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Happy National/Liberation Days to all

There will be no issue of the Arab Times on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. The next issue of the Arab Times will appear on Sunday morning. — See you then



Amiri Diwan photos

Student performances take center stage at the Fifth Fence National Operetta, embodying Kuwait's unity and resilience. Inset: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah graces the event at Bayan Palace Theater.

AMIR RECEIVES CONGRATULATIONS ON NATIONAL AND LIBERATION DAYS Kuwait grants amnesty to 781 prisoners

Healthcare team ready for emergencies: MoH

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: As part of its preparations for the National Day and Liberation Day celebrations, the Ministry of Health established 20 temporary medical emergency units at the celebration sites and allocated 50 various types of ambulances, including golf cars and four-wheel drive bikes, for ease of movement to immediately deal with any emergency situation.

In a press statement, the ministry confirmed that it assigned 250 medical emergency technicians to handle different cases in the field or immediate transfer to hospitals whenever needed; thereby, speeding up the response time and guaranteeing the provision of immediate care.

In addition, the ministry ensured the continuous operation of about 40 percent of primary healthcare centers during the holiday; some of which operate round the clock, while others are open until midnight.

This move aims to guarantee the provision of medical care for everyone, while seven preventive health centers continue to provide

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Amiri Diwan photo

All smiles and filled with joy, students gather around His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah after their captivating performances at the Fifth Fence National Operetta.

Operetta honors Kuwait's legacy

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Monday received a congratulatory cable from His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on the occasion of Kuwait's 64th National Day and 34th Liberation Day.

In his message, His Highness the Crown Prince wished the Amir continued good health and the people of Kuwait further progress and prosperity. He paid tribute to the sacrifices of those who gave their lives for the nation's freedom and development. Reaffirming his commitment, the Crown Prince vowed to continue working towards greater achievements under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir.

In response, His Highness the Amir expressed his appreciation for the Crown Prince's heartfelt sentiments. He honored the memory of the nation's martyrs, whose sacrifices remain etched in history, and wished the Crown Prince well-being, along with security, stability, and prosperity for Kuwait.

His Highness the Amir also received congratulatory messages from leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Arab, and friendly nations on the occasion.

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NewsWatch

PACI removes 462 invalid addresses

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) announced today the removal of the residential addresses of 462 individuals from its records, either based on the owner's declaration or due to the demolition of the building.

PACI urged the affected individuals to visit its offices, register their new addresses, and provide the required documents within 30 days from the date of the announcement in order to avoid the penalty outlined in Article 33 of law No. 32/1982, which imposes a fine of up to KD 100 per individual.

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Price surge hits Ramadan goods

By Najeh Bilal
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: The markets selling dates, Ramadan goods and foodstuff are witnessing stagnation despite the approaching holy month of Ramadan, unlike the previous years.

The newspaper's staff visited the big markets selling dates and items that every family needs in the holy month, specifically in Shuwaikh, where a number of consumers and traders confirmed that the prices of Ramadan goods have increased by around 15-25 percent.

The traders attribute the increase to the hike of customs duties abroad, in addition to transportation and handling fees; while most countries exporting Ramadan products have increased levies on importers.

Bou Sulaiman said the prices of Ramadan goods have exceeded expectations, indicating the prices of dates and coffee increased in an exaggerated manner compared to the Ramadan season last year.

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Chill sweeps Kuwait with frosty threat

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24, (KUNA): The Meteorological Department has forecast that Kuwait will be affected by a cold and dry air mass, with temperatures set to drop significantly. The cold wave is expected to result from an air rise extending from the northeast of the European continent, bringing cooler conditions to the region. Winds are anticipated to be northwesterly, moderate to brisk, particularly in coastal areas, which will further enhance the chilly weather, with pos-

sible frost in agricultural and desert regions.

Director of the Meteorological Department, Dirar Al-Ali, informed Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Monday that the peak of the cold wave is expected to occur tomorrow, Tuesday, continuing until Wednesday. He added that temperatures should gradually rise starting Thursday.

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New amendment imposes restrictions

PAM freezes work permits for blocked files

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) announced that the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah issued ministerial resolution No. 1/2025, which amends some provisions of

the rules and procedures for granting work permits through the addition of Clause No. 3 to Article No. 47 of the resolution, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The amendment prohibits the registration of any new files for companies registered with PAM,

whether for the manager or authorized personnel, if it is proven that any existing files related to them have been suspended, until the legal status of these files is resolved.

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9 Gulf Bank secures \$650 mln debut senior unsecured syndicated term loan facility

9 Gulf Bank, GUST sign strategic partnership for youth development

Prayer Timings

| | | | |
|------------|-------|------------|-------|
| Fajr | 05:00 | Asr | 15:17 |
| Sunrise .. | 06:19 | Maghrib .. | 17:44 |
| Zohr | 12:01 | Isha | 19:01 |

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Rather cold to cold with light to moderate freshening at times northwesterly wind to northerly wind, with speeds of 12-50 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear with a chance for frost forming over agricultural and desert areas.

Weather

By Night: Cold to very cold and partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times northwesterly wind to variable wind, with speeds of 08-45 km/h with a chance for frost forming over agricultural and desert areas.

| Station | Max Exp | Min Rec |
|----------------|---------|---------|
| Kuwait City | 17 | 09 |
| Kuwait Airport | 17 | 10 |
| Abdaly | 18 | 08 |
| Bubyan | 17 | 09 |
| Jahra | 18 | 09 |
| Failaka Island | 17 | 11 |
| Salmiyah | 18 | 11 |



PM Diwan photo
His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sees off his Egyptian counterpart at the Kuwait airport.

Egyptian PM concludes official visit to Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24, (KUNA): Egyptian Prime Minister Dr. Mostafa Madbouly and his delegation departed the country on Sunday, concluding a two-day of-

ficial visit.

He was seen off at Kuwait International Airport by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Dep-

uty Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sherida Al-Maousharji, Head of the Prime Minister's Diwan Abdulaziz Al-Dakhlil and other senior officials.

Students provided support to excel: Al-Suwayed

'Kuwait in forefront to help 'special people'

By Muneera Al-Rabiah

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24, (KUNA): Students with special needs have the potential to academically excel in all phases of education, which made the State of Kuwait eager and willing to provide all necessary assistance to enable such sector of society to shine.

The State of Kuwait on the highest level, made it its mission to support people with special needs to achieve educational excellence, head of special education at the Ministry of Education Abdulaziz Al-Suwayed said.

Since the establishment of the very first special needs school in the mid-1950s and onwards, Kuwait had been at the forefront in supporting this important sector of society, he revealed, adding that in the late 1950s and 1980s, the state had opened several educational facilities to accommodate people with special needs.

There are numerous schools geared towards people with special need according to their disability throughout the country, affirmed Al-Suwayed, adding that such schools provided public, health, and social ser-

vices to students and their families.

He went on to say that services also extended to providing entertainment to students with special needs, pointing out that transportation of students from and to school was also an option for students.

He also revealed that grants were given to similar students from the GCC countries with all services from lodging, allowances, and monthly grants given to Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis alike.

On her part, the headmistress of Al-Amal (hope) School for audible disability Mairam Mustafa commended the role of the Education Ministry in supporting students with special needs, saying that all services were provided to their students.

Similarly, the headmaster of Al-Warsh School for mental disability Omar Al-Kandari lauded the exceptional role played by the Ministry of Education in supporting the education of people with disability.

He noted that the latest in technological advancement was under the disposal of any special needs school, saying that such support had contributed to the educational excellence of many students.

There are around 20 special needs schools in Kuwait with 11 serving female students and nine for male students.



Al-Suwayed

'Pride, glory ... national days rekindle loyalty to country'

Patriotism comes with fun and frolic: Al-Enezi

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Development and Activities at the Education Ministry Maryam Al-Enezi stated that "national celebrations are not only occasions for sharing joy and happiness, but also a chance to renew our pledge of loyalty to our homeland and express our deep love for it."



Al-Enezi

Al-Enezi made the statement during the celebration of the 'Ibrahim Taher Al-Baghli Foundation for the Righteous Son' of the National Day and Liberation Day at the Ibrahim Al-Baghli Hall for Events in Rumai-thiya.

She pointed out that "national celebrations are occasions that instill the values of true patriotism in our souls and remind us of the

sacrifices of our fathers and grandfathers who gave their most precious and valuable possessions for the sake of the elevation and glory of this homeland."

She extended her sincere thanks and appreciation to the foundation for its kind initiative in organizing this generous celebration, which reflects its commitment to enhance the value of loyalty to the homeland and instill national celebrations in the souls of the people of Kuwait. She added that this initiative is an example worth emulating in giving and showing loyalty to this dear homeland.

On the other hand, Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of the foundation Raed Ibrahim Al-Baghli expressed his happiness over attending this ceremony, which was distinguished by the presence of prominent personalities including the chairman and members of the Muharraq House for Parents' Care in the sisterly Kingdom of Bahrain and the chairman and members of the Board of Trustees of the Prince Yousef Dandan Forum.

He thanked them for attending and contributing to the celebration of the foundation on the occasion of the glorious national holidays of the beloved State of Kuwait, which "confirms and embodies our sense of belonging to this land that Allah Almighty blessed us with.

It also renews loyalty and allegiance to HH the Amir, the people and social and soci-

etal components of Kuwait."

He pointed out that the foundation believes in and supports the enhancement of national concepts among children of different generations by activating the principle of social partnership with all individuals and institutions in civil society.

He added that they have implemented many programs and activities for 18 consecutive years in coordination with the relevant sectors at the Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Education and other ministries.

He continued that they worked towards enhancement and translation of the concepts of national unity as an important pillar that translates the cohesion of the people with their leadership.

He said it is the basis for the stability and development of the State, which makes national belongingness a value among the eternal national values that everyone -- people, government and leadership -- works hard for to strengthen and preserve it, as it is one of the nation's gains and a standard of distinction and respect for it.

He expressed his happiness as they contribute to supporting the work of colleagues and sons, wishing success for these sincere efforts and effective contribution to establishing the foundations of social work and developing their national concepts to achieve comprehensive development in the beloved State of Kuwait.



A view of the Catholic Church in Kuwait City.

Church extends congratulations to Kuwait leaders, gov't, people

May you be blessed, my country Kuwait, for you have always been our home and a true homeland.

□ □ □

The Catholic Church in the State of Kuwait extends its heartfelt congratulations and blessings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (May God protect him), His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (May God protect him), the government, and the generous people of Kuwait on the occasion of the National Day.

On this joyous day, we take pride in recalling Kuwait's rich history of giving and its remarkable achievements in development, peace, and coexistence. Kuwait has long stood as a unique model for promoting religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence among all segments of society. It offers a safe and open environment filled with love and mutual respect under its wise leadership.

On the occasion of Kuwait's Liberation in February 1991, the Catholic Church witnessed an iconic event, with priests and monks ringing the cathedral bells to celebrate this historic moment.

This event was a heartfelt expression of the joy, unity, and hope that filled the hearts of everyone, reaffirming the val-

ues of freedom and peace that bind the people of the nation together.

In Christian tradition, the ringing of bells signifies the announcement of good news and joy, spreading light and symbolizing renewed hope.

On that special day, the faces of the priests, monks, and citizens radiated with pride and gratitude. The sound of the bells carried a sublime message that combined the spirit of religious unity with the spirit of patriotism. This gesture was a symbol of the Catholic Church's solidarity with the Kuwaiti people in celebrating the liberation of the homeland and marking the birth of a new dawn, one that heralded an era of stability and progress.

Finally, the sounds of the bells that rang on that day remain a living testament to the strength of the high spirits and patriotism that unite us.

We pray to God to continue blessing Kuwait with security and safety, and to crown its efforts with even greater achievements, progress, and prosperity. May He protect its leaders and people from all harm.

We pray that Kuwait remains an oasis of peace and goodness, and a shining example of brotherhood between diverse peoples and cultures.

Many happy returns to Kuwait, its leadership, and its people.

Father Suleiman Haifawe

Arab world must unite on space front: KSR

Kuwait envisions Oman as launchpad for space rockets

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: Founder of Kuwait Space Rocket (KSR) Group Nasser Ashkanani confirmed at the 2025 conference on the Sultanate of Oman serving as a launching pad for Kuwaiti rockets that space exploration missions are considered an important step towards developing Arab space capabilities, which consolidates KSR's position as a pioneer in the field of regional space exploration, reports Al-Rai daily.

Founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Launching Company His Highness Azzan bin Qais bin Tariq Al-Said, and engineers Hassan Al-Mutawa and Sulaiman Al-Fuhaid attended the conference.

Ashkanani disclosed that the first seed funding round will be launched in early 2026, calling on ambitious investors to join in realizing KSR's vision to make the Gulf region a leader in space exploration.

He explained that "it is not just about

launching rockets, but about launching a new era for the Arab space industry. We are proud to launch Kuwaiti rockets from Omani land. The choice of a launching pad in the Sultanate of Oman is the result of deep historical relations between Kuwait and Oman, which have been linked by centuries of co-operation. The strategic geographical location of the platform between the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean enhances the safety and efficiency of launching operations."

He said the choice of the platform is accompanied by a future vision to push the region's space capabilities towards new horizons, indicating that KSR calls on the Arab world to unite to lead the next space front.

KSR is a pioneering space initiative in Kuwait that was established in 2018. It aims to develop rocket technology, support scientific research, and enhance the role of the Arab

world in the global space industry.

It is worth mentioning that Ashkanani presented the show with the participation of Al-Mutawa; reviewing the history of KSR from its beginnings to its successes in launching rockets, before revealing the ambitious future plans as follows:

1. Ambition-3: a rocket that reaches an altitude of 15 kilometers, designed to break the world record for the highest altitude reached by a rocket powered by sucrose fuel.

2. Ambition-4: a rocket that reaches an altitude of 20 kilometers, powered by a new solid fuel developed internally by KSR under the name 'Moon Dust', which is a highly efficient and safe fuel that provides optimal performance.

3. Ambition-5: the first suborbital launching vehicle for KSR, bringing Kuwait closer to providing commercial space services in the Arab world.

PAAET classes go online during Ramadan month

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) has modified class hours during Ramadan in order to provide a suitable educational environment for students during the holy month.

According to the announcement of the Deanship of Admission and Registration, physical classes will stop and will be online from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm as per the schedule.

The class hours have been divided into different periods to suit the needs of students, as lectures will be conducted for an hour or an hour and a half before or after breaking the fast.

PAAET added that the exams coinciding with the period of class suspension will be determined on campus, with the possibility of completing some study materials through the digital platforms.

In a related development, the Deanship of Admission and Registration confirmed that the registration for courses during Ramadan will be from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm in person, and from 8:00 pm until 2:00 am online.

The authority then wished its students "acceptable fast and successful efforts in their studies" during the holy month of Ramadan.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Regarding the Issuance of the Bankruptcy Judge's Decision to Initiate Restructuring Procedures for First Investment Company (K.P.S.C.P)

First Investment Company announces the issuance of the Honorable Bankruptcy Judge's decision in Application No. (S/2024 Restructuring), dated February 20, 2025, which stipulates the following:

First: The initiation of restructuring procedures for the application submitted by the debtor, First Investment Company (K.P.S.C.P.), with a stay of claims effective from the day following the issuance of this decision, in pursuance with the legal effect arising from the issuance of the decision to initiate restructuring procedures prescribed by Article (102) of the Bankruptcy Law, provided that the applicant company shall continue to manage its business and assets under the supervision of the Trustee, subject to the effects arising from this decision in accordance with the provisions of Articles (70, 71, 118) of the Bankruptcy Law.

Second: The appointment of Mr. Abdullah Marwan Al-Essa as the Trustee, whose initial mandate include overseeing the restructuring plan, announcing a summary of the decision, inviting creditors to submit their claims along with supporting documentation, and verifying the debts, in line with the duties of Trustees as specified under the Bankruptcy Law.

Third: The Bankruptcy Administration is tasked with registering the decision and disclosing it on the Boursa Kuwait, notifying the applicant company, the creditors, the parties against whom the application was filed, the Bankruptcy Committee, the Capital Markets Authority, Boursa Kuwait Securities Company, and the General Directorate of Execution of the decision, and the decision shall be given its Executive Formula and published in the Official Gazette.

Main junctions open today

Smart licenses to streamline food quality in private sector

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi revealed that the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) and the Public Health Department have joined the first phase of smart licenses, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

He stated that the Ministry of Health has several branches, including PAFN, which plays an important role in maintaining food quality.

Dr. Al-Awadhi revealed that the ministry issues hundreds of licenses but smart licenses will help reduce the documentation cycle, adding that hospitals and pharmacies will be included

in the smart license system in the near future.

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Main junctions open today: Director General of the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART) Eng. Khaled Al-Osaimi has announced that the new overpass from King Faisal Expressway-Road 50 to Ibrahim Al-Muzain Street-Road 404, going towards South Surra and Sheikh Jaber Hospital; in addition to the ramp leading to Ibrahim Al-Muzain Street-Road 404, going towards Khaitan will be opened Tuesday morning, reports Al-Rai daily.

Parents, schools role vital to curb kids social media misuse

"SOCIAL media is a double-edged sword -- one side is positive and the other is negative. If used in a positive manner, it is good and becomes a tool for construction, support for social relations, and means for constructive criticism." Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"However, if used negatively, it becomes the means for destruction and the consequences are under the purview of the law. From time to time, we may hear about judicial rulings with penalties, as a result of the misuse of social media.

"Perhaps, the saddest and most sorrowful aspect is the fact that some teenagers and those below the teenaged years are misusing social media, resulting in rulings and penalties for a social group in the prime of life. This age group is usually in the early stages of growth, awareness and consciousness. They do not have practical and life experience, knowledge, and familiarity with the law, which makes them vulnerable to violations due to the lack of prudence and wisdom in using social media in a positive and constructive way. They are vulnerable to accountability and legal punishment.

"It goes without saying that these young people are prone to impulsiveness, excitement, enthusiasm, and non-calculation of the consequences. Given that social media is always at their fingertips, misusage is a possibility, along with its repercussions, as it happened to some young people.

"So, what can be done to limit and address this? There are three responsibilities that must be borne, but before that is the responsibility of the young people themselves to use social media in a way that benefits them and their society.

"The first responsibility falls on the family in terms of education and awareness, the second, which is important, is the responsibility of the media, and the third is the responsibility of the educational system, which must constantly work on raising legal awareness. If these responsibilities are performed in the most complete manner, our children will be safe from the consequences of social media misusage.

"Yes, the legal responsibility falls primarily on the young people themselves, but that is part of a greater responsibility borne by the State and society."

Also:

"Thank Allah and the State's efforts to develop national human resources, Kuwait continues to achieve high ranks in the Human Development Index issued by the United Nations, ranking 47th among 193 countries recently. It recorded remarkable progress in the sub-indicators of the index. This is a source of pride and satisfaction." Kuwaiti writer and lawyer Dr. Abdullah Mohammad Al-Traji wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"Undoubtedly, we are currently witnessing important transformations at several levels, such as enhancing the role of national human resources in development, improving economic management, raising the quality of public services, and especially the continuous efforts to improve the infrastructure, all of which contribute to improving the quality of life and the well-being of citizens.

"We should not expect to reap all of these fruits within a short time; because they require time, continuous efforts and national partnership.

"In my opinion, continuing to achieve high economic and human development entails paying attention to a number of important matters, as follows:

1. The population increased by about eight percent in 2023 to reach nearly 4.8 million -- a high growth rate that puts pressure on services and government spending.

2. All sustainable development indicators should be given attention, and efforts should be exerted to achieve equal progress in their sub-indicators.

3. Education is the main lever for human resource development; hence, the need for the continuation of programs and procedures for developing this resource, raising the quality of its outputs and linking it to the manpower needs of the labor market.

4. Stimulating and encouraging the role of the private sector to be a partner in development are extremely important for it to play the required role in employing nationals and supporting economic growth.

5. Economic diversification, sources of income, and increasing productivity are important pillars and goals for raising the efficiency and competitiveness of the national economy, which should be the focus in the next stage.

6. Small enterprises are considered a vital economic sector, especially in providing job opportunities for young people. This sector needs to be reconsidered in terms of organization, incentives and financing, as well as protective policies that ensure its growth and enhance its competitiveness."



"It has been nearly 35 years since Kuwait experienced the brutal invasion by the fallen Iraqi regime. At that time, we lived through painful days filled with unforgettable memories. Throughout these challenging times, the courage and resilience of the Kuwaiti youth shone brightly, whether through those who

participated in armed resistance or those who contributed through various necessary services and tasks, all for the love of Kuwait", columnist Mousa Behbehani wrote for Al-Rai daily.

"Despite some negative stances from certain countries in the Arab League, Kuwaitis held strong faith in God, believing that the crisis would eventually pass and the nightmare would come to an end. They stood firm and remained resolute in their homeland, undeterred by danger, and carrying the love for their country in their hearts.

"On Wednesday, August 1, 1990, the meeting between Kuwait and Iraq concluded at 10:00 pm in Jeddah, with an agreement to resume discussions in Baghdad and, later, in Kuwait, as agreed upon by both parties.

"Four hours later, at 2:00 am on that black Thursday, August 2, the betrayal began. The invasion of Kuwait commenced, and the occupying forces seized all government and civilian institutions. The ominous statement was broadcast, declaring the brutal forces' control over all of Kuwait's territories, in an act of treachery and deceit by time itself.

"A government headquarters was formed in Taif, where the emergency government continued to monitor the situation of citizens both inside and outside the country. They provided various forms of aid and issued daily bulletins and radio broadcasts. Communication between the legitimate leadership and those steadfast in Kuwait remained uninterrupted.

"From the womb of tragedy, hope was born.

"The people of Kuwait wrote honorable chapters in the most painful of circumstances when their land was violated. Their sons became martyrs in defense of and in love for their beloved homeland. From among them emerged heroes in whom we take great pride. They remained steadfast, worked tirelessly, and defended the nation without boasting about their actions. They did not take pride in what they had given; instead, they humbled themselves, kept their deeds secret, and sought the face of their Lord, who does not waste the reward of those who do good deeds, and who knows the secrets and whispers of the heart.

"When Kuwaiti land was violated and subjected to a barbaric invasion, the majority of expatriate workers left, returning to their countries out of fear for their lives and the safety of their families. They are not to be blamed, as it was their rightful choice.

"What is truly beautiful, however, is that Kuwaitis, from all walks of life (urban, Bedouin, Sunni, Shia), took charge of all the work to replace that mass exodus. They worked in all professions, from the lowest tasks, such as driving garbage trucks from areas of Kuwait to the site of incineration, to managing all professional and service activities. The reliance was on the sons of the nation, who worked without expecting any wages. Their work was purely for God and for the homeland during these extraordinary circumstances.

"The brutal enemy proceeded to destroy Kuwait's cultural and architectural landmarks, vandalizing and stealing them. They burned the files of various ministries, and acts of oppression and terrorism escalated. They also transported large numbers of their own citizens to settle in Kuwait and seized the homes of Kuwaitis.

"They sought to turn Kuwait into a scorched land, leading them to commit their most heinous crime. The country's natural landscapes - its wild, marine, and aerial environments - suffered a catastrophic blow. The invaders set fire to oil wells and reservoirs, creating an environmental disaster of unprecedented scale caused by the deliberate burning of oil wells.

