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DEPUTY P.M. CALLS FOR UNIFIED EFFORTS AMID RISING CONCERNS 'Act decisively on security threats'

Commerce moves to verify authenticity of certificates

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: Minister of Commerce and Industry, Abdullah Al-Joaan, has instructed all departments under his authority to conduct a comprehensive inventory of the educational certificates of employees, spanning a period of approximately 23 years, reports Al-Rai daily.

The Minister has specified that this audit should encompass

certificates obtained by employees since January 1, 2001.

The purpose of this directive is to compile and verify the authenticity of these certificates, with the intention of submitting them to the Civil Service Commission to ensure their integrity.

Mol urges child supervision, traffic caution during Ramadan

KUWAIT CITY, March 21, (KUNA): Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Acting Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, emphasized today the importance of unified efforts and coordination across sectors, intensifying security measures, promptly addressing issues, and taking decisive action against any individual who threatens the country's security.

These directives were issued in a statement by Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, as reported in a press release by the General Administration of Security Relations and Media, following his chairmanship of a security meeting with assistant undersecretaries of the Ministry of Interior. He congratulated the newly appointed undersecretaries for earning the trust of the political leadership, recognizing their dedicated efforts in safeguarding national security.

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef urged continued diligence, integrity, dedication, and the implementation of action plans for modernization and development across all sectors. He emphasized the importance of maintaining an open-door policy and actively engaging in the field to realize the vision of the political leadership and uphold institutional excellence.

Furthermore, he stressed the imperative of enhancing security and traffic measures nationwide to ensure the safety of children, especially in light of the upcoming "Girgi'an" celebration during the holy month of Ramadan. He underscored the necessity of implementing measures to address any violations of the law.

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Day by Day

THE saying "whoever lives by deception dies of poverty" rings true for swindlers whose lives often lead to imprisonment, persecution,

and legal proceedings.

Those who resort to deception not only harm themselves but also corrupt their children and families. By feeding them ill-gotten gains, they subject their loved ones to a life built on lies, deceit, and falsehoods.

Eventually, the truth comes to light, and they face the consequences of their actions. Such individuals are met with disdain and condemnation from society

.. Yet tomorrow is another day

Zahed Matar

'Amend Constitution'

Court to rule Sunday on 'disqualifications'

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh and **Jaber Al-Hamoud** Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: The Court of Appeals has set a session on Sunday to rule on the disqualification cases of 2024 parliamentary election candidates Marzouq Al-Habini, Marzouq Al-Khalifa,

Ahmed Mutee and Jaber Al-Muhailbi.

Earlier, the Administrative Court canceled the decision to disqualify Marzouq Al-Khalifa and Ahmed Mutee; thereby, putting their names back to the list of candidates for the upcoming parliamentary election.

The court rejected the appeal of Fifth Constituency candidates Jaber Al-Muhailbi and Marzouq Al-Habini against the decision to remove them from the list of

The court received electoral appeals from some candidates disqualified by the Ministry of Interior, demanding in their appeals to cancel the decision to disqualify them and re-register their candidacy in the electoral district in which they were registered.

This came after the ministry decided to disqualify some candidates for failing to fulfill one of the electoral conditions due to their conviction for the crime of participating in by-elections.

The ministry informed Ahmed Mutee. Jaber Al-Muhailbi, Marzouq Al-Habini, Marzouq Al-Khalifa, Sheikh Mishal Al-Malik, Mohammad Al-Juwaihil, Walid Al-Nasser, Mohammad Al-Azmi, Hani Hussein, Adel Al-Saeedi and Mubarak Trad about their disqualification; in addition to three other candidates who failed to complete the registration procedures.

Meanwhile, Fourth Constituency candidate Musaed Al-Qeraifa said the Constitution must be amended; because the State should not be managed according to the mentalities of the people in the 1960s, "considering we are in 2024."

In a podcast interview, Al-Qeraifa stressed that Kuwait is no longer a testing field for members of the Sabah Family to be appointed as prime ministers.

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Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Thursday a cable of congratulations to the Republic of Namibia's President Dr. Nangolo Mbumba on the occasion of his country's Independence Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished him long-lasting health and further progress and prosperity for his country. (KUNA)

CAIRO: The Permanent Kuwaiti Representative to the League of Arab States Ambassador Talal Khalid Al-Mutairi, reaffirmed Thursday that despite the challenges, the League remains a sanctuary for all Arabs.

In honour of the 79th anniversary of the establishment of the League, the Ambassador gave a statement to KUNA saying that the League proved itself in being a home to all Arabs and an important platform for the aspirations of the Arab nation. (KUNA)

Ramadan Timings

| Iftar | Friday | 18:01 |
|-------|----------|-------|
| Imsak | Saturday | 04:26 |
| Iftar | Saturday | 18:02 |
| Imook | Sunday | 04.25 |



Ministry of Interior photo

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Acting Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah chairs a security meeting with assistant undersecretaries of the Ministry of Interior on Thursday.

Other Voices

10 records set in China-Kuwait relations

Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait

March 22 this year marks the 53rd anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Kuwait. Since the establishment of diplomatic ties, China-Kuwait relations have withstood the vicissitudes of the international landscape and enjoyed sound and steady growth, ensuring productive cooperation in various fields.

Our bilateral relationship, always a pacesetter in China's

exchange with other countries in the region, has played an

exemplary role, creating many "firsts" and records. I. Kuwait was the first among Gulf countries to send a senior delegation to visit the People's Republic of China (PRC). In February 1965, the late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah who was then Minister

of Finance, Commerce and Industry led a delegation to the PRC. The senior delegation, the first from Kuwait and even from Gulf countries to visit the PRC, was given a warm reception by the Chinese side. The then Chinese leaders met with Sheikh Jaber during his visit when he stressed that Kuwait recognizes the PRC and supports the one-China principle. That visit, a prelude to official exchanges between China and Kuwait, paved the way for the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two nations several years later.

II. Kuwait was the first Gulf Arab country to establish diplomatic relations with the PRC. In March 1971, China and Kuwait announced the establishment of diplomatic relations, opening the door to friendly exchanges between Gulf Arab countries and China. In

the same year, Kuwait voted in favor of China's return to the United Nations (UN). Over the years, Kuwait has been committed to the one-China principle, and China has been giving Kuwait firm support for its efforts to maintain national stability and explore a development path suited to its national conditions. Our two nations have always supported each other on issues involving our respective core interests and major concerns. After Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, China expressed firm opposition to it, and made utmost efforts in its capacity as a permanent member of the UN Security Council for the restoration of Kuwait's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. Following the end of the Gulf War, China has always supported firmly Kuwait's legitimate aspirations on legacy issues of the war and worked to promote the proper settlement of the relevant issues.

III. Kuwait has in China the largest diplomatic presence across the world. Kuwait is now represented by four diplomatic missions that include the embassy in Beijing and three general consulates in the cities of Guangzhou, Hong Kong and Shanghai. The size of its diplomatic representation in China attests to the significance of China-Kuwait

relations and the breadth and depth of bilateral cooperation. IV. Kuwait was the first Arab state to offer and has made itself the Arab state offering the largest amount of government concessional loans to China. In 1982, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) started to offer China concessional loans. Over the past 40 years and more, it has granted concessional loans worth about 305 million Kuwait dinar in total to 40 projects in the areas of infrastructure, education, health, agriculture and environmental protection, making positive contributions to the development of local areas in China especially the central and western regions. Today, China has become the second largest source of foreign direct investment in Kuwait,

while Kuwait continues to give China support on the rural revitalization strategy. This longstanding friendship is particularly precious to

V. Kuwait is the only GCC country where a Chinese medical team is stationed. As early as 1976, China began to dispatch a medical team to Kuwait. In the ensuing four decades and more, China has sent to Kuwait a total of 245 medical workers in 24 groups that have diagnosed and treated over 800,000 patients. China sending medical teams epitomizes bilateral cooperation on healthcare and demonstrates the special bonds of friendship between us. Facing the challenges posed by Covid-19, China and Kuwait have stood to-Ambassador Zhang gether and looked out for each other, as China

Jianwei dispatched a medical expert team to assist Kuwait and Kuwait donated medical supplies to China. Our joint efforts to beat the virus has left a splendid chapter in the annals of bilateral cooperation on health safety and

VI. China has become the largest trading partner of Kuwait. China has remained the biggest trading partner of Kuwait for nine years in a row, meaning that economic and trade cooperation between the two sides has become and will continue to serve as an important anchor. In 2023, China-Kuwait trade volume reached 22.39 billion U.S. dollars, soaring more than 100 times over the early days of diplomatic ties. And China imported 24.53 million tons of crude oil from Kuwait, making itself the second largest crude oil importer of Kuwait. In addition to traditional trade of crude oil, bilateral trade has been on the upgrade, with a notable increase in China's export of machinery products and automobiles to Kuwait. As China's high-quality development is advancing at a faster pace, economic and trade cooperation between our two nations will embrace broader prospects.

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Kuwaiti doctor honored for Gaza humanitarian efforts

Healing amidst crisis

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: According to Dr. Hussein Al-Quwaian, a consultant orthopedic surgeon and a member of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society's volunteer medical team in the Gaza Strip, the team performed 23 complex surgical operations during its short visit to the Gaza

In a press statement issued to Al-Seyassah on the sidelines of the annual ghabqa of the Kuwait Association of Surgeons the day before yesterday during which he was honored, Dr. Al-Quwaian said, "I am ashamed of this honor, as I am an orthopedic surgeon, just like all the other orthopedic surgeons in Kuwait whose desire and willingness I trust to travel to help and support the Palestinian medical team in Gaza, if they are given the opportunity

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KUWAIT CITY, March 21: The Ministry of Finance disclosed that the total general budget deficit for the first ten months of the fiscal year 2023-2024 stood at 1.09 billion dinars, marking a notable decrease from the anticipated deficit projected to reach

approximately 6.8 billion dinars

Finance reports

'reduced' deficit

by the fiscal year's end, reports Al-Qabas daily. According to a report issued by the Ministry, budget revenues from April 1, 2023, to the end of January 2024, reached around 17.8 billion dinars, predominantly sourced from oil revenues amounting to 16.3 billion dinars. Non-oil revenues totaled approximately 1.4 billion dinars, with taxes

and fees contributing 347 million dinars.



Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, receives visiting US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken in Jeddah late Wednesday night to discuss bilateral and regional issues. (AP)

Expected weather for next 24 hrs: By Day: Mild and cloudy to partly cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind, with speeds of 10-40 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times and a chance

Weather for rising dust over open areas.

By Night: Rather cold and partly cloudy with light to moderate southeasterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 06--32 km/h with a chance for fog forming over some areas.

Max Exp Min Rec Station **Kuwait City** 26 27 26 27 25 Kuwait Airport Abdaly Jahra Salmiyah Nuwaisib Wafra

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

Minister issues transfer orders of 7 Mol officials

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah recently issued decisions on the transfer and appointment of seven officials in the Ministry of Interior, reports Al-Qabas daily.



These decisions include the transfer of Assistant Undersecretary Major General Badr Al-Baloul from the Education Sector to the Correctional Institutions and Prisons Sector and Assistant Undersecretary for Public Security Sector Major General Abdullah Al-Rajaib to the Office of the Minister.

The minister also appointed Major General Hamad Al-Munaifi as Assistant Undersecretary for the Public Security Sector, Major General Yousef Al-Khadda as Assistant Undersecretary for the Operations and Traffic Sector, Major General Fawaz Al-Khaled as Assistant Undersecretary for the Education Sector, Major General Mujbil bin Shawq as Assistant Undersecretary for the Borders Sector and Major General Ali Al-Adwani as Assistant Undersecretary for the Resi-



KUNA photo

Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya is pictured with heads of diplomatic missions and international organizations in Kuwait.

FM Al-Yahya receives foreign envoys to Kuwait

Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya received on Wednesday heads of diplomatic missions of several countries and international organizations in Kuwait on the occasion of the holy month of Rama-

The minister conveyed to his guests the greetings

of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

He expressed appreciation of the deep-rooted relations between the State of Kuwait and the friendly

Al-Yahya also expressed best wishes for his guests and their countries, as well as the Arab and Muslim na-

The meeting was attended by Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and senior officials of the Foreign Ministry. (KUNA)

'Bonus to be deposited around Eid'

MoSA allocates KD1.5 million for

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs Abdulaziz Sari announced that the Ministry of Finance has approved approximately 1.5 million dinars for disbursing rewards to eligible employees, matching the previous year's allocation, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Despite an increase in the ministry's overall workforce and those entitled to bonuses, efforts are underway to deposit the bonuses into the accounts of eligible individuals before or immediately after Eid al-Fitr.

In a press statement, Sari explained that annual evaluations for all ministry employees have been completed in accordance with the Civil Service Commission's guidelines.

These evaluations are based on job performance, with 70% attributed to ministry performance and 30% to bureau performance, verified through fingerprint attendance records. Efforts are being made to expedite the evaluation process for simple cases.

Sari emphasized that rewards will

only be granted to eligible employees who meet all disbursement criteria, including having worked a minimum of 180 days throughout the year.

The value of excellent work rewards varies according to job grade, with assistant agents receiving up to 2,000 dinars and department heads receiving up to 1,000 dinars. Employees must contact the Civil Service Commission for approval before receiving rewards for service-related

Regarding automatic linking with the Service Bureau for attendance monitoring, Sari stated that the Ministry completed the process last year and is awaiting approval from Bureau

This linkage facilitates monitoring attendance and implementing penalties for non-compliance, such as delay and sickness deductions. Additionally, the Ministry is awaiting approval from five government agencies to complete the automatic connection for disbursing social assistance



KUNA photo

The 49th relief plane from the Kuwaiti Air Bridge to provide relief aid to Gaza is ready for take-off at Kuwait Airport.

National Guard lauds Amir's HQ visit

Call to implement royal directives

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: Deputy Chief of the National Guard Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf recently presided over the meeting of the Supreme Council of the National Guard,

with Undersecretary of the National Guard Lieutenant General Engineer Hashim Al-Rifai and senior officials in attendance, reports Al-Jarida daily. Sheikh Faisal



Al-Nawaf affirmed that he is proud of the honorable visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, to the National Guard General Presidency where he met with his sons – the leaders and officers -- during the holy month. This is an annual tradition that embodies the political leadership's interest in the military sector, he asserted.

He stressed that the lofty directives of His Highness the Amir during the visit are a beacon that lights the way and establishes firm rules and a road map for the continuation of the work and achievement in the National Guard. He confirmed that the National Guard draws lessons from such lofty directives to continue to play its role in maintaining national security and stability; while supporting the ministries of Defense and Interior, Kuwait Firefighting Force and State institutions, especially those of a strategic nature, under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir.

He said he instructed the commanders and officers to implement the royal directives; follow up the implementation of action, modernization and development plans in all areas; go out to the field and follow the open-door policy in order to achieve the vision of the political leadership, and preserve the process of institutional excellence that always receives praise from His Highness the Amir.

KPC CEO confirms development of disbursing 'rewards' to workers Durra field jointly with Saudi Arabia

211 nationalities withdrawn from March 4 till date

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Sabah has confirmed the development of Durrah field jointly with Saudi Arabia, reports Al-

Sheikh Nawaf disclosed that "the design phase of the project will be completed in the next few months. We will soon take the investment decision to start work in the field and develop it."

The Standard & Poor's Commodity Trading Agency quoted Sheikh Nawaf as saying during the 'CERAweek'

conference organized by the agency, "Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) is planning to start work in an offshore oil area for the first time. It will seek assistance from major international oil companies as it aims to enhance its declining production capacity. We are looking forward to a new business model in the new maritime work area to attract global expertise. Kuwait currently produces less than three million barrels per day due to OPEC+ cuts, but it



Sheikh Nawaf

intends to increase its production to more than four million barrels per day compared to 2.4 million barrels per day in February.

He pointed out that Kuwait is working hard to increase the refining of crude oil in its three refineries to maximize its exports of the most profitable light oil, explaining that these refineries currently refine 1.4 million barrels per day, with expectations to raise it to 1.6 million barrels soon.

He said Al-Zour Refinery works with as much oil refining as possible. "We are trying to maximize the capacity of the refinery, while obtaining lower returns in the refining market. This means that we can increase Kuwaiti oil exports to achieve higher returns.

As for the Red Sea tensions, he indicated that KPC was forced to divert its shipments around the Cape of Good Hope due to the Red Sea attacks; while giving the naval crews of its tankers autonomy regarding sailing to the Red Sea.

211 nationalities pulled: The number of individuals whose nationality was withdrawn from March 4 till date (within two weeks) totaled 211, reports Al-Qabas daily quoting a reliable source.

The source revealed that the forged and dual nationalities files are currently on the table of the Supreme Committee for Citizenship and are subject to scrutiny in preparation for withdrawal after verifying suspicions.

The source explained that the withdrawal files are divided into these categories: counterfeit, fraud, deception in obtaining citizenship, dual nationalities, and non-Kuwaiti women who married Kuwaitis for the purpose of obtaining Kuwaiti citizenship and divorced immediately after their naturalization; that is, through the husband agreeing with the wife to divorce even before their marriage. He said those with dual nationalities can either give up or retain the Kuwaiti citizenship

The source added the Ministry of Interior received 407 reports about cases of fraud and dual nationalities after opening the hotline for receiving such reports, and they are currently being carefully studied and investigated to confirm suspicions before submitting them to the Supreme Committee for Citizenship for the neces-

The source pointed out that the citizenship withdrawal decisions are based on relevant decrees and the decision of the Supreme Committee for Citizenship, indicating that such decisions will be issued successively.

Appeal rejected: The Constitutional Court ruled not to accept the demand to halt the 2024 National Assembly elections, in which the plaintiff based the claim on the invalidity of the decree of necessity amending the electoral law, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Lawyer Saad Al-Lamie had filed an appeal and demanded that the elections be halted and that the invitation decree be invalidated due to the absence of a state of necessity and the unconstitutionality of restricting the exercise of the right to vote by adhering to Islamic law.

Other Voices

Juha and mission impossible!

By Ahmad alsarraf

One of the Abbasid governors announced that whoever taught his favorite mule, which was then a 13-cylinder Volvo, to read and write, he would give him a thousand dinars, and if he failed, his head would be cut off.

Many idiots applied for the task, failed, and had their necks chopped off! But after a while, "Juha" advanced to the task, and re-

governor's palace, dragging the mule behind him, amidst the ridicule of the people of the city, and when they asked him about the secret of his madness,



alsarraf

when he was known for his intelligence, he responded by saying that he asked the governor to first give him the thousand dinars, and give him ten years so that he could complete his

Everyone laughed at his stupidity. How could a mule learn to read even after ten years? So Juha justified his behavior by saying that he would enjoy the money in the coming years, and then one of the following calamities would most likely occur: the mule would die, or the governor would die,

I remembered that anecdote as I read about the Ministry of Public Works beginning to solve the problem of damaged roads and awarding contracts to maintain some residential areas to local companies.

I have no doubt in the good faith of the honorable Minister Noura Al-Mashaan, and in her sincerity. From my meeting with her, based on her generous request, I found in her the determination, the intention to work, and the courage to confront the problems.

She is qualified for the task, and it would not have been advisable to burden her with the "ministry" of the municipality. With all the corruption and concerns of the Ministry of Works, I hope with all my heart that she will return as a Minister of Works (only) in the new ministry

I told her in the meeting that it was necessary to speed up the awarding of contracts to local companies, as the idea of using foreign companies was completely ridiculous and impractical! I also told her, and she was aware of

this, that it was very difficult to seek help from the Ministry's employees and its army of brave engineers, the majority of whom were not "always creative," men or women, to carry out the task of supervising, even the least difficult and complex work.

It was therefore necessary for someone from "outside the Ministry" to hire for this work, even if temporarily, due to the need to move quickly, especially with the presence of a Sharia graduate at the head of a completely technical ministry (!!).

It seems that she was not convinced by my proposal, or did not obtain approvals. I learned from my sources that it is not possible to seek the help of professional and external parties to carry out the supervision process, for logistical and financial reasons, and this is understandable!

Consequently, the ministry's supervision of the contractors' work will be of a quality other than what it requested, which is consistent with logic, and this may result in the situation remaining as it is, and perhaps we will discover after a few years that the condition of the roads has returned to what it was, then the theory of the three possibilities that he developed will apply

Juha had this in mind when he pledged to teach the mule how to read! After five years, when the devastation begins to appear in public, who will remember who was responsible? We hope we are wrong, but we have learned from our experiences with the Ministry of Works to be careful when assessing the level of the Ministry's supervision!

I hope that Madam Minister will ask all contractors to place clear signs in various project sites, clearly showing the name of the implementing company, so that people will remember that it is the one that implemented the project, and the company will subsequently either be praised or cursed and this is a kind of indirect deterrence.

We also do not forget to extend our sincere thanks to Minister Noura Al-Mashaan for her success in overcoming all obstacles to ending the situation of the "Abdul Razzaq" road tunnel, which for years represented evidence of the devastation and destruction of the government administration! We wish her success, and she de-

serves all the support and continuation of her "almost impossible" mission.

The discussion on the same topic will continue in tomorrow's article ...

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Ex-MP acquitted in various charges

By Jaber Al-Humoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: The Court of Appeal has acquitted a former Member of Parliament (MP) of charges related to smuggling and money laundering amounting to 257 million dinars. The ruling also included a verdict for two Jordanians, sentencing them to 3 and 8 years in prison respectively, along with a fine of one million dinars.

The Public Prosecution had accused the defendants of engaging in money laundering, involving a substantial sum of a quar-

ter-billion dinars. The accusation revolved around the deliberate possession and acquisition of funds known to be obtained from fraudulent activities. It was alleged that they collected these funds through various means, including depositing them into personal accounts and a company owned by the former MP.

The investigation revealed a complex network of financial transactions involving banking institutions, real estate companies, an engineering consulting office, and other entities owned by the primary defendant in Kuwaiti banks.

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A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Every citizen is a sentinel ... and the issue of hotline

"'EVERY citizen is a sentinel' is a phrase that officials always repeat to us, and we have imbibed it since childhood, considering that the nation needs the cooperation of officials and citizens in order to preserve its stability, and its growth," columnist Iqbal Al-Ahmad wrote for Al-Qabas daily.

"We often feel this responsibility, considering that the 'citizen is a sentinel' in

our daily life affairs. If I find water being wasted in a street or on a road, it is my responsibility to report this defect, and if I witness a traffic accident, then I must, from the fact that I am a "citizen sentinel." I contact the responsible party and



Iqbal Al-Ahmad

report this incident, and if a crime occurs in front of my eyes, it is my responsibility, considering that the "citizen is a sentinel," to go to the relevant authority and inform it and give my testimony there. All of these matters stem from the angle of true citizenship and loyalty to this nation.

"The Ministry of Interior's statement regarding the announcement of a hotline to report any case of fraud in citizenship sparked reactions, most of which are supportive and encouraging, because it is done within the framework of the law and responsibility.

"We all call on the Minister of Interior, for this sharp and resolute approach, and on His Highness the Prime Minister, as he is the one who bears responsibility for the difficult period of corruption that the country has reached, and we hope that this force will continue to deal with the citizenship file, which has been affected by a lot of corruption.

"Reporting anyone who has forged or obtained their citizenship illegally is extremely important and is based on clear legal justification.

"Reporting forgery is reporting betrayal of a country. Reporting forgery in citizenship is reporting the theft of the rights of Kuwaitis from people who facilitated this violation and this crime for many years, when law enforcement and accountability were relaxed and lax.

"Firmness has been the demand of the people of Kuwait for a long time and will continue, and the loud voices rejecting all measures to detect counterfeiters and hold them accountable are nothing but an expression of the state of panic that has struck those who have 'water in their mouths'. Perhaps some will retreat and take their steps backwards... as was happening before

and this is extremely unfortunately. "Today we are in the Kuwait of Al-Hazm... the Kuwait of Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the Kuwait of Sheikh Muhammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. and the Kuwait of Sheikh Fahd Yousef Saud Al-Sabah -- the triangle on which we have pinned our hopes on them to rescue the nation from tampering and corruption which has continued unabatedly

"Thank you, the Ministry of Interior, for your efforts to uphold the law... regarding the citizenship fraud file, and the hotline will assist you in accordance with the law, without any inappropriate accusation."

Also:

"The Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research issued a decision requiring the formation of a committee to develop a new curriculum for a subject called 'National Education' with the aim of strengthening national values, belonging and loyalty to the homeland in the hearts of male and female students," columnist Prof. Dr. Bahija Behbehani wrote for Al-Qabas daily.

