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# **MORE THAN 120,000 EXPAT OFFENDERS TO BENEFIT FROM DECISION Kuwait grants amnesty for visa violators**



Photo by Mahmoud Jadeed Increased traffic congestion is observed on Kuwaiti roads during the afternoon as working hours are reduced for the holy month of Ramadan.

March 17-June 17

By Munif Naif and Saud Al-Farhan Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The Deputy Prime** Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah has issued a decision to grant a grace period from March 17, 2024 to June 17, 2024 to expatriates who are in violation of the residency law and its executive regulations.

This decision was taken on the occasion of the month of Ramadan and coincides with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's assumption of the reins of power, consolidating the humanitarian role of the State of Kuwait at all levels and fulfilling its lofty mission as a center for humanitarian work.

In a press statement, the Ministry of Interior announced the violators of the residency law will be allowed to pay the relevant

**Continued on Page 5** 

Warm mornings, cooler evenings

NO. 18545

## **Kuwait braces for dusty winds,** thunderstorms over weekend

KUWAIT CITY, March 14, (KUNA): Kuwait weather is expected to have warm mornings and cooler temperatures in the evenings with chances of thunderous rain and dusty winds, said Kuwait Meteorology Department Thursday.

The department director, Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi, said in a statement to KUNA that the weather maps' data indicated warm, humid winds in addition to cloudy skies during the weekend.

Thursday morning would be warm with light southeastern dusty winds and temperature highs between 26 and 29 degrees Celsius accompanied with chances of rain.

Meanwhile, Thursday evening would lean towards more southeastern winds and higher chances of thunderous rain and gusts of dust with temperatures ranging between 15 and 18 degrees Celsius, added Al-Oarawi.

Al-Qarawi mentioned the weather on Friday morning would be warm and cloudy with unstable winds ranging between 10-42 km/h and temperature highs between 25 and 27 degrees

Friday evening would see cooler temperatures between 16 and 19 degrees Celsius with a chance of precipitation and fog, he added.

**Continued on Page 5** 

## **Dav by Dav**

IT IS a well-known fact the tail of a dog can never be straightened.

Similar, is the path of those who engage in theft, deceit, falsehoods, and duplicity, both here and all over the world.

Their reckoning is impend-ing, for divine justice leaves no shadow of escape for wrongdoers. They've pilfered, deceived, masqueraded, and employed persuasive language, organizing into groups, each playing their part to weave a web of deception.

Yet tomorrow is another day. **Zahed Matar** 

Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received US Ambassador to Kuwait Karen Hideko Sasahara on Thursday.

During the meeting, they talked about bilateral relations between the two friendly nations and issues of mutual interest. (KUNA)

Moody's maintains stable outlook for Kuwait's banking system







HH the PM receives the president and members of Private Schools Union of Kuwait



CAIRO: Arab Parliament President Adel Al-Asoomi called for exerting more efforts to combat Islamophobia worldwide.

Al-Ásoomi said on Thursday, in a statement marking the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, that it became very dangerous for Muslims in foreign countries, where they face many types of racism and discrimination as a result of relating Islam to terrorism. (KUNA)

TUNIS: A gas leak-caused fire at a petroleum company in Rades in the Tunisian capital of Tunis on Thursday triggered an explosion of multiple gas cylinders and injured 38 people, according to the National Office for Civil Protection of Tunisia (ONPC).

Spokesperson for ONPC Brig. Moaz Tarea said in a press statement that they were able to control the fire, and 19 out of the 38 injuries were transported to hospital with injuries varying of first and second degree severity, including four in critical condition. (KUNA)

BRUSSELS: The International Organization for Migration (IOM) said Thursday that it needs 119 million US dollars to support nearly one million Rohingya refugees in the largest refugee camp in the world in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh.

It is part of the joint response plan that the organization launched Tuesday in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and under the overall leadership of the Government of Bangladesh.

"The world today is suffering from many crises, but we cannot forget the urgent needs of Rohingya refugees and the response efforts in Bangladesh," IOM Director-General Amy Pope said in a statement. (KUNA)

**DUBAI: Yemen's Houthi rebels** claim to have a new, hypersonic missile in their arsenal. Russia's state media reported Thursday, potentially raising the stakes in their ongoing attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and surrounding waterways against the backdrop of **Israel**'s war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The report by the state-run RIA Novosti news agency cited an unnamed official but provided no evidence for the claim. It comes as Moscow maintains an aggressively counter-Western foreign policy amid its grinding war on Ukraine. (AP)

HH the PM receives parents of martyrs and missing individuals.

HH the PM receives the Chairman and members of the Kuwait Association

for Needy Families

3 candidates withdraw

## **Over 834,000 Kuwaitis to cast** vote in parliamentary election

## **By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Statistics from the Election Affairs General Department at the Interior Ministry revealed that the number of citizens who are eligible to vote in the parliamentary election on April 4, 2024 totaled 834,733 - 405,948men and 428,785 women. Following is the breakdown of eli-

gible voters per constituency:

First Constituency: 104.038 (50,398 men and 53,640 women) Second Constituency: 95,302 (46,639 men and 48,663 women) Third Constituency: 143,693 (68,991 men and 74,702 women) Fourth Constituency: 220,932 (106,534 men and 114,398 women) Fifth Constituency: 270,768 (133,386 men and 137,382 women) Meanwhile, the number of National Assembly election candi-

dates in 1962 totaled 37, 205 in

1963, 220 in 1967, 183 in 1971, 256 in 1975, 477 in 1981, 231 in 1985, 278 in 1992, 230 in 1996, 288 in 1999, 246 in 2003, 249 in 2006, 275 in 2008, 210 in 2009, 311 in 2013, 293 in 2016, 326 in 2020, 310 in 2022, 207 in 2023 and 241 in 2024.

Candidates are allowed to withdraw from the electoral race until March 28. So far, three candidates have withdrawn.

On the other hand, Kuwait Democratic Forum announced that it has no representative in the election.

Leader of the Forum Bandar Al-Khairan said they support the sincere and honest candidates like former MP Mehalhal Al-Mudhaf.

## **Ramadan Timings**

lftar	Friday	
lmsak	Saturday	
lftar	Saturday	17:58
Imsak	Sunday	04:34

## Road safety includes verbal restraint

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: A phrase uttered by an expatriate 'By God, I don't know if the insults and slander will stop' has landed the man in trouble, reports Al-Anba daily.

The expatriate said this to a Kuwaiti, when the latter due to sheer reckless driving almost caused an accident. However, the Kuwaiti reported the incident to the authorities, accusing the expatriate of insulting and defaming him.

When the expatriate was summoned for interrogation, after the General Traffic Department helped identify him, he denied intentionally insulting the citizen, stating that the phrase was uttered in the heat of the moment after narrowly avoiding an accident

caused by the citizen's reckless driving.

The incident was registered by the authorities as a misdemeanor and the expatriate said he did not intend to insult or defame the citizen, explaining that the phrase was a spontaneous reaction to the dangerous driving behavior of the citizen.

The case highlights the importance of exercising caution and refraining from engaging in confrontational behavior, especially on public roads where such incidents can escalate quickly.

It also underscores the need for clear communication and understanding of cultural and linguistic nuances to avoid misunderstandings and potential legal repercussions.

## PM receives needy families' body chief

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah received on Thursday at Bayan Palace the chief and members of the Kuwait Association for Needy Families.

He also received Private Schools Union of Kuwait and parents of martyrs and the missing individuals. On Wednesday, His Highness the Prime Minister

Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Cabinet Affairs Shereeda Al-Mousherji received at Bayan Palace Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Chairman Dr. Hilal Al-Sayer and the volunteer medical team of KRCS returning

from Gaza.

Attending the meeting was Minister of Commerce and Industry Abdullah Al-Jouaan.

In a press conference, His Highness the Prime Minister praised the voluntary medical teams initiative, which reflected Kuwaits nature in helping any person in need and treated unjustly. He noted the injustice that befell Palestinians from the barbaric occupation.

His Highness the Prime Minister added that what the medical team has done is a pride of Kuwait and a historical moment for the staff and generations to come. (KUNA)

## Ceasefire in Gaza badly needed: Egypt

## **Kuwait commends Palestinian women amid conflict**

NEW YORK, March 14, (KUNA): In light of attending the 68th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, Minister Al-Sabah said in a statement to KUNA that Palestinian women pay the price for an unjust aggression that killed tens of thousands of their children.

The Minister added that despite the war in Gaza, the Palestinian woman remains steadfast, commending her on her unwavering model with pride and appreciation.

He noted that establishing the National Committee for women, peace and security comes as a proof of Kuwaits belief in the priority and concern of women's issues in the work of the United Nations.

He added that the committee is keen on developing a coordinated plan between state bodies to implement the United Nations security council resolution (1325) on women, peace and security.

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya received a written letter by his Palestinian counterpart Dr. Riyadh Al-Maliki about the current situation in Palestine and the Israeli occupation's continued violations.

The letter was received during the Kuwaiti minister's meeting with Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub, said a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Wednesday



MoFA photo Kuwait FM receives letter on developments from Palestinian FM.

The statement reiterated Kuwait's firm position towards the Palestinian cause, condemning the Israeli occupation's attacks against the Palestinians.

Al-Yahya underscored that the systematic crimes committed by the Israeli occupation violate global human rights and international laws, praying to Almighty Allah to protect the Palestinians from harm especially during the holy month of Ramadan.

Elsewhere, Egypt's President Abdelfattah El-Sisi has stressed the need for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip to end the current humanitarian disaster.

Speaking at a joint news conference with visiting Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte on Wednesday, El-Sisi warned that Israel's targeting of the UNRWA runs counter to humanitarian values.

He said that Egypt has repeatedly cautioned against the Israeli plans aiming to carry out a ground military operation in Palestine's Rafah City that will jeopardize the lives of more than 1.5 million people.

The decision of some countries to suspend their contributions to the UNRWA contradicts humanitarian norms and values, he affirmed.

He referred that the UNRWA has a key role in receiving and handing out aid in Gaza and this role should continue.

Palestinians' sufferings over decades can stop only through recognizing a Palestinian state with UN full membership and implementing the two-state solution in line with international references, El-Sisi affirmed.

The Israeli occupation forces' practices against Palestinian civilians in the Strip is a flagrant violation of international law and international humanitarian law, El-Sisi made clear.

He said his talks with Rutte focused on the situation in the region, mainly the war in Gaza, reiterating the need of reaching ceasefire and stopping Israeli atrocities.

The talks reflected identical views that Egypt is an EU reliable partner in all fields, including combating illegal migration and terrorism.

"Our discussions highlighted alignment in views with regard to Egypt's crucial role as a reliable partner for the European Union and its member states on a range of common ground issues, including illegal migration, combating terrorism, and reinforcing security and stability in the region so as to achieve Egyptian European interests," El-Sisi said, according to Egyptian presidency's website.

PM Diwan photos

## **Prayer Timings**

..... 15:22

Fajr ...... 04:41 Asr... Maghrib .. 17:55 Sunrise .. 05:59 Zohr ..... 11:57 Isha ...... 19:12



Expected weather for next 24 hrs: By Day: Warm and partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 10-42 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times and a chance for fog forming

## at night. By Night: Rather cold and cloudy

Weather

with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind to southerly wind, with speeds of 10-40 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times and a chance for fog forming over some areas.

<b>Station</b> Kuwait City Kuwait Airport Abdaly Jahra Salmiyah	Max Exp 27 27 28 28 28 23	Min Rec 18 13 12 16 18
Wafra	24 28	12

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

## 'Nazaha' takes part in UN program

## 'Empower women professionals in security, anti-corruption, judiciary jobs'

VIENNA, March 14, (KUNA): Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha), represented by the Head of International Cooperation and Agreements, Ms. Anwar Al-Qadeeri, participated Wednesday in the launch of the program "Empowering Women in Justice/for Justice"

The launch took place during a high-level event that was organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNO-DC) Global Judicial Integrity Network and the Global Operational Network of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Authorities (GlobE Network) under the umbrella of the UNODC.

The program aims to empower women professionals in law enforcement authorities. anti-corruption agencies, and the judiciary by bringing them together with experts in these areas to share lessons learned, experiences, and practical career advice.

Anwar Al-Qadeeri Based on its active

participation in international anti-corruption forums and its cooperation with GlobE Network, Nazaha was chosen to participating in launching the pilot phase of this program.

Held at the United Nations Headquarters in Vienna, Republic of Austria, the highlevel event coincided with International Day of Women Judges.

It was attended by the Executive Director of UNODC, Ghada Wali, and the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Austria, Alma Zadic.

The event featured Ministers of Justice, judges, and founders of women's empowerment movements in the Republic of Ghana, the Republic of Serbia, the United States of America, the Republic of the Philippines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

In her speech, Al-Qadeeri emphasized the pivotal role of women in justice, law enforcement, and combating corruption. She highlighted the need for women to support each other in overcoming the challenges they face in their professional lives.

Ål-Qadeeri also highlighted Kuwait's efforts to empower women in the judiciary, citing that in September 2020, eight Kuwaiti female prosecutors were sworn in, becoming the first female judges in the history of the State of Kuwait-a significant step toward empowering women in this field.

Furthermore, she highlighted the importance of men's role in empowering women, adding that Nazaha has fostered a positive environment for women to assume important positions.

She mentioned that women at Nazaha have leading roles in the Board of Trustees and are heading vital sectors such as the Financial Disclosure Sector and the Prevention of Corruption Sector. She further pointed out that women constitute a large proportion of the workforce in Nazaha, including legal auditors, engineers, and others.

It is worth noting that Nazaha joined GlobE Network on 12 October 2021. It is a network that facilitates information sharing among frontline anti-corruption law enforcement officials

The network also provides knowledge resources and tools to track, investigate, and prosecute cases of cross-border corruption through secure communication channels.

Nazaha has played an active role since the establishment of GlobE Network and participated in the technical discussions prior to the adoption of its Charter.

Nazaha also chaired an international workshop organized by GlobE Network and holds memberships in its thematic working groups

Additionally, Nazaha was a facilitator in several sessions of these working groups Nazaha has also contributed to the GlobE Network's knowledge resources, such as the Compendium of Practices on Informal Cooperation in Translational Corruption Cases and the Directory of Open-Source Registries.

Nazaha continues to provide insights into the GlobE Network in order to support law enforcement authorities in the fight against corruption.

At the end of the event, Al-Qadeeri addressed her speech to the UNODC Executive Director, Ghada Wali, expressing hopes for the success of the program launch. She concluded by saying that the program will contribute to strengthening women's selfbelief, helping them overcome challenges and stereotypes, and enabling them to advance in their careers and take up leadership positions

## **Other Voices**

## The 'oppressed' plastic bag

### **By Ahmad alsarraf**

en years ago, California became The first American state to ban the use of single-use plastic bags. This encouraged other states to follow suit, and

in them, fresh or canned, were originally wrapped in plastic or similar materials; such as foam materials or packaged in plastic materials, such as ice cream, dairy products, ketchup, salad mixes, honey, vegetables, fresh juices, and

# **Rare stability in domestic sector**

Keep away from fictitious maid offices, public warned



Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya receives credentials of the new Georgian ambassador.

## New Georgia envoy takes charge

Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Ab-dullah Al-Yahya on Wednesday received a copy of credentials of newly appointed Ambassador of Georgia to the State of Kuwait Noshrevan Lomtatidze.

During the meeting, Al-Yahya wished the new ambassador success in his new post and more development for bilateral ties between the two friendly countries. (KUNA)

## Plan to build big mosque in Milan

## 'Need to correct wrong image of Islam, promote tolerance'

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Islamic Culture House in Milan, Italy Mahmoud Asfa confirmed that he is keen on correcting the wrong image of Islam in the West, combat hatred and promote acceptance of others, reports Al-Qabas daily

Asfa revealed to the daily that he visited Kuwait with his wife Shatha Ahmad Ali, who works as an Arabic language teacher for non-native speakers in Milan, in order to collect donations to build a mosque in Milan. He said the mosque will be the center of worship and a house of intellectual, cultural and jurisprudential radiation for Muslims, as well as for spreading the correct Islamic culture that the West desires. It is also aimed at informing others about the tolerant teachings of Islam and its dedication to humanity, justice, love and goodness, he added. He stated that he and his wife are guests of the International Islamic Charitable Organization; calling on generous people to donate for the construction of this mosque, stressing that Kuwait Al-Khair is a pioneer in supporting Islamic and charitable projects. He disclosed he immigrated to Italy to study in 1982, and that this choice was related to the World Cup. He added: "I asked my father to allow me to study in Italy, because of my attachment to football. He agreed and I arrived there in 1982, during which I participated in the World Cup celebrations. We have a religious upbringing. I pray regularly. When I traveled to the West, I had the challenge to adhere to the Islamic religion, such that I started frequenting Islamic centers and moved to Milan. The presence of Muslims in Italy was huge in the 1970s. We established the House of Islamic Culture with the participation of university students from Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq,

Syria, and various nationalities. We rented a building for Friday prayers and engaged in some religious activities. Then, the number increased; hence, the need for a center that brings together all Muslims there. The House of Islamic Culture was founded in 1992. We began to bring together all Muslims there, provided all services, establish social work, and organized religious and cultural activities

He pointed out that students from 100 Italian public schools visit the House of Islamic Culture, which is located in an old building and it is not a mosque. It is a cultural center that welcomes those wishing to visit. We coordinate with the municipality of Milan to give lectures on Islam in schools and universities. We asked the municipality for a cemetery to bury Muslims, and the House of Islamic Culture is supervising it. He touched on the West's wrong view of Islam, pointing out that he wrote a book about true Islam and this book contributed to guiding many people and converting them to Islam. He said a large percentage of people in Italy, especially women, convert to Islam when they learn the truth about the Islamic religion, which is fair to women and dedicates human love, justice and goodness for the benefit of societies. We have succeeded in demonstrating Islam's honor for women and its dedication to justice and human love.' On the other hand, Shatha Ahmad Ali, who is also a social activist and responsible for parents in Italian schools, confirmed that she is keen on raising her children well. She initially suffered from lack of tools that help Muslims raise their children properly; hence, the need for the House of Islamic Culture, in addition to the Islamic culture that is based on the tolerant teachings of the true religion.

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: General Manager of Al-Durra Domestic Labor Recruitment Company Muhammad Fahd Al-Zoubi has confirmed that the holy month of Ramadan this year witnessed unprecedented stability in the domestic labor sector due to the decision of the Ministry of Commerce to fix the fee for recruiting a domestic worker at KD 750 including the plane ticket, reports Al-Anba daily.

He said the number of female workers escaping from their employers and being exploited by some domestic labor recruitment office owners has decreased, coinciding with the high demand for these workers in Ramadan and the disappearance of fake advertisements about temporary workers. He added all these are attributed to the efforts of the Joint Committee to strictly enforce the laws on labor recruitment offices. He pointed out that the fake offices are one of the reasons for the prevalence of absconding cases among domestic workers, especially before Ramadan. The awareness of citizens and expatriates also played a role as they follow the laws and instructions in this regard, he affirmed.

He warned citizens and residents against dealing with fictitious or fraudulent entities that use the company's name and logo on social media sites, taking advantage of its success in attracting many citizens and expatriates to recruit domestic workers at the same government price. He asserted that legal procedures are in place, and the company follows these procedures to pursue those who impersonate its name and capacity.

## Bid to foster education, hunt talent in children

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The memorandum of understanding signed between Kuwait Insurance Company and the Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity marks a significant step towards fostering education and talent development among children and youth in Kuwait, reports Al-Jarida daily.

By sponsoring specialized programs in science and technology, both organizations aim to hone the skills and mental abilities of young individuals, preparing them for future success and contributing to the nation's development.

Kuwait Insurance Company's decision to sponsor the Kangaroo Mathematics Competition further underscores its commitment to supporting educational initiatives.

This competition, renowned internationally and

2

plastic became a bogeyman. However, environmental activists have recently

noticed that plastic bag waste, by weight, is increasing to unprecedented levels.

In the year the ban was passed, 158,000 tons of this waste were disposed of in California alone, and by 2022, it had risen to 231,000 tons, an increase

of 47%. The per capita share rose from 4 tons per thousand in 2014 to nearly 6 tons per thousand in 2022.

alsarraf

It turned out that the problem was with a provision of the prohibition law that allowed grocery stores and major retailers to provide thicker, heavier plastic bags to customers in exchange for paying 10 cents per bag, to encourage them to reuse them again. They are also made of 20% recyclable materials, but because they didn't look much different from the fragile bags that were banned, and many people did not actually reuse them, even though they bore the "recycle" symbol.

If we had not looked inside the plastic shopping bags, which many countries have banned from using in grocery and retail stores, and what we put in them while we were shopping, whether food or other consumer items, we would have found that the fruits and food items

hundreds of similar materials. As for non-food items, the situation

is even more ridiculous, as the majority of their containers are made of plastic, such as shampoo, conditioner, cleaning tools and materials, and many others. Water also reaches our homes through materials made of plastic, and replacing them with copper, lead, or galvanized iron is harmful and very expensive.

Plastic is also used in thousands of industries, such as clothes, toothbrushes, cosmetics, medical glasses, accessories for cars, airplanes, ships, furniture. shoes, camp covers, and farms of vegetables, fruits, poultry, and animals.

Therefore, it is ridiculous to focus on plastic bags, and leave other packaging machines that pollute the environment without restrictions to use it. Therefore, plastic will remain in our lives for many decades to come, and oil, the source of plastic, will remain dominant for many years to come.

This does not mean at all leaving the issue as it is, as many do not know the amount of ultra-fine plastic materials that enter our bodies, amounting to hundreds of thousands, through a plastic water bottle the size of one and a half liters. Therefore, we must all, as individuals, society and government, strive to increase the percentage of these materials that are reused, as this is the effective solution, and not preventing the use of plastic in our lives, as most of it is not left behind!

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## **Children trying to fast cautioned**

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Although fasting during the holy month of Ramadan is not obligatory for children, there is a desire among many of them to participate in this noble act of worship just like their parents. Therefore, we must be aware that children's bodies are more susceptible to dehydration and low blood sugar, compared to adults, reports Al-Qabas daily.

In this context, the pediatric consultant at Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital, Dr. Khaled Kalender has given several tips for children to fast safely such as:

-- Gradual fasting according to age

and physical ability.

-- Eat the suboor meal, delaying it as much as possible, and ensuring that it contains complete nutritional elements.

-- Pay attention to signs of dehydration or low blood sugar during fasting, such as headache, nausea, lethargy, dry mouth, extreme thirst, tremors, or excessive sweating.

-- Stay away from soft drinks and sweetened juices.

-- Follow up a child with chronic diseases and a diabetic patient with the treating physician on a regular basis.

held in over 70 countries, provides a platform for students to showcase their mathematical abilities and passion for the subject. By participating in such events, students not only enhance their mathematical skills but also develop critical thinking and problemsolving abilities essential for their academic and professional journeys.

CEO Sami Sharif emphasized the importance of education and talent development in nation-building, highlighting the role of the younger generation as the backbone of the country's progress. Through initiatives like the Kangaroo Mathematics Competition, Kuwait Insurance Company aims to instill a love for mathematics and promote its practical applications in various aspects of life.

Nada Al-Daihani, the Director General of the Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity, expressed appreciation for the partnership with Kuwait Insurance Company and underscored their joint commitment to empowering children and youth towards success and prosperity. By leveraging modern technology and exchanging experiences, both organizations seek to serve society and contribute to its advancement.

Overall, this collaboration between Kuwait Insurance Company and the Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity reflects a shared vision of investing in the future generation and nurturing their potential to drive innovation and progress in Kuwait.

## Job-seekers opinion sought

## Mol updates Ramadan work hours

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The Ministry of Interior (MoI) has announced updated working hours for various departments under its jurisdiction, reports Al-Anba daily. The General Administration of Service Centers will operate in two shifts: the morning shift will run from 9:30 am to 2:00 pm, while the evening shift will commence at

2:30 pm and conclude at 5:00 pm. The departments associated with the Gen-

eral Traffic Department, including technical inspection departments and testing centers, will operate from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. Vehicles testing departments will begin operations at 9:30 am and conclude at 3:30 pm.

The working hours for the General Administration of the Coast Guard will be from 8:00 am to 1:30 pm.

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'Give your opinions': The CEO of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Sabah, has called on workers in the oil sector to give their opinions on the job engagement questionnaire, considering that it comes from the most important source of the oil sector, which is human energy, reports Al-Rai daily.

He went on to say, "Give your opinion, do not hesitate... Employees' comfort is important to the executive management, and expressing your opinions in the job questionnaire will give you the opportunity to express the results frankly and confidentially, without interference from any party.'

Al-Saud asked the workers to follow up on the e-mail that will reach them next week from the consulting company Confrey, indicating that participation in the questionnaire will provide the information and suggestions required to develop work, raise the efficiency of operations, and continue the usual innovation and creativity in the oil sector.

## **MPW plans to upgrade** infrastructure network

### **By Mohammad Ghanem**

### Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Public Works Eid Al-Rashidi says the ministry, through its future plans, seeks to develop, modernize and raise the efficiency of the infrastructure network in the various governorates of the State of Kuwait.

In a press statement, Al-Rashidi affirmed that the ministry is in the process of signing an agreement to improve the infrastructure of Shamiya and Shuwaikh areas.

He explained that the ministry's plans include improving the infrastructure of Jahra, Oyoun, Waha, Tayma, Qasr, Naeem and other areas in various governorates of the State of Kuwait. The ministry is communicating with the regulatory authorities to complete its procedures.