"Over 737 oil wells were burned, marking one of the greatest environmental catastrophes humanity has ever faced. As a result, thousands of tons of polluting gases were released daily, accumulating in the lower atmosphere and



Behbehani

increasing the concentration of carbon dioxide. The falling rain did not help wash away the pollutants; instead, the raindrops carried dangerous compounds harmful to humans, plants, animals, and birds.

"The enemy did not stop there. They looted homes, cars, businesses, warehouses, and government institutions. Their acts of sabotage extended across every location, including the theft of food, medicine, antibiotics, and incubators from hospitals. They also abducted young men from mosques, streets, and homes, transporting them to Iraq to be used as human shields.

"A symbol of steadfastness in the face of invaders, the House of the Qurain stands as a witness to the heroic resistance and sacrifices made during those dark days. Nineteen Kuwaiti young men, from all walks of life, fought a national battle with their personal weapons, bravely confronting the invading forces who surrounded their home and bombarded it with heavy artillery. Twelve of them were martyred, while the others miraculously survived, becoming eyewitnesses who would later recount the events with accuracy and integrity, directly from the scene.

—Compiled by Mahmoud Attiyeh/Simi K. Kutty



KUNA photos

The emergency medical team that handled 35 cases during the walkathon.



A member of the paramedic team displays medical kit and other items used in emergency situations.

MoH dealt with 35 medical cases at Kuwait Sports Day walkathon

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: The Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Department at the Ministry of Health announced that it handled 35 cases - 23 men and 12 women - during the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Bridge Walkathon that was part of the activities of Kuwait Sports Day on Saturday, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

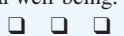
Director of the department Dr. Ahmad Al-Shatti told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the ministry had been fully prepared to support the event, which included several sports activities in five different locations.

He explained that a comprehensive plan had been developed to allocate 30 ambulances and 160 EMS technicians for these activities. For the Jaber Bridge Walkathon, 16 ambulances were stationed along the route, with one vehicle every 500 meters. Also, two fixed clinics and two golf carts were equipped, with the participation of 76 EMS technicians.

Dr. Al-Shatti affirmed the significance

of Kuwait Sports Day in promoting health.

He said he considers this as a step in the right direction due to the vital role of sports in strengthening immunity, preventing chronic diseases, protecting against heart and artery diseases, and improving mental well-being.



E-check of prices: In order to combat artificial price hikes, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry will develop the system for the electronic monitoring of commodity prices in the markets, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The electronic price monitoring system will provide the consumers with a list of commodity prices in various sales outlets and ease the monitoring of prices by individuals or the ministry's inspectors.

Through this system, the movement of prices of basic and secondary commodities will be closely monitored to prevent artificial price hikes; while allowing the monitoring and comparison of prices among the sales outlets.

The ministry set the deadline for the submission of bids for this project on March 6, indicating the amount of the initial guarantee for the bid is about two percent of the bid value.



Dr. Al-Shatti

'Remove all tents by March 1'

Municipality denies issuing new orders

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: According to informed sources, the removal of tents designated for events in the Governorates of Farwaniya, Jahra, and Ahmadi from early March, as per reports circulating on social media, is an old decision that is still in effect based on Supreme Municipality Committee's ruling issued about three months ago.

Kuwait Municipality had notified the own-

ers of the tents/halls to remove them by the beginning of next March. The removal of the notified or warned tents is contingent on providing alternative locations for them by the concerned authorities, including Kuwait Municipality.

The sources denied any new decisions being issued by the Supreme Municipality Committee regarding this matter, either for the actual implementation of the removal or for postponing the removal of the warned tents.



Bid to improve services: Minister of Social Af-

fairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthar Al-Huwailah received Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Hamoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to discuss mechanisms for improving services for the residents of the governorate, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a statement, the Ministry of Social Affairs explained that the meeting held discussions on enhancing the role of cooperative societies in meeting the needs of the community.

They also discussed ways to enhance collaboration between the ministry and the cooperative societies to ensure an integrated service delivery. Discussions were also held on expanding the scope of social services provided by the ministry to maximize benefits for citizens.



KFF photo

Firemen, officials at the headquarters.

KFF holds fire drill at Hawally headquarter

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) conducted a practical drill at the Hawally Governorate Headquarters on Monday morning.

According to a press release issued by KFF, the drill involved evacuating the building, rescuing the injured, and extinguishing a simulated fire.

These exercises are designed to enhance KFF's ability to respond quickly to emergencies, ensure the protection of lives and property, and contribute to community security in the country.

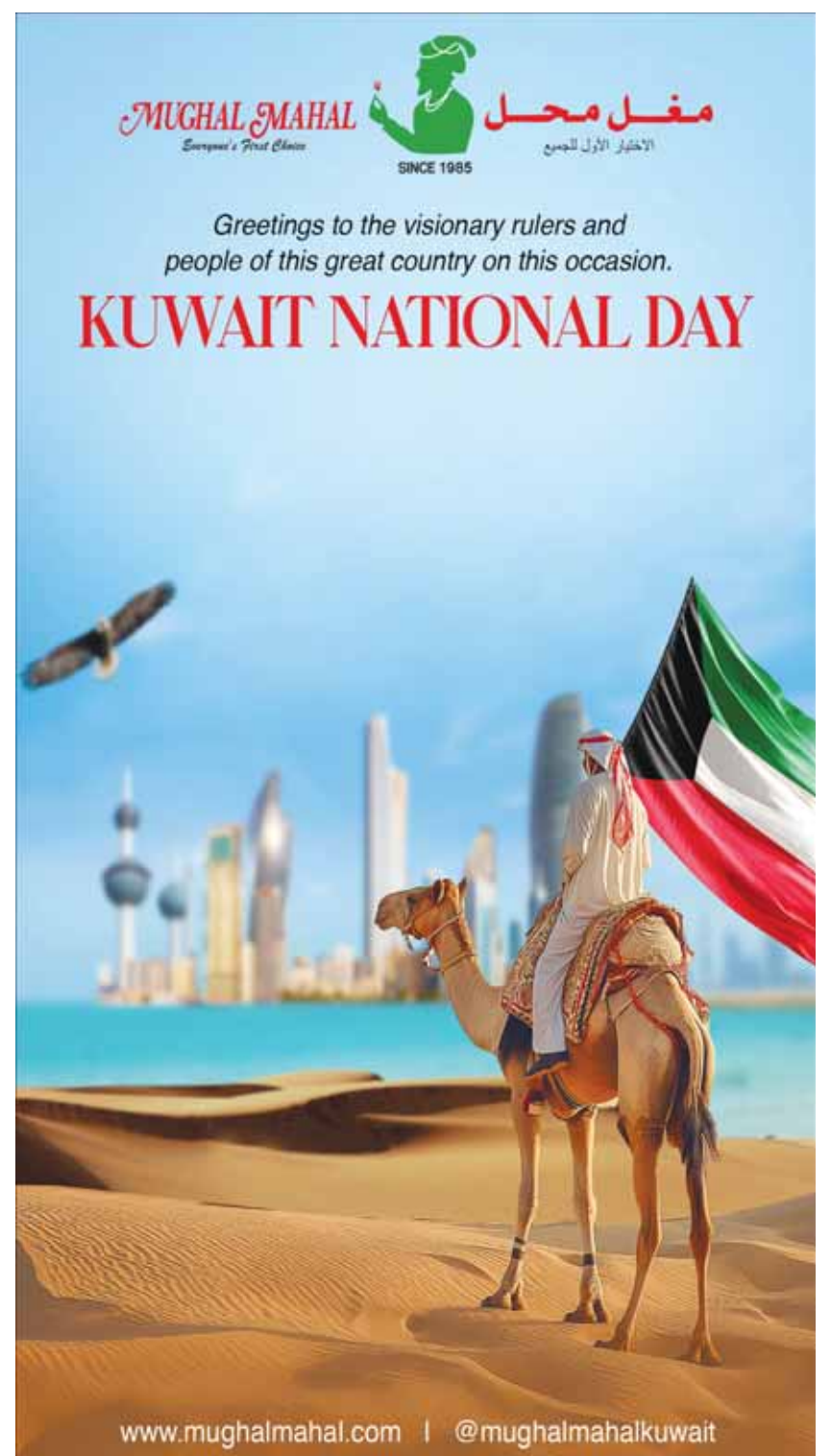
National Guard to take part in military exhibit

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: The National Guard has confirmed its participation in the 2025 Military Exhibition, which will take place from 10:00 am to 10:00 pm on Feb 25-27 along the Arabian Gulf Street -- adjacent to Kuwait Towers, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a press statement, the National Guard explained that the exhibition is part of the National Day and Liberation Day celebrations; showcasing the important role of military institutions in fostering loyalty and a sense of national pride.

It added that the exhibition aims to strengthen the values of loyalty and patriotism, highlight the National Guard's social responsibility, and engage with all sectors in the community.

The National Guard will present its equipment and mechanisms, demonstrating its commitment to defend the nation and support other military institutions.



Phase 2 of beautification project launched

Capital Governor praises TEC's waterfront efforts

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: The Tourism Enterprises Company (TEC) has launched the second phase of the waterfront beautification project, extending over a distance of five kilometers from the Green Island to the Yacht Club in Salmiya.

This coincided with the National Day and Liberation Day celebrations.

Present at the launching ceremony were sponsor of the ceremony and Capital Governor Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of TEC Hamoud Jassim Al-Falah, acting Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Hassan Al-Jaafar, and representatives of TEC and the companies investing along the waterfront.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah praised the Waterfront Project (Phase Two); stressing that it will boost the local economy by attracting tourists in general.

He disclosed there is follow up and anticipation of the development projects that are being implemented until 2035, while a package of future projects will be launched soon. He affirmed that the Waterfront Project is distinguished by its support for sports activities in Kuwait City, as it provides the infrastructure for those wishing to engage in various sports.

Al-Falah pointed out that the opening of the second phase of the waterfront project reflects the company's commitment to implement tourism and entertainment projects in line with the aspirations of citizens, expatriates and visitors.

"We are working hard to enhance Kuwait's position as a distinguished tourist destination by developing integrated and modern facilities that meet everyone's needs, in line with Kuwait Vision 2035," he revealed.

He added that the project contributes to supporting the local economy by attracting more visitors and activating the hospitality and services sector, as well as providing promising investment opportunities for local and international institutions.

He said the project represents a qualitative addition to the tourism scene in Kuwait, as "we were keen to design the second phase in accordance with the highest standards of sustainability and quality. Environmental and sustainability elements were taken into account in all stages of implementation, starting



Capital Governor inaugurates the launch of the second phase of the waterfront beautification project.



Capital Governor during a tour of the project, coincided with the National Day and Liberation Day celebrations.



Photos by Mohammad Morsi

from the use of clean energy to the adoption of modern technologies in managing facilities and infrastructure."

Operations Manager of TEC Eng. Sami Al-Zanki stated that the second phase of the marine destination project, which extends for about 10 kilometers, includes entertainment services, operational services like restaurants, and facilities that serve all segments of Kuwaiti society. He confirmed that TEC aims to develop tourist and entertainment places and facilities for the purpose of entertainment and domestic tourism.

He added that "after this phase, we have

a direction to develop and renovate marine clubs along the marine destination, such as the Marine Yacht Club, People's Marine Club, and Swimming Pools Complex. These projects will be a qualitative shift for TEC in its future projects and will be developed by the private sector over the next four years."

He affirmed the project has been completed 100 percent and some comments have been submitted to the contractor in order to fulfill them, explaining that there is a period of about a year to address these comments and that the project was received on February 2022 at an estimated cost of KD 14.700 million.

Project Engineer Mohammad Al-Mughmas stressed that the project was implemented according to designs that facilitate the public's access to walking areas and various sports. He said the project facilitated all means for people of determination and people with special needs -- parking lots or special paths for them.

He added that the waterfront project was designed according to the highest specifications and standards, explaining that the project is divided into two phases -- the first from Kuwait Towers to the Green Island and the second from the Green Island to the Yacht Club.

He disclosed that the first phase was opened in February 2024, followed by the second phase in February 2025.

It is worth noting that the waterfront is one of the most prominent tourist and entertainment destinations in the State of Kuwait and is divided into two phases: the first phase starts from the Kuwait Towers to the Green Island and was opened in February 2024, and the second phase starts from the Green Island to the People's Mosque.

The project also includes 12.4 kilometers of jogging tracks and dedicated bicycle path extending 15.4 km along the waterfront.

The company paid special attention to sustainability elements, as it replaced all traditional lighting poles with solar-powered ones and added 40 electric car charging stations from the famous Dutch brand ALFEN, distributed in strategic locations within the project, in addition to renovating 4,000 parking spaces, which contributes to facilitating access and providing a comfortable and convenient experience for all visitors.

TEC worked hard to rehabilitate the beaches as multi-use spaces to host events throughout the year, as well as reviving the natural landscape in the area by removing the Conacarpus trees that are harmful to the infrastructure and replacing them with new trees and plants that are suitable for the climate of the State of Kuwait.

It added distinctive artistic touches to the waterfront, including artworks that reflect Kuwait's culture and ecosystem, in addition to installing dedicated benches, columns, barriers and signage throughout the site.

The project also includes models of ships inspired by Japanese art (origami) in the shape of the Kuwaiti currency, while displaying the name 'Kuwait' in both Arabic and English.



Farwaniya Gov. photo showing Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah receiving in his office at the governorate on Sunday former Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Majdi Al-Dhafiri.

Farwaniya Governor meets ex-Assistant FM Majdi Al-Dhafiri

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received in his office at the governorate on Sunday former Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Majdi Al-Dhafiri for a friendly discussion. According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, they discussed several important issues and developments for enhancing services for the people of the governorate.

The governor expressed his pleasure in meeting Al-Dhafiri, and commended his tireless efforts during his tenure as Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs.

At the end of the meeting, Al-Dhafiri expressed his gratitude to Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser for the warm reception and hospitality. He praised the governor's efforts and commitment to maintaining communication with everyone, and wished him continued success and prosperity.

Director General of KDIPA reappointed

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: A decree was published recently in the official gazette 'Kuwait Alyoum' regarding the renewal of the service term of Sheikh Dr. Meshal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah as the Director General of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority, with the rank of Minister, for a four-year period starting from March 23, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

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Municipal Council OKs major urban proposals

Land, accessibility plan advances

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: The Municipal Council, led by Abdullah Al-Mahri, held its 13th regular session for the third legislative term on Sunday; with all members in attendance.

During the session, the council approved the following:

- Amiri Diwan's request to deduct 1,161 square meters from Hind Intermediate School for Girls in Jabriya;
- Ministry of Electricity and Renewable Energy's request to allocate a secondary transformer station site One in Jabriya, Block 10;
- Final approval to reorganize part of Block Three in Sharq, represented by the remaining part of the property Plot 1A/1;
- Request of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs to allocate a mosque measuring 852 square meters and parking spaces to serve the mosque with an area of 1,500 square meters temporarily in Shaqaya Industrial Area, Site 5A for Al-Na'em Scrap;
- Five recommendations presented in the first workshop of the Committee for People with Disabilities regarding the Kuwait Code for Accessibility according to the general design to enable its implementation.

The most important recommendations are: organizing introductory courses on the code, notifying the Union of Engineering Offices and Consulting Houses to circulate the Kuwait Code for Acces-



Photo by Mohammad Morsi Municipal Council, led by Abdullah Al-Mahri (right), during the Municipal Council's 13th regular session for the third legislative term.

sibility to engineering offices and consulting houses, and qualifying architects and specialists to implement it.

They also recommended assigning Kuwait Municipality to study the penalties and sanctions for not implementing the code and submitting them to the council for study and inclusion in the building regulations.

The council rejected the request of Kuwaiti Society for the Development of the Educational System regarding an unused vacant land in Salmiya for the establishment of the headquarters of the society.

It postponed discussions on the proposal of member Sherifa Al-Shalfan regarding the recycling of plastic bottles and their caps and the proposal to study the use of water collection basins and rainwater drainage channels in Kuwait.

It returned to the Hawally Governorate Committee the latter's comments during the meeting held on Feb 6, 2025 regarding violations of building regulations by private schools in private residential areas for further study.

Arab Group calls for stronger co-op

Kuwait cyber plan praised

NEW YORK, Feb 24, (KUNA): The Arab Group at the United Nations praised Kuwait's proposal on confidence and capacity building in cybersecurity, submitted during the ninth session of the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs).

This came in a speech delivered by Head of the ICT Department at Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Qadiri on Friday evening on behalf of the Arab Group during the 10th session of OWICT.

Kuwait's proposal suggests a platform for measuring the implementation of the list of rules and standards for responsible behavior of countries in the use of information technology.

The Arab Group considered the Kuwaiti proposal a qualitative addition to enhance international cooperation and should be built upon to support the implementation of agreed-upon standards. Al-Qadiri stressed the group's support for efforts to enhance

cybersecurity and the need to include the "Rules and Standards Platform" as a key element within the global portal.

He pointed to the establishment of the Ministerial Council for Cybersecurity of the League of Arab States, explaining that successive steps are being taken to fully activate it as a specialized regional platform.

He expressed the Arab Group's aspiration to achieve a smooth transition to the permanent mechanism for regular institutional dialogue next July, praising their efforts to discuss cybersecurity issues.

Al-Qadiri added that the continuous increase in the use of digital technology and reliance on cyber systems would require strengthening international cooperation to confront threats that include attacks on infrastructure, disinformation campaigns, and ransomware attacks.

He stressed the full support of Kuwait for establishing a global portal dedicated to cooperation in ICTs security and capacity building led by member states.

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait grants

Expressing his gratitude, he extended his best wishes to these nations, emphasizing Kuwait's commitment to strong and enduring ties.

The celebrations continued with the Fifth Fence National Operetta held under the patronage and in the presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace Theater.

The event was attended 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 senior state officials.

The ceremony commenced with the national anthem, followed by a vibrant student performance celebrating Kuwait's unity, resilience, and leadership. The operetta highlighted the nation's steadfast commitment to safeguarding its sovereignty. A commemorative gift was presented to His Highness the Amir before his departure.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Interior announced that 781 prisoners have been granted Amiri pardon as per Amiri Decree No. 33/2025; thereby, exempting them from the requirement to serve the remaining prison sentence, restriction of freedom, judicial deportation or reduced sentence for some on the occasion of the 64th National Day.

In a press statement, the ministry confirmed this is in compliance with the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the abovementioned Amiri Decree.

According to the ministry, the Correctional Institutions and Implementation of Judgments Sector implemented the Amiri pardon in the presence of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, who affirmed the State's commitment to fully support those released through the Amiri pardon. He urged them to invest this precious opportunity on a new beginning based through commitment to the law and positive integration into society.

He stressed the need to avoid past mistakes, indicating that society expects them to contribute to its construction and development. He added "pardon is an irreplaceable opportunity and everyone should seize it to ensure a more stable and secure future."

He recommended opening a special office to follow up those pardoned to ease their reintegration into society and provide them with the necessary support through rehabilitation and guidance programs that contribute to achieving social stability and enabling them to start a new life based on commitment and responsibility.

He addressed those who were released: For those who might be facing a problem, I will try every way to help you. Your job will be returned to you

on the condition that you stop toeing wrong path you toed before."

Chill sweeps

Today's weather has already seen a noticeable drop in temperatures, with conditions described as cold and partly cloudy. Winds will be from the northwesterly to northwesterly direction, light to moderate, and occasionally active, ranging from 15 to 45 km/h, with a chance of light, scattered rain. The expected maximum temperatures will range from 13 to 16 degrees Celsius, and the sea state will be light to moderate, with waves rising to 2-6 feet.

Al-Ali emphasized that the weather this evening will be cold to very cold, with northwesterly to northerly winds ranging from 15 to 50 km/h, particularly in coastal areas. There will also be a chance of frost in agricultural and desert regions, with minimum temperatures expected between 2 to 4 degrees Celsius. The sea state will be moderate to high, with waves from 3 to 6 feet.

For Tuesday, the weather will be cold, with northwesterly to northerly winds ranging from 12 to 50 km/h, occasionally active. Scattered clouds are expected, and frost could develop in agricultural and desert areas. The maximum temperatures will be between 12 and 14 degrees Celsius, with moderate to high waves in the sea, ranging from 3 to 6 feet.

Price surge

He demanded that the Ministry of Commerce and Industry should intensify its campaigns in the markets to stop this unreasonable price hike.

Umm Hamoud compared the prices of Ramadan goods this year to "fire" due to traders who exploit the Ramadan season, wondering if it is reasonable that the price of a kilogram of dates that was sold for KD2,250 before has now reached KD3,500.

She indicated that dates at lower prices are unsuitable for many families, while some of them are only valid for a year or some months. She thought that prices in Shuwaikh food markets are lower than those in cooperatives and parallel markets, but she was surprised as the prices are high compared to last year.

Jamal Al-Mutairi called on the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to intensify control over food markets to stop the manipulation of traders, especially since all consumers -- citizens and expatriates -- have noticed a huge increase in the prices of Ramadan goods at very high rates compared to last year despite the availability of all products in the markets.

PAM freezes

The Director of the Public Relations and Media Department and official spokesperson of PAM Mohammad Al-Muzaini revealed that suspension cases include:

■ The presence of one or more inactive licenses registered on the file

■ The presence of one or more licenses on a blocked file

■ The presence of licenses without a registered address.

Al-Muzaini stressed that the resolution also prohibits certain procedures for these companies, such as adding new licenses, updating license data (e.g., changing address or details), adding new workers, or estimating labor needs.

Healthcare team

their services in the morning period in all governorates to ensure the continuation of work on preventive programs.

For oral and dental health services, dental emergency clinics affiliated with schools; and clinics designated for adults in specialized dental centers, public hospitals or primary health care centers, will continue to provide their services.

Moreover, the Central Blood Bank in Jabriya and the Blood Transfusion Cooperative Center in Ahmadi Health District will continue to receive donors until 7:00 pm to ensure the availability of blood supply during the holiday.

The emergency departments in hospitals remain on alert, operating round the clock; as the staff will work in shifts to guarantee the continuity of providing health services with high efficiency.

In other news, the General Traffic Department has established guidelines for decorating vehicles during national holidays, which are as follows:

■ Do not tint or place stickers on the front or rear windows that obstruct visibility.

■ Do not cover the vehicle's body with stickers or other materials.

■ Do not cover the front or rear license plates of the vehicle.

■ Do not install flags outside the vehicle's body, as they may pose a danger to others.

Other guidelines issued by the General Traffic Department included:

■ Do not reduce vehicle speed below the minimum limit to avoid obstructing traffic

■ Children under the age of ten should sit in the back seats for safety

■ Passengers should not lean out of the vehicle's windows or sit on top of the vehicle

■ Seat belts are mandatory.

The General Traffic Department urged everyone to cooperate to ensure that the celebrations remain civilized, sophisticated, and safe. It stressed the need for motorists to pay attention while driving.

US envoy reflects on Kuwait's National and Liberation Days

Ambassador affirms strong defense ties

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: American Ambassador to Kuwait Karen Sasahara said the National Day and Liberation Day are two occasions representing pivotal moments in the history of Kuwait.