"A committee was formed in this regard and its tasks relate to identifying the classrooms in which the subject will be taught. National education for its students, preparing a complete curriculum for each classroom for a subject called national education in accordance with the established standards, and preparing an integrated plan for each classroom to teach the curriculum.

"We affirm that national education has a major role in preparing the emerging and educated generations in a way that is consistent with the philosophy that members of society believe in, and the customs and values that it accepts. It is also an effective way to address the problems that society suffers from.

"Definitions of "national education" have varied. Some define it as: "the process of instilling a set of values and principles in young people so that they have the ability to participate effectively in solving

all of the nation's issues and problems."
"Others explained that: "National education" is preparing young people to perform their role in society as decisionmakers and citizens who keep the interests of the nation in mind. This definition is of utmost importance to clarify

the "concept of national education." "This means that the teacher of "National Education" should be able to prepare a generation for the nation capable of confronting negative ideas such as sectarianism and tribalism with force and determination.

"Young people must believe that the homeland is for everyone, regardless of their origins, religions and sects, and put their hand in their hand to rebuild and defend the homeland.

"Therefore, the general goal of teaching "national education" -- as educators agreed - is "to prepare a good citizen who knows his rights and performs his duties towards his society, and to provide young people with a positive and realistic understanding of the political system of their country, as well as clarifying the rights and duties of

"The most important goal is to reject intolerance and discrimination in all its sectarian, denominational, ethnic and regional forms. This requires the national education subject to instill in the souls of young people pride and pride in belonging to Kuwait only.

"I do not believe that the committee will achieve the goal of its formation, as what we all see of our youth's pride in origin, tribe, and sect, and the occurrence of quarrels and disputes between each other due to their different affiliations during the period of nominations and elections for the National Assembly, student councils, and sports matches, is a clear indication and a sure sign of the spread of the phenomenon of pride in belonging to several trends that are not It includes pride in belonging to the homeland and working for its benefit alone, which is why I do not believe that the "National Education" Committee will achieve its goal."

"The beginning of the repair phase... Everyone knows the extent of what happened in Kuwait over the past years. There is no room to discuss it, as it left negative effects and exhausting consequences," columnist Faisal Al-Jazzaf wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"However, when the steps of purification and reform began, voices of opposition surfaced. They do not want reform, as they rather pushed for the continuation of the situation as it was before. They benefited from such a situation and established a mechanism for breaking administrative and legal systems, and the subsequent corruption, plundering of State funds, and infringement on the rights of the country and

"Today, we are all with His Highness the Amir, may Allah protect him. When the alarm bell rang, the path of purification and change was opened, and good signs began to repair what time had ru-

"We also appeal to His Highness the Prime Minister for his efforts and meetings with specialized groups and public benefit associations to form technical and economic opinions. This will add a lot of information for His Highness, based on a comprehensive understanding of the general situation of the State.

"We also hope to accelerate the priorities for citizens, the most important of which is the livelihood aspect, which is a cornerstone. We hope these efforts will not stop. They should continue to open the naturalization files of the counterfeiters and those who facilitated this for them.

"We should not ignore the Bedouns issue, as it is a snowball that has grown over time. Its security repercussions are dangerous to national security. This is in addition to addressing the lopsided demographic structure and problems of expatriate workers, cutting off the exploitation of people, holding everyone who has a hand in this problem accountable, and taking the maximum legal measures against them.

"The reform path of the political leadership or complacency is a reform map that will bear fruit soon. The nation needs the public to panic and stand in support of the leadership, so we can get through this and break the centers of influence wherever they may be, because Kuwait is more important and precious. It was and will be a beacon for all.

"We ask Allah to protect Kuwait and its people from all forms of hatred under the leadership of His Highness the

Amir, may Allah protect him.
"May Allah have mercy on our righteous martyrs.'

"Check the Constitution... There is nothing in the Constitution of the State of Kuwait or its explanatory memorandum or even the Kuwaiti social customs that prevents HH the Amir from relieving his Crown Prince of responsibility any time he wishes, provided that he appoints a new Crown Prince within a period not exceeding one year, even if he is the Crown Prince. The person who was exempted was chosen by the National Assembly from among three names nominated by HH the Amir, or the Assembly approved HH the Amir's nomination for the first time. There are many precedents, such that there is no room to list all of them here -- whether in Kuwait or other Gulf states!" columnist Talal Al-Saeed wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"Everyone who issues 'fatwas' on what they do not know should be aware of the above. There is no article in the Constitution stipulating that the next Assembly should choose the next Crown Prince. The appointment is up to His Highness the Amir, may Allah protect him. This is one of his powers. The Assembly has the right to approve or disapprove the name nominated for the first time or in the second round after the Amir nominates three names from which the Assembly chooses one name.

"There is no article in the Constitution that prevents HH the Amir from relieving whomever the Assembly chooses as Crown Prince, without giving reasons. Only HH the Amir chooses his Crown Prince and relieves the latter. The Assembly has no right to relieve the Crown Prince from his position, even if it is the one that chose him from among the three candidates.

"Our real problem is not in the procedures regulated by the Constitution of the State of Kuwait, but those who are bluffing about what they do not know and making the issue of choosing the next Crown Prince a political issue, trading on it and trying to reach the Assembly through it, and then rising and setting in this extremely important issue. They take advantage of some people's lack of understanding of the

provisions of the Constitution. Compiled by PFX Fernandes

84 violating election adverts dismantled

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: The Public Relations Department in Kuwait Municipality has announced the removal of 84 violating election advertisements,

reports Al-Jarida daily.

According to the department, 31 election advertisements were installed without a license and 53 were displayed outside the area designated for the 2024 National Assembly election candidates in Jahra Governorate

A team from the Audit and Services Follow-up Department in the Municipality branch in Jahra Governorate carried out an inspection campaign as per the law. This led to the removal of many election advertisements from the roads outside the walls of electoral headquarters or the streets in residential areas, as well as the removal of random advertisements from streets and squares, and advertisements not licensed by the Municipality.

The Municipality confirmed that the supervisory teams are intensifying their field campaigns in the governorates to remove unauthorized and random election advertisements throughout the election pe-

The Municipality added that inspectors are continuously monitoring violating advertisements to remove them immediately, stressing the need to adhere to the law to avoid legal problems and payment of fines.

New Mol service: The Ministry of Interior has announced the provision of a service to inquire about electoral registration data through the 'Sahl' application, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a video a clip uploaded on its social media accounts recently, the ministry stated that the citizens have the right to know their electoral registration data through 'Sahl' by accessing the services of the ministry and clicking the electoral registration data; clarifying that voting will be through the original nationality card.

The ministry urged citizens with lost or damaged original nationality cards to visit the Citizenship and Passport Affairs General Department to obtain a nationality card, indicating they should present their civil identification card and four photos.



Some Kuwaiti children out to collect 'gergean', an old tradition followed in Kuwait.

'Only qualified accepted'

SJC rejects grievances of graduates

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Sevassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: The Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) rejected all the grievances submitted by those among more than 300 male and female law graduates who were excluded from the position of prosecutors. After reviewing the grievances, the council confirmed that all who were accepted had passed the written and oral exams and were most qualified for the position.

The council's decision concerning these grievances came after auditing and examining all the files of the complainants. It was thus confirmed that the decisions of the Admissions Committee in selecting prosecutors were correct and in accordance with the law.

The batch of prosecutors whose acceptance was announced in November 2023 had sparked parliamentary reactions and threats to grill the former minister of Justice, who ordered the grievances to be opened and taken into consideration to ensure justice and equality were achieved among all applicants. A specialized committee had then studied the grievances.

In addition, the applications for the position of prosecutors used to be accepted every two years but are now accepted every year as a step to accept the largest number of people eligible for this sensitive job and with the aim of filling vacancies and training the judiciary.

Gravel issue rears head again as rains subside throughout Kuwait

Measures taken to tackle recurring phenomenon

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: In the aftermath of the recent rainfall, certain highways and internal roads across the country experienced the gravel flying, while streets treated with improved bitumen mixture by the Ministry of Public Works remained unaffected, reports Al-Jarida daily.

This problem, which first emerged in 2014, prompted the formation of a specialized committee by the Public Works Ministry to investigate the causes of gravel flying post-rainfall, as per Ministerial Resolution No. 1 of 2014.

The Ministry disclosed that it had undertaken various executive measures based on the committee's recommendations to address road deficiencies. These measures included amendments to contract specifications, such as of earthworks before layer spreading, and limiting bitumen technical specifications to "60/70" specifications

Among the committee's recommendations was coordination with the National Petroleum Company to design new asphalt mixtures and enforce standards for project engineers, requiring a minimum of seven years' practical experience in the field and completion of qualifying training programs.

Furthermore, the Ministry outlined 11 conditions for improving bitumen and repairing asphalt, including ensuring project engineers adhere to assigned responsibilities and implementing asphalt works controls. The discount system for asphalt works was replaced with a system compelling contractors to rectify all defective

Studies conducted to develop asphalt specifications for the Gulf region highlighted the necessity of using bitumen performance "10 - 76 PG" to address Kuwait's climatic conditions. This superior performance requires the addition of polymer improvers to enhance bitumen

The Ministry affirmed its commitment to repairing roads as per announced contracts and in accordance with the previously recommended conditions and specifications, aiming to eradicate the issue of flying gravel ef-

Start shopping April 1

68 applicants win stalls in 'Al-Hareem' market

By Mohammad Al-Musleh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: In confirmation to the report published in Al-Seyassah on February 17, Kuwait Municipality announced that 68 applicants won stalls in the women's market (Souk Al-Hareem) through a lottery in Souk Mubarakiva.

The municipality explained that Director General Saud Al-Dabbous called on the markets committee to expedite work on completing the conditions and controls for investing in the Hareem Market.

The step was aimed at reviving the market so that it could return due to the historical heritage it carries in the heart of the Souk Mubarakiya. The committee supervised the lottery for the market stalls Tuesday morning, after 90 investors who met the conditions of the public markets list applied.

The new stall owners will begin their activities in the market on April 1 after concluding their contracts with the Ministry of Finance.

Drugs with wanted man: Hawally patrolmen arrested an individual wanted by law with an undisclosed quantity of 'cocktail' drugs in his possession, reports Al-Anba daily.

A security source revealed that at a checkpoint on a street in Hawally, the suspect was spotted turning his vehicle toward the opposite direction. When the officers stopped and questioned him, they discovered he is wanted by law for involvement in criminal and civil cases.

During the inspection of his vehicle, the above-mentioned narcotics were found. The suspect was referred to the concerned security authority, along with the confiscated drugs.



ing violations within 19 days, reports Al-Rai daily.

Media reports stated that the 23-yearold man went to the Scandinavian country in search of work, but he was arrested 25 times for speeding from Feb 6-25.

The ruling showed that the young man committed the worst violation on Feb 20, as he was driving at a speed

It was reported that most of the crimes were monitored by fixed automatic radars, of which the perpetrator was not aware.

The sentence of the 'man in a hurry' was reduced by three days -- from 24 days in prison to 21 days -- due to his full confession. However, his driving license was suspended for a year.



College of Admin Sciences partners with Coded Academy for tech initiatives

KU College of Dentistry hosts World Oral Health Day awareness event

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: The College of Dentistry at Kuwait University recently organized an awareness event in celebration of World Oral Health Day, under the patronage and presence of Dr. Rashid Al-Azmi, the Acting Dean of the College, in collaboration with the International Hospital and Ultramed Company, reports Al-Jarida

Iman Behbehani, Outreach Dr. Awareness Program Officer and Assistant Professor in the Department of Preventive Sciences and Growth and Development Sciences at the college, highlighted the significance of the skills with diverse societal segments. event in line with World Oral Health

She emphasized the importance of raising awareness about oral health among society members, stressing the college's commitment to social responsibility through education, awareness, and dispelling misconceptions regarding oral hygiene practices and dietary habits detrimental to oral health.

Dr. Rashid Al-Azmi, the Acting Dean of the College, underscored the college's dedication to equipping students with effective communication

He emphasized the importance of student participation in awareness campaigns and volunteer activities, both domestically and internationally, to promote the adage "Prevention is better than cure." Al-Azmi encouraged community members to undergo regular oral examinations and adhere

healthy teeth and gums. Meanwhile, the College of Administrative Sciences at Kuwait University and the Coded Academy for Human Resources Development recently

to preventive measures for maintaining

forged a memorandum of understanding, solidifying their joint strategic cooperation on initiatives like "Kuwait Programming" and "Technology Pioneers." The signing took place during a press conference held at the Cultural Center in Al-Shaddadiya, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Ahmed Marafi, CEO of Coded Academy, emphasized the initiative's nonprofit nature, aiming to educate secondary school students in programming and cultivate a tech-savvy generation capable of addressing challenges through technology.

Marafi highlighted the initiative's past achievements, having served over 2,500 students, many of whom pursued technical academic careers in fields such as data science and computer science, while others embarked on entrepreneurial ventures.

Dr. Adel Al-Waqyan, Acting Dean of the College of Administrative Sciences, underscored the college's alignment with the academy's objectives in fostering youth engagement in technology, information technology, and programming across different age groups.

Walid Al-Khashti, CEO of Zain, expressed a commitment to enhancing students' skills in technology, information technology, and programming, aligning with the demands of contemporary labor markets.

Yousef Al-Ruwaih, Deputy Director General for Public Relations and Media at Kuwait Finance House, emphasized the importance of initiatives like these in meeting the labor market's needs. He stressed the significance of nurturing a conscious generation interested in such initiatives to meet evolving demands in the job market.

'KIMS trainers bonuses hiked as MoH okays quarterly payment'

'Procedures on for unified e-technical file for drug registration'

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: Informed health sources disclosed that increased bonuses for trainers at the Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialties (KIMS) have been transferred to beneficiaries' bank accounts in recent days.

The Al-Jarida report quoting informed sources said, while some beneficiaries have already received their rewards, others can expect to receive them in the coming period.

The Ministry of Health approved the disbursement of raised remuneration for trainers at the institute on a quarterly basis, departing from the previous annual practice. The new remuneration structure includes 500 dinars for consultants, 400 dinars for first specialists, and 300 dinars for first registrars.

Dr. Abdullah Al-Sanad, Director of the Health Communication Center and official spokesman for the Ministry of Health, affirmed the ministry's commitment to implementing the objectives and projects outlined in the government's 100-day work plan. He announced the opening of a new branch of the Medical Council in Jahra Governorate next week, following the directives of Health Minister Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi, aiming to enhance healthcare accessibility for all patients.

Dr Al-Awadhi

Furthermore, Al-Sanad reported the recent inauguration of five dental departments in primary health care centers across various governorates in Kuwait, along with the Al-Jahra Specialized Dental Center for children. In a move toward digital transformation, procedures have commenced for implementing a unified electronic tech-

nical file for drug registration. This system, adopted globally by pharmaceutical regulatory bodies, ensures the quality, effectiveness, and safety of medicines circulating in Kuwait.

Additionally, Dr. Al-Sanad announced the initiation of an electronic system for managing laboratory information in pharmaceutical laboratories within the ministry's Department of

Registration and Control of Medicinal and Plant Drugs, further advancing digitalization efforts across various ministry sectors.

Bid to address members' concerns: Dr. Khaled Al-Saifi, President of the Faculty Association of Applied Colleges in the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, has called for several measures to address faculty members' concerns, including the separation of five applied faculties from the "applied" body to come under the Council of Public Universities, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Speaking at a ceremony organized by the association at its headquarters, attended by Dr. Hassan Al-Fajjam, the director of the authority, and faculty members from various educational institutions, Dr. Al-Saifi emphasized the importance of addressing faculty issues and strengthening ties between academics and authority

The event also honored faculty members who have made significant contributions to their fields, including Dr. Qais Majeed, Head of the Science Department in Basic Education.



A photo from the College of Dentistry's 'World Oral Health Day' event.



Signing of MoU between College of Administrative Sciences and Coded Academy.

KPS to host 1st pharmacy confab in May

Conference set to boost health care & career prospects for pharmacists

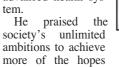
By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: The Kuwait Pharmaceutical Society (KPS) announced the launch of the 1st Kuwait Pharmacy Conference to be held on May 4 and 5 with the aim of developing the pharmacy sector and highlighting all the career opportunities available to pharmacists, in addition to improving health care in all pharmaceutical sectors.

In this regard, President of the Kuwait Pharmaceutical Society Al-Enezi, in his speech recently during

the society's annual Ramadan ghabqa, affirmed the continuation of serious and sincere work to raise the level of pharmaceutical performance within the country's advanced health sys-





Al-Enezi

that every pharmacist aspires to, while preserving the gains achieved by those who preceded them in holding the secretariat of this national edifice since its inception.

Approve

Also, the Secretary-General of the Kuwait Pharmaceutical Society pharmacist Ali Hadi expressed his hope that the National Assembly will soon approve the new pharmacy profession law, which will be the first of the society's achievements in the next stage.

He stressed the importance of the law in addressing the problems and challenges facing the pharmaceutical sector, and developing appropriate solutions to them with sound legal formulation.

In a press statement, Hadi explained that the law reflects in its articles the development of the pharmacy profession in the public and private sectors, supports the presence of Kuwaiti youth energies and the infusion of new blood into the various governmental and private pharmaceutical sectors, and develops a set of solutions to address the issue of drug shortages and maintain drug security in the country.

The new law keeps pace with scientific development in the pharmacy sector, and also keeps pace with the increase in the number of pharmacists in the State of Kuwait, and preserves their rights to moral and material incentives, thus preserving the profession and enabling pharmacists to practice the profession according to the latest international standards.

Regarding the expected health career structure, and the position of the pharmaceutical sector towards it, Hadi said one of the matters that is of interest to the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Pharmaceutical Society is the structure of the pharmaceutical sector within the

'Residential plots' go under hammer

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: Al-Enmaa Real Estate Company conducted a real estate auction at the Four Seasons Hotel on Tuesday, featuring 11 residential plots of land situated in the Yarmouk, Al-Zahraa, and Hittin areas. However, only 4 plots, all located in the Yarmouk area, were successfully sold at their starting price of 3.96 million dinars, with no significant increase, reports Al-

Among the sold plots was one measuring 1,013 square meters, with dual street frontage (Batin, Dhar, and Sikka), fetching a price of 1.09 million dinars. Additionally, three plots, each measuring 920 square meters, were sold for 957 thousand dinars each.

The remaining residential plots, with various areas, remained unsold, totaling an initial value of 5.18 million di-

The auction was conducted in compliance with Penal Ruling No. 1499 of 2008, which governs the management of public funds, and was overseen by the Public Prosecution.

body of the Ministry of Health.

He indicated that there are many studies and observations that were prepared by the board of directors to be submitted as proposals to the Ministry of Health to take into consideration.

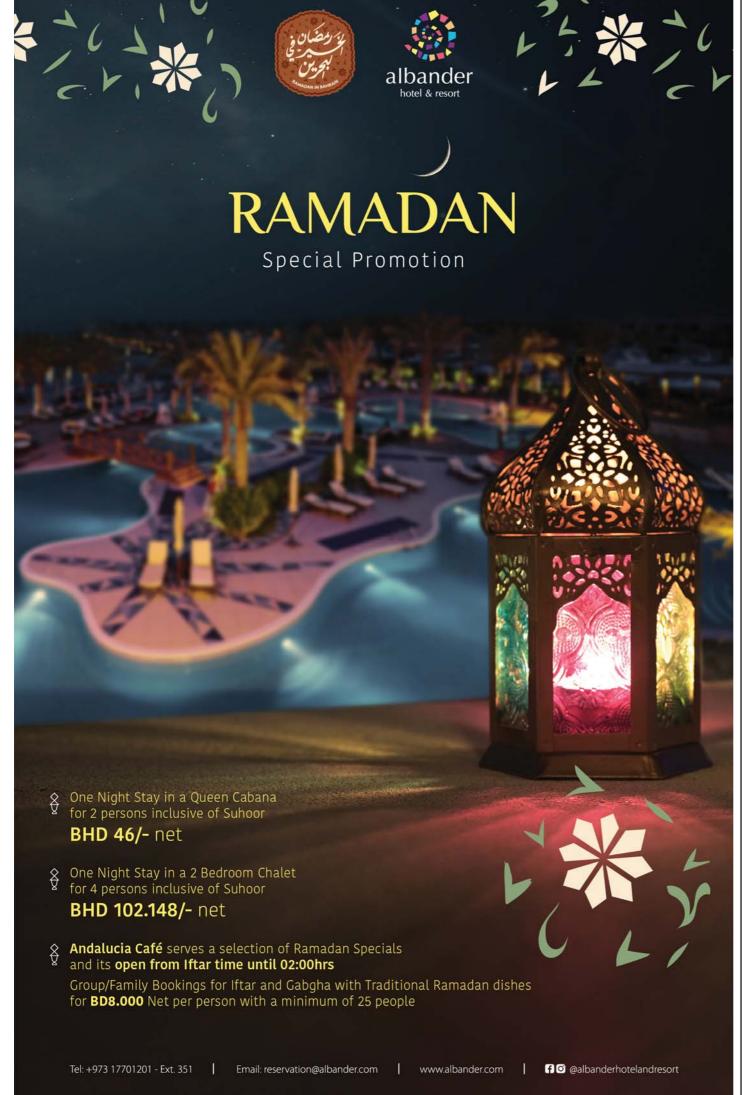
Hadi stressed the society's keenness to approve any functional structure for the pharmacy sector that keeps pace with the needs of modern practices of the pharmacy profession in the government and private sectors, thus providing job and investment opportunities for Kuwaiti pharmaceutical energies.

Challenges

Regarding the challenges facing the sector currently, Hadi pharmacy explained that there are two types of challenges - global and local. The first revolves around the availability of some types of medicines and the supply of medicines and medical equipment in all countries of the world, including the State of Kuwait.

There is the need to develop, pay attention to, and address local challenges to achieve the maximum degree of functional efficiency, by placing them at the center of attention of specialists to develop the pharmaceutical services provided in the country.

These include regulating the work of pharmacies in the private sector, providing medicines in the two sectors, ensuring the supply of medicines and drug security, and achieving self-sufficiency of essential medicines in the



'Act decisively

Continued from Page 1

On Wednesday, the Ministry of Interior revealed a comprehensive security and traffic plan for the holy month of Ramadan, aimed at ensuring the safety and security of all citizens and residents. The plan involves deploying both fixed and mobile security patrols across all governorates.

In a press statement, the Public Relations and Security Media Department of the Ministry of Interior urged the public to refrain from organizing special events within residential areas and open areas during Rama-

Additionally, it emphasized the importance of avoiding the use of vehicles, entertainment setups, popular bands, and food carts in these areas to prevent road closures, traffic congestion, and potential hazards to children, especially with the approaching occasion of "Girgi'an" midway through the holy month.

Parents have been urged to closely monitor their children and not rely solely on domestic workers, while emphasizing the importance of adhering to security and traffic instructions.

The Ministry reiterated its commitment to maintaining continuous communication with the public to achieve safety goals, alongside taking legal actions against vio-

Furthermore, drivers were reminded to exercise caution and reduce speed, particularly on internal roads, and to remain vigilant on public roads to ensure the safety of all road users.

The Ministry's plan aims to create a secure environment throughout Ramadan, fostering a sense of peace and harmony within the community.

10 records

Continued from Page 1

VII. Kuwait was the first country in the Middle East to sign Belt and Road cooperation documents with China. In response to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) proposed by President Xi Jinping, Kuwait signed in June 2014 memorandums of understanding with China to jointly promote cooperation concerning the Silk Road Economic Belt and the development of Kuwait's Silk City, opening up broader prospects for China-Kuwait win-win cooperation. In recent years, both sides have worked to better synergize China's BRI and Kuwait's Vision 2035, which has achieved positive outcomes in the areas of infrastructure construction, energy, investment and communications. Chinese enterprises have undertaken the construction of many signature projects in Kuwait, making prominent contributions to the country's economic and social development. This year marks the 10th anniversary of China and Kuwait signing the Belt and Road cooperation documents. China is prepared to work with Kuwait to write a new chapter in the joint pursuit of high-quality Belt and Road coop-

VIII. The Kuwait Investment Office (Shanghai) is the only overseas investment office established by the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) after Kuwait's independence. KIA opened its representative office in Beijing in 2011 and then an investment office in Shanghai in 2018 which is the only overseas investment office that KIA has set up after the country's independence, marking a solid step toward stronger cooperation with China and the Asian-Pacific region. Investment cooperation has now become a new highlight of practical cooperation between the two sides. As part of its efforts to diversify investment portfolio, KIA has invested in the Jinan-Oingdao high-speed railway project, making it the first time that a domestic high-speed railway has attracted capital from a foreign institutional investor.

