



Soccer  
Pages 14-16



## Kuwait's Amir congratulates Saudi on Founding Day

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a congratulatory cable on Saturday to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud on the occasion of the Kingdom's Founding Day.

In his message, His Highness the Amir praised Saudi Arabia's significant civilizational and developmental achievements across various sectors, enhancing its prestigious international standing. He also expressed pride in the deep-rooted fraternal ties between the ruling families of both nations, emphasizing their shared history and strong bilateral relations. His Highness wished King Salman continued health and prosperity for the Kingdom.

Similarly, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent congratulatory cables to King Salman, lauding the Kingdom's progress and wishing it further development and success.

His Highness the Amir also extended his congratulations to Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, commending the Kingdom's advancements and reaffirming Kuwait's commitment to strengthening cooperation at all levels. His Highness the Crown Prince and the Prime Minister sent similar cables, applauding Saudi Arabia's achievements under its leadership.

Continued on Page 5

## KUWAIT AMIR JOINS CONSULTATIVE MEETING IN RIYADH



In this photo Arab leaders (left to right), Bahrain Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein of Jordan, Egyptian President AbdelFattah El-Sisi, Jordan Crown Prince Hussein bin Abdullah, and UAE's National Security Advisor Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed Al-Nahyan pose for a picture during their meeting in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on Friday, Feb 21, 2025.

### Leaders unite

RIYADH, Feb 22, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah took part in a fraternal consultative meeting with leaders of the GCC states, Egypt, and Jordan in Riyadh on Friday.

Initiated by Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman, the informal gathering brought together UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad, Jordanian King Abdullah II, and Egyptian President AbdelFattah El-Sisi. The meeting aimed to reinforce regional cooperation and unity amid pressing regional and international challenges.

Following the discussions, His Highness the Amir departed Riyadh, where he was seen off by Kuwait's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Sheikh Sabah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. He arrived back in Kuwait later in the evening and was received at the airport by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and Minister of State for Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

Continued on Page 5

# Kuwait's travel market takes flight with KD 341 mln boost

More airlines, more passengers, more possibilities

By Mohammad Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: A recent statistic showed a remarkable growth in travel activity to and from Kuwait over the past year as the total travel ticket sales in 2024 amounted to KD 341.2 million.**

The newspaper obtained data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA) which revealed that approximately 3.31 million tickets were sold in Kuwait's air transport market in 2024, marking a modest 0.12 percent increase compared to 2023, when 3.304 million tickets were sold.

May 2024 recorded the highest number of ticket sales with 338,000 tickets sold; followed by July with 331,000 and June with 299,000 tickets. In the summer season alone, more than a million tickets were sold, highlighting a surge in travel demand during this period.

The statistics also revealed that the Kuwaiti market accounted for 7.6 percent of all ticket sales in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

Moreover, the report showed that the number of carriers operating at Kuwait International Airport has risen to 85 -- an increase of three carriers compared to 2023; while the number of licensed travel and tourism agencies in Kuwait now stands at 439.

Continued on Page 5



Participants fill Sheikh Jaber Bridge on Saturday morning for Kuwait Sports Day, with a vibrant turnout of all ages enjoying various activities including bicycle race and walkathon. -- See Page 16

## Experts urge action on growing budget deficit

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22:** Two experts have underscored the urgent need for Kuwait to expedite the implementation of economic projects to tackle its growing budget deficit.

The Ministry of Finance has projected a KD 6.3 billion deficit in the upcoming budget, with oil revenue barely covering salary expenditures and non-oil revenues continuing to decline.

The experts warned that Kuwait's ongoing dependence on oil revenue -- a commodity subject to international price fluctuations -- poses significant risks. They suggested that borrowing from abroad, following the issuance of the Public Debt Law Decree, could be a viable option; provided the funds are used effectively.

Businessman and economic expert Qais Al-Ghanim agreed that utilizing public debt to finance development projects is not inherently problematic, as long as the projects generate sufficient returns to allow the government to repay the debt. He emphasized the importance of conducting thorough studies to ensure that borrowed funds are allocated wisely.

He also recommended that the State evaluate its assets and consider putting them under a specialized body to improve Kuwait's credibility with international financial institutions.

Both Al-Ghanim and economic expert Dr. Salah Borsali stressed the need for Kuwait to diversify its economy to reduce reliance on oil.

Borsali proposed using profits from the State's trillion-dollar sovereign fund to support local projects. While recognizing that borrowing is common even in strong economies like the United States, he stressed that borrowed funds should be invested in projects that strengthen Kuwait's economic and service infrastructure.

Al-Ghanim voiced concerns about the entry of foreign investments into Kuwaiti bank shares and the exit of private companies to neighboring countries. He attributed these trends to

Continued on Page 5

## 'Power cuts' in 15 areas till Monday

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22:** The Ministry of Electricity and Water announced that maintenance work is being carried out on several secondary transformer stations in 15 areas, which will result in partial power outages in some residential areas from Saturday to Monday from 8:00 am for a duration of four hours, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

On Saturday, the following areas experienced partial power outages: Al-Sabah Health Zone, Al-Oyoun, Saad Al-Abdullah, Shamiya, Rumaitihiya, and Abdullah Al-Mubarak.

On Sunday, February 23, power will be cut off in the following areas: Hawally, Mangaf, Fahaheel, Fintas, Saad Al-Abdullah, Al-Naseem, Qurain, Sabah Al-Salem, Rehah, and Sabah Al-Nasser. These areas will experience partial power outages on February 24 as well.

## Ministry enforces strict safety rules for 'National Day'

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22:** The Ministry of Interior has confirmed that the use of water balloons or water guns will not be allowed during the national celebrations, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

During last year's national holiday celebrations, Kuwait witnessed an unprecedented level of adherence to the ministry's warnings regarding negative behaviors that had been repeated in previous years before 2024.

In a post on its X platform account, the ministry also declared that children are prohibited from leaning out of vehicle windows or openings in order to ensure their safety.

It affirmed that it will begin enforcing the new traffic law starting April 22, which includes penalties for serious violations such as running red lights.

## Non-Kuwaiti with criminal record caught with alcohol haul

## Hit-and-run suspect arrested in record time

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22:** Ahmadi security officers have arrested a non-Kuwaiti man with a criminal record who ran over a police officer in Abu Halifa before fleeing the scene.

Following the suspect's escape, the area was swiftly cordoned off, and the suspect was arrested in under 15 minutes. A large number of alcohol bottles were discovered in his possession, while the injured officer was immediately transported to the hospital.

A security source revealed that the accused fled in his vehicle after being stopped by a patrol for routine inspection, hitting the police officer in the process.

Under the guidance of Assistant Undersecretary for Public Security Affairs at the Interior Ministry Major General Hamad Al-Muneifi and the leadership of Assistant Director of Ahmadi Security Brigadier Hussein Dashti, the security officers quickly sealed off the area, leading to the suspect's immediate arrest.

A thorough search of the vehicle led to the discovery of several bottles believed to contain alcohol.

The necessary legal action has been taken against the accused who was referred to the concerned authorities.

The ministry emphasized that these steps are part of the ongoing efforts by the Ahmadi Security Directorate within the public security sector to maintain public safety and order.

### Newswatch

## 13 individuals lose Kuwaiti nationality

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22:** The First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, and Chairman of the Supreme Committee for the Investigation of Kuwaiti Nationality Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah issued decision No. 52/4-2 for the year 2025 to revoke the Kuwaiti nationality of 13 individuals based on Article 11 of Amiri Decree No. 15/1959 regarding Kuwaiti nationality, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

**CAIRO:** Secretary-General of the Arab League Ahmad Aboul-Gheit said on Saturday he looks forward for a unified Arab position to back the steadfastness of Palestinians.

Speaking during the seventh conference of the Arab Parliament and chairmen of Arab legislatures at the Arab League's H.Q., Aboul-Gheit affirmed the rejection of displacing Palestinians and supporting alternative initiatives.

The Arab region is going through the most dangerous period in its modern history, as the Palestinian cause, which has a great position inside all Arabs, is facing a plan of liquidation through the displacement of Palestinians after destroying land, he said.

He said the idea of displacing Palestinians is rejected on Arab and international levels, as it is illicit, immoral and unrealistic.

He underlined the exceptional impor-

ance of the collective Arab voice in this decisive period. (KUNA)

**ISTANBUL:** The Turkish Airlines said Saturday it was forced to cancel some flights to and from Istanbul Airport (IST) scheduled for Sunday, "due to the expected adverse weather conditions" in the city.

"In this regard, additional rights have been granted to passengers whose flights have been cancelled," the national flag carrier said in a post on its X account.

"For the latest information regarding your flight, you can check our flight status page or make inquiries via TK Asistan on WhatsApp. You can also find detailed information about ticket changes and refund requests," it added.

Air traffic over the Black Sea region has been chaotic over the past three days with dozens of flights being rescheduled due to bad weather. (KUNA)

**8 NBK launches Ramadan 2025 'Doing Good Deeds' campaign with interactive community initiatives**



**9 Markaz records total revenue of KD 20.31 mln for 2024**



**15 Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr attends the national days celebration at Embassy of Kuwait in Switzerland**







KUNA photo

Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi during his tour of the exhibition.

## 'Expo 965 showcases Kuwait rich heritage'

Al-Baghli honored for his contributions

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22, (KUNA):** Minister of Information and Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi said on Thursday the "Expo 965" exhibition creates atmosphere for innovation and creativity that bring authenticity and modernity together in a manner that goes in harmony with Kuwait's position.

This contributes to enhancing the national identity and cements "our" cultural values, Al-Mutairi added in a speech while opening the 6th edition of "Expo 965" exhibition on rare heritage and possessions.

He noted that the "outstanding event is an honorable window of Kuwait's authentic heritage and shows keenness of us all to protect traditional handicrafts and highlight the innovations of Kuwaiti craftsmen".

The event embodies a message of maintaining heritage and transferring it to the upcoming delegations, through embracing national talents and backing crafts' projects

as well as spreading cultural and heritage awareness, the minister pointed out.

The expo coincides with National Days' celebrations, which make happiness and joy, and the country's hosting of "Kuwait as the Arab capital of media and culture for 2025", he elaborated.

He referred to high turnout at this expo, indicating this shows much attention of handicrafts and heritage, and eagerness of the Ministry of Information, and the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) to create a stimulating environment to upgrade talents and skills.

In a speech delivered on behalf of "Expo 965" general coordinator and founder Mohammad Kamal, Dr. Ali Al-Nejada said Ibrahim Al-Baghli was chosen for this year's outstanding personality due to his contributions to maintaining Kuwait's heritage and handicrafts for years.

Al-Nejada said about 300 persons of the team, along brothers from GCC states, are partaking in this year's edition, in addition to the participation of about 750 others from national, voluntary and official bodies.

Dozens of dignitaries in different fields will be honored during this year's expo, which includes a large number of pavilions, he stated.

## Award-winning works highlight nation's artistic brilliance

# Kuwait Fine Arts Festival honors creativity

By Medhat Allam  
Al-Seyassah/Arab  
Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22:** The Kuwait Society for Fine Arts organized the opening ceremony of Kuwait Festival for Fine Arts Creativity, under the patronage of Ambassador of Kuwait to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Honorary President of the Society Sheikh Sabah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

The exhibition showcased various artworks, including photography, sculpture and ceramics, in the context of the development and remarkable presence of the Kuwaiti fine arts scene.

At the awarding ceremony for the winners of the festival competition, head of the Kuwait Society for Fine Arts artist Abdul



Sheikh Sabah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah with Rasoul Salman during the opening ceremony.

Rasoul Salman stated: "I present to you a bouquet of fragrant roses, full of longing. We live moments of joyful demonstration with our national celebrations, which fill our hearts with joy and deepen the feelings of friendship and love among everyone in the most beautiful images of loyalty to our homeland.

The artistic diversity that we witnessed while touring the exhibition is a testament to the cognitive and cultural diversity that our beloved Kuwait is witnessing in raising the value of the art and cultural scene and what it reflects as an image of the reality of social life, in addition to youth experience, some of

which presented models of artistic development and the use of heritage and reality that contribute to the advancement of the art movement in Kuwait."

He praised the efforts of Sheikh Sabah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, considering the exhibition coincide with National Day and Lib-

eration Day, as well as the declaration of Kuwait as the Capital of Arab Culture and Media 2025.

He added: "All thanks and appreciation to His Excellency Sheikh Sabah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his wife for their continuous presence and support. We cannot express gratitude in return for this flowing torrent of good feelings of happiness. To everyone who contributed and participated with us in this artistic event, we express our feeling of confidence and feeling under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, may Allah protect him and his loyal Crown Prince. It is a memory immortalized in the history of yesterday, and we live its joy today, to draw the hope of the future."