"More than three decades ago, Kuwaiti, American and coalition forces worked together to liberate Kuwait, establishing a partnership that has grown stronger over time. We honor the courage and sacrifice of those who fought and gave their lives for Kuwait's freedom and sovereignty," Sasahara added.

She affirmed that the "United States of America is proud to have led the coalition that came to Kuwait's aid. It remains committed to the steadfast partnership. Over the decades, our defense cooperation has continued and strengthened."



KUNA photo

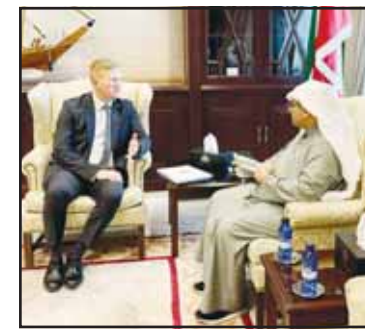
US Ambassador to Kuwait Karen Sasahara delivers speech.

South African Minister Dean Macpherson concludes successful two-day Kuwait visit

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: The South Africa Minister of Public Works & Infrastructure, Dean Macpherson, and his delegation concluded a successful two-day visit to Kuwait as part of a Middle East tour which also includes the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, from 20 to 28 February, to attract additional investment into South African infrastructure projects, aimed at igniting economic growth and job creation.

The Minister's visit is the first to Kuwait by a South African Minister under the new administration. His delegation included the Limpopo Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Public Works & Infrastructure, Ernest Rachoene, Chairperson of the eThekweni Municipality Economic Development and Planning Committee, Themebuhle Ntuli, and Acting Head of Infrastructure South Africa (ISA), Mameetse Masemola.

Among the stakeholders engaged were the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs of the State of Kuwait, Kuwait Investment Authority, the oldest and one of the largest sovereign wealth funds in the world, and the Kuwait Chamber of Com-



KUNA photo

A view of the meetings of the Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure in South Africa, Dean Macpherson, during his visit to the State of Kuwait.

merce and Industry. The delegation aims to build fruitful relationships with funding institutions to stimulate interest in South Africa's infrastructure pipeline of projects, with the goal of closing the infrastructure investment gap.

"Our visit to Kuwait demonstrates our commitment to achieving our goal of attracting an additional R100 billion in funding for South African infrastructure projects during the sev-

enth administration. The meetings held with the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs of the State of Kuwait, the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Kuwait Investment Authority - the world's oldest sovereign wealth fund - will undoubtedly contribute towards turning South Africa into a construction site, growing the economy, and creating jobs," said Minister Macpherson.

"We extend our gratitude to the South African Mission in Kuwait and their Acting Head of Mission, Ms Busisiwe Mpungose, for the invaluable role they played in facilitating numerous meetings and engagements in the best interests of the South African people. The work of marketing South Africa abroad and attracting investment is precisely what our Embassies are intended to do, and we commend the Mission in Kuwait for fulfilling this role."

Limpopo MEC for Public Works & Infrastructure, Ernest Rachoene, reiterated the province's commitment to working with stakeholders to attract additional investment, which will contribute to improving the lives of South Africans in the region.

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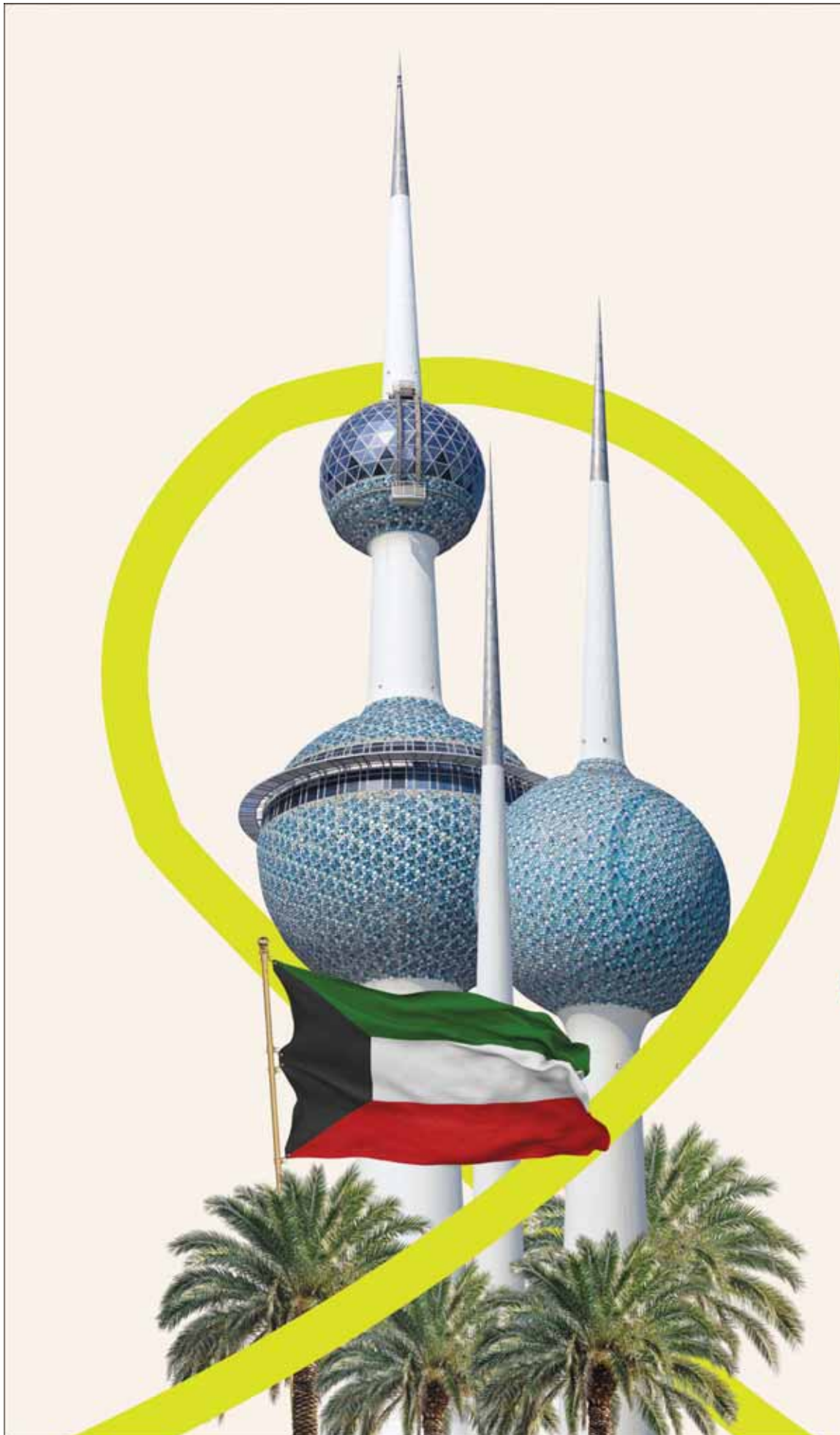
to

**His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh
Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah,**

**His Highness The Crown Prince Sheikh
Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah,**

**His Highness the Prime Minister
Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah,**

**The government of Kuwait and all the
citizens and residents of Kuwait May this
nation be blessed and continue
to flourish in peace, joy, and prosperity**



US president set to hold meeting Thursday with British PM Starmer

Trump meets with Macron as uncertainty grows about US ties to Europe

WASHINGTON, Feb 24, (AP): US President Donald Trump welcomed French President Emmanuel Macron to the White House for talks on Monday at a moment of deep uncertainty about the future of transatlantic relations, with Trump transforming American foreign policy and effectively tuning out European leadership as he looks to quickly end Russia's war in Ukraine.

The two leaders were starting their day by taking part in a virtual meeting with fellow leaders of the Group of Seven economies to discuss the war.

Trump also has made demands for territory - Greenland, Canada, Gaza and the Panama Canal - as well as precious rare earth minerals from Ukraine. Just over a month into his second term, the "America First" president has cast an enormous shadow over what veteran US diplomats and former government officials had regarded as

America's calming presence of global stability and continuity.

Despite some notable hiccups, the military, economic and moral power of the United States has dominated the post-World War II era, most notably after the Cold War came to an end with the collapse of the Soviet Union. All of that, some fear, may be lost if Trump gets his way and the US abandons the principles under which the United Nations and numerous other international bodies were founded.

"The only conclusion you can draw is that 80 years of policy in standing up against aggressors has just been blown up without any sort of discussion or reflection," said Ian Kelly, a US ambassador to Georgia during the Obama and first Trump administration and now a professor at Northwestern University.

"I'm discouraged for a lot of reasons,



US President-elect Donald Trump, (left), attends a meeting with France's President Emmanuel Macron at the Elysee Palace in Paris on Dec 7, 2024. (AP)

but one of the reasons is that I had taken some encouragement at the beginning from the repeated references to "peace through strength," Kelly added. "This is not peace through strength - this is peace through surrender."

Trump, a Republican, is hosting Macron on Monday, the three-year anniversary of the war in Ukraine. Trump is set to hold a meeting Thursday with another key European leader, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

Their visits come after Trump shook Europe with repeated criticism of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for failing to negotiate an end to the war and rebuffing a push to sign off on a deal giving the US access to Ukraine's rare earth minerals, which could be used in the American aerospace, medical and tech industries.

European leaders also were dismayed by Trump's decision to dis-

patch top aides for preliminary talks with Russian officials in Saudi Arabia without Ukrainian or European officials at the table.

Another clash is set to play out at the UN on Monday after the US proposed a competing resolution that lacks the same demands as one from Ukraine and the European Union for Moscow's forces to immediately withdraw from the country.

On the minerals deal, Zelenskyy initially bristled, saying it was short on security guarantees for Ukraine. He said Sunday on X that "we are making great progress" but noted that "we want a good economic deal that will be part of a true security guarantee system for Ukraine."

Trump administration officials say they expect to reach a deal this week that would tie the US and Ukrainian economies closer together - the last thing that Russia wants.

Democratic governors balance whether to fight or pacify after Trump threatens one of their own

WASHINGTON, Feb 24, (AP): US President Donald Trump's real-time confrontation with Maine's governor over athletes captured the conundrum many Democratic governors are facing in the Republican's second term.

Gov. Janet Mills' vow that she would see Trump in court over his threat to withhold money from the state if it didn't comply with his executive order delighted Democrats who want more strident pushback. But the dust-up that played out in the open Friday as Trump hosted governors at the White House ticked off a president known to retaliate against people he considers enemies.

Hours after the spat, the federal Department of Education announced it was initiating an investigation into the Maine Department of Education over the inclusion of trans athletes. Trump doesn't want them playing in girls and women's sports; Maine law bars discrimination based on gender identity.

"Any time a public interaction like that takes place, it's coming from a person who's grounded in their values," Michigan Gov Gretchen Whitmer said in an interview Sunday. "I love Janet Mills and I appreciate her for standing up. I also know that there's always a cost that comes with that."

The Democrats who lead the nation's most populous states were in Washington for a meeting of the National Governors Association, where they tried to strike a balance between



Michigan Gov Gretchen Whitmer speaks at the Detroit Auto Show on Jan 15, in Detroit. (AP)

their states' needs and their feelings about Trump.

Whitmer, known for clashing with Trump during his first term over the federal COVID-19 response, campaigned vigorously against him in 2024 on behalf of Democratic nominee Vice President Kamala Harris. Whitmer said she sat next to Trump at a White House dinner on Saturday night.

"I was the only Democrat at the table. I was a little surprised. I think everyone in the room was a little surprised, to be honest," she said. "But I

took the opportunity to talk a little bit about tariffs."

Michigan and other states could be significantly affected by some of the president's early proposals. For example, Michigan expects nearly 42% of its budget to come from federal funds and relies heavily on trade with Canada, which now faces potential Trump-imposed trade penalties.

A federal judge is considering a request to block the administration from freezing trillions of dollars in grants and loans, a move that could severely

impact states. At the same time, Trump's key ally, Elon Musk, is pushing to shrink the federal government, with likely ripples nationwide. About 80% of the roughly 2 million people in the federal workforce live outside metro Washington, dispersed across the country.

"I'm very worried that people are going to make decisions without a real understanding of what the ramifications are going to be for the American public," Whitmer said. Musk, she said, is "dangerous."

At discussion panels and news conferences at the meetings, state leaders struck a conciliatory tone.

"We always hope that people can disagree in a way that elevates the discourse and tries to come to a common solution," said Democratic Gov. Jared Polis of Colorado, the association's chair, when asked about the Trump-Mills exchange. "I don't think that disagreement was necessarily a model of that," he said.

Gov. Kathy Hochul, D-N.Y., met with Trump for more than an hour on Friday afternoon to discuss Manhattan's congestion tolling. Trump ordered a halt to the program, a key Hochul priority, and declared in a social media post: "Long live the king!"

Asked about the meeting, Hochul told CBS' "Face the Nation" that it was "adversarial" and said New Yorkers "need to know I'm willing to take the fight wherever I have to."



Conservative commentator Dan Bongino speaks at the Conservative Political Action Committee annual conference in National Harbor, Md., on March 6, 2014. (AP)

Ex-Secret Service agent Bongino picked as FBI deputy director

WASHINGTON, Feb 24, (AP): Dan Bongino, a former US Secret Service agent who has penned best-selling books, ran unsuccessfully for office and gained fame as a conservative pundit with TV shows and a popular podcast, has been chosen to serve as FBI deputy director.

President Donald Trump announced the appointment Sunday night in a post on his Truth Social platform, praising Bongino as "a man of incredible love and passion for our Country." He called the announcement "great news for Law Enforcement and American

Justice."

The selection places two staunch Trump allies atop the nation's premier federal law enforcement agency at a time when Democrats are concerned that the president could seek to target his adversaries. Bongino would serve under Kash Patel, who was sworn in as FBI director at the White House on Friday and who has signaled his intent to reshape the bureau, including by relocating hundreds of employees from its Washington headquarters and placing greater emphasis on the FBI's traditional crime-fighting duties.

Human rights being suffocated by autocrats, warmongers: UN

GENEVA, Feb 24, (AP): UN Secretary-General António Guterres says human rights are being "suffocated" around the world, lashing out at voices of division and anger who see them as a barrier to their quest for power and profit.

In a speech to the Human Rights Council, Guterres decried Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine that marked its third anniversary Monday, appealed for a permanent cease-fire between Palestinian militants and Israel, and urged respect for Congo's territorial integrity, among other things.

While reiterating many of his concerns about conflict and cli-

mate change, the UN chief said he would propose new ideas to the Security Council aimed to bring greater stability and security for the people of Haiti, where a multinational security support mission has been deployed.

Guterres depicted a world where human rights were "on the ropes and being pummeled hard" by warmongers, a "morally bankrupt global financial system" that favors profits over planet protections, those who might exploit artificial intelligence to harm people, and leaders who seek to demonize migrants or restrict women's rights.



Switzerland's Ambassador Juerg Lauber, (left), President of the Human Rights Council, and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, attend the High-Level Segment of the 58th session of the Human Rights Council at the European headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland on Feb 24. (AP)

Ramaswamy set to join Ohio gov's race

COLUMBUS, Ohio, Feb 24, (AP): Vivek Ramaswamy, the Cincinnati-born biotech entrepreneur who departed the Department of Government Efficiency initiative on President Donald Trump's first day, was expected to launch his bid for Ohio governor Monday.

Ramaswamy, 39, is set to kick off his campaign in Cincinnati, joining the 2026 Republican primary just a month after presumed frontrunner and then-Lt. Gov. Jon Husted left the running to take a U.S. Senate appointment.

Ramaswamy sought the GOP nomination for president in 2024 before dropping out to back Trump, who later tapped him to co-chair the efficiency initiative with billionaire Elon Musk. A near-billionaire himself, Ramaswamy has promoted his ties to Trump as he lines up key endorsements and donors in the governor's race, but the president has made no formal endorsement yet.

Ramaswamy joins a competitive GOP primary field to succeed Republican Gov. Mike DeWine, 78, a veteran center-right politician who is term-limited.



Ramaswamy



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Presidential Press Office, European leaders attending the ceremony at the memorial to the fallen Ukrainian soldiers on Independence Square in Kyiv, Ukraine on Feb 24. (AP)

Western leaders visit Ukraine's capital to show support on war's third anniversary

KYIV, Ukraine, Feb 24, (AP): More than a dozen Western leaders attended events in Ukraine on Monday marking the third anniversary of the country's war with Russia, many pledging more military aid in a conspicuous show of support for Kyiv as uncertainty deepened over the commitment of US President Donald Trump's administration to helping it fend off Russia's invasion.

The fourth year of fighting could be pivotal, as Trump uses his return to office last month to press for a peace deal. But Ukrainian and European officials have been rattled by his cordial approach to Russian President Vladimir Putin and his tough words for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

World security is at stake in talks over how the war ends, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen warned.

"The autocrats around the world are watching very carefully whether there's any impunity if you violate international borders or invade your neighbor, or if there is true deterrence," she told a conference in Kyiv.

Some observers say Russian success in Ukraine could embolden China's own ambitions. Just as Moscow claims that Ukraine is rightfully Russian territory, China claims the self-governing island of Taiwan as its own.

In a cascade of unwelcome developments for Kyiv, Trump has in recent days called Zelenskyy a dictator, suggested Ukraine is to blame for the war

and ended Putin's three-year diplomatic isolation by the United States. U.S. officials have also indicated to Ukraine that its hopes of joining NATO are unlikely to be realized and that it probably won't get back the land that Russia's army has occupied, amounting to nearly 20% of the country.

Meanwhile, Putin's troops are making steady progress on the battlefield while Ukraine is grappling with shortages of troops and weapons.

Some of Ukraine's most important backers, including European leaders and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, were among the stream of dignitaries arriving by train in Kyiv. Others spoke at a conference via video link.

The guests had similar messages: Ukraine and its European partners must be consulted in any peace negotiations, Putin's ambitions must be thwarted, and Europe must take on more of the burden for its own defense.

The shift in Washington's policy has set off alarm bells in Europe, where governments fear being sidelined by the US in efforts to secure a peace deal and are mulling how they might pick up the slack of any cut in U.S. aid for Ukraine. The changes have also placed strain on transatlantic relations.

European Council President Antonio Costa on Sunday announced that he would convene an emergency summit of the 27 EU leaders in Brussels on March 6, with Ukraine at the top of the agenda.

"We are living a defining moment for Ukraine and European security," he said in a post on social media.

EU foreign ministers on Monday approved a new raft of sanctions against Russia. The measures target Russia's so-called "shadow fleet" of ships that it uses to skirt restrictions on transporting oil and gas, or to carry stolen Ukrainian grain. The EU said 74 vessels were added to its shadow fleet list.

Asset freezes and travel bans were imposed on 83 officials and "entities" - usually government agencies, banks or companies.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said his country would provide a 1 billion-euro (\$1.04 billion) military systems package to Ukraine this year.

Starmer said Ukrainians' voices "must be at the heart of the drive for peace," while Trump's intervention had "changed the global conversation" and "created an opportunity."

"Russia does not hold all the cards in this war," he said.

Coming off a victory in Sunday's German elections, conservative leader Friedrich Merz - also a staunch backer of Ukraine - posted on X Monday: "More than ever, we must put Ukraine in a position of strength."

"For a fair peace, the country that is under attack must be part of peace negotiations," he wrote.

On Sunday, Russia launched its biggest single drone attack of the war, pounding Ukraine with 267 drones.

Merz on course to take Germany's top job after election and vows to unite Europe

BERLIN, Feb 24, (AP): Friedrich Merz, on course to become post-World War II Germany's 10th chancellor after the country's election, has vowed to prioritize European unity and the continent's security as it grapples with the new Trump administration and Russia's war on Ukraine.

Merz's task will be complicated by the need to form a coalition with the center-left Social Democrats of outgoing Chancellor Olaf Scholz. He has repeatedly pledged not to work with the far-right anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany party despite their second-place finish.

The 69-year-old conservative leader heads the center-right Union bloc, which won Germany's national election with 28.5% of the votes.

"I am also aware of the scale of the task that now lies ahead of us," he told supporters after his victory Sunday night. "The world out there isn't waiting for us, and it isn't waiting for long-drawn-out coalition talks and negotiations."

The top job has been late in com-



Friedrich Merz, (center), leader of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), receives flowers and applause from board members Julia Kloeckner, (left), Christina Stumpp, (second from left), Carsten Linnemann, (second from right), and Silvia Breher, (right), at the CDU's headquarters, in Berlin, Germany on Feb 24. (AP)

ing for Merz, a lawyer by profession, who saw his ascent derailed by former Chancellor Angela Merkel in the early 2000s and even turned his back on ac-

tive politics for several years. Despite his political experience, he is heading to the chancellery without previously having served in government.

INTERNATIONAL

DPRK condemns 11 nations for convening meet on sanctions

SEOUL, Feb 24, (Xinhua): The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has condemned 11 countries for convening a meeting on the implementation of UN sanctions against Pyongyang, the DPRK's official Korean Central News Agency reported on Monday, citing an official.

The inaugural meeting of the Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team (MSMT) "may bring about serious backfire hard for them to deal with," the chief of the External Policy Office of DPRK's Foreign Ministry was quoted as saying on Sunday. North Korean leader is **Kim Jong-Un**.



Kim

The MSMT meeting talked about strengthening the implementation of UN sanctions to cope with the nuclear and missile "threats" of the DPRK. The MSMT, formed by countries that are only doing harmful things, "is nothing but an illegal, illegitimate and criminal ghost group in terms of the reason of its existence and purpose," said the official.

Sanctions waiver through negotiations has long ceased to be a concern for the DPRK and is not part of its agenda,

said the official. "However, it will never overlook any provocations of the United States and its followers to encroach upon the legitimate sovereign rights of the DPRK under the pretext of implementing sanctions, but strongly counter them with resolute actions."

According to the US State Department, the governments of Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, South Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States held the MSMT steering committee inaugural meeting in Washington, DC, on Wednesday.

The MSMT, established in October 2024, is to assist with the full implementation of UN Security Council resolutions on the DPRK, said the US State Department in a statement.

Meanwhile, South Korea's police booked President Yoon Suk-yeol for obstructing the execution of a warrant to arrest him, multiple media outlets said Friday.

The police were quoted as saying that its special investigative unit had booked and investigated Yoon over the suspicion of obstructing his arrest warrant execution. The police seized text messages between Yoon and Kim Seong-hoon, the presidential security service's deputy chief, in which Yoon reportedly instructed Kim to block investigators' attempt to arrest him in the presidential residence.

President Xi Jinping tells Putin that China pleased with Russia's efforts to end Ukraine war

BEIJING, Feb 24, (AP): China's President Xi Jinping had a call with Russia's President Vladimir Putin on Monday and said he was pleased with Moscow's efforts to hold a summit with the U.S. toward ending the war in Ukraine, state broadcaster reported.

Putin updated Xi on the latest contacts with the US, according to CCTV, which didn't give further details.

Xi said that "China is pleased to see that Russia and relevant parties have made positive efforts to resolve the crisis," according to CCTV.

The Chinese side "expressed support" for the dialogue between Russia and the U.S. and said it is prepared to assist to peacefully resolve the conflict, according to a statement from the Kremlin.

The call came as a dozen leaders from Europe and Canada visited Ukraine's capital on Monday to mark the third anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion and show their support for Kyiv.