IX. The China Cultural Center in Kuwait is the first of its kind in service in the **Gulf region.** Diverse interactions and cooperation in cultural and people-to-people fields between the two sides have registered many highlights. Over the years, multiple Chinese art troupes have given great performance during their visits to Kuwait, while people of cultural circles in Kuwait have taken an active part in cultural events held in China. On September 17 last year, the China Cultural Center, located in Kuwait's Salmiya, launched its trial operation. Built as the first of its kind in the Gulf region, this center will serve as a key platform for promoting cultural exchanges between the two countries and fostering closer ties between the two peoples. It will also be a gateway for Kuwaiti friends in all sectors to learn Chinese language, understand the fine traditional culture of China and experience the development dynamics of contemporary China. It will play an active role in consolidating the cultural foundations for building a China-Arab community with a shared future.

X. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal is the first head of state among the leaders of GCC countries who explicitly expressed his support for three Initiatives proposed by President Xi Jinping. When President Xi Jinping and Amir Sheikh Mishal had a meeting in Hangzhou in September 2023, Amir Sheikh Mishal voiced his support for the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI) and the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) put forward by President Xi Jinping. During their meeting, they reached broad consensus on deepening China-Kuwait strategic partnership and witnessed the signing of the Joint Statement on the Five-Year (2024-2028) Cooperation Plan between the People's Republic of China and the State of Kuwait, as well as multiple bilateral cooperation documents in such fields as renewable energy, infrastructure construction and environment governance, charting the course for future bilateral relationship

Though far apart geographically, China and Kuwait have been working hand in hand, as good friends and good partners that support and trust each other, to pursue a shared future. Our bilateral friendship provides an example for state-to-state relations. Through two fruitful meetings, President Xi Jinping and Amir Sheikh Mishal lay out a new blueprint for future China-Kuwait strategic partnership. Today, China-Kuwait relations have entered a crucial phase of building on past successes to strive for new progress. China stands ready to work with Kuwait to implement the common understandings reached by the two heads of state and develop greater synergy in our development strategies. Through enhanced cooperation in investment, energy, infrastructure, environmental governance and digital economy and closer people-topeople and cultural exchanges, we will be able to build a high-quality China-Kuwait community with a shared future and contribute to the greater vision of jointly building a community with a shared future for

Kuwaiti doctor

Continued from Page 1

I was lucky to join the Kuwait Red Crescent Society's volunteer medical team. Our visit was arranged in coordination with the Egyptian Red Crescent Society and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society. I thank them for all the assistance they provided and the good coordination and facilitation of our mission in helping the wounded and the Palestinian medical team.

Of course, we cannot cover the acute shortage of medical capabilities and human resources there, as the catastrophic deterioration of the health sector in Gaza cannot be covered by volunteer medical teams from Kuwait, America, Britain and other European

However, our presence served as a psychological and moral motivation for the steadfast Palestinian doctors, who continued to work day and night without receiving salaries for six months. Some of them do not know the fate of half their family members, and most of them were displaced two, three, and four times.

We saw on the ground the frightening deterioration in the field and the catastrophic decline in medical capabilities in the sector. The experience, as sad as it was, instilled within me a feeling that we can do something.

We sparked enthusiasm in the hearts of others, and showed the world that the road to Gaza is not a road of no return. Rather, everyone can travel and offer a helping hand and return safely to their country. Despite the small effort we made, its impact was very large.

The medical team's initiative stems from our country's firm position towards supporting the Palestinian cause. From the first hours of the Israeli attack on the Gaza Strip, Kuwait announced its position to stand by our brothers in the Gaza Strip.

A total of 49 relief planes were directed from Kuwait to Gaza, and were delivered to the Egyptian Red Crescent Society, which in turn put them on the aid schedule to take their turn to enter the Strip."

Regarding the medical assistance provided by the team in the sector, Dr. Al-Quwaian said, "We took medical equipment with us, using which we succeeded in helping in performing 23 emergency and accurate surgical operations. We also saved the lives of two people who were facing certain death. One of them was suffering from a gunshot wound in the abdomen that reached his pancreas, stomach, and liver. Dr. Muhammad Jamal succeeded in extracting the gunshot and saving his life. The other was suffering from a severe injury in the right thigh. and I had to amputate his leg to preserve his life. Thank Allah, he was saved after being so close to death. The bleeding was stopped, a blood transfusion was given, and his health condition stabilized.

He revealed that the wounded Palestinians were transferred to many countries, including Egypt, Europe, Turkey, and others, in coordination with the Egyptian Red Crescent Society, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, and the relevant organizations, adding that the Kuwait Red Crescent Society's medical team included four doctors, relief workers, and ad-

Court to

Continued from Page 1

It is worth mentioning that Al-Qeraifa was disqualified in the previous election as per the law on prohibiting those convicted of offending the Amiri entity. He is also among the beneficiaries of the recent amendment of the law, which reduced the rehabilitation period for those convicted of such a crime.

Former MP and Fourth Constituency candidate Fayez Al-Jomhour disclosed that if he wins in the election, his cooperation with the government will be based on how the latter deals with urgent public issues; the most important of which are the bills on improving the standard of living of citizens.

He asked HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah to be careful in choosing ministers. He then voiced objection to the reappointment of Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, the Consultation Chamber at the Constitutional Court has rejected the appeal to cancel the upcoming parliamentary election and invalidate the Election Invitation Decree due to the absence of a state of necessity and the unconstitutionality of restricting the exercise of the right to vote.

The appellant, Attorney Saad Al-Lamie, argued that there is no state of necessity and that the text restricting the exercise of the right to vote is unconstitutional as per the Islamic law.

The court explained in the merits of its decision that the appellant did not provide any evidence of the actual harm caused to him as a result of the application of the contested decree, such that ruling on its unconstitutionality would remove this harm and achieve a benefit for him. It emphasized the need to show the extent to which the implementation of this decree reflects on his position and status; so the direct personal interest can be investigated in light of that, but

there is no evidence in this regard. The appellant asserted that the opinion on constitutional jurisprudence and the previous ruling of the Constitutional Court state that it is not permissible for the government to dissolve the National Assembly and then issue a decree of necessity to change the electoral map, because this is considered invalid for the electoral process.

The appellant pointed out in his direct appeal that Decree Law No. 4/2024 on the election of Assembly members is unconstitutional due to the absence of a state of necessity, which is required as per Article 71 of the Constitution.

The call for fresh elections is undoubtedly a necessary decree according to the constitutional concept and the decree may not amend the Election Law; but going further, the decree may only amend laws that are approved by an ordinary majority and it should not affect the scope reserved for



A photo from the British Council School Awards.

British Council celebrates success of 41 students in UK Int'l School Qualifications

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: 41 students from British Council Partner Schools in Kuwait received prestigious awards from Cambridge Assessment International Education and Pearson Edexcel to acknowledge their outstanding performance in the May/June 2023 and Oct/Nov 2022 examination series.

The British Council hosted a ceremony to celebrate the success of these students, recognizing their dedication, hard work and commitment that led to this incredible achievement. During this special occasion the benefits of UK International School Qualifications were highlighted, and the event gave an opportunity for the schools and British Council explore new ways collaborating and further strengthening their relationship.

In attendance at the event from the Ministry of Private Education were Ms Sunny Ahmed, Charge d'Affaires, British Embassy Kuwait, Ms Noura Abdulkareem Faraj, Head of Equivalency from the Private Education Dept and Michael King, Director of Examinations and Assessments, KSA, Kuwait & Bahrain.

Ms Sunny Ahmed congratulated the students for their achievements and thanked the British Council Kuwait for enhancing teacher professional development through diverse training programmes and supporting the curriculum delivery in schools through Partner Schools Network (PSN). She said "it is fitting that we mark this success in the year we celebrate 125 years of diplomatic relations between Kuwait and UK. Education has been a longstanding foundation of this relationship which today is marked with almost 10,000 Kuwaiti students studying in some of the world's best universities in the UK.

Michael King, Director of Ex-

aminations and Assessments, KSA, Kuwait & Bahrain, British Council, elaborated further, "I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to all the students for their exceptional achievements in the 2022-2023 UK International School Qualifications. It is a great privilege to witness their incredible accomplishments and to be a part of this celebration. Their exceptional performance not only reflects their personal abilities but also highlights the quality of education provided by our esteemed partner schools. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the teachers, mentors, and the entire staff of these schools for their unwavering support and guidance throughout the educational

Dr Řanda Diab Bahman, a distinguished member of the UK alumni community in Kuwait, who also serves as a senior lecturer at Kuwait Technical College, provided insights into the advantages of UK education. She highlighted how her educational background in the UK played a pivotal role in contributing to her career success.

The British Council Partner Schools Network (PSN) is the community of schools that offer UK curriculum leading to exams such as IGCSE and A level, administered in collaboration with the British Council. It is aimed at offering highquality products and services that support our leaders, teachers, learners and parents through Quality Assurance self-assessment tools and an excellent suite of in-service teachertraining workshops for both primary and secondary teachers, providing access to online educational support. In Kuwait, there are 22 schools teaching UK qualifications and the number is steadily rising over the

Kuwait's envoy highlights strong ties with China on 53rd 'versary

'Significant growth witnessed in political, economic, cultural fields'

TOKYO, March 21, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Ambassador to China Jasem Al-Najem celebrated, Thursday, the 53rd anniversary "deep-rooted diplomatic relations" between Kuwait and China dating back to 22 March 1971. In a statement to KUNA, Al-

Najem elaborated on the Kuwaiti and Chinese ties, stating they were "built on the clear foundations of mutual trust and common interests, which reflected not only the shared visions of the leaders, but also the desire of the peoples of the two countries to increase friendship between them.

Since the foundation of the diplomatic relations between Kuwait and China, significant growth has been witnessed in political, economic, cultural and other fields, "effectively contributing to development, construction, and progress," added Al-

Ambassador Al-Najem recounted the friendly bilateral bonds between the two countries as early as February 1965 with the late Amir His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's official visit, as Minister of Finance, Industry and Trade, to China to meet with former Chinese President Liu Shaoqi.

Loans

It is worthy to note that Kuwait is the first Arab country that provided soft government loans to China through the Kuwait Fund for Development, covering many projects in the fields of infrastructure, education, health, agriculture and environmental protection etc., which has contributed to economic and social development in China, mentioned Al-Najem.

Additionally, bilateral cooperation in the health field revived during the 2020 outbreak of the Covid-19 Pandemic, where China cooperated with Kuwait through sending medical envoys and devices in fighting against the outbreak.

Al-Najem noted that Kuwait Investment Authority opened its office in Beijing in 2011, which moved to Shanghai in 2018, calling it "a good reflection of the special economic significance of China to Kuwait."

He spoke highly of Kuwait Vision 2035, which provides opportunities to increase and develop cooperation between the two countries in various



KUNA photo

KRCS' volunteer staff implementing the purchasing vouchers project in the West Bank. **KRCS** distributes coupons to needy families in West Bank

Kuwaiti, Egyptian charity sign USD 10mln agreement financing charitable projects

By Abdulaziz Faisal

CAIRO, March 21, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Office for Charitable Projects signed an agreement with Misr Al-Kheir Foundation on Thursday to finance charitable projects in Egypt with a financial donation of USD 10 million provided by Kuwait Finance House.

The Director of Zakat House, Dr. Majid Al-Azmi representing the Kuwait Office for Charitable Projects, and the CEO of Misr Al-Kheir Foundation, Dr. Muhammad Al-Rifai signed the agreement.

Al-Azmi said in a statement to KUNA that the signing included a number of contracts for several development projects in various Egyptian governorates in partnership with the Misr Al-Kheir Foundation.

He added that these projects come with a generous donation from Kuwait Finance House to cover a wide range of socio-economic development issues (hun-

fields, especially with Kuwait's fu-

ture vision being compatible with

China's Belt and Road Initiative, as

Kuwait was the first country in the

Middle East to join the initiative in

ger, poverty, health, education, water and economic empowerment) in Egypt.

Adnan Sabti, Director of the Kuwait Office for Charitable Projects in Cairo, confirmed in a similar statement to KUNA that the donation provided by Kuwait Finance House amounts to USD 10 million.

On his part, Al-Rifai said in a similar statement to KUNA that the agreement between the Kuwaiti Zakat House and Misr Al-Kheir Foundation is a promising beginning of cooperation between the two sides and comes as a continuation of a previous cooperation that includes integrated development in society.

Al-Rifai stressed that this cooperation confirms the close ties between the Kuwaiti and Egyptian peoples, explaining that the protocol includes 33 development projects in various fields such as (health, education and relief).

He added that the protocol in-

cludes multiple projects like Ramadan baskets and tents distributed to various Egyptian governorates and supporting hospitals, improving the housing environment and

Meanwhile, Kuwait Red Cres-

cent Society (KRCS) started dis-

other charitable projects.

tributing coupons to families in need in the West Bank, through Wafaa Capacity Building and Mi-

The project mainly targeted Jenin Refugee Camp, which was continuously attacked by the Israeli occupation forces, resulting in difficult economic conditions

since October 7. Director General of Wafaa Mohasen Atawneh said that this project helped provide thousands of Palestinians with necessities during the holy month of Ramadan, expressing his sincere appreciation to Kuwait's Amir, government and people for their continuous support since the be-

ginning of the war. its liberation in 1991, as well as extinguishing 10 oil fire wells, he said. Al-Najem reiterated that both countries have consistent perceptions on regional and international

uation that has occurred in the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023.

Successful Furthermore, Al-Najem underscored the successful visit of High according to Al-Najem. Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to China last September, during which seven important Memorandums of Understandings on economic development projects were signed between His Highness the Amir and

Chinese President Xi Jinping. Kuwait and China established the strategic partnership in 2018, which witnessed the two countries ushering into an era of friendship, economic and trade cooperation amounting to about 22 billion US dollars, making China the largest trading partner of Kuwait for nine consecutive years,

The two nations supported one another, from Kuwait's support of the One-China principle, to China's support of Kuwait during the 1990 Iraqi invasion, where Chinese companies contributed in Kuwait's nation building and restoration after

affairs, and the Kuwaiti government highly appreciates China's wisdom and balanced policies while handling such issues, especially the sit-

The ambassador expressed his aspiration for bilateral relations between the two friendly countries, which were built on solid foundations and rules, for further growth, development and prosperity.



Jasem Al-Najem

World News Roundup

Europe

Kyiv hit by Russia missiles

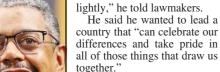
Gething elected as Wales' 1st minister

LONDON, March 21, (AP): Vaughan Gething was elected first minister of Wales on Wednesday, becoming the first Black leader of a government in the

Gething was elected government leader by members of the Welsh parliament in Cardiff, four days after winning the contest to be leader of Wales' governing Labour Party. He secured 27 of 51 votes in the legislature, the Senedd, where Labour is the biggest

Gething, the son of a Welsh father and a Zambian mother, said Wales is now "the first nation anywhere in Europe to be led by a Black person."

"It is a matter of pride for a modern Wales but also a daunting responsibility for me - and one that I do not take



Gething will be sworn in once his appointment is approved by King Charles III - a

formality. Three of the UK's four governments now have nonwhite leaders. UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has Indian

heritage, while Scottish First Minister Humza Yousaf

was born to a Pakistani family in Britain Northern Ireland is led jointly by Michelle O'Neill and Emma Little-Pengelly, meaning that for the first time there are no white male heads of government in

Wales, which has a population of about 3 million, is one of four parts of the United Kingdom, along with England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The British government in London is responsible for defense, foreign affairs and other UK-wide issues, while administrations in Cardiff, Edinburgh and Belfast control

areas such as education and health.

Gething was Wales' health minister during the COVID-19 pandemic. As economy minister since 2021, he has had to deal with fallout from Tata Steel's plan to close both blast furnaces at its plant in Port Talbot, eliminating 2,800 jobs at one of Wales' biggest employers.

Portugal's center-right wins: A center-right alliance led by the Social Democratic Party has won Portugal's general election by a slender margin and is set to form a minority government that could have a difficult term in office as a radical-right populist party that came third in the voting tries to get a hand on the levers of power.

Results published late Wednesday after votes from abroad were counted to decide the last four lawmakers from the March 10 balloting gave the Democratic Alliance a final tally of 80 seats in the 230-seat National Assembly, Portugal's parliament.

The center-left Socialist Party placed second with 78 seats and has said it won't stand in the way of the Democratic Alliance forming a minority government in an upcoming parliamentary vote.

Wilders taps 2 officials to lead talks: The Dutch parliament named two new go-betweens Wednesday to lead negotiations to form the next ruling coalition, four months after the anti-immigration party led by Geert Wilders won a national election.

The appointment of economist and former lawmaker Elbert Dijkgraaf, and Richard van Zwol, a former senior civil servant who now sits on a key government advisory panel, sets the stage for a new phase in government talks.

Four parties - Wilders' Party for Freedom, the center-right People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, the reformist New Social Contract and proagriculture populist Farmer People Movement - are seeking to build what they are calling a "program Cabinet" made up of politicians and experts from outside politics.

Irish PM quits for personal reasons: Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar announced Wednesday that he is stepping down for reasons that he said were both personal and political.

Varadkar announced Wednesday he is quitting immediately as head of the center-right Fine Gael party, part of Ireland's coalition government. He'll be replaced as prime minister in April after a party leadership contest.

"My reasons for stepping down now are personal and political, but mainly political," Varadkar said, without elaborating. He said he plans to remain in parliament as a backbench lawmaker and has "definite" future plans.

Russia fires 31 missiles at Kyiv: Russia fired 31 ballistic and cruise missiles at Kyiv before dawn Thursday in the first attack on the Ukrainian capital in 44 days, officials said. Air defenses shot down all the incoming missiles, though 13 people including a child were injured by falling wreckage, they

Residents of Kyiv were woken up by loud explosions around 5 a.m. as the missiles arrived at roughly the same time from different directions, said Serhii

Popko, head of the Kyiv City Administration. Ukraine's air force said Russia launched two ballistic missiles and 29 cruise missiles against the capital.

Kyiv has better air defenses than most regions of the large country. The missile interception rate is frequently high, rendering Russian attacks on the capital significantly less successful than during the early days

US national security adviser visits Kyiv: President Joe Biden's top foreign policy adviser Jake Sullivan sought to reassure Ukrainians during an unannounced visit to Kyiv Wednesday that the U.S. will continue to support their efforts to fend off Russia's two-year-old invasion.

The national security adviser expressed optimism that lawmakers in Washington will break a monthlong logjam and approve tens of billions of dollars in military and economic aid to Ukraine. Russian forces have exploited the shortfall to make some gains in the

"We will get a strong bipartisan vote in Congress," Sullivan said during a press conference. "We will get that money to you as we should, so I don't think we need to speak about Plan B today." He also acknowledged that the process had "taken too long.



US President Joe Biden speaks about an agreement to provide Intel with up to \$8.5 billion in direct funding and \$11 billion in loans for computer chip plants in Arizona, Ohio, New Mexico and Oregon, on March 20, in Chandler, Ariz., at the Intel Ocotillo Campus. (AP)



Britain's Queen Camilla is welcomed by Lieutenant Governor of Isle of Man Sir John Lorimer, outside the Government House in Onchan, Isle of Man on March 20. (AP)



America

Inmate, accomplice still at large: Authorities are still searching for a white supremacist Idaho prison inmate and an ac-complice who fled after the accomplice shot and wounded corrections officers as they were transporting the inmate from a Boise hospital, according to police.

Police said Nicholas Umphenour is suspected of shooting two corrections officers during Wednesday's ambush in the ambulance bay at Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center, A warrant with a \$2 million bond has been issued for his arrest on two charges of aggravated battery against law enforcement and one charge of aiding and abetting an escape, police said.

He and inmate Skylar Meade drove off early Wednesday after the shooting in a gray 2020 Honda Civic with Idaho plates. It's not known where they are or where they are headed, police said Wednesday evening.

Three corrections officers were shot and wounded during the attack - two allegedly by Umphenour and one by responding po-Officials described Meade, 31, as a white

supremacist gang member. Meade was sentenced to 20 years in 2017 for shooting at a sheriff's sergeant during a high-speed chase. (AP)

Former deputy gets 40 years: Two former Mississippi deputies wept in court Wednesday as a federal judge sentenced them to years in prison and condemned their cruelty for breaking into a home with four other white officers and torturing two Black

US District Judge Tom Lee sentenced Christian Dedmon, 29, to 40 years in prison and Daniel Opdyke, 28, to 17.5 years.

Lee said Dedmon carried out the most "shocking, brutal and cruel attacks imaginable" against the two Black men, Michael Corey Jenkins and Eddie Terrell Parker, and against a white man during a traffic stop weeks earlier.

Dedmon did not look at Jenkins and Parker as he apologized Wednesday, saying he'd never forgive himself for the pain he

Jenkins, who has trouble speaking after being shot in the mouth during the January 2023 attack, said in a statement read by his lawver that Dedmon's actions were the most depraved of any of those who attacked him.

Alabama governor signs bill: Alabama

Politics

United Steelworkers Union endorses US prez

Biden touts Arizona as America's 'future'

CHANDLER, Ariz., March 21, (AP): US President Joe Biden on Wednesday celebrated an agreement to provide Intel with up to \$8.5 billion in direct funding and \$11 billion in loans for computer chip plants around the country, talking up the investment in the political battleground state of Arizona and calling it a way of "bringing the future back to America.

The Biden administration has predicted that the cash infusion should help the US boost its global share of advanced chip production from zero to 20%. The Democratic president highlighted the investment while visiting Intel's Ocotillo campus in Chandler, Arizona, where he inspected silicon wafers and expressed amazement at how thin the chips are.

In remarks after a tour, Biden pivhave on the US economy as he tries to translate his policy wins into a political boost ahead of November's election. Intel plans to invest in facilities in Arizona, Ohio, Oregon and New Mexico, with some of the government money helping to support workforce development.

"This isn't just about investing in America," Biden said, "It's about investing in the American people as well."

Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said the deal reached through her department would put the United States in a position to produce 20% of the world's most advanced chips by 2030, up from zero. The U.S. designs advanced chips, but its inability to make them domestically has emerged as a national security and economic

"Failure is not an option - leadingedge chips are the core of our innovation system, especially when it comes to advances in artificial intelligence and our military systems," Raimondo said on a call with reporters. "We can't just design chips. We have to make them in America."

The funding announcement came amid the heat of the 2024 presidential campaign. Biden has been telling voters that his policies have led to a

resurgence in US manufacturing and job growth. His message is a direct challenge to former President Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, who raised tariffs while in the White House and wants to do so again on the promise of protecting US factory jobs from China.

Biden told Intel employees during his tour, "You're bringing the future back to America. Biden narrowly beat Trump in Ari-

zona in 2020 by a margin of 49.4% to 49.1%. After the announcement, Biden flew to Texas to headline a pair of Dallasarea campaign fundraisers, with the first event a sellout that raised \$2.5

million, said trial lawyer Russell Budd, one of the hosts. "Mr. President, you're the hottest tick-

tonignt, Budd told Biden.

The United Steelworkers Union has endorsed US President Joe Biden, giving him support from another large labor union.

Operated

The announcement Wednesday by the Pittsburgh-based union came less than a week after Biden voiced opposition to the planned sale of U.S. Steel to Nippon Steel of Japan, saying it's vital that the company remain American owned and operated.

The USW, which represents 850,000 workers in metals, mining, rubber and other industries, said Biden has a track record of supporting retirement security, affordable health care and laws that help workers, all important issues to its members

The AFL-CIO, United Auto Workers, and several other unions previously endorsed Democrat Biden in his race against Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee. The Teamsters union has talked with both candidates and has yet to announce its pick.

By opposing Nippon's planned acquisition of US Steel, Biden chose to support unionized workers at the risk of upsetting the business community and an essential ally in Japan. Also, U.S. Steel is headquartered in Pennsylvania, a key swing state in this year's

US President Joe Biden opened a new line of attack against former president Donald Trump on Wednesday, asking and answering the classic "are you better off today than you were four years ago" question to remind voters of what it was like when Trump was in office.