It recently concluded two maintenance contracts for the Yarmouk and Qurtuba at a value exceeding KD 26 million.

What distinguishes such contracts is that they are comprehensive, which means they include infrastructure, lighting, sanitation, and rain drainage, as well as asphalt works in an integrated manner.

On the other hand, the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART) announced a temporary diversion of the Fifth Ring Road in both directions (the intersection of the Fifth Ring Road and Ibn Al-Qasim Street) on Friday and Saturday morning from 2:00 am to 9:00 am in coordination with the General Traffic Department.

## Mol designates hotline to report phenomenon of begging

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The Ministry of Interior has taken proactive measures to address the issue of begging, designating a hotline within the Criminal Security Sector for swift response to such cases. Emphasizing the gravity of begging as a societal offense that tarnishes the civilized fabric, the Ministry underscores its

commitment to bolstering security efforts against this phenomenon, reports Al-Anba daily

The General Department of Security Relations and Media urges public cooperation with the General Department of Criminal Investigation by promptly reporting any instances of begging. Citizens can reach out via designated hotline numbers: 25589655 and 25589644, or utilize the emergency line (112), operational round the clock. It emphasizes the citizen's role as a guardian of their homeland, emphasizing the collective responsibility for the welfare of society. 

ing team at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has inspected the meat stores in wholesale markets in Shuwaikh to monitor the prices and supply, since meat is one of the basic commodities that is in high demand during the holy month of Ramadan, reports Al-Anba daily.

Check on meat rates: The price monitor-

## LOCAL

# diwaniya 🕐 جيوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

# Once again ... consequences of carrying 'dual citizenship'

"WE stand at the precipice of a new council, mindful of the perils of duplication that have previously threatened our nation's core interests. The past council's failure to uphold our supreme interests led to its dissolution, underscoring the urgency of addressing the issue of duplication among council members," columnist **Dr. Saud Mohammad Al-Asfour** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"We do not question the past council's composition, but rather emphasize the necessity for stringent scrutiny of candidates to prevent the infiltration of duplicity. Priority must be given to ensuring that candidates for both current and future councils are free from any allegiance to other nations, as dual citizenship poses a risk of conflicting

loyalties. "Those who willingly hold citizenship of another country or conceal their lack of eligibility for Kuwaiti citizenship must be disqualified from the National Assembly. Dual allegiance under-

mines the ability

to make impartial



Dr. Al-Asfour

decisions in matters concerning both nations, necessitating the revocation of Kuwaiti citizenship to uphold national security.

"Obtaining citizenship through fraudulent means violates Kuwaiti law and undermines its integrity. Individuals knowingly engaging in such acts must face immediate consequences, including the revocation of citizenship, to uphold the sanctity of the law.

"Legislative councils serve as guardians of national interests and cannot tolerate compromises or divided loyalties. Removing individuals with dual citizenship from these councils is imperative to safeguard Kuwait's sovereignty and ensure unwavering dedication to its people.

"Granting privileges of Kuwaiti citizenship to dual nationals creates a loophole that must be closed. Individuals and their associates may exploit their dual status for personal gain, undermining the integrity of the citizenship process.

"The Central Agency for Addressing the Situations of Illegal Residents, led by Dr Saleh Al-Fadala, plays a crucial role in identifying and exposing individuals with dual citizenship. Empowering this agency to detect and address instances of duplicity is essential to preserving our national integrity.

"Urgent action is needed to scrutinize candidates for council candidacy and verify their eligibility to represent Kuwait. It is imperative to ensure that council members are solely committed to serving the interests of Kuwait and its citizens."

Alco

of 5,000 Chinese workers in Kuwait belonging to 13 companies.

They were removed in batches and in cooperation with the Chinese embassies in Kuwait, Baghdad and Jordan. Negotiations to establish diplomatic relations began on March 12, 1971 between the heads of the two delegations (Rashid Abdulaziz Al-Rashed and Gong Dafi).

"On March 22, 1971, after signing the statement establishing relations, Kuwait informed the Taiwan Embassy in writing of this matter, and then the Undersecretary of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that the government had abandoned maintaining diplomatic relations with it.

"At the end of July 1971, the first Chinese ambassador to Kuwait left Beijing and presented his credentials to Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. You read Chinese testimonies about Iraq's occupation of Kuwait, how Chinese nationals were evacuated under the flames of war, and memories of the Chinese oil firefighting team that participated in extinguishing Well No. 168 in the Burgan field in 1991.

"The first cooperation between the Kuwait Fund for Development and China was in 1982 by providing a loan to finance a cement factory. Until 2014, the total number of projects reached 37 worth about 952 million US dollars.

"Thus, Kuwait is the Arab country that provides China with preferential loans. In the book, there is a testimony by Mrs. Aisha Al-Ghais, wife of the Kuwaiti Ambassador to China, Faisal Al-Ghais, about her time of work there and her impressions and experiences recorded by a Chinese researcher who conducted an interview with her, entitled 'A Caring Heart Across Borders'.

"Cultural and educational aspects and more than half a century of relations between the two countries, Kuwait is the first Gulf country to establish diplomatic relations with China, and the first initiator at the Arab and Gulf levels to sign the Belt and Road Project, which was launched by the Chinese President in 2013."

### 

"Ramadan is a month of worship, not for political marketing... Do we have the month of Ramadan, the month of goodness, about which the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said: "When Ramadan comes, the gates of Paradise are opened, the gates of Hell are closed, and the devils are chained'? Instead of competing in worship and to win obedience, some compete to achieve personal interests," columnist **Hamad Salem Al-Meri** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"After opening the door for candidacy for membership in the National Assembly, and setting the date for the election in the last 10 days of the month of Ramadan, many of the candidates and their supporters are busy in political marketing -- either by whispering and slandering ag the government, or by challenging the opponents, without us hearing or seeing a program or real electoral potential for these candidates. "As is the custom of these people, they preoccupy themselves, and with them the Kuwaiti street, with their political conflicts, so the hostile records are repeated in every election (Al-Mariya - Al-Mahash - Frob Al-Astabal - Al-Rabbit), and other terms that the Kuwaiti citizen is tired of, as he watches the neighboring countries compete in development, construction and the advancement of their peoples. In all fields, we are still fighting among ourselves to achieve imaginary gains under the slogan of 'democracy and freedom of opinion. "The next election will be in the last 10 days of the blessed month of Ramadan, which the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's prayers and peace be upon him) used to receive with diligence in obedience, as it includes the Night of Power, about which Allah said: 'To afflict the Ouraysh (1) to accustom them to the journey of winter and summer (2) so that they may worship the Lord of this House. (3) Who fed them from hunger and made them safe from fear (4). "Instead of being preoccupied with worship and anticipating this great night to win it, some people are preoccupied with political conflicts and verbal exchanges on media channels and social media, either to protect the members of the tribe or sect, or in defense of the party. which would earn them a great reward, and to no avail desired for the country. "For decades, we have gone from election to election, and the country as it is, has not changed for the better. Unfortunately, corruption has spread and development has been hampered. "Fraternal advice to the Kuwaiti people: Give up following the political conflicts and verbal exchanges between the candidates. Do not get carried away by it, and be busy with worship and drawing closer to Allah through all kinds of obedience in this holy month. By Allah, some of us will leave this life, and running after the legislative chair will not benefit them. Rather, they will wish that they took advantage of the opportunity of Ramadan to win the pleasure of the Most Gracious. "This election, like others in the past, will not change the reality of Kuwait at all, because winning the legislative seat will be based either on a tribal, sectarian or partisan basis, or with the support of merchants. "Some of them will be tools for the struggle of influential people outside the legislature. The political conflict that is causing the country's stagnation and disrupting its development will not stop... I ask Allah to protect Kuwait and its people.'



Minister of Public Works Noura Al-Mishaan, project engineers visiting the site

## Minister restarts 'Darwaza' project after 5 yrs

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: More than five years after the closure of the Darwaza Al-Abdul Razzaq Intersection, Minister of Public Works Noura Al-Mishaan has breathed new life into the area with the announcement that work at this vital junction has resumed, reports Al-Qabas daily.

By doing this, the Minister has emphasized the significance of Darwaza Al-Abdul Razzaq as a vital area. During her visit to area, she declared the recommencement of work in adherence to the directives of the Council of Ministers.

She further stated that repair works have already com-

menced to ensure the facility's safety and enhance its longevity.

Moreover, she unveiled a comprehensive plan aimed at road repairs and infrastructure modernization across the country.

The Ministry of Works has entered into two contracts in the Capital Governorate and published 18 notices in the Official Gazette pertaining to road repairs, with 6 under the Roads Authority and 12 under the Ministry of Works, all aimed at preserving the integrity of the nation's roads.

## Camping till before 'Eid'

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Official sources have disclosed to Al-Rai that the Environment Public Authority has officially agreed to extend the camping period until the conclusion of the holy month of Ramadan. This decision follows coordination with relevant authorities, including the Kuwait Municipality, reports Al-Rai daily.

The rationale behind this extension is attributed to the favorable weather conditions and the commitment of the majority of campers to environmental regulations, fostering the opportunity to revel in nature while ensuring its preservation. This extension aligns with the Ramadan ambiance, further enhancing the experience for campers.

Last Friday, Al-Rai reported that the spring committee camps unanimously endorsed the request for an extension from citizens, outdoor enthusiasts. and campsite proprietors. Subsequently, the municipality reached out to the Environment Public Authority for their input on extending the camping season until the end of Ramadan, replacing the initial end date of March 15

# **CSC** starts implementation of order on examining academic certificates

## Decision covers Kuwaitis, expats working in public sector

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) has started implementing the directive of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah to examine the academic certificates of State employees, reports Al-Qabas daily quoting a government source.

The source told the daily that the decision covers all State employees -- citizens and expatriates -- who obtained post-secondary certificates from the beginning of 2000 till date, and that the examination will not be limited to one party.

The source said the CSC has informed all

examining the certificates obtained outside the country. "If the employee's certificate has no equivalency as per the procedures followed by the Ministry of Higher Education, the ministry will be asked to take measures to ensure the validity of the certificate by addressing the cultural offices and the university from which the certificate was obtained and then issue the equivalency. If the certificate has an equivalency, the ministry will be asked to verify its validity," the source added.

### **Certificates**

He pointed out that the easiest certificates to examine are those obtained in Kuwait, so they will be left for the final stage and the higher education institutions in the country will be asked to ensure their authenticity.

He stressed that the examination procedures require a great deal of time and effort, and that the authorities must quickly provide the CSC with the required data, so it can take measures to verify the authenticity of the certificates. Regarding the legal procedures in proving the invalidity of a certificate, the sources said the procedures include referral to the Public Prosecution and holding the certificate holder accountable. The source explained that the issue of fake and forged certificates is not urgent, as the war waged by the ministry against the so-called 'education shops' started early, with the suspension of many suspicious universities in a number of countries like the Philippines and others during the terms of two former ministers of Education -- Dr Moudhi Al-Hamoud and Nouriya Al-Sabeeh. However, the issue reached its peak in 2018 when then Minister of Education and Higher Education Dr Hamid Al-Azmi submitted hundreds of forged certificates to the prosecution. This facilitated the process of examining the certificates that is currently taking place, as certain procedures must be followed, including the complete Kuwaitization of the equivalency management in 2018 and the establishment of a list of equivalencies in 2019, which served as a barrier to counterfeiters, the source narrated.

The source also revealed that the committees in government agencies started examining academic certificates at the time, but this was halted during the Corona crisis. Since 2018, ministry has adopted the idea of the establishment of an automatic number for each issued equivalency, which serves as a reference and identifier for the equivalence on the ministry's website and allows the entities that receive the certificate to verify its authenticity by entering the automated number on the site. Therefore, the equivalencies issued after this date will be easier to obtain, review and examine, the source added.

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#### AIJU.

"Stories of China and Kuwait" deserves to be a reference for knowing this relationship that extends from 1971 to the present day, 35 authors belonging to various sectors, whose articles contain accurate stories about friendship and relations between the two countries. When we say that there is a Chinese community in Kuwait is not news, but for a Kuwaiti citizen to go to live and settle in China, this is news, and what I found in the book "Stories of China and Kuwait" deserves to be a reference for knowing this relationship extending from 1971 to our days. 35 authors belonging to various sectors, their articles contain accurate stories about friendship and relations between the two countries," columnist Hamza Alyan wrote for Al-Jarida daily.

"What I found in the book will provide also for the readers valuable and detailed information about events and personalities that contributed to building a bridge of cooperation, Chinese and Kuwaiti stories, and the idea of a book that is really interesting to read, narrated within the framework of a series of books published under the title "We and You" in the Arabic language.

"Dr. Hussein Al-Moussawi tells the story of his love for China after he became satisfied with his studies of its history and future. He decided to move and immigrate there with his children, when he submitted his resignation from the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, which was in 1998, and to work as a university professor specializing in engineering and the English language, and he bought a house for himself in the capital, Beijing (Jianwei District) and then opened a commercial office related to the manufacture of agricultural equipment, fertilizers, textile trade and electrical appliances.

"China offers 5 scholarships to Kuwait and there are students studying in its universities. The Chinese-Arab friendship goes deep into history, as the overland Silk Road and the maritime Spice Road linked China with the Arab countries since ancient times. Among the most famous ambassadors of friendship are "Gan Ying" and "Ibn Battuta." Today, 22 Arab countries establish diplomatic and cultural relations that took place over the years from 1956 to 1990.

"There are great differences between Kuwait and China, in terms of area, population, social system, and culture, but they have commonalities, which is their adherence to the five principles of peaceful coexistence as a basis for developing relations, understanding, and mutual support.

"China declared its opposition to the annexation and invasion of Kuwait and asked Iraq to withdraw its forces without conditions and restore the independence and unity of Kuwait. During the invasion in 1990, there were a total

- Compiled by PFX Fernandes

government agencies and public institutions about the need to submit the academic certificates of their employees, along with the equivalencies; in preparation for examining the equivalencies and academic certificates to ensure their validity.

### Explained

He explained that the government agencies, including the ministries of Education and Endowments, and other bodies have informed their employees in this regard; calling on other entities to take the same measure. He added that uploading academic certificates and their equivalencies on the automated system is just an initial step, affirming more steps will follow later to examine the certificates.

The source indicated that the first step is

### Prohibits

The source also underscored the need to implement law number 78/2019, which prohibits the use of non-equivalent academic certificates, indicating many public sector employees have non-equivalent certificates due to the failure to activate the law.

The source pointed out that updating the lists of universities accredited by the ministry contributed to stopping many suspicions of forged, fictitious and weak certificates; especially after reducing the number of accredited universities in Egypt to only seven and in Jordan to only five universities.



## Fashionista appeal rejected Court acquits test cheat facilitators after appeal By Jaber Al-Hamoud

## Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The Court of Appeals, presided over by Judge Abdul Rahman Al Darmi, overturned the verdict issued by a lower court which sentenced a Kuwaiti man and a Kuwaiti woman to twoyear imprisonment each, and a expatriate man and a expatriate woman to six-month imprisonment each for leaking question papers of high school exams, and for laundering KD 308,000. The court instead acquitted them of all charges.

It also upheld the acquittal of a citizen of leaking question papers in another case.

Previously, investigations by the police had revealed the involvement of others and the role of each accused in leaking the question papers of the high school exams, as well as the amount of money that went into their bank accounts illegally as a result of their crime.

### 

**Appeal rejected:** The Court of Appeals presided over by Judge Salem Al-Asousi rejected the appeal submitted by the fashionista Fatima Al-Moumen against the verdict issued by a lower court which sentenced her for three-year imprisonment for causing a major traffic accident on Al-Sour Street in Capital Governorate.

The court also upheld the withdrawal of her driver's license for one year on charges of manslaughter, crossing a red signal, and driving above the allowed speed limit.

It is noteworthy that the accident occurred at dawn on Thursday, August 24, 2023, at the intersection of the Soor Street and King Fahad bin Abdulaziz Road in Kuwait, which resulted in the death of two people and injuries to two others.

### ARAB TIMES, FRIDAY-SATURDAY, MARCH 15-16, 2024

## LOCAL

# Kuwaiti woman plays pivotal role in social dev: Sheikh Firas

Minister addresses 68th UN Commission on Status of Women

NEW YORK. March 14. (KUNA): **Minister of Social Affairs, Family** and Childhood Affairs Sheikh Firas Saud Al-Malik Al-Sabah said the Kuwaiti woman played a central role in the development and protection of society at times of peace and war.

In his address to the 68th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women at the UN General Assembly hall on Wednesday, Sheikh Firas said the Kuwaiti woman proved to be influential in all aspects of life thanks to the care and protection she enjoys under the Constitution of the State of Kuwait.

"The Constitution recognizes the important role of women in social, economic and political development and bans all forms of discrimination against women.

"Laying the basic principles of freedom. justice and equality for the society, the Constitution provides against discrimination based on gender, religious or linguistic considerations," the minister pointed out.



KUNA photo Sheikh Firas Saud addresses the 68th Ses-sion of UN Commission on the Status of Women.

The State of Kuwait, out of belief in these constitutional principles, has always been keen on empowering women in the political, economic, social, artistic and sports areas, through adoption of relevant legislation and joining UN conventions.

Kuwait has advanced by 10 positions on the Global Gender Gap Index 2023 of the World Economic Forum, which benchmarks the national gender gaps on economic, political, education, and health-based criteria, Sheikh Firas went on.

"Kuwait has also advanced from 123rd to 61st ranking on the Women Peace and Security Index (WPS Index) of Georgetown University's Institute for Women, Peace and Security, which signals the political, economic and social environments conducive to women empowerment in the country.

"Women in Kuwait now account for 41 percent of the leading positions at the Central Bank of Kuwait, 26 percent of leading position in the banking sector and 35 percent of the workforce at Kuwait banks," he added.

The legislation in Kuwait provide for protection of women against violence, the minister noted, praising the partnership between the Kuwaiti government and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in this the effort to improve the status of women.

## **Partnership discussed**

## Social Affairs minister meets ESCWA chief on cooperation

NEW YORK, March 14, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Sheikh Firas Saud Al-Malik Al-Sabah met Executive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia Rola Dashti on Wednesday to discuss the partnership between the State of Kuwait and the ESCWA.

The meeting took place at Kuwait's Permanent Mission to the UN on the sidelines of the 68th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

The discussions dealt with issues of common concern, including the project to assess the economic cost of violence against women, the social protection project and the efforts to improve Kuwait's record.

Sheikh Firas, who leads Kuwait's delegation to the ongoing session of the UN Commission, praised the ESCWA cooperation in sharing information with Kuwait and serving the common interests.

He noted that his ministry and the Supreme Council of the Family Affairs work together for providing social protection for women and empower them economically.

The ministry and the council encourage women to engage in microenterprises and provide them with the necessary production requirements, he pointed out.

On her part, Dashti underscored the significance of cooperation with both



KUNA photo Kuwait's Minister Sheikh Firas Saud with Rola Dashti

government bodies to improve the efficacy of the labor market and build the capacity of female workers.

On a separate occasion, Sheikh Firas hosted Algerian Minister of National Solidarity, Family and Women's Affairs Kaouthar Krikou who leads her country's delegation to the session of the UN Commission.

They discussed the prospects of the cooperation in the social affairs, with emphasis on the efforts to improve the status of women.

## KISR presents studies on dust impact at Riyadh confab

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) participated in the Second International Conference on Sustainability Development and Innovation held at Prince Sultan University in Riyadh, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The conference aimed to raise awareness about sustainability and encourage the transition towards a more sustainable future. Engineer Dana Al-Enezi and Dr. Ali Al-Dosari from KISR presented two scientific papers focusing on the effects of dust on residential areas in Kuwait and its impact on engineering projects. They collaborated with architect Al-Anoud Al-Anazi from the Kuwait Municipality and Dr. Hassan Dashti from the Meteorology Department at the General Administration of Civil Aviation.

Given that sand and dust storms pose significant weather hazards affecting air quality, especially in Kuwait, which is prone to such storms, these studies aim to understand the impact of dust on urban areas' quality of life and engineering projects' progress. They also seek to develop appropriate solutions to mitigate these impacts.

In the first study, over 200 questionnaires were distributed to citizens and residents in various residential areas. The results revealed that half of the population sample suffered from asthma and dust allergies, highlighting the severity of the issue. In the second study, questionnaires were distributed to various engineering sectors, both governmental and private. The findings indicated that dust storms adversely affected the health and performance of workers, leading to delays in construction schedules.

These studies provide valuable insights that can support decision-makers in addressing the challenges posed by dust storms, ultimately contributing to the development of effective solutions and strategies to mitigate their impact on both public health and engineering projects.



## '... a time for togetherness'

## **Kuwait's Ramadan atmosphere** charms ambassadors, diplomats

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Ambassadors and diplomats live the atmosphere of Ramadan and its rituals with the people of Kuwait, as they also prepared for the holy month with much passion to enjoy its customs, traditions, wonderful atmosphere of faith, and the cherished gatherings and visits, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Many of these ambassadors confirmed to the daily that Ramadan in Kuwait has special rituals and a distinctive flavor, with a spiritual atmosphere and family gatherings that are cherished by everyone. They usually wait for the breaking of fast to bask in the Ramadan family atmosphere.

They believe that the most important aspect distinguishing the holy month in Kuwait from other months is the traditional customs and traditions representing a part of the Kuwaiti culture, referring to the commonalities between

Kuwait and their countries Asked if they pre-

pared for the holy month, some of them revealed that preparations their

Ramadan events are on her calendar, in addition to preparing her 'dara'a'. "I love the tradition of distributing Ramadan 'nugsat', so my work team and I prepare them with a Canadian touch," she disclosed.

### Togetherness

She believes that Ramadan in Kuwait is a time for togetherness, an active month and includes unique traditions compared to other countries where she lived the same month. "My team and I enjoyed the 'Quraysh' meal before Ramadan. Now, I look forward to attending diwaniyas and ghabqas, which are a great way to communicate with each other -- Kuwaitis and people from all over the world, in addition to attending women's gatherings," she narrated.

Regarding the Ramadan atmosphere in her country and the similarities with Ku-

wait, Mawani pointed out that "diversity is the core of our identity as Canadians - from culture and ethnicity to language and religion. Canada is home to more than million Muslims

who have traditions

from all over the

world. This diversity

Special Promotion



One Night Stay in a Queen Cabana for 2 persons inclusive of Suhoor BHD 46/- net

One Night Stay in a 2 Bedroom Chalet for 4 persons inclusive of Suhoor BHD 102.148/- net

Andalucia Café serves a selection of Ramadan Specials and its open from Iftar time until 02:00hrs

Group/Family Bookings for Iftar and Gabgha with Traditional Ramadan dishes for BD8.000 Net per person with a minimum of 25 people

the house with Ramadan decorations and lanterns, and preparing dates and



The diplomats did not hide their great admiration for the Kuwaiti atmosphere of Ramadan, stressing their keenness



Lewis

ing offices to communicate with people and hear about their concerns.

British Ambassador Belinda Lewis disclosed this is her third Ramadan in Kuwait and she expects it to be just as special as it was in previous years. She said the Ramadan atmosphere in her home is not different from others, as she also decorated her home and its balcony with beautiful lanterns and lights bearing the shape of the star and crescent, in addition to preparing many dates to welcome this holy month. She also celebrated 'Quraysh' with the embassy team.

### Amazed

Lewis told the daily: "Personally, I am always amazed by the extent of the social atmosphere experienced in the month of Ramadan in Kuwait, so my team and I are keen on visiting many diwaniyas during the holy month, which is an excellent opportunity to understand the topics that are on people's minds and to meet people we have not seen for a while. I look forward to iftar meals and ghabqas and to wearing the beautiful heritage armor that I acquired during my time here in Kuwait.'

Regarding the similarities in the Ramadan atmosphere between her country and Kuwait, she said: "The United Kingdom is home to about four million Muslims, so the month of Ramadan is an important time throughout Britain as well. Many Londoners hope that the beautiful Ramadan illuminations -- such as the silver and gold moon, stars and lanterns -- will return to Central London in the West End. Communities and local councils are also be busy during the month of Ramadan, planning Eid celebrations. Family-friendly Eid festivals are being planned in many cities in the United Kingdom, with entertainment exhibitions, music, speakers, food booths and Holy Quran competitions. There are preparations to organize a large Eid festival in Medan, Trafalgar on April 20 with singing, dancing, crafts and delicious food."

Every year during Ramadan, Canadian Ambassador Aliya Mawani and her son prepare a calendar that includes good deeds in the holy month -- from helping a friend to calling distant grandparents and family members to check on them, and doing household chores. She ensures that various



Mawani

affects how we celebrate and experience Ramadan. Some people focus on prayer and self-reflection, others focus on charitable work such as providing meals to the needy, and some focus on building bridges of understanding with other religious communities. The Ramadan table in Canada does not differ much

Sönmez

from Kuwait. It is as diverse as the Canadians themselves, as most people start their breakfast with dates, then move on to eating soup and salads, then dishes that contain protein -- from tagine to dal to biryani to curry and barbecues depending on what is part of each family's tradition and what is local.'

She concluded that most people prefer to eat a snack, but not too much to avoid wasting it. "Canadians like to do food gatherings for breakfast, where each guest brings a dish that they enjoy and is special to them to share," she added.

The Ramadan rituals of Spanish Ambassador Miguel Moro Aguilar do not differ from other diplomats. This is his fourth Ramadan in Kuwait, wishing to experience the good traditions and live the beautiful atmosphere of the holy month among good friends by visiting some diwaniyas and ghabqas, in addition to organizing some events himself.