Xi also reiterated China's stance, which includes a "Friends of Peace" group established last September with several other countries, to promote efforts to end the war. China and Brazil issued a joint peace plan last year that calls for a peace conference with both Ukraine and Russia and no expansion



Russian President Vladimir Putin speaks with Chinese President Xi Jinping via videoconference at Novo-Ogaryovo state residence outside of Moscow, Russia, Tuesday, Jan 21. (AP)

of the battlefield.

Xi and Putin have had a close relationship, which is also reflected in the countries' ties. China has become a major customer for Russian oil and gas and a source of key technologies following sweeping Western sanctions on Moscow.

Also:

BANGKOK: Chinese authorities said they began live-fire exercises in the Gulf of Tonkin on Monday, only days

after Vietnam announced a new line

marking what it considers its territory in the body of water between the two countries. China's Maritime Safety Administration said the exercises would be focused on the Beibu Gulf area, closer to the Chinese side of the Gulf of Tonkin, and would run through Thursday evening.

It gave no further details, but the drills follow an announcement last week by Vietnam establishing a baseline used to calculate the width of its ter-

ritorial waters in the Gulf of Tonkin. State-run Vietnam News reported that the baseline was in compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and would provide "a robust legal basis for safeguarding and exercising Vietnam's sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction."

Vietnam has not publicly responded to the Chinese drills.

China and Vietnam have long had a maritime agreement governing the Gulf of Tonkin, but have been locked in competing claims in the nearby South China Sea over the Spratly and Parcel Islands and maritime areas.

China has been growing aggressive in pursuing those claims, and in October assaulted 10 Vietnamese fishermen near the Parcel Islands, three of whom suffered broken limbs.

China claims almost the entire South China Sea as its own, though it has not publicly released exact coordinates of its claim other than a map with 10 dashed lines broadly demarcating what it calls its territory.

In addition to Vietnam, China's claims overlap with those of the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan, while Indonesia has also figured in violent confrontations with the Chinese coast guard and fishing fleets in the waters around the Natuna Islands.

'Mutual alarm over Chinese aggression'

Japan and Philippines agree to further deepen defense collaboration

MANILA, Philippines, Feb 24, (Agencies): Japan and the Philippines agreed Monday to further deepen their defense collaboration and talk about protecting shared military information in the face of mutual alarm over China's increasing aggressive actions in the region.

Japanese Defense Minister Gen Nakatani and his Philippine counterpart, Gilberto Teodoro, forged the agreements in a meeting in Manila where their concern over China's actions in the disputed South China Sea and East China Sea was high in the agenda.

Japan and the Philippines are treaty allies of the United States, and the three have been among the most vocal critics of China's assertive actions in the region, including in the contested waters.

At the opening of his meeting with Nakatani, Teodoro said the Philippines was looking forward to boosting defense relations with Japan "against unilateral attempts by China and other countries to change the international order and the narrative."

Nakatani said after the meeting that he agreed with Teodoro "to strengthen operational cooperation," including joint and multinational defense trainings, port calls and information-sharing.

"We also agreed to commence discussion between defense authorities on military information protection mechanism," Nakatani said.

The Philippines signed an agreement with the United States, its longtime treaty ally, last year to better secure the exchange of highly confidential military intelligence and technology in key weapons to allow the sale of such weaponry by the U.S. to the Philippines.

Then-Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Teodoro signed the legally binding General Security of Military Information Agreement in Manila at a time



Japanese Defense Minister Gen Nakatani, (left), gestures beside Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro during their press conference in Makati City, Philippines on Feb 24. (AP)

when the U.S. and the Philippines were boosting their defense and military engagements, including large-scale joint combat drills, largely in response to China's increasingly aggressive actions in Asia.

Nakatani said that he and Teodoro "firmly concurred that the security environment surrounding us is becoming increasingly severe and that it is necessary for the two countries as strategic partners to further enhance defense cooperation and collaboration in order to maintain peace and stability in Indo-Pacific."

Japan has had a longstanding territorial dispute with China over islands in the East China Sea. Chinese and Philippine coast guard and navy ships, meanwhile, have been involved in a series of increasingly hostile confrontations in the South China Sea in the last two years.

Also high in the agenda of Nakatani and Teodoro, a copy of which was seen by The Associated Press, was the "expansion of bilateral cooperation, especially in the context of the Reciprocal Access Agreement."

Last year, Japan and the Philippines signed the agreement allowing the deployment of Japanese and Philippine forces for joint military and combat drills in each other's territory. The Philippine Senate has ratified the agreement, and its expected ratification by Japan's legislature would allow the agreement to take effect.

The agreement with the Philippines, which includes live-fire drills, is the first to be forged by Japan in Asia. Japan signed similar accords with Australia in 2022 and with Britain in 2023.

Japan has taken steps to boost its security and defensive firepower, including a counterstrike capability that breaks from the country's postwar principle of focusing only on self-defense. It's doubling defense spending in a five-year period to 2027 to bolster its military power.

Many of Japan's Asian neighbors, including the Philippines, came under Japanese aggression until its defeat in World War II, and Tokyo's efforts to strengthen its military role and spending could be a sensitive issue.

Asia

Teen held for stabbing: The Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department on Monday arrested a 17-year-old boy on suspicion of attempted murder after another 17-year-old boy was fatally stabbed on a street in Adachi Ward of Tokyo.



Yuriko Koike

The crime scene is located in a residential area approximately 1.5 km west of Nishi-Arai Daishi Nishi Station on the Nippori-Toneri Liner. Governor of Tokyo is **Yuriko Koike**. (Xinhua)

Traffic accident kills 6: Six people were killed and three others injured in a traffic accident on Monday in the county of Zhongshan in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, according to local authorities.

A minivan traveling along a section of a national highway collided with a truck at around 7 a.m. this morning. Four died at the scene and two passed later despite emergency rescue efforts. (Xinhua)

6 killed in fatal incident: Six people were found dead, and nine others remain missing after a truck carrying 32 people, including several children, plunged into a river in Indonesia's Riau province, a top rescuer said on Sunday.

The fatal accident occurred in a river in Pelalawan Regency late Saturday, according to Budi Cahyadi, head of the provincial search and rescue office. (Xinhua)

Residents attack Bangladesh air force base, leaving 1 dead

DHAKA, Bangladesh, Feb 24, (Agencies): A group of residents in southern Bangladesh on Monday attacked an air force base following an altercation, prompting soldiers to open fire that killed at least one and wounded several others, local media reports said.

The military in a statement blamed "miscreants" for attacking the air force base in Cox's Bazar. It did not mention any casualties.

The country's largest English-language Daily Star newspaper reported one dead.

The violence broke out after a man on a motorbike was challenged by air force soldiers for not wearing his helmet, according to the Bengali-language Prothom Alo newspaper. After an altercation, the man's relatives and neighbors came forward and started attacking the base, the report said.

Bangladesh, which is run by an interim government headed by Nobel Peace laureate Muhammad Yunus, has faced numerous challenges in establishing order since the ouster of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina in early August by a mass uprising spearheaded by students. Mob justice has become a concern.

The interim government launched a nationwide crackdown called "Operation Devil Hunt" on Feb. 8 and arrested more than 8,000 people across the country. Hasina's Awami League party blamed the government for arresting their supporters.

Meanwhile, Bangladeshi interim government is planning the possibility of introducing military



People stand around the vandalized residence of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh's former leader and the father of the country's ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, in Dhaka, on February 6. (AP)

training for the youth.

Also:

DHAKA: The Bangladeshi interim government has declared Feb. 25 as "Army Martyrs Day" to commemorate the army officers killed during a mutiny inside the headquarters of the paramilitary Border Guard Bangladesh, previously known as Bangladesh Rifles (BDR).

A notification issued by the country's Cabinet Division on Sunday instructed all ministries, divisions and organizations to comply with the observance annually.

A total of 74 people, including 57 army officials, were killed at BDR's headquarters on Feb. 25-26 in 2009.

Argentina's President Milei explains chainsaw methods and likens them to Musk's DOGE

OXON HILL, Md., Feb 24, (AP): Argentina's President Javier Milei on Saturday urged an enthusiastic crowd of U.S. conservatives to keep supporting measures to shrink the size of their government, saying his methods are similar to those undertaken by President Donald Trump and close ally Elon Musk.

Milei is the man behind the chainsaw waved effusively onstage by Musk, in perhaps the most memorable single moment at this year's Conservative Political Action Conference, or CPAC, held in suburban Maryland.

In a Saturday speech in Spanish, Milei expressed support for the Trump administration's efforts to dismantle the U.S. Agency for International Development, saying it is out of line with the president's agenda and claiming it was wasteful.

"The only rational path is to shrink the size of the state as much as possible," Milei said. "Reducing the size of the State is in itself an act of justice."

Trump, in his remarks at the gathering, praised Milei. "We're very proud of you," he said.

Milei quoted in his speech an influential libertarian intellectual from Pennsylvania, Albert J. Nock, who wrote in his 1935 book "Our Enemy, the State" about the struggle between state power and social power.

"Our method is similar to that of our dear friend Elon Musk," Milei said. "To go office by office, keep in place what is working and get rid of the rest. That's why I gave him a



Argentina's President Javier Milei speaks at the Conservative Political Action Conference, CPAC, at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center, on Feb 22 in Oxon Hill, Md. (AP)

chainsaw."

The Argentine leader used a different chainsaw as a prop during his 2023 campaign to symbolize his proposals to shred the bloated state. The red chainsaw gifted to Musk was engraved with Milei's slogan "Viva la libertad, carajo," which is Spanish for "Long live liberty, damn it."

When Musk first began toying with the idea of forming a taskforce to downsize the federal workforce during an interview with Trump on X last August, they both talked about the Argentine leader. Musk praised his extreme austerity measures that had laid

off tens of thousands of public sector workers and cut pensions to reverse spending that caused the country to default on its debts.

Milei also attended CPAC last year and met with Trump backstage, exchanging a close hug. Milei was the first foreign leader to meet with Trump after he won the election, but before he took office. Milei was also invited to the inauguration on Jan. 20.

In a video message later Saturday, Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni defended the central role of Europe and its crucial relationship with the United States.

Sudan's army breaks RSF siege of crucial city

CAIRO, Feb 24, (AP): Sudan's military on Sunday broke a more than yearlong siege on the crucial city of Obeid, restoring access to a strategic area in the south-central region and strengthening crucial supply routes in its nearly two years of war against a notorious paramilitary group, officials said.

The military also kicked the Rapid Support Forces from its last stronghold in the White Nile province in another setback to the notorious group, military spokesman Brig. Gen. Nabil Abdullah said in a statement.

Sudan was plunged into chaos in April last year when simmering tensions between the military and the RSF exploded into open warfare across the country.

The fighting, which wrecked the capital, Khartoum, and other urban areas has been marked by atrocities including mass rape and ethnically motivated killings that amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, especially in the western region of Darfur, according to the United Nations and international rights groups.

Abdullah, the spokesman, said mili-



This photo taken with a mobile phone in Port Sudan shows displaced individuals preparing to leave Port Sudan for Wad Madani, the capital of Gezira State in central Sudan, as part of a government program for voluntary return, on Feb 10. (Xinhua)

itary troops in the al-Sayyad axis managed to reopen the road to the city of Obeid and break the RSF siege on the city which serves as the provincial capital of North Kordofan province. The city hosts a sprawling airbase and the military's 5th Infantry Division

known as Haganah.

A commercial and transportation hub, Obeid is located on a railway linking Khartoum to Nyala, the provincial capital of South Darfur province. It was besieged by the RSF since the onset of the ongoing conflict in April 2023.

Finance Minister Jibril Ibrahim hailed the military's advances in Obeid as a "massive step" to lift the RSF siege on el-Fasher, the capital of North Darfur province, as well as delivering humanitarian aid to the Kordofan area.

Sunday's RSF defeats were the latest in a series of setbacks for the notorious group that started in September when the military launched an offensive aiming at recapturing the Great Khartoum area - Khartoum and its two sister cities of Omdurman and Khartoum North, or Bahri.

The military has since captured strategic areas including its own main headquarters and is now close to recapturing the Republican Palace which RSF fighters stormed in the first hours of the war in an attempt to kill military chief Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan.



A Somali soldier controls the crowd as thousands of people attend a protest rally in Mogadishu, Somalia on Jan 3, after being angry with an agreement signed between Ethiopia and the breakaway region of Somaliland to give landlocked Ethiopia access to its shoreline. (AP)

Ethiopia and Somalia to boost army cooperation

ADDIS ABABA, Feb 24, (Xinhua): Ethiopia and Somalia have set to develop a "Status of Force Agreement" for their bilateral forces that will operate in Somalia, according to a joint communique released on Saturday, the state-affiliated Fana Broadcasting Corporate reported.

The agreement followed talks between Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, on Feb. 14-16 and a subsequent discussion between the army chiefs of the two neighboring countries in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, on Saturday. Ethiopia was a key troop contributor to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), which operated from 2022 to 2024. ATMIS has been replaced by the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) since January 2025.

A delegation led by Birhanu Jula, chief of staff of the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF), paid a one-day working visit to Somalia on Saturday. The Ethiopian delegation held a discussion with Somalia's officials, including Odowaa Yusuf Rageh, Somali chief of defense force, on ways of strengthening bilateral cooperation in the fight against Al-Shabaab and maintaining peace, security, and stability in the Horn of Africa.

In line with its commitment to promoting banking culture and enhancing financial awareness across all segments of society

NBK hosts fraud awareness session for Dasman Bilingual School students

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: In line with its ongoing commitment to promoting banking culture and enhancing financial awareness across all segments of society, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) held a fraud awareness and prevention session at Dasman Bilingual School. The initiative aligns with NBK's support for the "Let's Be Aware" banking awareness campaign, launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) in collaboration with Kuwait Banking Association (KBA).



Farah Bastaki

The session, attended by over 100 middle school students, shed light on the latest prevalent fraud tactics, how they are executed, and the deceptive methods employed by fraudsters. It also provided essential tips and guidance on safeguarding against such schemes and ensuring online security.

The session saw remarkable engagement, with students actively interacting through the real-life examples and cases presented by the NBK team. The discussion was further enriched by numerous student inquiries, to which the team provided insightful responses. Beyond raising awareness, the session aimed to equip students with the knowledge and vigilance needed to proactively safeguard their personal data while using social media.

The NBK team shared several key fraud prevention tips, emphasizing the importance of using strong and secure passwords with a minimum of eight characters, incorporating letters, numbers, and symbols. They highlighted that the longer the password, the harder it is to crack, while also advising against using personal information or reusing the same password across multiple accounts. This precaution is crucial, as a security breach on one device could com-

promise all linked online accounts if the same password is used.

The team also cautioned against clicking on suspicious links, whether received through social media or emails from fraudulent sources that impersonate reputable institutions such as banks, telecommunications providers, or major corporations. These deceptive tactics are designed to steal banking or personal information, making vigilance and verification essential to safeguarding one's data.

The team also emphasized the importance of never responding to messages or phone calls claiming to be from the bank and requesting personal or banking information. Fraudsters increasingly use artificial intelligence tools to manipulate communications, making phone numbers appear local within Kuwait to deceive victims. To ensure security, no banking details



NBK hosts fraud awareness session for middle school students.

should ever be shared with any individual or entity.

Furthermore, the NBK team reaffirmed that the bank will never request personal information via email, text messages, or phone calls. They cautioned against responding to such messages, as they are fraudulent attempts designed to steal banking information, sensitive data, or funds.

Commenting on the event, Farah Bastaki, Manager, Digital Communications at National Bank of Kuwait stated: "Awareness serves as the first and most effective line of defense against fraud. That is why we remain committed to expanding the aware-

ness content shared across our social media platforms to educate the public, strengthen their confidence in the banking sector, and ensure a secure banking environment. This commitment is particularly crucial amid rapid technological advancements and the increasing sophistication of financial fraud driven by artificial intelligence."

"We are continuously striving to enhance financial awareness and promote banking culture across all segments of society, including school and university students as well as our senior community members. Our commitment extends to innovating new approaches that enrich the content of the 'Let's

Be Aware' campaign, empowering the public with the knowledge needed to safeguard their data and bank accounts," she added.

Bastaki emphasized that NBK leverages its extensive capabilities in customer communication, utilizing its wide-reaching digital channels—the most followed among Kuwaiti banks—to ensure that the objectives of the "Let's Be Aware" campaign reach the broadest possible audience.

NBK remains dedicated to championing strategic campaigns that drive meaningful impact on the national economy and society. Its steadfast commitment to fraud prevention and

Bastaki:

- Awareness serves as the strongest safeguard against fraud, and we remain unwavering in our commitment to strengthening it
- We continuously enhance and expand our social media content to educate and empower all segments of society
- Our commitment extends to actively supporting key strategic campaigns that serve the broader interests of the national economy and community

raising customer awareness serves as a cornerstone of its broader strategy, reinforcing trust and financial security.

The campaign, launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) in collaboration with Kuwait Banks Association (KBA), is the largest of its kind in the region. It aims to enhance banking and financial awareness among customers by covering key topics such as fraud prevention measures, best practices for utilizing banking services, and fostering a culture of savings and investment, along with other relevant financial issues.

NBK is a key supporter and strategic partner of all CBK campaigns and initiatives aimed at enhancing financial literacy and promoting banking awareness across all segments of society. As a leading financial institution, NBK consistently organizes various initiatives and events that raise awareness about critical banking sector issues.

GCC foreign reserve assets reach \$804.1 bln in H1 2024

Foreign reserves account for 4.9% of global total

MUSCAT, Feb 24, (KUNA): Data released by the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf (GCC-Stat) indicate that total foreign reserve assets of GCC countries amounted to USD 804.1 billion by the end of the first half of 2024, marking a 7.5 percent increase compared to end of the previous year.

The statistics also revealed on Sunday that these reserve assets accounted for 4.9 percent of total global reserve assets, making GCC countries rank fifth in terms of the size of international reserve assets after China, the European Union, Japan and Switzerland.

The data attributed this growth to the increase in oil revenues, in addition to the rise in prices of financial assets in global markets. The average price of Brent crude during the first half of 2024 reached about USD 84 per barrel, which constitutes the largest portion of financial resources of the GCC countries.

'Fully digital loans for the first time in Kuwait'

Weyay Bank opens the doors to digital financing

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: In a new step that is the first of its kind towards enhancing digital financing in the banking sector, Weyay Bank announces the launch of fully digital loans with the highest standards of speed and security and the aim of expanding the scope of the Bank's services to meet the requirements of customers from different segments. This step comes in line with Kuwait 2035 Vision, which aims to transform Kuwait into a financial and trade hub regionally and internationally through digital transformation.



Mohammed H.

This transformation supports innovative digital initiatives in various sectors, which contribute to developing the digital infrastructure and expanding the use of modern technologies to facilitate people's lives and achieve sustainable development.

This unprecedented step also enhances the vision of the Central Bank of Kuwait, which plays a pivotal role in supporting digital transformation in the Kuwaiti banking sector by implementing legislation and visions that support digital innovation, as it seeks to develop a banking environment based on modern technology, such as developing digital systems for processing payments, transfers, and other services.

With the launch of digital loans, Weyay Bank customers, for the first time in Kuwait can enjoy an end-to-end digital loan experience that redefines convenience, transparency, and control for customers. Designed for the digital-first generation, this seamless loan journey empowers users to apply, track, and manage their loans effortlessly through the Weyay app.

What makes this launch further innovative is that the loan applications submitted through the Weyay app are linked to the Credit Information Network (CiNet), for the first time in Kuwait, to provide an instant and secure loan process. This link to CiNet allows the borrower's credit data to be verified and the accuracy and reliability of their financial information to be ensured, which can only happen after obtaining the borrower's approval that is also done digitally via the "Kuwait Mobile ID" app. This all together accelerates the approval process, enhances transparency, and reduces the risks

associated with loans.

The main features of Weyay Bank's digital loans:

A Smarter Way to Borrow: With a state-of-the-art loan calculator, customers can personalize their loan experience from the very first step. The Apply stage enables users to:

- Obtain CINET consent digitally, ensuring a fully paperless process.
- Instantly check their actual loan eligibility based on salary and liabilities.
- Customize their loan amount and repayment plan through an intuitive calculator that provides real-time insights.

Real-Time Tracking and Digital Contract Signing: The Track stage gives customers full visibility over their loan's progress, eliminating uncertainty. Through the Weyay app, users can:

- Monitor their loan status throughout the underwriting process.
- Access and review loan contracts in one place.
- Sign their loan agreement digitally via Kuwait Mobile ID, ensuring a secure and hassle-free process.

Complete Management at Your Fingertips: once the loan is approved and funded, customers can take full control in the Manage stage. A user-friendly payment calendar offers complete transparency, allowing users to:

- Track all payments made towards their loan.
- View upcoming installment due dates.
- Stay informed with a clear, struc-

tured repayment plan.

"The launch of our digital loans underscores our dedication to creating innovative financial solutions that empower our customers to achieve their goals. Recognizing that our customers require banking services that align with their digital lifestyle, Weyay Bank is committed to offering modern, advanced banking options that cater to these evolving needs," said Mohammed Al-Humaidi, Product Owner at Weyay Bank.

These loans also play a key role in boosting the national economy by encouraging customers to manage their financial lives more effectively. By enhancing their financial capabilities, Weyay Bank helps promote financial inclusion and stimulate both investment and economic growth.

Weyay Bank is leading the way in banking innovation in Kuwait, offering a digital experience that not only meets the needs of customers who seek to keep up with the latest, but also those who seek efficiency, flexibility and simplicity. As more than just a financial institution, Weyay Bank plays an active role in enabling the digital lifestyle and remains committed to shaping the future of banking in Kuwait.

All information about the Weyay Bank digital loans and how to apply can be found on its website www.weyaybank.com or in the Weyay app that can be downloaded from the App Store or Google Play Store.



Weyay Bank launches Kuwait's first fully digital loans.

On the occasion of the National and Liberation Days of the State of Kuwait

بمناسبة العيد الوطني وعيد التحرير لدولة الكويت

The Executive Management and all the employees of HSBC Bank Middle East Limited, Kuwait, extend their warmest congratulations and best wishes to the honourable leadership and people of the State of Kuwait.

Wishing His Highness the Amir and all the people of Kuwait prosperity, security and safety.

تقدم الإدارة التنفيذية وجميع العاملين في بنك إتش أس بي سي الشرق الأوسط المحدودة - الكويت، بأسمى آيات التهنية والتمنيات لقيادة وشعب الكويت الكرام.

كل عام والكويت وأميرها وأهلها بنعمون بالخير والإزدهار والأمن والأمان على الدوام.

Opening up a world of opportunity

Wide range of digital banking services now available at ABK

ABK champions financial literacy with 'Let's Be Aware' campaign

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) continues to play a pivotal role in promoting financial literacy and banking culture within the Kuwaiti society by actively supporting the 'Let's Be Aware' awareness campaign. Now in its fourth consecutive year, this campaign is a collaboration with the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Banking Association.

ABK is harnessing all its resources to achieve the objectives of this initiative. By engaging with customers and the local community, ABK disseminates daily tips and valuable insights to enhance financial literacy. These are shared within its branches, digital platforms, and social media pages.