Photos by Mohamed Morsi

Awarding ceremony for the winners of the festival competition.

## Over 2,000 flags raised to celebrate national holidays

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22:** Kuwait Municipality has completed all preparations to commemorate the country's national holidays under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, the Director of the Public Relations Department and spokesperson of Kuwait Municipality Mohammed Al-Sindan explained that the Decorations and Flag Installation section in the Public Relations Department

raised more than 2,000 Kuwait flags of various sizes on masts distributed throughout the country. In addition, 138 mobile advertisements have been installed under the slogan "Pride and Dignity."

A number of masts were installed at the Red Palace in Jahra Governorate, in addition to maintaining 490 flagpoles on bridges and their bases from Amiri Airport to Bayan Palace.

Al-Sindan urged both citizens and residents to

cooperate with the field decorations monitoring teams, and stressed the importance of preserving the flags and reporting any damaged ones for replacement.

He praised the initiative by the Legal Department of Kuwait Municipality, led by Director Hussein Al-Ajmi, to organize a celebration for employees on Wednesday in honor of the upcoming Independence and Liberation Day anniversaries.

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## Bangladesh Ambassador's message

Assalamu Alaikum  
Wa Rahmatullahi Wa  
Barakatuhu



Ambassador of Bangladesh – Major General Syed Tareq Hussain, OSP, awc, psc

I, on behalf of the people, the Government of Bangladesh and from my own behalf, would like to extend our heartiest congratulations and warm greetings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Government and the brotherly people of the State of Kuwait on the auspicious occasion of the 64th National Day and 34th Liberation Day of the State of Kuwait.

Kuwait's journey since independence has been remarkable. From its strategic role as a trading hub in the Arabian Gulf to becoming a global leader in oil production and financial services, Kuwait has consistently demonstrated resilience, innovation, and a commitment to progress. The nation's ability to rebuild and thrive after the challenges of the 1990 invasion is a testament to the strength and unity of its people.

As we celebrate this joyous occasion, we also

recognize Kuwait's contributions to regional and global peace. Kuwait has emerged as a beacon of diplomacy, fostering cooperation and dialogue in the Gulf region and beyond. Its efforts in humanitarian aid, mediation, and sustainable development have earned it respect on the international stage.

The strong bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Kuwait are a source of pride. Over the years, our relations and partnership have grown stronger, encompassing many fields with par-

ticular focuses on human resources, trade, investment, development, and defence sectors. We believe that both our countries have the potential to further consolidate these relations through more interactions for mutual benefit of our two countries. We look forward to deepening this collaboration in the years to come, working together to address global challenges and promote shared prosperity.

On this special day, we join the people of Kuwait in celebrating their rich cultural heritage, vibrant traditions, and the spirit of unity that defines their nation. We also wish continued peace, progress and prosperity to the brotherly people of Kuwait.

May the Kuwaiti flag continue to fly high, symbolizing freedom, pride, and hope for future generations.

Major General Syed Tareq Hussain, OSP, awc, psc  
Ambassador of Bangladesh

## KFAS, Nature Masterclass empower researchers at bioethics workshop

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22:** Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) and the Nature Masterclass recently concluded the bioethics workshop at the Kuwait Institute for Medical Specializations (KIMS).

Numerous researchers and students in the field attended the workshop, which focused on international ethical standards in clinical research.

KFAS said this workshop provided a valuable opportunity for early-career clinical researchers to learn about international ethical standards related to human research participants, ensuring their safety and identifying disease risk factors. This knowledge will ultimately facilitate the publication of high-quality research, it affirmed.

Dr. Jeffrey Robbins, Head of the Department Community Interaction in Nature Portfolio, conducted the workshop, which also aimed to equip clinical researchers with the tools and knowledge needed to improve the quality of their research, aligning it with global ethical standards.

Robbins, who holds a doctorate from the



Dr. Jeffrey Robbins shares insights on ethical clinical research standards with local researchers.

University of Pennsylvania, has extensive experience in conducting training workshops globally to enhance the quality and impact of scientific publications.

The workshop is in line with the vision of KFAS to foster a thriving scientific and innovative culture in Kuwait by encouraging investment in scientific research and staying abreast of scientific and technological advancements.

## CSC ends social development deadline

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22:** The Information Systems Sector at the Civil Service Commission (CSC) has been tasked to delete the tardiness records of evening shift employees in government departments in the fingerprint attendance system, if any and exclude them from the grace period granted to employees, reports Al-Anba daily.

Sources explained there is no fingerprint attendance system for evening shift employees in government departments.

In another development, sources told the daily that the deadline granted by the CSC

to the employees of the Social Development Office to complete the procedures for them to work other government entities ended Thursday.

Asked about the possibility of extending the deadline, sources pointed out this decision is in the hands of the CSC officials who are keen on protecting the interests of employees.

It is important to mention that the distribution of these employees to the new government agencies has been completed and the initial deadline ended last Sunday.

State-of-the-art facility set to serve victims across Middle East and Africa

# Egypt inaugurates first burn hospital with Kuwaiti support

CAIRO, Feb 22, (KUNA): The first burn hospital in Egypt is officially in effect as of Thursday thanks to the donation of the heirs of the late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

During the opening ceremony, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah gave a speech expressing sincere happiness for this occasion and for the hospital that under his father's name has officially opened, and for the hospital's waiting room that is under his uncle's name late Sheikh Sabah Mohammad Sabah Al-Sabah.

He also greatly valued the role the hospital plays for the people of Egypt, Middle East, and Africa to serve as the first hospital specializing in burned victims.

The enclosure of preparing the major operating and waiting rooms comes thanks to the strong bilateral relations between Kuwait and Egypt especially in the health sector.

He also mentioned his mother's efforts in this project Sheikh Dr. Suad Mohammad Al-Sabah and her continued support as she and his father both visited the burned victims of the October war of 1973.

He also said, "I had the honor of sponsoring the ceremony of the Ahl Masr Foundation for Development which was held in Kuwait on December 2, 2019" were this initiative was embarked on.

Sheikh Abdullah presented great thanks to all those who contributed to these efforts and the success of



KUNA photo  
Opening of the two major operating and waiting rooms at the 'Ahl Masr' Hospital with a donation from the heirs of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

its initiative to provide an opportunity for a better life for those victims.

The hospital is designed and equipped with the most modern utilities with the capacity of 200 beds of which 40 specialized for intensive care units, as well as a nursery center equipped to rescue and treat children, and an emergency department to receive more than 30 cases per minute.

It also contains operating rooms, a physical rehabilitation center, physiotherapy, and a psychological rehabilitation center among other departments and services that are aimed at the goal of saving the lives of burnt victims and reducing the rates of mortality, disability and deformities, and scheduled to provide service to 200,000 cases

annually.

Attending the ceremony was former Prime Minister, Honorary President and Member of the Board of Trustees of the Ahl Masr Foundation for Development, Ibrahim Mahlab, advisor to the President of Egypt for Economic Development, former Minister of Planning and Economic Development, and member of the Board of Trustees of the Ahl Masr Foundation for Development, Dr. Hala Al-Saeed.

The opening was also attended by the Head of Kuwaiti Health office in Cairo, Dr. Muhammad Al-Ajmi, the executive director of the Ahl Masr Foundation, Iman Sharif and the Director of Ahl Masr Hospital Dr. Refaat Abdel Maksoud.

Zakat provides 10 tons of food aid for Ramadhan

## Kuwait sends 30th relief aid plane to Syria

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22, (KUNA): Kuwait's 30th relief flight from Kuwait's air bridge departed on Friday to Damascus International Airport, carrying 10 tons of food aid, as part of "Kuwait By Your Side" campaign.

Kuwait Zakat House, in coordination with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense, as well as Kuwait Air Force, organized this latest initiative.

In a pre-takeoff statement to KUNA, Zakat House's Observer of Projects and External Bodies Ayed Al-Mutairi said his charity would keep delivering various relief aid to the Syrian people, especially with the approaching of the holy month of Ramadhan, at the behest of the political leadership.

He added that Kuwait's 30th aid plane contains foodstuff involving flour, oil and date, with a view to answering the needs of the Syrian people.

He added that today's humanitarian supplies were determined in coordination with Syrian Arab Red Crescent, revealing that 20 trucks carrying relief supplies would be sent to Syria in the coming period.

This plane is Kuwait Zakat House's sixth relief flight, bringing its overall aid shipments to 168 tons of the Kuwaiti air bridge to Syria, which now stands at a total of 727 tons.



KUNA photo  
Official entities participating in the 30th relief flight to Syria.

# Municipal Council to review land use and environmental proposal

Municipality sets leave deadline

By Inaas Awadh  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: The Municipal Council headed by Abdullah Al-Mahri will hold its 13th regular session on Sunday to discuss the following:

- Request of the Kuwaiti Society for the Development of the Educational System to use a vacant land in Salmiya for the establishment of its headquarters;
- Amiri Diwan's request to deduct 1,161 square meters from Hind Intermediate School for Girls in Jabriya, with a total space of 27,613.25 square meters;
- Ministry of Electricity and Renewable Energy's request to allocate a site for a secondary transformer Station No. 1 in Jabriya, Block 10;
- Proposal of member Sherifa Al-Shalfan regarding the recycling of plastic bottles and their caps;
- Final approval to reorganize

part of Block Three in Sharq, represented by the remaining part of the document property represented as Plot 1A/1 in survey plan;

Proposal of members Sherifa Al-Shalfan and Abdullatif Al-Da'i to study the use of water collection basins and sewers during torrential rains in Kuwait.

On the other hand, the Legal and Financial Affairs Committee, headed by Fahad Al-Abduljader, held its third meeting, during which it decided to postpone talks on the proposal of the committee chairman on the establishment of an electronic platform for municipal violations.

It also returned to the executive body to provide it with a technical opinion on the two items related to the proposal submitted by member Abdullatif Al-Daai on allowing the

setback of a roofed area for commercial activities; proposal of members Abdullatif Al-Daai and Sharifah Al-Shalfan to amend Article Four of the Roads, Squares, Sidewalks and Public Squares Occupancy Regulations; and set aside the request of the heirs of Abdul Hamid Al-Qattan regarding naming Street Two in Surra, Block Four, after the late Abdul Hamid Al-Qattan.

Meanwhile, the Kuwait Municipality's Financial and Administrative Affairs Sector has instructed all departments to submit their mission and study leave requirements for fiscal 2025/2026 to the Administrative Development and Training Department by March 5.

The submissions should align with the Municipality's work and will be used to create the annual plan for missions and study leaves.

This initiative aims to enhance employee skills and keep them up-to-date with advancements, ultimately improving the operational efficiency and service delivery of the Municipality.



Al-Mahri

Continued from Page 1

Experts urge

the absence of taxes in Kuwait's financial system and the lack of a favorable investment environment for the private sector.

He also pointed out that banks are not providing sufficient loans for construction projects, and that private sector capital is often invested abroad due to higher returns.

He suggested that raising government service fees could improve the budget, although he acknowledged that it would take time for the government to realize profits from its development projects.

Borsali recommended opening the door to foreign labor in the private sector to support the execution of development projects and bolster the national economy.

In general, these experts' recommendations emphasize the urgent need for Kuwait to address its financial challenges through strategic investments, a more diversified economy, and a more attractive business environment for both local and foreign investors.

Kuwait's travel

Sources privy to the matter told the newspaper that agencies at the airport are intensifying efforts to coordinate flight schedules for the upcoming summer season, which is expected to see a high volume of passengers.

Civil aviation authorities will grant operational approvals based on passenger terminal capacity and the allocation of shares to approved airlines. The goal is to enhance operational efficiency and improve the overall travel experience for passengers. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has also been proactive in expanding air transport connections, recently signing several bilateral agreements with various countries. These efforts are aimed at further strengthening Kuwait International Airport's connectivity to major global and regional airports, sources added.

Kuwait's Amir

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior

Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah congratulated Saudi Interior Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Nayef bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, while Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdulah Al-Sabah sent a cable to his Saudi counterpart, Prince Khaled bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, extending his best wishes on the occasion.

KUWAIT AMIR

In cables to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, His Highness the Amir expressed deep appreciation for the warm hospitality extended to him and his delegation. He lauded Saudi Arabia's leadership and pivotal role in regional and global affairs, particularly its unwavering support for the Palestinian cause.

The Amir also emphasized the significance of ongoing coordination among regional nations to address shared challenges and aspirations, ensuring a more stable and prosperous future for all.

Kuwait offers water tech to Latin America

By Mohammed Ghanem  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: The Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy Wednesday organized an exploratory visit for the ambassadors of Latin American countries to learn about the water desalination technologies used in Kuwait including flash distillation, reverse osmosis, and multiple-effect distillation, and consider their implementation in their countries to deal with the water crisis expected to occur in Latin America in the coming years.