### Gatherings

He asserted that the warm family gatherings and the community's dedication and generosity in helping the needy are the most important aspects he likes about this holy month, indicating he prefers to go walking in the area where he lives whenever possible, in addition to swimming and padel with friends.

He said: "Many Spanish Muslims who live among us in Spain celebrate the holy month while observing many traditions, fasting during the day and gathering all families and friends at home to break the fast together in a very friendly and festive atmosphere.'

This is the second Ramadan for Turkish Ambassador Tuba Nur Sönmez. She affirmed that the Ramadan atmosphere in her country is not different from Kuwait, where the moment of breaking the fast is a cherished occasion in which families, friends and neighbors come together to share a meal that symbolizes unity and gratitude.

"Traditional tents throughout Kuwait also serve a delicious array of dishes, reminiscent of Turkish breakfast tables. The scent of saffron-soaked rice, tender lamb and sweet pastries fills the air, inviting everyone to share in the communal spirit, just like in Turkey.



## LOCAL

## Bank announces its partnership with Nawras Company

## 'Warba' advances Tawarrug solutions to keep pace with sustainable financing

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Faisal

said:

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KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Warba Bank announced its partnership with Nawras Company to finance environmentally friendly goods as part of its commitment to environmental, social responsibility and governance practices. This partnership is considered an important step towards Warba Bank's vision of becoming a sustainable financial institution. Through this partnership, Warba Bank strengthens its sustainable strategy and demonstrates its commitment to supporting a more sustainable future, as this partnership is consistent with the Bank's comprehensive strategy to move to more responsible and sustainable financing.

Nawras L.L.C, known for its expertise in the field of sustainability, will act as an approved supplier of goods used in the financing operations that Warba Bank provides to its clients through its innovative and environmentally friendly solutions. Warba Bank aims to reduce the carbon footprint and promote sustainable practices within its operations



sustainability, we found that this partnership is completely compatible with our vision of a more pure and sustainable banking sector. We will also work together to achieve a positive impact on the environment and the communities we serve as global concerns about climate change increase. As environmental, social and governance considerations have become an urgent necessity for financial institutions around the world, and in recognition of the importance of sustainable financing, the Bank took a proactive step by focusing on environmental, social and corporate governance sustainability standards in the Kuwaiti banking sector, which enhances the confidence of stakeholders, works to attract responsible investors and enhances the Bank's market reputation. We look forward to expanding in the future to increase transactions with suppliers of environmentally friendly goods.'

This partnership is one of many initiatives undertaken by Warba Bank to integrate sustainability into its operations, as Warba Bank remains committed to promoting environmental awareness, social

responsibility, good governance practices, and sustainable financıng.

5

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

## Lectures, symposiums being held

## Kuwait's pavilion at Doha expo attracts many visitors: official

DOHA, March 14, (KUNA): Kuwait's pavilion at the International Horticultural Expo 2023 Doha is alluring several visi-

tors and specialists as well as those interested in environment to follow up with lectures, in the presence of academics, a Kuwaiti official said to

Al-Millam

Millam, pavilion's head, said the pavilion has been holding lectures and symposiums aiming to raise awareness and enhance environmental sustainability of visitors.

Al-Millam referred that the expo is paying much attention to modern agriculture, technology, innovation, and environmental awareness and sustainability, noting that the pavilion held multiple lectures in this regard.

The Kuwaiti pavilion aims to highlight governmental and non-governmental initiatives on concerted efforts for a sustainable future and raising environmental awareness, she stated.

She expressed great appreciation to Sameera Al-Kandari, acting director general of Kuwait Environment Public Authority and general commissioner at the expo, for all efforts made at the pavilion.

The expo kicked off last October and will continue until March 28 in the Qatari capital, Doha.

manitarian role in the crisis.

Rutte stressed his country's condemnation of the failure to reach a political solution to the Palestinian crisis, calling for establishing an independent Palestinian state

to live side-by-side with Israel. He warned that the Israeli plans to launch a gourd attack on Rafah would result in a

"humanitarian disaster". He said that the situation in the Red Sea

is worrying as targeting ships cause much harm to commercial shipping Meeting with President El-Sisi confirms

rapprochement of ties between the two countries, he said, noting that his visit to Egypt is a chance to enhance relations.

The Israeli military said Wednesday it plans to direct a significant portion of the 1.4 million displaced Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip's southernmost town of Rafah toward "humanitarian islands" in the center of the territory ahead of its planned offensive in the area.

The fate of the people in Rafah has been a major area of concern of Israel's allies including the United States - and humanitarian groups, worried an offensive in the region densely crowded with so many displaced people would be a catastrophe. Rafah is also Gaza's main entry point for desperately needed aid.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netan-

# **'Plan to modify over 100 historical** buildings into tourist attractions'

'NCCAL begins works to preserve schools with historical value'

CITY, **KUWAIT** March 14: After the **Council of Ministers** instructed the National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature (NCCAL) to speed up the refurbishment of heritage and historical buildings and sites in the country, a source from the government unveiled a plan to transform more than 100 historical and heritage buildings into tourist attractions, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The source revealed that this is part of the State's plan to boost domestic tourism by establishing more entertainment and cultural facilities that attract tourists.

The source said the NC-CAL is implementing new projects to preserve heritage sites, in cooperation with Ku-wait Municipality and other parties engaged in survey work for historical buildings, and then send a list of these buildings to the State Property Department in the Ministry of Finance.

The source pointed out that the plan to refurbish historical and heritage buildings and monuments aims to reconstitute the country's cultural memory. He affirmed that the political leadership focuses on heritage, culture, tourism and entertainment projects; which will see the light soon within the framework of the government program aimed at diversifying the sources of income and creating an economic identity. He added these are new measures to reduce dependence on oil as the sole source of national income. The NCCAL began restoration and maintenance works to preserve schools with historical value. Work has been completed in Al-Qabliya School for Girls and Kazma School in Jahra that were transformed into cultural and administrative centers, and Eastern Girls School which is now a museum of modern art. Work is underway in Eastern School for Boys to be transformed into a museum of the history of education in the country, as well as the restoration of the American Hospital, Sadu House and Red Palace. As a result of the development in administrative work and after the establishment of NCCAL; the responsibility for preserving archaeological buildings and antiquities was entrusted to the council, whose engineering department is currently supervising the restoration work of a number of heritage buildings like mosques, houses and old official buildings - some of which date back to the end of the 19th century and others to the early 20th century.



A photo from the event.

## **Event features workshops**

## KCST hosts inaugural OWASP event, explores AI applications, challenges

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The Kuwait College of Science and Technology (KCST) recently hosted a groundbreaking event or-ganized jointly by the Kuwait and Dubai branches of the international organization OWASP (Open Web Application Security Project), re-

ports Al-Jarida daily.

representing OWASP Kuwait, kicked off the event with an opening speech, expressing gratitude to the college for hosting such a sig-nificant gathering. Dr. Khaled Al-Baqaeen, President of the College, followed with a welcoming speech emphasizing the importance of the conference's topic.

shops focusing on cyber attacks

and the cybersecurity requirements

tions, presenting potential attacks and strategies for protecting against them.

In his closing remarks, Dr. Al-Baqaeen expressed his satisfaction with the college's role in hosting such an important conference. He emphasized the significance of collaboration between educational inprofessi

zations in addressing the evolving

challenges of cybersecurity in the

KUNA in a statement, Sarah Al-

Kuwait braces

Wednesday.

Speaking

### **Continued from Page 1**

Saturday morning would be warm and cloudy with southeastern to northwestern winds and temperature highs ranging between 28 and 31 degrees.

Meanwhile, Saturday evening would lean towards cooler temperatures between 15 and 18 degrees Celsius with cloudy skies and fog, Al-Qarawi said.

## Kuwait grants

### **Continued from Page 1**

fines and amend their status during the aforementioned grace period from March 17, 2024 to June 17, 2024 in accordance with the controls and procedures regulating the process. Those unable to pay the fines or amend their status during the grace period can leave the country from any of the country's ports designated for that purpose without paying any fines, and will be allowed to return through new procedures.

Violators of the residency law who have administrative or judicial obstacles must apply to the Directorate General of Residency

Al-Jarida photo

Affairs to determine the availability of the requirements for obtaining residency in accordance with the legal provisions and rules established within the specified period.

The ministry affirmed that such a decision was taken on the occasion of the blessed month of Ramadan and coinciding with the assumption of the reins of the country by His Highness the Amir of the country Sheikh Mishaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and to consolidate the humanitarian role known to the State of Kuwait at all levels and in fulfillment of its lofty mission as a center for humanitarian work.

Those who are in violation of the residency law and do not amend their status or leave the country within the aforementioned grace period will be subject to the legally prescribed penalties. They will not be permitted to stay, and will be deported from the country as well as blacklisted.

In a related context, security sources revealed that the Residency Affairs departments in the six governorates have taken all necessary preparations to complete the procedures for amending the status of violators of the residency law who wish to amend their legal status.

They stressed that the violators are required to pay the relevant fines, which reach a maximum of KD 600.

The sources indicated that the number of expatriates who will be included in this decision is estimated to be more than 120,000. Last year, the ministry was able to deport 42,000 violators of the residency law who are not entitled to return to the country.

## **Kuwait commends**

### **Continued from Page 1**

El-Sisi said that he reviewed Egypt's efforts in hosting over nine million guests, who enjoy the same public services as Egyptian citizens.

This fact underscores the need to strengthen stability in the region's countries to address the phenomenon of illegal migration and asylum."

He wen to say that "it is no secret that the events unfolding in Gaza, in full view of the world, are taking place in conjunction with policies that obstruct the lives of Palestinians in the West Bank, including unleashing settler violence, carrying out demolition and expulsion operations, conducting military incursions and confiscating land in West Bank cities, in addition to settlement expansions and cementing the occupation".

He elaborated that he called on Rutte to exert genuine efforts in this regard as a fundamental pre-condition for ending this humanitarian catastrophe in the Gaza Strip and halting the escalation and tension in various parts of the region as well.

Meanwhile, Rutte said his country appreciates Egypt's role on all levels to contain the crisis in the Strip.

He underlined the necessity of allowing further humanitarian aid into Gaza, indicating that Egypt has a pivotal logistic and huvahu has said a Rafah offensive is crucial to achieve Israel's stated aim of destroying Hamas following the militants' Oct. 7 attack in which about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, were killed and around 250 taken hostage and brought into Gaza. Israel's invasion of Gaza has killed more than 31,000, according to Gaza health officials, left much of the enclave in ruins and displaced some 80% of Gaza's 2.3 million people.

Israel's chief military spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, said moving those in Rafah to the designated areas, which he said would be done in coordination with international actors, was a key part of the military's preparations for its anticipated invasion of Rafah, where Israel says Hamas maintains four battalions it wants to destroy.

Rafah has swelled in size in the last months as Palestinians in Gaza have fled fighting in nearly every other corner of the territory. The town is covered in tents.

"We need to make sure that 1.4 million people or at least a significant amount of the 1.4 million will move. Where? To humanitarian islands that we will create with the international community," Hagari told reporters at a briefing.

Hagari said those islands would provide temporary housing, food, water and other necessities to evacuated Palestinians. He did not say when Rafah's evacuation would occur, nor when the Rafah offensive would begin, saying that Israel wanted the timing to be right operationally and to be coordinated with neighboring Egypt, which has said it does not want an influx of displaced Palestinians crossing its border.

The U.S. has been firm with Israel over its concerns about Rafah, and Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Wednesday that Washington had yet to receive from Israel its plans for civilians there.

"We need to see a plan that will get civilians out of harm's way if there's a military operation in Rafah," he told reporters in Washington after convening a virtual ministerial meeting on Gaza aid with officials from the UN, the EU, Britain. Cyprus, Qatar and the UAE. "We've not yet seen such a plan.'

Meanwhile, fighting continued across Gaza. An Israeli strike Wednesday hit a food distribution site in southern Gaza run by UNRWA, the U.N. agency that works with Palestinian refugees, killing one staff member from the agency and wounding 22 others.

The death brings to 165 the number of workers for the agency killed during the past five months of fighting, according to UNRWA.

Gaza's health authorities said a total of five people were killed in the strike on the yard of an UNRWA warehouse.

Hagari said the army was looking into the report.

The conflict has sparked a humanitarian disaster that has led to growing hunger. Aid delivery has been hobbled by Israeli restrictions, the ongoing hostilities and the breakdown of order inside Gaza, according to the United Nations. Israel denies it is restricting the entry of aid.

plications of artificial intelligence (AI) and the cybersecurity challenges associated with them. This event marked the first collaboration of its kind between two branches of OWASP in the region, highlighting the importance of addressing cybersecurity concerns in the era of

AI technology. Engineer Omar Al-Mutairi,

Bank continuing advocacy of 'Let's Be Aware'

## **NBK urges regular review of account activity** for unauthorized or suspicious transactions

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Pursuing its active role to promote financial awareness and inclusion among all segments of society, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues to support the "Let's Be Aware" campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in collaboration with local banks and Kuwait Banking Association (KBA).

In this context, NBK highlights the necessity to regularly review account activity made and follow up credit reports to promptly identify any unauthorized or suspicious transactions.

Typically, unauthorized payments after stealing credit cards, banking or personal information, or hacking smartphones through fake apps. Therefore, NBK advises customers to review account activity regularly to detect any unusual transactions, as well as to change passwords regularly and not reuse them or using the same password for more than one account.

NBK also urges customers to beware of unwanted requests for personal information, and to avoid clicking on suspicious or unknown links, downloading attachments and apps using public Wi-Fi networks, or conducting any banking transactions using these networks being insecure.

The bank also advised customers to use strong passwords that contain letters, numbers and special characters that are difficult to guess in order to keep bank cards and personal information secure. It also urged them to keep always updated on the latest fraud trends and educating themselves on the best practices to prevent suspicious or unauthorized payments.

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

The bank intensifies awareness by publishing educational content including video clips and text communications, as well as awareness tips on all its social media platforms and other digital channels, in addition to reposting of CBK's related communications. This aims to increase awareness among all segments of society and familiarize them with different fraud types and techniques, and the precautions to steer clear of these threats.

NBK employs its strong customer communication capabilities as well as all its digital channels, which are the most popular among all Kuwaiti banks, to support the Central Bank's endeavors to protect customers and the economy.

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

## Youth minister affirms state's interest to support youths development

KUWAIT CITY, March 14, (KUNA): Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, Youth Affairs, and Communications Affairs Daoud Marafie reaffirmed the state's commitment to creating the right conditions for young people to grow in confidence, support, and ability to achieve their goals and make them a reality that advances the countrys progress and prosperity.

Minister Marafie emphasized the importance of Kuwaiti Youth Day, celebrated on March 13 each year, as an opportunity to renew the covenant with ambitious youth. The government is committed to providing opportunities and resources for future leaders and innovators, with the support of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the active follow-up of His Highness Sheikh Dr. Muhammad Sabah. Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Prime Minister.

Youth Public Authority is dedicated to youth development, empowerment, and rehabilitation, aiming to achieve their social, economic,

sports, cultural, scientific, and technical aspirations. The Authority plans to improve work, enhance education and training opportunities, and foster a pioneering environment that encourages creativity, innovation, and leadership, ensuring a successful future for the youth.

Marafie expressed gratitude to all young individuals who diligently strive to achieve their goals and contribute to their country, encouraging them to continue achieving success and taking responsibility for a prosperous future for Kuwait.

He invited every Kuwaiti youth with achievements, contributions, and community projects to apply for the sixth edition of the Kuwait Award for Excellence and Youth Creativity, which is sponsored by His Highness the Prime Minister, in various fields such as entrepreneurship, culture, literature, science, technology, arts, media, volunteer work, forensic sciences, environment, and sustainability through the website of the Authority at www.youth.gov.kw.

for AI-supported programming. Dr. digital age. He extended gratitude Muhammad Dashti demonstrated to OWASP Kuwait Branch for choosing the college as a partner programming supported by AI and in organizing this significant event. discussed the necessary cybersecurity measures. Engineer Ahmed The conference concluded with Abdullah, representing OWASP a sense of accomplishment and a Dubai, led a workshop on cyber commitment to furthering dialogue risks associated with AI applicaon cybersecurity and AI.

## INTERNATIONAL

## **World News Roundup**

## Europe

British govt wants to define extremism: The British government published an official definition of "extremism" on Thursday, and said groups that get the label will be barred from receiving government funding.

It's unclear who will be on the list, and critics say branding nonviolent groups as extremist could undermine freedom of speech. The government defined extremism as "the promotion or ad-

vancement of an ideology based on violence, hatred or intolerance" that aims to destroy others' rights and freedoms or "undermine, overturn or replace the UK's

system of liberal parliamentary democracy and democratic rights."

The government did not provide examples of extremist groups, but Communities Secretary Michael Gove pointed to the threat from the extreme right and "Islamist extremists who are seeking to separate Muslims from the rest of society and create division within Muslim communities.

Islamic and civil liberties groups said they worried the definition would be used disproportionately on Muslims. Gove

Qari Asim, chairman of the Mosques and Imams Advisory Board, said "this proposed definition may not be applied consistently."

"If it's left to people to apply any definition of extremism and call anyone extremist at their whim, then that is going to create huge division in our society," he told the BBC. (AP)

US, EU re-affirm strength of partnership: The United States and the European Union have re-affirmed "the unique strength" of the US-EU partnership.

This stance came during a meeting that grouped US Secretary of State Antony Blinken with High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission Josep Borrell, held in Washington late on Wednesday.

State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a state-ment that the meeting was held to re-affirm the unique strength of the US-EU partnership and to continue close cooperation on key foreign policy and security issues.

Blinken and Borrel underscored steadfast transatlantic unity to support Ukraine as it defends itself against "Russian aggression. The Secretary and High Representative/Vice President discussed the ongoing conflict in Gaza and the actions "we are taking to increase humanitarian aid," Miller added. (KUNA)

#### 

Poland pro-EU govt to remove 50 envoys: Poland is recalling 50 of its ambassadors as part of efforts by the new, pro-European Union government to improve diplomatic missions at a challenging time, the Foreign Ministry said Wednesday. The diplomats had all been appointed by the previous, right-wing administration.

A ministry statement did not name any of the ambassadors be-ing recalled by Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski. The previous, Euro-skeptic government had ruled for eight years, until December. The ministry said the decision had been approved by Prime Minister Donald Tusk and that the procedure has begun.

The statement did not say when the recalled ambassadors would be replaced or if any foreign postings would be cut.

However, the recall of the diplomats may not get the approval of President Andrzej Duda, who has been linked to the previous government and is critical of Tusk. If Duda does not approve, in locations where ambassadors were told to return home, charges d'affaires would remain as heads of missions. (AP)

#### 

Austria expels two Russian diplomats: The Austrian Foreign Ministry declared on Wednesday two Russian diplomats persona non grata and gave them one week, until March 19, to leave the country.

A statement from the ministry said the behavior of both diplomats is inconsistent with their career, which is a charge of espionage in diplomatic terms.

In response, the Russian Foreign Ministry, which rejected the Austrian move as unjustifiable, could be planning for a tit-for-tat expulsion of Austrian diplomats from Moscow.

The Russian Federation has two missions in Vienna; one handing the relations with Austria, and the other has to do with the UN



US President Joe Biden speaks at the Pieper-Hillside Boys & Girls Club on March 13 in Milwaukee. (AP)

**Politics** 

## WSBA OK's far lower caseloads for public defenders

## US lawmakers see TikTok as China's tool

WASHINGTON, March 14, (AP): If some US lawmakers have their way, the United States and China could end up with something in common: Tik-Tok might not be available in either country.

The House on Wednesday approved a bill requiring the Beijing-based company ByteDance to sell its subsidiary TikTok or face a nationwide ban. It's unclear if the bill will ever become law, but it reflects lawmakers' fears that the social media platform could expose Americans to Beijing's malign influences and data security risks.

But while US lawmakers associate TikTok with China, the company, headquartered outside China, has strategically kept its distance from its homeland.

### Distance

Since its inception, the TikTok platform has been intended for non-Chinese markets and is unavailable in mainland China. It pulled out of Hong Kong in 2020 when Beijing imposed a national security law on the territory to curtail speech. As data security concerns started to rise in the US, TikTok sought to reassure lawmakers that data gathered on U.S. users stays in the country and is inaccessible to ByteDance employees in Beijing.

## **US prez looks to shore up a Democratic** 'blue wall'; announces mins for projects

MILWAUKEE, March 14, (AP): US President Joe Biden is getting to be a familiar face around the Great Lakes - and with a November rematch against Donald Trump loom-

ing, that's no accident. He started a two-day swing through Wisconsin and Michigan in Milwaukee on Wednesday as he tried to shore up a Democratic "blue wall" and build momentum for bia realization comparing ofter o figure his reelection campaign after a fiery State of the Union address last week. Aiming to show voters that his

administration has improved their lives. Biden used the stop to announce \$3.3 billion for infrastructure projects in disadvantaged communities, including \$36 million to reconnect parts of Milwaukee's 6th Street, which had been divided by highway construction in the 1960s

"You've lived and felt decisions made decades ago," Biden said. "Today, today, we're making deci-sions to transform your lives for decades to come."

The money comes from the bi-partisan infrastructure law that Biden signed in the first year of his

presidency. Biden told voters that Donald Trump, his Republican predecessor and likely opponent in this year's election, had promised infrastructure improvements but never delivered.

"He didn't get a single thing done," Biden said. "Not one. Biden and Trump clinched their

Britain's King Charles III, (right), shakes hands with Commonwealth Secretary General, Baroness Scotland of Asthal, during an audience, at Buckingham Palace, in London, on March 13. (AP)

Vienna office. (KUNA) 

## Wilders doesn't have support of coalition: Geert Wil-

ders an anti-immigration rhetoric swept him to a stunning victory in the November election, said Wednesday he doesn't have the support of his prospective coalition partners to become the next Dutch prime minister.

Wilders took to X, formerly Twitter, to say that "I can only become premier if ALL parties in the coalition support that. That wasn't the case.'

His comment came after media reported, citing unnamed sources, that a breakthrough in coalition talks announced Tuesday night was that the leaders of all four parties involved in drawn-out coalition negotiations would remain in parliament.

That sets up the likelihood of some sort of technical Cabinet made up of experts. While it now looks like Wilders will not lead the government, he and his Party for Freedom will remain the driving force behind the next administration. (AP)

#### 

Catalonia calls early regional election: The regional president of Catalonia has called an early election for May 12 after his minority government failed to pass a budget for Spain's wealthy northeast region that includes Barcelona.

The move by Pere Aragonès on Wednesday came on the eve of a vote in Spain's national parliament on a contentious amnesty law that could pardon hundreds of leaders and supporters of the separatist movement, including those involved in Catalonia's unsuccessful bid to declare independence from Spain in 2017.

Some separatists leaders were jailed at the time, and others like ex-regional President Carles Puigdemont fled the country.

The amnesty proposal has aroused the ire of millions of Span-iards. Those who oppose the bill believe that the people involved in provoking one of the country's biggest crises since the transition to democracy after the death of Gen. Francisco Franco in 1975 shouldn't get away with charges including sedition and rebellion. (AP)

#### 

Denmark plans to expand military draft: Denmark wants to increase the number of young people doing military service by extending conscription to women and increasing the time of service from 4 months to 11 months for both genders, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said Wednesday.

"We do not rearm because we want war. We are rearming because we want to avoid it," Frederiksen told a press conference. She said the government wants "full equality between the sexes."

Denmark currently has up to 9,000 professional troops on top of the 4,700 conscripts undergoing basic training, according to official figures. The government wants to increase the number of conscripts by 300 to reach a total of 5,000.

The country is a member of the NATO alliance and a staunch supporter of Ukraine in its war against Russia's invasion.

Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen stressed that "Russia does not pose a threat to Denmark." (AP)

#### 

Dozens more migrants reach Crete: A boat carrying 91 migrants has reached a small island south of Crete that is seeing a spike in the arrival of people attempting the long and dangerous crossing from Africa, Greek authorities said Wednesday.

A coast guard statement said the migrants, who were found on a beach on Gavdos island Tuesday, were being taken to reception areas on Crete.

They are believed to have set off from the coast of eastern Libya, about 170 nautical miles to the south. Their nationalities were not made public.

Gavdos, which lies some 27 nautical miles south of Crete, and Crete's southern coastline have seen an increase in migrant arrivals in recent months. Over the past four weeks, about a dozen boats carrying more than 600 people in total made landfall in the area or were rescued offshore.

In several cases, the Greek coast guard said they had crossed the Mediterranean Sea from the eastern Libyan port of Tobruk, having paid smuggling gangs up to \$5,000 each for their passage. (AP)



Gonzalez

## America

Biden

Landslide destroys LA home: A landslide reduced a Los Angeles house under renovation to a jumble of lumber, pulled the pool and deck away from a second home, and left the pool at a third residence on the edge of a huge fissure early Wednesday. The slide occurred just before 3 am in

Sherman Oaks, a neighborhood of expensive homes about 12 miles (19 kilometers) northwest of downtown. An initial search found no victims, but several people were evacuated from one house, the Los Angeles Fire Department said in a statement.

There was no immediate word on the cause of the landslide, but numerous slides have happened in Southern California due to drenching winter storms that saturated the ground. Since Jan. 1, downtown LA has had al-

most 16 inches (41 centimeters) of rain, which is nearly twice what it normally gets by this time of year. By early February, the city had reported nearly 600 mudslides, had re-tagged 16 buildings as unsafe to enter and had yellow-tagged more than 30 others, limiting access to them.