Criticized

The Democratic president also criticized Trump for saying over the weekend that a "bloodbath" would follow if he loses to Biden again in November. Trump and his allies defended the rhetoric, saying the Republican's comments were about the US auto industry. Trump's critics had a different

"Folks, we can't stand for this," Biden said in his first public comments on Trump's "bloodbath" claim. "We have to say it as Americans, as Democrats, as independents, as Republicans, that there's no place for political violence ... ever. Period."

Biden sought to turn the tables on Trump with the "better off" riff.

"Speaking of Donald Trump, just a few days ago, he asked the famous question at one of his rallies: Are you better off today than you were four years ago?" Biden said at a pair of Dallas-area campaign fundraisers, one of which brought in \$2.5 million, one of the hosts said.

"Well Donald, I'm glad you asked that question man because I hope everyone in the country takes a moment to think back when it was like in March of 2020," Biden said.

The Democratic president reminded the audience that the coronavirus had reached America, hospital emergency rooms were overcrowded, first responders were risking their lives to care for the sick and some nurses wore trash bags due to the scarcity of personal protective equipment.

Morgues were being set up outside of hospitals because so many people were dying, unemployment shot up, the stock market crashed and grocery store shelves were bare, Biden said.

Gov Kay Ivey on Wednesday signed legislation that would ban diversity, equity and inclusion programs at public schools, universities and state agencies and prohibit the teaching of "divisive concepts" including that someone should feel guilty because of their race or gender.

The measure, which takes effect Oct. 1, is part of a wave of proposals from Republican lawmakers across the country taking aim at



A firefighter walks amongst the debris after a Russian attack in Kviv. Ukraine on March 21. Around 31 cruise and ballistic missiles were shot down over Kyiv on Thursday morning, said Serhii Popko, the head of Kyiv City Administration. The missiles were entering Kyiv simultaneously from various directions in a first missile attack on the capital in 44 days. (AP)

diversity, equity and inclusion programs, also known as DEI, on college campuses. Republicans say the programs deepen divisions and promote a particular political viewpoint. But opponents say it is a rollback of hard-won advances and programs that welcome underrepresented student popula-

"My administration has and will continue to value Alabama's rich diversity, however, I refuse to allow a few bad actors on college campuses - or wherever else for that matter - to go under the acronym of DEI, using taxpayer funds, to push their liberal political movement counter to what the majority of Alabamians believe," Ivey said in a statement. (AP)

'Don't let Trump forgo bond: New York state lawyers urged an appeals court Wednesday not to buy former President Donald Trump's claims that it's impossible to post a bond fully covering a \$454 mil-

lion civil fraud judgment while he appeals. The presumptive Republican nominee's lawyers said earlier this week that he couldn't find an underwriter willing to take on the entire amount. But the state is arguing that Trump and his co-defendants didn't explore every option.

The "defendants fail to propose a serious alternative to fully secure the judgment," Dennis Fan. a lawyer in the state attorney general's office, wrote in papers sent to the appeals court. (AP)

Lat/Am

Communities targeted

Venezuela govt keeps 'arresting' opponents

MEXICO CITY, March 21, (AP): As Venezuela's government would have it, President Nicolás Maduro and members of his inner circle have been the target of several conspiracies since last year that could have left them injured or worse.

Few details have been released about the alleged plots. But the government has cited them in the arrests of more than 30 people since January including a prominent human rights attorney and staffers of the leading opposition presidential candidate.

Local and international nongovernment groups, the United Nations and foreign governments have described the crackdown as a pretext to stifle political opposition ahead of the July 28 president election in which Maduro, in power since 2013, will seek a new six-vear term



The latest arrests took place Wednesday shortly before the country's top prosecutor announced arrest warrants for nine people working with Machado's campaign whom he accused of participating in one plot.

Oscar Murillo, general co-ordinator for the Venezuelan human rights group Provea, said officials are coordinating actions of the police, military and civic groups to tamp down

on any anti-government activity. "This has translated into greater political repression and a deepening of the policy of persecution that seeks to break civil society at a time when perhaps the ideal thing would be to be talking about the public policies needed to reverse poverty or inequality in Venezuela," Murillo said.

Attorney General Tarek William Saab has described the plots variously as aimed at attacking military installations, killing Maduro and other officials and de-stabilizing the country. He has publicly presented alleged confessions, planning documents, laptops and other items he has characterized as evidence.

Saab on Wednesday accused the nine members of the opposition, including Machado's campaign manager, of being part of a "destabilizing" plot that included demonstrations, a media campaign and plans to attack military barracks. He said two of the nine people, Dignora Hernández and Henry Alvierez Machado's Dignora Hernández and Henry Alviarez - Machado's political coordinator and national coordinator respectively - had already been arrested.

The arrests of Hernández and Alviarez brings to at least six the number of Machado staffers who are in custody over their alleged participation in the plots the government claims to have foiled.

Allowing free-market proponent Machado to run in the July election would offer Venezuela its best chance of a competitive race because no other candidate has anywhere near the level of support, money or political machinery to challenge Maduro. But the selfdescribed socialist government has barred her from office for 15 years - an administrative order upheld by the country's top court in January.

Other members of Venezuela's opposition have urged Machado to stand aside for another contender, but she has insisted on continuing her candidacy - perhaps hoping that international pressure could force Venezuela's establishment to relent on the ban.

"If the regime believes that with these actions they are going to isolate me, let me be clear: My team is Venezuela," she told reporters Wednesday. She added that her campaign continues organizing across the country and expects "much more than just well wishes" from the international community.

Machado defended her staff, stressing that all allegations against them are false.

The government has not made public any charging documents detailing allegations against the dozens of defendants in the conspiracy cases. Under Venezuelan law, court hearings are open, but in practice people, journalists and sometimes even the defendants' counsels of choice are barred from the courtroom.

Maduro has alleged the US government is behind the plans to assassinate him.

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: Armed gangs launched new attacks in the suburbs of Port-au-Prince early Wednesday, with heavy gunfire echoing across oncepeaceful communities near the Haitian capital.

Associated Press journalists reported seeing at least five bodies in and around the suburbs, and gangs blocked the entrances to some areas.

People in the communities under fire called radio stations pleading for help from Haiti's national police force, which remains understaffed and outmatched by the gangs. Among the communities targeted in the pre-dawn hours were Pétion-Ville, Meyotte, Diègue and Métivier.

"When I woke up to go to work, I found I could not leave because the neighborhood was in the hand of the bandits," said Samuel Orelus. "They were about 30 men with heavy weapons. If the neighborhood had mobilized, we could have destroyed them, but they were heavily armed, and there was nothing we could

By Wednesday afternoon, another victim had been reported: a police officer killed in broad daylight in a Port-au-Prince neighborhood known as **Delmas** 72, according to the SYNAPOHA police union

As the attacks continued, the US State Department announced Wednesday that it had completed its first evacuation of American citizens from Port-au-Prince. More than 15 Americans were airlifted to neighboring Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican

RIO DE JANEIRO: As Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro's term wound down in the final days of December 2022, he had decided to skip the ritual of handing over the presidential sash to his successor, and instead made plans to travel abroad.

But there was a problem, according to a Federal Police indictment unveiled Tuesday: Bolsonaro didn't have the necessary vaccination certificate required by

So Bolsonaro turned to his aide-de-camp, Mauro Cid, and asked him to insert false data into the public health system to make it appear as though he and his 12-year-old daughter had received the COVID-19 vaccine, according to the indictment.

Cid told police he tasked someone with the carrying out the deed, then printed out the certificates inside the presidential palace on Dec. 22 and hand-delivered them to Bolsonaro, according to detective Fábio Alvarez Shor, who signed the indictment.



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, right, meets with New South Wales state Premier Chris Minns, left. during a visit to New South Wales Parliament House in Sydney, on March 21. Australia received its most senior Chinese leadership visit in nearly seven years with Wang's arrival Wednesday. (AP)



Residents of the township of Soweto, South Africa, queue for water on March 16. Thousands of South Af-ricans are lining up for water as the country's largest city, Johannesburg, confronts an unprecedented collapse of its water system affecting millions of people. Residents rich and poor have never seen a shortage of this severity. (AP)



Africa

Senegal votes Sunday: Senegal votes Sunday in a tightly contested presidential election that has fired up political tensions and tested one of West Africa's most stable

The election will take place after much uncertainty following President Macky Sall's unsuccessful effort to delay the vote until the end of the year, sparking violent protests.

In the latest turn of events leading up to Sunday's vote, opposition leader Ousmane Sonko was released from prison last week, triggering jubilant celebrations on the streets of Dakar and renewed excitement about the contest.

Sunday's election is set to be Senegal's fourth democratic transfer of power since it gained independence from France in 1960. The country is viewed as a pillar of stability in a region that has seen dozens of coups and attempted coups in recent years.

Alioune Tine, founder of Afrikaiom, a Senegalese think tank, told the Associated Press that Sunday's election had set a grim record in the country's democratic history, with rights groups accusing Sall's government of repressing the media, civil society and the opposition.

"It was the longest and most violent presidential election process, with the most deaths, injuries and political detainees," said

Human Rights Watch said nearly 1,000 opposition members and activists have been arrested across the country in the last three years. But in a recent interview with the AP, Sall denied that he's trying to hold on

There are 19 candidates in the race, the highest number in Senegal's history. These include a former prime minister, a close ally of Sonko - who was barred from running - and a former mayor of Dakar. A runoff between leading candidates is widely ex-

Despite the violent upheavals in recent months, analysts say unemployment is the chief concern for a majority of young Senegalese. Around half of Senegal's population of 17 million are under 18, according to Afrobarometer, an independent survey

"The big question right now for the Senegalese election is how are we going to break out of poverty," said Marième Wone Ly, a former Senegalese political party leader. "We can't see the end of the tunnel. People don't see it."

About a third of Senegalese live in poverty, World Bank data shows. Thousands have fled towards the West in search of economic opportunity, undertaking risky and often

Asia

UN urges stronger int'l action against Myanmar junta

Australia, UK sign defense & security treaty

SYDNEY, March 21, (Agencies): Australia and the United Kingdom signed a new defense and security cooperation agreement with the defense ministers of both countries saying it was required to meet "contemporary challenges" to maintain a global rulesbased order.

The treaty was signed by Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles and his UK counterpart Grant Shapps following annual bilateral ministerial defense talks at Parliament House in Canberra on Thursday, as part of the Australia-UK Ministerial (AUKMIN) meeting, which was first held in 2006.

"Australia's relationship with the UK is dynamic and enduring," Marles said in a written statement Thursday. "From the UK's leadership of support for Ukraine and efforts to address the Houthi threat, to increasing contributions in the Pacific and the Indo-Pacific, we continue to work closely together to support a global rules-based order.

"As the world becomes more complex and uncertain, we must modernize our most important partnerships," the statement said.

The treaty also includes provisions to make it easier for the respective forces to operate together in each other's countries, such as the joint training of Ukrainian troops in the UK. Shapps said the treaty formalizes

how the two country's will consult on issues that affect each other's sovereignty and regional security.

"I think one of the most important elements is it describes a mechanism by which we consult when either of our countries are under threat and we have those discussions more formalized than it is at the moment," Shapps said at a joint press conference with Marles at Parliament House in Canberra on Thursday.

Other areas within the agreement included continued cooperation on capability development, including through the AUKUS alliance, as well as closer collaboration on undersea warfare, intelligence and military exercises.

Refreshing the bilateral defense treaty was a commitment made at the AUKMIN conference held last year in the UK, and is unlikely to have come as a surprise to others powers in the region, namely China.

Also:

GENEVA: Thomas Andrews, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar called on Wednesday for stronger international action against Myanmar's military

Subianto confirmed as president-elect as rivals allege fraud in Indonesia polls

JAKARTA, Indonesia, March 21, (AP): Indonesian Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto was announced the winner of the presidential election in the world's third-largest democracy Wednesday over two former governors who vow to contest the result in court over alleged irregularities.

Subianto, who was accused of abuses under the past dictatorship and chose the son of the popular out-going president as his running mate, won 58.6% of the votes. Former Jakarta Gov. Anies Baswedan received 24.9% and former Central Java Gov. Ganjar Pranowo got 16.5%, the General Election Commission said. It posted polling stations' tabulation forms on its website, allowing for independent verification.

Subianto said he will respect those who made different choices in the vote.

"We call on all Indonesian people to look to the future together," he told a news conference. "We must unite and join hands because our challenges as a nation are very big."

Subianto has received congratulatory messages from other Southeast Asian nations as well as the Chinese, Russian, French, Dutch and British governments, who all expressed their wishes to work with his new government.

"We look forward to partnering

junta. The junta has escalated attacks on civilians in response to significant battlefield losses and widespread opposition. Andrews called for an end to "appeasement and unconditional engagement with the junta" in a press conference from Geneva, saying that the first condition for future engagement must be to "stop the killing".

He described the junta as "desperate and increasingly isolated but extremely dangerous" highlighting a fivefold increase in air strikes against civilian targets and the launch of a forced military recruitment program.

Andrews expressed concern about the plight of Myanmar's Muslim community, stressing that unlike others they are prohibited from moving to safety, adding that the junta is allegedly forcing young people from the Muslim minority to join the military, which has been responsible for the genocide of their own community.

closely with President-elect Subianto and his Administration when they take office in October," U.S. State Secretary Antony J. Blinken

said after his victory was confirmed. On Thursday morning, Bas-wedan's lawyers filed a challenge to the results in the Constitutional Court. Pranowo also plans a court challenge. "We do not want to let these various deviations from democracy pass without historical records and set a bad precedent for future election organizers," Baswedan said after final results were announced.

Also:

HANOI, Vietnam: Vietnam's Vice President Vo Thi Anh Xuan will serve as acting president after the previous president's resignation a year into the position, a Communist Party newspaper reported Thurs-

Ánalysts said a permanent candidate was unlikely to be selected soon, underscoring the growing concerns among foreign tors about political instability in the Southeast Asian nation that is a growing manufacturing hub and sits at the middle of the U.S.-China competition for global influence.

Xuan, 54, became vice president in 2021 and she will be serving as acting president for the second time, the Tuoi Tre daily reported.

MEULABOH, Indonesia: An Indonesian search and rescue ship on Thursday located a capsized wooden boat that had been carrying dozens of Rohingya Muslim refugees, and began pulling survivors who had been standing on its hull to safety.

An AP photographer aboard the rescue ship said 10 people had been taken aboard local fishing boats and another 59 were being saved by the Indonesian craft. Men, women and children, weak and soaked from the night's rain, wept as the rescue operation got underway and people were taken aboard a rubber dinghy to the rescue boat.

It was unclear how many refugees were aboard the small craft when it capsized off of Indonesia's northernmost coast on Wednesday, with six survivors initially rescued by local fishermen estimating between 60 and 100 people.

deadly journeys. (AP)

Taps run dry in Johannesburg: For two weeks, Tsholofelo Moloi has been among thousands of South Africans lining up for

water as the country's largest city, Johannesburg, confronts an unprecedented collapse of its water system affecting millions of people.

Residents rich and poor have never

seen a shortage of this severity. While hot



Rohingya refugees stand on their capsized boat as rescuers throw a rope to rescue them in the waters off West Aceh, Indonesia, on March 21. The wooden boat carrying dozens of Rohingya Muslims capsized off Indonesia's northernmost coast on Wednesday, according to local fishermen. (AP)

weather has shrunk reservoirs, crumbling infrastructure after decades of neglect is also largely to blame. The public's frustration is a danger sign for the ruling African National Congress, whose comfortable hold on power since the end of apartheid in the 1990s faces its most serious challenge in an

election this year.

A country already famous for its hourslong electricity shortages is now adopting a term called "watershedding" - the practice of going without water, from the term loadshedding, or the practice of going without power. Moloi, a resident of Soweto on the outskirts of Johannesburg, isn't sure she or her neighbors can take much more.

They and others across South Africa's economic hub of about 6 million people line up day after day for the arrival of municipal tanker trucks delivering water. Before the trucks finally arrived the day before, a desperate Moloi had to request water from a nearby restaurant.

There was no other alternative. A fiveliter (1.3-gallon) bottle of water sells for 25 rand (\$1.30), an expensive exercise for most people in a country where over 32% of the population is unemployed.

"We are really struggling," Moloi said. "We need to cook, and children must also attend school. We need water to wash their

clothes. It's very stressful." Residents of Johannesburg and surrounding areas are long used to seeing water shortages - just not across the whole region at once. (AP)



Dubai sovereign wealth fund plans to sell third of Nasdaq shares

A Dubai sovereign wealth fund that's the single-largest shareholder in the Nasdaq stock index plans to sell a third of its shares in the exchange, a deal potentially worth some \$1.6 billion that saw the value of the firm fall in aftermarket trading Wednesday

The announcement from Borse Dubai, owned by the Investment Corp. of Dubai, would make it the second-largest holder in the Nasdaq, a technology-heavy exchange that's one of the three main indexes in the United States.

"Today's offering is being conducted to enhance the capital structure and liquidity within the Borse Dubai Group," said Essa Kazim, chair and CEO of Borse Dubai, in a statement released after the Nasdaq closed Tuesday. "We continue to be a longterm shareholder in Nasdaq and are invested in the success of the com-

pany."
Kazim did not say what exactly Borse Dubai planned to do with the money. Filings by the Nasdaq put the Borse Dubai sale at some 26.9 million shares. A separate statement suggested a sales price of \$59 a share, putting a potential value of \$1.6 billion on the deal.

Borse Dubai will retain some 10.8% of shares in the Nasdaq. "Borse Dubai is and continues to be a valued shareholder of Nasdaq underpinned by a shared vision for our future," Nasdaq Chief Financial Officer Sarah Youngwood said in the same statement. "Borse Dubai's insights and contributions have and will continue to shape our path ahead.

Share prices for the Nasdaq fell 2.6% in aftermarket trading Wednesday to just over \$60 a share. (AP)

Market Movements

- Tadawu JAPAN Nikkei PHILIPPINES -

Change Closing pts +96.32 12,835.65 +812.06 40.815.66 +106.45 6,963.22

- KSE 100 PAKISTAN

21-03-2024

Change Closing pts -13.76 4,277.61 -297.03 65,419.95 Business

Kuwait Finance House focuses on core banking business to achieve sustainable profitability

KFH ranks first among Kuwaiti banks in terms of profits

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: In an interview with The Banker magazine, Kuwait Finance House (KFH)'s Acting Group Chief Executive Officer, Abdulwahab lesa Al Rushood, said that KFH ranked first among Kuwaiti banks in terms of profits. The bank reported a record net profit of KD 584.5 million for the year ended 2023; representing an increase of 63.4% compared to 2022.

Al Rushood added that "KFH reported its highestever profit, not only in its own history but also the largest within the Kuwaiti banking sector. This achievement is primarily attributed to consolidation of AUB Group's financial statements for the full year, following the acquisition's completion in October 2022".

"In general, the higher profit is mainly from the increase in total operating income, lower provision,' said Al Rushood.

On another front, Al Rushood said that KFH future objectives revolve around further focusing on core banking business for achieving sustainable profitability, moving forward in innovation and digital transformation strategy, expanding customer base, and enhancing their loyalty, promoting harmony and synergy among the Group banks, talent acquisition and retention, empowering staff and creating a culture that encourages digital mindset.

Banking technology

Al Rushood noted that KFH is leveraging cutting-edge technologies in the banking industry such as robotics and AI to streamline back-office operations, utilizing big data analytics for informed business decisions. He added that private blockchain applications are revolutionizing transaction settlements, ensuring efficiency and security. These advancements showcase KFH's commitment to harnessing frontier and emerging technologies for comprehensive digital transformation.

Tam Digital Bank

Speaking about the digital transformation strategy,



Abdulwahab Al Rushood

Al Rushood mentioned Tam Digital Bank, which KFH launched few months back as Kuwait's first Shariah compliant digital bank.

"The aim of launching Tam Digital Bank is to complement KFH's mission with delivering superior innovation and customer excellence. That said, Tam Digital Bank is designed to appeal to the younger audience, early entrepreneurs and those who are looking for a different and innovative banking experience," said Al Rushood "Tam aspires to make a paradigm shift in the banking sector within the region.'

He added that besides the standard banking services most banks offer, Tam is focusing on the experience and lifestyle of today's ecosystem leveraging personalization, customer engagement through integrated collection of rewards.

Best services and products

Al Rushood pointed out that KFH is constantly striving to develop and offer the best card payment services and products to customers that exceed their

He added that the card payment industry is evolving at a very fast pace in terms of technological advance-



KFH Headquarters

ment worldwide, noting that KFH is at the forefront and completely committed to provide customers with the best-in-class product features and with top security

"KFH card customers enjoy the finest loyalty programs such as Baitak Rewards points, airline miles and cashback in partnership with the top local and internationally renowned retailers," he added.

He went on to say that most of KFH rewards programs provide customers with extra earning for crossborder card payments, saying that the Bank has also enabled most of the digital wallets like Apple Pay, Samsung Pay, Google Pay to allow customers to follow the payments method trends with the most secure

Sustainability strategy

As the pioneer in the Islamic finance industry, Al Rushood stated that KFH has strategically positioned itself at the forefront of sustainability in Kuwait.

"KFH's sustainability strategy, deeply embedded in its operations, encompasses over 62 objectives across four critical pillars: Economic, Environmental, Social, and Governance. This comprehensive framework is a testament to our commitment to driving sustainable growth," said Al Rushood.

He also said that a key innovation in KFH sustainability agenda is the introduction of its Green Financing product. This product is designed to support projects and initiatives that are not only economically viable but also environmentally friendly and socially beneficial. It aligns perfectly with KFH vision to address the current and future needs of the Kuwaiti society through sustainable solutions, thereby creating a positive effect across social and economic dimensions.

On the economic front, he added that KFH objectives are geared towards fostering sustainable economic development that is resilient and inclusive, adhering to the core principles of Islamic finance.

As for the growth outlook, Al Rushood expected the Kuwaiti operating environment to remain stable, saying that Kuwait's banking market is experiencing a surge in digital banking solutions, as customers increasingly opt for convenient online banking solutions. Thus, the investment in digital solutions will continue to grow at a fast pace. He also expected further growth in green finance products and sustainability initiatives.

Net profits surge 28.7% in '23

Trade sector financing in Kuwait

Kuwaiti banks report robust profits despite economic downturn

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: Despite a downturn in the Kuwaiti economy quarter of 2023. Despite political and economic uncertainties, banks are in 2023, banks in the country reported robust profits, largely driven by optimistic about maintaining stable growth throughout 2024. increased interest rates, according to 'The Banker' magazine, reports Al-

Qabas daily. Despite a 0.7% contraction in GDP due to oil production and price declines, Kuwaiti banks saw annual net profits rise by 28.7% to 1.5 billion

The surge in profits was attributed to a significant uptick in net interest income, which reached 2.6 billion dinars in 2023, up from 2.3 billion dinars the previous year. This increase mirrored global trends, with international banks also benefiting from higher interest rates aimed at combating infla-

With the Central Bank of Kuwait raising interest rates to 4.25%, Kuwaiti banks saw their net interest margins strengthen, reaching 2.78% in the third

Redmond Ramsdell of Fitch Credit Rating Agency anticipates Kuwaiti loan growth to remain relatively strong, between 3% and 4% for the year, supported by continued profitability from higher interest rates. Major Kuwaiti banks are eyeing opportunities in the project market as the government invests in infrastructure projects aligned with Kuwait Vision 2035.

Digital banking is on the rise in Kuwait, with 95% of the population using digital channels for banking. Kuwaiti banks are investing in digital solutions to meet evolving customer demands, particularly among the youth

Salah Al-Fulaij, CEO of National Bank of Kuwait, highlighted the bank's commitment to financing development projects and embracing digital trans-

KPC reports minor rise in oil price

KUWAIT CITY, March 21, (KUNA): Kuwait oil price rose by six cents on Wednesday to reach USD 86.74 per barrel, compared to USD 86.68 on Tuesday, said the Kuwait petroleum corporation (KPC) on USD 81.68 a barrel.

Thursday.

In international markets, Brent crude oil went down by USD 1.43 to reach USD 85.95 per barrel as West Texas Intermediate by USD 1.79 to reach

9 companies submit proposals

KOC evaluates bids for deep drilling rig tender

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: In its pursuit of boosting oil and gas production as part of its ambitious strategy, Al-Rai has learned that the Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) has opened the envelopes for a tender aimed at supplying 24 rigs for deep drilling. These envelopes are currently being assessed both technically and commercially to make a decision.

According to sources, out of the 14 qualified entities, 9 companies have submitted their price proposals. Remarkably, some companies have bid for more rigs than initially specified in the tender by the KOC.