During the visit, the ambassadors were accompanied by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy Dr. Adel Al-Zamel.

The ambassadors toured the distilleries and the control room at the Doha East Power and Water Distillation Plant, as well as the reverse osmosis water desalination system and its control room at the Doha West Power and Water Distillation Plant. Dr. Al-Zamel expressed the ministry's readiness to share its 70+ years of expertise in the field of water desalination.

He affirmed that Kuwait is a leading country in water desalination and high-quality water production, and reiterated the ministry's willingness to transfer this knowledge to other nations.

وزارة التجارة والصناعة  
Ministry of Commerce and Industry

## Ministry of Commerce and Industry

### RECALL INFORMATION

Speaker/Strobe

Horn/Strobe

Tyco Fire Products LP is the manufacturer of the Simplex branded TrueAlert ES Addressable Notification Appliances (including sounders, horns and visual strobes) manufactured on or after January 19, 2021 (for Xenon Type Notification Appliances) and on or after August 19, 2021 (for LED type Notification Appliances) until August 18, 2022, and marketed and sold in Kuwait by Bader Al Mulla & Bros Co. (the "Affected Products"). This announcement does not include the following products:

- All Addressable Notification Appliances manufactured before January 19, 2021 or after August 18, 2022
- All LED Type Notification Appliances manufactured before August 19, 2021 or after August 18, 2022
- All Addressable Speaker Only Notification Appliances

RECALL REASON

Tyco Fire Products recently became aware of an issue that potentially impacts certain of the Affected Products, such as sounders, horns and visual strobes. We learned that if an Affected Product, experiences a memory chip issue and becomes non-responsive, one or more additional Affected Products on the same fire alarm system hardwire loop may also become non-responsive, with the result being that those Affected Products may not sound or strobe in the event of an alarm ("Impacted Appliances"). Some, but not all, Impacted Appliances with speakers may then "chirp."

REMEDY

Tyco Fire Products has performed advanced testing and implemented a remedy for the issue. This issue is resolved through a firmware update to the Affected Products that is implemented through the fire alarm control panel at all sites containing these devices. Any Impacted Appliances that do not recover following the firmware update will be replaced.

If you believe that you have an Affected Product, please reach out to us in order for us to evaluate your system, and, if necessary, implement the firmware update and replace devices as needed.

All Affected Products that require replacement must be responsibly disposed of in compliance with applicable laws. They may not be resold or reused.

CONTACT

For any questions, please contact Tyco Fire Products LP and its local agent, Bader Al Mulla & Bros Co on the following contact details:

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## Kuwaiti crude oil price drops to \$79.15 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti crude oil price fell by 21 cents during Friday's trading to reach USD 79.15 per barrel (pb), compared with USD 79.36 pb the day before, Kuwait

Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said Saturday. Brent futures fell USD 2.05 to USD 74.43 pb and West Texas Intermediate went up down USD 2.08 to USD 70.40 pb.

# Business

Bank promotes road safety with pre-Iftar meal distribution

## NBK launches Ramadan 2025 'Doing Good Deeds' campaign with interactive community initiatives

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: As part of its continued commitment to social responsibility, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is launching its annual Ramadan campaign, "Doing Good Deeds," which has been a cornerstone of its CSR initiatives for over 25 years. This year's program introduces new community-driven activities designed to strengthen social bonds and promote generosity during the holy month.

Manal Faisal Al Mattar, Head of Group Corporate Communications at NBK, stated: "We have expanded our Ramadan program this year to include more interactive initiatives that engage with the community, support families, and reinforce values of generosity and social solidarity. Our goal is to create a meaningful and lasting impact throughout the holy month."

### Raising Awareness on Sustainability

**Reduce Food Waste Campaign:** NBK is launching a campaign to encourage food conservation and minimize waste. Refrigerators will be placed at 12 NBK branch entrances (two in each governorate) to collect surplus food.

The community is encouraged to donate excess food, embracing a culture of sustainability and social responsibility.

### Embracing The True Spirit of Ramadan Through Community Participation



Manal Al Mattar

"Your Iftar with NBK". This social initiative is designed to create meaningful connections and strengthen community bonds during Ramadan.

As part of this effort, NBK will distribute shopping vouchers at leading supermarket chains, enabling families to fully embrace the spirit of Ramadan together.

### Encouraging Physical Activity During Ramadan

NBK Ramadan Challenge NBK will host a 10-day sports and social event at Al-Shaheed Park.

Participants can select their preferred challenges, promoting an active and healthy lifestyle in the spirit of Ramadan.

### Al Mattar:

- This year, our program includes innovative initiatives that strengthen social and humanitarian values
- Field initiatives include distributing Iftar meals, supporting families, promoting sports, and raising environmental awareness to reduce food waste
- Interactive cultural and entertainment competitions, along with Gergean celebrations, aim to enhance Ramadan traditions

### Interactive Knowledge-Based Challenge

NBK Cultural Competition: A digital cultural competition will be hosted through a dedicated app, featuring general knowledge and cultural questions throughout Ramadan. The two-day competition will award valuable prizes to the top three winners, fostering community engagement through both entertainment and education.

### Celebrating Ramadan Traditions

NBK Gergean with Boqshah: In collaboration with Boqshah Exhibition, NBK will be the official sponsor of an interactive Gergean celebration. The initiative, "Reserve Your Spot for Your Kids' Gergean," will be open to the public with limited registrations, creating a joyful community experience for families during this cherished Ramadan tradition.

### Spreading Festive Joy

Before Eid, NBK will engage with the community at Souq Al-Mubarakiya and other popular

locations by distributing special Ramadan gifts, including incense burners, oud, perfumes, and traditional fabric sets. This gesture aims to spread joy and celebrate the spirit of giving.

### Promoting Road Safety Awareness

NBK is launching a road safety initiative to encourage responsible driving before Iftar. Light meals will be distributed to drivers at key locations to remind them to slow down and drive safely before Maghrib prayer. This initiative aims to reduce traffic accidents and promote safer roads during Ramadan.

### NBK's Commitment to Social Responsibility

Concluding her statement, Al Mattar emphasized NBK's long-term dedication to sustainable initiatives, stating: "We believe that community work is an investment in the future. That's why we continue to introduce initiatives that foster generosity, awareness, and social cohesion – solidifying NBK's role as a key contributor to Kuwait's society."



NBK Invest launches comprehensive investment platform.

## CEO highlights NBK's vision of inclusivity

## Watani Investment launches NBK Invest & NBK Brokerage

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Watani Investment Company K.S.C.C., a subsidiary of NBK Group, has announced the launch of its comprehensive investment platform, NBK Invest, and the re-naming of Watani Brokerage to NBK Brokerage.

This initiative aims to unify the identity of the investment products and services provided by Watani Investment Company for clients under the NBK brand, bridging the gap between clients and new investment opportunities.

Accordingly, Watani Investment Company has launched the NBK Invest mobile application to provide a range of investment solutions that meet the diverse needs of clients. The platform includes a digital financial advisory service and a selection of mutual funds, all accessible through a user-friendly interface designed for both beginner and experienced investors.

Through the digital advisory service, clients can access globally diversified investment plans, tailored to their needs and risk tolerance. The service also offers conventional and Shariah-compliant investment options, with the flexibility to customize investment plans according to individual financial goals.

Additionally, the application provides access to a diverse range of mutual funds with a long and established track record managed by Watani Investment Company. These include seven funds covering equities, bonds and money markets, allowing investors to diversify their investments easily. The equity and bond funds provide broad diversification across regional equities and fixed-income. Meanwhile, the money market funds offer low-risk, highly liquid investments, available in both Kuwaiti Dinars and US Dollars, with both conventional and Shariah-compliant options.

Clients can open an account entirely digitally through the application, eliminating the need for paperwork or branch visits, ensuring a seamless and efficient investment experience.

Meanwhile, NBK Brokerage continues to provide access to trading services in local, regional, and US markets, as well as offering Sharia-compliant options. Through its innovative online platforms, NBK Brokerage aims to provide quick fund transfers and swift execution capabilities. The platforms feature advanced tools, including real-time prices and detailed account analysis. Users can also view their transaction history, access statements, and benefit from mobile trading features for a seamless experience in tracking, buying, and selling investments.

NBK Brokerage operates across three separate platforms, each tailored to specific markets and services: NBK Brokerage – Regional, NBK Brokerage – US, and NBK Brokerage – Sharia.

Operating separately from NBK Invest, NBK Brokerage offers a more active trading experience with seamless trading services, empowering clients with direct digital control over their trades through a user-friendly mobile app and website.

### A Comprehensive Investment Platform

Commenting on this significant development, Deputy CEO of Watani



Fahad Al-Rushaid Al-Bader

### Al-Bader:

- The launch of NBK Invest was driven by the belief that investment opportunities should be easily accessible to everyone
- NBK Invest seeks to empower clients with a wide selection of investment solutions through its comprehensive financial platform
- The platform offers an array of services suitable for a range of financial goals and risk appetites
- Account registration is available to all
- The platform's intuitive design ensures easy access to investment solutions

Investment Company, Mr. Fahad Al-Rushaid Al-Bader, stated, "Guided by its vision of inclusivity and social responsibility, Watani Investment Company seeks to deliver sustainable investment solutions to all its clients."

He elaborated, stating that the enhanced platforms address a wide range of investment and savings needs, offering distinctive investment services across various instruments and asset classes in global markets.

"These digital investment platforms offer investment opportunities tailored to the investor's goals, financial aspirations, and risk tolerance, making long-term investing accessible," he concluded.

Watani Investment Company, a leading investment firm in the region, was established in 2005. It is setting the standard in growth-focused innovative financial products and services with a customer-centric approach, addressing the specific needs of investors. Watani Investment Company combines local and regional expertise with the resources and global network of National Bank of Kuwait, one of the largest and oldest financial institutions in the region, to consistently deliver integrated solutions, innovative products and objective research with excellence in service.

With over 139 investment professionals, Watani Investment Company prides itself in a leading regional presence and a global reach and scale.

## Signed strategic partnership with Astek

## stc participates in 'LEAP 2025' conference in Riyadh

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced its participation in the 'LEAP 2025' conference hosted in Riyadh, KSA.

The Company's attendance at one of the largest global technology events aligns with stc's strategic objectives behind enabling digital transformation, forming strategic partnerships, and gaining access to the latest insights and trends in the market. LEAP 2025 brings together industry leaders, experts, and innovators to explore the latest advancements in digital transformation, artificial intelligence, and emerging technologies.

stc's presence at the LEAP 2025 conference reflects the Company's ongoing commitment to driving digital innovation, expanding its ICT capabilities, and strengthening its role as a key player in the region's evolving landscape. stc Kuwait CEO, eng. Muataz Aldharrab & stc Kuwait Chief Strategy Officer, Khalid Al Sudairy were present and attended the conference and actively engaged with global industry leaders, technology experts, and innovators to explore emerging trends in the tech world, exchange insights, and foster strategic collaborations. During the conference, stc established a strategic collaboration that aim to enhancing the cybersecurity and digital transformation solutions that are offered to the private and the public sectors.

### Collaboration with Astek for IT Transformation

During the LEAP 2025 conference, stc entered into a strategic partnership with Astek, a global expert in IT consulting and engineering solutions, to further advance its digital transformation initiatives. The signing ceremony was attended by stc Kuwait CEO, Eng. Muataz Aldharrab and Astek Co-Founder, Jean-luc Bernard. This collaboration aligns with stc's vision of empowering enterprises with scalable, secure, and innovative IT services, helping businesses in Kuwait and the region optimize their operations and drive technological advancement.



stc team and Astek team at the LEAP 2025 conference.

With its expertise in IT engineering, digital transformation, and software development, Astek is recognized in global market research reports, including Gartner, Forrester, and IDC Market Scope, for delivering high-impact IT solutions. Through this partnership, stc aims to provide comprehensive IT services that enhance business agility, streamline operations, and create new growth opportunities for enterprises across various industries.

### Driving the future of telecom and ICT solutions in Kuwait

As a telecom pioneer and ICT solutions provider, stc remains committed to delivering exceptional telecom and connectivity solutions, expanding its digital ecosystem, enhancing cybersecurity frameworks, and delivering cutting-edge IT solutions. The Company continues to invest in forming strategic partnerships with leading companies within their industries to deliver a full range of exceptional solutions



CEO Muataz Aldharrab and Astek co-founder Jean-luc Bernard during the partnership signing.

and services. Participating in conferences, such as LEAP 2025, offers valuable opportunities to collaborate with industry and market leaders, supporting the Company's Key objectives, including driving the digital transformation in Kuwait and enriching the lifestyle of its customers.