News helicopter video revealed the extent of the slide. The destroyed house, which appeared to be in the midst of a renovation, was crushed with most of its roof lying on the ground. (AP)

#### 

Kansas, Missouri hit with hail: Massive chunks of hail pelted parts of Kansas and Missouri on Wednesday night, bringing traffic to a standstill along Interstate 70 and unleashing a possible tornado, as meteor-ologists urged residents to stay indoors.

At least one unconfirmed tornado was reported Wednesday in Alta Vista, Kansas, according to media reports. The National Weather Service in Topeka said quartersize hail and wind gusts up to 60 mph (96 kph) were expected across northern Kansas overnight until 6 a.m. on Thursday.

Descriptions of the hail ranged from the size of golf balls and apples, to softballs and baseballs.

Alex Sosnowski, senior meteorologist at AccuWeather, previously said the predicted hail was deemed "gorilla hail" because it had the potential to be so big.

"Gorilla hail" is a term coined by Reed Timmer, a storm chaser who calls himself an extreme meteorologist. Sosnowski said. In this case, the term might fit: Some hail from north-central Kansas into north-central

TikTok's parent company is following the same playbook as many other Chinese companies with global ambitions: To win customers and trust in the United States and other Western countries, they are playing down their Chinese roots and connections. Some have insisted they be called "global compa-nies" instead of "Chinese companies."

But for TikTok, this may not be enough. The House bill passed overwhelmingly on a 352-65 vote. Its prospects in the Senate are uncertain, but if it clears both chambers, President Joe Biden said he would sign it into law. The moves in Washington threaten the app's survival and cast a spotlight on the quandary that many private Chinese companies have found themselves a part of as they seek to engage Western markets at a time of souring US-China relations.

nese tech companies and private busi-

Missouri could be as big as a baseball. (AP) 

explosion during an indoor training exercise Wednesday sent 16 members of Southern California's Orange County Sheriff's De-

Seattle Times reported Wednesday. partment SWAT team to the hospital, with jury, the department said. 16 SWAT officers hospitalized: An Two others had superficial wounds while in their ears.

"We're rebuilding the roads, we're filling in the cracks in the sidewalk, we're creating spaces to live and work and play safely, and to breathe clean air, and to shop at a nearby grocery stocked with fresh and healthy food," he said.

nesses in decades as tensions and rivalry between the United States and China continue to grow," said Zhiqun Zhu, professor of political science and international relations at Bucknell University.

### Also:

**SEATTLE:** The Washington State Bar Association (WSBA) has approved far lower case limits for public defenders in an effort to stop them from quitting, to help with recruiting and to make sure they have enough time to represent each client properly.

The new limits adopted at a meeting of the Bar's board of governors by a 12-1 vote March 8 are designed to cut maximum caseloads by about twothirds over the next several years, The

one person requiring surgery for a leg in-

the remaining 13 had dizziness and ringing



An aerial view shows a property damaged by a landslide, on March 13, in the Sherman Oaks section of Los Angeles. A landslide has destroyed the hillside home and is imperiling at least two others in Los Angeles. (AP)

parties' nominations on Tuesday after decisive victories in the primaries, setting up what promises to be a grinding rematch between the two men.

Much of that battle will be fought in Michigan and Wisconsin, as well as Pennsylvania, which was biden's first stop after his State of the Union. They're collectively known as a "blue wall" because of their historic support for Democrats.

"Public defense is in crisis right now," Jason Schwarz, director of the Snohomish County Office of Public Defense, told the Bar, which regulates attorneys statewide. "If we do nothing, we're going to remain in crisis."

Skeptics agree the system is breaking down but are concerned about finding more attorneys to cover the cases. Many counties, especially rural ones, already struggle to employ enough public defenders and get almost no state funding.

"This could be what bankrupts smaller counties like ours" unless the new limits help persuade state lawmakers to allocate more funding, Franklin County Administrator Mike Gonzalez said in a statement before the meeting. 'At some point, we simply will not be able to pay the bills anymore."

The blast occurred shortly before 1 p.m. at the facility in a remote area of Irvine, said sheriff's Sgt Frank Gonzalez. It was not immediately clear what caused the explosion, but it happened during a training with the sheriff's bomb squad, he said.

The most severe injury was a non-lifethreatening leg wound that will require surgery, Gonzalez said. The two other wounded deputies won't require surgery, he said.

Helicopter news footage showed a small one-story building encircled by yellow police tape surrounded by grassy fields. (AP) 

### Hunter Biden case could go to trial: Hunter Biden could face trial in Delaware on federal firearms charges as soon as June, in the midst of his father's reelection campaign.

US District Judge Maryellen Noreika set the tentative date during a short telephonic hearing Wednesday, though she is still weighing several defense motions to toss out the case against the president's son that could yet derail any potential trial.

The trial is slated to begin June 3 and could last up to nine days. A separate trial on tax charges against him in California is now tentatively set to begin later that month.

Hunter Biden, the son of President Joe Biden, has pleaded not guilty to lying about his drug use in October 2018 on a form to buy a gun that he kept for about 11 days. He has acknowledged an addiction to crack cocaine during that period, but his lawyers have said he didn't break the law and another nonviolent, first-time offender would not have been charged. (AP)

"It's the most difficult time for Chi-

## INTERNATIONAL

## Lat/Am

## Mayoral hopeful killed Some political parties reject proposal in Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, March 14, (AP): A proposal to install new leadership in Haiti appeared to be crumbling as some political parties rejected the plan to create a presidential council that would manage the transition.

The panel would be responsible for selecting an interim prime minister and a council of ministers that would attempt to chart a new path for the Caribbean country that has been overrun by gangs. The violence has closed schools and businesses and disrupted daily life across Haiti.

Jean Charles Moïse, an ex-senator and presidential candidate who has teamed up with former rebel leader Guy Philippe, held a news conference Wednesday to announce his rejection of the proposed council backed by the international community.



Moïse insisted that a threeperson presidential council he recently created with Philippe and a Haitian judge should be implemented.

We are not going to negotiate it," he said in a loud voice as he wiped his forehead with a handkerchief. "We have to make them understand." His ally, Philippe, who helped lead a successful revolt

Aristide

in 2004 against former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide

and was recently released from a United States prison after pleading guilty to money laundering, said no Haitian should accept any proposal from the international community.

### Corrupt

In a video posted Tuesday on social media, Philippe accused the community of being complicit with Hai-ti's elite and corrupt politicians and urged Haitians to take to the streets.

"The decision of Caricom is not our decision," he said, referring to the regional trade bloc whose leaders presented the plan to create a transitional council. "Haitians will decide who will govern Haiti." Other high-profile Haitian politicians declined

to participate in the proposed transitional council. Among them were Himmler Rébu, former colonel of Haiti's army and president of the Grand Rally for the Evolution of Haiti, a party that is part of a coalition awarded a spot on the transitional council.

He said in a statement that the party prefers that a judge from Haiti's Supreme Court assume the reins of power.

Rébu added that the party is "ashamed and angry" upon seeing "the search for positions of power that do not take into account the responsibilities attached to them.

Meanwhile, former senator Sorel Jacinthe and young politician Jorchemy Jean Baptiste, both supporters of Prime Minister Ariel Henry and the Dec 21 coalition that backs him, called Radio Caraïbes separately Wednesday to argue why their choice for the transitional council was the best one.

Caribbean leaders who announced the plan for the transitional council did not respond to messages for comment

### Solution

The plan emerged late Monday following an urgent



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un drives a new-type tank in North Korea March 13. (AP)



People displaced by the ongoing fighting between Congolese forces and M23 rebels gather in a camp on the outskirts of Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo, on March 13. Ramesh Rajasingham, OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) head and representative is carrying out a working visit to the region. (AP)



Asia

## Thai ex-PM Thaksin makes first public appearances North Korea's Kim drives tank during drills

SEOUL, South Korea, March 14, (Agencies): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un joined his troops in training to operate newly developed battle tanks as he called for bigger efforts to prepare for war, state media reported Thursday.

The North's tank training was seen as a response to the annual 11-day South Korean-US military drills that are to end later Thursday. The North views its rivals' exercises a rehearsal for invasion.

The North's training on Wednesday was designed to inspect tankmen's combat capabilities and involved the new-type main battle tank that Kim called "the world's most powerful," the official Korean Central News Agency.

During the training, heavy tanks moved around various simulated harsh combat circumstances and fired rounds at targets. Kim mounted one of the new-type tanks and drove it himself, "adding to the high militant spirit of the tankmen of our army," KCNA said.

North Korea's Defense Ministry earlier vowed to carry out "responsible military activities" in reaction to the ongoing South Korea-US military exercises in the South. Kim later supervised artillery firing drills. The South Korean-US training involve a computer-simulated command post training and 48 kinds of field exercises, twice the number conducted last vear.

Two Indonesian presidential rivals plan to contest poll results with fraud allegations

JAKARTA, Indonesia, March 14, (AP): The camps of the two Indo-nesian presidential candidates who appear to have lost in an election last month said Thursday they plan to challenge the official results in the Constitutional Court with allegations of widespread fraud.

Indonesians voted on Feb. 14 for a successor to popular President Joko Widodo, who is serving his second and final term. The election is a threeway race among current Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto and two former provincial governors, Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo.

Subianto is a former general linked to past human rights abuses who had the incumbent president's tacit backing because Widodo's son is Subianto's vice-presidential running mate. Subianto claimed victory on election day after unofficial tallies showed that he won the poll with nearly 60% of the votes.

The General Election Comhas officially tallied over mission

over their refusal to provide authorities with information on the group under a national security law.

Chow Hang-tung, Tang Ngok-kwan and Tsui Hon-kwong were core members of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of **China** before it disbanded under the shadow of the Beijing-imposed law in 2021. They received a sentence of 4 1/2 months last year - widely seen as part of a crackdown on dissidents following massive pro-democracy protests in 2019. Before the group dissolved, police had sought details about its operations and finances in connection with alleged links to democracy groups overseas, accus-ing it of being a foreign agent. 

TAIPEI, Taiwan: City officials in eastern China apologized to local iournalists after authorities were shown pushing them and trying to obstruct reporting from the site of deadly explosion, in a rare ad

caster CCTV during a live broad-

cast near the site of a suspected

gas leak explosion that killed seven

Harassment of journalists - espe-

cially foreign reporters - is common

in China but almost never acknowl-

servative elite who was toppled in a

coup in 2006 but remains influential

in politics, arrived before dawn at the

capital's City Pillar, accompanied by

and injured 27 on Wednesday.

edged by the state.

meeting involving Caribbean leaders, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and others who were searching for a solution to halt Haiti's crisis of violence.

Hours after the meeting, Henry announced Tuesday that he would resign once the council was in place, saying that his government "cannot remain insensitive to this situation.'

Henry remains locked out of Haiti because gang attacks have shuttered the country's airports. He is currently in Puerto Rico.

The gang attacks began Feb. 29, when Henry was in Kenya to push for the United Nations-backed deployment of a Kenyan police force. The deployment has been temporarily suspended.

"My concern is that the longer there is a power vacuum and an effort to figure out a way forward on the political side, every day that delays resolutions, many, many people are dying," said William O'Neill, the UN's independent expert on human rights in Haiti.

Armed men in the capital of Port-au-Prince have set fire to police stations and stormed the country's two biggest prisons, releasing more than 4,000 inmates. Among those who fled are gang leaders of at least seven communities, according to information given by officials who are not being quoted by name out of safety concerns.

### Also:

MEXICO CITY: Prosecutors in southern Mexico said Wednesday that a mayoral candidate was killed in the Pacific coast state of Guerrero, one of a half-dozen local politicians murdered so far this year ahead of the June 2 national elections

Tomás Morales was hoping to become mayor of the violence-wracked city of Chilapa, Guerrero.

The ruling Morena party had not formally named Morales as candidate, but he was considered a top contender in the race.

State prosecutors said a gunman shot Morales to death outside his home in Chilapa late Tuesday. For more than a decade, the relatively isolated city of Chilapa has been the scene of bloody turf battles between drug gangs.

Earlier this month, Alfredo González, a mayoral contender in the town of Atoyac, Guerrero, was shot to death.

In late February, two mayoral hopefuls in the town of Maravatío, in the neighboring state of Michoacán, were killed by gunmen within hours of each other.

One, like Morales, was from the governing Morena party of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador. The other belonged to the conservative National Action Party. A third mayoral hopeful from that town was abducted and found dead in November.

MEXICO CITY: A prominent journalist who went missing this week in western Mexico said Wednesday he was abducted, beaten and questioned by an armed gang about his reporting before being let go with a warning to tone down his journalism.

Authorities confirmed that radio and television anchor Jaime Barrera, who has written about drug cartel violence, was found alive and well Wednesday. Barrera vanished Monday after leaving a radio station where he worked in the city of Guadalajara. He said he had barely gotten in his car when five men surrounded him with guns drawn.

In interviews with the Radio Formula station, Barrera described how his captors bundled him into a vehicle, blindfolded him and took him somewhere.

Rajasingham

## Africa

Zimbabwe police rescue 251 kids: Zimbabwe police on Wednesday said they have arrested a man claiming to be a leader of an apostolic sect at a shrine where believers stay in a compound and authorities found 16 unregistered graves, including those of infants, and more than 250 children

used as cheap labor. In a statement, police spokesman Paul Nyathi said Ishmael Chokurongerwa, 56, led a sect with more than 1,000 members at a farm about 34 kilometers (21 miles) northwest of the capital, Harare, where the children were staying alongside other believers. The children "were being used to perform

various physical activities for the benefit of the sect's leadership," he said. Of the 251 children, 246 had no birth certificates.

"Police established that all children of school-going age did not attend formal education and were subjected to abuse as cheap labor, doing manual work in the name of being taught life skills," said Nyathi

Police said among the graves they found were those of seven infants whose burials were not registered with authorities. (AP) 

**Congo faces unprecedented crisis:** Escalating violence in Congo's eastern region has displaced at least 250,000 people in the last month, a senior United Nations official said Wednesday, describing the situation as an unprecedented humanitarian crisis.

Far from the nation's capital, Kinshasa, eastern Congo has long been overrun by more than 120 armed groups seeking a share of the region's gold and other resources as they carry out mass killings. The result is one of the world's largest humanitarian crises, with about 7 million people displaced, many of them beyond the reach of aid.

"It's really heartbreaking (and) what I saw is truly a horrible situation," Ramesh Rajasingham, director of coordination in the UN humanitarian office, told The Associated Press.

Rajasingham visited the city of Goma, where many are taking refuge. "Such a large number of displaced persons in such a short time is unprecedented," he said. (AP)

EU provides EUR 70m aid: The European Union announced providing an initial humanitarian aid of EUR 70 million for Africa's Great Lakes region suffering from major humanitarian crises caused by conflict, violence and natural disasters. In a statement, the European Commission

mentioned that this funding will support,

North Korea has dialed up its weapons testing activities since early 2022 in a bid to modernize and enlarge its nuclear and missile arsenals. The US and South Korea have expanded their training exercises and a trilateral drill involving Japan in response.

### Also:

TOKYO: South Korean Defense Minister Shin Won-sik called on special operations troops Wednesday to equip themselves with capabilities to "swiftly eliminate" the North Korean leadership if it starts a war against the South. Yonhap News Agency reported.

Shin made the call at the Army Special Warfare Command in Icheon, 56 km southeast of Seoul, as South Korea has been conducting the Freedom Shield joint military exercise with the US since last week to boost deterrence against the North's threats.

"If Kim Jong-un starts a war, as a key unit of Korea Massive Punishment and Retaliation (KMPR), you must become the world's strongest special operations unit to swiftly eliminate

"projects addressing gender-based violence, support to Education in Emergencies, and disaster preparedness,

The Democratic Republic of Congo will be allocated EUR 63.75 million to finance humanitarian projects, read the statement,

78% of the votes as of Thursday, with Subianto taking 58.82%, Baswedan 24.50% and Pranowo 16.68%. Baswedan and Pranowo have refused to concede and alleged fraud in the election.

izers of Hong Kong's annual vigil in remembrance of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown on prodemocracy protests lost their bid to overturn their conviction Thursday

the enemy leadership," Shin said, ac-cording to his office. KMPR refers to an operational plan to incapacitate the North's leadership in a major conflict.

It is a pillar of the military's "threeaxis" deterrence system against North Korea, which also includes the Kill Chain pre-emptive strike platform and the Korea Air and Missile Defense system.



BANGKOK: Former Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra began his first public appearances since leaving detention, with an early morning visit to a shrine in Bangkok on Thursday before flying to his home province of Chiang Mai in the country's north.

The controversial billionaire, a longtime rival of the country's con-

while a further EUR six million has been allocated to Burundi refugees in neighboring countries, including Rwanda and Tanzania, as well as returnees to Burundi.

In recent months, escalation of the conflict in DRC caused displacement of many



Worksafe Victoria representatives arrive for a press conference near Ballarat, Australia on March 14, after falling rocks inside a gold mine killed one worker and left another with life-threatening injuries. Another 29 workers inside the mine when the collapse happened Wednesday took refuge in a safety pod and later returned to the surface, Victoria state police said. (AP)

his youngest daughter Paetongtarn, the leader of governing Pheu Thai party Thaksin spent years in exile to avoid a jail term for corruption, a charge he

always denied, but returned to Thailand as his allies in parliament formed a coalition government with military parties associated with the coups that repeatedly drove him and his allies out of power.

He was immediately sent to prison but within hours was moved to a city center hospital after he was diagnosed as being seriously ill. Soon afterwards, his eight-year sentence was commuted to one year.

and hampered delivery of humanitarian assistance. (KUNA)

Ruto reaffirms commitment: Kenyan President William Ruto said Wednesday the country will still lead a U.N.-backed multinational police force to help quell gang violence in Haiti once a transitional presidential council is formed in the Caribbean country.

Ruto said in a post on X, formerly Twitter, that US Secretary of State Antony Blinken had briefed him on the latest developments in Haiti and that he assured Blinken of Kenya's commitment to deploy a police force to Haiti.

"I assured Secretary Blinken that Kenva will take leadership of the UN Security Sup-port Mission in Haiti to restore peace and security," Ruto said.

Kenya's Foreign Affairs Principal Secretary Korir Sing'oei on Tuesday said Kenya had put on hold the deployment of 1,000 of its policemen until a clear administration is in place in Haiti. The announcement came after Haiti Prime Minister Ariel Henry said he would resign once a presidential council is created.

Kenya had agreed last October to lead a UN-authorized international police force to Haiti, but the country's top court in January ruled it unconstitutional, in part because of a lack of reciprocal agreements on such deployments between the two countries. (AP)

knowledgment of state aggression against journalists. The city of Sanhe, near Beijing, issued a public apology Thursday after authorities were shown harassing reporters from state broad-

Also: HONG KONG: Three former organ-

## dollar stable

### The exchange rate of US Dollar stabilized on Thursday against the Kuwaiti Dinar at KD 0.307 as did the Euro at KD 0.335 compared to yesterday's rates, said Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK)

CBK indicated in its daily bulletin that the Pound Sterling stabi-lized at KD 0.392 and the Swiss Franc went down by 0.23 per-cent to KD 0.349 while the Japanese Yen remained at KD 0.002 (KUNA) The Capital Markets Authority (CMA) has granted approval to several local investment companies to market approximately nine funds within the Kuwaiti market since the beginning of the year. These funds were established abroad for the benefit of seven local financial institutions, based on the applications submitted by the companies managing these funds, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The marketing of global fund units within the local market or the establishment of new funds was carried out in accordance

with the recent amendments made by the CMA to the provisions of Book Thirteen Collective Investment Regulations" of the executive regulations of Law No. 7 of 2010, which governs the establishment of the Markets Authority and the regulation of securities activities.

Despite the recent amendments, most investment companies still find it more feasible to establish investment funds outside the local market and then market them within Kuwait due to less stringent conditions and regulatory frameworks abroad. This indicates a need to reconsider the licensing requirements and conditions for establishing funds locally to make Kuwait more competitive in attracting these funds to establish their headquarters in the country.

CMA approves marketing of global funds in Kuwait

Although the CMA has set standards and facilities for Kuwaiti companies to invest financially abroad and obtain licenses to establish investment funds outside Kuwait, some investment companies still find profitable opportunities in investing in offshore jurisdictions such as the Cayman Islands, where there are no censorship or taxes

All investment funds, whether established abroad or locally, are subject to the provisions of financial market authorities, including Law No. 7 of 2010 and its executive regulations and amendments. Investment companies must comply with the instructions and requirements of the relevant authority before obtaining the necessary approvals and licenses for marketing or establishment.



# Strong non-oil GDP growth supports Kuwaiti banks' stability

Loan quality expected to remain stable, supported by favorable conditions

## By Moody's Investor Service

We maintain a stable outlook for Kuwait's banking system, reflecting our expectation that continued growth in the non-oil economy will support credit conditions for Kuwaiti banks. The banks' concentrated lending to single borrowers and their international operations in weaker countries, like Turkey and Egypt, pose risks to banks' solvency, but these vulnerabilities are mitigated by very large loan-loss reserves, solid capital, and sound liquidity. We expect Kuwaiti banks' profitability to remain solid, while reliance on market funding should remain low. Adverse political or geopolitical developments, or much lower oil prices, remain potential risks to the stable outlook

Robust growth in the non-oil economy, solid profitability, healthy capital and liquidity drive our stable outlook

Non-oil GDP growth will remain strong, supporting banks' business generation. The Kuwaiti economy is continuing to recover from 2020. The government's 2023-2027 action plan, a part of its 2035 Kuwait vision to diversify the economy, is focused on delivering key infrastructure projects to support growth in the non-oil economy. We expect the growth in the non-oil economy, where the banks conduct most of their business, to remain strong (forecasted at 4% in 2024) supported by increased government expenditure as announced in the 2023-2024 budget. This trend will improve business conditions for the country's banks. We anticipate that the projects targeted as part of this plan will drive an annual credit growth of around 5% over the next 12 to 18 months.

Loan quality will remain stable. We expect prob-lem loans to stay low, at around 1.8% of gross loans in 2024, driven by favorable operating conditions for banks in their domestic market. International operations in weaker economies, such as those in Turkey and Egypt, could pose some lending risk. However, these operations are relatively small when compared to total assets. The practice of concentrated lending to single large borrowers, along with exposure to volatile real estate and equity markets, continues to present vulnerabilities. As of September 2023, consumer loans comprise 35.3% of the loan book; they are well protected since they are largely to Kuwaiti government employees with high job security and salary assignments. Construction and real estate stand at 23% of the loan book as of September 2023.

The capacity for loss absorption is solid. Kuwaiti banks hold strong capital buffers. Tangible common equity1, our preferred measure of capital, will remain sta-

### 18 months.

Profitability will stabilise after modest increases in recent years. We anticipate that sector-wide net income will average 1.4% of tangible assets over the next 12 to 18 months, stabilizing from the high level of September 2023, which stood at 1.5%. Banks have very high loan loss reserves and provisioning cost should remain low. The reversal of the interest rate cycle should reduce funding costs and ease competitive pricing on consumer loans, factors that will support the banks' profitability. The presence of small branch networks and large asset bases also contribute to strong efficiency. Loan loss pro-vision to gross loans remained very low at 26 basis points as of September 2023.

Reliance on market funding will remain low, and liquidity will stay strong. Kuwaiti banks will continue to be primarily funded by low-cost, stable deposits, a credit strength. Furthermore reliance on costly public entities deposits is slowly decreasing as private sector deposits gather pace. As of September 2023, customer deposits accounted for around 70% of liabilities, while liquid assets made up roughly a third of total assets. Nonetheless credit growth has outpaced deposit growth in recent years, pushing the loans to deposit ratio above 90% with a slight increase in market funding, which stood at 21% of tangible banking assets.