The sources further revealed that the KOC has set a limit on the maximum number of drilling rigs that each company can be awarded, with allocations ranging between 7, 4, and 2 rigs based on its strategic vision.

No additional rigs beyond these allocations will be accepted, and bids for excess rigs will be rejected. Moreover, the price quotes must be comprehensive and cover the entire scope of work for each platform.

The sources explained that some

companies committed to the required share of the KOC and some offered more or less, indicating that the companies that submitted their offers were:

■ "Burgan Well Drilling": two rigs, priced at 32.89 million dinars per rig

■ "Great Wall": 10 rigs between 32.191 and 35.292 million

■ "Gray Wolf": one excavator for 34.185 million

■ "KCA Duetage": five excavators, prices between 36.984 and

47.447 million ■ "Kuwait Drilling": three rigs between 29.705 and 32.662 million

■ "Nabors Drilling": three excavators, prices between 30.278 and

31.703 million ■ "Sinopec": seven excavators rang-

ing between 31.072 and 33.464 million ■ "Trinidad": two rigs at 36,485

million per rig
■ "United Precision": seven excavators ranging between 31.767 million and 33.251 million.

\$223 mln contract awarded to Hesco

Construction begins on gas flow line network in Western Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: According to information obtained by MEED Projects, construction has begun on a project aimed at developing a gas flow line network and associated infrastructure in western Kuwait. The project, expected to be finalized in the third quarter of 2028, involves a contract worth \$223 million awarded to the Kuwait Heavy Engineering Industries and Shipbuilding Company (Hesco) in December 2022, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The scope of the project encompasses various tasks, including the construction of gas flow lines, installation of valves, surface safety valves, control systems and panels, as well as the installation of booster pumps and civil works. Additionally, pipe works, fabrication works, and associated facility construction are integral components of the project.

Gas flow lines serve to connect individual wells to a manifold or process equipment, facilitating the transportation of gas in both onshore and offshore fields. These lines are crucial elements in large oil and gas fields, transporting flows from the manifold to pretreatment stages or transportation facilities.

It's noted that Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) has been actively tendering numerous flow line projects since the beginning of 2020. While several projects are valued at less than \$100 million, larger contracts, like this one, hover around the \$250 million mark.

soars to 672.6 mln dinars in Jan Decline in Kuwaiti banks' imports financing

By Mahmoud Shendi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: Financing provided by local banks to the trade sector in Kuwait witnessed a significant surge in January, reaching a total of 672.6 million dinars, a substantial increase from 206.6 million dinars in December 2023, marking a staggering 270% annual growth compared to January 2023 when it stood at 181.7 million dinars.

These figures, unveiled in the monthly statistics released by the Central Bank of Kuwait for the year 2023, underscore a robust expansion in commercial financing activities within the country.

The cumulative balance of commercial financing extended by local banks recorded a modest uptick of 1.1% in January, amounting to 3.576 billion dinars, compared to 3.536 billion dinars in December 2023. On an annual basis, this represents a notable increase of 6.1%, reflecting the resilience and dynamism of Kuwait's trade finance sector amid evolving market conditions.

In terms of syndicated financing, the aggregated financing provided by local banks to the trade sector in

Exports to Japan increase by 34.2%

Kuwait's Feb. trade surplus with Japan up 53.4%

TOKYO, March 21 (KUNA): Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan surged 53.4 percent from a year earlier to JPY 83.5 billion (USD 652 million) in February, up for the first time in two months, as exports outpaced imports by a big margin, government data showed on Thursday.

In a preliminary report, the Finance Ministry said that Kuwait stayed in black ink with Japan for 16 years and

Overall exports from Kuwait to Japan jumped 34.2 percent year-on-year to JPY 101.9 billion (USD 673 million) for the first increase in two months. Imports from Japan sank 14.4 percent to JPY 18.4 billion (USD 121 million), down for the third month in a row.

As for Middle East's trade surplus with Japan, it edged up 0.4 percent to JPY 804.5 billion (USD 5.3 billion) last month, with Japan-bound exports from the region expanding 1.3 percent from a year earlier.

Crude oil, refined products, liquefied natural gas

(LNG) and other natural resources, which accounted for 96.3 percent of the region's total exports to Japan, went

The region's overall imports from Japan grew 4.0 percent on demand for machinery, manufactured goods and electrical machinery The world's third-biggest economy logged a global

trade deficit of JPY 379.4 billion (USD 2.5 billion) for the second straight month in February, but the amount shrank by 59.2 percent year-on-year. Exports rose 7.8 percent from the year before, thanks

US. Imports gained 0.5 percent with clothing, computers and units, and petroleum products increasing. China remains Japan's biggest trade partner, followed by the US.

to robust shipments of automobiles and auto parts to the

The trade data are measured on a customs-cleared basis before adjustment for seasonal factors.

Kuwait experienced a notable surge in 2023, expanding by 33.5% or approximately 766 million dinars. Trade financing, a pivotal service offered by domestic banks to support both domestic and international trade transactions through mechanisms such as commercial deals, letters of guarantee, and letters of credit, played a crucial role in facilitating trade activities.

However, it is worth noting that while trade financing flourished, the value of financing extended by Kuwaiti banks for imports witnessed a decline in January 2024, marking the lowest level since June 2022, with a total of 452 million dinars. This decline represents a 37.01% decrease compared to January 2023 when imports financing amounted to 882 million dinars. Additionally, there was a monthly decrease of 32.17% from 819.1 million dinars recorded in December 2023.

Analyzing the breakdown of financing types, financing through other payment orders emerged as the most prominent category, amounting to 363.6 million dinars, despite experiencing a 32.81% annual decrease. Borrowed credits followed with 161.6 million dinars, marking a substantial 67.11% annual decrease, while financing under collection policies witnessed a modest increase of 16.47% at 30.4 million dinars. Regarding the currency denomination for financing, the dollar dominated with financing reaching 438.2 million dinars, while financing in Swiss francs remained minimal at 1.4 million dinars.

Sign that price pressures remain elevated

BoE expected to signal interest rate cuts could happen

The Bank of England is widely expected to indicate Thursday that interest rates could be cut in the coming months following news that inflation across the U.K. is falling faster than expected.

The central bank, which sets monetary policy for the U.K., is expected to keep its main interest rate unchanged at a 16-year high of 5.25%, as it has since

But like the U.S. Federal Reserve, which also kept rates on hold Wednesday, the Bank of England is expected to show that it is inching toward cutting borrowing costs as price rises ease.

Central banks around the world raised interest rates aggressively in late 2021 from near zero to counter price rises first stoked by supply chain issues during the coronavirus pandemic and then by Russia's invasion of

Ukraine, which pushed up food

and energy costs.

Higher interest rates - which cool the economy by making it more expensive to borrow, thereby bearing down on spending have contributed to easing inflation worldwide, though they also

have affected economic activity. The British economy, for example, has barely grown over the past year, and the near-term outlook is not much better. (AP)

Microsoft hires influential AI figure Suleyman

Microsoft has hired Mustafa Suleyman to head up its consumer artificial intelligence business, adding another influential figure to its pool of talent leading the charge to build a technology that Suleyman views as both as a

boon and threat to humanity. Suleyman, co-founder of Al research lab DeepMind, said Tuesday in a LinkedIn post that he'll become CEO of Microsoft AI, leading all of the company's consumer Al

products and research, including its generative AI service Copilot as well as its Bing search engine and

Edge browser Microsoft is also hiring the chief scientist at Suleyman's Al company, Inflection, and several of its top engineers and researchers, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella said in a blog post. The hirings are likely to bolster Microsoft's lead position in the Al industry, as big tech companies battle for position to capitalize

on demand for AI services.

Microsoft has teamed up with ChatGPT maker OpenAI, investing billions of dollars into the San Francisco company, and recently partnered with France's Mistral, a hot Al startup.

Suleyman co-founded the Deep-Mind Al research lab, which Google purchased in 2014, and worked there until 2022, when he left to set up Inflection.ai with LinkedIn cofounder Reid Hoffman . (AP)

US inflation up again in February

Anouncement fuels rally on Wall Street

Fed still foresees 3 interest rate cuts this yr despite the bump in inflation

WASHINGTON, March 21, (AP): Federal Reserve officials signaled Wednesday that they still expect to cut their key interest rate three times in 2024, fueling a rally on Wall Street, despite signs that inflation remained elevated at the start of the year.

For now, the officials kept their benchmark rate unchanged for a fifth straight time.

Speaking at a news conference, Chair Jerome Powell said the surprising pickup in inflation in January and February hadn't fundamentally changed the Fed's picture of the economy: The central bank still expects inflation to continue to cool, though more gradually than it thought three months ago.

The recent high inflation readings followed six months of steady slowdowns in price increases. Economists and Wall Street investors were looking for some clarification Wednesday about how the latest inflation reports were viewed at the Fed.

The January and February data, Powell said, "haven't really changed the overall story, which is that of inflation moving down gradually on a sometimes bumpy road towards 2%," the Fed's target.

In new quarterly projections they issued, the policymakers forecast that stronger growth and inflation above their 2% target level would persist into next year. Overall, the forecasts suggest that the Fed still expects an unusual combination: A healthy job market and economy in tandem with inflation that continues to cool - just more gradually than they had predicted three months ago.

For this year, the Fed projected that the economy will expand 2.1% - a big increase from its December forecast of just 1.4%. Yet at the same time, it still expects inflation

to keep declining, though slowly. Michael Gapen, chief U.S. economist at Bank of America, said the Fed's updated projections suggest that it expects improvements in supply chains and the availability of workers to continue, allowing the economy to grow even as inflation slows to the Fed's target. Rising immigration, for example, has made it easier for businesses to hire without having to rapidly raise pay

"It looks to me like they're embracing that supply-side story," Gapen said. That means "you can cut while growth is solid, and you can cut while the labor market is

Rate cuts would, over time, lead to lower costs for home and auto loans, credit card borrowing and business loans. They might also aid President Joe Biden's reelection bid, which is facing widespread public unhappiness over higher prices and could benefit from an economic jolt stemming from lower borrowing rates.

The financial markets cheered the message Wednesday from Powell and the Fed, with traders sending the Dow Jones industrial average surging 1%, to another all-time high.

"Inflation has come way down, and that gives us the ability to approach this question carefully and feel more confident that inflation is moving down sustainably," Powell said. "It is still likely ... that we will see that confidence and that there will be rate cuts."

The Fed's policymakers did make some small adjustments in their outlook: Their projections showed that in 2025, they now



Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange Wednesday, March 20, 2024. U.S. Federal Reserve Board Chairman Jerome Powell announced that there was no rate cuts today, but signaled there may be later in

US retail sales to increase between 2.5% and 3.5% in 2024, trade group forecasts

NEW YORK, March 21, (AP): The largest U.S. retail trade group is forecasting that the country's retail sales will increase anywhere between 2.5% and 3.5% this year, a solid but still slower pace than the 3.6% seen last year.

The National Retail Federation said Wednesday that it expects retail sales will reach between \$5.23 trillion and \$5.28 trillion this year.

The 2024 forecast is roughly in line with the 10-year pre-pandemic average annual sales growth of

"The economy is primarily supported by consumers who have shown much greater resilience than expected, and it's hard to be bearish on the consumer," the federation's chief economist, Jack Kleinhenz, said. "The question for 2024 ultimately is, will consumer spending maintain its resilience?"

The group's calculation of retail

foresee only three rate cuts, down

from the four they envisioned in

One reason may be that they

expect "core" inflation, which ex-

cludes volatile food and energy

costs, to still be 2.6% by the end of

2024, up from their previous pro-

jection of 2.4%. In January, core

inflation was 2.8%, according to

The Fed's foecasts overall, sug-

Most economists have pegged

the Fed's June meeting as the most

likely time for it to announce its

first rate cut, which would begin to

reverse the 11 hikes it imposed be-

ginning two years ago. The Fed's

hikes have helped lower annual in-

flation from a peak of 9.1% in June

2022 to 3.2%. But they have also

made borrowing much costlier for

tumbled since mid-2022, it has re-

mained stuck above 3%. And in the

first two months of 2024, the cost

of services, like rents, hotels and

Though consumer inflation has

businesses and households.

the Fed's preferred measure.

gest that

their December forecasts.

sales excludes automobile dealers, gasoline stations and restaurants to focus on the core retail sector. The 2024 retail sales forecast is based on economic modeling that considers a variety of indicators including employment, wages, consumer confidence, disposable income, consumer credit, previous retail sales and weather.

A strong jobs market and rising wages have fueled household spending, but retail sales have become choppy in the face of rising credit costs and still higher prices. And shoppers have been shifting their spending to services after focusing on buying goods while they were staying close to home during the heart of the pandemic.

The retail group's forecast comes as Americans picked up their spending a bit in February after pulling back the previous month, according to the latest Commerce Department

hospital stays, remained elevated.

That suggested that high borrow-

ing rates weren't sufficiently slow-

ing inflation in the economy's vast

While the Fed's rate hikes typical-

ly make borrowing more expensive

for homes, cars, appliances and other

costly goods, they have much less

effect on services spending, which

doesn't usually involve loans. With

the economy still healthy, there is no

compelling reason for the Fed to cut

rates until it feels inflation is sustain-

said Luke Tilley, chief economist

at Wilmington Trust, a wealth

management company. "They've

got a strong economy, strong labor

In most respects, the U.S. econ-

omy remains heathy. Employers

keep hiring, unemployment re-

mains low, and the stock market

is hovering at record highs. Yet

average consumer prices remain

much higher than they were before

the pandemic - a source of unhap-

"There's no urgency for them,"

service sector.

ably under control.

market.'

report. But last month's gain of 0.6% was weaker than expected, and January's decline was revised even lower, suggesting that many are growing more cautious with their money.

Many retailers are stepping up deals heading into the spring selling season, while offering new loyalty programs -both free and fee-based to get shoppers to return more frequently.

For example, in the world of home improvement, customers have been pulling back on big doit-yourself projects amid a still challenging home market. Lowe's, the nation's second largest retailer, launched in January a free loyalty program that features such perks as free shipping and early notification of discounts.

It's similar to Lowe's separate loyalty plan for its so-called professional customers who include contractors.

piness for many Americans for which Republicans have sought to pin blame on Biden.

And there are signs that the economy could weaken in the coming months. Americans slowed their spending at retailers in January and February, for example. The unemployment rate has reached 3.9% still a healthy level, but up from a half-century low last year of 3.4%. And much of the hiring in recent months has occurred in government, health care and private education, with many other industries

barely adding any jobs. Other major central banks are also keeping rates high to ensure that they have a firm handle on consumer price spikes. In Europe, pressure is building to lower borrowing costs as inflation drops and economic growth stalls. The European Central Bank's leader hinted this month that a possible rate cut could come in June, while the Bank of England isn't expected to open the door to any imminent cut when it meets Thursday.

WASHINGTON, March 21, (AP): Consumer prices in the United States picked up last month, a sign that inflation remains a persistent challenge for the Federal Reserve and for

President Joe Biden's re-

election campaign, both of

which are counting on a

steady easing of price pressures this year. Prices rose 0.4% from January to February, higher than the previous month's figure of 0.3%, the Labor Department said Tuesday. Com-

pared with a year earlier, consumer

prices rose 3.2% last month, above

January's 3.1% annual pace. Excluding volatile food and energy prices, so-called "core" prices also climbed 0.4% from January to February, matching the previous month's rise and a faster pace than is consistent with the Fed's 2% inflation target. Core inflation is watched especially closely because it typically provides a better read of where inflation is likely headed.

"It's a disappointment, but not a disaster," said Eric Winograd, U.S. economist at asset manager AB. "The underlying details are more encouraging than the top-line number, which was boosted by a few volatile categories - the type of prices that tend not to repeat month-to-month.

Those volatile items include gas prices, which jumped 3.8% just from January to February but are still below their level of a year ago. Air fares surged 3.6% after two months of much smaller increases. Clothing prices rose 0.6% after three months of declines but are unchanged compared with a year earlier.

Housing and rental costs, though, which tend to change more gradually, cooled in February: They rose 0.4% from January, slower than the 0.6% increase the previous month. Measures of new apartment leases, which have cooled, are expected to feed into the government's inflation data in the coming months.

New car prices ticked down 0.1% in February. Though these prices remain much higher than they were before the pandemic, they're expected to decline further as more vehicles show up on dealer lots. Grocery prices were unchanged last month and are up just 1% from a year earlier.

Despite February's elevated figures, most economists expect inflation to continue slowly declining this year. At the same time, the uptick last month may underscore the Fed's cautious approach toward interest rate cuts.

Voter perceptions of inflation are

sure to occupy a central place in this year's presidential election. Despite a healthy job market and a record-high stock market, polls show that many Americans blame Biden for the surge in consumer prices that began in 2021. Though inflationary pressures have significantly eased, average prices remain about far above where they stood three years ago.

In his State of the Union speech last week, Biden highlighted steps he has taken to reduce costs, like capping the price of insulin for Medicare patients. The president also criticized many large companies for engaging in "price gouging" and so-called "shrinkflation," in which a company shrinks the amount of product inside a package rather than raising the price.

"Too many corporations raise prices to pad their profits, charging more and more for less and less," Biden said.

Rob Considine, who lives near Minneapolis, said he has noticed shrinkflation in consumer products like deodorant, shampoo, and soap. Considine, 38, said he doubts, though,

that Biden's criticism of shrinkflation, or proposals in Congress to restrict the practice, will have much effect. If companies can't make bars of soap smaller while charging the same price, Considine suggested, they will simply reduce the quality to maintain their profits.

"I don't know how the government can set a price for a commodity like that without affecting it in the long run," he said.

Overall inflation has plummeted from a peak of 9.1% in June 2022, though it's now easing more slowly than it did last spring and summer. The prices of some goods, from appliances to furniture to used cars, are actually falling after clogged supply chains during the pandemic had sent prices soaring higher. There are more new cars on dealer lots and electronics on store shelves.

By contrast, prices for dental care, car repairs, and other services are still rising faster than they did before the pandemic. Car insurance has shot higher, reflecting rising costs for repairs and replacement. And after having sharply raised pay for nurses and other in-demand staff, hospitals are passing their higher wage costs on to patients in the form of higher prices.

Still, Fed Chair Jerome Powell signaled in congressional testimony last week that the central bank is getting closer to cutting rates. After meeting in January, Fed officials said in a statement that they needed "greater confidence" that inflation was steadily falling to their 2% target level. Since then, several of the Fed's policymakers have said they believe prices will keep declining. One reason, they suggested, is that consumers are increasingly pushing back against higher prices by seeking out cheaper alternatives.

Largest fine ever assessed

Chevron agrees to pay over \$13 mln in fines for oil spills

SACRAMENTO, Calif., March 21, (AP): Chevron has agreed to pay more than \$13 million in fines for dozens of past oil spills in California.

The California-based energy giant agreed to pay a \$5.6 million fine associated with a 2019 oil spill in Kern County. The company has already paid to clean up that spill. This money will instead go toward the state Department of Conservation's work of plugging old and orphaned wells.

The department said it was the largest fine ever assessed in its his-

tory.
"This agreement is a significant demonstration of California's commitment to transition away from fossil fuels while holding oil companies accountable when they don't comply with the state's regulations and environmental protections," department Director David Shabazian said in a news release.

The 2019 oil spill dumped at least 800,000 gallons (3 million litres) of oil and water into a canyon in Kern County, the home of the state's oil industry.

Also, Chevron agreed to pay a \$7.5 million fine for more than 70 smaller spills between 2018 and 2023. These accounted for more than 446,000 gallons (1.6 million litres) of oil spilled and more than 1.48 million gallons (5.6 million litres) of water that killed or injured at least 63 animals and impacted at least 6 acres (2.4 hectares) of salt brush and grassland habitat, according to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Office of Spill Prevention and Response.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife said it was the largest administrative fine in its history. Most of the money will go to projects to acquire and preserve habitat. A portion of the money will also go to the Oiled Wildlife Care Network at the University of California, Davis School of Veterinary Medicine and to help respond to future oil spills.
"This settlement is a testament

to our firm stance that we will hold businesses strictly liable for oil spills that enter our waterways and pollute our environment," Department of Fish and Wildlife Director Chuck Bonham said.

Chevron did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Japan's exports rise nearly 8% in February on strong shipments of cars and machinery

TOKYO, March 21, (AP): Japan's exports rose 7.8% in February from a year earlier on strong shipments of cars and electrical machinery, the

government said Thursday. Exports in February totaled 8.2 trillion yen (\$55 billion), marking the third straight month of growth, according to preliminary customs data.

The report showed the trade deficit sank by more than half on-year to 379 billion yen (\$2.5 billion), marking the second straight month of a

Exports to China rose just 2.5% and those to all of Asia edged 2.3% higher on-year, suggesting that demand has moderated. Exports to the United States rose 18% and exports to the EU were up almost 16%.

The picture for imports was mixed, with China supplying 1.7 trillion yen (\$236 billion), a nearly 17% annual increase that more than doubled Japan's deficit with its giant

In all, imports edged up 0.5%, to-

taling nearly 9 trillion yen (\$60 billion), as prices for key commodities such as coal and liquefied natural gas

The strength in exports come as good news, coming a day after the Bank of Japan raised its key interest rate for the first time in 17 years, no longer setting it at below zero. The

central bank has promised to still keep lending easy as it gauges various signs for how growth holds up.

One positive recently is a solid rebound in tourism, which counts statistically as exports, with recent data showing that visitor numbers have exceeded those before the CO-VID-19 pandemic. Japan restricted

entry into the country during the pandemic.

Exports have remained relatively strong even as Japan's economy has slowed, hitting a record high of just over 100 trillion yen (\$670 billion)

Japan is now the world's fourth largest economy, behind Germany.

What's On

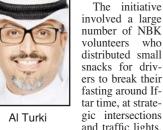
Bank hopes to encourage a greater sense of responsibility during the holy month

NBK distributes thousands of Iftar meals at different areas in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: As part of fulfilling its ongoing corporate social responsibilities and on the occasion of the Holy Month of Ramadan, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK)'s Public Relations Team distributed thousands of meals and special convoys to fasters daily at many Areas in Kuwait. This initiative comes within the framework of the ongoing "Do Good Deeds in Ramadan" philanthropic campaign launched by the bank.

Also, NBK distributed dates and water at different intersections and bus stops in Kuwait before iftar time as part of "Do Good Deeds in Ramadan". The campaign aimed to raise awareness at reducing accidents, speeding and committing traffic violations during the holy month of Ramadan, espe-

cially during the run up to iftar at different areas.



gic intersections and traffic lights, as well as bus stops "NBK Iftar banquets, an annual NBK philanthropic tradition and a landmark activity within the bank's corporate social responsibility, ac-

quired much more momentum this year distributing daily thousands of Iftar banquets at many Areas in Kuwait, including Farwaniya, Salmiya, Bneid Al Qar and Jleeb, in addition to hospitals: Amiri, Mubarak and Sabah as well as Kuwait Airport terminals 1 and 2", said Talal Al Turki, NBK Public Relations Senior Manager.

"The distribution scale and range of NBK Iftar banquets this year also included distributing fast-breaking meals via special convoys to various crowded locations in Kuwait. A large number of NBK staff volunteers was ready to serve the fasters", Al Turki added

Commenting on dates and water distribution, "NBK is proud to launch this initiative, which combines giving and sharing spirit in offering snacks to drivers to break their fasting and raising safety awareness to reduce traffic accidents, especially around Iftar





NBK's Public Relations Team distributed thousands of meals and special convoys to fasters daily at many areas in Kuwait.

time". He stated.

"NBK is committed to adopting value-added social initiatives, especially those related to the holy month of Ramadan," he added.