## PBC and CCIAP host key meetings with Kuwait stakeholders

## Arab-Portuguese Chamber strengthens economic ties with Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: The Portuguese Business Council Kuwait (PBC) is pleased to announce the successful completion of the Arab-Portuguese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCIAP) business mission to Kuwait. This strategic initiative aimed to enhance economic, investment, and trade relations between Portugal and Kuwait, reinforcing a growing partnership between both nations.

With Portugal recognized as a hub of quality, innovation, and talent, and Kuwait pursuing economic diversification under Vision 2035, both countries stand to benefit from deeper cooperation.

The delegation was led by Mr. Nuno Anahory, Executive Board

Member of CCIAP, and organized in close collaboration with Mr. António Azevedo Campos, President of the Portuguese Business Council in Kuwait. Together, they provided a strong platform for Portuguese businesses to connect with Kuwait stakeholders, facilitating key discussions on investment and economic collaboration.

### Summary of the Mission

The delegation, composed of over 12 Portuguese companies from key sectors including energy, real estate, investment funds, construction, cybersecurity, tourism, security services, and industries, visited Kuwait from February 18 to 20, 2025. This visit coincided with the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Portugal and Kuwait, a testament to



Photo during the meeting.

the enduring mutual respect and cooperation between the two nations.

During the mission, numerous business opportunities were explored, and several Kuwait companies expressed strong interest in partnering with Portuguese enterprises. The discussions focused on trade, infrastructure development, and investment-driven innovation, opening new pathways for economic collaboration.

### Key Highlights of the Mission

■ Reception at the White Palace: The delegation was honored with a reception hosted by His Excellency Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah at the White Palace, where discussions centered on Kuwait's commitment to innovation

and sustainability.

■ Meeting with Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI): Under the coordination of Mr. Firas M. AlOda, the delegation engaged in productive discussions with KCCI. The focus was on strengthening partnerships, trade and economic ties.

■ Engagement with Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA): The delegation met with His Excellency Sheikh Abdullah Sabah Humoud Al-Sabah, Assistant Director General for Investment Operations at KDIPA. Discussions highlighted Kuwait's strategic initiatives to attract high-value investments and create a business-friendly environment for international enterprises.





Warba Bank hosts cultural festivities for travelers at Kuwait Airport.

## Warba Bank celebrates Kuwait's national holidays at T4 Airport

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: As part of its commitment to social responsibility and its dedication to sharing the community's joy during Kuwait's national holidays, Warba Bank organized a series of events at Terminal 4 (T4) at Kuwait International Airport. The festivities included a traditional "Artha" performance, as well as the distribution of gifts to travelers and hospitality services throughout the day.

Speaking of the initiative, Dr. Mohammad Barakat as Chief Marketing and Corporate Communication Officer, said: "At Warba Bank, we take pride in being actively present during national celebrations and sharing these special moments with the community. The initiative reflects our commitment to strengthening pride in our nation and adding a festive touch for travelers. It embodies our core values and social responsibility while honoring our Kuwaiti heritage and history. By distributing gifts, providing traditional hospitality, and showcasing cultural performances, we continue our journey of spreading joy during national holidays, reinforcing our deep-rooted values and dedication to preserving national identity."

Barakat emphasized the success of these events, saying: "Travelers gath-

ered in the departure hall to enjoy the cultural performances, which beautifully showcased Kuwait's rich heritage. The distribution of souvenirs demonstrated Warba's appreciation for its customers, while our hospitality services added an element of delight to the travel experience. The celebratory spirit of the national holidays was reflected in every detail of these events."

He added that this initiative underscores the bank's commitment to fostering national culture and enhancing its institutional role in engaging with various segments of society. It also aligns with Warba Bank's broader strategy of strengthening community connections and participating in significant national occasions.

Commitment to Social Responsibility

Through this initiative, Warba Bank reaffirms its ongoing role in strengthening community cohesion. Its commitment to social responsibility is one of the fundamental pillars of its corporate culture. The bank continuously strives to develop initiatives that integrate different segments of society and actively participate in national celebrations, reinforcing its role in serving the community and supporting Kuwait's national development.



ABK wishes Kuwait a Happy National and Liberation Days.

'Digital services available'

## ABK announces branch closures for National and Liberation Day

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) extends its greetings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, as well as the government, people, and residents of Kuwait on the occasion of Kuwait's National and Liberation Day.

ABK discloses that its branches will be closed from 25 to 27 February 2025

to resume operations on 2 March 2025. During this time, ABK's digital branch in Al Khiran Mall will be functional to service customers from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

The Bank has also confirmed its full operational readiness to serve customers 24/7 via its various digital platforms. This includes Online Banking via eahl.com, the ABK mobile app, as well as the Bank's call center Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 and its ATM network.

## Markaz records total revenue of KD 20.31 mln for 2024

Assets Under Management of KD 1.41 bln

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" (KSE: Markaz, Reuters: MARKZ.KW, Bloomberg: MARKAZ:KK) reported its financial results for 2024 with a Total Revenue of KD 20.31 million with a decrease of 23%, as compared to KD 26.32 million in 2023.

The net profit attributable to shareholders of Markaz was KD 4.46 million, compared to KD 4.15 million in the same period last year, and earnings per share was 9 fils for the year ended 31 December 2024. The Board of Directors has recommended a dividend of 7fils per share (Subject to the AGM approval).

Mr. Diraar Yusuf Alghanim, Chairman at Markaz stated: "In 2024, GCC economies showed resilience, with the MSCI GCC Countries Domestic Index up 5.9%. Kuwait outperformed with the All Share Index rising 8.0% and the Main 50 Index soaring 24%, driven by strong investor interest in mid-cap and small-cap stocks. Oil prices contributed to regional fiscal stability, while governments policies and investments have focused on economic diversification. The GCC average projected real GDP growth for 2024 is 1.4%, driven by economic diversification and infrastructure investments. The global economic environment in 2024 presented a blend of opportunities and challenges. Global GDP growth is projected at 3.2%, bolstered by easing inflation in developed economies. Emerging markets benefited from gradual improvements in supply chains and labor markets. However, geopolitical uncertainties and tariff-driven measures pose



Diraar Yusuf Alghanim, Chairman at Markaz

significant risks to sustained growth. Looking ahead, we are optimistic about the region's prospects and our capacity to capitalize on growth opportunities and deliver enduring value for our stakeholders."

Mr. Ali H. Khalil, Markaz's CEO, stated: "Markaz's Asset Management fees for 2024 were KD 8.73 million as compared to KD 7.17 million for the previous year. Investment Banking and Advisory fees for 2024 were KD 1.08 million as compared to KD 0.84 million for 2023, an increase of 29%. The year 2024 held special significance as we celebrated our 50th anniversary, a testament to decades of sustained growth through innovation and trust. Understanding that our clients' success is tied to our own, we prioritize enhancing the client experience to reinforce our market leadership. Our equities team capitalized on these opportunities across multiple funds and portfolios; our equity mutual funds MIDAF and Forsa Funds outperformed the benchmarks.

Markaz's real estate investments in the GCC region are characterized by operational efficiency, leading to optimal rental rates, high occupancy and



Ali H. Khalil, Markaz's CEO

collection ratios. These factors have significantly contributed to the income and returns of the Markaz Real Estate Fund (MREF) and the Markaz Gulf Real Estate Fund (MGREF), a private placement fund.

Our international real estate portfolio has performed well despite expanding capitalization rates and higher-than-expected interest rates. We have successfully sold projects in Europe and the United States. Markaz is now focusing on high-potential opportunities under the current market conditions, including leveraged senior debt in multifamily and industrial development projects in the U.S. and Europe.

The investment banking team demonstrated its innovative capabilities by successfully executing a KD 100 million bond program for the Commercial Bank of Kuwait and introducing the region's first KD-denominated convertible bond. Advisory services, including M&A, restructuring strategies, and feasibility studies, addressed complex financial structures for corporations and family-owned businesses. By focusing on creating long-term value, we aim to align our strategies with market dynamics and client needs, providing



Abduallah W. Al-Nusif, Managing Director, WMBD at Markaz

consistent growth and meaningful outcomes."

Mr. Abduallah W. Al-Nusif, Managing Director, Wealth Management and Business Development at Markaz, stated: "Markaz Assets Under Management (AUM) increased by 16% to reach KD 1.41 billion as of December 31, 2024. Despite market complexities, our strategic role as investment advisors enabled us to seize market opportunities effectively, as exemplified in our continued ventures into Private Equity, Private Credit, and Local Fixed Income in secondary markets. We strengthened relationships with leading local and regional institutions while expanding our client base.

All these efforts led to Markaz being recognized by reputable organizations including Global Finance, EMEA finance, Euromoney, and MENA Banking Excellence, and winning (9) prestigious awards in asset management, investment banking, real estate, digital solutions, and innovation. Our goal is to provide our clients with the best innovative financial solutions that achieve their investment objectives, and we are committed to delivering high-end value."

## UK and Kuwait strengthen investment ties at FDI conference

## Kuwait hosts 2025 Foreign Direct Investment Conference

LONDON, Feb 22, (KUNA): The Foreign Direct Investment Conference in 2025: Insights and Trends Shaping the Future of Investment, organized by the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) in cooperation with the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA), kicked off on Friday.

Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for European Affairs Ambassador Sadiq Marafi, Kuwait's Ambassador to the United Kingdom Bader Al-Munaikhi, Assistant Director General for Business Development at the KDIPA and Vice-Chairman of the Steering Committee of the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA) Mohammad Mulla Yaqoub, Head of the Kuwait Investment Office in London Abdulmoheem Al-Mukhaizeem are taking part in the conference.

Also participating are: Director for Investment Affairs at the British Department of Business and Trade John Edwards, and CEO of WAIPA Ismail Ersahin, in addition to a number of senior officials and financial and business experts from various countries around the world.

In his inaugural speech, Assistant Foreign Minister for European Affairs Ambassador Sadiq Marafi said the conference is being held at a time full of challenges but at the same time holds great opportunities.

"I recall with great pride the foreign policy of the State of Kuwait after independence, which combined diplomacy with investment," adding that Kuwait's

strategic vision "planted the seeds of friendship" centuries ago, which grew in the European continent.

"I proudly announce that Kuwait's investments in the United Kingdom have grown by more than 400 percent in the past twenty years," he disclosed.

Ambassador Marafi stressed that the United Kingdom was and still is one of the best investment and tourism destinations for Kuwaitis, who are also among the largest real estate owners in the country.

He said that despite the economic and geopolitical challenges in various parts of the world, "we aim to achieve a rebalancing in a way that protects our interests."

For his part, Director for Investment at the British Department of Business and Trade John Edwards told KUNA that the Kuwaiti economy is undergoing a transformation to innovative and clean energy industries.

"We work closely with the Kuwaiti government to identify sectors of interest in which we have expertise to cooperate in them" he said.

Participants in the conference discussed ways to attract high-quality investments to Europe through European investment promotion agencies in line with sustainable development goals and national economic strategies.

The first session explored emerging opportunities for foreign direct investments in the innovation and sustainable investment sectors to reach a comprehensive understanding of the current direct investment

dynamics around the world, while the second session examined the strategies and trends that shape financing investments with a focus on political funds and stock markets.

The conference sessions included exclusive round-table discussions for investment promotion agencies with the aim of finding cooperation strategies to address regional challenges facing investment in addition to strengthening partnerships.

The conferees also reviewed the expectations of global direct investment in the current year, most notably the continued growth of the services, communications, renewable energy, semiconductors, and industrial transformation using artificial intelligence.

The World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA) was founded in Geneva in 1995 with the aim of enabling investment promotion agencies to work more effectively to achieve sustainable economic development and enhance the flow of direct investment.

The Association is responsible for building international networks that facilitate dialogue between governments and the private sector. It also provides training platforms and international conferences such as the World Investment Conference, which gives its members the opportunity to learn about emerging global trends and formulate investment policies in line with these developments.

Concluding the 10-week mentorship program, and as part of its Innovation and ESG strategies

## KIB honors winners of its H.I. Innovation Program with a grand closing ceremony

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) successfully concluded its ground-breaking H.I. Innovation Program, announcing the winners at a grand closing ceremony. The event, held at Courtyard Kuwait City - Al Raya Ballroom, brought together university students, industry leaders, and banking professionals to celebrate innovation, creativity, and the future of financial solutions in Kuwait. The ten-week program, held in partnership with VISA, SIA Partners and five local prestigious universities, exemplifies KIB's dedication to nurturing young talent and promoting a culture of innovation within the community in which it operates. This initiative directly supports the Bank's social responsibility efforts as part of its overarching Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) strategy.

The ceremony featured a judging panel with distinguished industry experts, including Mohamed Reyad, Country Head from Visa, Roberto Wyszowski, Partner & Growth and Innovation Team Leader from SIA Partners, Mohamed El Shareef, General Manager of the Digital Innovation and Data Intelligence Department at KIB, Abdullah Al Awadi, General Manager of Strategy Department at KIB, and Fahad Al Bader, General Manager of the Operations Department at KIB.