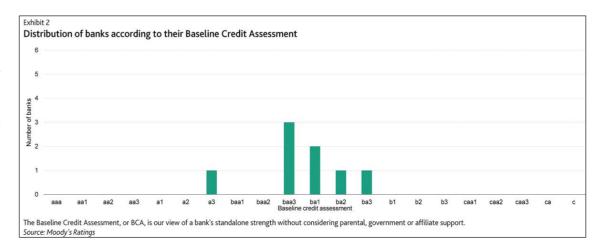
We assume a very high likelihood of government support. The government has a history of providing capital to distressed banks and possesses substantial financial assets that it could mobilize for further support, if necessary. This publication does not announce a credit rating action. For any credit ratings referenced in this publication, please see the issuer/deal page on https://ratings.moodys.com for the most updated credit rating action information and rating history. 2 13 March 2024 Banking System Outlook - Kuwait: Robust growth in the non-oil economy drives our stable outlook

### **Rating universe**

We rate eight Kuwaiti banks, representing an estimated 96.8% of banking sector assets and around 96% of banking sector loans and deposits. Kuwaiti banks' average asset-weighted stand-alone Baseline Credit Assessment (BCA) is baa2. The average local currency deposit rating is A2, incorporating on average three notches of government support uplift, which reflects our view of a very high probability of government support in the event of stress

### **Banking System Outlook definition**

The Banking System Outlook reflects our view of credit fundamentals in the banking sector over the next 12



	Total assets Sep 2023			Uplift			Government	LC	*FC			Market	Market	Market
		(USD	Parental		Adjusted BCA	Governmen				Outlook	ITCOD	share		
Name of the bank	million)	BCA	support	BCA	BCA	t support	notches	100000	rating		LICRR	total assets		deposits
National Bank of Kuwait S.A.K.P.*	119,189	a3		0	a3	Very High	2	A1	A1	STA	A1	34.6%	34.6%	33.9%
Kuwait Finance House K.S.C.P.	119,944	baa3		0	baa3	Very High	4	A2	A2	STA	A1	34.8%	30.2%	35.6%
Burgan Bank K.P.S.C	22,618	ba2		0	ba2	Very High	4	Baa1	Baa1	STA	A3	6.6%	7.0%	6.3%
Boubyan Bank K.S.C.P.	26,536	baa3	2	2	baa1	Very High	2	A2	A2	STA	A1	N/A	N/A	N/A
Gulf Bank K.S.C.P	22,556	ba1		0	ba1	Very High	4	A3	A3	POS	A2	6.5%	8.2%	6.7%
Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait K.P.S.C	20,271	baa3		0	baa3	Very High	4	A2	A2	STA	A1	5.9%	6.8%	6.0%
Commercial Bank of Kuwait K.P.S.C.	13,257	ba1	i.	0	ba1	Very High	4	A3	A3	POS	A2	3.8%	3.8%	3.2%
WARBA Bank K.S.C.P.	15,540	ba3	1	0	ba3	Very High	4	Baa2	Baa2	POS	Baa1	4.5%	5.5%	4.9%

Notes: The table shows banks' standalone BCAs, refecting their creditworthiness without considering support from parent banks, affiliates or the gov ratings reflect a bank's standalone credit strength, plus our affiliate, parental and government support assumptions. For more detail, see Moody's Banks Rating Methodology. \* National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) consolidates Boubyan Bank. Boubyan's market share is therefore already included in the market share shown for NBK. ources: Banks' financial statements, Moody's Ratings

### Government support incorporated into our ratings

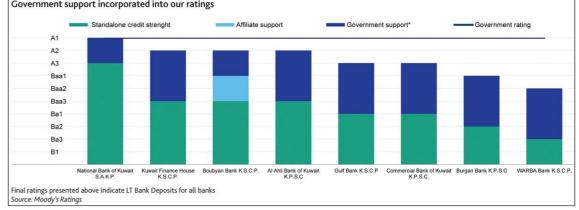


Exhibit 4

ble for the Kuwait banking sector at between 12.5% and 13.0% of risk-weighted assets. The banks' capacity to absorb losses is further bolstered by high loan-loss reserves, which stood at 246% of problem loans as of September 2023. We anticipate moderate loan growth, which should keep Kuwaiti banks' capital steady over the next 12-toto 18 months. Banking sector outlooks are distinct from rating outlooks, which, in addition to sector dynamics, also reflect issuers' specific characteristics and actions.

The outlook does not represent a sum of upgrades, downgrades or ratings under review, or an average of rating outlooks.

## Asset seizures raise concerns

## Kuwait's small shareholders face information disparity, says report

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The issue of small shareholders being the last to know about the realities within companies is a significant concern, despite existing laws emphasizing the importance of disclosing essential information transparently, reports Al-Jarida daily.

There are several reasons why influential information remains restricted to insiders and not disclosed to others such as by: Delaying Tactics -- Some

companies deliberately provide misleading data and information to prolong procedures and exploit legal loopholes. This prolongation allows them to avoid addressing difficult financial conditions or other challenges they may be facing.

Debt Restructuring Plans --Companies may call for general assemblies to review debt structuring and capitalization plans, even if they know that these plans are likely to fail. They may bet on buying time and passing on the crisis to avoid immediate repercussions.

Concealing Strategic Issues -- Financially distressed companies with faltering projects abroad may hide critical facts from shareholders. They may evade inquiries or provide vague responses, delaying the provision of necessary information.

Disagreements and Conflict -- Some groups neglect to present the facts of internal disagreements or conflicts, knowing that litigation processes can take years. This delay allows them to avoid immediate accountability or pressure from shareholders.

Seizure of Assets -- Companies may face substantial asset seizures through legal means, exploiting administrative influence and control of the Board

of Directors. Approvals may be passed under questionable circumstances, leading to the loss of assets.

Continuous Resignations --Continuous resignations from board members or executives, often due to financial reasons or disagreements, can harm the company and its shareholders. This turnover may indicate underlying issues within the company's management.

Manipulative Practices --Companies may manipulate share prices without justifying the reasons behind significant changes. Hollow disclosures may mislead shareholders and regulatory authorities.

Financial Violations -- Some companies may engage in financial violations without disclosing them. Mass manipulation operations may occur without appropriate measures being taken.

Opaque Management -- In some cases, companies are managed by one party behind the scenes, with the Board of Directors unaware of operational details. This lack of transparency allows influential information to be controlled and hidden.

Sale of Foreign Assets --Companies may sell foreign assets to benefit specific parties, obscuring the entity's operations and preventing shareholders from tracking those assets.

Overall, these practices highlight the need for increased transparency and accountability within companies to ensure that all shareholders have access to essential information.

The regulatory authorities should closely monitor and address instances of non-disclosure and manipulation to protect the interests of shareholders and investors.

## Merger plans for KNPC and KIPIC underway

## **Kuwait Petroleum Corporation appoints acting CEO for KIPIC**

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The Board of Directors of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) is taking steps to appoint Engineer Wadha Al-Khatib, CEO of Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC), as the acting CEO of Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) alongside her current responsibilities, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Sources indicate that the tenure extension of Walid Al-Badr, CEO of KIPIC, is set to expire at the end of March unless renewed. KPC is actively pursuing the merger of its affiliated oil companies, with plans to merge KNPC and KIPIC during the current year.

The decision to merge these entities aligns with broader objectives, including cost reduction, particularly in operations, and performance enhancement. There's a recognized need to restructure KPC and its subsidiaries to better align with long-term strategic goals, aiming to enhance efficiency and increase oil and gas production to meet targets set until 2040.

The merger decision is driven by the need to enhance global competitiveness, flexibility, and agility in the oil sector, particularly amidst significant industry challenges.

Achieving a production capacity of around 4 million barrels of oil per day necessitates advanced operational methods, say oil sources.

Regarding employee concerns, it's emphasized that the rights of all employees in merged companies will be safeguarded, with no layoffs planned. Employees will either be transferred to other companies with similar technical specialization or retained within the resulting parent company, ensuring no adverse impact on their rights, job grades, salaries, or financial benefits.

KPC is committed to ensuring

## 'Clean energy transitions pose security challenges'

## OPEC highlights threats to oil supply security

VIENNA, March 14, (KUNA): OPEC called on Wednesday for seeking all means to promote and use clean energy through boosting and safeguarding security for all.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the organization said "We took note of the International Energy Agency (IEA) reaffirming the significance of oil security to energy transitions in its most recent commentary: 'A strong focus on oil security will be critical throughout the clean energy transition.

"At OPEC, we are encouraged by this message and the reference to the continuing importance of oil to the world.

It added that the IEA said, in its commentary, "An enduring focus on oil security is a consequence of the continued need for oil to fuel cars, trucks, ships and aircraft, as well as to produce the petrochemicals necessary to manufacture countless everyday items".

"These messages have been strongly voiced by OPEC for many years, and we will continue to reiterate that energy security, energy affordability and reducing emissions need to go

that employees are not adversely affected by decisions related to the merger and restructuring of the oil sector.

The merger process is expected to bring significant value to the oil sector, resulting in cost savings, increased annual profits, and enhanced efficiency by integrating similar activities such hand-in-hand, as we look to an all-energies, all-technologies and all-peoples approach to energy transitions.

The IEA's commentary also underlines a number of other critical points, it affirmed.

It noted, "Investment uncertainty raises the risk of a supplydemand imbalance" and talks of how this can leave "oil companies facing difficult and commercially risky decisions."

"This is true, but it is important to stress that the IEA's talk of the need for no new oil and natural gas fields in its net zero pathway has contributed significantly to this uncertainty, which has the potential to lead to major energy chaos, not the desired energy security.

It highlighted that oil supply security is threatened by an array of additional factors, such as geopolitics, extreme weather events and cyber-attacks. It is important to stress that these factors have the potential to affect all energies, as well as all economic sectors.

The oil sector is not isolated in this regard.

It also referenced "the emerging security dimensions of clean

as refining, production, marketing, and foreign investments to maximize the value of hydrocarbons.

### Also:

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait oil price went down by 62 cents on Wednesday to reach USD 82.51 per barrel, compared to USD 83.13

energy transitions, such as critical mineral supplies.'

Critical mineral supply chains will also come under pressure in the IEA's net zero pathway, given that the IEA says a typical electric vehicle needs six times the mineral inputs of a conventional car.

It is incumbent on all industry stakeholders to focus on and contribute to oil security, in all facets, given the immense benefits that oil, and the petroleum products derived from it, continue to provide to people and nations across the world.

"OPEC has consistently reaffirmed its commitment to oil market stability and security of supply, including through its Members holding spare capacity at their own cost in case of any unforeseen global oil supply disruptions.'

"We have also underscored how underinvestment in the industry could imperil that security. The stakes are high. This warrants clear and consistent messaging from all energy stakeholders on how vital oil and energy security is for the health of the global economy and the welfare of billions around the world."

pb on Tuesday, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Thursday.

In international markets, Brent crude oil rose by USD 2.11 to reach USD 84.03 per barrel, while West Texas Intermediate rose by USD 2.16 to reach USD 79.72 a barrel.

## **BUSINESS**

### Bitcoin has surged to unprecedented heights

Bitcoin has surged to unprecedented heights, surpassing \$73,300 and achieving its highest levels ever. This remarkable growth represents a staggering 47 percent increase over the last 30 days and a notable 10 percent rise over the past seven days. With its market value exceeding \$1.4 trillion, Bitcoin has now become the eighth most valuable global asset, surpassing the market value of silver metal, reports AI-Jarida daily. Several factors are driving Bitcoin's bullish momentum. The recent approval by the Securities and Exchange Commission of Thailand for asset management companies to launch Bitcoin exchange-traded funds (ETFs) has contributed to the positive sentiment surrounding Bitcoin. Additionally, the announcement from the London Stock Exchange that it will start accepting applications for Bitcoin exchange-traded notes

(ETNs) in the next quarter further

iueled optimism in the market. Furthermore, the significant milestone achieved by Blackrock, the largest Bitcoin ETF issuer, has added to the upward pressure on Bitcoin prices. Blackrock's spot fund, known as the "IBIT ETF," has amassed over 200,000 BTC under management within just two months of its launch, indicating growing institutional interest in Bitcoin.

### Britain's GDP up 0.2 pct in Jan. '24

The gross domestic product (GDP) rose up by 0.2 pct in January after shrinking by 0.1 pct in December of the prior year, showed official statistics showed on Wednesday. In a report by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the statistics showed that this growth led to improving service outputs, which represents almost 80 pct of the local economy, to grow by 0.2 pct in January.

It added that the construction

output grew by 1.1 pct in January while production output declined by 0.2 pct. Another statistics report by the ONS showed Britain's net trade deficit rose in January to 16.1 billion sterling pound (USD 20.6 billion).

It also showed that the value of goods import rose to 900 million sterling pound (USD 1.15 billion) due to the high domestic demand of fuel imports for the total of monthly imports to reach 45.9 billion sterling

pound (USD 58.7 billion).

It added that in the same month, British exports fell slightly by 100 million sterling pound (USD 127.9 billion) to reach 29.8 billion sterling pound (USD 38.1 billion).

The report showed that the imports from the European market in January totaled 25.8 billion sterling pound (USD 33 billion) while British exports to the European market reached 14.7 billion sterling pound (USD 18.8 billion). (KUNA)

## **Development tied to lower oil revenues**

# Kuwait: Fiscal balance returns to deficit in 9M FY23/24

### **By National Bank of Kuwait**

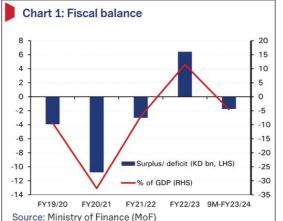
Ministry of Finance data show that the government recorded a fiscal deficit of KD 1.7 billion for the first nine months of the current fiscal year (FY2023/24), after an exceptional surplus in the same period of the previous fiscal year. The deficit was due to a combination of much lower oil revenues and a broad surge in spending above historic trends. Given no big change in oil prices so far in 2024, and assuming the typical jump in spending towards the end of the fiscal year, a wider deficit is likely in the closing accounts of FY23/24. The switch back to a deficit highlights the public finances' continued exposure to volatile oil revenues and the structural impact of high current spending.

The fiscal deficit was around 4.5% of pro-rated estimated GDP in the first nine months (April-December) of FY2023/24, from a surplus of KD 10.1 billion in the same period of FY2022/23. Almost half of the year-on-year worsening in the balance was due to a drop in revenues linked to lower oil prices and OPEC+ production cuts, which were recently extended until mid-2024. The rest was due to a surge in spending, which although expected due to a record size budget (including some exceptional items), came at a notably higher rate of allocations compared to previous years, which could be an indication of a change in bookkeeping practices. Still, a sizeable portion (KD 9 billion or 35%) of the budget expenditure allocation remains unused, and with the historical actual/budgeted spending ratio at around 95%, spending is likely to accelerate in the final months of the year. Together with a lower oil price average so far in the final quarter of FY23/24, the deficit is likely to widen to above KD 3 billion by the end of the fiscal year, exceeding our previous forecast of KD 2.2 billion.

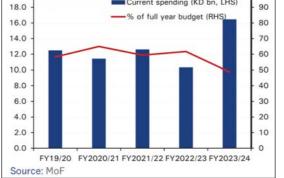
### Broad increase in current spending

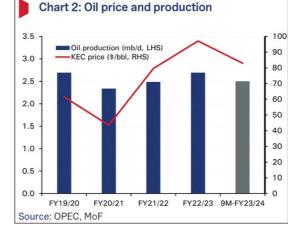
The 9M saw a jump in total expenditures by 56% y/y to KD 17.2 bn, 65% of the full-year budget allocation. Current spending which constitutes the vast majority, rose by 59% y/y to KD 16.5 bn, with a broad increase across all spending categories, but mostly in compensation of employees, goods and services and subsidies which rose sharply from the previous year. As mentioned above, the higher spending can be partly owed to a large budget, which added KD 3.3bn in current spending, around half of which (KD 1.6bn) was one-off arrears and vacation allowances. The remainder comes from budgeted increases in other items including wages & salaries, social security, cost of living and student allowances, and MoH pharmaceuticals. Further, nine-month spending as a percentage of the pro-rated budget allocation was an elevated 87% in FY23/24 compared to only 63% the previous year, reflecting the higher than usual pace of spending. Finally, the higher spending came despite a lower oil price average (-16% y/y) which would normally lead

## **Reflection of a troubled economy**

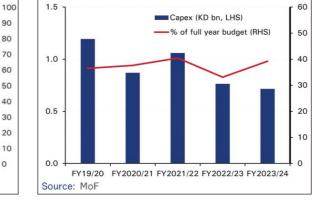


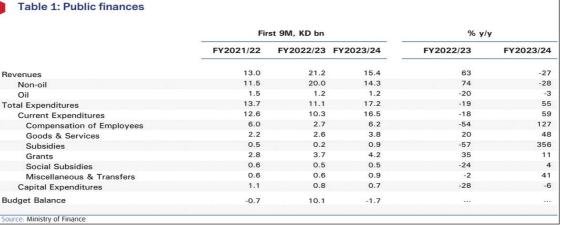












to lower fuel related outlays under subsidies and goods and services.

Capital expenditure sees continued but slower decline

Capital expenditure continued to decline, with 9M cumulative outlays down 6.2% y/y to only KD 763 million. Outlays were 39% of the full-year budget allocation, which was at a recent low of KD 1.83 bn. Low capital spending reflects a multi-year negative trend despite the large projects in the state's development plan, making room for increased current spending and reflecting ongoing liquidity constraints. In addition, the decline could be attributed to the political turbulence of recent years, which may have affected the decision-making and execution process. With that said, the pace of decline was slower than previous years, implying that spending could stabilize before potentially recovering to levels consistent with long-term development goals. This will depend on liquidity-enhancing reforms which could spur a revival in capex.

### Revenues fall on lower oil prices and output

Revenues fell 27% y/y to KD 15.5bn in 9M FY 23/24, reaching 79% of the full-year budget, though well below historical levels despite the typically conservative budget revenue assumptions. The drop was due to the exceptionally high oil revenues in the previous fiscal year, combined with a decline in oil prices, and below budget production of 2.55 mb/d (vs 2.65 mb/d) due to OPEC constraints. With production limits expected to continue until mid-2024, and softer oil prices so far this year, oil revenues could be close to the budget projection of KD 17.2 bn by the end of the fiscal year. Meanwhile, non-oil revenues amounted to KD 1.2 bn, 51% of the full year budget and with the fiscal year drawing to a close in March, non-oil revenues could fall slightly short of the 10% increase outlined in the budget.

### Public finances on track for record-sized closing account

Given the record size of the FY23/24 budget and that cumulative spending was well above trend in the first nine-fiscal months, expenditure is on track to reach a record level in the FY23/24 closing account – although uncertainty over the likely size of the year-end jump in spending makes projections difficult. The draft budget for FY24/25 projects a KD 1.7 bn or 6.6% b/b decline in spending, but this is mostly due to the omission of the prior mentioned one-off items from the previous budget and recurring current spending (mostly wages and subsidies driven) remains high. As expenditure continues to rise to critical levels, the vulnerability of the government's finances to oil price volatility becomes more pronounced, stressing the need for swift reforms to address structural weaknesses and to promote fiscal sustainability.

# Elderly retirees face big losses after Chinese trust 'goes bust'

CHENGDU, China, March 14, (AP): Some investors in a troubled trust fund in China are facing financial ruin under a government plan to return a fraction of their money, casualties of a slump in the property industry and a broader economic slowdown.

Sichuan Trust, headquartered in the southwest city of Chengdu, announced it was insolvent in 2020, stricken by sketchy accounting and failed investments in shopping malls and other projects. A deadline earlier this month to accept a 20%-60% "haircut" or loss on their investments has left some investors in deep financial trouble, according to public announcements and AP interviews with five people affected.

China's economy, the world's second largest, depends heavily on real estate development to drive growth and create jobs. Property prices and sales have languished after a crackdown on what leaders viewed as dangerous levels of borrowing, causing dozens of developers to default on their debts.

At the National People's Congress session in Beijing last week, officials pledged to do more to protect investors. Premier Li Qiang said China would work to control risks and resolve the property crisis.

For the people who put their life savings into Sichuan Trust and similar entities, it's likely too late. Around 300 of more than 8,000 investors refused to accept a government plan and are looking for legal help, a relative of one investor said. A few who attempted to come to Beijing during the congress to air their grievances were blocked by police, the relative said.

The ruling Communist Party faces a dilemma: Debt is a problem, but falling home prices lead people to scrimp on spending. That squeezes companies' sales, so they lay off workers and cut back on investment. The result: slowing growth and less wealth to go around.

Inevitably, someone will end up losing out as China's debt crisis unwinds, said Tsinghua University finance professor Michael Pettis.

"Nobody wants to absorb the loss. If you assign it to households, you weaken consumption even more," Pettis said. "It's got to be assigned. And that's the political problem."

Trusts are a cross between a bank and an investment fund. Some advertised their offerings as reliable, high interest government-backed accounts. They're actually private entities that fund projects like factories and shopping malls. Weak disclosure requirements allowed them to use money from new investors to pay what they owed earlier ones, a set-up somewhat like a Ponzi scheme.

"Financial supervision was relatively loose in the past, so the design of these products, including systems for protecting investors' rights and interests, had serious issues," said Zhu Zhenxin, chief analyst at Rushi Finance Institute in Beijing. "If underlying assets of financial products won't generate enough returns to pay such high interest rates, default is inevitable."

The troubles at Sichuan Trust first surfaced when the government began restricting new sales of trust products in 2020. Without revenue from new investors, it couldn't pay its outstanding debts.

That summer, Sichuan Trust announced it had 25.3 billion RMB (\$3.5 billion at the time) in debts it couldn't repay. The provincial government and banking regulators took control, ousting the management, reorganizing its books and launching an investigation. Hundreds of investors staged week-

ly protests outside the company's headquarters and their losses became a political issue.

In 2021, police detained Sichuan Trust's majority shareholder Liu Canglong, a mining and real estate tycoon who was once the richest man in Sichuan, a province of more than 80 million people. He is accused of embezzling trust funds.

In December, the trust announced it would return investors' funds according to a sliding scale of the original investment. The larger the investment stake, the larger the loss.

That sparked more protests.

"We're extremely anxious," one investor who asked not to be named told The AP. "It's so cruel, the amount of money they're giving us is so little."

A person answering Sichuan Trust's hotline said the company does not take interviews and would not provide comment. Sichuan Trust, the Sichuan provincial government and the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission did not respond to faxed and emailed requests for comment.

The plan to return funds "appropriately favors small and medium-sized investors," Sichuan Trust said earlier in a public statement, calling it "fair."

Those protesting fear say they've been harassed and intimidated, subjected to police interrogations and threats from their children's employers. They've been barred from leaving Chengdu or, at times, their housing compounds.

# Biden against plans to sell US Steel to a Japanese company

Announcement could have a ripple effect in race against Trump

WASHINGTON, March 14, (AP): President Joe Biden is coming out in opposition to the planned sale of U.S. Steel to Nippon Steel of Japan, saying in a statement to be released Thursday that the U.S. needs to "maintain strong American steel companies powered by American steel workers."

In a statement obtained in advance by The Associated Press, Biden adds: "U.S. Steel has been an iconic American steel company for more than a century, and it is vital for it to remain an American steel company that is domestically owned and operated."

Thursday's announcement, coming as Biden is campaigning in the Midwest, could have ripples in his race against the GOP presumptive nominee, Donald Trump. The Democratic president has made the restoration of American manufacturing a cornerstone of his agenda as he seeks reelection, and he has the endorsements of the AFL-CIO and several other prominent unions.

Nippon Steel announced in December that it planned to buy the Pittsburgh-based steel producer for \$14.1 billion in cash, raising concerns about what the transaction could mean for unionized workers, supply chains and U.S. national security.

Shortly after the deal was announced, the White House indicated it would be under review by the secretive Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States.

# IMF to hold crucial talks with Pakistan over release of final \$1.1b tranche of \$3b bailout

ISLAMABAD, March 14, (AP): The International Monetary Fund will hold a crucial round of talks with Pakistan's newly elected government this week to determine whether the country has met conditions for receiving the much needed final \$1.1 billion tranche of a \$3 billion bailout, officials said Wednesday.

The five-day talks will begin Thursday in Islamabad with the government of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, whose advisers have hinted that Pakistan will seek a new bailout of up to \$8 billion when the current one expires this month.

Pakistan is likely to get the final installment of \$1.1 billion from the IMF under the 2023 bailout deal agreed to by both sides last year. It needs the funds to overcome one of the worst economic crises in its history that had raised fears the South Asian Islamic nation could default on the payment of foreign debts.

In a statement, Pakistan's Finance Ministry said Pakistan has complied with all of the IMF's conditions to receive the much-need final installment of \$1.1 billion under the bailout which expires this month.

The ministry said once a staff-level agreement with IMF is reached, the executive board of the global lender will approve the disbursement of the \$1.1 billion to Pakistan.

The latest development comes a day after Pakistan's newly appointed Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb told reporters that Islamabad will seek a new bailout from the IMF when the current one successfully concludes.

Last year's bailout was signed by Sharif, who replaced former premier Imran Khan after a no-confidence vote

his backing from union workers can resonate with voters.

The city is in a swing county that narrowly backed Trump in 2016 and then flipped to Biden in 2020, making it a crucial contest in this year's presidential race.

Biden has a close relationship with the United Steelworkers. He gave the union "personal assurances" that he has their backs, according to a February statement by the union about Nippon Steel's plans. U.S. Steel is headquartered in Pennsylvania, another key state in this year's election.

The United Steelworkers issued a statement last week after meeting with representatives from Nippon Steel that it had concerns about whether the company would honor existing labor agreements in parliament. Sharif was again elected the country's premier this month after the Feb. 8 parliamentary elections.

The latest development comes days after Khan wrote a letter to the IMF urging it to link any talks with Islamabad to an audit of the recent elections, which his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party says were rigged. Authorities have dismissed the charge as baseless. So far, the IMF has not commented on Khan's letter.

Khan has come under criticism by Sharif's government for writing the letter, which said it was a bid by Khan to harm the economy. Pakistan narrowly averted a default on foreign payments last summer when the IMF approved the bailout for it following monthslong talks.

Sharif this week said that his biggest challenge is to overcome the lingering economic crisis.

and about the company's financial transparency, adding that there were "barriers" to closing a merger.

The U.S. considers Japan to be one of its closest allies and a key partner in countering China's ambitions and influence in Asia. Biden has visited the country twice as president and will host Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida at the White House on April 10.

But Nippon Steel's connections to China have raised concerns within the administration. More than half the steel produced globally comes from China, according to the World Steel Association. India is the second-largest producer, followed by Japan and the United States.

The government does not officially provide updates on the CFIUS review process.

The Democratic president has a big megaphone to weigh in on the matter, but he is not intervening in the review process or formally blocking the deal, according to a person familiar with deliberations who insisted on anonymity to discuss the situation.

Trump said earlier this year after meeting with the Teamsters union that he would stop the U.S. Steel acquisition: "I would block it. I think it's a horrible thing, when Japan buys U.S. Steel. I would block it instantaneously."