The Bank places great emphasis on encouraging customers to adopt the comprehensive digital solutions it offers. This initiative aims to ensure customers can conduct their banking and

financial transactions with the highest security standards. ABK also provides numerous instructional videos detailing the use of new digital services, as part of its ongoing commitment to enhancing customers' banking knowledge. This education helps customers understand the methods and benefits of these banking solutions, aligned with technological advancements.

ABK's digital services encompass a wide range of functionalities, including account opening, data updating, loan and bank card applications, customer

service contact, and account statement requests. These services are continuously introduced as part of ABK's digital transformation plan.

This digital content supports financial inclusion in the community, which stands as one of the most important and prominent goals of the 'Let's Be Aware' banking awareness campaign. ABK remains committed to supporting the efforts of the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Banking Association in advancing this campaign throughout the year across Kuwait.



ABK logo



Diraya logo

Bank employees gain access to higher education at GUST

Gulf Bank, GUST sign strategic partnership for youth development

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: As part of its ongoing commitment to empowering and equipping young professionals – and reinforcing its position as a preferred employer in Kuwait’s financial sector – Gulf Bank has signed a strategic partnership agreement with the Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) to enhance training and employment opportunities for students.

Under the agreement, Gulf Bank will offer distinguished training programs to GUST students in various banking fields, enabling them to apply their academic knowledge in a real-world work environment. Additionally, Gulf Bank will consider employment opportunities for GUST’s top talent upon graduation.

The partnership also includes Gulf Bank’s active participation in initiatives, events, and career fairs organized by GUST, providing students with valuable networking opportunities with potential employers and insights into their future career paths.

Furthermore, as a part of the strategic partnership, Gulf Bank employees will have access to exclusive packages for continuing their higher education at GUST. This initiative reflects the bank’s commitment to investing in its workforce’s professional growth, providing opportunities to enhance skills, expand knowledge, and advance careers through quality academic programs.

Following the signing of the agreement, Mrs. Salma Al-Hajjaj, General Manager of Human Resources at Gulf Bank, stated: “We are excited about our partnership with GUST, as it aligns with our commitment to supporting education and youth development in Kuwait. This collaboration highlights our dedication to equipping young talents with the necessary skills and expertise to excel in the private sector, particularly in banking, thereby contributing to Kuwait’s economic growth.”

She added, “This strategic partnership is part of Gulf Bank’s ongoing efforts to build strong collaborations with esteemed universities in Ku-



Salma Al-Hajjaj and President of Gulf University for Science and Technology Dr. Bassam Alameddine during the signing of the agreement.

wait, aiming to provide students with comprehensive training programs that equip them for the job market, support their career growth, and offer employment opportunities after graduation.”

Mrs. Al-Hajjaj emphasized Gulf Bank’s commitment to Kuwait Vision 2035, which prioritizes employment in the private sector and youth empowerment. She noted that the Bank’s continuous investment in national talent has led to significant growth in its Kuwaiti workforce over

Salma Al-Hajjaj:

■ This partnership reaffirms our commitment to supporting education and youth in Kuwait, focusing on enhancing their skills and potential.

recent years.

“We take pride in being one of the leading banks that generously invest in human capital to enhance employees’ competencies. Our people are at the core of our strategic vision, and we are committed to equipping them with the latest skills and expertise needed to navigate the ever-evolving banking industry,” she added.

Mrs. Al-Hajjaj concluded by highlighting Gulf Bank’s commitment to economic sustainability through employment, training, and development – focusing on hiring and empowering Kuwaiti talent, fostering their growth, and preparing them to lead in the private sector.

Gulf Bank aims to be Kuwait’s leading bank, fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace to deliver exceptional customer service while contributing sustainably to the community. Through its extensive branch network and innovative digital services, the Bank empowers customers to conduct banking transactions conveniently and efficiently, ensuring a seamless experience.

In alignment with Kuwait Vision 2035, “New Kuwait,” and its commitment to fostering collaborative partnerships, Gulf Bank is dedicated to driving robust sustainability initiatives across environmental, social, and governance (ESG) dimensions. The Bank is committed to implementing strategically selected and diverse sustainability programs both internally and externally.

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KFH services

Available on several channels

KFH ensures 24/7 banking services during the holiday

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) continues to provide its banking services around the clock through a group of various digital tools during the holiday.

Most of the banking services are available on several channels around the clock, whether through the bank’s website, KFH.com, or via the KFHOnline mobile application, or through the KFH Go self-banking stations that are spread in many important locations, in addition to the KFH accounts on social media and many E-service channels.

The KFH Go self-banking station is considered a smart electronic channel that helps transfer normal customer transactions to an innovative automated branch, allowing customers to benefit from highly efficient banking services. It includes more than 80% of the services and business provided by the branches in their traditional sense.

KFH GO self-banking stations include the XTM device that allows direct video call with service personnel, as well as automatic teller and cash deposit machines. The cash deposit machines receive 300 notes per transaction.

Moreover, customers can perform a variety of interactive banking services through KFH Go branches located in various places in Kuwait, including Kuwait International Airport. These services include: establishing Murabaha financing transactions, requesting credit and prepaid cards, updating data and phone numbers, activating bank cards, opening deposits and accounts, instant cheque and card printing, receiving gold biscuits (10 grams), opening (gold, savings, Al-Rabeh, electron) accounts, online gold purchase and sell, cardless withdrawals using QR code through mobile, or by using Civil ID or phone number, in addition to many other financing and banking services conducted quickly, easily and safely.

The electronic banking services at KFH are also characterized by their high efficiency in addition to ease and safety. This was evident in the number of electronic banking operations that KFH customers carried out via KFHonline, on the website or through mobile applications.

The e-banking transactions include: opening bank account online for citizens and residents without having to visit the branch, local and telex financial transfers, opening deposits, adding beneficiaries, balance inquiry, cheque book request, opening gold account, selling and purchasing gold, requesting financing, requesting Al-Khair Card, and checking the PINs of the credit and debit cards, activating new cards, reporting a lost credit/debit cards, checking the financing obligations and the number of installments, reviewing investment plans, receiving account balances and deposits summary, along with other wide range of digital services.

KFH also allows customers to complete their personal financing transactions and signing them online, whether through the mobile app or the website from anywhere without having to visit the branch. The Bank also launched the Live FX Pricing, and instant cross-border payments service at KFH-Turkey using Ripple’s technology in addition to the instant card printing service within three minutes. Additionally, KFH offers digital Wallet service through smart mobiles and watches, providing advanced and smart digital payment methods according to highly developed security standards in cooperation with Samsung, Fitbit and Garmin.

Call Center

Meanwhile, the call center continues to provide services 24/7 to receive customer calls, listen to their enquiries and respond to them through a qualified and technically advanced staff. KFH provides the automated telephone service 1803333 that works with the same efficiency and speed, to respond to transfers between accounts, inquire about financial operations, pay bills, and recharge Mobile phone cards, among other services.

Social Media

KFH’s social media team remains dedicated to addressing customer inquiries and assisting them at all hours through the official social media accounts (@KFHGroup).

Gulf Bank secures \$650 mln debut senior unsecured syndicated term loan facility

Deal successfully closed by Emirates NBD Capital and Standard Chartered

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: Gulf Bank K.S.C.P. (“Gulf Bank” or the “Borrower”), one of the leading conventional banks in Kuwait, has successfully signed a US\$ 650 Million Senior Unsecured Syndicated Term Loan Facility (the “Facility”).

Emirates NBD Capital Limited, the investment banking arm of Emirates NBD, and Standard Chartered served as Global Coordinators, Mandated Lead Arrangers and Bookrunner (“MLABs”), acting both individually and collectively in these roles.

The Facility is Gulf Bank’s debut transaction in the international syndicated loan markets and opens up a sustainable and diversified route of financing through access to the international and regional syndicated loan markets. The proceeds of the Facility will be utilized to fund Gulf Bank’s general corporate purposes.

The Facility was anchored by the MLABs and was launched to a select group of international and regional investors in general syndication.

Waleed Mandani, Gulf Bank’s Acting Chief Executive Officer, commented: “The transaction re-



Waleed Mandani

ceived strong interest from both global and regional banks, allowing Gulf Bank to expand its funding sources and diversify its investor base. The Facility was significantly oversubscribed, allowing Gulf Bank to exercise the green-shoe option to upsize the Facility to US\$ 650 Million from the original size at launch of US\$ 500 Million, post scale-back. The success of this debut transaction affirms Gulf Bank’s reputation as a regional banking leader with good domestic franchise, high credit worthiness and impeccable financial strength.”

Mandani Added: “Emirates NBD and Standard Chartered have demonstrated exceptional expertise in successfully closing this transaction.”

Hitesh Asarpota, CEO of Emirates NBD Capital, said: “We are proud to have played a pivotal role in facilitating Gulf Bank’s milestone debut global syndicated loan transaction. The transaction was



Gulf Bank headquarters.

successfully completed with strong demand from both regional and global investors. This transaction is a testament to Emirates NBD Capital’s commitment to fostering long-term partnerships, strengthening relationships with key institutions, and enhancing access to global liquidity.”

Commenting on the transaction, Rola Abu Manneh, Chief Executive Officer of Standard Chartered, UAE Middle East and Pakistan said: “This successful transaction underscores Gulf Bank’s market position and the

high level of investor confidence in the region. The strong demand for the facility highlights both, the resilience of the syndication market and the depth of liquidity available to leading institutions. Standard Chartered remains committed to providing clients with innovative financing solutions and seamless access to global liquidity.”

The Facility was closed with participation from a diversified mix of regional and international lenders, with Emirates NBD Bank (P.J.S.C.) acting as Facility Agent.

Musk claims ‘fraud,’ demands federal employee reports

Federal employees face job cuts under Musk’s mandate

WASHINGTON, Feb 24, (AP): Confusion and chaos loom as hundreds of thousands of federal employees begin their workweek on Monday facing a deadline from President Donald Trump’s cost-cutting chief, Elon Musk, to explain their recent accomplishments or risk losing their jobs.

Musk’s unusual demand has faced resistance from several key U.S. agencies led by the president’s loyalists - including the FBI, State Department, Homeland Security and the Pentagon - which instructed their employees over the weekend not to comply. Lawmakers in both parties said that Musk’s mandate may be illegal, while unions are threatening to sue.

Trump over the weekend called for Musk to be more aggressive in his cost-cutting crusade through the so-called Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, and posted a meme on social media mocking federal employees who “cried about Trump and Elon.”

Musk’s team sent an email to hundreds of thousands of federal employees on Saturday giving them roughly 48 hours to report five specific things they had accomplished last week. In a separate message on X, Musk said any employee who failed to respond by the deadline - set in the email as 11:59 p.m. EST Monday - would lose their job.

Mass confusion followed on the eve of the deadline as some agencies resisted the order, others encouraged their workers to comply, and still others offered conflicting guidance.

One message on Sunday morning from the Department of Health and Human Services, led by Robert F. Kennedy Jr., instructed its roughly 80,000 employees to comply. That was shortly after the acting general counsel, Sean Kenney, had instructed some not to. And by Sunday evening, agency leadership issued new instructions that employees should “pause activities” related to the request until noon on Monday.

“I’ll be candid with you. Having put in over 70 hours of work last week advancing Administration’s priorities, I was personally insulted to receive the below email,” Kenney said in an email

viewed by The Associated Press that acknowledged a broad sense of “uncertainty and stress” within the agency.

Kenney laid out security concerns and pointed out some of the work done by the agency’s employees may be protected by attorney-client privilege: “I have received no assurances that there are appropriate protections in place to safeguard responses to this email.”

Democrats and even some Republicans, including Sen. John Curtis, R-Utah, were critical of Musk’s ultimatum.

“If I could say one thing to Elon Musk, it’s like, please put a dose of compassion in this,” Curtis, whose state has 33,000 federal employees, said on CBS’ “Face the Nation.” “These are real people. These are real lives. These are mortgages. ... It’s a false narrative to say we have to cut and you have to be cruel to do it as well.”

Newly confirmed FBI Director Kash Patel, an outspoken Trump ally, instructed employees to ignore Musk’s request, at least for now.

“The FBI, through the Office of the Director, is in charge of all of our review processes, and will conduct reviews in accordance with FBI procedures,” Patel wrote in an email confirmed by the AP. “When and if further information is required, we will coordinate the responses. For now, please pause any responses.”

Ed Martin, interim U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia, sent his staff a message Sunday that may have caused more confusion.

“Let me clarify: We will comply with this OPM request whether by replying or deciding not to reply,” Martin wrote in the email obtained by the AP, referring to the Office of Personnel Management.

“Please make a good faith effort to reply and list your activities (or not, as you prefer), and I will, as I mentioned, have your back regarding any confusion,” Martin continued. “We can do this.”

Officials at the Departments of State, Defense and Homeland Security were more consistent.

Tibor Nagy, acting undersecretary of state for

management, told employees in an email that department leadership would respond on behalf of workers. “No employee is obligated to report their activities outside of their Department chain of command,” Nagy wrote in an email.

Pentagon leadership instructed employees to “pause” any response to Musk’s team, according to an email from Jules Hurst, the deputy undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness.

The Homeland Security Department, meanwhile, told employees that “no reporting action from you is needed at this time” and that agency managers would respond, according to an email from R.D. Alles, deputy undersecretary for management.

Thousands of government employees have already been forced out of the federal workforce - either by being fired or through a “deferred resignation” offer - during the first month of Trump’s second term. There is no official figure available for the total firings or layoffs so far, but the AP has tallied hundreds of thousands of workers who are being affected. Many work outside of Washington.

Musk on Sunday called his latest request “a very basic pulse check.”

“The reason this matters is that a significant number of people who are supposed to be working for the government are doing so little work that they are not checking their email at all!” Musk wrote on X. “In some cases, we believe non-existent people or the identities of dead people are being used to collect paychecks. In other words, there is outright fraud.”

He has provided no evidence of such fraud. Separately, Musk and Trump have falsely claimed in recent days that tens of millions of dead people over 100 years old are receiving Social Security payments.

Meanwhile, thousands of other employees are preparing to leave the federal workforce this coming week, including probationary civilian workers at the Pentagon and all but a fraction of U.S. Agency for International Development staffers through cuts or leave.

K.T. Rabeullah honored for contributions to Kuwait's healthcare

Shifa Excellence Awards 2025 celebrates leadership and service



Photos during the event.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: The Shifa Excellence Awards 2025 unfolded in a grand ceremony at Aspire International Indian School, Abbasiya, celebrating excellence, commitment, and visionary leadership.

The event was inaugurated by Dr. Khaled Al Kandari, who delivered an inspiring address, commending Mr. K. T. Rabeullah, Chairman of Shifa Al Jazeera Medical Group, for his pioneering efforts in making quality healthcare accessible and his enduring philanthropic vision that has shaped Kuwait's private healthcare sector.

Joining as Guests of Honour were Munthasar Majeed and Naziha Mohamed Rabeeh, Vice Chairman and Vice Chairperson of Shifa Al Jazeera Medical Group, respectively.

Recognizing Media Excellence & Dedicated Service
In his keynote address, Azeem Sait Sulaiman, Head of Operations & Business Development, extended warm congratulations to the awardees, highlighting the vital role of media in fostering strong community relations.

Two media professionals were recognized for their impactful contributions:
■ Mr. Najeeb C K, Country Head (Kuwait), Business Solutions, Gulf Madhyamam – Media Relations Impact Award
■ Mr. Nixon George, CEO, Connexions Media, Asianet – Kuwait – Outstanding Media Leadership Award

Each recipient was awarded Rs. 500,000 and a distinguished memento in recognition of their achievements.

Shifa Al Jazeera Medical Group honoured its long-serving employees, who completed 10 and 15 years of dedicated service, acknowledging their vital role in the organization's continued success at the event.

A special highlight of the evening was the screening of "Bin Hubbik Ya Kuwait (We Love You Kuwait)", a visual documentary presented as a tribute to Kuwait's rich heritage, expat-friendly spirit, and enduring glory, in celebration of the National Day of Kuwait. Scripted, narrated, and directed by Mr. Azeem Sait Sulaiman, the documentary garnered widespread acclaim from both Kuwaiti nationals and the expatriate community.

Vision for Healthcare & Growth
In his honorary address, Munthasar Majeed applauded the awardees and long-serving staff for their commitment and dedication. He emphasized the guiding philosophy of Mr. K. T. Rabeullah—that quality healthcare should be accessible to all—and outlined the group's future plans, including the upcoming launch of new medical centres in Salmiya and Jahra and efforts to secure international accreditations to elevate service standards.

Award Presentations:
■ Mr. Najeeb C K was felicitated by Munthasar Majeed and Naziha Mohamed Rabeeh.
■ Mr. Nixon George received his award from Dr. Khaled Al Kandari.

Cultural Extravaganza:
The evening was further enlivened by an enthralling musical performance by the Urumi Musical Band, led by popular Indian singers Faizal Razi and Shikha Prabhakaran, captivating the audience with their dynamic renditions. A soulful melody segment by Abid Anwar added a harmonious touch to the celebrations.

Adding to the festive spirit, employees from various branches of Shifa Al Jazeera Medical Group showcased vibrant performances, enhancing the program's beauty and grandeur and reflecting the unity and talent within the organization.

About Shifa Al Jazeera Medical Group:
Operational since 2008, Shifa Al Jazeera Medical Group has established a robust presence in Kuwait's private healthcare sector. The group actively operates a network of healthcare services across the GCC countries and runs three multispecialty medical centres in Kuwait, located in Farwaniya, Fahahel, and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh.

Event Highlights:
The ceremony was hosted by Lucia Williams, Deputy Manager – Administration & Human Resources, ensuring a seamless flow of the program.

Key contributors to the event's success included:
■ Zubair Musliyarath, Administrative Manager, Shifa Al Jazeera Medical Centre, Farwaniya – Event Captain
■ Mona Hassan, Head of Marketing & Business Development – Event Coordinator

The felicitation segment featured:
■ Gunaseelan Pillai, Administrative Manager, Shifa Al Jazeera Medical Centre, Fahahel
■ Vignith V Nair, Administrative Manager, Al Nahil Clinic

The evening concluded on a patriotic note, with heartfelt National Day wishes extended to Kuwait, celebrating its rich heritage and visionary leadership.
"Bin Hubbik Yaa Kuwait! We Love You, Kuwait!"

Mohammad Hadel Atteyah wins ABK Alfouz draw

Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait announces KD 20,000 monthly winner

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is excited to announce MOHAMMAD HADEL ATTEYAH as the winner of the Alfouz KD 20,000 monthly draw on Monday, 24 February 2025. The draw took place in the presence of a Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative, ensuring transparency.

From the highly coveted mega annual draw of a KD 5,000 monthly salary for 10 years to its KD 10,000 weekly prize, the account has attracted significant attention in the Kuwaiti market.

Based on the account's great success, ABK decided to go above and beyond to reward customer loyalty.

With a KD 100,000 quarterly draw, in addition to an exciting KD 20,000 monthly draw, the Alfouz account continues to sur-

pass expectations and deliver even more customer satisfaction.

To top it off, ABK has simplified the ability to open the account and win! Customers can enter the draws and get extra entry chances for every KD 10 deposited. The more you save, the higher your chance to be the next Alfouz winner!

ABK encourages everyone to open an Alfouz draw account or increase their balance to participate in the upcoming draw, which is scheduled to take place on Monday, 3 March 2025.

Open an Alfouz account today and enjoy increased opportunities to win the lifestyle you've been waiting for!

To learn more about the Alfouz account and its range of exciting draws and prizes, please follow ABK's Instagram account @abk_kuwait, visit eahli.com, contact Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 or visit one of the Bank's branches across Kuwait.



ABK's Alfouz draw winner.

Pradeep Menon honors winning departments in Kuwait heritage decoration competition

Al Rashed Shipping Co. celebrates Kuwait's National & Liberation Days with heritage and history

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: The Al Rashed International Shipping Co. celebrated Kuwait's National and Liberation Days with a vibrant decoration competition, honoring the nation's heritage. Winners were recognized, making it a memorable tribute to unity and progress.

■ National Day, celebrated on February 25th, marks the anniversary of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah's leadership and Kuwait's independence in 1961. His visionary leadership laid the foundation for Kuwait's transformation into the flourishing and modern nation it is Monday.

■ Liberation Day, observed on February 26th, commemorates the end of the Iraqi occupation in 1991. It stands as a powerful reminder of Kuwait's resilience, unity, and the sacrifices made for its freedom.

Al Rashed International Shipping Co., a leading name in

Kuwait's maritime industry, marked the nation's National and Liberation Days with vibrant celebrations, on Monday, February 24.

The celebration at Al Rashed International Shipping Co.'s office was a vibrant tribute to Kuwait's heritage, where each department took part in a spirited competition, breathtaking decorations at their workspaces to showcase national pride and the country's rich cultural legacy.

All the ten floors of the Shipping Co.'s building buzzed with creativity and patriotism as individual departments participated in the competition, each showcasing Kuwait's rich cultural heritage through stunning decorations.

Replicas of traditional Kuwaiti cafés, crafted with intricate details, beautifully captured the essence of the nation's history, while a striking model of a traditional wooden

dhow, symbolizing Kuwait's proud maritime legacy, became a standout attraction.

The celebration was further enriched by impressive exhibits featuring traditional Kuwaiti items such as pottery, textiles, and artifacts, offering a captivating glimpse into the nation's cultural legacy. Walls adorned with historical photos and artistic illustrations took visitors on a visual journey through Kuwait's rich heritage.

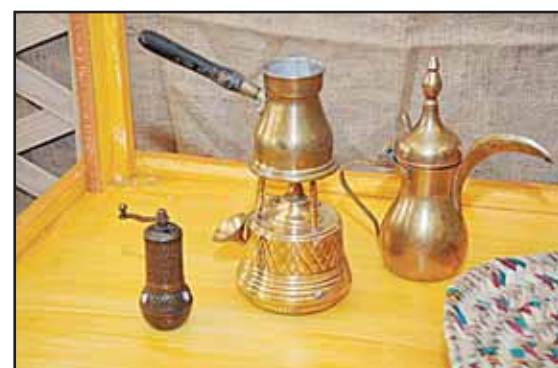
The vibrant display of Kuwaiti flags, colorful lighting, and traditional setups added to the festive atmosphere, while Diiversey's own products were innovatively designed to reflect Kuwaiti expressions.

The experience was brought to life with the aroma of freshly brewed Arabic coffee filling the air, complemented by the delightful taste of traditional sweets and dates, immersing everyone in the warmth of Kuwaiti hospitality.

The fusion of creativity and cultural heritage made the celebration truly unforgettable. Each display reflected a deep sense of national pride, turning the event into a vibrant tribute to Kuwait's legacy. Kudos to everyone who participated, showcasing their talent and passion, and making the celebration a remarkable and cherished experience!

The decoration competition was meticulously evaluated by Mr. Bassim Al-Rashed and Ms. Saba Bassim Al-Rashed, who carefully assessed each department and floor. The judging criteria focused on creativity, cultural expression, thematic representation, and visual impact.

Amidst an atmosphere of excitement and anticipation, the winners of the competition were announced, celebrating the teams' creativity and dedication. CFO Pradeep Menon honored the winning departments with well-deserved appreciation and cash awards.