The much-anticipated announcement of the winning projects captivated the audience, as they showcased exceptional creativity, strong feasibility, and a transformative impact on the banking sector. The winners, which included Abdulrahman Almutairi, Jana Hadwan, Noor Tahat and Nour Mansour from the Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST), impressed the judges with their ground-breaking project, Murshid, a cutting-edge solution designed to elevate customer engagement at KIB.

The event's stage design mirrored the grandeur of international competitions, featuring an impressive panel setup. The audience of 100 guests witnessed a night of engaging presentations, insightful discussions, and inspiring success stories. A highlight of the ceremony was the Student Journey Video, showcasing the participants' hard work, dedication, and growth throughout the program. The professionally produced film captured key moments, behind-the-scenes footage, and testimonials, leaving a lasting impression on attendees.

Commenting on the event, El Shareef said: "The creativity and ingenuity demonstrated by the participants were truly remarkable, and we are proud to have provided a platform for these future leaders to shine. Their achievement underscores KIB's commitment to fostering young talent and driving forward-thinking innovation in the financial industry. The H.I. Innovation Program reflects the Bank's dedication to empowering young minds, and cultivating a forward-thinking culture within Kuwait's banking sector."

The H.I. Innovation Program spanned over a period of ten weeks, allowing teams from the five participating universities, including Australian University, American University of Kuwait, Gulf University for Science & Technology, Kuwait College of Science & Technology, and College of Business Administration - Kuwait University, to solve real-world challenges faced by the banking sector. Designed to



H.I. Innovation Program - First Place Winners



H.I. Innovation Program - Second Place Winners



H.I. Innovation Program - Jury



H.I. Innovation Program - All participating university students with their cash prizes.

bridge the gap between academia and the business world, the program offered a unique prospect to develop practical skills and gain valuable industry experiences. The students had the opportunity to work closely with innovation coaches and mentors from SIA Partners to develop innovative solutions to pressing business problems.

El Shareef noted that the H.I. Innovation Program stands as a testament to KIB's unwavering commitment to progress, serving as a dynamic platform to empower the next generation of innovators, cultivate forward-thinking mindsets, and deliver sustainable financial solutions that evolve with customers' ambitions. By empowering Ku-

wait's future trailblazers and fostering ground-breaking ideas, the Bank is reinforcing its role in driving a more sustainable and resilient financial ecosystem in Kuwait, thus strengthening its position as one of the leaders in the Islamic banking sector.

El Shareef added: "The H.I. Innovation Program reflects our deep commitment to developing future banking solutions and fostering a culture of innovation both within and beyond the Bank. We take great pride in the program's achievements, as it provides participants with a valuable opportunity to bring their ideas to life while serving as a platform for deeper engagement with the next generation of innovators.

The students have demonstrated exceptional capabilities in presenting innovative solutions that address the challenges facing the banking sector, reinforcing our vision of enhancing sustainable banking and elevating service excellence."

It is worth noting that KIB remains committed to supporting the next generation of financial innovators through initiatives that encourage entrepreneurship, technological advancement, and strategic problem-solving. With the success of this year's H.I. Innovation Program, the Bank looks forward to continuing its mission of driving meaningful change in the banking industry, in line with its main slogan "Bank for Life".

Leveraging advanced AI-powered robotics and automation solutions

Zain teams up with Smooth Logistics to streamline its logistics operations

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Zain is teaming up with Raha, the rapidly growing logistics technology company in Kuwait. Through this collaboration, Raha's subsidiary, Smooth Logistics, will support Zain's logistics operations, leveraging its expertise in advanced AI-powered robotics and automation solutions to optimize storage, shipping, and delivery, ultimately enhancing customer experiences.

The partnership was officially announced at Smooth Logistics' headquarters in Al-Ardiya, attended by Zain Kuwait's CEO Nawaf Al-Gharabally, Chief Commercial Officer Meshal Al-Kandari, Chief Enterprise Business Officer Hamad Al-Marzouq, and Raha's Co-Founder and CEO Saleh Al-Tunaib, alongside executives and teams from both companies.

Through this collaboration, Smooth Logistics will support Zain's logistics operations, encompassing product storage, shipping, and delivery with the highest standards of quality and efficiency. These operations will be carried out using AI-powered robotic solutions within Smooth Logistics' state-of-the-art facility in Kuwait, which is among the most advanced in the logistics sector.

Commenting on the partnership, Nawaf Al-Gharabally said: "We are excited about this new collaboration with our partners at Raha, who share our passion for harnessing technology to enrich customer experiences and integrate innovation into our operations. We take pride in selecting a Kuwaiti company led by exceptional national talents who have built a remarkable success story in the tech logistics sector."

He added: "Enhancing our logistics operations is a crucial step in our broader efforts to integrate digital transformation across all aspects of our business, ensuring an enriched customer experience that meets their expectations and aligns with our strategic vision to become a leading provider of digital and technological innovations."

Al-Gharabally further stated: "We look forward to delivering new levels



Nawaf Al-Gharabally and Saleh Al-Tunaib with executives from both companies.



Robotics and automation solutions contribute to enriching customer experiences.

of efficiency and flexibility in the services we offer to our customer base in Kuwait. Additionally, this partnership will enhance the quality of our overall operational processes, and we are eager to explore the opportunities it will create to elevate customer satisfaction and drive business excellence."

Saleh Al-Tunaib commented: "We are proud of this partnership with Zain, which reflects our commitment to providing advanced logistics solutions powered by the latest technologies."

He continued: "At Smooth Logistics, we are redefining the concept of logistics services through automation and robotics, allowing us to achieve unparalleled operational efficiency, reduce delivery times, and enhance customer experiences."

Al-Tunaib concluded: "We greatly value Zain's trust in choosing to work

**Nawaf Al-Gharabally:**

- "Enhancing logistics a key step toward realizing our vision of embracing digital transformation and enriching customer experiences"
- "Proud to select a Kuwaiti company led by national talents who built an inspiring success story in the tech logistics sector"

**Saleh Al-Tunaib:**

- "We value Zain's trust and look forward to achieving shared successes that support its ambitions and contribute to the advancement of the logistics sector"

with us, and we look forward to achieving mutual successes that support their goals and contribute to the evolution of the logistics industry."

Leveraging Smooth Logistics' pio-

neering capabilities and expertise, Zain will, for the first time, introduce a one-hour delivery service for most areas in Kuwait—a groundbreaking achievement in the country's telecom sector.

This service will add significant value to the online shopping experience via the Zain app and website.

Raha aims to redefine traditional warehousing with its advanced 4,000-square-meter facility, which operates entirely through robotic and automated systems and houses over 15,000 storage locations.

The automated systems employed by Raha are distinguished by their precision, efficiency, and flexibility, handling all logistics tasks—from order reception and storage to packaging, shipping, and final delivery to customers in record time. This approach minimizes human error, reduces costs, and enhances operational fluidity, ultimately driving customer satisfaction.

The facility was designed with sustainability goals in mind, prioritizing

energy efficiency and the use of eco-friendly packaging materials. This aligns with Zain's sustainability strategy, which focuses on reducing carbon emissions and minimizing environmental impact.

Since its launch in 2022, Raha has rapidly grown into a multi-sector company specializing in automation and digitization. Smooth Logistics offers cost-effective storage, fulfillment, and last-mile delivery solutions, leveraging robotics to enhance efficiency and reduce costs.

Meanwhile, btr.tech is a local consulting and integration firm that helps businesses across various sectors design warehouses, optimize operations, and implement end-to-end solutions incorporating software and robotics. Raha's mission is to simplify automation and make it accessible to all.

'Our Traditions Always Bring Us Together' Ramadan initiative

Gulf Bank launches Ramadan program to foster community unity

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: As the holy month of Ramadan approaches, Gulf Bank introduces its special program, "Our Traditions Always Bring Us Together", offering a variety of charitable, social, and sports activities aimed at promoting humanitarian and social values, bringing joy and benefit to the community.

Mrs. Najla Aleisa, Chief Marketing Officer at Gulf Bank, stated: "As part of our commitment to reinforce social sustainability, we have developed a comprehensive Ramadan program featuring charitable, social, and sports initiatives, supported by Gulf Bank's volunteer team, 'Sawa'ed Al-Khaleej."

She further emphasized that Gulf Bank has declared 2025 the "Year of Giving," highlighting generosity as a fundamental humanitarian value. "We are committed to dedicating our time, resources, and efforts to preserving our cherished traditions under the theme 'Our Traditions Always Bring Us Together,'" she added.

**The Ramadan program includes:**

**Iftar Meal Distribution**  
As part of its Ramadan initiatives, Gulf Bank will distribute Iftar meals over 20 days, providing support to those in need who may face challenges in securing a meal after long hours of fasting.

**"Machlat Ramadan" Grocery Package Distribution**

As part of its Ramadan initiatives, Gulf Bank, in collaboration with its partners, will distribute "Machlat Ramadan" (Ramadan grocery packages) over four days before and during the holy month. This initiative reflects the spirit of generosity and encourages community participation in charitable giving.

**"Joy Land" Initiative for Underprivileged Families**

In support of underprivileged families, Gulf Bank is taking part in the "Joy Land" initiative, providing essential household items and Eid clothing to families with limited income. This initiative seeks to enhance their well-being during Ramadan by meeting their basic needs and bringing joy to their celebrations.

**Encouraging Sports and a Healthy Lifestyle**

Gulf Bank's Ramadan initiatives go beyond charitable giving, incorporating sports activities that promote health and fitness within the community. The Bank plans to organize various sporting events to encourage individuals to stay active and maintain a healthy lifestyle during Ramadan. These activities aim to inspire people to prioritize their well-being, especially during a month that brings shifts in daily eating habits.



Najla Aleisa

**Empowering SMEs Through "Naqsat Al-Khaleej"**

Gulf Bank continues its commitment to fostering innovation and driving sustainable economic growth. Through "Naqsat Al-Khaleej," the Bank will support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) by providing them with opportunities to showcase their businesses, gain visibility, and access valuable resources that contribute to their growth and success.

**Gargee'an Celebrations for Children**

Gulf Bank will celebrate Gargee'an with special festivities, bringing joy to young Neo account holders and embracing one of Ramadan's most cherished traditions. To extend the spirit of giving, dedicated celebrations will also be held over two days for children with disabilities and orphans, creating unforgettable moments of happiness.

**Astronomical Ramadan Crescent Sighting**

In a special initiative, Gulf Bank will partner with a renowned astronomer to offer the public a firsthand experience in sighting the Ramadan crescent. This event will provide a deeper understanding of the astronomical aspects of moon observation during the holy month.

**Ramadan Graish for Media Partners**

In appreciation of the media's vital role, Gulf Bank will host a special Graish gathering to honor journalists and media representatives. This event aims to foster stronger relationships and recognize their contributions in highlighting the Bank's Ramadan initiatives.

**Community Iftar Gatherings**

As a gesture of appreciation for institutions that contribute to community growth, Gulf Bank will

**Najla Aleisa:**

- "We take pride in being the bank closest to the community and remain committed to upholding social sustainability standards."
- We dedicate our time, resources, and efforts to preserving our traditions under the theme "Our Traditions Always Bring Us Together."
- Distribution of Iftar meals to those in need over 20 days, along with Ramadan Machla packages for the community and customers.
- Organizing sports activities to promote a healthy lifestyle and encourage fitness throughout Ramadan.
- Supporting small businesses through "Nuqsat Al-Khaleej" and celebrating Gargee'an with children.

host Community Iftar Gatherings at various workplaces. This initiative recognizes organizations that play a vital role in supporting society while fostering a sense of unity and collaboration.

**Annual Employee Ghabga**

Gulf Bank values its employees as its most valuable asset. To honor their dedication, the bank will host its Annual Employee Ghabga, providing an opportunity to celebrate their hard work and foster team spirit.

**"Awaidna" – A Celebration of Tradition**

Continuing its annual tradition, Gulf Bank has released a special Ramadan song, "Awaidna". This year's song beautifully weaves together Kuwait's national, religious, and social celebrations, honoring the country's National Day, Liberation Day, and the timeless Ramadan traditions cherished by generations. This initiative highlights Gulf Bank's enduring connection to Kuwaiti society, reflecting its commitment to being "Always With You."

Mrs. Aleisa concluded by stating, "We take great pride in being the bank that is closest to the community and remain committed to launching impactful initiatives that foster social connections, empower small businesses, and promote a healthy lifestyle throughout the holy month of Ramadan."



Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait achieves third consecutive five-star Forbes status.