Biden will travel on Thursday to Saginaw, Michigan, which was once home to multiple General Motors plants and where he hopes

What's On

10

Bank strives to confirm leadership in social responsibility, sustainable development

## KFH launches 'Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan' program

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: As part of its commitment to social responsibility and community service, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) launched the "Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan" program for 2024. The program is packed with community initiatives, diverse volunteer campaigns, and daily interaction with the public.

### Iftar and Ramadan Basket

KFH Deputy General Manager Public Relations and Media, Yousef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh, said that KFH strives to include all segments of society in its Ramadan program to further establish its reputation in volunteer work, social responsibility, and sustainable development.

He added "KFH started its "Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan" program with KFH Volunteer Team that distributed Iftar meals at various locations across several Kuwaiti governorates, expanding the campaign's reach. KFH volunteer team distributed Iftar snacks to drivers during Maghrib prayers. This initiative, conducted in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, aimed to ensure drivers reached home safely by encouraging them to avoid speeding.Furthermore, KFH partnered with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society to distribute Ramadan baskets. This collaboration not only strengthened the volunteer spirit but also helped instill the concept of giving within the community.

Al-Ruwaieh pointed out that beyond food distribution, the program embrac-



Yousef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh

es a variety of community initiatives. These include sports and youth activities, Qurra'aBaitik, daily interaction with the public, Gergean events, and awareness videos. The videos are produced in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, Kuwait Fire Force, nutritionists, and doctors.

The program also offers hospitality services for prayers in mosques and shares iftar meals with various entities working during iftar time. Sports and health activities

Al-Ruwaieh said that KFH Ramadan program offers a variety of sports and health activities during Ramadan. These include the V-Fit Virtual Walking Challenge, held in collaboration with the V-Thru App. This challenge encourages participants to walk in Al Shaheed Park and the Avenues Mall before iftar.

He added that KFH is co-organizing

a sports event for men and women with Circuit+ at Al Hamra Mall. Additionally, it co-organizes another sport event in the Arena Challenge at 360. For KFH staff, the program includes the Employees Indoor Football Championship and the first-ever US penalty shootout tournament.

In collaboration with Kuwaiti Chef Faisal Al-Nashmi, KFH offered a cooking workshop for female customers and employees.

**Gergean Events** 

Al-Ruwaieh explained that in its "Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan" program, KFH will host several Gergean celebrations for children at various locations. These events aim to bring joy to children while also preserving Kuwaiti heritage.

The program features various competitions and prizes designed to boost interaction and engagement with the public and customers through KFH's social media platforms. These competitions will offer valuable prizes for both customers and employees.

### "Qurra'aBaitik" Competition

Al-Ruwaieh said that KFH continues its annual tradition of organizing the "Qurra'aBaitik" Ramadan competition for the tenth consecutive year, drawing a larger crowd each year. Additionally, KFH has released a Holy Quran application for iOS and Android devices, which has seen a surge in users and offers exclusive benefits.



Baytak Volunteer Team distributes Ramadan baskets in cooperation with the Kuwaiti Red Crescent.





KFH Volunteer Team distributes Iftar meals for fasting people

Initiative comes back for 17th year with 42k meals served throughout Holy Month

## Zain's Iftar Hall welcomes worshippers daily at Grand Mosque



Ali Shadad and Hamad Al Musaibeeh with Zain's volunteers and Grand Mosque officials.

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Zain announced the launch of its annual Iftar initiative to serve fasting individuals during the Holy Month of Ramadan, which comes back in its 17th year, this time in strategic partnership with the Grand Mosque of Kuwait. The company receives worshippers daily at the Mosque's main tent as part of its annual social campaign, Zain Alshuhoor, with a total of 42,000 meals served throughout the entire month.

The initiative's kick-off was attended by Grand Mosque Administration Director Ali Shadad, Zain Kuwait Corporate Relations Department Manager Hamad Al Musaibeeh, Zain and Grand Mosque officials, and members of the Zain Alshuhoor volunteer team.

Zain's Iftar initiative, which comes back for the 17th year, is a main pillar of Zain's annua al social program during the Holy Month. Meals are served daily at the Grand Mosque's main tent, along with meals distributed through trucks across Kuwaitin strategic partnership with the Kuwait Food Bank. The total number of meals served via both partners reaches 42,000 for the entire month.

company's divisions and departments - support the initiative, reflecting the Zain family's commitment to bring about positive social impact in the community.

The strategic partnership between Zain and the Grand Mosque not only encompasses the Iftar meals initiative, but also extends to many other programs and contributions that last throughout the Holy Month. These contributions include hospitality services for worshippers during the last ten days of Ramadan, Zain's Holy Quran Recital competition, and the Zain employees Holy Quran Recital competition.

This year, six of Zain's strategic community partners from both the public and private sectors join its annual Ramadan social campaign, Zain Alshuhoor. The campaign features a wide range of humanitarian, charitable, social, religious, health, and sports programs that continue throughout the Holy Month of Ramadan. Zain Alshuhoor is one of Kuwait's biggest and most successful community programs during the Holy Month. Every year, the company introduces a bigger, renewed version of the campaign that expands upon the previous year in its initiatives and programs. The campaign strives to share the blessings of this muchcherished month with the entire Kuwaiti people.



Initiative serves worshippers daily

The Iftar initiative is directly supervised and organized by Zain's team. In addition, members of the Zain Alshuhoor volunteer team - that consists of Zain employees from across the

## As part of bank's committed support to entrepreneurs and SMEs

## KIB concludes sponsorship of final round of Food Buzz

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: In continued efforts to support Kuwait's entrepreneurs as well as small and medium enterprise (SMEs) owners, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) concluded its sponsorship of the final round of the 7th edition of Food Buzz Festival - Kuwait's iconic food and beverage (F&B) annual festival. The final round took place between March5and 6at Al Hamra Tower. KIB's strategic sponsorship and continued support of the festival come as part of the Bank's far-reaching social responsibility program.

Commenting on the Bank's



Marwa Marafie, Manager of Marketing and Corporate Communication at KIB

participation in Food Buzz, Marwa Marafie, Manager of Marketing and Corporate Communications at KIB, said: "We are delighted to continue supporting Food Buzz this year and we highly encourage members of our community to visit the upcoming edition of the festival. We are truly proud of the success Food Buzz has achieved in the previous years and the latest edition. Our support of and participation in events such as Food Buzz stems directly from our faith in the capacity of Kuwait's entrepreneurs and SME owners who continue to contribute to the flourishing of our domestic economy, elevating the markets they

operate in."

As part of their participation in the Graish edition of the festival, KIB's representatives and members of the direct sales team continued to be present on-ground at the Bank's dedicated booth, engaging the crowd in fun activities, in addition to conversations about sustainability and eco-friendly practices as well as banking and financial literacy. This comes as part of the Bank's ongoing sup-port for the "Let's Be Aware" (Diraya) campaign - launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) with the unanimous support of all Kuwaiti banks. The KIB booth also encouraged visitors to embrace sustainability in their daily lives.

It is worth noting the KIB is a longstanding patron of entrepreneurship and SME success in Kuwait, for the high value that they add to the market, economy, and members of the community. In line with this belief, the Bank launched its flagship entrepreneurship hub, KIB Mubader Center, which offers a comprehensive suite of services, resources, and tools for aspiring entrepreneurs, enabling them to take confident and faster strides toward business success.



Alfouz flyer

## **ABK** announces Mohammad Yaqoub Boshehri as winner of the Alfouz KD10,000 weekly draw prize

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced Mohammad Yaqoub Boshehri as the KD10,000 Alfouz weekly draw winner on Monday, 11th March 2024, whereby the draw was held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

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

The account also retains its hallmark mega annual draw of a KD5,000 monthly salary for ten

years. Furthermore, the Bank now offers customers an increased opportunity to win for every KD10 as opposed to KD100 previously.

ABK encourages everyone to open an Alfouz draw account and/ or increase their balances to have more chances in winning in the upcoming weekly draw winner announcement, which will take place on Monday,18th March 2024. The higher the deposits, the higher the chances to win.

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



KIB at Food Buzz

Zain's Iftar Hall at the Grand Mosque.

## 'Headshot' offers raw exploration of teenage girl boxers' psyches

### **By Ann Levin**

**R**ita Bullwinkel knows a thing or two about the human body and the abuse it can take. In an interview with The Paris Review, the author, who played water polo in college, talked about the beating her body took for a sport few people care about.

"My nose and all of my fingers have been broken. One time, when I was 16, I vomited for two days straight because of a full-force kick I took directly to the stomach.

Bullwinkel brings that intimate knowledge of bodies in competition to her debut novel, "Headshot," which takes place in Reno, Nevada, over two sweltering days

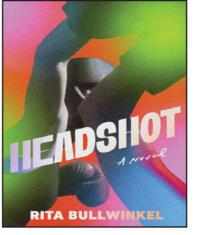
in July as eight teenage girls vie for the Daughters of America Cup at Bob's Boxing Palace, a faded, dusty gym that is far from palatial.

Andi is haunted by thoughts of a 4-year-old boy who drowned in a swimming pool when she was on duty as a lifeguard. Artemis, whose older sisters excelled at boxing, too, worries about not living up to the family legacy.

Bullwinkel gives us "head shots" of the other girls, too, each with her own weird obsessions and dreams.

Andi may be fixated on the child's corpse but she is also thinking about a boy lifeguard she wants to kiss. One moment Arte-

Variety



This cover image released by Viking shows "Headshot" by Rita Bullwinkel. (AP)

mis hates Andi, "this sorry zit-ridden girl;" the next, she wants to be friends.

Bullwinkel's rhythmic, muscular prose matches the visceral, sometimes stomach-churning material vicious hits to the face and body,
"Andi's nose feeling like cornflakes" after Artemis's glove lands between her eyeballs.

Stylistically, she takes risks. Though the story unfolds over just the 48 hours of the tournament, the omniscient narrator projects into the future to imagine the girls' fates.

She is clear-eyed, unsentimental. When Artemis is 60, she will not be able to hold a cup of tea because her fingers have been broken so many times.

"Her injury ... will not be some battle relic, but, rather, a sorry, pathetic disability." In 2018, Bullwinkel made a

splash in the literary world when she published "Belly Up," a collection of short stories with grotesque, surreal plot twists. One reviewer described it as full of 'squirmy pleasures.'

Her new work continues in that vein with dark scenes and characters that can be difficult to read.

Yet it also feels important because she gives agency to a group of girls who might not otherwise be seen and shows them to us in the full flush of youth, striving for recognition and glory. (AP)





Books

This image released by PBS shows Domhnall Gleeson, left, and Andrea Riseborough in a scene from Masterpiece series "Alice & Jack," premiering Sunday March 17 on PBS. (AP)

**Television** 



LOS ANGELES: Singer Kelly Clarkson and NFL legend Peyton Manning will bring a new flavor to NBC Universal's upcoming Paris Olympics coverage this summer.

Clarkson and Manning are expected to join Mike Tirico to host the opening ceremony, the network announced Tuesday night. The ceremony's live coverage will air July 26 on NBC and Peacock at noon ET.

"I'm extremely honored to have a front row seat," said Manning, a Pro Football Hall of Famer who won two Super Bowls during his 18 seasons in the NFL. He is now the co-host of "Monday Night Football with Peyton and Eli" with his brother and former NFL quarterback Eli Manning.

Clarkson is a three-time Grammy and multi-Emmy winner through her NBC talk show "The Kelly Clarkson Show." She also hosted the NFL Honors last year.

"Kelly and I are both fans of the athletes and the opening ceremony of years past," Manning told The Associated Press in an interview Tuesday. "I think there'll be a lot of emotions for these athletes. I look forward to finding out those stories between now and July and maybe sharing that with the audience.

Manning said he'll be stepping out his comfort zone of usually talking football, but Tirico believes he and Clarkson will do just fine. The trio will be positioned at the Trocadero near the ceremony's finish with views of the Seine River and Eiffel Tower.

"Our goal and desire is for Peyton and Kelly to be Peyton and Kelly. Just be who they are," said Tirico, who will host his fourth opening ceremony. "So many people have come to know, love and trust these two. Having them there as part of this really speaks to what this event is. It's under the umbrella of sports. The gathering is because of sports. But it's really a cultural celebration.'

Organizers said the open-

PBS series dares to question romance myths

## 'Alice & Jack' offers realistic take on love

NEW YORK, March 14, (AP): Like most kids, Victor Levin was raised on fairy tales - and still resents it. Those stories in books, movies and TV that inevitably ended up with everyone happily ever after - and they seemed dishonest.

"It's nonsense," says the writer-producer. "We human beings are deeply flawed creatures, and sometimes from the best of intentions, we make grotesque mistakes and hurt each other. This is the nature of being human and this is the nature of love. It's messy.'

Levin is ready to prove his point with the powerful new six-part PBS "Masterpiece" series, "Alice & Jack," which traces a modern couple spending years in the messy, giddy, crazy push-pull of love.

"This is a very valuable emotion that can do great things. It can also hurt people, but it can do great, great things. Let's not take it for granted," says Levin, who previously worked on the series "Mad Men" and "Mad About You."

"Alice & Jack," which starts airing Sunday, stars Andrea Riseborough and Domhnall Gleeson as they come together, fall apart and reunite, through marriages to others, births and death. Their gravitational pull remains.

"They really leave a huge mess in their wake, but they also are clearly meant to be connected for the time that they're on this earth," says Riseborough. "I think that, in of itself, is something that's very hopeful and something that I really identified with - the imperfect nature of love."

Alice and Jack don't exactly meet-cute. They connect on a dating app and their first date is at a pub. They go back to her place, but in the morning he is bluntly told to leave. "I'll call you?" he offers. "Thank you, but if it's OK with you, I'd rather you didn't," she responds.

Time and circumstances seem to conspire against this pair. "You're like the incarnation of everything I've ever wanted," she tells him. Yet she's not ready, still having to process a dark childhood. Years later, he chooses to get married to another woman. "We

ing ceremony of the Olympics along the Seine will be held during sunset. It's the first time an Olympic opening ceremony will be held outside a stadium setting, in line with the Paris organizers' motto: "Games Wide Open."

About 10,500 athletes will parade through the heart of the



Clarkson



This image released by PBS shows Domhnall Gleeson, left, and Andrea Riseborough in a scene from Masterpiece series "Alice & Jack," premiering Sunday March 17 on PBS. (AP)

throw away our blessings at our peril," he tells her.

Levin says it's taken decades for him to create a project that tries to answer the question: Are the forces that bring us together stronger than the ones that would tear us apart?

"Ultimately, I am not smart enough to know any answers. But maybe every now and then I ask the right question. And so my job, as I see it, is to give you something to think about after you shut the TV

off," he says.

"Alice & Jack" takes place in London but Levin originally intended it to be set in New York City. "I would like to think that it could be in any city, with any two people," he says.

His choice of the actors wasn't negotiable, however. Levin is a huge fan of Riseborough and Gleeson and waited for both to be available to do "Alice & Jack." He adored their acting but also their ability to listen.

"I knew that a lot of this story was going to be told on reactions. That is to say, not just the person who's speaking, but also the person who is receiving the information," Levin says. "You are learning as much from the person who is listening as you are from the person who is speaking."

With Riseborough and Gleeson, he had two fine actors who also happened to have been paired up in the past onscreen - they were partners in "Never Let Me Go" and brother and sister in "Shadow Dancer."

"So I had great speakers, great listeners, great talents, great brains, by the way," says Levin. "Just intellectually brilliant people - emotionally high IQs, comedically high IQ, dramatically high IQ. I mean, that's winning the lottery for a writer.'

Levin lured each actor with finished scripts for the first and last episodes and a sketch map for where he wanted to go in between. The writer then used the actors' idiosyncrasies and put them into the characters as he finished the project. "He injected us into the story," Riseborough says.

Levin hopes "Alice & Jack" can spark conversations among viewers about romantic love but also other forms of love - like fraternal, familial and parental.

"We are living in a very troubled world and if you can say for a second, 'Let's talk about love and what it means and how we can show it respect and treasure it, not ask too much of it, but ask a lot of it, understand what it is and how valuable it is' - if we can have that conversation for a second, I think that can only be helpful."

French capital on boats on the Molly Solomon, executive producer and president of NBC Seine along a 6-kilometer (3.7-Olympics Production, said each "Today" show hosts Savanhost will bring the best out of nah Guthrie and Hoda Kotb each other. She called them a will be stationed together on a "compelling combination." bridge along the route. They're

"I'm excited about this whole team," said Solomon, who noted that Guthrie and Kotb will have the best seats during the opening ceremony for their telecast.

"They're going to be taking in the athlete boat parade from one of the bridges, where all the fans will be watching," she said. "They're really going to contribute from a very unique perspective. They'll be watching the ceremony as the fans do. It'll be a great experience." (AP)

## **NEWS/FEATURES**

## People & Places



Guitarist Nile Rodgers of Chic performs at the Jazz Festival of 5 Continents, in Marseille, southern France, July 20, 2013. (AP)



## Legends of beats

# Rodgers and Salonen win Polar Music Prize

STOCKHOLM, March 14, (AP): Nile Rodgers, American songwriter and co-founder of the influential 1970s disco band Chic, and esteemed Finnish classical music composer and conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen won the 2024 Polar Music Prize on Tuesday.



This image released by Interscope Records shows 'Deeper Well' by Kacey Musgraves. (AP)



## **'Deeper Well' unveils folk undertones**

Musgraves charting new course

NEW YORK, March 14, (AP): Just over a decade ago, Kacey Musgraves emerged as a fresh new voice in country music – a mid-tempo storyteller with an incredible acuity both in her lyrics and in her instrumentation, knowing just when to pick up the harmonica, whistle a tune or break out the vocoder. In the years and award-winning albums since, she's proven herself to be malleable: weaving disco-pop into her narratives where fitting (most memo-rably on "High Horse" from 2018's "Golden Hour," the love-forward release that earned her album of the year at the 2019 Grammys ), recording in Spanish ( "Gracias a la Vida" from 2021's divorce record, "star-crossed"), and most recently, recording a feature with Zach Bryan, which has become her first No. 1 hit (the sentimental "I Remember Everything," one of AP's picks for best of 2023.) In 2024, it has led to "Deeper Well," a muted folk record with a warm kind of profundity. The album opens with the '60s folkinspired "Cardinal," a similar tone to its closer, "Nothing to be Scared Of" acoustic guitars and Musgraves' openhearted narratives delivered through her glassy vocal delivery. Much of the album follows the format, but with quite a few surprises. Those looking for capital-C country through Musgraves' matured folk filter could skip to "The Architect," a mas-

terful acoustic rumination on a higher power. "Sometimes I look in the mirror and wish I could make a request/Could I pray it away? Am I shapeable clay? Or is this as good as it gets?," she asks. ic language of the current moment, like in the fingerpicking title track "Deeper Well." "My Saturn has returned/when I turned 27," she sings, referencing the popular astrological conceit that also appears on Ariana Grande's latest album, "eternal sunshine." "Everything

started to change/Took a long time, but I learned." There's another line,

"You've got dark energy," that feels more like a text message than an effec-

tive lyric - and runs the risk of dating

itself the moment the listener hears it

Musgraves is interested in a kind of

existential bloodletting, revealing the

depths of her thoughts about love and

death trickle out in gorgeous-sounding

Friends," her tear-jerkin' response to "The Sound of Music" classic "My Fa-

vorite Things," in which Musgraves,

atop piano and acoustic guitar, sings

about all of the things she loves - and

will miss - "from the other side" of

there, the horses and dogs," she sings,

'Intimate convos that go way into the

As a whole, "Deeper Well" is a soft-

night/The way that sun on my floor

makes a pattern of light.'

"My home state of Texas/The sky

Like in the standout "Dinner with

songs with sweet melodies.

life

- but that, too, could be a tool. Here,



The Polar Music Prize is awarded annually to individuals, groups and institutions in recognition of exceptional music achievements. It was founded in 1989 by the late Stig Anderson, a Swedish publisher, lyricist and manager of ABBA, who established the record label Polar Music.

Salonen

Rodgers and Salonen

will each receive prize money of one million Swedish kroner (about \$95,000) in ceremonies in Stockholm on May 21.

The award panel said Tuesday of the American guitarist, composer and producer: "There are few in history, if any, who have composed dance music as sophisticated and subtly arranged as Nile Rodgers," who "turned disco and funk into an art" with his group Chic and songs like "Le Freak" and "Dance, Dance, Dance."

"In Nile Rodgers, we honor a ground-breaking pioneer whose legacy spans his work as co-founder of Chic and as record producer and creator behind so much of the world's greatest music," Marie Ledin, managing director of the Polar Music Prize, said in a statement. "Nile's impact in pop culture is incomparable and his timeless songs will continue to delight, uplift and inspire for many years to come," she said.

Among others, Rodgers has created songs for David Bowie, Diana Ross, Madonna, Daft Punk and Sister Sledge.

### Innovator

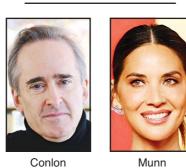
Currently acting as the music director of the San Francisco Symphony and Conductor Laureate of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Esa-Pekka Salonen "is an innovator," Ledin said.

"His artistic curiosity, creativity and forward-thinking approach to composing and conducting paves the way in classical music," she said. "He is a master of tone, perfectly balancing sound and emotion to produce and lead music that deeply moves the listener."

Salonen saw a breakthrough in 1983 when he conducted Mahler's Symphony No. 3 with the Philharmonia Orchestra in London.

The award panel praised Salonen's embrace of technological innovations, "not simply for the sake of experimentation, but as a way to help people discover great music in the constantly changing world of media."

During his long career, Salonen has also worked with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and he's a co-founder of the annual Baltic Sea Festival, one of Europe's leading classical music events taking place in Sweden.



## Variety

**LOS ANGELES:** James Conlon will retire as music director of the Los Angeles Opera at the end of the 2025-26 season, ending a 20-year run that will have spanned half the company's history.

Conlon made the announcement Wednesday, five days before his 74th birthday. He will become conductor laureate in 2026-27 and intends to return to the LA Opera as a guest conductor.

"It will be my 20th anniversary as the music director. It will be the 40th anniversary of the company. We wanted to do that together," Conlon said in a telephone interview. "I am not retiring. I'm not stopping conducting. I have a lot of other activities I'm going to do. But I'm a certain age. I'm going to be 76 years old by then."

The LA Opera began performances in 1986 and **Kent Nagano** became principal conductor in 2001-02, then was promoted to music director in 2003. Conlon replaced him for 2006-07 and has led more than 460 performances in LA of 68 operas by 32 composers.

"He's made a titanic impact," company CEO **Christopher Koelsch** said. "It felt like the right time for generational change." Conlon anticipates his performance total

will reach 500 by the time he steps down.

"I want to devote myself more urgently to other things about American musical life that I think are bigger and more important than any individual orchestra or opera company and that is education, gaining back the audience," Conlon said. "I remember how things were in New York public school system when I grew up in the '50s and '60s. ... We all know that that disappeared a long time ago, and we are seeing the effects in the audience in our country. We didn't create this problem - orchestras, opera companies, chamber music series - but we have to fix it." Conlon was principal conductor of the

Rotterdam Philharmonic from 1983-91, general music director of **Cologne**, **Germany**, from 1989-2002, principal conductor of the Paris Opéra from 1995-2005 and principal conductor of the RAI National Symphony Orchestra in Italy from 2016-20. He also was music director of the Cincinnati May Festival from 1979-2016 and the Ravinia Festival, summer home of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, from

### 2005-15.

In LA, Conlon launched a Recovered Voices project to bring attention to works of composers suppressed by Nazi Germany, including Alexander Zemlinsky's "Eine Florentinische Tragödie (A Florentine Tragedy)" and "Der Zwerg (The Dwarf)," Viktor Ullmann's "Der Zerbrochene Krug (The Broken Jug)," Walter Braunfels' "Die Vögel (The Birds)," On "Anime Eyes," Musgraves describes a "Miyazaki sky" and talksings her way through a kaleidoscopic, psychedelic detour. "Lonely Millionaire" is a surprising near-reimagination of Atlanta rapper JID's "Kody Blu 31." Seriously: he received a songwriting credit for the song, she does not rap, and it's a weeper.

### Evolution

For fans following Musgraves' career since the very beginning, "Deeper Well" is a noted evolution from "Follow Your Arrow," the celebratory country-as-heck LGBT+ anthem from her 2013 debut album "Same Trailer Different Park." But the spirit is the same: Musgraves has long pushed the boundaries of her formative genre whether its touring with Willie Nelson and Katy Perry - or when she made sure her co-writers Brandy Clark and Shane McAnally took the stage when she won the Country Music Awards Song of the Year Award in 2014 for her first hit; it was the first time two openly gay people stood on the CMA stage for an award. That she chooses to move her needle, here, in a softer direction feels fitting.

Sometimes, that means hyper-specif-

**Franz Schreker**'s "Die Gezeichneten (The Stigmatized)." He plans to continue with the project in LA and elsewhere.

"Recovered Voices is a part of my life that goes beyond Los Angeles Opera and will continue, and you can be sure you'll see more of that in the future," Conlon said. "I will never live to see the end of that mission. It takes time. And it is an example of how easy it is for humanity to destroy and



Model Naomi Campbell poses for photographers during a photocall to promote the upcoming exhibition 'Naomi: In Fashion' at the Victoria & Albert Museum celebrating her 40 years in fashion, at The Dorchester hotel, in London, Wednesday, March 13, 2024. (AP)

pedaled album, but also one that celebrates her humanity. It's a nice change of pace — arguably the best kind one with some familiarity. how difficult it is to rebuild." (AP)

**LOS ANGELES:** Olivia Munn has revealed that she was diagnosed with breast cancer and underwent a double mastectomy, thanking her doctors and urging fans to calculate their own risk assessment.