John Lithgow, (from left), Ralph Fiennes, Sergio Castellitto, and Isabella Rossellini accepts the award for outstanding performance by a cast in a motion picture for 'Conclave' during the 31st annual Screen Actors Guild Awards on Sunday, Feb. 23, at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. (AP)



Sergio Castellitto, (from left), John Lithgow, Isabella Rossellini, and Ralph Fiennes, winners of the award for outstanding performance by a cast in a motion picture for 'Conclave,' pose in the press room during the 31st annual Screen Actors Guild Awards on Sunday, Feb. 23, at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. (AP)



Tommy Bastow, (from left), Shinnosuke Abe, Moeka Hoshi, Hiroyuki Sanada, Anna Sawai, Tadanobu Asano, and Hiroto Kanai, winners of the award for outstanding performance by an ensemble in a drama series for 'Shogun,' pose in a press room during the Screen Actors Guild Awards. (AP)



Hiroyuki Sanada, (from left), Tadanobu Asano, Anna Sawai, Hiroto Kanai, Moeka Hoshi, Tommy Bastow, and Shinnosuke Abe accept the award for outstanding performance by an ensemble in a drama series for 'Shogun' during the 31st annual Screen Actors Guild Awards. (AP)

Awards

Chalamet, Moore win best actor awards

'Conclave' triumphs at SAG Awards



Selena Gomez



Mikey Madison



Elle Fanning



From top: Selena Gomez, Mikey Madison, Elle Fanning and Sofia Carson arrive at the 31st annual Screen Actors Guild Awards on Sunday, Feb. 23, at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. (AP)

LOS ANGELES, Feb. 24. (AP) — The papal thriller "Conclave" won best ensemble and Timothée Chalamet took best actor at the 31st Screen Actors Guild Awards on Sunday, Feb. 23, at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. "Conclave" dramatizes the fictional election of a new pope. Earlier in the evening onstage, Isabella Rossellini shared the cast's best wishes for Pope Francis.

In winning the guild's top award, Edward Berger's Vatican-set drama triumphed just as the Catholic Church was praying for the health of Pope Francis, who remained in critical condition Sunday after an asthmatic respiratory crisis. "Conclave" dramatizes the fictional election of a new pope. Earlier in the evening onstage, Isabella Rossellini shared the cast's best wishes for Pope Francis.

All the momentum going into the SAG Awards was with Sean Baker's "Anora," which had won with the producers, directors and writers guilds. Now, with "Conclave" winning with the actors and at the BAFTAs, what will nab best picture in a week's time at the Academy Awards is, again, anyone's guess. "Wow," said "Conclave" star Ralph Fiennes taking the stage. "I've not been elected to speak. I've been designated to speak on behalf of our conclave, our ensemble."

That wasn't the only surprise in the ceremony held at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles and streamed live by Netflix. Chalamet's best actor win upset "The Brutalist" star Adrien Brody and put the 29-year-old on course to possibly win his first Academy Award.

Surprised

Chalamet looked visibly surprised when his name was announced at the ceremony. But once he reached the stage, the "A Complete Unknown" star spoke with composure and confidence. "The truth is, this was 5 1/2 years of my life," said Chalamet. "I poured everything I had into playing this incomparable artist, Mr. Bob Dylan, a true American hero. It was the honor of a lifetime playing him."

He then added: "The truth is, I'm really in pursuit of greatness. I know people don't usually talk like that, but I want to be one of the greats."

The other Oscar favorites — Demi Moore, Zoe Saldana and Kieran Culkin — all won. The SAG Awards are closely watched as an Oscar preview. Their picks don't always align exactly with those of the film academy, but they often nearly do.



Demi Moore accepts the award for outstanding performance by a female actor in a leading role for 'The Substance.' (AP)



Timothée Chalamet poses with the award for outstanding performance by a male actor in a leading role for 'A Complete Unknown.' (AP)



Zoe Saldana accepts the award for outstanding performance by a female actor in a supporting role for 'Emilia Pérez.' (AP)



Kieran Culkin accepts the award for outstanding performance by a male actor in a supporting role for 'A Real Pain.' (AP)



Jessica Gunning poses with the award for outstanding performance by a female actor for 'Baby Reindeer.' (AP)



Jane Fonda poses with the lifetime achievement award during the 31st annual Screen Actors Guild Awards. (AP)

The last three best ensemble winners — "Oppenheimer," "Everything Everywhere All at Once" and "CODA" — all went on to win best picture at the Oscars. All but one of the SAG acting winners of the last three years has also won the Os-

car. (The sole exception was Lily Gladstone, who won SAG's award for female actor last year for "Killers of the Flower Moon," but the Oscar trophy went to Emma Stone for "Poor Things".) Moore seemingly solidified her

Oscar chances by following up her Golden Globe win for her performance in "The Substance." Moore, whose campaign was boosted by her speech about being pigeonholed a "popcorn actress," has traded awards with "Ano-

ra" breakthrough Mikey Madison. "What we believe is so much more powerful than what we think," said Moore. "The saying, 'I'll believe it when I see it' — the reality is when I believe it, I will see it."

The SAG Awards unfolded against the backdrop of the aftermath of the devastating wildfires that began in early January. Those fires forced the guild to cancel its in-person nominations announcement and launch a disaster relief fund for SAG-AFTRA members affected. Host Kristen Bell introduced attending firefighters as "the most attractive tables" among a sea of stars.

Jane Fonda, 87, given the guild's Life Achievement Award, provided the evening with its most passionately political moment. Fonda, a famed activist, spoke indirectly about President Donald Trump's administration.

"We are in our documentary moment," said Fonda. "This is it. And it's not a rehearsal." Fonda added that "woke just means you give a damn about other people."

Hurt

"A whole lot of people are going to be hurt by what's happening, by what's coming our way," said Fonda. "We are going to need a big tent to resist what's coming at us."

Jane Fonda, who had advocated for canceling award shows because of the wildfires, won best female actor in a comedy series for "Hacks." Smart didn't attend, but participated in a pre-taped introduction as her character, Deborah Vance.

Also not in attendance: Martin Short, though he upset Jeremy Allen White to win best male actor in a comedy series for "Only Murders in the Building." The Hulu series also won for best comedy ensemble.

"Wait, we never win. This is so weird," said Selena Gomez. "Marty and Steve (Martin) aren't here because, you know, they don't really care."

Colin Farrell won his first SAG award, for his performance in "The Penguin" and also became the first winner ever introduced, by Jamie Lee Curtis, as "the man who gave me COVID at the Golden Globes." Farrell bounded to the stage and promptly responded, "Guilty as charged," before blaming Brendan Gleeson for giving it to him.

List of winners at the SAG Awards

LOS ANGELES, Feb. 24. (AP) — Here's an updating list of winners at the 31st Screen Actors Guild Awards, held Sunday at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. In addition to the winners below, Jane Fonda received the SAG Life Achievement Award.

Film

- Ensemble: "Conclave"
- Female actor in a leading role: Demi Moore,

"The Substance"

- Male actor in a leading role: Timothée Chalamet, "A Complete Unknown"
- Female actor in a supporting role: Zoe Saldana, "Emilia Pérez"
- Male actor in a supporting role: Kieran Culkin, "A Real Pain"
- Stunt ensemble: "The Fall Guy"

Television

- Drama ensemble: "Shogun"
- Comedy ensemble: "Only Murders in the Building"
- Female actor in a drama series: Anna Sawai, "Shogun"
- Male actor in a drama series: Hiroyuki Sanada, "Shogun"
- Female actor in a comedy series: Jean Smart,

"Hacks"

- Male actor in a comedy series: Martin Short, "Only Murders in the Building"
- Female actor in a limited series or TV movie: Jessica Gunning, "Baby Reindeer"
- Male actor in a limited series or TV movie: Colin Farrell, "The Penguin"
- Stunt ensemble: "Shogun"



This image released by Disney shows Danny Ramirez, (left), and Anthony Mackie in a scene from Marvel Studios' 'Captain America: Brave New World.' (AP)

'The Monkey' adds to Neon's successes

'Captain America' dives in second weekend

NEW YORK, Feb. 24, (AP) — "Captain America: Brave New World" soared on opening weekend, but crash-landed in its second go-around with audiences. "Brave New World," the latest sign that the Marvel machine isn't quite what it used to be, remained No. 1 at the box office in its second frame with \$28.2 million in ticket sales, according to studio estimates Sunday. But after a debut of \$100 million over four days and \$88 million over three days, that meant a steep drop of 68%.

While blockbusters often see significant slides in their second weekends, only two previous MCU titles have fallen off so fast: 2023's "The Marvels," which fell 78%, and 2023's "Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania," which dropped 70%.

The Anthony Mackie-led "Captain America" installment has been slammed by critics, and audiences also have graded it poorly, with a "B-" CinemaScore. "Brave New World," which fans had hoped would right the Marvel ship, has been largely met as another example of a once-impenetrable brand struggling to recapture its pre-"Avengers: Endgame" aura of invincibility.

Still, "Brave New World" has quickly grossed \$289.4 million worldwide, with international sales nearly reaching \$150 million. And with few big-

budget offerings arriving in theaters in the coming weeks, it will have scant competition through much of March.

The biggest new release of the weekend was Oz Perkins' "The Monkey," the director's follow-up to his 2024 horror hit, "Longlegs." Adapted from a Stephen King short story, "The Monkey" opened with \$14.2 million for Neon, the second-best debut for the indie distributor. The best? "Longlegs," which launched with \$22.4 million.

Momentum

Neon had much to celebrate over the weekend. Its top awards contender, "Anora," by Sean Baker, continues to gather momentum into next Sunday's Academy Awards. The best-picture favorite added wins at the Independent Spirit Awards on Saturday.

Perkins, Neon and Blumhouse, which partnered in the release of "The Monkey," have found a productive low-budget collaboration, with more on the way. Even if "The Monkey" doesn't reach the heights of "Longlegs" (\$126.9 million globally), Perkins and Neon return with "Keeper" this October.

"The Monkey," starring Tatiana Maslany and Theo James, revolves around an old monkey toy found in an attic. Reviews have been good (77%

fresh on Rotten Tomatoes), though audiences were less impressed, giving it a C+ CinemaScore. Horror films, though, typically grade low.

As it did with "Longlegs," Neon leaned into cryptic promotion for "The Monkey," along with some macabre marketing. A funeral premiere was held Los Angeles' Immanuel Presbyterian Church, and fan screenings took place at Hollywood Cemetery. The film, produced by James Wan, cost \$10 million to make.

Lionsgate's "The Unbreakable Boy" opened with a paltry \$2.5 million in 1,687 theaters. The Christian-themed Jon Gunn-directed film starring Zachary Levi and Meghann Fahy, is about parents who learn their son is autistic and has brittle bone disease.

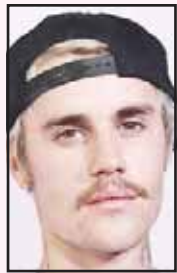
"Paddington in Peru," the third installment of the marmalade-mad bear, fell to third place in its second weekend. It grossed \$6.5 million in 3,890 locations, bringing its two-week total to \$25.2 million. "Paddington in Peru" has been most popular overseas, where it's collected \$125 million thus far.

"Ne Zha 2," the animated Chinese juggernaut, took in \$3.1 million from 800 theaters in its second weekend. In China, the sequel has grossed \$1.7 billion this month, setting numerous box-office records. Those totals put "Ne Zha 2" past "Inside Out 2" (\$1.66 billion) as the highest grossing animated film ever.

Variety

LOS ANGELES: Justin Bieber and Steve Carell laced up their skates along with Hockey Hall of Famers Rob Blake, Mark Messier, Cammi Granato and Jeremy Roenick on Sunday afternoon to support relief funds from the Los Angeles fires.

The Los Angeles Kings and National Hockey League held "Skate for LA Strong" at Crypto.com Arena to benefit recovery efforts from the devastating wildfires in Southern California. The Palisades Fire was the most destructive in Los Angeles' history.



Bieber

"We're looking to have a good time and show when we come together, good things happen," Bieber said.

The four-team exhibition tournament was the brainchild of Hockey Hall of Famer and Kings President Luc Robitaille.

The four teams had 15 skaters and one goaltender and included a mix of celebrities, former players and local first responders.

"We've all been touched by what happened last month. We all have friends, families or different (people) that have been impacted, so for us to be able to make a difference and to do something, we're gonna raise as much as possible and make a difference," Robitaille said.

The team coached by actors Vince Vaughn and Cobie Smulders won both of its games to take the exhibition tournament.

Roenick had two goals on the day and then playfully dropped the gloves with Bieber during one of the games. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Chinese animated blockbuster "Ne Zha 2" remained the top five at the North American box office on its second weekend, taking in 3.06 million U.S. dollars for a North American cume of 14.85 million dollars, data from measurement firm Comscore showed on Sunday.

The tally made the film the highest-grossing Chinese-language film in North America since 2006.

Data from online platforms show that 2000's "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," directed by Ang Lee, is still the highest-grossing Chinese-language film in North America, with over 128 million dollars, followed by 2002's "Hero," directed by Zhang Yimou, which generated 53.7 million U.S. dollars in North America. However, since 2006's "Fearless," starring Jet Li, which earned 24.6 million in North America, no Chinese-language film has been able to break through the 10 million-mark in North America.

"Ne Zha 2" is a sequel to the 2019 animated box office hit "Ne Zha." Both films were inspired by China's 16th-century classic novel "The Investiture of the Gods." (Xinhua)

KABUL: A week-long street book fair kicked off on Sunday in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, which was aimed at promoting the culture of book reading among the public.

Organized by the Kabul Municipality in collaboration with an independent publisher, the exhibition features hundreds of book titles across various genres, including language education, psychology, and literature, according to a statement from the Kabul Municipality.

"The exhibition has been well received by visitors, both men and women, and we are delighted to see such enthusiasm for books," Ali Ahmad Nazari, one of the organizers, told Xinhua. (Xinhua)

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia: Artists are seen during an "Ardah" dance performance in Diriyah, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on Feb. 22, 2025. The performance was held to celebrate this year's Saudi Founding Day, which falls on Feb. 22 every year to commemorate the establishment of the first Saudi state in 1727 by Imam Mohammed bin Saud. (Xinhua/Luo Chen)RIYADH, Feb. 23 (Xinhua) -- Traditional dancing performances were staged in Riyadh on Saturday to mark the Saudi Founding Day, observed annually on February 22 to commemorate the establishment of the first Saudi state in 1727.

The "Ardah" dance, which combines traditional chanting, swordplay, and rhythmic drums, was originally performed to motivate warriors. (Xinhua)

Film

Why is the international film category broken?

Oscars are more international than ever

NEW YORK, Feb. 24, (AP) — For many filmmakers, the Oscars are a pipe dream. But not because they think their movies aren't good enough.

The Iranian director, Mohammad Rasoulof, for instance, knew his native country was more likely to jail him than submit his film for the Academy Awards. Iran, like some other countries including Russia, has an official government body that selects its Oscar submission. For a filmmaker like Rasoulof, who has brazenly tested his country's censorship restrictions, that made the Oscars out of the question.

"A lot of independent filmmakers in Iran think that we would never be able to make it to the Oscars," Rasoulof said in an interview through an interpreter. "The Oscars were never part of my imagination because I was always at war with the Iranian government."

Unlike other categories at the Academy Awards, the initial selection for the best international film category is outsourced. Individual countries make their submission, one movie per country.

Sometimes that's an easy call. When the category — then "best foreign language film" — was established, it would have been hard to quibble with Italy's pick: Federico Fellini's "La Strada," the category's first winner in 1957.

But, often, there's great debate about which movie a country ought to submit — especially when undemocratic governments do the selecting. Rasoulof's fellow Iranian New Wave director Jafar Panahi likewise had no hopes of Iran selecting his 2022 film "No Bears" for the Oscars. At the time, Panahi was imprisoned by Iran, which didn't release him until he went on a hunger strike.

Rasoulof's film, "The Seed of the Sacred Fig" — a movie shot clandestinely in Iran before its director and cast fled the country — ultimately was nominated for best international film. But on March 2, it will be at the Oscars representing Germany, the country Rasoulof made his home in after being sentenced to flogging and eight years in prison in Iran.

Distribution

"The film, to a large degree, is now a German film, both because of the distribution company and because of all the people who worked on it post-production, including myself," said Rasoulof. "I'm a person who's been ripped of his Iranian national identity."

The Oscars are more international than ever. This year's lead nominee, "Emilia Pérez," is the most nominated non-English language film ever. It's a Mexico-set, Spanish-language film shot outside Paris — a reflection of how borderless film can be. (It's France's Oscar submission.) For the seventh year in a row, a foreign-language film has been nominated for best picture. And for the first time, in fact, there are two up for Hollywood's top prize: "Emilia Pérez" and the Brazilian drama "I'm Still Here."

The historic 2020 win for "Parasite," the first non-English language best picture winner, wasn't just, as director Bong Joon Ho called it then, a victory over "the one-inch-tall barrier of subtitles." It was the sign of a tectonic shift



This image released by Neon shows Soheila Golestani, (from left), Mahsa Rostami, and Setareh Maleki in a scene from 'The Seed of the Sacred Fig.' (AP)



This image released by Janus and Sideshow Films shows Kani Kusruti, (left), and Divya Prabha in a scene from 'All We Imagine As Light.' (AP)

in the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. To diversify its membership, the academy has in recent years invited hundreds of overseas voters, tipping the Oscar scales. The Academy Awards have gone global.

And yet the Academy Awards' marquee category for international cinema, best international film, has been continually criticized as unjust, outdated and subject to political interference. "The Oscars' international film category is broken," wrote film critic Alissa Wilkinson in 2020 for Vox. "Nothing short of a total overhaul of

the category is order," wrote Variety critic Peter Debruge in 2022.

The academy has sometimes tweaked the category, which was renamed in 2020. In 2006, the academy ruled that international submissions no longer needed to be in the language of its home country. Last year's winner, "The Zone of Interest," was a German-language film set at Auschwitz, but marked the United Kingdom's first best international film Oscar.

To help guard the process from outside influence, the academy in 2023 specified that each country's selec-

tion committees must be at least 50% composed of "filmmakers, artists and craftspeople." But who those people are, and what their subjective sense of national identity might be, has often been questionable.

This year, one of the most conspicuous absences from the Oscars is Payal Kapadia's "All We Imagine As Light," an Indian drama that numerous critics have named the best film of 2024. It was the first Indian film to play in competition at the Cannes Film Festival in 30 years.

The Film Federation of Indian in-

stead chose Kiran Rao's "Laapataa Ladies," a glossier comedy from Jio Studios that the academy ultimately passed on. FFI president Ravi Kottarakara told the Hollywood Reporter India that the jury, which was all male, felt "All We Imagine As Light" was like "watching a European film taking place in India."

Kapadia, speaking shortly after that decision, praised the choice of "Laapataa Ladies" while taking issue with the jury's metric.

"What is Indian? It's a very big continent that we have," said Kapadia. "There's a lot of Indias. I'm really happy with the film they chose. It's a really nice film. I liked it a lot. But I feel like these kind of statements, I don't know what purpose they serve. The committee that made the selection was 13 men. Is that very Indian?"

Rancor over the Greek selection process led 20 filmmakers to withdraw their submissions for this year's Oscars to protest the Greece Ministry of Culture's sudden replacement of selection committee members.

Renos Haralambidis, one of the filmmakers who withdrew his film, told Balkan Investigative Reporting Network: "I believe that the committee that will choose which film will be nominated for the Oscars should be independent of the state, because I believe the less the state in art, the better."

Question

The question for the academy is: Does it want this annual drama in the international film category? Should governments, autocratic or not, have any say in what films are in the running for one of the most sought-after Oscars?

The film academy declined to comment for this article.

These are issues the Oscars have long been aware of. Sometimes, the academy has even lent a hand to a country making its first submission. That was the case when Bhutan established a selection committee so it could nominate Pawo Choyning Dorji's 2019 film "Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom." It surprised pundits and received an Oscar nomination, Bhutan's first.

What options does the academy have? It could make its own international film selection committee, like those that exist in other categories, and remove governments completely from the process. Some have advocated for expanding the category to 10 nominees, like best picture, and doing away with the one-nation, one-movie rule. Another option: Keep the current system but allow for several academy committee-chosen slots so that political dissidents aren't ruled out.

Such changes would surely be welcome news to those who believed France last year should have submitted Justine Triet's best picture-nominated legal drama "Anatomy of a Fall," or India ought to have backed the Telugu-language smash "RRR." Both picked up Oscars in other categories.

Regardless, it's clear that geopolitics have increasingly made the best international film award at the Oscars almost as quarrelsome as the rest of our global existence.

An era of family control of 007 ends

Amazon MGM takes creative reins of James Bond

NEW YORK, Feb. 24, (AP) — In a James Bond shakeup that stirred the film industry, Amazon MGM announced Thursday that the studio has taken the creative reins of the 007 franchise after decades of family control. Longtime Bond custodians Michael G. Wilson and Barbara Broccoli said they would be stepping back.

Amazon MGM Studios, Wilson and Broccoli formed a new joint venture in which they will co-own James Bond intellectual property rights — but Amazon MGM will have creative control.

Financial terms weren't disclosed. The deal is expected to close sometime this year.

"With my 007 career spanning nearly 60 incredible years, I am stepping back from producing the James Bond films to focus on art and charitable projects," Wilson said in a statement. "Therefore, Barbara and I agree, it is time for our trusted partner, Amazon

MGM Studios, to lead James Bond into the future."

Amazon bought MGM Studios in 2022 for \$6.1 billion, a purchase that was significantly motivated by the acquisition of one of the movies' most beloved and long-running franchises. Since the Daniel Craig era of 007 concluded with 2021's "No Time to Die," Broccoli and Wilson have reportedly clashed with Amazon MGM over the direction of Bond.

The announcement Thursday means that for the first time in the more than half a century of Bond, a Broccoli won't be greenlighting the next 007 film, or picking who inherits his tux. Amazon MGM also anticipates expanding the franchise beyond movies.

"We are grateful to the late Albert R. Broccoli and Harry Saltzman for bringing James Bond to movie theaters around the world, and to Michael G. Wilson and Barbara Broccoli for their unyielding



In this Oct. 28, 2015 file photo, actor Daniel Craig poses for the media as he arrives for the German premiere of the James Bond movie 'Spectre' in Berlin, Germany. (AP)

dedication and their role in continuing the legacy of the franchise that is cherished by legions of fans worldwide," said Mike Hopkins, head of Prime Video and Amazon MGM Studios. "We are honored to continue this treasured heritage, and look forward to ushering in the next phase of the legendary 007 for audiences around the world."

Bond had been a family business since Albert "Cubby" Broccoli secured the rights to adaptations of Ian Fleming's novels and kicked off a run of 25 Bond films produced by Eon Productions, beginning with 1962's "Dr. No." Those movies have accrued \$7.6 billion in box office.

In 1995, the elder Broccoli handed over control of Eon to his daughter, Broccoli, and stepson, Wilson. In recent years, the 64-year-old Broccoli has largely taken the lead as Wilson, 83, has aged into retirement.