For almost three decades, the Ra-

madan program comprised a series of activities and initiatives aimed at encouraging community engagement and solidarity in Kuwait. "NBK hopes to encourage a greater sense of responsibility during the holy month", Al Turki

It is worth mentioning that NBK's, NBK Iftar banquet campaign launched with the commencement of the Holy Month of Ramadan as part of an extensive social program comprising a multitude of philanthropic Bank offers highest monthly returns

KIB announces winners of Al Dirwaza account's 2nd and 3rd weekly draws

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced the names of the winners in the Al Dirwaza account's second and third weekly draws, based on customers' February deposits. The two weekly draws were recently held in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as well as representatives from the Bank. In the second weekly draw, the KD 1,000 prize was awarded to Marzouq Qeaid Faisal AlOtaibi, Hadeel Alaa Aldeen Mirza AlSeleemi, Mohammad Abdulredha Mohammad AlBazzaz, Laila Abbas Ahmad AlSairafi, and Abdulkarim Ajdar Khalil Balanji, whilst the KD 500 prize was awarded to Ahmad Mohammad Abdullah AlYaqout, Maha Abdulmohsen Ibrahim Alshatti, Hatem Alsayed Abu Alezz Ahmad Alsayed, Faisal Mohad Muhsen Alenzi, Hanan Khaled Salman AlOtaibi, Ashraf Mohamed Hussein Ahmed Kasbar, and Abdulrahman Saleh Marzouq Abu

As for the third weekly draw, the KD 1,000 prize was awarded to Ali Khalel Abdulhussain Alkhabbaz, Engy Alyeldean Yehia Ibrahim, Mubarak Shadid Salman Alhindal, Saif Khaled Saif Alazmi, and Fakhreyah Mohammad Abdullah Almulla, whilst the KD 500 prize was awarded to Ali Ahmad Abdulmajeed Albohasan, Fetouh Ahmad Almursi Mohamed, Adnan Ahmed Hussein Alshaheen, Mohammad Abdulraheem Abdulredha Almutawaa, Hamad Ahmad Mudhhi Almudhhi, Shaikhah Muhareb Awwad Alazmi, and Osama Abdulaziz Mohammad Abdulaziz.

On this occasion, Ali Alsane, Manager - Product Development, Digital Innovation and Data Intelligence at KIB, said: "On behalf of KIB, I would like to congratulate all those who were the lucky winners of the weekly draw and wish the rest of Al Dirwaza account holders the best of luck in the upcoming period. Our distinctive draws campaign for the Al Dirwaza account has many features and allows customers to enjoy benefits and rewards in exchange for their savings. It motivates customers to deposit funds and enter the draws, which boast the highest number of winners throughout the year." He added: "At KIB, we always seek to introduce products and solutions that enable us to reward our customers, earn their loyalty, and achieve the highest levels of satisfaction among them. In line with KIB's slogan 'Bank for Life', we continue offering the best banking experience



its campaign designed to encourage customers to open an Al Dirwaza account digitally through the KIB Online platform or KIB Mobile application.

Alsane asserted

It serves to note that Al Dirwaza account is a savings account for individual customers, based on the Wakala investment principle, launched by KIB as one of its banking products for individuals. The account is currently the best of its kind in the sector, with annual expected profits of up to 2% disbursed on a monthly basis, where the customer gets an expected profit of 2% for the first 3 months from the account opening date and up to 1% expected rate onward. The expected profits are automatically deposited into the customer's account within the first day of the beginning of each month.

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



ABK announces Alaa Ali Alias winner of the Alfouz KD 10,000 weekly draw prize

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced Alaa Ali Alias the KD10,000 Alfouz weekly draw winner on Monday,18th March2024, 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

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 pre-

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 Ku-

Drive reaches needy families

KCICAI distributes vital food supplies during Ramadan

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: The Kuwait Chapter of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (KCICAI) proudly announces its recent initiative aimed at providing essential food supplies to those in need during the holy month of Ramadan. In a spirit of generosity and compassion, the chapter successfully concluded its food distribution program, providing crucial support to individuals requiring financial assistance.

Ramadan stands as a month of fasting, prayer, and reflection, emphasizing acts of charity and kindness towards those facing adversity. Recognizing the importance of this sacred month, KCICAI organized the food distribution drive to ensure that individuals have access to nutritious meals throughout Ramadan. This initiative reflects the chapter's commitment to its core values of social responsibility and compassion towards the less fortunate.

Mr. Rabin Gonsalves, Chairperson of KCICAI, expressed his enthusiasm for the initiative, stating, "As members of the global accounting community, it is our duty to contribute positively to society and make a difference in the lives of others. We believe that Ramadan is not only a time for personal reflection and spiritual growth but also an opportunity to extend a helping hand to those facing difficulties. It is a time of solidarity and compassion, and through our food distribution



Group photo during the charity work.

efforts, we hope to alleviate the burden on families struggling to make ends meet and spread joy and solidarity within our community.

The food distribution encompassed a range of essential items, including rice, lentils, cooking oil, flour, and other pantry staples. KCICAI committee members and its members, devoted their time and efforts to meticulously coordinate logistics, ensuring a seamless and efficient distribution process. Mr. Rabin extended heartfelt gratitude to all volunteers and supporters whose contributions were instrumental in the success of this initiative.

The Ramadan food distribution program reflects KCICAI's ongoing commitment to making a positive difference in the lives of others. By uniting as a community and exemplifying compassionand solidarity, the chapter endeavoursto foster a sense of unity and empathy during this auspicious month.

For more information about the food distribution program, please visit the KCICAI website at icaikw.org

Middle Eastern educational leaders convene in Sri Lanka

36th CBSE Principals' Conference in Sri Lanka marks historic milestone

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: The Kuwait Chapter hosted the 36th CBSE Principals' Conference at the Hilton Hotel in Colombo, Sri Lanka from 7th February to 10th February, 2024. The conference themed 'Visionary Leaders in Times of Change' was the first ever CBSE Gulf Sahodaya Principals' conference to be held outside India and the Middle East.



Stage play 'Right vo Wrong' flyer

The CBSE Gulf Sahodaya, established in 1986, comprises 200 principals from six Middle Eastern countries—Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates—making it one of the largest academic leadership bodies in the region, dedicated to maintaining high standards in academics, sports and co-curricular activities. The Annual Conference serves as a platform for stakeholders to convene, participate in various events, and benefit from the expertise of seasoned educators within the Sahodaya. The Kuwait Chapter of CBSE Gulf Sahodaya warmly

welcomed distinguished guests, esteemed speakersand Principals from prestigious CBSE Schools in the Middle East to the inaugural ceremony on7th February, 2024. The ceremony witnessed a SEA of great minds and the excitement was palpable. The occasion was graced by the dignified presence of the Hon. Dinesh Gunawardena, esteemed Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. Dr. Satyanjal Pandey, Deputy High Commissioner of India to Kuwait was the Special

Amidst ceremonial drumbeats, trumpets, and cymbals, accompanied by traditional dance, the attendees were escorted to the auditorium. Adorned with vibrant lights, the auditorium exuded an atmosphere of joy and serenity. The conference was formally inaugurated by lighting the lamp of knowledge by Hon. Dinesh Gunawardena and Dr. Satyanjal Pandey, symbolizing intellectual and spiritual energy. The gathering paid tribute to the nations of Sri Lanka and India by honoring the National Anthems.

The young pillars from the reputed schools of Sri Lanka presented a soulful rendition of prayer invoking the blessings of Almighty. They mesmerized the audience with an enthralling classical dance, a replication of Sri Lanka's rich culture. Highlighting the pivotal role played by the visionary leaders in shaping educational landscapes, Dr. V. Binumon, Secretary of Gulf Sahodaya presented an august welcome to the gathering. Mr. Palaniswamy, Chairman of CBSE Gulf Sahodaya, in his Presidential address appreciated the educators for inspiring generations and encouraged them to



Group photo during the 36th CBSE Principals' Conference in Sri Lanka.

continue serving the society by spreading the light of knowl-

edge.
Mr. Ravi Ayanoli, Chapter Convenor, Kuwait gave a formal introduction of the esteemed Chief Guest, Hon. Dinesh Gunawardena. In his address, the Chief Guest acknowledged the significant role educators play in shaping society. He also highlighted the strong bond between Sri Lanka and India, sharing a personal connection by mentioning his parents' involvement in India's independence movement and their imprisonment in Mumbai. Hon. Dinesh Gunawardena commended the collaborative efforts of CBSE Gulf Sahodaya in education and officially launched the CBSE Gulf Sahodaya Mobile App. The Sri Lankan cultural extravaganza presented by the young talented buds of Sri Lanka was a treat to the eyes of the spectators. Vote of thanks proposed by Dr. Prashant Vasudev, Treasurer CBSE Gulf Sahodaya drew curtains to the inaugural ceremony of the Principals

With the motto 'Learn Together and Grow Together', the 36th CBSE Principals' Conference aimed to update visionary leaders on modern trends in the field of education. The conference provided a forum for Principals to network, exchange ideas, and refine their skills. Discussions encompassed recent innovations, achievements, trends, practical sues, and challenges, fostering growth and solidarity.

Multiple speakers, trainers and mentors shared a common platform to connect, educate and inspire the visionary leader adding glory to the 36th Principals' Conference of CBSE Gulf Sahodaya. The engaging four-day event comprised sessions on strategic vision and system improvement.

Pilar Rubio, Spain's most charismatic television phenomenon







Pilar Rubio

SHE is a reporter and TV presenter who entertains the audiences through her television broadcasts and also plays a crucial role in keeping the public informed about current events, conducting interviews, hosting programs, and presenting stories on a wide range

With strong communication skills, a keen eye for detail and the ability to work under pressure to meet tight deadlines, she reports from the field, conduct live interviews in studio settings and hosts talk shows and other television programs.

She is none other than Pilar Rubio Fernández a prominent Spanish reporter and television presenter known for her captivating on-screen presence, versatile talent, and engaging person-

Born on March 17, 1978, in Torrejón de Ardoz, Spain, Rubio has established herself as one of the most recognizable faces in the Spanish entertainment industry, with her passion for sports engaging with viewers, provide analysis, and offer insights into various issues of public interest and plays a vital role in imparting valuable information to audiences across the globe.

Rubio began her career in the spotlight as a model before transitioning to television, where she quickly gained recognition for her charisma and professionalism.

Her breakthrough came when she joined the cast of the popular Spanish comedy show "Sé lo que hicisteis..." (I Know What You Did...) in 2007.

As a co-host of the program, Rubio showcased her wit, humor, and interviewing skills, earning praise from audiences and critics alike.

Building on her success in comedy, Rubio expanded her repertoire to include various television genres, including entertainment, reality television, and sports.

She has hosted several high-profile programs, including "Operación Tri-unfo," "Mira quién baila!" (Look Who's Dancing!), and "Ninja Warrior España," where she demonstrated her versatility as a presenter and her ability to connect with diverse audiences



Sergio Ramos and Pilar Rubio wedding in Seville.

In addition to her work on television, Rubio has also ventured into acting, appearing in Spanish films and television series. Her talent and charm have made her a sought-after personality for endorsements and brand partnerships, further solidifying her status as a household name in Spain.

Off-screen, Rubio is known for her philanthropic efforts and commitment to charitable causes, using her platform to raise awareness and support for various social issues.

With her magnetic presence and multifaceted talent, Pilar Rubio Fernández continues to captivate the audiences and make a significant impact in the Spanish entertainment industry.

She began a relationship with Spanish and then Real Madrid defender Sergio Ramos in September 2012, which was confirmed during the FIFA Ballon d'Or gala. They have four children.

On July 16, 2018, the couple got engaged. The wedding took place in Ramos' hometown of Seville on June 15, 2019.

Since 2014, she has appeared as a collaborator on El Hormiguero. In 2012, she began a relationship with footballer Sergio Ramos, with whom she has four children; they married in

She started studying Economics, although she did not finish the degree.

She modeled in several men's magazines and appeared in the films Isi & Disi: Alto Voltaje and Carlitos y el campo de los sueños, as well as in two short films: Merry Christmas by Fran Casanova and Cuestión de química by Juan Moya, acting alongside Cristina Peña and Arturo Valls, among others.

On television, she has appeared in commercials for Amstel, Canal+, Hyundai, and in programs such as Lo que necesitas es amor, The Price Is Right, La azotea de Wyoming, and in Six pack, broadcast by the Cuatro network.

Her definitive public success was her appearance on the comedy program Sé lo que hicisteis... on La Sexta, where she reported on various news articles. In the summer of 2007, she appeared in a humorous home video program called La ventana indiscreta.

She won the award for best television reporter at the Premio Joven 2007. In 2008 and 2009, she was selected as the sexiest woman in the world by the Spanish edition of FHM magazine.

From July 14 to August 29, 2008, and in July 2009, she presented the program Sé lo que hicisteis... replacing Patricia Conde, who was on vacation.

Since 2014, she has appeared as a collaborator on the comedy show El Hormiguero. In 2013, she appeared as a zombie on the cover of Annihilator's album Feast.

Variety



This image released by Columbia Pictures shows, from left, Celeste O'Connor, Kumail Nanjiani, Finn Wolfhard and James Acaster in a scene from "Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire." (AP)

Film

Nostalgic romp or just another reboot?

LOS ANGELES: M. Emmet Walsh, the character actor who brought his unmistakable face and

unsettling presence to films including "Blood Simple" and "Blade Runner," has died at age 88, his manager said Wednesday. Walsh died from cardiac arrest

on Tuesday at a hospital in St. Albans, Vermont, his longtime manager Sandy Joseph said.

The ham-faced, heavyset Walsh often played good old boys with bad intentions, as he did in one of his rare leading roles as a crooked Texas private detective in the Coen brothers' first film, the 1984 neo-noir "Blood Simple.

Joel and Ethan Coen said they wrote the part for Walsh, who would win the first Film Independent Spirit Award for best male lead for the role.

Critics and film geeks relished the moments when he showed up on screen.

Roger Ebert once observed that "no movie featuring either Harry Dean Stanton or M. Emmet Walsh in a supporting role can be altogether bad.

Walsh played a crazed sniper in the 1979 Steve Martin comedy "The Jerk" and a prostate-examining doctor in the 1985 Chevy Chase vehicle "Fletch.

In 1982's gritty, "Blade Runner," a film he said was grueling and difficult to make with perfectionist director Ridley Scott, Walsh plays a hard-nosed police captain who pulls Harrison Ford from retirement to hunt down

Born Michael Emmet Walsh, his characters led people to believe

Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire clears low bar NEW YORK, March 21, (AP): Forty years after "Ghostbusters" and fol-

lowing a string of sequels that never measured up to the 1984 original - beginning all the way back with 1989's "Ghostbusters II" - it's fair to wonder, well, who else ought we to call? It may be time to, if not give up the ghost entirely, at least give a flip through the ol' rolodex.

But as the lackluster 2021 install-"Ghostbusters: Afterlife" showed, the half life of most film franchises today is an ever-lengthening long tail of diminishing returns. Though the options are many, sucking "Ghostbusters" dry would make a prime exhibit in Hollywood's nostal-

Still, it's not quite as simple as that. I'm glad for the female-led 2016 "Ghostbusters." Aside from prompting a minor culture war, it assembled the best comic ensemble since the original with Melissa Mc-Carthy, Kristen Wiig, Kate McKinnon, Leslie Jones and, yes, Chris Hemsworth.

And as easy as it might be to label the new one, "Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire," another half-hashed retread - which it is, a little bit - it's also a significant upgrade from "Afterlife," which relocated the action to Oklahoma and forgot to pack any comedy. "Frozen Empire," back, thankfully, in New York, is a breezier, more serviceable sequel that has a modest charm as an '80-tinged family adven-

The innate appeal of "Ghostbusters" had to do with its brash mixing of genres - adult-edged comedy with sci-fi toys - that summoned the spirit of "Abbott of Costello Meet Frankenstein." When the sequels have gone astray, it's usually because they get bogged down with solemnity or special effects when all they really need is the it's-the-end-of-the-worldand-I-feel-fine smirk of Bill Murray. I'd forgive bad visual effects a lot

sooner than I would bland comic in-

"Frozen Empire," though, is organized less around a group of funny people wearing proton packs than it is around a family. The movie more or less opens with the Ectomobile racing down Fifth Avenue with Gary (Paul Rudd) at the wheel, Callie (Carrie Coon) riding shotgun and her kids -Trevor (Finn Wolfhard) and Phoebe (Mckenna Grace) - in the back, all in bickering pursuit of a "sewer dragon" apparition.

The cast is much the same as "Afterlife," but the behind-the-scenes talent has been rejiggered. After Jason Reitman took over directing from his father, Ivan Reitman, he here is credited as a producer and writer. Gil Kenan, who co-wrote "Afterlife," directs "Frozen Empire," which is dedicated to the elder Reitman, who died in 2022.

More than before, you can feel the growing distance from the original

"Ghostbusters." Harold Ramis died in 2014 and while Murray, Dan Aykroyd and Ernie Hudson all return, they no longer feel like the axis to this cinematic universe. (Aykroyd, though, gives the movie some soulful quirk as Dr. Raymond Stantz, and Ernie Hudson may be more a potent presence than ever.)

Familiar-faced ghosts return, too, in "Frozen Empire," which, like its predecessor, doesn't skimp on the fan service. That instinct to cater to "Ghostbusters" diehards (a kind of ridiculous kind of diehard, if we're being honest) continues to diminish a franchise that recoiled defensively after the 2016

"Ghostbusters." But if you accept the low-bar aspirations of "Frozen Émpire," you may get a pleasant-enough experience out of it. It's a movie that feels almost more like a high production-value TV pilot for an appealing sitcom, with Rudd as the stepfather, than it does a big-screen event on par with the original.

he was from the American South, but he could hardly have been from any further north.(AP)

LONDON: Prince Harry's lawyer leveled explosive new allegations Wednesday that Rupert Murdoch was aware of cover-ups at his British tabloids

that used unlawful techniques to





Murdoch

Attorney David Sherborne said Murdoch was among the executives who were aware that public statements made about phone hacking and other unlawful information gathering at News Group Newspapers were

spy on the Duke of Sussex and

others.

Harry and other claimants, in-

cluding actor Hugh Grant, sought during the first of a three-day hearing in the High Court to amend their lawsuit against the publisher to include allegations that executives were part of an effort to conceal and destroy evidence of wrongdoing.

"It is inferred that they would not have been carrying out this extensive concealment and

destruction strategy without the knowledge and approval of Rupert Murdoch," Sherborne said in a court filing.

Defense lawyer **Anthony** Hudson said the proposed changes to the case were unnecessary and seemed aimed at "campaigning against the tabloid press" and as a substitute for a public inquiry.



People & Places

ENTERTAINMENT

Natural wonders, Napoleon's exile

Journey through history's forgotten isle

St. Helena, a small, craggy island in the South Atlantic Ocean, hasn't seen many tourists in the past for good reason: It's one of the most remote inhabited places in the world.

Until 2017, it took five nights by boat to reach the British overseas territory, which is nearly halfway between southern Africa and Brazil. Today, with weekly commercial flights and the recent arrival of high-speed internet, the government is hoping to breathe new life into a fledgling tourism industry that welcomed about 2,100 leisure travelers in 2023.

The island has just a little more than 4,000 residents, or Saints as they call themselves, and is likely to attract a certain kind of visitor.

"It's people with a real desire to travel and learn rather than, 'let's go somewhere to have a bit of sunshine and some nice food," says Emma Phillips, whose husband, Nigel, is St. Helena's governor.

After all, weather can be unpredictable and supplies occasionally run low when you're 1,200 miles from the nearest continent.

"You've got to be prepared to embrace all of that," Phillips says, while extolling the island's wel-coming locals, rich history and natural wonders. "Come with an open mind."

Perhaps best known as the site of Napoleon Bonaparte's exile from 1815 until his death in 1821, St. Helena features multiple heritage sites honoring the deposed French emperor. Visitors can tour his homes and his original burial grounds. His remains were returned to France in 1840.

The capital city, Jamestown, is an eclectic mix of new and old. British Georgian-era colonial buildings house small retail and grocery stores. There are a couple DVD rental shops - remnants of the island's pre-high-speed inter-

net days. For a workout with a view, climb the 699 steps of Jacob's Ladder on the edge of town. The 600-foot-high outdoor staircase was originally a donkey-powered cart track used to transport goods between the city and fortifications on the cliffs above.

Plantation House, 2 miles south of the capital, is a grand Georgian mansion built in 1792 by the Brit-



Sweeping views of Sandy Bay can be seen from Blue Point Trail on the island of St. Helena, on Feb. 24, 2024. The 40-minute trek is one of the remote territory's 21 scenic hiking trails of varying difficulty. (AP)



British Georgian-era colonial buildings line Main Street in Jamestown, St. Helena, on Feb. 23, 2024. The British overseas territory, located nearly halfway between southern Africa and Brazil,



of the governor of the British overseas territory of St. Helena, is pictured on Feb. 22, 2024. (AP)

A wooden bridge leading to the Heart Shaped Waterfall on the island of St. Helena on Feb. 21, 2024. The trek is one of the remote territory's 21 scenic hiking trails of varying difficulty. (AP)



The site of Napoleon Bonaparte's tomb, known as the Valley of the Tomb, is seen on the British overseas territory of St. Helena in the South Atlantic, on Feb. 24, 2024. (AP)



Tourists take photos of Jonathan, a 192-year-old tortoise, on the lawn of Plantation House on the South Atlantic island of St. Helena on Feb. 22, 2024. (AP)



A hiker walks the Cox's Battery trail on the island of St. Helena on Feb. 24, 2024. The nearly three-mile trek is one of the remote territory's 21 scenic hiking trails of varying difficulty. (AP)



The city of Jamestown is pictured from the top of Jacob's Ladder, a massive staircase carved into the side of a mountain on the remote island of St. Helena, on Feb. 23, 2024. The 600-foot-high stairway was originally a donkey-powered cart track used to transport goods in and out of the city. (AP)

ish East India Company, which administered St. Helena until 1834. Now the official governor's residence, the house features a collection of royal portraits and original furnishings, including antique china and a chandelier from Bonaparte's final home.

Plantation House's well-manicured vard is home to one of the island's most famous residents, a venerable tortoise named Jonathan. At the approximate age of 192, Jonathan holds the Guinness World Record for the oldest living land animal. He has met several royals, including Queen Elizabeth II, who visited St. Helena in 1947, and Prince Edward, who made the trip in January.

"Jonathan is an enigmatic tortoise," says Teeny Lucy, one of his caretakers for over a decade. "If you come to St. Helena, people usually know two things: Jonathan the tortoise and Napoleon Bonaparte." She's not sure who is the bigger celebrity.

Jonathan has lost his sight and

sense of smell, but remains a major draw for tourists like Gilly Hill, who traveled from the U.K. to snap selfies with him.

"I just think he's the most amazing creature," she said.

Other bucket-list activities include swimming with Chilean devil rays or whale sharks, which are often spotted December through March. There's also humpback whale watching from June to December. Come in January to catch peak nesting season for the wirebird, also known as the St. Helena plover, which can only be found on St. Helena.

Roughly one-third of all endemic biodiversity in U.K. territories can be found within the 47-square-mile island. More than 500 species are not seen anywhere else on earth, including 45 flowering plants and ferns.

Microclimates that range from cool tropical forests to sunny rolling grasslands and windswept volcanic cliffs can all be experienced within an hour's drive.

With two dozen scenic trails, St. Helena can satisfy even the most avid hiker's wanderlust. Serious trekkers might opt for the highest point, Diana's Peak. The 2.3-mile hike takes you 2,690 feet above sea level and into Britain's last remaining natural cloud forest.



KHARKIV, Ukraine, March 21, (AP): In a

dance studio that doubles as a bomb shelter in

northeast Ukraine, the little girls in pink tutus

jump and glide. Occasionally, they misbe-

have, prompting a curt rebuke from Marina

windowless space under an apartment com-

plex, but for an hour, the ballet class offers

levity and escape from the daily horrors play-

ing out above ground in the northeastern city

are inescapable: buildings lie in piles of rubble,

and sirens are constant. Practicing in a bomb

shelter means the girls can keeping dancing

Owner Yulia Voitina has done what she

can to lighten the place up: Pink ballet slip-

pers hang from a door knob, a bean bag offers

little girls bend their knees, staring at their re-

flection in a large mirror to perfect the stance.

As the music swells, she tells them to rise up

on the balls of their feet and raise their arms.

The Kharkiv region cuts across the snaking

1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line, where

Ukrainian and Russian forces have been

locked in vicious battles for over two years

the war, but she closed them when she left to

seek shelter in western Ukraine. When she came home in March 2023, she realized she

Casual hikers can stroll along

Blue Point Trail for spectacular

views of Sandy Bay, Sperry Island

and Castle Rock. For a moderate

challenge, try the shaded hike to

St. Helena's famed Heart Shaped

Waterfall, which only flows in

winter and early spring. Be sure

to catch the best views of the falls

Voitina ran a chain of ballet studios before

Altukhova tells her students to plié, and the

through the almost hourly air raid alerts.

comfortable seating for waiting parents.

Some lose their balance.

since Moscow's invasion.

"Very good," she says.

Reminders of Russia's war against Ukraine

Timed to classical music, the 9-year olds

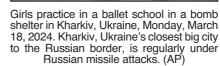
The Princess Ballet Studio is a spartan,

prance in like gusts of air.