'Luxurious stays with scenic views'

Four Seasons Kuwait spa achieves 5-star Forbes status for third year

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya has become the first and only hotel in Kuwait to achieve the Forbes Five-Star Award for both its Hotel and Spa operations for three consecutive years. Awarded its third maximum ten-star rating by Forbes on 12 February 2025, the Hotel's latest achievement further emphasizes its leadership role in the Arabian Gulf.

Forbes Travel Guide (FTG) is the only independent global rating system for luxury hotels, restaurants, spas and ocean cruises. Launched over 60 years ago, its internationally renowned awards are based on an assessment by anonymous inspectors according to 900 objective criteria; its winners exemplify excellence in hospitality, from authentic experiences to unparalleled amenities.

At Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya, resort-like spaciousness, lush park views, and rooftop dining offer business and leisure guests a unique alternative for a Kuwait City stay. Four Seasons' iconic service and the city's largest guestrooms are complemented by an array of luxurious experiences, including the award-winning Spa, a fourth-floor city-view infinity pool, and Al Soor Lounge—affectionately known as 'La Chocolaterie of Kuwait'—where guests can indulge in exquisite handcrafted chocolates and pastries. The Hotel is also home to different signature restaurants, including the newly opened Li Beirut, an elegant Lebanese dining destination, as well as Sinto, Dai Forni, and Elements, each offering distinct culinary journeys from Pan-Asian flavors to Italian delicacies. Adding to the Hotel's exceptional offerings, guests can enjoy the exclusive Cigar Lounge, a sophisticated retreat for connoisseurs, and the dedicated Kids' Club, ensuring memorable experiences for younger guests.

Guests seeking connection to Kuwaiti culture and hospitality are rewarded with elegant Middle Eastern architecture and a mesmerizing art collection. The city's not-to-be-missed malls and souks are just a few minutes' drive away, while the vast expanse of Kuwait's largest green space, Al Shaheed Park, is directly opposite.

In addition to its exemplary Hotel operations, Four Seasons also achieved Five-Star Forbes status in 2025 for the third consecutive year in Kuwait for its Spa. An elegant and calming retreat with curved architecture and neutral tones, it unites globally-inspired therapies with natural products to create a healing haven. Experiences flow from the purifying power of a traditional Moroccan Hammam to Wellness Rituals inspired by ancient Greek psammotherapy. The only spa in the city to have both indoor and outdoor pools, its resort-like ambience is further heightened by six air-conditioned poolside cabanas for special occasion dining.

"We're thrilled to see the care and focus of our Hotel and Spa teams recognized by Forbes for a third year running," comments General Manager of Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait, Martin Kipping. "Our dedication to merging five-star luxury with responsible hospitality is part of our vision for the future. This accolade fires us up to continue looking forward and pioneering new ways to immerse guests in Kuwait's wonders while protecting our natural environment."

To discover the enduring Forbes Five-Star luxury hospitality experience at Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya, visit [www.fourseasons.com/kuwait/](http://www.fourseasons.com/kuwait/) to book online.



Activities that encourage exercise during Ramadan.



Distribution of Iftar meals.



Ramadan magazine distribution.



Part of last year's Gargee'an celebration

GCC economies to outpace global growth in 2025, GDP set to double

ABU DHABI, Feb 22, (Xinhua): The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) economies will outpace global growth in 2025, with the region's gross domestic product (GDP) growth expected to double, said a report released Friday by the First Abu Dhabi Bank (FAB).

In its 2025 Global Investment Outlook report, the FAB, the largest bank of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), forecast that GCC economies will outpace global growth in 2025, with

the region's GDP growth expected to double from 2.1 percent in 2024 to 4.2 percent in 2025, while the UAE's growth rate is projected to rise from 4.5 percent to 5.6 percent.

According to the report, titled "Shaping the Future of Investments: Artificial Intelligence and the Interest Rate Environment," the GCC's economic resilience will be supported by strategic investments, diversification and robust expansion in the non-oil sector.

## Wellness blogger's scam still haunts Australia years later

## Netflix series on Gibson's cancer hoax sparks fresh outrage

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, Feb 22, (AP): A decade after wellness influencer Belle Gibson admitted she didn't have terminal brain cancer, which she claimed was cured by the healthy lifestyle that made her famous, her story has inspired a new Netflix series - and fresh outrage in Australia about the case's lack of resolution.

Authorities said this week they're still pursuing the disgraced Instagram star for unpaid fines, fueling ongoing ire among Australians about one of the country's most brazen online scams - an episode that drew attention to the destructive harms of false health claims on social media.

Apple Cider Vinegar, Netflix's dramatic retelling of Gibson's story released this month, doesn't recount what happened after it was revealed in 2015 that she wasn't sick. In real life, she never faced criminal charges.

But in 2017, Australia's federal court fined her 410,000 Australian dollars (\$261,000), which she had raised for charity and failed to donate. The consumer watchdog in the state of Victoria is still trying to recover the funds, a spokesperson told The Associated Press.

Gibson's healthy recipe app, The Whole Pantry, had 200,000 downloads in one month from the Apple store in 2013. She claimed proceeds from the app and her cookbook - published by a Penguin imprint - would be donated to charities and to the family of a child with cancer.

Only 2% of the total was donated and Gibson was found to have breached consumer law. A court ordered her to produce the remaining funds and barred her from making health claims.

In a letter to the court, Gibson said she was in debt, didn't have a job and couldn't pay the costs.

"Consumer Affairs Victoria has continued to undertake actions to enforce the debt owed by Annabelle Natalie Gibson (Belle Gibson) under court order," said a statement from the agency that was supplied on Wednesday.

The statement did not say if any of the money has been recovered. Authorities have raided Gibson's home twice in attempts to seize assets, but they didn't publicly divulge an outcome.

The AP tried to reach Gibson for comment but didn't receive a response. She hasn't spoken publicly in years and wasn't involved with, or paid by, the creators of the Netflix show.

### Unresolved

Jacinta Allan, the premier of Victoria, said this month she was "disappointed" the case remains unresolved. But the authorities "won't let up," Allan told reporters.

Journalist Richard Guillatt, who in 2015 was the first to report that Gibson was lying, said the lack of legal consequences still fuels "vitriol" toward the erstwhile influencer.

"The thing remains sort of like an open wound," he said. "What she has suffered is just incredible public humiliation. There's a part of me that thinks people are just going to have to let it go at some point."

Gibson's book publisher paid a \$30,000 (\$19,000 US) fine in the civil case for failing to fact-check her claims.

While Gibson hasn't faced more charges, her case had other repercussions. Australia's code governing therapeutic health claims was dramatically overhauled in 2022 and breaches can now be punished by millions of dollars in

fines - changes some analysts attribute in part to Gibson's conduct.

Paid testimonials for such goods are now prohibited, and anyone claiming health expertise cannot endorse them.

"This would have applied to the therapeutic claims that Belle made," said Suzy Madar, a Sydney-based partner at the law firm King & Wood Mallesons.

Apple Cider Vinegar has drawn praise for its skewering of online wellness culture - and criticism from Australians involved in the real-life events it recounts. The series is billed as a "true-ish story, based on a lie," and Gibson is the only real person the show purports to depict.

But Queensland man Col Ainscough, whose wife and daughter - also a wellness influencer - both died of cancer decried the production in a statement this month, because its characters included a family with a different name whose story appeared to parallel his own.

The show was "insensitive and clearly profit-driven," Ainscough said.

"Behind the TV stories, behind the dramatization, are real people who have had their lives devastated by the actions of this individual," Allan, the state premier, told reporters.

But the case still holds fascination as one of Australia's most "bizarre and flagrant" online scams, reporter Guillatt said.

"I like to think that it really was a wake-up call for a lot of people," he said. "I hope it's had an impact in terms of people's gullibility about accepting advice on very serious health conditions online."



Belle Gibson arrives at the Federal Court in Melbourne, Australia, June 20, 2019. (AP)

## Variety

**SANTA MONICA, Calif.:** Oscar nominees like Mikey Madison, Demi Moore and Sebastian Stan are to make a stop by beach Saturday for the Film Independent Spirit Awards. The annual awards ceremony is the shaggier, more irreverent sister to the Academy Awards, celebrating the best in independent film and television.

Here's everything you need to know.

The Film Independent Spirit Awards (sometimes casually referred to as the Indie Spirits) have been celebrating the best in independent film for 40 years.

For many years, the show, put on by the non-profit organization Film Independent, took place the day before the Oscars but it's recently shifted timing away from that busy weekend.

Awards are voted on by Film Independent Members, a group that includes filmmakers, industry leaders and passionate fans. The awards limit eligibility to productions with budgets of \$30 million or less, meaning more expensive productions like "Wicked" and "Dune: Part Two" are not in the running. Television categories were added in 2021.

The Spirit Awards will be held on Saturday in Santa Monica, California, in a tent next to the beach. The show begins at 5 p.m. ET.

The Spirit Awards will be streamed live on IMDb and Film Independent's YouTube channels.

"Saturday Night Live" alum Aidy Bryant is returning to host for the second year.

Oscar front-runner "Anora" is one of the most nominated films of the night, as is Jane Schoenbrun's psychological horror "I Saw the TV Glow." Both got six nominations, including best feature and best director.

Also nominated for best feature film were RaMell Ross' adaptation of Colson Whitehead's "Nickel Boys," Greg Kwedar's incarceration drama "Sing Sing" and Coralie Fargeat's body horror "The Substance." (AP)

**SAO PAULO:** Lady Gaga has confirmed that she will perform a free concert on Rio de Janeiro's Copacabana Beach on May 3.

"I've been dying to come perform for you for years and was heartbroken when I had to cancel years ago because I was hospitalized," Gaga said Friday on social media.

In 2017, she canceled a performance at Rock in Rio for medical reasons. At the time, she apologized and said she needed to focus on her health.

"I am now coming back and I feel better than ever and am working so hard to make sure this show is one you will never forget," she added.

Gaga's concert on the beach follows Madonna's free performance there in May. The "Queen of Pop" drew an estimated 1.6 million people to Copacabana Beach, one of the world's most famous shorelines.

Rio Mayor Eduardo Paes, who was re-elected last year to a four-year term, has pledged to bring a major international concert to the city every May.

"I don't have tickets for the Lady Gaga show! It's open and free!" he joked on X while sharing Gaga's announcement. (AP)

## Film



This image released by The Avenue shows Cooper Hoffman, left, and Christoph Waltz in a scene from 'Old Guy.' (AP)

## Waltz and Hoffman's clash doesn't spark in hit man movie

# 'Old Guy' has style, but it's no bull's-eye

LOS ANGELES, Feb 22, (AP): A boomer hit man is given a nightmare final assignment to train his own Gen Z replacement in Simon West's lifeless action-comedy "Old Guy."

Christoph Waltz's Danny Dolinski is the one at an unwelcome crossroads in the film. He's only partially healed from a hand injury that's rendered him dependent on pills and unable to aim a gun as well as he used to. Dolinski also seems to be in the throes of a full crisis: We meet him not on the job, or even in flashback to his pre-injury glory, but out clubbing. The next morning, Dolinski emerges in a bathrobe to gaze proudly upon the several much younger women who have spent the night.

But a room full of scantily clothed model-types who seem to be there willingly is only a temporary balm for poor Dolinski. While he might still be a viable specimen for the 20-something party girls of London, his game does not hold the same appeal in the workplace. Soon he'll be getting the dreaded "we're going younger" talk from his boss, and she's talking about him, not his love interests. This is a guy who is certain he's got a lot left to give in the assassin game, and not as a mentor to a "hitman prodigy," as Cooper Hoffman's character Wihlborg is described.

Is a familiar conceit like the wise veteran and the cocksure

newcomer tired or a classic? Well, it's all in the execution. And "Old Guy," stylishly filmed though it may be, is not one of the better attempts, likely hampered by the script from Greg Johnson. Generational clashes should be easy enough comedic fodder for a screenwriter and two capable actors, but here it lands with a thud. One likes to drink! The other doesn't even like to be around alcohol! The more serious ethical questions about hitman etiquette are similarly inelegant. Take this gem from Wihlborg: "Where I come from one does what one needs to do to survive. That includes killing a kid."

### Prodigy

Hoffman, so perfect leading "Licorice Pizza," is not served well by this script, which never quite justifies why he's such a prodigy at such a young age and doesn't give him or Waltz any room to play off one another in a natural way. Waltz also can't seem to choose a lane with Danny, an eccentric hedonist with a soul who doesn't think it's necessary to kill kids on the job. He's also working with his normal accent which is all well and good until the movie very unnecessarily introduces his Irish mother.

And because action movies of this variety need a woman, Lucy Liu, who deserves much, much better than this (they all

do, but mostly her), goes along for the ride. Her character Anata is the glamorous manager of a Soho karaoke bar that might also be a front for a brothel, but that's never really explored. What is deemed important here is that she's Dolinski's longtime confidante, and tags along on their mission to Belfast for...wait for it...a date. It's a very strange little subplot in which Anata does go to this date only to be broken up with. The guy she's been seeing is not connected to the larger plot in any way, except as the narrative push to have her ultimately fall in Dolinski's arms.