Diabetic patients should control sugar levels during Ramadan: Dr. Al-Dhafiri

Eye expert warns about the dangers of water and foam sprays

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: Retina Surgery and Ophthalmology Consultant at Jaber Hospital Dr. Yousef Al-Dhafiri praised the decision of the Ministry of Commerce to ban foam and water sprays during the National Day and Liberation Day celebrations.

In an exclusive interview with the newspaper, Al-Dhafiri stressed that firmness in confronting such negative phenomena contributes to protecting celebrants from direct eye damage resulting from the use of foam or water sprays; in addition to the second social dimension, which is preserving public money and water -- preserving the

blessing of water, and not encouraging children to assault and spray others with water without permission.

Regarding the effects of such negative phenomena on the eye, he cited the danger of direct injury to the eye; as the foam is for cleaning cars. "Regrettably, it was promoted and marketed for some chemical materials and cleaning sprays at one time, for a festive activity which, unfortunately, causes severe harm to the eye, as such formulations contain materials that cause chemical burns to the cornea of the eye, burns to the conjunctiva, redness of the eye and severe damage," he explained.

He pointed out that the ban on foam spraying during celebrations has led to a decrease in the number of eye

injury cases over the past three years. He credited the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Ministry of Health for their tremendous efforts in this regard.

He also revealed that diabetic retinopathy is the most common eye disease among adults in Kuwait, followed by eye pressure disease, hereditary retinal diseases, cataracts and high eye pressure.

He said most eye patients can fast during Ramadan, but they should adhere to using their prescribed eye drops. He emphasized that fasting is a religious matter and patients should follow their own beliefs and consult with religious scholars if they have concerns about using eye drops while fasting.

He advised patients with diabetes and diabetic retinopathy to control their sugar levels during Ramadan and to avoid sugary drinks and foods. He warned that high sugar levels can lead to retinal hemorrhage and other complications.

He then explained that chronic diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure can damage the retina and optic nerve, leading to vision loss. He said these tissues are irreplaceable, and that there is no treatment for optic nerve damage.

He added that people considering weight loss injections should consult an ophthalmologist beforehand, as there have been reports of these injections affecting the optic nerve.

Standing job's health risks

Prolonged standing tied to chronic pain, heart issues

NEW YORK, Feb 24, (AP): As a citizen of both France and America, Margaux Lantelme has noticed a difference in how store cashiers work in the two countries: in France, they do their jobs sitting down. In the US, where Lantelme works a register at REI, cashiers typically spend eight hours a day on their feet.

For Lantelme, a former kayaking instructor, prolonged standing can trigger flare-ups of chronic pain that limit her mobility. She requested a chair to use during her shift and got one. But after a change in management, she had to fill out paperwork to keep the chair, which required multiple doctor visits and insurance co-payments over a period of months. She's still waiting for final approval.

"Not having access to a chair without approval from a doctor, which costs money and time and energy, is really ridiculous," Lantelme said. "I personally think that people should be able to have access to seating at work anytime they need it."

Standing for long periods can lead to low back pain, fatigue, muscle pain and leg swelling, and it can increase the risk of cardiovascular problems and pregnancy complications, according to a review conducted by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. Researchers there concluded that movement, whether walking or shifting from a standing to a seated or leaning position, appeared to be the best way of reducing those health hazards.

Being on one's feet for an extended time also can lead to chronic venous insufficiency, a disease in which damaged veins impact blood circulation, according to the Association of Perioperative Registered Nurses, which represents operating room nurses.

Fatigue

The association recommends trying "fatigue-reducing techniques such as alternate propping one foot on a footstool, the use of anti-fatigue mats, using a sit-stand stool and wearing supportive footwear," said Lisa Spruce, senior director of evidence-based perioperative practices at AORN.

Many jobs besides nursing require extended standing: department store sales clerks, hairdressers, surgeons, restaurant cooks and airport workers are just some of the people who perform their roles on their feet.

Cecilia Ortiz, 43, used to work as an airport wheelchair attendant in Phoenix. "It takes a really hard toll on the knees," she said. The break room had three or four chairs, which wasn't enough for everyone, so workers often went to the hallway and sat on the floor, Ortiz said.

She said she once got written up by her boss for sitting down at an electronic device charging station for 15 minutes after she'd been on her feet for five hours without a break.

Ortiz now works for a warehouse that provides supplies to the airport, and when she needs to sit, she can.

"It's not so strict over there. If we needed to sit down for any reason there

wouldn't be a problem," Ortiz said.

Her former employer, Prospect Airport Services, said it adheres to all local, state and federal labor regulations regarding breaks. "Our employees are welcome to take their breaks and meals in our designated break room or in any common-use space throughout the airport," company spokesperson Jackie Reedy said. "This policy allows our employees to choose the location that best suits their needs."

Unionized workers at the Barnes & Nobles store in Manhattan's Union Square have made access to chairs and the right to sit down under certain conditions a part of their negotiations for their first contract.

Solutions

"The longer I've been at the job, I've started noticing knee issues, especially because we do a lot of bending down and standing back up when we're shelving books and showing customers things and creating displays," bookseller Bear Spiegel, 28, said. "Being able to have a stool available would be really useful just so I could rest my knees for a couple of minutes throughout the day while I'm doing things on the computer while I'm at the registers."

Spiegel's coworkers suggested wearing a knee brace and athletic tape, and those solutions have helped, but it's hard for him to predict what days he'll need the extra support because his symptoms vary each day, he said.

"There have been days that I've requested a stool and thankfully my managers have allowed me to take them out and use them when needed," Spiegel said.

Barnes & Noble uses chairs or stools routinely for those working off the sales floor when it's sensible to do so, but a lot of a bookseller's work is done on the move, including unpacking, sorting and shelving books, a company spokesperson said.

The Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, which represents about 100,000 workers, has been pushing to include in the contracts it negotiates, including at Barnes & Noble, a guaranteed right to sit during work that can be done seated, said Stuart Appelbaum, the union's president.

During one bargaining session, an employer objected to the demand. Union negotiators used a break that emptied the conference room to underline their position. "The employer came back and saw we had removed all chairs from the negotiating table," Appelbaum said. "I think the point was made."

In the end, the union got the chairs it wanted written into the contract, he said.

Around the turn of the 20th century, most states in the U.S. had laws requiring seating for female workers. Women were increasingly entering the workforce, and there was a fear that if their jobs were too physically taxing, they might not become pregnant, said Eileen Boris, a labor historian and professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Pontiff battles complex lung infection

Pope Francis in critical condition with early kidney failure but remains alert

ROME, Feb 24, (AP): Pope Francis remained in critical condition Sunday and blood tests showed early kidney failure but he remains alert, responsive and attended Mass, the Vatican said, as the 88-year-old pontiff battles pneumonia and a complex lung infection.

In a late update, the Vatican said Francis hadn't had any more respiratory crises since Saturday night but was still receiving high flows of supplemental oxygen.

Some blood tests showed "initial, mild, kidney failure," but doctors said it was under control.

"The complexity of the clinical picture, and the necessary wait for drug therapies to provide some feedback, dictate that the prognosis remains guarded," Francis' doctors concluded.

Prayers for Francis, meanwhile, poured in from around the world, from his native Argentina to the seat of Sunni Islam in Cairo to schoolchildren in Rome.

In New York, Cardinal Timothy Dolan admitted what church leaders in Rome weren't saying publicly: that the Catholic faithful were united "at the bedside of a dying father."

Condition

"As our Holy Father Pope Francis is in very, very fragile health, and probably close to death," Dolan said in his homily from the pulpit of St. Patrick's Cathedral, though he later told reporters he hoped and prayed that Francis would "bounce back."

Doctors have said Francis' condition is touch-and-go, given his age, fragility and pre-existing lung disease. His condition has revived speculation about what might happen if he becomes unconscious or otherwise incapacitated, and whether he might resign.

Francis was supposed to celebrate Mass on Sunday morning in St. Peter's Basilica and ordain deacons as part



Candles and photos for Pope Francis are seen at the Agostino Gemelli Polyclinic, in Rome, Monday, Feb. 24, where the Pontiff is hospitalized since Friday, Feb. 14. (AP)

of the Vatican's yearlong Holy Year commemoration.

The organizer of the Holy Year, Archbishop Rino Fisichella, celebrated the Mass in his place and offered a special prayer for Francis from the altar before delivering the homily the pope had prepared.

"Even though he is in a hospital bed, we feel Pope Francis close to us. We feel him present among us," Fisichella told the hundreds of white-robed deacons.

A prewritten message that had been prepared for Francis to read Sunday, but he did not deliver, said he was "confidently continuing my hospitalization at the Gemelli Hospital, carrying on with the necessary treatment; and rest is also part of the therapy!" The message asked for prayers for him - as he always asks - and noted the upcoming anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, "a painful and shameful occasion for the whole of humanity."

Meanwhile in Francis' native Ar-

gentina, Catholics prayed for the pope at the Buenos Aires cathedral and the city's iconic obelisk was lit up "Francis, the city prays for you."

In Cairo, the grand imam of Al-Azhar, the seat of Sunni learning who forged a close bond with Francis, wished him well.

"I pray to Allah to grant my dear brother, Pope Francis, a swift recovery and to bless him with good health and well-being so that he may continue his journey in serving humanity," Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb wrote in a Facebook post.

The American Jewish Committee also offered prayers. "We stand together with our Catholic brothers and sisters during this challenging time," the group wrote on X.

And school children from around Rome deluged the Gemelli hospital with get-well cards, while Italian bishops led rosary prayers and celebrated special Masses across Italy.

Communication

China to 'end' air pollution

BEIJING, Feb 24, (Xinhua): China aims to basically eliminate severe air pollution by 2025, the final year of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025), Li Tianwei, an official with the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, said on Monday.

To reach this goal, China will ramp up efforts in pollution control and emission reduction, improve its air quality forecasting and early warning systems, and enhance coordinated management of PM2.5 and ozone pollution, Li told a press conference.

In 2024, China's air quality continued to improve significantly. The average concentration of PM2.5 in cities at or above the prefecture level was 29.3 micrograms per cubic meter, a year-on-year decrease of 2.7 percent.

The proportion of days with good air quality reached 87.2 percent, up by 1.7 percentage points year on year.

"The blue sky is not given; it is earned," Li said.

In China, mobile sources are a significant contributor to air pollutant emissions, accounting for roughly 60 percent of the national nitrogen oxides and 24 percent of the volatile organic compounds.

To effectively tackle mobile source air pollution, it is crucial to expedite the development and revision of relevant standards, the official said, adding that China plans to introduce new emission standards that align with global best practices.

China will also boost the share of new energy vehicles and machinery in airports, ports and logistics parks, and accelerate the transition of long-haul bulk cargo transportation from road to rail and waterways, Li said.

□ □ □

Quantum communication: A team of Chinese researchers proposed a theory of one-way quantum direct communication and successfully developed a practical system, advancing quantum direct communication from a concept to the stage of practical application.

According to a study recently published in Science Advances, researchers from the Beijing Academy of Quantum Information Sciences, Tsinghua University, and North China University of Technology set a record in a standard optical fiber communication test with a transmission distance of 104.8 km. They achieved stable transmission at a rate of 2.38 kilobit per second for 168 consecutive hours.

Quantum direct communication was previously proposed by a team led by Long Guilu from Tsinghua University, one of the corresponding authors of the study paper. It enables secure communication by utilizing quantum states and features characteristics such as eavesdropping detection and prevention, compatibility with existing networks, simplified management processes, and covert transmission.

Schools see drop in myopia rates in children

China reinforces daily PE for student well-being

BEIJING, Feb. 24, (Xinhua): Thanks to more emphasis on PE classes, the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen has seen a noticeable drop in the number of secondary school students who need to wear glasses.

The municipal education bureau recently released the data one year after it piloted "one physical education (PE) class per day" in the compulsory education stage.

Since its implementation on Jan. 1, 2024, the overall myopia rate among children and adolescents in Shenzhen has dropped to 55.5 percent, down 1.2 percentage points from 2023. Meanwhile, a measurement of student physical fitness excellence rose by over 6 percentage points

from 2023.

"Seeing the data, I feel even more confident about implementing the policy. A year of practice has proven that we made the right decision," said Zheng Xiuyu, head of the municipal education bureau.

Since the beginning of this new semester, various provincial-level regions in China have introduced policies to ensure students have proper recess activities and sufficient PE classes to improve their health.

Beijing has released a document to strengthen physical education in primary and secondary schools. It outlines eight measures, including ensuring one PE class for primary and junior high school students and ensuring that

they engage in at least two hours of comprehensive physical activities every day.

Regions such as Hunan, Hebei, Gansu, Tianjin and Sichuan have recently released similar documents.

These initiatives came after concerns over the physical and mental health of primary and secondary school students have been growing in recent years.

A 2024 report released by the China Development Research Foundation highlights that issues like myopia, obesity and scoliosis are surpassing infectious diseases as primary health concerns. Mental health problems, including high anxiety and depression rates, are also rising.

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SPORTS



Brian Campbell, of the United States, watches his hit from a bunker on the 18th hole during the final round of the Mexico Open golf tournament in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. (AP)



Angel Yin of the U.S., holds her trophy during the award ceremony after winning the LPGA Honda Thailand golf tournament in Pattaya, southern Thailand. (AP)

Angel Yin takes Honda LPGA Thailand

Campbell wins first PGA tour title at Mexico Open

VALLARTA, Mexico, Feb 24, (AP): Brian Campbell cashed in on a huge break Sunday when his tee shot in a playoff bounced out of the trees and back into play, leading to a birdie on the second extra hole to win the Mexico Open over Aldrich Potgieter.

Campbell, who closed with a 1-under 70 at Vidanta Vallarta, won for the first time since he turned pro a decade ago and the timing could not have been better. The victory sends him to the Masters, The Players Championship and the PGA Championship, along with five of the signature events left on the tour schedule.

Campbell and Potgieter, who shot 71, each made birdie on the 18th in regulation and began the playoff with a par. Returning to the par-5 closing hole for the third time - a big advantage for the 20-year-old South African with his

power - the 31-year-old Campbell hit a low, hard fade toward the out-of-bounds stakes.

But it crashed into the trees and popped back out into the rough. He still was 94 yards behind Potgieter, but at least he had a shot. He hit fairway metal to 68 yards short, and hit a lob wedge to 4 feet. Potgieter came up a foot short and into a bunker. He blasted out some 6 feet by and missed the birdie putt to the left.

Campbell was winless in 186 starts on the Korn Ferry and PGA Tour combined, earning \$1,487,830. His payoff Sunday was \$1,260,000.

Potgieter started the final round with a one-shot lead, fell behind with two bogeys to end the front nine, caught up to Campbell with a superb up-and-down on the par-5 14th. They each made one bogey coming in and finished

at 20-under 264.

Angel Yin won for the second time on the LPGA Tour, making a shot birdie putt on the 18th hole for a 7-under 65 that was just enough to hold off hard-charging Akie Iwai of Japan in the Honda LPGA Thailand.

Yin started the final round on the Pattaya Old Course at Siam Country Club with a five-shot lead. She played bogey-free. She had four birdies on the last six holes. And it was barely enough to capture the title.

Akie, who along with twin sister Chisato Akie are LPGA rookies this year, was dynamic to the very end when she made eagle on the par-5 closing hole for a 61 to momentarily tie for the lead. Yin got her birdie to finish at 28-under 260.

Jacques Kruyswijk of South Africa closed with a 4-un-

der 67 and held on to win the Kenya Open for his first European tour title.

Kruyswijk finished at 18-under 266 at Muthaiga Golf Club for a two-shot victory over John Parry, who shot a 68.

The 32-year-old Kruyswijk completed the weekend bogey-free and carded four birdies in the final round. Having started the day one shot ahead, Kruyswijk was overtaken by Parry within five holes, but back-to-back birdies on Nos. 6 and 7 saw him regain the lead.

Nick Voke closed with a 3-under 69 and held on for a one-shot victory over Jake McLeod (65) in the Webex Players Series Sydney on the PGA Tour of Australasia.

Napoli winless streak reaches 4 with loss at promoted Como



Cagliari's Zito Luvumbo in action during the Serie A soccer match between Cagliari Calcio and Juventus at the Unipol Domus in Cagliari, Sardinia, Italy. (AP)

Kean discharged from hospital after collapsing

ROME, Feb 24, (AP): Napoli's winless streak reached four matches with a 2-1 loss at promoted Como in the Italian league.

Amir Rrahmani set the tone of the match for Napoli with an own-goal seven minutes in. Giacomo Raspadori equalized for Napoli 10 minutes later but 19-year-old Spanish winger Asane Diao won it for Como after being set up by Nico Paz late in the second half.

Antonio Conte's Napoli had a chance to reclaim the Serie A lead from defending champion Inter Milan, which moved ahead by beating Genoa, but will instead be in second for a matchup with Inter next weekend.

Napoli had drawn its three previous matches.

Cesc Fabregas' Como moved up to 13th.

Third-placed Atalanta bounced back from a Champions League exit with a 5-0 rout at Empoli that was helped by a brace from Ademola Lookman.

Mateo Retegui and Davide Zappacosta also scored for Atalanta, which took the lead with an own-goal from Emmanuel Gyasi.

Atalanta moved within three points of the top of the league.

Fourth-placed Juventus won 1-0 at Cagliari with an early goal from Dusan Vlahovic after it, too, was eliminated from the Champions League.



Atalanta's Mateo Retegui, left, and Empoli's Alberto Grassi in action during the Serie A soccer match between Empoli and Atalanta at the 'Carlo Castellani - Computer Gross Arena' Stadium in Empoli, Italy. (AP)

Also, Hellas Verona beat Fiorentina 1-0 with a goal five minutes into second-half injury time from Antoine Bernede.

Fiorentina forward Moise Kean has been released from the hospital after collapsing on the field during a

Serie A match on Sunday following a head injury.

Kean was carried off on a stretcher and taken to a local hospital after the incident in the second half of Fiorentina's match at Hellas Verona.

"Fiorentina can confirm that Moise Kean was discharged from hospital in Verona overnight and has returned to Florence. Medical and diagnostic tests all produced negative results," his club said in a brief statement on Monday.

Kean had been hit in the face and received treatment for a deep cut on his eyebrow before returning to the game. But a few minutes later he fell down to the grass. The Italy international did not appear to lose consciousness.

It was the second time that a Fiorentina player collapsed this season, after Edoardo Bove lost consciousness in December. Bove was placed in a medically induced coma and then had a heart defibrillator implanted.

Kean is having the best season of his career, with 15 goals scored.

Verona went on to beat Fiorentina 1-0 with Antoine Bernede netting the winner five minutes into stoppage time. Fiorentina's next match is on Friday, at home to Lecce.

'A big concern'

Nordic combined faces a shaky future at Olympics

WASHINGTON, Feb 24, (AP): Nordic combined has a rich history in the Olympics and potentially, a bleak future.

Since the first Winter Games in 1924, the unique sport has tested the bravery and endurance of athletes in ski jumping and cross-country skiing.

A year from now, it might be a former Olympic sport. "That's a big concern - or a big issue - that we talk about," four-time Olympic champion Joergen Graabak of Norway said in an interview with The Associated Press.

Nordic combined is scheduled to wrap up competition at the Milan-Cortina Olympics on Feb. 19, 2026, and that may be its finale on the world stage.

The International Olympic Committee will make the call in June, when it decides which events will be part of its program at the 2030 French Alps Winter Games.

The sport might not make the cut at least in part to end conversations about its gender inequities during an era in which women have made strides in sports across the globe.

Nordic combined is the only Winter Olympic sport that excludes a gender, giving men an opportunity to go for gold while women are relegated to watching. The International Ski and Snowboard Federation (FIS) plans to apply for women's Nordic Combined to become an Olympic sport, but not until the summer of 2026.

The IOC is proud to say the 2026 Winter Games will be the most gender-balanced, hailing the fact that 47% of the athletes will be female.

While the governing body could decide to give women a chance at Olympic gold in Nordic combined, it could also choose to eliminate the sport from the program in five years.

FIS, national governing bodies, athletes, coaches and advocates are doing what they can to salvage the sport on the Olympic level. They have increased the number of participating skiers along with attempts to boost its visibility with a docuseries "The Overlooked," and a bigger presence on social media.

The French ski federation may also give the sport a lifeline. Although the governing body in France is not going to call the shots, it is teaming up with FIS to publicly and privately push for women in Nordic combined to have their first opportunity to compete for Olympic gold in 2030.

"Women's Nordic combined is developing little by little around the world and it's only logical that women should be able to join the Olympic program too," French skiing federation technical director Pierre Mignerey told the AP. "But we are not the decision-makers."

Jarl Magnus Riiber, a five-time overall World Cup champion currently ranked No. 1, hopes the IOC considers how cutting the sport would also affect two other disciplines.

"Taking away Nordic combined will destroy ski jumping a little bit and cross country as well," said the 27-year-old Norwegian, who is planning to retire following the season due to a digestive condition. "This is very important for the stability of our system."

"It's a very easy choice for them to make a quick fix, but I think for the future, it's best to keep it in the Winter Games."

Three years ago, Nordic combined barely survived as an Olympic sport. The IOC's executive board lamented that it did not have strong international representation outside of Europe. During the previous three Winter Games, just four countries won the 27 medals available and the sport had the smallest audience during those Olympics.

Since then, FIS has provided the IOC with progress reports every six months and met annually.

Females who leave a perch as high as a 40-story building and fearlessly fly the length of an American football field and then race on cross-country skis have also done their part to keep flickering Olympic dreams alive.

There are 46 women with World Cup points, entering world championships that start Thursday in Norway, after 30 females participated in the debut season four years ago.

Skiers from Germany, Japan and Norway are in the top three in the World Cup standings and eight countries are represented among the top 12.



In this file photo, gold medal winner Norway's Joergen Graabak shows his medal during the Nordic combined individual Gunderson large hill/10k medal ceremony at the 2022 Winter Olympics in Zhangjiakou, China. (AP)

Championship's third season with Suffix concluded, winners of the CSI3-W* show jumping competition announced

KIB | The Stadium proves to be an exceptional success beyond expectations



Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, along with Raed Bukhamseen, Bashar Abdullah, Ghazi Al-Jariri, Ahmed Al Huzami, and Masoud Hayat with the winners of the World Cup qualifying round.



A glimpse of the winners' coronation ceremony.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced the successful conclusion of the third season of KIB | The Stadium championship, which exceeded all expectations. The event garnered significant audience engagement and was enjoyed by attendees and participating riders from various countries, including Kuwait, Argentina, Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium, Germany, the United Kingdom, Hungary, India, Italy, Jordan, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, and Spain. This achievement played a vital role in promoting sports tourism, stimulating the local economy and domestic trade, and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises.

The championship drew a large crowd, creating a thrilling and sportsmanlike atmosphere of intense competition. The closing ceremony was attended by several prominent figures, including H. E. the Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Baddah Al-Mutairi; Vice Chairman and CEO of KIB Raed Jawad Bukhamseen; Vice President of the Kuwait Olympic Committee Sheikh Mubarak Faisal Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah; Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Sports Bashar Abdullah; President of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation Masoud Hayat; Secretary of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation Ghazi Al-Jariri; General Manager of the Retail Banking Department at KIB Othman Tawfeq; Chief Executive Officer of Suffix Ahmed Al-Huzami; Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB Marwa Marafie; in addition to a number of employees from KIB and Suffix. Commenting on the success of the three-week championship, Othman Tawfeq, General Manager of the Retail Banking Department at KIB, said: "We are extremely proud of the success of the third edition of KIB | The Stadium. This event not only highlighted Kuwait's remarkable equestrian talent but also reinforced the country's position as a premier destination for hosting and organizing international sporting events. We congratulate all the winners and participants on their outstanding performances."