Altukhova, their instructor.

Girls practice in a ballet school in a bomb

Echoes of elegance: Ballet's timeless tale



didn't have the money, or the students to reopen them. But she decided keep one open for nearly no profit. From 300 students before the war, today her studios serve 20.

She felt she had to. "There is nothing for kids in Kharkiv, no school or kindergartens, kids are online all the time," she said. "They need to apply their energy somewhere to feel nice emotions. So ballet, in particular, is like salvation for them.

Across the Kharkiv region, civilians are putting lives back together as best they can.

In nearby Izium, all but levelled after months of Russian occupation, Hanna Tertyshna is gardening. The front lines are not far, but she has had enough of being displaced after fleeing the Russians once. "It's all unpredictable," she said. "But it's good to be home, the birds are chirping and children are playing.

A short distance away, Evgeny Nepochatov looked at the rubble that used to be his family her mother Hanna watches with pride. "That is her favorite thing to do, she has been attending classes since she was 3," the 32-year old says. Her husband works for the State Emergen-

Yuri Sevastianov, an 80-year-old former

Soviet agricultural director, bicycled by to

gather firewood from the remains of Nepo-

chatov's house. "It's the only way we can sur-

vive," said Sevastianov, grimly, and sped off.

plicated exercise for the girls that will require

them to do a complete turn of the body on one

foot - a pirouette. Nine-year old Myroslava

Ponomarenko goes in for the move, her ex-

pression fixed in a mask of concentration as

From the door to the small waiting room,

though the whole world were at stake.

Back in ballet class, Altukhova has a com-

cy Service, and is rarely at home. Often, he is called to rescue civilians after Russian missile strikes, move rubble and assess the damage. Like Voitina, Ponomarenko fled the city with her family early in the war, only to return

her daughter for ballet classes once the studio reopened. Åt first, little Myroslava was not impressed. "When my daughter came here at first, she said, 'Oh my God, mom, this is a basement, there are no windows'" she said.

last year. She was among the first to sign up

She was used to Kharkiv's finest ballet conservatory, where concert pianists played live

during lessons, and she could watch professional dancers practice. But she has come to terms with the new re-

ality. She told her mother, "Well, it is what it is, let it be," Ponomarenko said. "I will agree to anything."



Coconut fingers, a traditional from the main road out of Jamescelebration dessert of iced sponge cake dusted with co-Perched at 1,700 feet on one of conut, are displayed at a resthe lushest and most remote parts taurant on the island of St. Helena on Saturday, Feb. 24, of the island lies a historic estate 2024. (AP) with sweeping cloud-forest views



pictured during a farm tour and tasting at Wranghams, a small coffee plantation and homestay in Sandy Bay, St. Helena, on Feb. 22, 2024.

and a really good cup of joe. Wranghams is a small coffee

farm with tours and home stays, run by Neil and Debbie Fantom. Coffee connoisseurs seek out

St. Helena's beans, often touted as one of the rarest and most expensive varieties in the world due to their export costs and single-origin status. It sells online for \$150 per half pound. Extreme isolation has ensured that the coffee plants, which were imported from Yemen in the 18th century, have never been cross-fertilized. (AP)

editor's choice



Excess niacin fuels inflammation, cardiovascular disease through newly discovered pathway

Cleveland Clinic-led study discovers link between 'high levels' of Niacin

CLEVELAND, March 21: Researchers from global health system Cleveland Clinic have identified a new pathway that contributes to cardiovascular disease associated with high levels of niacin, a common B vitamin previously recommended to lower cholesterol.

The team, led by Stanley Hazen, M.D., Ph.D., discovered a link between 4PY, a breakdown product from excess niacin, and heart disease. Higher circulating levels of 4PY were strongly associated with development of heart attack, stroke and other adverse cardiac events in large-scale clinical studies. The researchers also showed in preclinical studies that 4PY directly triggers



published in Na-Medicine,

ture

also details ge-

netic links between 4PY and vascular inflammation. The findings provide a foundation for potential new interventions and therapeutics to reduce or prevent that inflammation.

"What's exciting about these results is that this pathway appears to be a previously unrecognized yet significant contributor to the development of cardiovascular disease," said Dr. Hazen, Chair of Cardiovascular and Metabolic Sciences at Cleveland Clinic's Lerner Research Institute and Co-Section Head of Preventive Cardiology in the Heart, Vascular & Thoracic Institute. "What's more, we can measure it, meaning there is potential for diagnostic testing. These insights set the stage for developing new approaches to counteract the effects of this pathway."

Dr. Hazen adds, "For decades,

more than 50 nations have mandated niacin (vitamin B-3) fortification in staple foods such as flour, cereals and oats to prevent disease related to nutritional deficiency." Yet one in four subjects in the researchers' patient cohorts appear to be getting too much, and had high levels of 4PY, which appears to contribute to cardiovascular disease development.

Dr. Hazen compares our intake of niacin as multiple taps pouring water into a bucket. Once that bucket is filled, it begins to spill over. The human body then needs to process that spill-over and produce other metabolites, including 4PY.

The main takeaway is not that we should cut out our entire intake of niacin – that's not a realistic approach," said Dr. Hazen. "Given these findings, a discussion over whether continued mandates of flour and cereal fortification with niacin could be warranted."

Dr. Hazen notes broader use of over-the-counter supplements made with different forms of niacin have also become popular because of presumed anti-aging purposes. He adds that patients should consult with their doctors before taking over-thecounter supplements and focus on a diet rich in fruit and vegetables while avoiding excess carbohydrates.

The new findings also might help explain why niacin is no longer a goto treatment for lowering cholesterol. Niacin was one of the first treatments prescribed to lower LDL or "bad" cholesterol. However, eventually niacin showed to be less effective than other cholesterol-lowering drugs and was associated with other negative effects and higher mortality rates in previous research.

Sharp increase seen in Community Eligibility Provision

Free school meals for all may reduce childhood obesity while easing financial and logistical burdens for families and schools

By Anna Localio, University of Washington and Jessica Jones-Smith, University of Washington

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

School meals are critical to child health. Research has shown that school meals can be more nutritious than meals from other sources, such as meals brought from home.

A recent study that one of us conducted found the quality of school meals has steadily improved, especially since the 2010 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act strengthened nutrition standards for school meals. In fact, by 2017, another study found that school meals provided the best diet quality of any major U.S. food source.

Many American families became familiar with universal free school meals during the COVID-19 pandemic. To ease the financial and logistical burdens of the pandemic on families and schools, the U.S. Department of Agriculture issued waivers that allowed schools nationwide to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students. However, these waivers expired by the 2022-23 school year.

Since that time, there has been a substantial increase in schools participating in the Community Eligibility Provision, a federal policy that allows schools in high poverty areas to provide free breakfast and lunch to all attending students. The policy became available as an option for low-income schools nationwide in 2014 and was part of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. By the 2022-23 school year, over 40,000 schools had adopted the Community Eligibility Provision, an increase of more than 20% over the prior year.

We are public health researchers who study the health effects of nutrition-related policies, particularly those that alleviate poverty. Our newly published research found that the Community Eligibility Provision was associated with a net reduction in the prevalence of childhood obesity.

President Harry Truman established the National School Lunch Program in 1946, with the stated goal of protecting the health and well-being of American children. The program established permanent federal funding for school lunches, and participating schools were required to provide free or reduced-price lunches to children from qualifying households. Eligibility is determined by income based on federal poverty levels, both of which are revised annually.

In 1966, the Child Nutrition Act piloted the School Breakfast Program, which provides free, reduced-price and full-price breakfasts to students. This program was later made permanent through an amendment in 1975.

The Community Eligibility Provision was piloted in several states beginning in 2011 and became an option for eligible schools nationwide beginning in 2014. It operates through the national school lunch and school breakfast programs and expands on these programs.

The policy allows all students in a school to receive free breakfast and lunch, rather than determine eligibility by individual households. Entire schools or school districts are eligible for free lunches if at least 40% of their students are directly certified to receive free meals, meaning their household participated in a means-based safety net program, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or the child is identified as runaway, homeless, in foster care or enrolled in Head Start. Some states also use Medicaid for direct certification.

The Community Eligibility Provision increases school meal participation by reducing the stigma associated with receiving free meals, eliminating the need to complete and process applications and extending access to students in households with incomes above the eligibility threshold for free meals. As of 2023, the eligibility threshold for free meals is 130% of the federal poverty level, which amounts to US\$39,000 for a family of four.

We analyzed whether providing universal free meals at school through the Community Eligibility Provision was associated with lower childhood obe-

sity before the COVID-19 pandemic. To do this, we measured changes in obesity prevalence from 2013 to 2019 among 3,531 low-income California schools. We used over 3.5 million body mass index measurements of students in fifth, seventh and ninth grade that were taken annually and aggregated at the school level. To ensure rigorous results, we accounted for differences between schools that adopted the policy and eligible schools that did not. We also followed the same schools over time, comparing obesity prevalence before and after the policy.

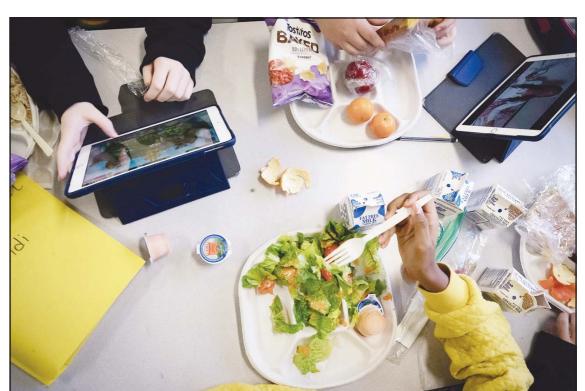
We found that schools participating in the Community Eligibility Provision had a 2.4% relative reduction in obesity prevalence compared with eligible schools that did not participate in the provision. Although our findings are modest, even small improvements in obesity levels are notable because effective strategies to reduce obesity at a population level remain elusive. Additionally, because obesity disproportionately affects racially and eth-nically marginalized and low-income children, this policy could contribute to reducing health disparities.

The Community Eligibility Provision likely reduces obesity prevalence by substituting up to half of a child's weekly diet with healthier options and simultaneously freeing up more disposable income for low-to-middle-income families. Families receiving free breakfast and lunch save approximately \$4.70 per day per child, or \$850 per year. For low-income families, particularly those with multiple school-age savings that families can use for other health-promoting goods or services.

Childhood obesity has been increasing over the past several decades. Obesity often continues into adulthood and is linked to a range of chronic health conditions and premature death.

Growing research is showing the benefits of universal free school meals for the health and well-being of children. Along with our study of California schools, other researchers have found an association between universal free school meals and reduced obesity in Chile, South Korea and England, as well as among New York City schools and school districts in New York state.

Studies have also linked the Community Eligibility Provision to improvements in academic performance and reductions in suspensions. (AP)



Seventh graders sit together in the cafeteria during their lunch break at a public school on Feb. 10, 2023, in the Brooklyn borough of New York. (AP)

When earth, moon and sun line up perfectly

'Solar eclipses' result from a fantastic celestial coincidence of scale, distance

By Christopher Palma Penn State

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

On April 8, 2024, millions across the U.S. will have the once-in-alifetime chance to view a total solar eclipse. Cities including Austin, Texas; Buffalo, New York; and Cleveland, Ohio, will have a direct view of this rare cosmic event that lasts for just a few hours.

While you can see many astronomical events, such as comets and meteor showers, from anywhere on Earth, eclipses are different. You need to travel to what's called the path of totality to experience the full eclipse. Only certain places get an eclipse's

The relatively small size of the Moon and its shadow make eclipses truly once-in-a-lifetime opportunities. On average, total solar eclipses are visible somewhere on Earth once every few years. But from any one location on Earth, it is roughly 375 years be-

tween solar eclipses. I'm an astronomer, but I have never seen a total solar eclipse, so I plan to drive to Erie, Pennsylvania, in the path of totality, for this one. This is one of the few chances I have to see a total eclipse without making a much more expensive trip to someplace more remote. Many people have asked me why nearby eclipses are so rare, and the answer is related to the size of the Moon and its distance from the Sun.

You can observe a solar eclipse when the Moon passes in front of the Sun,

Solar eclipses happen because of a few factors, including the Moon's size and distance from the Sun. (AP)

blocking some or all of the Sun from view. For people on Earth to be able to see an eclipse, the Moon, while orbiting around the Earth, must lie exactly along the observer's line of sight with the Sun. Only some observers will see an eclipse, though, because not everyone's view of the Sun will be blocked by the Moon on the day of an eclipse.

The fact that solar eclipses happen at all is a bit of a numerical coincidence. It just so happens that the Sun is approximately 400 times larger than the Moon and also 400 times more distant from the Earth.

So, even though the Moon is much smaller than the Sun, it is just close enough to Earth to appear the same size as the Sun when seen from Earth.

For example, your pinky finger is much, much smaller than the Sun, but if you hold it up at arm's length, it appears to your eye to be large enough to block out the Sun. The Moon can do the same thing - it can block out the Sun if it's lined up perfectly with the Sun from your point of view

When the Earth, Moon and Sun line up perfectly, the Moon casts a shadow onto the Earth. Since the Moon is round, its shadow is round as it lands on Earth. The only people who see the eclipse are those in the area on Earth where the shadow lands at a given moment.

The Moon is continuously orbiting around the Earth, so as time goes on during the eclipse, the Moon's shadow moves over the face of the Earth. Its shadow ends up looking like a thick line that can cover hundreds of miles in length. Astronomers call that line the path of totality. From any given location along the

utes. Then, the shadow moves away from that location and the Sun slowly becomes more and more visible. Solar eclipses don't happen every single time the Moon passes in be-

path of totality, an observer can see the

Sun completely eclipsed for a few min-

tween Earth and the Sun. If that were the case, there would be a solar eclipse every month. If you could float above the Earth's

North Pole and see the Moon's orbit from above, you would see the Moon line up with the Sun once every time it orbits around the Earth, which is approximately once per month. From this high point of view, it looks like the Moon's shadow should land on Earth every orbit.

However, if you could shift your perspective to look at the Moon's orbit from the orbital plane, you would see that the Moon's orbit is tilted by about 5 degrees compared with Earth's orbit around the Sun. This tilt means that sometimes the Moon is too high and its shadow passes above the Earth, and sometimes the Moon is too low and its shadow passes below the Earth. An eclipse happens only when the Moon is positioned just right and its shadow lands on the Earth. (AP)



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Winners on the podium after the awarding ceremony.

Barca, PSG win first leg matches of **Women's Champs League quarters**

Norwegian, Swedish teams go down by same margin

LONDON, March 21, (AP): Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain scored secondhalf winners in their away victories in the first leg of the Women's Champions League quarterfinals on Wednesday.

Defending champion Barcelona defeated Norwegian team Brann 2-1, while PSG earlier beat Swedish club Häcken by the same score. Salma Paralluelo gave Barcelona the

SOCCER

win with a low left-footed shot from inside the area in the 72nd minute for her competition-leading sixth goal this

Caroline Graham Hansen, a Norway international, had put the titleholders ahead with a deflected shot less than 10 minutes into the match.

"Away games in the Champions League quarterfinals are never easy. Even if people beforehand were saying differently, we knew that was not going



Brann's Marit Bratberg Lund (left), in a duel with Barcelona's Caroline Graham Hansen during the quarterfinal of the Women's Champions League soccer match between SK Brann Kvinner and FC Barcelona at Asane Arena in Bergen, Norway, Wednesday March 20, 2024. (AP)

to be the case. We knew it was going to be difficult," Graham Hansen said. "It's a deserved win, even if we should have scored more. Now we have to go back to Barcelona and finish the job there."

Cecilie Kvamme equalized for the hosts from a tight angle in the 39th.

"We stuck together for 90 minutes and I'm proud of us," Kvamme said. "I'm really happy we are still in it, now we have to prepare and do our best next

On Tuesday in the other quarterfinals, favorites Lyon and Chelsea also day.

cord eight-time champion Lyon came from behind to beat Benfica 2-1, while Chelsea defeated Ajax 3-0 to move closer to a second straight appearance in the last four of Europe's top compe-PSG defeated Häcken in Gothenburg

earned first-leg wins on the road. Re-

with a 74th-minute winner by Tabitha Chawinga.

"Offensively, I'm a little disappointed," PSG coach Jocelyn Precheur said. "We can show a better side to ourselves, especially in our stadium in

Eva Gaetino had opened the scoring for PSG in the 23rd with her first professional goal, and Rosa Kafaji equalized for the hosts in the 42nd off the rebound of her own missed penalty kick.

"We are disappointed but there were many things we did pretty well in the game," Häcken coach Mak Lind said. "It was good for us to experience this game, and it's only the first half out of two. There's one more game to play and we have a chance, for sure.'

The second legs for both series involving PSG and Barcelona will take place next Thursday. Chelsea and Lyon

Al-Kharafi claims top honors in the inaugural Dressage Championship

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: Equestrian Hussein Al-Kharafi clinched first place in the basic dressage level with an impressive score of 74.58 percent at the inaugural Kuwait Center for Dressage Championship. The event, which saw participation from both male and female riders representing local clubs, concluded with Al-Kharafi also securing top honors in both the first and second basic levels.

In the intermediate category, the talented equestrian Cora Boselli claimed the first-place spot, while Ibrahim Ismail emerged victorious in the light level. Dana Buresli showcased exceptional skills to win the training level, and advisor Khaled Muhammad Al-Kharafi proudly crowned the champions.

Expressing his commitment to supporting equestrian sports and dressage championships, Khaled Al-Kharafi emphasized the importance of this discipline in enhancing the overall well-being of horses and improving the rider's ability to control them. He expressed

EQUESTRIAN

hope for increased government attention towards dressage, recognizing its potential to yield notable achievements and championships.

Al-Kharafi extended his heartfelt gratitude to Sheikha Fajr Al-Sabah for her unwavering support and dedication to this esteemed sport.

Kuwait Club surge to top of the league after beating Al-Qadisiya

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: In a thrilling showdown, Kuwait soared to the summit of the Golden Square competitions in the Basketball League overpowering Al-Qadisiya with a commanding scoreline of 102-87. This pivotal match marked the culmination of the first division, which also witnessed Kazma's triumph over Al-Arabi with a score of 97-89, propelling Kuwait to the zenith of the standings with six points. Al-Qadisiya trailed closely behind with five points, while Kazma and Al-Arabi secured four and three points respectively.

As per the tournament format, the top four teams engaged in a twosection tournament within the gold-

BASKETBALL

en square. Following this stage, the

first-ranked team would face the

fourth-ranked team, and the second-

ranked team would compete against

the third-ranked team in the semi-

finals. These semi-final matches

would adhere to a playoff system

comprising three intense encounters,

with the victor of two matches advancing to the final, which would

The opening quarter of the grip-

ping contest between Kuwait Club

and Al-Qadisiya witnessed a fierce

battle, with both sides displaying

remarkable strength and parity.

Al-Qadisiya managed to edge ahead

by a slim margin of 25-26, courtesy

of stellar performances from Abdul

adopt the same system.



Kuwait Club player shoots over Al-Qadisiva defender.

Mohsen Al-Moussawi and the American player Robert Lowry.

The second quarter maintained the neck-and-neck intensity, with Kuwait Club seizing the advantage and surging ahead, only for Al-Qadisiya to swiftly level the scoreline by the end of the quarter, resulting in a deadlock at 51-51.

The rivalry intensified in the third quarter, with Al-Qadisiya seizing the momentum through stellar displays from their American players, Lowry and Teran, ending the quarter with a six-point lead at 77-71.

Despite Al-Qadisiya's efforts to retain their lead in the final quarter, Kuwait Club asserted its dominance, leveraging the experience of its players in crucial moments to clinch a well-deserved victory with a final score of 102-87.

Hamilton praises F1 Academy director

Verstappen says plans to fulfil Red Bull contract

MELBOURNE, Australia, March 21, (AP): Formula 1 champion Max Verstappen wants to stay with Red Bull until the end of his contract in 2028 amid rumors of a switch to Mercedes, even as he admits to actively avoiding knowing any more than he does about the ongoing turmoil at the team.

Verstappen said on Thursday he was flattered by comments at the last race in Saudi Arabia by Mercedes boss Toto Wolff, who said he'd "love" to have the Dutch star as a driver. Verstappen said he wants to stay with his Red Bull "family."

"That's why I signed the deal in the first place," Verstappen said.

"As I've said before, I'm happy within the team and, of course, it's very important that we try to keep the key players in the team (together) for a longer period of time because that's, of course, where the performance is as well - and at the end of the day, it's a performance business.

"It's also my intention to be here until the end (of it) because, of course, it would be a great story for me personally to see it out, because it basically means that I've been part of one family, and one team."

Rumors that Verstappen could seek a move to Mercedes were wide of the mark, he said.

"We all want the same, and we want to just perform on track, so that's what we want to focus on as a team," he

"The problem is also that (speculation is happening) not only within the team, but from the outside and that is something that I cannot control. The only thing you can control is, of course, (getting everyone moving) on the same direction within the team, and I feel that is what we are doing.

He also defended the way Red Bull is handling the saga surrounding team principal Christian Horner, stating it was all done "in the right way," though necessarily distanced himself from the process.

"I also don't want to be too involved with these kind of things," Verstappen said. "At the end of the day, I'm the driver who's here to look at the performance side of things, that's what I'm

"But from what I know, everything is handled in the right way and I'm not going into any further details on that side. I don't know more than that,

and I also don't want to know because that's not my job or my task within the

The team's parent company last month dismissed a complaint of alleged misconduct by Horner toward a team employee. Verstappen's father Jos has been sharply critical of Horner, claiming the team could "explode" if he remains in charge.

The employee whose complaint sparked the investigation has since been suspended. The employee has ex-

MOTOR RACING

ercised the right to appeal Red Bull's clearance of Horner and filed a formal complaint with F1 governing body, the

Earlier Thursday, Verstappen's Red Bull teammate Sergio Pérez downplayed speculation that three-time champion Verstappen could be considering a switch to Mercedes.

"The team is in a very strong position, because with the results we're currently having, the harmony that there is in the team, I think to achieve that it takes a couple of years probably," Pérez said before the first practice sessions in Melbourne.

Verstappen won the first two F1 races in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. Perez

Red Bull driver Max Verstappen of the Netherlands is surrounded by re-

porters as he holds a press conference outside his team garage ahead of the Australian Formula One Grand Prix at Albert Park, Melbourne, Aus-

tralia, Thursday, March 21, 2024. (AP)

finished second in both

"Right now, the dynamic, everyone in the team is working really well together, the whole engineering group, it's really united," Perez said. "And you can see that on-track, and how efficient we've been in the last year. So I don't see any reason to change it.'

He added it would "obviously be a blow for the team if Max were to leave." Pérez denied any knowledge of an exit clause in Verstappen's Red Bull contract, which has been the subject of intense speculation.

The Australian Grand Prix is set for Sunday. There are two practices scheduled for Friday and another on Saturday before afternoon qualifying.

În Melbourne, Australia, Seventime Formula 1 world champion Lewis Hamilton has criticized FIA while supporting Susie Wolff's "bravery" for filing a criminal complaint against the sport's governing body in the French

Wolff, who is married to Mercedes F1 team boss Toto Wolff, and director of the all-female junior racing series F1 Academy, on Wednesday said she had begun legal action "in relation to statements made against me" by the FIA.

The Wolffs were the subject of an FIA investigation last December which sought to determine if the couple shared confidential information. It followed allegations of a conflict of interest published in BusinessF1

But FIA closed the investigation after just 48 hours, following nearidentical statements from the remaining nine teams denying they'd lodged the complaint required to commence it, with Susie Wolff beginning legal action on March 4.

Hamilton, though, firmly backed Wolff during a media session Thursday at Albert Park ahead of Sunday's Australian F1 Grand Prix, in which he lamented the lack of accountability in the sport.

"I'm incredibly proud of Susie Wolff," Hamilton said. "I think she's so brave, and she stands for such great values. She's such a leader. And in a world where often people are silenced, for her to be standing up sends such a great message.
"I love that she's taken it out of

this (F1) world to fight it from the outside because there is a real lack of accountability here within this sport, within the FIA. Things that are happening behind closed doors, there is no transparency, there is clearly no accountability.

Best of the Rest

Botman out for up to 9 months: Newcastle defender Sven Botman was ruled out for up to nine months on Thursday after sustaining a serious

knee injury.

The Netherlands center back injured his ACL in the 2-0 loss to Manchester City in the FA Cup quarterfinals on Saturday.