"I'm lucky. We caught it with enough time that I had options. I want the same for any woman who might have to face this one day," the 43-year-old actor posted on Instagram on Wednesday with photos and a video of her being treated at a hospital.

Munn said she took a genetic test in February 2023 that checks for 90 different cancer genes and was negative for all. Even so, her doctor decided to calculate her Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Score and that "saved my life," Munn wrote.

Recording a high score, Munn got a biopsy, which found she had an aggressive form of cancer in both breasts. She had a double mastectomy 30 days after the biopsy and has had four surgeries in the past 10 months. She said she kept it private because "I needed to catch my breath and get through some of the hardest parts before sharing."

Munn thanked family and friends, especially her partner, comedian John Mulaney, "for being there before I went into each surgery and being there when I woke up, always placing framed photos of our little boy Malcolm so it would be the first thing I saw when I opened my eyes."

Munn was a correspondent on "The Daily Show with **Jon Stewart**" and her movie credits include "Magic Mike," "The Predator," "Office Christmas Party" and "X-Men: Apocalypse." (AP)

## **HEALTH/SCIENCE**

## **Reimagining workforce dynamics and economic realities**

# Al and humanity: Collaborative evolution or competitive strife?

### **By Ahmad Al-Hamily**

KUWAIT CITY, March 14, (KUNA): Recent leaps in Artificial Intelligence (AI) have sparked serious discourse on whether or not this technology will soon replace human beings in various tasks and jobs.

For those touting human ingenuity and creativity, the old folktale of John Henry and the Railroad might provide inspiration.

The story has it that Henry -- an African American folk hero and railroad worker -- competed against a steampowered drill, trying to prove that man was much faster and stronger than a machine. The legend concludes with him winning by sheer force and determination.

Many might argue the authenticity of the story, but one cannot deny that humans have the imagination and consciousness that no current technology could sincerely duplicate or imitate.

However, does the relationship between AI and humanity have to be one of competitiveness and rivalry, or might it be a synergistic relationship in line with other technological advancements in history, with infinite possibilities looming on the horizon

"Applications of AI technology have several ramifications in politics and business, but the idea of "creating content dynamically without involving human beings is a very traumatic change in the way we work," Bahrain's Ameen Altajer, CEO of the AI Company (INFINITEWARE), told KUNA in a series of interviews with experts and individuals tackling the topic at hand.

Altajer, whose company has been providing products and services to clients across the globe for more than 15 years, said that AI applications would have an effect on several sectors including media and news.



KUNA photo AI, human ingenuity relation between Synergy, rivalry, infinite possibilities.

In corporate spaces, like banks, AI technology is being put to use to preform language-based tasks including drafting emails, this "takes a lot of the workload from human beings, so it has a lot of pros and cons," he said.

Asked if AI would be able to venture off without the involvement of humans, Altajer said that there was a level of "symbiosis" between the technology and humans; however, AI was not at that stage where it could develop a sense of agency on its own without humans being in the picture.

AI could make decisions, affirmed the expert, adding that the concept of machine learning involves specifying inputs and outputs via algorithms and data to imitate decision-making by humans without the machine knowing the practical details of the process.

If prompted, AI -- through the machine learning process -- could distinguish between images of cats and dogs without really knowing the intricate details and differences of both species unless fed with more information, he explained.

"There is no agency ... no consciousness as far as we can understand and see," stated Altajer, but pointed out that AI, as a technology, would for sure change down the road. On current uses of AI and Language Learning Models

On current uses of AI and Language Learning Models (LLM), he said that both technologies involve feeding a tremendous amount of data and text to provide convincing output that mimics humans.

Altajer did express fear when it came to involving AI and other similar technologies in making powerful decisions, asking "If we do not understand how those systems really work from the inside, are we okay with the idea of delegating the 'driving wheel' to them"

In the case of information being implicitly biased, AI would be making decisions according to data regardless of circumstances, firing or hiring individuals, favoring certain races, hair colors, and whatnot if the data dictated so, he said.

Bringing the economy into the sphere of discussions, Mohammad Ramadan -- an economic researcher and columnist for the Kuwaiti Al-Qabas newspaper -- said that recent advancements in AI had increased its usage across the board.

"We see the usage in financial markets, trading, fraud detection, image recognition, military use, and self-driving cars," stated Ramadan about the vast utilization of AI. On fears of AI taking over careers, Ramadan pointed out that "Some people should be worried that AI will take their jobs, especially jobs that could be automated."

According to a July 29, 2023 report by McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) -- a 1990-established organization aiding in economic and business decision-making, "by 2030, activities that account for up to 30 percent of hours currently worked across the US economy could be automated -- a trend accelerated by generative AI".

Ramadan explained that the report's findings were no cause of plausible concern, indicating, "When the PC was invented" it had replaced the typing machines, other devices, or jobs that have been there and this is called structural unemployment where people lose their jobs due to market structure change."

On the solution to such possible unemployment, the expert said that people could adapt easily by gathering different sets of skills and knowledge creating new jobs and career paths.

Ramadan also spoke about the government's responsibilities towards the issue of AI, saying, "Government should not do anything expect regulating AI to be more, legally useable, Video generated by AI could be almost realistic, Voice could be realistic, Chatbots could act like humans, so we do not know how that thing could develop."

He indicated that various polls across the globe showed that a huge percentage of people feared that AI could be used fraudulently.

Ramadan asserted that AI and humans could coexist in the economic landscape; however, between 2023 and 2030 AI market size is projected to expand at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 37.3 percent, according to a report by the India-US-based market research and consulting company "Grand View Research", cited by several outlets, including Forbes.

## Math, science, pies and more What's Pi Day all about?

NORWALK, Connecticut, March 14, (AP): Math enthusiasts around the world, from college kids to rocket scientists, celebrate Pi Day on Thursday, which is March 14 or 3/14 - the first three digits of an infinite number with many practical uses.

Around the world many people will mark the day with a slice of pie - sweet, savory or even pizza.

Simply put, Pi is a mathematical constant that expresses the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter. It is part of many formulas used in physics, astronomy, engineering and other fields, dating back thousands of years to ancient Egypt, Babylon and China.

Pi Day itself dates to 1988, when physicist Larry Shaw began celebrations at the Exploratorium science museum in San Francisco. The holiday didn't really gain national recognition though until two decades later. In 2009, Congress designated every March 14 to be the big day - to hopefully spur more interest in math and science. Fittingly enough, the day is also Albert Einstein's birthday.

Here's a little more about the holiday's origin and how it's celebrated today.

Pi can calculate the circumference of a circle by measuring the diameter the distance straight across the circle's middle - and multiplying that by the 3.14-plus number.

It is considered a constant number and it is also infinite, meaning it is mathematically irrational. Long before computers, historic scientists such as Isaac Newton spent many hours calculating decimal places by hand. Today, using sophisticated computers, researchers have come up with trillions of digits for pi, but there is no end.



### A freshly decorated Key Lime pie rests on a counter in a busy bakery kitchen at Michele's pies, Wednesday, March 13, 2024, in Norwalk, Conn. (AP)

### rolls used in printers.

Pi is also useful in determining the necessary scale of a tank that serves heating and air conditioning systems in buildings of various sizes.

NASA uses pi on a daily basis. It's key to calculating orbits, the positions of planets and other celestial bodies, elements of rocket propulsion, spacecraft communication and even the correct deployment of parachutes when a vehicle splashes down on Earth or lands on Mars.

Using just nine digits of pi, scientists say it can calculate the Earth's circumference so accurately it only errs by about a quarter of an inch (0.6 centimeters) for every 25,000 miles (about 40,000 kilometers).

Every year the San Francisco museum that coined the holiday organzes events including a para a circular plaque, called the Pi Shrine, 3.14 times - and then, of course, festivities with lots of pie. Around the country, many events now take place on college campuses. For example, Nova Southeastern University in Florida will hold a series of activities, including a game called "Mental Math Bingo" and event with free pizza (pies) - and for dessert, the requisite pie. "Every year Pi Day provides us with a way to celebrate math, have some fun and recognize how important math is in all our lives," said Jason Gershman, chair of NSU's math department. At Michele's Pies in Norwalk, Connecticut, manager Stephen Jarrett said it's one of their biggest days of the year.

## SEATTLE, March 14, (AP): A blood test for colon cancer performed well in a study published Wednesday, offering a new kind

of screening for a leading cause of cancer deaths. The test looks for DNA frag-

ments shed by tumor cells and precancerous growths. It's already for sale in the U.S. for \$895, but has not been approved by the Food and Drug Administration and most insurers do not cover it. The maker of the test, Guardant Health, anticipates an FDA decision this year.

In the study, the test caught 83% of the cancers but very few of the precancerous growths found by colonoscopy, the gold standard for colon cancer screening. Besides spotting tumors, colonoscopies can prevent the disease by removing precancerous growths called polyps.

But some people avoid the exam because of the hassle of getting time off work or the day-ahead preparaExploring pros and cons

**Promising blood test for colon cancer** 

sparks hope amidst screening options



Guardant Health runs the Shield (TM) blood test for colorectal cancer screening in its labs in Palo Alto and Redwood City, California. (AP)

age-eligible adults goal set by the falsely colon c number number

falsely indicated they might have colon cancer. That means a sizeable

board. In a separate study published

It wasn't given its name until 1706, when Welsh mathematician William Jones began using the Greek symbol for the number.

Why that letter? It's the first Greek letter in the words "periphery" and "perimeter," and pi is the ratio of a circle's periphery - or circumference - to its diameter.

The number is key to accurately pointing an antenna toward a satellite. It helps figure out everything from the size of a massive cylinder needed in refinery equipment to the size of paper tion that involves drinking a strong gr laxative to empty the bowels.

A convenient alternative is an annual stool test, where people send a stool sample to a lab for analysis.

"The best test is the one someone will actually complete," said Dr. Douglas Corley, chief research officer for Kaiser Permanente, Northern California, who was not involved in the study. "Giving people a choice increases the number of people who will get screened."

In the U.S., screening is recommended for healthy adults ages 45 to 75 at average risk for colon cancer. Frequency depends on the test: a routine colonoscopy is every 10 years. Screening is inching up but falls well short of the 80% of Guardant recommends testing with its blood test called Shield every three years. Like a stool test, the blood test requires a follow-up colonoscopy if there's an abnormal result, which could lead to more out-of-pocket costs.

The study, sponsored by Guardant and published in the New England Journal of Medicine, involved 7,861 people in the U.S. who had both a colonoscopy and a blood test. While the blood test caught 83%

While the blood test caught 83% of the cancers found by colonoscopy, it missed 17%. That's on par with stool-based tests.

There were also false alarms: For 10% of the people where the colonoscopy found nothing, the blood test number of people would face the anxiety of follow-up colonoscopies.

The blood test is tuned to pick up the signature of colon cancer but more research is needed to determine if it might pick up other cancers as well and give misleading results, Corley said.

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States and the third worldwide. In the U.S., more than 153,000 new cases and 53,000 deaths from the disease are expected this year.

More screening should result in fewer cancer deaths, said study co-author Dr. William Grady of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center in Seattle and a paid member of Guardant's scientific advisory Wednesday in the same journal, an updated version of the Cologuard stool test, which also looks for DNA fragments, seemed to improve its performance on false alarms, possibly leading to fewer follow-up colonoscopies. That study, involving more than 20,000 people, was sponsored by Exact Sciences, maker of the test.

"The more options we have for our patients, the better," said Dr. Nabil Mansour of Baylor College of Medicine, who was not involved in either study. He'll continue to recommend a colonoscopy for his patients but "I'm excited there will be a pretty good blood test option available."



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## **SPORTS**

## AI-Magseed stresses the Supreme Committee's commitment to enhancing future editions

## Excitement builds ahead of Saad Al-Abdullah Academy, Gulf University showdown

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: At 9:00 AM tomorrow, Saturday, the final match of the Warba Bank Football League for Higher Education will take place at Sabah Al-Salem Stadium in the Arab Club. This match brings together the teams of Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences and the Gulf University for Science and Technology, forming part of the competitions of the Third Sports Games for Higher Education, organized by the Kuwait Sports Federation.

## SOCCER

The league features participation from 14 teams representing public and private higher education institutions. The Kuwait College of Science and Technology team secured third place, while the American University claimed fourth.

Faisal Al-Maqseed, President of the School Union and Chairman of the Supreme Committee for the session, emphasized the strong competition witnessed throughout the Warba League this season, from the group stage to the semi-finals. Saad Al-Abdullah Academy and Gulf University emerged as final-



Faisal Al-Maqseed, President of the School Union.

ists. Al-Maqseed highlighted the strategic partnership with Warba Bank, which contributed to increased competition across all games, not limited to football. He stressed the Supreme Committee's commitment to enhancing future editions, with an expected increase in participants exceeding 14 teams, compared to the current 11

Al-Maqseed also noted the significant

interest from various state institutions in the league's conclusion, with the match set to be broadcast live on the third sports channel. He acknowledged the solidarity among higher education institutions, along with the support provided by the General Sports Authority, as crucial factors contributing to the successful organization of the league

Sheikha Fajr Badr Al-Sabah, the dressage committee of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation comprises Alaa Al-Sultan, Abdullah Al-Awadhi, Nusayba Al-Maousherji, Dana Buresli, and Abdullah Al-Amer. Technical management is overseen by the highly experienced Amber Dean Heer.

The tournament will com-

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The

Kuwait Equestrian Center's dres-

sage championship, sponsored

by the Kuwait Equestrian Fed-

eration, is set to kick off tomor-

row, Saturday, at 8:30 PM in the

EQUESTRIAN

Under the leadership of

Sabhan area.



Horsewoman Sheikha Fajr Al-Sabah gearing up for the championship.

mence at 8:30 PM at the Kuwait Equestrian Center, beginning with the training level, followed

by the basic level, the light level, and finally, the first intermediate level.

# **Nuggets win NBA Finals rematch,** move 'atop' Western Conference

Kings beat Lakers 120-107 for 4-game season sweep

MIAMI, March 14, (AP): After four months of looking up at others in the Western Conference, Denver finally is alone atop the standings.

Michael Porter Jr. scored 25 points, Aaron Gordon added 16 and the reigning NBA champion Nuggets took sole possession of first place in the West standings with a 100-88 win over the sliding Miami Heat in a finals rematch on Wednesday night.

Jamal Murray scored 14 points and Nikola Jokic finished with 12 points, 14 rebounds and six assists for the Nuggets (46-20), who moved a halfgame ahead of Oklahoma City (45-20) and a full game up on Minnesota (45-21) in the West race.

Denver is an NBA-best 10-1 since the All-Star break, and the Nuggets are 32-9 when their go-to starting five - Porter Jr., Gordon, Murray, Jokic and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope - are together in the lineup. The Nuggets hadn't ended a day alone atop the West since mid-November.

"When they want to put on the jets, they've been able to leave teams





## The aim is world records

Italian companies making track and pools for the Paris Olympics

ALBA, Italy, March 14, (AP): The purple pieces of vulcanized rubber track being produced at a factory in northern Italy will be run on by the world's fastest athletes at the Paris

Olympics. They have been made with one clear goal. Records.

After three world records and 12 Olympic marks were set on the track in Tokyo three years ago, expect more records to fall at the Stade de France.

That's why Mondo, the company that has provided the track at every Summer Games since Montreal in 1976, went back to the drawing board after Tokyo.

With the help of athlete feedback and extensive testing, new generation granules that are more elastic and cohesive are being used to produce the upper layer of rubber for the Paris track

Multiple algorithms were explored before finding a more optimal shape and dimension for the air cells inside the track, which have been designed to minimize energy loss and enhance performance.

In other words, the innovations are meant to enable Olympians to run faster, jump higher and leap further. Kind of like the Olympic motto: "Faster, higher, stronger - together.'

The athletes will find this track to be more reactive and better suited for their competition," Maurizio Stroppi-ana, vice president of Mondo's sport division, said during a press tour at the company's factory in Alba, near Turin.

Produced in portions over two days this week and then rolled up for transport to France, the track will be

### BASKETBALL

behind in the dust," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said.

### Kings 120, Lakers 107

In Sacramento, Domantas Sabonis had 17 points, 19 rebounds and 10 assists, and the Sacramento Kings beat the Los Angeles Lakers.

The Kings have won seven of their last eight games against the Lakers, including a four-game sweep this season. Harrison Barnes made seven 3-pointers and scored 23 points, De'Aaron Fox added 21 and Keegan Murray had 19 as all five starters for the Kings scored in double figures.

Sabonis' triple-double was his league-leading 23rd, with his last one coming in the Kings' victory at the Lakers last week. Kings coach Mike Brown called the feat "the norm" for his center, who went toe-to-toe with the Lakers' Anthony Davis.

Austin Reaves led the Lakers with 28 points. Davis added 22 points and 10 rebounds, and LeBron James had 18 points and 13 boards.

### Mavericks 109, Warriors 99

In Dallas, Luka Doncic's triple-double streak is over as the focus turns to his tender left hamstring.

Daniel Gafford is staring down Wilt Chamberlain for the best run of consecutive made baskets in NBA history.

Doncic scored 21 points as his triple-double run ended at seven games, Gafford made five baskets to push his streak to 33 in a row and the Dallas Mavericks beat the Golden State Warriors 109-99 on Wednesday night.

The triple-double streak for Doncic was all but over when the NBA scoring leader returned to the game in the fourth quarter. He was gone 22 seconds later, soon ruled out with left hamstring soreness.

Coach Jason Kidd said he wasn't

Sacramento Kings forward Domantas Sabonis (10) shoots against Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James (23) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Sacramento, Calif, Wednesday, March 13, 2024. (AP)

sure if Doncic would make the trip to Oklahoma City, where the Mavs finish a back-to-back on Thursday night.

### Cavaliers 116, Pelicans 95

In New Orleans, Donovan Mitchell returned from a seven-game absence and the Cleveland Cavaliers stemmed a two-game slide with style and on the road against an opponent that has been hard to beat lately.

Mitchell scored 14 points, Darius Garland had 27 points and 11 assists, and the Cleveland Cavaliers combined for 20 3-pointers in a 116-95 victory over the New Orleans Pelicans.

Mitchell, who made four 3s, was one of four Cavs with at least that many, along with Darius Garland (six) and Sam Merrill (five) and Georges Niang (four). Cleveland finished 20 of 45 from deep, while the Pelicans made just 4 of 22 from long range in losing for the first time in five games.

Center Jarrett Allen had 17 points, 10 rebounds and two blocks for the Cavs, who also were delighted by their 38 assists on 47 made baskets.

Zion Williamson had 33 points and nine rebounds for New Orleans. Brandon Ingram scored 20 and Trey Murphy III 11. New Orleans outscored Cleveland 56-52 in the paint and 21-2 from the foul line - statistical advantages which were more than wiped out by the dramatic disparity in 3-point shooting

### Magic 114, Nets 106

In Orlando, Paolo Banchero handled the finesse part and let his Orlando teammates handle the physicality. He made all six of his shots and eight

of nine free throws, finishing with 21 points, and had nine assists Wednesday night in the Magic's 114-106 win over the Brooklyn Nets.

After sitting out Sunday's loss to Indiana with a right thigh contusion, Suggs established the Magic's physicality from the start, especially on the defensive end.

Thomas led the Nets with 21 points and eight rebounds.

Mikal Bridges scored all 17 of his points in the second half for Brooklyn, and Dennis Schroeder and Cam Johnson added 13 points each.

Suggs hit three 3-pointers and Orlando shot 67% in the first quarter to grab a 33-16 lead.

Thomas and Dennis Smith led a 16-5 run to close out the first half with Brooklyn behind just 61-54.

The Nets were down by eight early in the third quarter when Nic Claxton was called for a technical foul after his



Portland Trail Blazers guard Matisse Thybulle shoots against the Atlanta Hawks during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Portland, Ore., Wednesday, March 13, 2024. (AP) right elbow caught Suggs on the jaw. The first of three technicals on the Nets opened a 19-8 spurt that pushed the Magic's lead back to double figures.

Schroeder scored five points of a 9-0 Brooklyn run that got the Nets back to within 98-90. But Joe Ingles responded with a 3-pointer that bounced high off the board and dropped in with 7:14 remaining.

### Bulls 132, Pacers 129 OT

In Indianapolis, DeMar DeRozan scored 46 points, including the goahead 3-pointer in overtime, to help the Chicago Bulls outlast the Indiana Pacers 132-129.

The All-Star forward's only 3-pointer at the 2:17 mark of overtime pushed the Bulls ahead 127-123. Pacers All-Star point guard Tyrese Haliburton missed a 3-pointer just before the final buzzer.

The final 72 seconds of regulation were particularly entertaining as Pacers center Myles Turner hit 3-pointers on back-to-back possessions with 1:12 and 56.7 seconds remaining for a 3-point lead. But DeRozan sank a free throw and swished a baseline fadeaway jumper with 0.3 seconds remaining to force overtime. Pacers reserves T.J. McConnell and

Jalen Smith scored 16 and 15 as the Indiana bench owned a 47-16 advantage. The Bulls outscored the Pacers 35-

23 in the third quarter to take a 93-85 lead. Caruso contributed 14 points with four 3-pointers in the stretch. DeRozan added nine points.

### Hornets 110, Grizzlies 98

In Memphis, Miles Bridges scored 27 points, rookie Vasa Micic added a career-best 25 and the Charlotte Hornets defeated the Memphis Grizzlies.

Micic shot 9 of 10, including 5 of 6 from 3-point range, and had eight assists. Grant Williams added 18 points for the Hornets. Tre Mann, who missed the previous three games with a groin strain, finished with 10 points, as did Brandon Miller.

GG Jackson led the Grizzlies with 26 points, while Luke Kennard scored 17. Trey Jemison had 14 points and John Konchar finished with 13 points and nine rebounds for the Grizzlies, who have lost three of four.

Early in the fourth quarter, Hornets coach Steve Clifford reminded officials that Charlotte had not shot a free throw through three quarters, The Hornets finally got to the line with 10:13 left in the game. Mann, trying to convert a three-point play, missed the free throw.

### Pistons 113, Raptors 104

In Detroit, Jalen Duren had a careerhigh 23 rebounds along with 24 points and five assists as the Detroit Pistons won three of four games for the first time in nearly two years, beating the Toronto Raptors.

Detroit, which trailed by 16 points in the second quarter, hadn't won three of four since late in the 2021-22 season - a stretch of 145 games.

Duren posted his second game this season with at least 20 points, 20 boards and five assists. Nikola Jokic and Domantas Sabonis are the only other players with two this season.

He became the first Pistons player with such a game before his 23rd birthinstalled at the Stade de France next week, weather permitting.

It will mark the third time that Mondo has installed a new track at the Stade de France, which hosted the athletics world championships in 2003.

"It's laid on the asphalt base and it's glued in place," Stroppiana said. "It's a fairly quick process. We're going to work 24 hours and overnight because of the limited time available and the weather."

Another novelty for Paris is the color of the track, which will be purple for the first time at an Olympics.

"The color was a courageous decision of the local organizing commit-tee," Stroppiana said. "We have never done this color before. It's a light mauve and darker violet. It sort of recalls the landscape of France.'

A three-hour drive across the country is the headquarters of another Italian company and supplier for big-time Olympic sports, Myrtha Pools.

Including training facilities, Myrtha is making 24 pools for swimming, diving, water polo and artistic swimming in Paris. It's the sixth Olympics that Myrtha will be providing pools for.

For the swimming races at La Defense Arena, Myrtha is installing two temporary pools inside the rugby stadium - one for competition and one for warmups and training.

Stainless steel modules being produced at the Myrtha factory in Castiglione delle Stiviere near Verona will be transported to France and bolted together to form the pool walls and floors.

"(Building temporary pools) is a big advantage because this allows us to reinstall the pools after the event," Myrtha CEO Roberto Colletto said.

For example, the pools used at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 - when six world records were set in swimming were reused for the world championships in Fukuoka last year and reinstalled again at local schools in Japan.

Shanto's century powers Bangladesh to 6-wicket win over Sri Lanka

CHATTOGRAM, Bangladesh, March 14, (AP): Captain Najmul Hossain Shanto hit a century as Bangladesh recovered from 23-3 to beat Sri Lanka by six wickets in the opener of their threematch ODI series.

He was unbeaten on 122, including 13 fours and two sixes, which steered Bangladesh to 257-4 in 44.4 overs after Sri Lanka was dismissed for 255 in 48.5 overs.

Shanto fittingly brought up the victory to give Bangladesh 1-0 lead, hitting offspinner Maheesh Theekshana for a boundary through extra over.

Mushfigur Rahim was not out on 73 after sharing 165 runs for the undefeated fifth wicket stand with Shanto.

"The bowlers should be praised because initially it was a tough wicket to bowl on, but they came back strongly," Shanto said.

Pacer Dilshan Madushanka swung the ball admirably to trouble Bangladesh batters and removed two openers in his first two overs. He rattled the stump of opener Liton Das in the first ball of the innings and then had Soumya Sarkar (3) caught by Theekshana at mid-wicket.

His new ball partner Pramod Madushan pegged back Bangladesh after getting rid of Towhid Hridoy for 3.