West is an action and studio system veteran behind "Con Air," "Lara Croft: Tomb Raider" and various Jason Statham vehicles. There's lots of shoot-em-up action and bullets to the head for anyone looking for that, but not much more to hang on to. "Old Guy" feels very of this moment in the fact that it looks good and has a good cast and yet can't seem to deliver something that's either entertaining or meaningful. But unlike so many of its peers, this one amazingly was not made by a streamer.

"Old Guy," a The Avenue release in limited theaters and on VOD Friday, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for "language, violence, some drug use." Running time: 93 minutes. One and a half stars out of four.

## Star couple avoids public court battle

# Lopez and Affleck are officially divorced

LOS ANGELES, Feb 22, (AP): Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck officially became divorced and single Friday.

A Los Angeles Superior Court judge approved their divorce settlement on Jan. 6, and declared that it would take effect on Feb. 21, after California's required six months passed since Lopez filed to dissolve their two-year-old marriage. The document said they settled through mediation in September, avoiding the kind of drawn-out court fight that other celebrity couples have gone through.

Lopez now drops the Affleck from her legal name. Most of the financial details were kept private, but neither star will pay the other spousal support, and they have no children together so custody is not an issue.

The superstar pairing married in July 2022. Lopez filed for divorce in August 2024. The filing said they had separated more than a year earlier.

It was their second stint as a couple. In the early 2000s, they met, fell in love, got engaged and starred together in the infamous "Gigli" and "Jersey Girl" in 2004. They split up that same year, blaming in part the pressure of the public eye.

But to the joy of many fans and perhaps the doubt of others, they got back together two decades later and got married.

Affleck divorced Jennifer Garner, with whom he has three children, in 2018. Lopez has been married four times and has twins with singer Marc Anthony.



Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck arrive at the world premiere of 'Air' on March 27, 2023, at the Regency Village Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)



## The Conversation

## 'Not a silent killer'

## Recognizing ovarian cancer symptoms key to 'survival'

By Barbara Goff

University of Washington

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

Ovarian cancer is the most deadly of gynecologic tumors. Fewer than 40% of those diagnosed with ovarian cancer are cured, and approximately 12,810 people in the US die from the disease every year.

For the past 25 years, scientists have tried to identify a screening test to detect ovarian cancer in its earliest stages, when the chance of cure is high. Unfortunately, multiple clinical trials with hundreds of thousands of participants have failed to identify an effective way to screen for ovarian cancer. In fact, the US Preventive Services Task Force gave ovarian cancer screening a grade of D in 2018, meaning it recommends against periodic screening because it doesn't improve survival and can prove harmful to patients.

Because no effective screening test currently exists, 70% of people with ovarian cancer are diagnosed at advanced stages, when chances of cure are poor. Around 60% to 90% of people with stage one or two cancer that stays around the ovaries and pelvis are disease-free five years after diagnosis, compared with only 10% to 40% of those with stage three or four cancer that has spread through the abdomen and beyond.

## Chance

But even those with advanced disease have a higher chance of being cured if complete surgical removal is still possible. This makes early diagnosis all the more important for overall survival.

Without screening tests, many physicians wrongly assume that early diagnosis for ovarian cancer isn't possible. As a gynecologic oncologist who treats hundreds of ovarian cancer patients each year, I was frustrated by these late diagnoses, and wondered if better recognition of its symptoms could help clinicians and patients identify ovarian cancer earlier.

Ovarian cancer has historically been called a "silent killer," because clinicians thought its symptoms were undetectable. Patients

were often diagnosed so late that doctors thought nothing could be done.

But there have been many studies over the past 20 years demonstrating that ovarian cancer does have early warning signs. My colleagues and I conducted one of the earliest studies in 2000. Our survey of 1,700 people with ovarian cancer found that 95% of patients reported noticeable symptoms three to 12 months before diagnosis. The most common symptoms were pain in their pelvis and abdomen, increased frequency and urge to urinate, difficulty eating or feeling full quickly, and bloating or abdominal distension.

## Studies

Importantly, people with both advanced- and early-stage disease reported similar types of symptoms. Subsequent studies from multiple researchers further confirm that patients with even early-stage ovarian cancer experience frequent symptoms.

We also found that providers often misdiagnosed ovarian cancer as another condition. When we asked patients what their doctors told them was the cause of their symptoms, 15% had their symptoms attributed to irritable bowel disease, 12% to stress, 9% to gastritis, 6% to constipation, 6% to depression and 4% to some other cause. Thirty percent were given treatment for a different condition. And 13% were told there was nothing wrong.

One major issue has been distinguishing ovarian cancer symptoms from those of common gastrointestinal and urinary conditions. In another study, my team and I found that patients with ovarian cancer have symptoms with a recent onset and occur more than 50% of the month.

To facilitate early detection of ovarian cancer, my team and I compared the symptoms ovarian cancer patients experienced with those of patients without ovarian cancer. We developed an index that identified six important symptoms of ovarian cancer: bloating, increased abdominal size, feeling full quickly, difficulty eating, pelvic pain and abdominal pain. Symptoms needed to occur more than 12 times a month but to have lasted for less than a year. (AP)

## Kenya launches immunization campaign to tackle polio virus

NAIROBI, Feb 22, (Xinhua): Kenya's Ministry of Health has launched a five-day polio immunization campaign in four northeastern counties, targeting over 800,000 children under 11 years of age.

Mary Muthoni Muriuki, principal secretary in the Ministry of Health, said the campaign, launched on Friday, follows an outbreak of poliovirus in Ethiopia near the border with Kenya in October 2024.

"A subsequent round of polio immunization campaign will take place in April 2025 in these four counties, which have been found to be most at risk for disease transmission," Muriuki told journalists in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya.

She noted that Kenya has stepped up measures to interrupt transmission of

the disease from Ethiopia and Eritrea due to the high cross-border movement of communities in the region.

The official said the children will be given two doses of oral polio vaccine regardless of previous immunization status.

"We want to reassure the public that all vaccines used in the country are safe, effective, and have undergone rigorous testing. Receiving multiple doses of polio vaccine will not harm your child, but will provide additional immunity to your child against the disease," Muriuki said.

Polio is a highly infectious disease caused by poliovirus, which can infect a person's spinal cord, leading to paralysis or even death, according to the health ministry.



Participants at the 24th Kuwait Ophthalmology Conference.

KUNA photo

Ophthalmology conference helps boost training, skills

## Kuwait makes remarkable progress in ophthalmology, eye care: Dr. Al-Awadhi

By Marwa Al-Bahawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Minister of Health Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi confirmed that Kuwait has achieved remarkable progress in the field of ophthalmology and eye surgery through the support of the wise leadership, tremendous efforts of national medical staff and continuous cooperation with specialized international centers.

In his speech at the opening of the 24th Kuwait Ophthalmology Conference organized by the Ophthalmology Departments Council in cooperation with Kuwait Ophthalmology Association on Thursday, Al-Awadhi affirmed that this cooperation resulted in remarkable achievements which had a deep impact on human resource development and the improvement of training and continuing education programs.

He said ministry focused on ophthalmology and eye surgery, which led to the opening of new eye de-

partments in Jahra and Capital governorates, increasing the total number of such departments to six in various governorates, providing the highest standard of therapeutic and surgical services.

He affirmed the provision of the latest medical devices and advanced therapeutic technologies, in addition to the interest in developing the skills of medical staff through training and continuing education programs. He added the conference confirms the importance of this approach and its role in strengthening cooperation with regional and international medical institutions, as it contributes to the development of health services provided to the public.

On the other hand, Chairman of the Organizing Committee for the conference Dr. Ahmed Al-Foudari stressed the importance of the conference in gaining more experience and innovation in the field of ophthalmology with the presence of the most brilliant ophthalmologists, researchers and healthcare

professionals from all over the world.

He said: Our common mission includes development of eye care, explore pioneering research and improve the quality of life for millions of patients who rely on us for their vision and well-being. The conference continues for three days and reflects the commitment to promote scientific progress, professional development and ensuring that the people we serve receive the highest level of care.

He also pointed out that the conference is an opportunity to fortify regional and international cooperation in the field of ophthalmology, as it opens the way for exchanging expertise and building scientific and medical partnerships that serve the development of health services in Kuwait and the region. He stated that the aim is to enable doctors and specialists to acquire new skills and enhance their knowledge through intensive scientific sessions and workshops that focus on the most accurate and latest developments in eye surgeries.

## 'He is not out of danger'

## Sepsis a threat in pope's pneumonia battle: Vatican

ROME, Feb 22, (AP): The Vatican carried on with its Holy Year celebrations without the pope Saturday, as Pope Francis battled pneumonia and a complex respiratory infection that doctors say remains touch-and-go and will keep him hospitalized for at least another week.

Francis slept well overnight, Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said in a brief early update Saturday. But doctors have warned that the



Pope Francis

main threat facing the 88-year-old Francis would be the onset of sepsis, a serious infection of the blood that can occur as a complication of pneumonia. As of Friday, there was no evidence of any sepsis, and Francis was responding to the various drugs he is taking, the pope's medical team said in their first in-depth update on the pope's condition.

"He is not out of danger," said his personal physician, Dr. Luigi Carbone. "So like all fragile patients I say they are always on the golden scale: In other words, it takes very little to become unbalanced."

Francis, who has chronic lung disease, was admitted to Gemelli hospital on Feb. 14 after a weeklong bout of bronchitis worsened.

## Measles outbreaks spread in US, cases surge to nearly 100

NEW YORK, Feb 22, (AP): The measles outbreak in rural West Texas has grown to 90 cases across seven counties, the state health department posted online Friday, and 16 people are hospitalized.

In neighboring eastern New Mexico, the measles case count is up to nine, though state public health officials said Thursday there's still no evidence this outbreak is connected to the one in Texas.

Measles is a highly contagious disease. Here's what you should know about how to protect yourself against measles, as well as what's happening in Texas and New Mexico.

The West Texas cases are concentrated in Gaines County, which has 57 infections, and Terry County, north of

Gaines, where there are now 20 confirmed cases.

Dawson County, to the east of Gaines, was new to the count with six. Yoakum County has four and Lubbock, Lynn and Ector counties have a case each.

Texas state health department data shows the vast majority of cases are among people younger than 18: 26 in kids younger than 4 and 51 in kids 5-17 years old. Ten adults have measles and three cases are "pending" an age determination. The Ector County Health Department told the Odessa American its case was in a child too young to be vaccinated.

State health officials have said this outbreak is Texas' largest in nearly 30 years.

Largest outbreak in 30 years

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# Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr attends the national days celebration at Embassy of Kuwait in Switzerland



Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr with Ambassador Ziad Al-Mishaan, Monika Schmutz and other attendees of the celebration.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr Al-Sabah, Chair of the Kuwaiti and Asian Aquatics federations, visited the Embassy of the State of Kuwait in Switzerland during his stay there to join the celebrations marking the 64th Independence Day and 34th Liberation Day of Kuwait.

According to a press release, Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr was warmly received by the Ambassador of Kuwait to the Swiss Confederation Ziad Al-Mashaan.

During the visit, Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr, both in person and on behalf of the Board of Directors and all members of the Asian Water Games, extended his heartfelt congratulations and blessings to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah

Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and the government and people of Kuwait on the occasion of the national holidays celebrating both Kuwait's independence and liberation.

In his congratulatory message, Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr said all members of Kuwait's sports movement take this occasion to renew their pledge of loyalty to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait.

He prayed to God Almighty to preserve Kuwait, its leadership, and its people, and to keep Kuwait secure and safe under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir (may God protect him, and grant him good health and well-being).

Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr said, "This cherished memory, along with the pride and glory it carries, is a precious moment for everyone. It serves as a reminder of the lessons and values that inspire us to work toward a better future, as well as look forward to the



Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr, Kuwait's Ambassador to Switzerland Ziad Al-Mashaan, and Monika Schmutz during the cake cutting ceremony.

future with determination, optimism, hope, and unified efforts. Together, we can build a proud and progressive Kuwait".

He affirmed that the directives of His Highness the Amir serve as a roadmap for advancing sports in a way that achieves the progress and development of the beloved homeland for the benefit of all Kuwaiti citizens.

Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr explained that the generous care of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, along with his continuous directives to prioritize the welfare of athletes, has placed a great responsibility on those overseeing the sports movement. This challenge requires hard work to provide all necessary support and overcome obstacles through a comprehensive strategy aimed at advancing Kuwaiti sports, restoring its former glory, and ensuring Kuwait's flag is proudly raised in continental and international sports forums.



Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr presents a souvenir to Assistant Foreign Minister of Switzerland Monika Schmutz.

## Passion, politics & patriotism meld, Pakistan and India clash

Cricket's fiercest rivalry

NEW DELHI, Feb 22, (AP): It is a sports rivalry like no other in the world.

When India and Pakistan face off in Dubai on Sunday, the cricket contest will be amped up by so much more - the 78 years of bitterness between the two arch rival nations, the heightened political hostilities, and the patriotic zeal of hundreds of millions of people.

Cricketer-mad nations India and Pakistan are competing in the game's 50-over format for the coveted eight-nation Champions Trophy tournament that began on Wednesday in Pakistan. While six national teams have travelled to Pakistan for the tournament, India has refused to go there by leveraging its strong influence on the International Cricket Council, the game's global governing body.

Indian cricket authorities have offered no formal statement about refusing to play in Pakistan, but some officials have suggested that the decision was based on security concerns. India will play all its matches - including the one against Pakistan - at a neutral venue in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

In both India and Pakistan, cricket has become a symbol of national identity and every clash grabs the attention of more than a billion fans. And Sunday's match comes at a time when relations between the two neighbors have hit a new low.

That animosity largely stems from the two countries' dispute over Kashmir, a restive Himalayan region over which they have fought two wars. Nuclear-armed rivals each administer part of Kashmir, but both claim the territory in its entirety.



Indian cricket fans, their bodies painted in the colors of the national flags of India, right and Pakistan, left, pose for photograph in Ahmedabad, India. (AP)

Compounding the territorial dispute are heightened tensions stemming from the deadly 2008 Mumbai attacks that India blamed on Pakistani militants, a charge Islamabad denies.

And sporting relations inevitably ebb and flow with the politics. Bilateral cricket ties have remained suspended since 2008, and the two national teams have only played each other in global events where they are always paired together in a group to ensure there is a contest between them.

Even though the Indian team has not travelled to Pakistan since 2008, Pakistan played in India in 2023 during the World Cup, including before a hostile crowd at a cricket stadium named after Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

So-called "cricket diplomacy"

has occasionally thawed out relations but that hasn't been the case under Modi. His Hindu nationalist government has taken a tough stance on resuming friendlier cricket ties with Pakistan with many senior ministers saying Indian team won't play in the country.

Dozens of people in India and disputed Kashmir have also faced police complaints and sometimes even jail for cheering for the Pakistani team.

"Cricket is the strongest currency in the eyes of this government which they have used to instigate resentment and anger against Pakistan," said Sharda Ugra, an Indian sports writer. Ugra said while the fans of the two countries are eager to watch the two nations play more often, the contest "has been held hostage to ugly politics."

In sheer numbers, viewership for the India-Pakistan match dwarfs the Super Bowl in what Ugra calls the "greatest sports rivalry in the world" bar none.

When the two sides played against each other in 2023 in India, the estimated viewership - on cable television and streaming services - was around 400 million. In comparison, this year's Super Bowl averaged a 127.7 million across all platforms in the U.S.

Organizers expect similar numbers for Sunday's contest that will be played at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium. And it's a guaranteed windfall as tickets for the game sold out within minutes while billion-dollar broadcast deals have been hammered out.

Media in both the countries are cashing in too. Pakistani and Indian TV news channels are providing wall-to-wall coverage. In recent weeks, TV commercials in both countries used patriotic fervor to poke fun at each other.

Local authorities and private companies in both the countries have announced that they would set up giant screens in some city centers and inside shopping malls.

For many fans, this clash holds more value than any other sporting event in the world - and they want more of it.

In India's western city of Mumbai, cricket coach Anil Sawant plans to watch the game at a clubhouse along with his friends on a giant screen.

"These matches should take place often," 57-year-old Sawant said, as his students honed their skills during practice at the city's Shivaji Park ground - a favorite for cricketers of all ages.

## Kuwait's ice hockey legend Al-Ajmi bows out with spectacular farewell

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Kuwaiti ice hockey star Ahmed Al-Ajmi has officially retired from the sport, marking the end of an illustrious career during a farewell match between Kuwait and the "Gulf Stars." The exciting encounter, held at the Winter Games Club Hall, ended with the Gulf Stars securing an 8-7 victory.

The retirement festival was held under the patronage of former Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Ahmed Al-Shahoumi, who was represented by his son, Khalifa Ahmed Al-Shahoumi.

The event drew a distinguished audience, including the honorary president of the Winter Games Club, Sheikh Jaber Bandar Al-Sabah, along with the club's chairman, board members, and a large gathering of athletes and fans. Their presence highlighted the deep appreciation and respect Al-Ajmi has earned throughout his career, as he closed a remarkable chapter of dedication and success on the ice.

Khalifa Al-Shahoumi praised Al-Ajmi as a veteran and inspirational figure in Kuwaiti ice hockey, emphasizing that his achievements will continue to inspire future generations. He also reaffirmed his father's



Al Ajmi presents a commemorative shield to Khalifa Al Shahoumi.

commitment to supporting Kuwaiti athletes across various sports, stating that honoring Al-Ajmi was a fitting tribute to his immense contributions to the national team.

Fahid Al-Ajmi, Chairman of the Winter Games Club, echoed this sentiment, acknowledging Ahmed Al-Ajmi's vital role in shaping Kuwaiti ice hockey. He expressed confidence that Al-Ajmi's legacy will remain a cornerstone in the sport's history in Kuwait.

## Saudi Arabia edges China in U20 Asian Cup quarterfinals

SHENZHEN, Feb 22, (Xinhua): Substitute Amar Alyuhabi scored a last-minute goal as host China fell 1-0 to Saudi Arabia in the quarterfinals of the 2025 AFC U20 Asian Cup on Saturday, missing out on qualification for the 2025 FIFA U20 World Cup in Chile.

In the 95th minute, Alyuhabi fired a right-footed shot from a tight angle, beating the goalkeeper into the bottom right corner after connecting with a cross from Talal Haji.

China dominated possession with 59%, but the

young squad struggled to convert chances, including a missed penalty in the second half.

Head coach Dejan Djurdjevic fielded China's strongest lineup, while Saudi Arabia made a surprising decision to bench several key starters, including Rakan Alghamdi, Haji, and Ziyad Alghamdi.

In the 30th minute, Wang Yudong came close to breaking the deadlock, but his right-footed shot struck the far post.

Wang later won a penalty for China in the 59th

minute, but Liu Chengyu's effort from the spot was denied by the Saudi goalkeeper.

As the match entered the final 30 minutes, Saudi Arabia brought on several substitutes, including Alyuhabi and Haji, who combined for the last-minute winning goal.

According to U20 Asian Cup regulations, the top four teams of the tournament qualify for the 2025 FIFA U20 World Cup, which will take place in Chile from September to October.

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NEWS



Participants patiently wait for the start signal of the Kuwait Sports Day activities at the Jaber Bridge.

# Sports

## Kuwait Sports Day kicks off with a successful bicycle race, walkathon



His Highness the former Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem and the Minister of Information are among the participants.



Participants getting ready for the bicycle race.



Approximately 20,000 competitors of all genders, including champions with special needs participated in Kuwait Sports Day.

Photos by Mohamed Morsi

### Minister Al-Mutairi gives the official signal to start competition

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22:** As part of the Kuwait Sports Day activities and with strong participation from individuals of all ages, a bicycle race and a walkathon kicked off on Saturday morning at Jaber Bridge, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Minister of Information and State Minister for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi gave the official signal to start the competition in the presence of

President of the Kuwait Sports for All Federation Mahmoud Abul who is a member of the Supreme Organizing Committee for Kuwait Sports Day.

Former Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem took part in the bicycle race for the second consecutive year, along with former Minister and MP Dawood Marafie.

The bicycle race covered a distance of 20 kilometers, and the walkathon five kilometers.

The number of participants in the walkathon and bicycle race reached approximately 20,000 competitors of all genders, including champions with spe-

cial needs.

Al-Mutairi said Kuwait Sports Day plays a major role in raising awareness about the importance of sports, and sends a positive message from Kuwait to promote a safe and supportive environment for engaging in sports and physical activity.

Meanwhile, Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Development and Activities at the Ministry of Education Maryam Al-Enezi stated that the Ministry of Education participated for the second consecutive year in the Kuwait Sports Day walkathon, with 4,500 students from various educational zones.



The walkathon in progress.



Participants preparing for action.



The bicycle race in progress.

### Kuwait Club maintains top spot as Al-Arabi secures narrow win

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Kuwait Club maintained its lead in the Zain Premier League after securing a valuable 3-1 victory over Al-Salmiya in the 16th round, keeping a two-point advantage over its closest competitor, Al-Arabi, who narrowly defeated Al-Yarmouk 1-0.

Kuwait Club now has 43 points, having successfully overcome the "Sky Blues" in a pivotal match, despite playing most of the game with 10 men following a red card to defender Amin Abu Al-Fath. Kuwait Club sent a clear message: the top spot and the title won't be easily relinquished, and Al-Arabi will need to work hard to take the lead.

Al-Arabi, however, was determined not to let its earlier setback derail its title hopes, with a late goal in the 68th minute to keep its ambitions alive for



Kuwait Club players celebrate their victory over Salmiya.

a championship that has eluded it for three seasons.

As the league progresses, the competition is heating up. With Qadsia (29

points), Al-Salmiya (27 points), and Al-Fahaheel (25 points) ensuring their places in the Premier League, the battle for the sixth spot intensifies. Teams like Al-Tadamon (17 points), Kazma (15 points), Khaitan (11 points), and Al-Nasr (9 points) are all vying to avoid relegation and secure their place in the top league.

Al-Tadamon, after a 2-0 defeat to Al-Fahaheel, still controls its own fate, while Kazma, following a 1-0 loss to Khaitan, needs Al-Tadamon to slip up. For Al-Nasr and Khaitan, their hopes hinge on defeating both Al-Tadamon and Kazma in the final two rounds.

At the bottom of the standings, Yarmouk remains in last place. Despite their commendable performance against Al-Arabi, they now face an uphill battle to rearrange its strategy and make a push in the remaining six matches if it is to stay in the Premier League.



The Kuwaiti players preparing for the opening match against UAE.

### Kuwait gears up for tough UAE encounter in Veterans Gulf Cup

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Kuwait will take on the UAE at 7:45 pm in the second round of Group One in the Gulf Cup for Veterans, which Kuwait is hosting until Wednesday. In the same group, Qatar will face Oman at 4:45 pm, while Group Two will feature Yemen against Saudi Arabia at 6:15 pm and Bahrain against Iraq at 9:15 pm. All matches will be held at Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium.

Wael Suleiman, former star of Kuwait and Al-Jahra Club and head of the Kuwaiti Veterans team delegation, anticipates fierce competition among the eight participating teams in pursuit of the tournament's inaugural title. In a press statement, he

praised the tournament's competitive format, which was initiated by Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi as part of the national holiday celebrations.

Suleiman emphasized Kuwait's ambition to claim the tournament's first title, noting that it coincides with the Gulf tournaments, including the upcoming "Gulf 27" in Saudi Arabia. He highlighted the efforts of the Blues' technical staff, led by veteran coach Mohammed Ibrahim and assistant Hani Al-Saqr, alongside team manager Mohammed Binyan and administrators Ali Mahmoud and Adel Youssef.

### United rallies to draw at Everton after late VAR drama

LONDON, Feb 22, (AP): Manchester United rallied from two goals down before benefitting from a late-gasp video-review call to draw 2-2 at Everton in the Premier League on Saturday.

Uruguay midfielder Manuel Ugarte grabbed the 80th-minute equalizer for United with his first goal at club level in four years, eight minutes after Bruno Fernandes started the visitors' fightback at Goodison Park by curling in a free kick.

United had been on course to slip

to a third straight loss - and ninth defeat in 15 league matches since Ruben Amorim took charge in November - after first-half goals by Beto and Abdoulaye Doucoure for resurgent Everton.

There was a late scare for United when Everton was awarded a penalty for what appeared to be a foul by Harry Maguire on Ashley Young, who fell to the ground dramatically under pressure from Maguire and Matthijs de Ligt in the third minute of stoppage time.

Following a video review, on-field

referee Andrew Madley was advised to view the incident again on the pitch-side monitor and he changed his initial decision.

"I think it was a soft penalty, it was clear," Amorim said.

Everton faded halfway through the second half and United took advantage, though the comeback doesn't mask the big problems facing Amorim as he looks to get the fallen English giant up the standings from its current embarrassing position of 15th place.

"We need to survive this season and then we can think ahead," Amorim said.

Everton extended its unbeaten run under David Moyes, a former United manager who returned for a second spell at Goodison Park last month, to six league games.

Ugarte's last club goal was for Portuguese team Famalicao in February 2021 so he was an unlikely scorer for United, which produced another large-scale inept display.

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