As the title sponsor of the championship organized by Suffix, KIB partnered

with leading experts and specialists in sports event management for KIB | The Stadium. A world-class equestrian arena was built along Marina Beach, providing a unique and innovative experience for the Kuwaiti community as well as the local and international teams competing in the event.

Tawfeq added: "KIB is dedicated to supporting and sponsoring sports events and activities, reinforcing the role of Kuwaiti banks—and the private sector as a whole—as strategic partners in the state's efforts to empower youth, nurture talent, and advance Kuwait's sports landscape. This commitment also strengthens



Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, along with Jawad Bukhamseen, Raed Bukhamseen, Anwar Bukhamseen, and Ahmed Al Huzami with the Bank team.

Kuwait's position as a premier destination for hosting major international championships. Continuing this mission, the Bank remains committed to building a better future for the community, launching and sponsoring initiatives that enable individuals to achieve their ambitions, reflecting its main slogan, 'Bank for Life'."

Tawfeq also expressed his gratitude to everyone who contributed to the success of the third season of KIB | The Stadium, highlighting how this year's events drew a large audience of equestrian enthusiasts and played a key role in promoting the sport across the region. He emphasized that this success reinforces KIB's commitment to supporting such initiatives, which align with the Bank's comprehensive social responsibility strategy and its ongoing efforts to strengthen community engagement and foster meaningful connections with all segments of society.

From his side, Chief Operations Officer of Suffix Ahmed Al-Majed said: "The success of the third season of KIB | The Stadium is a testament to the growing enthusiasm for equestrian sports in Kuwait and the region. At Suffix, we take pride in organizing such prestigious competitions, and we remain committed to elevating the standard of equestrian events in the country. Congratulations to all the winners and participants for their outstanding performances."

The KIB | The Stadium championship attracted approximately 500 riders and 5,000 spectators, fostering an atmosphere of excitement, fierce competition, and true sportsmanship. Kuwaiti rider Yara Al-Hunaidi stole the spotlight by claiming first place in the Grand Prix of the FEI World Cup Jumping Qualifier, a CSI3-W* event. Ali Al-Khorafi secured second place, while Fawaz Al-Subaie finished third. The winners earned valuable points toward their World Cup qualification rankings.

It is worth noting that sports play a vital role in KIB's comprehensive social responsibility program, which includes organizing and sponsoring various sports activities and events across Kuwait. The Bank remains dedicated to promoting a sports culture within the community while continuing to support young athletes who have achieved remarkable milestones and proudly represented Kuwait on the international stage.

New Zealand wins women's

Argentina claims men's title at Vancouver Sevens

VANCOUVER, Feb 24, (AP)—Argentina held off South Africa to win the men's title and New Zealand beat Fiji to claim the women's title Sunday at the Vancouver Sevens, the fourth leg of rugby's World Sevens Series.

Luciano Gonzalez scored two first-half tries and Tobias Wade scored immediately after the break as Argentina opened a 19-0 lead over South Africa in the men's final.

South Africa rallied with tries to Quewin Nortje and Siviwe Soyizwape before Gonzalez claimed a late turnover which helped Argentina seal a 19-12 win.

It was Argentina's fourth successive title in Vancouver and its first win in six finals against South Africa.

"I'm very happy, very proud of my team. All the team, all the staff and all the work we do here to finish on top," Argentina captain Santiago Mare said. "I don't know what it is about this city and this stadium but we are very happy to stay here and play rugby here."

Argentina's win took it clear atop the season standings with 68 points, ahead of Spain with 64 and Fiji and South Africa with 62. Spain beat Fiji 22-7 in the playoff for third.

New Zealand beat Fiji 41-7 in the women's final after leading 22-0 at halftime. It was New Zealand's third consecutive title in Vancouver.

Risi Pouri-Lane and Mania Nuku scored early tries while Fiji had a player in the sin-bin. Stacey Waaka and Georgia Miller added tries before the break.

Michaela Brake scored the first try of the second half, her 10th of the tournament and her 264th in the World Series, extending her all-time record.

Sesenila Donu scored for Fiji before Maia Davis and Mahina Paul added tries for New Zealand.

"We love coming here to Vancouver. It would be one of our favorite spots," New Zealand captain Sarah Hirini said. "It's nice to get the win here again."

"We don't take our Fijiana sisters lightly and we must congratulate them on reaching a pretty cool Oceania final."

Olympic champion New Zealand leads the women's standings with 76 points ahead of Australia with 70 and France with 52.

Australia finished in third place in Vancouver and host Canada beat the United States 27-10 in a seventh-place playoff.

PSG moves 13 points clear

No serious rival in France this season

PARIS, Feb 24, (AP)—Paris Saint-Germain has no serious rival in France this season and will soon find out if its crushing domestic dominance can translate into the team thriving on European soccer's biggest stage.

Still unbeaten in the French league after 23 matches, PSG extended its massive lead at the top of the standings to 13 points with a 3-2 win at sixth-placed Lyon.

The match came to life after the interval and featured inspired attacking moves from both sides. PSG was the better side and led 2-0 with seven minutes left to play. The only downside for Luis Enrique's team was its players' inability to keep their lead intact when Lyon really upped the tempo.

Inspired by the in-form Ousmane Dembélé - who scored his 17th league goal at Lyon - PSG has made tremendous progress in recent weeks. Achraf Hakimi scored PSG's other goals.

There appears little doubt that PSG will win a record-extending 13th league title this season. But a far tougher test looms in March against Premier League leader Liverpool when the two teams face off in a mouthwatering last-16 Champions League tie. The first leg is in Paris on March 5.

It's the next big hurdle on the road



Lyon's Clinton Mata, left, duels for the ball with PSG's Achraf Hakimi during the French League One soccer match between Lyon and Paris Saint-Germain at the Groupama stadium, outside Lyon, France. (AP)

that separates PSG from their ultimate goal of winning the Champions League, a task that has proved too difficult so far despite the millions injected by Qatari investors since 2011.

The only French club to win the Champions League, second-placed Marseille, made headlines for the wrong reason this weekend. It lost 3-0 at Auxerre, and its president accused French league referees of corruption.

In Lyon, Hakimi put PSG ahead in the 53rd minute from Bradley Bar-

cola's cross and Dembélé doubled the lead six minutes later with a superb strike in the opposite corner.

Ryan Cherki ensured some suspense when he pulled one back at the end of a fine team move with seven minutes left to play. Hakimi completed his brace soon after to restore PSG's two-goal lead after Gonçalo Ramos delivered a scintillating backheel pass in the build-up, only for Corentin Tolisso to revive the suspense in stoppage time with a header. But that was too little, too late.

Struggling Nantes moved five points clear off the relegation playoff spot with a 3-1 win against Lens.

A week after getting hammered 7-1 at Monaco, Nantes bounced back to secure only its fifth win in 23 league games this season.

The hosts put on a spirited display against a visiting side that lacked an attacking spark and was reduced to 10 men for the last 20 minutes.

French teenager Louis Leroux celebrated his first Ligue 1 start by opening the scoring in the 36th minute with a powerful shot. Moses Simon then made it 2-0 with a penalty kick on the hour-mark following a handball.

Neil El Aynaoui pulled one back from the spot five minutes later but Lens never looked capable of scrambling a comeback, especially after Mbala Nzola was sent off. Meschack Elia Lina secured a Nantes victory in stoppage time from former Arsenal midfielder Francis Coquelin's assist.

Lens slumped to a third straight loss and remained in eighth place. According to the league's statistics, Coquelin played his first Ligue 1 game since May 29, 2011, meaning he waited for 13 years and 270 days.

The much-traveled Coquelin joined Nantes last month as a free agent.

It's the second longest gap between two matches for a player in the French topflight since 1947-48 after Samuel Lobé - 14 years, 79 days between January 1986 and April 2000.

Another thrilling NASCAR finish in Atlanta

Bell takes only lead in OT to edge Hocevar, Larson

HAMPTON, Ga., Feb 24, (AP)—Christopher Bell celebrated a drought-ending victory for himself and Joe Gibbs Racing after a dramatic comeback in Atlanta.

Bell edged Carson Hocevar and Kyle Larson in overtime Sunday in another close NASCAR Cup Series finish at Atlanta Motor Speedway.

Bell led only the final lap in his Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota and had a slight edge on the outside when the caution light came on in overtime following a wreck by Josh Berry.

"That last lap of the race we were at our best," Bell said.

It was the first victory for Joe Gibbs Racing since Bell's win at New Hampshire Motor Speedway on June 23, 2024.

"I am glad that we don't have to hear about that," Bell said. "Joe Gibbs Racing hasn't won since June. That's all I've heard. So I'm very happy to end that narrative."

The 30-year-old Oklahoma driver has 10 career Cup victories, and he acknowledged Atlanta wasn't the spot his team had circled to end the drought.

Bell's strength in his career has not been superspeedway style racing, but he pulled off the comeback after qualifying only 32nd and struggling most of the day to look like a serious contender. Even Bell's crew chief, Adam Stevens, wasn't expecting the late comeback.

"I think I fell off the edge of my

seat a couple of times, especially there what was it, maybe 10, 15 to go when we were up in the top three or four and then fell back outside the top 10," Stevens said. "I thought we were toast. But Bell just kept his head down and really dug deep all day."

Austin Cindric led in his Team Penske Ford before he and William Byron, the Daytona 500 winner last week, wrecked with three laps remaining, setting up the overtime.

Hocevar faced criticism from Ryan Blaney and other drivers after the race for his aggressive style on the track.

"Yeah, I mean, there's some stuff I got to learn and clean up a little bit, but I feel like we put ourselves in the perfect opportunity to try and win a race," Hocevar said after falling short in a bid for his first victory. "I've never had that opportunity really before, especially on a superspeedway."

Kyle Busch finished seventh, ending his hopes of snapping a winless streak on the Cup Series. Busch won the Atlanta Truck Series race Saturday but is still looking for his first Cup win since 2023 after having his NASCAR-record 19-year streak with at least one win end last

year. Larson failed to finish the last four and five of the last six Atlanta races and was involved in accidents in each of the six.

Larson's Hendrick Motorsports teammates claimed the spotlight in NASCAR's first two weeks. Chase Elliott won The Clash on Feb. 2 before Byron avoided late wrecks to win the Daytona 500.

Larson's string of bad luck ended Sunday after he qualified only 17th. Larson, the 2021 Cup champion, surged late to win the second stage. "Came up a little bit short, but proud of the effort today by everybody on our HendrickCars.com Chevy," Larson said. "Yeah, finally finished at Atlanta and finally got to run up front."

Elliott was in the top 10 when his Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet hit the wall late in the second stage and then hit Brad Keselowski's RFK Racing's Ford, ending Keselowski's race. Elliott finished 18th.

Daniel Suarez, who edged Blaney Kyle Busch in a thrilling three-wide finish in Atlanta's 2024 February race, saw his hopes for a repeat win end when he was involved in a seven-car crash early in the third stage. Cole Custer, Ty Gibbs, Cody Ware, Noah Gragson and JJ Yaley also were involved.

Blaney was in contention before his late one-car spin caused a caution, but he rallied to finish fourth.



Christopher Bell celebrates victory after a NASCAR Cup Series auto race in Hampton, Ga. (AP)

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Bangladesh's Mushfiqur Rahim, right, attempts to run out New Zealand's Devon Conway, left, during the ICC Champions Trophy cricket match between Bangladesh and New Zealand, in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. (AP)

Sports

'Tournament born successful,' says Bahraini legend Hamoud Sultan

Gulf Cup for Veterans enters decisive stages in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: The Gulf Cup for Veterans, hosted by Kuwait, has reached its critical stages with the semi-final matches set for today. The champion of Group One will face the runner-up of Group Two at 4:45 PM, while the champion of Group Two will compete against the runner-up of Group One at 6:30 PM at Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium. The tournament will conclude tomorrow, Wednesday, with the final match scheduled for 7:00 PM at the same venue.

The second round of the tournament continued with a series of draws. On Sunday, Qatar played to a 1-1 draw against Oman, while Kuwait and the UAE finished 0-0 in Group One. In Group Two, Iraq and Bahrain ended their match goalless, while Saudi Arabia secured a 1-0 victory over Yemen.

Bahraini goalkeeping legend Hamoud Sultan praised the Gulf Cup for Veterans, stating that its success was ensured by being hosted in Kuwait. He expressed his gratitude to the Kuwait Football Association and Sheikh Ahmed Al-Yousef for the invitation to attend, despite not being part of Bahrain's squad.

Sultan highlighted how the tournament rekindled fond memories for Gulf football stars who had been away from the spotlight for years. He commended Kuwait for its excellent hosting of the inaugural edition and expressed hope that future tournaments could be held alongside the official "Gulf 27" competition, ensuring greater fan engagement and media coverage.

He also emphasized that the tournament prioritizes camaraderie over competition, with its true essence being a celebration of Gulf football heritage under the banner "Made in Kuwait." Sultan further noted that the event serves as a motivation for retired players to maintain their fitness and remain involved in the sport, lamenting the decline in physical activity among some former Gulf stars.

Former UAE national team star Nasser Khamis, who won the Best Player Award in the 1990 Gulf Cup in Kuwait, expressed his delight at participating in the event. He was thrilled to reunite with Gulf football icons from the 1980s and noted that the close competition in the group stage demonstrated that any team could claim the title. However, he stressed that the true significance of the tournament lies in the reunion of Gulf football legends.

Saudi Arabian goalkeeper Mabrouk Zayed observed that the level of play has been steadily improving. He noted that Saudi Arabia's slow start was due to a short preparation period, but the team's performance against Yemen showed noticeable progress despite some mistakes.

Zayed expressed gratitude to Kuwait for organizing the event, describing it as a symbolic recognition of the players' careers. He cherished the opportunity to reconnect with former colleagues in a friendly atmosphere reminiscent of the sport's golden days.

Yemeni football veteran Ali Al-Nono acknowledged the challenges of maintaining peak performance due to age, fitness, and limited preparation. However, he emphasized that the tournament's primary goal is to revive cherished memories and reunite Gulf football stars. He extended his gratitude to Kuwait for launching an initiative he hopes will continue in future editions.

Veteran Kuwaiti goalkeeper Nawaf Al-Khalidi received widespread praise from critics and fans for his standout performances in the tournament's preliminary rounds. Al-Khalidi credited his strong form to rigorous training and dedication to maintaining his physical and mental sharpness.

He expressed excitement about reliving his international career moments, particularly after playing in Kuwait's opening match against Oman. His performances have solidified his status as a key figure in the tournament.

Kuwaiti footballer Walid Ali underscored the importance of such tournaments in keeping retired players engaged with the sport. He highlighted how the event



A Kuwaiti dribbles past an opponent during the Gulf Cup for Veterans match between Kuwait and UAE.

encourages former players to maintain their health and fitness, which aligns with the core values of sportsmanship.

Ali, known for scoring the decisive goal in Kuwait's Gulf 20 triumph over Saudi Arabia, praised the exceptional performances of goalkeepers, particularly his compatriot Nawaf Al-Khalidi. He affirmed that Al-Khalidi had become one of the standout figures in the competition.

The Veterans Committee held a meeting on Sunday at the Gulf Union delegation headquarters, led by Hassan Al-Suwaidi and attended by all committee

members. Discussions focused on the tournament's organization and the support required to ensure its success.

During the meeting, Mohsen Musbah was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Committee, signaling a commitment to strengthening the tournament's structure and securing its future presence. The committee praised the positive reception of the event and underscored the importance of integrating it into the official Gulf Cup schedule. This move aims to foster continued engagement with former players and celebrate Gulf football heritage.

Kuwait to host Asian handball championship & WC qualifiers



Intensive preparations before the tournament.

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: The Executive Council of the Asian Handball Federation has approved the schedule for the 22nd Asian Championship, which will serve as the 2027 World Cup Qualifiers to be held in Kuwait in January 2026, with matches set to take place at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex Hall, starting on January 26.

Kuwait's bid to host the championship received unanimous approval from the Executive Office, granting the country the honor of organizing this prestigious event. The tournament will determine the four teams that will qualify for the 2027 IHF World Championship in Germany.

Commenting on the announcement, Qaed Al-Adwani, Secretary General of the Kuwait Handball Federation, expressed pride in hosting the Asian qualifiers under the directives of Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs. He emphasized Kuwait's proven track record in suc-

cessfully organizing Asian tournaments and highlighted the strong support from Minister Al-Mutairi and Bashar Abdullah, Director General of the Public Authority for Youth.

"All preparations for the championship will be meticulously handled by the organizing committees to ensure a world-class event that upholds Kuwait's reputation on the international stage," Al-Adwani said. "Additionally, an intensive preparatory program will be put in place for the national team ahead of the tournament."

Talal Al-Otaibi, a member of the Kuwait Handball Federation's Board of Directors and the Arab Handball Federation, underscored the significance of this unanimous decision, which reflects the confidence of Asian Federation officials in Kuwait's capability to host a major sporting event. He also credited Minister Al-Mutairi and the acting Director of the Sports Authority for their instrumental support in securing the bid, extending his gratitude on behalf of Kuwait's handball community.

OKC outlasts Timberwolves, Raptors rout slumping Suns

Bucks finish strong to beat Heat for 4th straight win

MINNEAPOLIS, Feb 24, (AP) — Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 37 points, eight rebounds, eight assists and three steals to help the West-leading Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 130-123 on Sunday night to open a home-and-home set.

Chet Holmgren added 19 points for the Thunder, who shot a season-best 54% (19 for 35) from 3-point range.

Gilgeous-Alexander re-entered the game with eight minutes left and sparked an 18-4 spurt over the next 5:16 after his cousin, Nickeil Alexander-Walker, hit a 3-pointer that put the Timberwolves up 110-105.

Anthony Edwards had 29 points and 10 rebounds for the short-handed Timberwolves (31-27), who wiped out a 19-point deficit in the second quarter before losing for the fourth time in five games.

Raptors 127, Suns 109

In Toronto, Immanuel Quickley, Chris Boucher, and RJ Barrett each scored 23 points and the Toronto Raptors made 20 3-pointers in victory over the Phoenix Suns.

Quickley made 5 of 7 3-pointers and the Raptors were 20 of 35 overall from



Golden State Warriors forward Draymond Green, left, shoots while defended by Dallas Mavericks forward P.J. Washington (25) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in San Francisco. (AP)

long range in sending the Suns - coming off a victory Saturday in Chicago - to their fifth loss in six games.

Boucher also had 10 rebounds, and Scottie Barnes added 20 points for the Raptors. Toronto shot 8 for 8 from 3-point range in the fourth quarter to

win for the second time in eight games.

Bucks 120, Heat 113

In Milwaukee, Damian Lillard scored 28 points and Gianni Antetokounmpo had 23 points and 16 rebounds as the Milwaukee Bucks used a strong fourth quarter to rally past the Miami Heat for their fourth consecutive victory.

Lillard, who sat out Friday night's win over Washington with a hamstring strain, also had eight assists. Brook Lopez added 17 points, Kyle Kuzma and Gary Trent Jr. each scored 16, and Kevin Porter Jr. finished with 11.

Cavaliers 129, Grizzlies 123

In Cleveland, Donovan Mitchell scored 33 points, fellow All-Star Evan Mobley had 25 points, 13 rebounds and eight assists and the NBA-leading Cleveland Cavaliers beat the Memphis Grizzlies.

Ty Jerome had 15 of his 26 points in the fourth quarter for Cleveland, which extended the longest active winning streak in the league to seven and is 27-4 at Rocket Arena. All-Star guard Darius Garland did not play after bruising his left hip Friday against New York.

Warriors 126, Mavericks 102

In San Francisco, Stephen Curry scored 30 points and the Golden State Warriors beat the Dallas Mavericks.

The Warriors have won five of six and improved to 5-1 since trading for Jimmy Butler, who made his home debut and finished with 18 points.

Pelicans 114, Spurs 96

In New Orleans, Zion Williamson had 22 points and nine rebounds and the New Orleans Pelicans overcame a 17-point deficit to beat the San Antonio Spurs to open a two-game set.

The teams will meet again in New Orleans on Tuesday night.

Magic 110, Wizards 90

In Orlando, Franz Wagner and Anthony Black each scored 23 points, Paolo Banchero added 19 and the Orlando Magic pulled away in the second half to beat the Washington Wizards.

Black scored 18 of his career-high 23 points in the second half.

Pistons 148, Hawks 143

In Atlanta, Cade Cunningham had 38 points, 12 assists and seven rebounds, and the Detroit Pistons extended their winning streak to a season-high six games with a 148-143 win over the Atlanta Hawks on Sunday night.

Malik Beasley scored 24 points, shooting 6 of 10 from 3-point range.

Pacers 129, Clippers 111

In Indianapolis, Tyrese Haliburton had 29 points and 12 assists for his 16th double-double of the season, Aaron Nesmith scored a season-high 19, and the Indiana Pacers defeated the Los Angeles Clippers.

Haliburton scored 17 points in the third quarter, when the Pacers (32-23) took a 101-83 lead. The All-Star point guard shot 9 of 14 overall with four 3-pointers.

Al-Kharafi qualifies for Show Jumping World Cup

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: Kuwait Club and national team show jumping star Ali Jassim Al-Kharafi has officially qualified for the 2025 Show Jumping World Cup Finals in Switzerland, marking a significant achievement for Kuwait and the nation's equestrian community.

Al-Kharafi secured his spot after earning 67 points in the Arab League competitions, finishing behind Saudi rider Ramzi Al-Dahami (71 points) and Emirati rider Omar Al-Marzouqi (69 points).

Expressing his joy, Al-Kharafi emphasized the honor of representing Kuwait on the global stage in one of the most prestigious equestrian events.

Masoud Jawhar Hayat, President of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation, extended his congratulations to Al-Kharafi, praising his outstanding performance in the Arab League quali-



Ali Jassim Al-Kharafi poses with other winners.

fiers within the seventh regional group, which includes Arab nations. He highlighted Al-Kharafi's exceptional skills

in show jumping and affirmed the federation's commitment to fully supporting him throughout his sporting journey.

Kuwait Volleyball Association unveils new logo

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 24: The Board of Directors of Kuwait Volleyball Association has approved a new logo following the endorsement of the Public Authority for Sports. The previous logo, in use since the Association's establishment in 1957, will be replaced.

The new design reflects the ongoing development of the sport, with the Arabic text now placed above the foreign text, in contrast to the old logo. Additionally, a volleyball shape has been incorporated, replacing the image of a hand hitting the ball above the net in the previous version.

In the latest Volleyball League action, Al-Shabab secured a 3-1 victory over Burqan, temporarily sharing the top spot with Kazma, each team holding 18 points. Burqan remains with 9 points. In another match, Al-Yarmouk triumphed 3-0 over Al-Tadamon, increasing their tally to 5 points, while Al-Tadamon stayed at 3 points.



The new Kuwait Volleyball Association logo.