"He is expected to return to action within six to nine months," Newcastle

Botman missed nearly three months in the first half this season because of a knee injury but elected at the time for a non-surgical rehabilitation plan.

His latest injury is a big blow to Newcastle's hopes of qualifying for a European competition for next season. The team is in 10th place, four points behind West Ham in seventh.

Haaland played down concerns: Erling Haaland plays down injury concerns he sustained an injury in training with Norway this week - and revealed a message he was sent by

diola before going away on international duty. Haaland has linked up with his national team ahead of friendly matches against the Czech Republic on Friday

Manchester City manager Pep Guar-

and Slovakia on Tuesday. Footage from a Norway training session on Tuesday showed Haaland in apparent pain, even if the Norwegian team doctor said afterward there was no problem with the striker's fitSpeaking at a news conference in Oslo on Thursday, Haaland said he was "feeling fine."

"I didn't walk off the training - I don't know who wrote that," he said in English. "I trained the full training and I'm feeling good and ready to

play the game."
Guardiola will be hoping Haaland comes through Norway's games
unscathed, with City facing a run of big matches after the international break in its bid to win the English Premier League-FA Cup-Champions League treble for the second straight season.

Norway hasn't qualified for the European Championship being played in Germany across June and July.(AP)

Blow for Germany: Germany's preparations for the European Cham-

pionship were dealt a blow with Manuel Neuer's thigh injury ahead of the goalkeeper's planned comeback. Germany's World Cup captain had been due to return to the national team after breaking his leg in a skiing ac-

cident, but he sustained a muscle fiber tear in his left adductor during training Wednesday morning, the German soccer federation said. It said the 37-year-old Neuer will

miss Germany's upcoming friendlies against France and the Netherlands but didn't give any further indication of how long he will miss. Neuer had

already left the squad.

Germany plays France in Lyon on Saturday, then the Netherlands in Frankfurt on Tuesday. (AP)

Event hosted by KAC Workers Union

Curtains drawn on Ramadan padel session

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: Amidst a delightful Ramadan ambiance, the curtains drew to a close yesterday evening on the inaugural Ramadan padel session hosted by the Kuwait Airways Workers Union and its subsidiaries. Held at the Shuwaikh stadiums, this first-of-its-kind event witnessed thrilling and closely contested matches in the advanced rounds, showcasing the participants' exceptional skills in padel. The event also saw the distribution of numerous valuable prizes to the enthusiastic fans who avidly followed the matches.

Expressing his satisfaction and pride, Pilot Abdullah Khaled, Secretary of the Kuwait Airways Workers' Union and its subsidiaries, lauded the resounding success



achieved by the union's Ramadan padel session in its maiden edition. He commended the unwavering support and commitment of the Board and its subsidiaries' Workers' Union in meticulously organizing the event and surmounting any challenges encountered by the organizing com-Pilot Khaled extended his appre-

of Directors of the Kuwait Airways

ciation to Abdullah Al-Tawala, the head of the union's sports committee, and all members of the organizing committee for their diligent efforts, impeccable hospitality, and meticulous organization. He remarked, "We are delighted to witness a distinguished padel tournament that brought together brothers and friends in a Ramadan sporting ambiance characterized by spirited competition, camaraderie, and exemplary sportsmanship displayed by all participants."

In partnership with Suffix to promote active lifestyle during Holy Month

Zain Alshaheed Park Ramadan Challenge kicks-off for third year running

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: For the third year running, the Zain Alshaheed Park Ramadan Challenge kicks-off in strategic partnership with Suffix Events. The health & sports program was highly successful in its first two seasons and aims to encourage people of all ages to stay active and engage in sports during the Holy Month of Ramadan.

The challenge kicked-off at Alshaheed Park - Phase 1, joined by Zain Kuwait Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti, Suffix Chief Operations Officer Ahmad Al Majed, Zain and Suffix teams, and many participants from all ages.

Zain's support to this unique sports initiative for the third year running springs from the company's strategy to support health and sports programs in the community, especially during the Holy Month. In its past two seasons, the Zain Alshaheed Park Ramadan Challenge was highly successful with thousands of adults and children joining in to promote a healthier, more active lifestyle during fasting.

The challenge runs from 20-29 March at Phase 1 and offers people



Initiative promotes active lifestyle during Holy Month.

of all ages a great opportunity to join by speed-walking or running at their own time and pace inside Alshaheed Park. Participants can collect distance points and compete to top the leader boards. Those who want to earn extra points can join the special workouts held at the park.

After signing up, participants collect their armbands from a vending machine at the park. The armbands feature a chip that tracks and registers each participant's kilometers as they pass through the solar-powered smart arch. The leader board screen shows everyone's progress in real time so every participant can check their standing and compete for a higher place.

The challenge also features many other interactive programs, including group workout sessions with several local gyms, an activation to celebrate the International Day of Happiness, a special race for people with down syndrome, the Zain Ramadan Kids Race, and more.

The Zain Alshaheed Park Ramadan Challenge targets both males and females from all ages to encourage them to keep fit and adopt a healthy and active lifestyle, not only during the Holy Month, but throughout the year.

This year, six of Zain's strategic community partners, including Suffix, 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's initiatives and programs. The campaign strives to share the blessings of this much-cherished month with the entire Kuwaiti people.



Waleed Al Khashti and Ahmad Al Majed with Zain and Suffix teams.

Murray beats weary Berrettini to advance at the Miami Open

Vekic outlasts Pliskova

Diwaniya Al-Jabriya claims victory in Soccer Championship



Diwaniya Al-Jabriya celebrates with officials at the end of the tournament

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: The team "Diwaniya Al-Jabriya" clinched victory in the Rawdah and Hawalli Ramadan Football Association Championship, triumphing over the Al-Thabet team with a resounding score of three unanswered goals in the recent showdown at Ajyal Stadium in the Al-Islah Association located in Rawdah. Additionally, Al-Maali's got the fair play award.

The championship's final match was graced by the presence of Muhammad Al-Kandari, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Rawdah and Hawalli Cooperative Society, along with other esteemed members of the Board of Directors

The conclusion of the Ramadan session saw Kuwaiti football luminaries Hamad Al-Saleh, goalkeepers Nawaf Al-Khalidi and Musab Al-Kandari, and Saudi journalist Fahd Al-Jaloudi being honored as guests. The event, attended by

a large audience passionately cheering on the finalists, featured drawings for numerous prizes for the fans.

Muhammad Al-Kandari, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Rawdah and Hawalli Cooperative Society, commended the exceptional level of skill demonstrated throughout the matches of the Ramadan football tournament,

SOCCER

particularly highlighting the electrifying final match, which drew a significant crowd.

He emphasized the Rawdah and Hawalli Association's dedication to organizing sports events that benefit young individuals, especially during this sacred month, with the aim of fostering a healthy society.



Sheikh Fahad Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah with other officials.

MIAMI GARDENS, March 21, (AP): Andy Murray won another lengthy match with Matteo Berrettini, who appeared weary and leaned on his racket to keep his balance during Murray's 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 victory at the Miami Open.

Open.
Playing his first match on the ATP Tour this season, Berrettini was serving with Murray leading 5-2 in the second set when he seemed to become dizzy, resting his racket on the court to hold himself up. He was visited by a medical attendant, who checked

TENNIS

his blood pressure before play continued.

Berrettini left the court after dropping that set but was able to finish the match, which last 2 hours, 49 min-

utes. It was a rematch of Murray's 6-3, 6-3, 4-6, 6-7 (7), 7-6 (10-6) victory that lasted more than 4 1/2 hours in the first round of the 2023 Australian Open.

Open.

"It was obviously a great win for me," Murray said. "Started off a little bit slow but then I did think I played pretty well across then end of the first set through to the end of the match. Created a lot of opportunities and he was struggling for a little bit end of the second and beginning of the third, and I capitalized on that and got off to

Sheikh Fahad Al-Nasser pledges support for Kuwaiti athletes and all sports clubs

KUWAIT CITY, March 21: Sheikh Fahad Nasser Sabah Ahmad Al Sabah, President of the Kuwait Olympic Committee, reiterated the committee's unwavering support for all sports federations and clubs, emphasizing their commitment to enhancing sports development and securing remarkable achievements in international competitions. This commitment is underpinned by the robust backing provided by the country's political leadership to sports and athletes.

Addressing reporters following the reception by the Family Sports Committee at the committee's headquarters in the Jaber Al-Ahmad City Youth Center, Sheikh Fahad Nasser Sabah Ahmad Al Sabah described the event as an invaluable opportunity to engage with athletes and glean insights aimed at propelling the Kuwaiti sports movement forward.

He revealed that preparations are underway for Kuwaiti teams' participation in the upcoming Gulf Youth Games scheduled to take place in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in April. The Kuwaiti contingent is set to compete in over 18 team and individual events. Additionally, plans are in motion for the forthcoming Olympic Games in Paris 2024, where several Kuwaiti athletes are poised to showcase their talents across various

In a similar sentiment, Abdullah Al-Shaheen, President of the Kuwait Football Association, commended the gathering as a testament to the camaraderie among members of all sports bodies. He hailed the initiative as a platform for fostering dialogue aimed at bolstering collaboration among sports institutions nationwide.

Al-Shaheen highlighted the Kuwaiti football team's rigorous preparations for their encounters against their Qatari counterparts in the joint Asian qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup and the 2027 Asian Cup. Expressing optimism, he voiced hopes for a favorable outcome for the "Blues" against the reigning Asian champions.

Asian champions.

Echoing these sentiments, Fuhaid Al-Ajmi, President of the Kuwaiti Winter Games Club, underscored the significance of such gatherings in nurturing a spirit of unity and solidarity among Kuwaiti athletes and sports enthusiasts alike.

Al-Ajmi disclosed that the club is gearing up to host the Ice Hockey World Cup slated for April, underscoring that Kuwait's role as host for these prestigious international sporting events, supported by the committee and the General Sports Authority, serves to elevate its stature on the global sports

a quick start in the third and served it out well at the end."

Plagued by injuries, Berrettini hadn't played a match on tour since being forced to retire during his match in the second round of last year's U.S. Open. The 2021 Wimbledon runner-up returned last week and reached the final of a Challenger tour tournament in Phoenix.

The 36-year-old Murray has won the title twice in Miami and joined Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal as the only active players with 30 wins at the event. The three-time Grand Slam champion advanced to face No. 29 seed Tomas Etcheverry in the second round.

Naomi Osaka, a two-time U.S. Open champion, beat Elisabetta Cocciaretto 6-3, 6-4 in her return to Miami. The runner-up to Iga Swiatek in her last appearance in 2022 advanced to face No. 15 seed Elina Syitolina in the second round.

Elsewhere on the first full day of the tournament, Sloane Stephens celebrated her 31st birthday by beating Angelique Kerber 6-2, 6-3 in a matchup of past U.S. Open women's champions. Also, Donna Vekic outlasted Karolina Pliskova 6-4, 2-6, 6-2; and Americans Danielle Collins and Shelby Rogers advanced with three-set victories.

Men's winners included Denis Shapovalov, who beat Luciano Darderi 6-3, 6-7 (3), 6-4; and Martin Damm Jr., who outlasted China's Zhang Zhizhen 7-6 (2), 7-6 (3).

The 32 seeded players were given first-round byes. Aryna Sabalenka, the No. 2 seed, is expected to play her opening match against Paula Badosa on Friday.

On this, the leaders of tennis can agree: There is more money out there to be made. And they see eye-to-eye on this, too: The sport's current structure could stand to change.

The how's and why's and when's of it all? Well, that's open to discussion - and there is plenty of that happening now behind closed doors, conversations and negotiations about the future of tennis among the folks who run the Grand Slam tournaments and other events, the women's WTA and men's ATP professional tours, the players, their agents and others with a hand in the sport, including Saudi Arabia's Private Investment Fund (known as the PIF, it is the entity



Sloane Stephens serves against Angelique Kerber, of Germany, in their first round match at the Miami Open tennis tournament in Miami Gardens, Fla. (AP)

The draw for the Paris 2024 Olympic Soccer men's tournaments is pictured in Saint-Denis, outside Paris. (AP)

Sports

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Paris Olympics soccer draw

US women face Germany, Australia

States women's soccer team will face Germany and Australia at the Paris Olympics when incoming coach Emma Hayes looks to get off to a flying start in the job.

The draw for the men's and women's soccer tournaments were held at a ceremony in Saint-Denis

The record four-time gold-medalist was drawn against fifth-ranked Germany and World Cup semifinalist Australia in Group B. Those teams will be joined by either Morocco or Zambia from the African Football Confedera-

Hayes takes up her role as U.S. head

coach in May after finishing the season with Chelsea, where she is challenging for a quadruple of trophies in her final year. She has already won 14 major trophies at Chel-Women's League Super



Kilgore

Twila Kilgore is serving as interim coach of the United States until Hayes can join the team. Kilgore recently led the team to the title in the CON-CACAF Gold Cup.

"The bottom line is we're excited to have a path, to know who we're playing for the most part, to be able to start working on specific game plans," Kilgore said following the draw. "But also just to know the logistical path. There's so much that goes into an Olympics with a short turnaround and

congested games."
The U.S. hasn't won Olympic gold since 2012 and is coming off a disappointing Women's World Cup last year when it suffered its earliest exit from the tournament after being knocked out by Sweden on penalties in the round of 16. It had never finished worse than third at previous World Cups.

Hayes has established herself as one of the sport's leading coaches. She can further add to her record by winning

including the Champions League, which is the one competition she is yet to deliver at Chelsea.

Defending champion Canada was drawn in Group A with host France, Colombia and New Zealand. Before winning the gold medal at the Tokyo Games, Canada won back-to-back bronze medals in London and Brazil.

"We know more than ever that there's not an easy game in the women's game, no matter what the ranking Canada coach Bev Priestman said "We know the other routes we could have gone down. Pleased, excited, but taking nothing for granted."

World Cup winner Spain is in Group with Japan and Brazil. Nigeria or South Africa will join that group as another CAF qualifier.

The U.S. men's team will face

OLYMPICS

France at the Paris Games after being drawn in the same group as the host nation for the men's tournament.

The U.S. is competing at the Games for the first time since Beijing in 2008 and faces a potentially daunting task after being drawn alongside France, coached by soccer great Thierry Henry, in Group A.

Also in the group are New Zealand and the winner of a playoff between teams from the Asian and the African confederations.

World champion Argentina was drawn in Group B with Morocco, Ukraine and a qualifier to be confirmed from the AFC.

Spain, runner-up in Tokyo, is in Group C along with Egypt, Dominican Republic and another qualifier from

the AFC, which is yet to be confirmed. Group D features Paraguay, Mali and Israel as well as a final qualifier from the AFC.

Men's Olympic soccer is national Under-23 teams with three roster spots available for players over the age limit.

The soccer tournament will begin two days before the opening ceremony of the Games on July 24, with the women's final concluding the event on Aug. 10.

Heat close in on Sixers for final automatic playoff berth in East



Sacramento Kings guard Davion Mitchell (15) tries to get between Toronto Raptors guard Javon Freeman-Liberty (0) and guard Gary Trent Jr. (33) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Toronto. (AP)

Defending champions Super Kings host Royal Challengers

Kohli vs Dhoni as IPL begins season with clash of 2 of India's legendary cricketers

NEW DELHI, March 21, (AP): Virat Kohli against MS Dhoni. For the lucrative Indian Premier League and its billion-plus audience, the head-to-head encounter is a perfect prime time opener for the eight-week season.

The 2024 season begins with the star-studded encounter in Chennai Friday when the defending champion Super Kings host Royal Challengers Bengaluru.

Dhoni will be leading Chennai against Kohli and Bengaluru.

Kohli returns to action after missing international cricket for nearly two months - he skipped India's test series win over England owing to the birth of his second child.

Attention will be also be heavy on Dhoni, who returns from 10 months out. After leading Chennai to its record-equaling fifth IPL title last year, he announced his intention to retire at the end of this upcoming season.

CRICKET

"He (Dhoni) is the greatest-ever captain, and I am very lucky that I have spent some time with him over the years," Bengaluru skipper Faf du Plessis told host broadcaster Star Sports. "That's probably the biggest thing in my career, my years at Chennai. It shaped me from a leadership perspective, just observing MS. As a young leader, it was special to my growth.'

Three-time runner-up Bengaluru have never won the IPL title - an oddity for their record-breaking star Kohli. Their women's team only recently ended the franchise's trophy drought, winning the 2024 Women's IPL trophy on Sunday.

Meanwhile, India's current captain across formats Rohit Sharma has made way for a new skipper at Mumbai Indians. Allrounder Hardik Pandya was brought in through a high-profile player trade with Gujarat Titans in No-

Pandya, who played for five-time champion Mumbai from 2015 to 2021, had signed with Gujarat ahead of IPL 2022. He captained the new franchise to a maiden title that season and they finished runner-up to Chennai in 2023.

Mumbai had won all their five titles under Sharma, the last in 2020. A barren three-year run prompted a first regime change after 11 years, which has sparked backlash among the Mumbai fan base ahead of the new season.

"This team has achieved all its glory under him (Rohit), so it won't be any different because he will always be



Royal Challengers Bangalore's Virat Kohli celebrates his century during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Royal Challengers Ban-galore and Gujarat Titans in Bengaluru, India. (AP)

'Robinho must serve 9-year prison'

SAO PAULO, March 21, (AP): A Brazilian high court ruled that former soccer star Robinho must serve his nine-year prison sentence

in his home nation as a result of his 2017 rape conviction in Italy. L a w

yers for the 40-year-old Robinho said they will file a request for habeas cor-



pus at Brazil's Supreme Court so he can remain free while he ap-

Judges on Brazil's Superior Court of Justice in the capital city of Brasilia voted 9-2 to validate the conviction of the former Real

Madrid, Manchester City and AC Milan striker.

Robinho was sentenced in Italy to nine years in prison for his part in a group assault in 2013 when he played for AC Milan. Brazil doesn't extradite nation-

als, which led Italy to seek his imprisonment in his home nation. "Brazil cannot be a shelter for criminals," judge Mauro Campbell

Marques said during his vote. Judges wrapped up their voting in less than a day. Most Brazilian legal analysts expected the court's deci-

sion to take days, possibly weeks. The swift decision came on the same day a Spanish court decided that Brazilian soccer star Dani Alves could leave prison if he pays a bail of one million euros (\$1.1 million) and hands over his passports while awaiting the appeal of his conviction for raping a woman

there to help me out if I need his help," Pandya told a pre-season news conference. "From now on, it will just be me carrying forward what he has started."

Shubman Gill will take over as captain at Gujarat Titans in what will be his first major leadership stint.

In other major news ahead of the IPL season, star wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant has been declared fit for cricket at the highest level.

in Barcelona

The 26-year-old Pant has recovered from knee and back injuries in the past 15 months, and ca return to high-profile cricket. He hasn't played since being in a car accident in December 2022. He will lead the Delhi Capitals' franchise once again, having previously led them to the IPL 2020 final.

CLEVELAND, March 21,

(AP): Terry Rozier scored nine points in the final 1:24, including the go-ahead 3-pointer with 14.5 on the clock, lifting the Miami Heat to a 107-104 victory over the Cleveland Cava-

Rozier converted a 4-point play before sinking a 26 footer that gave Miami a 105-102 lead. After Georges Niang made two free throws for the Cavaliers, Rozier followed with two of his own with 2.8 seconds remaining.

Darius Garland had a chance to force overtime, but his off-balance, 3-point attempt was off the mark and Cleveland lost its third straight home

Jimmy Butler scored 30 points and Rozier finished with 24, helping Miami pull within one-half game of Philadelphia for the sixth and final automatic playoff berth in the Eastern Conference. Nikola Jovic added 14 points.

Warriors 137, Grizzlies 116

In San Francisco, Stephen Curry reached 300 3-pointers for an NBA-record fifth season and scored 14 points with four 3s, one of seven players in double figures as the Golden State Warriors beat the Memphis Grizzlies

Jonathan Kuminga scored 26 points, Andrew Wiggins added 22 and 10 rebounds and Klay Thompson 23 points off the bench. Chris Paul dished out a season-best 14 assists - matching the second-most by a reserve this season - in the team's 30th game with at least 30 assists. They finished with a season high 43.

GG Jackson II scored 35 points and Jaren Jackson Jr. had 28 for a Memphis team that lost 121-111 in overtime on Monday at Sacramento and now has dropped four straight and six of seven. Santi Aldama scored 15 of his 27 points in the second quarter and had 21 by halftime for the Grizzlies.

Celtics 122, Bucks 119

In Boston, Jayson Tatum scored 31 points on Wednesday night to help the Boston Celtics win their seventh game in a row, taking advantage of the absence of two-time MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo to beat the Milwaukee Bucks 122-119.

Payton Pritchard added 19 points and six rebounds off the bench for Boston, scoring 10 points in the second quarter - as many as Milwaukee had as a team. He also grabbed four rebounds in the second, including an offensive board he took away from Brook Lopez, a player a full foot taller.

Suns 115, Sixers 102

Curry reaches 300 3-pointers for record fifth timex

In Phoenix, Grayson Allen scored 32 points and tied a career-high with nine 3-pointers, leading the Phoenix Suns past the Philadelphia 76ers.

Allen made 10 of 17 shots from the field, including 9 of 15 from long range. He's made at least eight 3-pointers in seven games this season, which is second in the NBA behind Golden State's Stephen Curry.

Kevin Durant added 22 points for the Suns while Devin Booker had 18 points, nine rebounds and 11 assists, falling just shy of his first regular-season triple double.

BASKETBALL

Thunder 119, Jazz 107

In Oklahoma City, Chet Holmgren scored 35 points and tied a career high with 14 rebounds and the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the short-handed

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 20 of his 31 points in the second half for the Thunder, who have the best record in the Western Conference at 48-20.

Alexander became the 13th player in NBA history to score 30 points or more in 50 games.

Collin Sexton had 25 points for Utah, which played without injured players Lauri Markkanen and Jordan Clarkson - two of the team's top three

Utah committed 15 turnovers that resulted in 19 points for Oklahoma City. The Thunder also scored 35 points on second-chance opportunities compared to eight points for the Jazz.

Kings 123, Raptors 89

In Toronto, Domantas Sabonis had



phen Curry shoots during the first half of an NBA basketball game against the Memphis Grizzlies in San Francisco. (AP)

13 points, 17 rebounds and 10 assists for his 24th triple-double of the season, De'Aaron Fox scored 20 points and the Sacramento Kings routed the shorthanded Raptors, extending Toronto's season-worst losing streak to eight.

Sabonis has recorded at least a double-double in 51 consecutive games.

Malik Monk scored 17 points and Harrison Barnes added 16 as the Kings won their second straight and fourth of five. Chris Duarte scored 14 points and Keegan Murray had 10 for the Kings, whose biggest lead was 38 points.

Clippers 116, Trail Blazers 103

In Portland, Paul George scored 27 points, James Harden had 19 points and 14 assists and the Los Angeles Clippers beat the Portland Trail Blazers.

The victory gave the Clippers a one-

game lead over the New Orleans Pelicans for the fourth seed in the Western Conference playoff picture. Scoot Henderson had 18 points and

five assists for Portland and fellow rookie Kris Murray had a season-high The teams meet again Friday night

in Portland to complete a two-game The Clippers used a 34-point third

quarter, which included 17 of Kawhi Leonard's 24 points, to put the game out of reach. After leading 60-50 at halftime, the Clippers took things into overdrive.

Portland cut the Clippers' lead to eight multiple times early in the third quarter before Los Angeles pushed the lead to 72-58, forcing a Blazers timeout. Portland turned the ball over after

the timeout on back-to-back possessions, including a 3-point play from Leonard, pushing the lead to 77-58.

Pacers 122, Pistons 103

In Detroit, Pascal Siakam had 25 points and eight rebounds, Tyrese Haliburton added 20 points and nine assists, and the Indiana Pacers routed the short-handed Detroit Pistons.

Aaron Nesmith added 14 points

as the Pacers (39-31) swept the fourgame season series from the Pistons. The game was the first on Indiana's five-game road trip.

Cade Cunningham had 23 points, 10 assists and six rebounds for Detroit, which lost its fourth straight.

The Pistons played without starting forwards Ausur Thompson (blood clots) and Isaiah Stewart (hamstring), who were each ruled out for the season on Wednesday. Tosan Evbuomwan made his first NBA start and Stanley Umude made his second before leav-

ing with an ankle injury.
Indiana led 54-52 with 1:27 left in the first half, but went on a 33-9 run to take a 26-point lead late in the third quarter.

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