Shanto and veteran Mahmudullah

steadied the team with 69-run for the third wicket.

Pacer Lahiru Kumara further gave the side an edge when Mahmudullah top-edged a short delivery to Madushanka in square leg after hitting a run-

## CRICKET

a-ball-37.

But the joy was short lived as Shanto and Mushfiqur Rahim patiently dealt with the bowlers to keep Bangladesh afloat.

After bringing up his fifty off 52

balls, Shanto took Sri Lankan bowlers in precision and raised his third century off 108 balls with a cracking cut for a four through cover region against Kumara.

Bangladesh's three-pronged pace attack shared nine wickets amongst them to help the side bundle Sri Lanka in a moderate total.

"Pathum (Nissanka) and Avishka (Fernando) batted really well in the first 10 overs but the middle order struggled a little bit after that," Sri Lanka captain Kusal Mendis said.

Dilshan Madushanka and Pramod Madushan, he added, "bowled really well in the first 10 overs, but when the ball got wetter with the dew it was harder to control the ball and that helped them with the batting."

Tanzim Hasan, who was used as third seamer, claimed 3-44 to give Sri Lanka the initial trouble before Shoriful Islam (3-51) and Taskin Ahmed (3-60) came to the party to rip through Sri Lanka.

Janith Liyanage made team-high 67 off 69 with three fours and two sixes while captain Kusal Mendis hit a 75ball 59.

But after opting to bat first, Sri Lanka made a rapid start with Pathum Nissanka and Avishka Fernando, sharing 71 runs in just 59 balls.

Tanzim broke through with the wicket of Fernando, who made run-aball-33.

Tanzim then dealt double blow, claiming the wicket of Nissanka who made 36 off 28 and Sadeera Samarawickrama in his consecutive two overs, to leave the visitors at 84-3 in 13.1 overs.

Offspinner Mehidy Hasan, who took 1-33 in 10 overs, slowed down Sri Lanka's innings as the run rate dipped below six.

He got the reward for his tight line and length when he got the better of Charith Asalanka for 18 with a delivery that spun sharply.

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## **SPORTS**



The Kuwait cricket team warmly welcomed at Kuwait International Airport following its victorious campaign in the ICC 50 overs Challenge League Play-off in Malaysia.

# Kuwait men's cricket team receives a warm welcome after historic triumph

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The Kuwait Men's National cricket team was warmly welcomed at Kuwait International Airport on March 12, 2024, following its victorious campaign in the ICC 50 overs Challenge League Playoff in Malaysia earlier in the month. Led by captain Mohammad Aslam and guided by coaches Qasim Ali and Shehan Shashika, with Naveen Jayan

## CRICKET

managing, the team received a heartfelt reception from the Kuwait Cricket Contingent, including KCC President Haider Farman, KCC Director General Sajid Ashraf, and other senior KCC officials.

Haider Farman, President of Kuwait Cricket Board, expressed immense joy and satisfaction, labeling the win as historic and groundbreaking for Kuwait Cricket. He attributed the success to the collective efforts of the KCC family over the years, extending congratulations to every member of the Malaysian delegation and the wider KCC community for this notable achievement. Despite initial challenges faced against Saudi Arabia in the league stage, he lauded the team's resilience and skill showcased throughout the tournament.

Sajid Ashraf, KCC Director General, shared in the jubilation, highlighting that Kuwait's qualification for the ICC CWC Challenge League, granting them List A Status by the ICC, fulfilled one of their long-held dreams. He commended the team for their exceptional prowess, determination, and unity, underscoring their journey through 15 List A matches and their pursuit of ICC ODI Status, facilitated by their qualification for the ICC Cricket World Cup Challenge League 2024-2027.

Looking ahead, the Kuwait National Men's Cricket Team is ready for the ACC T20 Men's Premier League in Oman from April 10th to 24th, 2024, after a brief respite. With their recent triumph and newfound momentum, Kuwait aims to maintain their stellar performance on the global cricket stage.

The entire nation stands behind the team, celebrating their accomplishments and eagerly anticipating their future endeavors as they continue to excel in the realm of associate nations cricket.

# **Al-Arabi reclaim league summit**

## **By Hassan Musa** Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Al-Arabi reclaimed the top spot in the Zain Premier League after securing a vital victory over Al-Nasr with a 3-1 scoreline in the opening round of the championship group, also known as the League of Six. This ascendancy was facilitated by Kuwait Club, the former frontrunners were held to a 1-1 draw by Al-Fahaheel.

Despite a draw against Al-Fahaheel in the seventeenth round, Al-Abyad, the defending champions, were not entirely satisfied with their position, slipping to second place with 44 points. Meanwhile, Al-Arabi surged ahead with

## Kuwait Club held by Al-Fahaheel



Players in action during the Zain Premier League soccer match.

45 points, leaving Al-Fahaheel tied with Al-Nasr and Salmiya at 24 points.

Al-Arabi seized control early in their match, with Bandar Salama netting a goal in the fourth minute, followed by Ayman extending the lead in the 37th minute, concluding the first half at 2-0. The dominance continued in the second half as Algerian Imad Eddine Abu Bakr's header secured their third goal, with Al-Nasr managing a consolation goal in stoppage time through Colom-

bian Hancel Zapata.

In the clash between Kuwait Club and Al-Fahaheel, Kuwait's early lead from a penalty kick was nullified by Al-Fahaheel's late equalizer in the 88th minute, resulting from Brazilian Vitor's cross deflecting off defender Fahad Hammoud into the net.

Elsewhere, Al-Qadisiya displayed a dominant performance, securing a

4-0 victory over Al-Salmiya, narrow-

## SOCCER

ing the gap with the league leaders to three points and trailing second-placed Kuwait by two points. Consequently, Al-Salmiya dropped to sixth place in the standings. Firas Al-Khatib, the Syrian coach

Firas Al-Khatib, the Syrian coach of Al-Fahaheel, highlighted his team's near-victory against Kuwait, emphasizing their participation in the League of Six for the enjoyment of football without undue pressure. He expressed his team's ambition to secure fourth place and viewed the matches against top teams as an opportunity to assess their current standing in the season.

## **Best of the Rest**

## Luton prevented from climbing out of the relegation zone

Bournemouth come back from 3-0 down



Luton Town's Reece Burke (left) and Bournemouth's Dominic Solanke vie for the ball, during the English Premier League soccer match between Bournemouth and Luton Town, at the Vitality Stadium, in Bournemouth, England. (AP)

## Argentine exits early because of leg injury

## Messi & Suárez lead the way as Miami eliminates Nashville in Champions Cup

FORT LAUDERDALE, March 14, (AP): Lionel Messi had a goal and an assist before leaving the game due to a leg injury as Inter Miami beat Nashville 3-1 in the second leg of the CON-CACAF Champions Cup round-of-16 matchup.

Messi found his former Barcelona teammate, Luis Suárez, in stride for a goal that opened scoring in the eighth minute. The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner then added a first-half goal to give Inter Miami an early 2-0 lead.

The Argentine superstar checked out of the match in the 50th minute. Coach Gerardo "Tata" Martino said after the game that Messi is dealing with a mild leg injury that started bothering him during the game, so the team took him out as a precaution.

He had rested during Sunday's 3-2



Inter Miami forward Luis Suárez defends Nashville SC defender Josh Bauer during the second half of a CONCACAF Champions Cup soccer match in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. (AP)

loss to Montreal, which is the only game he has missed this season.

Martino said Messi will likely miss the team's MLS match Saturday against D.C. United.

"I don't want to risk it," Martino said. He added that Messi will undergo tests, and the team will evaluate from there.

Messi was replaced Wednesday by Robert Taylor, who scored in the 63rd minute to give Inter Miami a 3-0 lead.

Inter Miami advanced to the CON-CACAF Champions Cup quarterfinals with the win and 5-3 advantage in aggregate goals in the total-goals series.

The teams had tied in the first leg in Nashville last Thursday. Messi scored

## SOCCER

in regulation, and Suárez scored the tying goal in stoppage time to rally Miami to a 2-2 draw. Messi went down late in regulation of that game when Nashville defender Lukas Macnaughton stepped on his left calf. A trainer checked on Messi, who remained on the pitch.

He had been listed as questionable with a shin injury entering Sunday's game against Montreal, but Martino said after that match that the plan was always to rest Messi for that game.

The rest seemed to bode well for Messi's performance Wednesday, as he wasted no time making an impact.

He earned a free kick after a foul by Nashville's Aníbal Godoy just four minutes into the match, but had his attempt blocked. The 36-year-old seized his opportunity a few minutes later, using his impressive vision to fit a pass to a streaking Suárez, who sent the ball into bottom right corner of the net.

# to beat Luton 4-3 in the Premier League

BOURNEMOUTH, England, March 14, (AP): Bournemouth completed a stunning comeback to beat Luton 4-3 in the Premier League after being 3-0 down at halftime.

Antoine Semenyo's 83rd-minute strike at Vitality Stadium sealed the win for Bournemouth and prevented Luton from climbing out of the relegation zone.

Bournemouth is the third team in Premier League history to come back from 3-0 down at halftime and win. Manchester United and Wolverhampton were the other two teams to achieve that feat.

"I haven't been involved in a game like that before," Semenyo said. "Even when we are down at halftime we know that man to man our game is about bravery. So in the second half whether we are down or up we are going to be pressing the same way. We know that we are going to have chances and second half today was amazing."

Luton had looked set to climb up to 17th in the standings and above Nottingham Forest on goal difference after strikes from Tahith Chong, Chiedozie Ogbene and Ross Barkley before halftime. But Bournemouth powered back after the break through Dominic Solanke, Illia Zabarnyi and a double from Semenyo.

"It's going to hurt but we have to pick ourselves up," Luton manager Rob Edwards said. "We have another huge game (against Forest) in a few days time and we've got no other option but to pick ourselves up and go again."

## SOCCER

The game had been rescheduled after the original fixture was abandoned when Luton captain Tom Lockyer suffered a cardiac arrest on the field in December.

Lockyer was in attendance along with the medical staff who treated him on the field and received a standing ovation from fans.

He was soon celebrating with the rest of the visiting fans when Chong headed Luton in front in the ninth.



PSG's Kylian Mbappe (right), and Reims' Amir Richardson fight for the ball during the French League One soccer match between Paris Saint-Germain and Reims at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris, France. (AP)

## Mbappé on target as PSG reach French Cup semifinals

PARIS, March 14, (AP): Kylian Mbappé returned to the starting lineup and took just 14 minutes to score as Paris Saint-Germain beat Nice 3-1 to reach the French Cup semifinals.

He started the past two league games on the bench as part of coach Luis Enrique's rotation policy, which most observers accept involves leaving out Mbappé to prepare for next season without him.

Mbappé looked sharp, expertly

swapping waist-high passes with midfielder Fabián Ruiz and putting the ball between goalkeeper Marcin Bułka's legs for his 35th goal of the season. Ten minutes later, Mbappé hit the post with a deflected shot.

PSG has won the trophy a record 14 times - but not since 2021 - and faced a Nice team that is the only one to beat PSG in the league this season.

Bułka made an awful blunder for the second goal, botching a clearance and

spinning around unaware of where the ball was landing. Ruiz profited to roll it into an empty net in the 33rd.

But PSG's defense remains vulnerable, as it has been for several years.

Nice pulled a goal back four minutes later when striker Gaëtan Laborde - who scored in September when Nice won in Paris - was unmarked on the right of the penalty area and guided a low half-volley into the left corner. **Mullins secures 100th win:** Top Irish trainer Willie Mullins secured a milestone 100th Cheltenham Festival win on Wednesday when Jasmin de Vaux raced to victory in the Weatherbys Champion Bumper.

Mullins is the most successful trainer in the history of the prestigious jumps meeting and reached his landmark figure with three wins on the day after earlier victories for Ballyburn and Fact To File.

"I thought my lifetime achievement was when I had a winner here in Cheltenham in the Supreme Novices' Hurdle back in 1995 and who ever dreamt any trainer, never mind me, could do it," he said.

To make the moment even more special, Mullins' son, Patrick, rode Jasmin de Vaux to victory.

"He has redefined what is possible and I'm just very privileged to get the 100 for my father - it's a special moment," the jockey said. Mullins had been left on 99 wins

Mullins had been left on 99 wins when odds-on favorite El Fabiolo pulled up in the Queen Mother Champion Chase and outsider Captain Guinness took the race earlier in the day. But he didn't have to wait long

But he didn't have to wait long for his century as Jasmin de Vaux finished ahead of Romeo Coolio and Jalon D'oudairies.

Mullins won his first race at the festival 29 years ago when Tourist Attraction triumphed in the Supreme Novices' Hurdle.

"I'm just delighted, I wouldn't say emotional," he said. "When I started out I didn't think anyone would ever train 100 Cheltenham winners and I certainly didn't think it would be me." (AP)

**Diaz, Jorge get rematch:** Nate Diaz and Jorge Masvidal are set for a rematch. This one, though, will happen in the ring instead of the octagon.

octagon. The former UFC headliners will square off June 1 at the Kia Forum in Inglewood, California, in a boxing match, promoters announced Wednesday.

Wednesday. Diaz and Masvidal last fought in the main event at UFC 244 in 2019 at Madison Square Garden in New York. Masvidal won that MMA fight via a technical knockout in the fourth round; the ringside physician stopped it because Diaz was cut above the eye, blood pouring down his face.

This time, they're scheduled to go 10 rounds at 175 pounds in an event dubbed "Last Man Standing."

Diaz and Masvidal are no longer active in UFC. Diaz is a free agent and Masvidal has retired, although he remains under contract to the series. (AP)



Some members of the Kuwait cricket team are welcomed at the Kuwait International Airport upon their return home, following their win in the ICC 50 overs Challenge League Play-off in Malaysia. - See Page 15



# Latest sports scores at — http://sports.arabtimesonline.com **Oblak heroics propel Atletico to CL quarters**

Inter out on intense penalty shootout

MADRID, March 14, (AP): With tears in his eyes, Diego Simeone stared at the Atletico Madrid fans celebrating in the Metropolitano Stadium stands.

Minutes earlier, the coach was pacing back and forth by the sideline, unable to watch the tense penalty shootout that ended with Atletico triumphing over Inter Milan and advancing to the quarterfinals of the Champions League.

Jan Oblak made two saves and Lautaro Martínez sent his shot over the crossbar as Atletico defeated Inter 3-2 on penalties after scoring a late winner in regulation.

"It was moving," Simeone said. "I'm happy for the players and for the fans. We are among the best eight teams in Europe again. That tells a lot



Atletico Madrid's head coach Diego Simeone celebrates at the end of the Champions League, round of 16, second leg soccer match against Inter Milan at the Metropolitano stadium in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

about this club.'

Oblak saved the penalties by Alexis Sánchez and Davy Klaassen before Martínez missed the final kick for last year's runner-up in the European competition.

"In the end it's a bit about luck in the shootout," Oblak said. "Because you have to choose the correct side and you have to make the stop. If the player takes the kick perfectly, it's impossible to stop it. Gladly, I was able to make the saves. What matters is the victory and that we made it to the quarterfinals."

SOCCER

Memphis Depay, Rodrigo Riquelme and Ángel Correa converted their penalties for Atletico, with Saúl Ñíguez having his shot saved by Inter goalkeeper Yann Sommer. Hakan Calhanoglu and Francesco Acerbi scored for the visitors in the shootout.

Atletico reversed the 1-0 first-leg loss after Depay scored an 87th-minute goal that gave Simeone's team a 2-1 win in regulation.

Atletico didn't make it past the group stage last season and was eliminated by Manchester City in the last eight in 2021-22.

Inter, which lost last year's final to Man City, had arrived at the Metropolitano Stadium enjoying a 13-game winning streak. It hadn't lost in 15 consecutive games in all competitions and had won all of its matches in 2024. "We must be proud of what we

did in this Champions League," Inter coach Simone Inzaghi said. "In the second half we should have done better. In extra time we had more energy but unfortunately we made too many mistakes.'

Inter opened the scoring in regulation with Federico Dimarco in the 33rd, but Atletico equalized two minutes later with Antoine Griezmann in until Depay broke through with the late winner with a low shot from inside the area after a nice set up by midfielder Koke Resurrección. Inter had increased its first-leg lead with Dimarco scoring with a low shot

from the middle of the area after a pass by Nicolo Barella following a break-

The hosts dominated the final part of

the match and created several chances

### away in the 33rd.

But it didn't take long for Atletico to answer, equalizing a couple of minutes later with Griezmann scoring after picking up a loose ball inside the area.

Griezmann was making his return to action after spraining his ankle in the first leg in Italy three weeks ago. The France forward has been key for At-

letico this season but hadn't scored in eight consecutive matches in all competitions

Barella had a chance to add Inter's second goal in a breakaway in the 82nd but he got off a weak shot in a one-onone situation with Oblak. Depay had hit the post in the 85th, a few minutes after coming off the bench to replace Álvaro Morata.

## **Navarro stuns Sabalenka in three sets as Gauff advances to last 8 on her birthday**

INDIAN WELLS, March 14: (AP): Emma Navarro beat second-seeded Aryna Sabalenka 6-3, 3-6, 6-2 in the fourth round of the BNP Paribas Open on Wednesday for the biggest win of the young American's career.

Morocco selects Díaz for friendlies MADRID, March 14, (AP): Brahim be welcomed in his squad.

Díaz was selected in Morocco's Díaz was a regular in Spain's youth squade including coached by De la Fuente. He won his solitary senior cap, and scored a goal, in a 4-0 win over Lithuania in a June 2021 friendly match. The under-21 squad was called up for that game because senior players were isolating due to COVID-19. FIFA, soccer's world governing body, must process any request by a member federation for a player to change national-team eligibility, although Diaz is a routine case as he has never played a competitive senior game for Spain.

PSV beaten 3-1 on aggregate

## Sancho, Reus send Dortmund to quarterfinals

DORTMUND, Germany, March 14, (AP): Jadon Sancho scored early and Marco Reus netted late to send Borussia Dortmund to the Champions League quarterfinals with a 2-0 win over PSV Eindhoven in the second leg of their last 16 tie.



and Donyell Malen missed another good chance against his former team. The Dutch visitors only started threat-

ening after 25 minutes. Gregor Kobel saved an effort from Johan Bakayoko, then another from Guus Til.

PSV coach Peter Bosz took Til off

Inter Milan's Benjamin Pavard, (left), fights for the ball with Atletico Madrid's Angel Correa during the Champions League, round of 16, second leg soccer match between Atletico Madrid and Inter Milan at the Metropolitano stadium in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

his return from injury.

The eight teams in the draw for the quarterfinals are Atletico, Dortmund, Bayern Munich, Paris Saint-Germain, Real Madrid, Manchester City, Arsenal and Barcelona.

It was an open match at the Metropolitano Stadium, with Atletico pressing forward from the start and Inter threatening on counterattacks.

Navarro improved to 18-5 this year. with her victories leading the WTA Tour. She is 11-2 in three-set matches. The 2021 NCAA singles champion from Virginia reached her fourth quarterfinal of the year and first at the 1000 level.

"I was able to stay aggressive on returns even though she has a really good serve," Navarro said in an oncourt interview. "Played some better service games in the third set and just was able to put a lot of pressure on her throughout. I think that's what made the difference."

Sabalenka, the Australian Open champion, trailed 1-4 in the third set and won just one more game before getting broken on Navarro's second match point.

"It's never easy coming out and playing an opponent like that, so experienced and just so talented, obviously." Navarro said. "She made it really tough on me today, but I was able to play some good tennis in the big moments."

The 22-year-old American won the title at Hobart early in the year.

Navarro moves on to the quarterfinals against ninth-seeded Maria Sakkari, who beat Diane Parry, 6-2, 3-6, 6-3.

### **TENNIS**

Coco Gauff celebrated her 20th birthday with a 6-0, 6-2 win in just over an hour against Elise Mertens to reach the quarters for the second consecutive year in the Southern California desert.

"Today was one of my best matches since the Australian Open," Gauff told the Tennis Channel. "I was definitely trying to be aggressive. That just made the difference. I don't think she felt she could step in on me."

Mertens, who knocked off Naomi Osaka in the third round, trailed 6-0, 2-0 before she broke Gauff and then fought through a five-deuce game on her serve for a 2-2 tie. But Gauff reeled off the final four games to improve to 4-0 in her career against the Belgian.

"I did really well playing deep in the court and mixing up the pace on her,' Gauff said. "She can do really well when it's all the same pace.'

Gauff won 84% of her first serves and won six of eight break points. She formed a  $\tilde{2}$  and a zero with her

hands to acknowledge her special day,

**Editor-in-Chief** 

**AHMED AL JARALLAH** 

for two friendlies later this beirns month, ending speculation about the Real Madrid winger's possible future with the Spanish national team.

The Spanish daily Marca and other local media reported the move earlier this week. Spanish media said the national team's lack of interest in Díaz played a role in his decision, with Morocco active in trying to recruit him.

Spain coach Luis de la Fuente responded to those reports by saying he'd respect Díaz's decision. He added that only individuals who want to play for Spain would

with mom Candi dancing in the players' box. Gauff blew out the candles on a cake she was presented by the Tennis Channel and then lifted it up and took a bite.

Yuan Yue of China defeated 11thseed Daria Kasatkina, 4-6, 6-4, 6-3 in 2 1/2 hours to reach her first quarterfinal at a WTA 1000 tournament. Yuan took out No. 8 seed Quiwen Zheng in the second round and plays Gauff next.

**Editorial Office:** 

**Airport Road, Shuwaikh** 

On the men's side, fourth-seeded Daniil Medvedev had just eight winners in a 6-4, 6-4 win over 13th-seeded Grigor Dimitrov. Medvedev held at love to close out the match for his seventh win in 10 career matches over Dimitrov.

No. 7 seed Holger Rune outlasted 2022 winner Taylor Fritz, 2-6, 7-6 (2), 6-3. He'll play Medvedev in the quarterfinals

Sancho scored in the third minute and Reus sealed the win in the fifth minute of stoppage time to complete Dortmund's 3-1 win on aggregate after the teams drew the first leg 1-1 in Eindhoven.

## SOCCER

Dortmund, which reached the final in 2013, is into the last eight for the first time in three years.

"We're looking forward to the next round because a big opponent awaits us." Niclas Füllkrug said of Friday's quarterfinal draw.

Dortmund coach Edin Terzić bemoaned his team's poor second half after starting with what he said was "the best 30 minutes of the season."

Ian Maatsen tested PSV goalkeeper Walter Benítez in the second minute before Sancho scored the next.

Julian Brandt sent the England forward through to score his second goal in as many games for Dortmund with a precise shot inside the bottom left cor-

Dortmund's Mats Hummels, (right), heads the ball during the Champi ons League round of 16 second leg soccer match between Borussia Dortmund and PSV Eindhoven at the Signal Iduna Park in Dortmund, Germany. (AP)

ner. Sancho scored his first goal since returning from Manchester United for Dortmund to beat Werder Bremen in the Bundesliga on Saturday.

Dortmund should have scored more as the home team's intensity overwhelmed PSV. Füllkrug drew a shot wide with only the goalkeeper to beat, for Mexico forward Hirving Lozano at the break and his team emerged with more bite.

Terzić was clearly unhappy with the visitors' revival after Lozano struck the post. Then Kobel denied Bakayoko at his near post in the 71st, shortly before Sancho had to go off injured. Reus went on in his place.

One of Reus' first touches was to deliver a free kick that Füllkrug met to score, but the goal was ruled out for offside after a VAR check.

PSV captain Luuk de Jong missed the visitors' best chance before Reus sealed the win at the other end.

"We dominated the second half without creating any huge chances, until right at the end, when I should have scored," de Jong said.

In the other Champions League match Wednesday, Atletico Madrid defeated Inter Milan on penalties.

The eight teams in the draw for the quarterfinals are Atletico, Dortmund, Bayern Munich, Paris Saint-Germain, Real Madrid, Manchester City, Arsenal and Barcelona.

## Milan's current and former owners say allegations from prosecutors are false

Bird added.

MILAN, March 14, (AP): AC Milan's current and former American owners each said that allegations from Italian prosecutors disputing who runs the seven-time European champion are false.

Milan's offices were raided by police as part of an investigation by Italian prosecutors into the sale of the Serie A giant.

RedBird Capital Partners purchased Milan from fellow American firm Elliott Management in August 2022, but Milan prosecutors claim Elliott still owns and controls the Italian club.

"RedBird Fund IV and its investors own 99.93% of AC Milan; the other 0.07% are individual legacy Italian investors that are long standing fans of the club. The notion that RedBird doesn't own and control AC Milan is just false and contradicts all the evidence and facts," RedBird said in a statement.

"When we took control of the club upon closing, Elliott provided loan financing to RedBird with a term of three years and no voting rights," Red-

"this allegation (from the Milan prosecutors) is false. "AC Milan was sold to RedBird on 31st August 2022. As of that date, the

In a separate statement, Elliott said

Elliott funds have had no equity interest in, or control over, AC Milan," Elliott added.

Italian financial police also reportedly searched the homes of current CEO Giorgio Furlani and former chief executive Ivan Gazidis, who held the role from 2018 to 2022.

Furlani and Gazidis are being investigated for allegedly hiding information related to the sale from the Italian soccer federation.

Milan said it is a "third party and extraneous to the ongoing legal action," adding that it was "giving its full cooperation to the investigating authority.

Milan could nevertheless be fined or docked points by the Italian soccer federation.

RedBird also addressed speculation that the club is courting new investors in Saudi Arabia or elsewhere.



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