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## **Kuwait Amir receives Ramadan greetings from well-wishers**



#### **Opinion**

#### Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

#### Thank you Trump for your public dialogue with Zelenskyy

THE heated dialogue that the White House witnessed a few days ago between US President Donald Trump and his Vice President on one hand, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on the other hand, is an example of the so-called 'naked diplomacy' that is usually practiced behind closed doors.

For the first time, the world witnessed such a heated dialogue. The meeting revealed a truth that has long been hidden from the people -- how the destinies of peoples are manipulated.

Zelenskyy, Addressing Trump said firmly: You are seeking World War III. Talking to his counterpart, he stressed that every leader must be aware of what his opponent is seeking. Thus, when the current US Administration revealed its desire to achieve peace and settle the Russian-Ukrainian war, the US President was aware that the continuation of the war will lead to World War III.

These fears are not limited to Americans, but are also present in the minds of world leaders who know that it is very easy for countries to be part of a world

World War I was caused by the assassination of the Crown Prince of Austria. Although its preliminaries were present, it needed a spark, which came from a reckless Serbian extremist. Its result was the killing of about 23 million people.

World War II also had its causes. The first spark was the German invasion of Poland; as a result of the desire of a crazy Nazi leader, Adolf Hitler, to prove that he could rule the entire world Through his alliance with Italian fascism and Japanese extremism, Hitler sought to set fire to the planet. As a result, more than 70 million people were killed and massive destruction befell most European countries. Eventually, atomic bombs were used for the first time in history.

Yes, the leaders of countries are human beings. They have their own personal tendencies and desires. This is applicable to everyone. When Roosevelt died and was replaced by Truman, the latter wanted to prove his strength and worth. He wanted to promote himself to be elected again. He also wanted to take revenge on Japan for bombing Pearl Harbor and reserve his dominant place among the world leaders. Thus, Truman ordered the dropping of nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Thus, the Ukrainian-Russian war, which does not seem to end any time soon, could push President Zelenskyy to drag Europe and the world into a nuclear war that would end in the annihilation of humanity.

This is what Trump hinted at, seeking in his new term to focus on his problems with China and the American economy rather than being preoccupied with international crises that weaken his country's global role.

It is easy to start a war, but making peace is very difficult, especially in the presence of leaders controlled by individual desires and personal objectives. The world is full of many examples of those who caused the death of hundreds of thousands of people for their personal glory or their greed for presidential privileges.

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His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah as well as members of the ruling family receive greetings from citizens and expatriates on the holy month of Ramadan.

KUWAIT CITY, March 2, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah as well as members of the ruling family received greetings from citizens and expatriates on the holy month of

The event, hosted at Al-Sabah Diwan, Bayan Palace, on Saturday evening, materialized the traditional bonds of amity and fraternity characterizing the Kuwaiti

## No pay, no way as Kuwait issues 43,290 travel bans

42.885 cars seized over unpaid debts

#### Ministry sets 'clearance' process for individuals with revoked citizenship

KUWAIT CITY, March 2: The Ministry of Higher Education has called on individuals whose Kuwaiti citizenship was revoked to visit the ministry's headquarters at the visitors' hall in Sanabel Tower on M3 floor starting Monday, from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm, to receive their clearance certificate, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The ministry affirmed that the concerned individual must attend in person or be represented by a legally authorized representative, and bring any document displaying their civil ID number.

#### By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff KUWAIT CITY, March 2: Less than two weeks after the

Cabinet approved two draft decrees amending provisions of the Civil and Commercial Procedures and Bankruptcy Laws to reinstate the system of arresting debtors who are unable to repay their debts, the General Administration of Sentences Enforcement at the Ministry of Justice revealed that a total of 2,140,417 creditors had submitted

requests during the first half of 2024 to impose executive seizures on debtor properties held by others. These requests were made following final court rulings issued in favor of the creditors to recover their owed money.

According to statistics issued by the General Administration of Sentences Enforcement, the number of cars seized for the same reason totaled 42,885 during the same period.

There were a total of 43,290 travel ban cases, with 25,149 of these cases having their travel bans lifted after collecting a total of KD 6,183,290.

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#### ......... Monday ..... 17:49 ..... Tuesday ..... 04:51

Newswatch

**Ramadan Timings** 

**KUWAIT CITY:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace Sunday, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received Acting Prime Minis-

Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah. Also on Sunday, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad AL-Sabah received at Bayan Palace Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah. (KUNA)

ter and Minister of Interior Sheikh

KUWAIT CITY: On Sunday, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences to Sheikh Humaid bin Rashid Al-Nuaimi, Ruler of Ajman, UAE, following the passing of his brother, Sheikh Saeed Rashid Al-Nuaimi. In his message, His Highness expressed deep sympathy and prayed to Almighty Allah to grant Sheikh Humaid and his

family strength and comfort. Similarly, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent a condolence cable to Sheikh Humaid, offering heartfelt condolences and praying for patience and solace for the grieving family. (KUNA)



Muslims during Ramadan.

Photo by Rezk Tawfiq A cannon is fired at sunset at Nayef Palace, Kuwait City, signaling the end of the day-long fast for

## **Court orders death** for grandma's killer

#### By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 2: The Criminal Court on Sunday sentenced a citizen to death for murdering his grandmother in

In a previous session, the Public Prosecution demanded the court to impose the maximum penalty on the accused, that is, death. It described the crime as "heinous because the accused killed the victim, who was 85 years old, without mercy. He was stripped of humanity and did not have mercy, especially considering her weakness and old age.'

The prosecution confirmed at the time that "the crime was not just an assault on a person; but a stab in the heart of human values, and it was not in front of an enemy who killed his enemy, but a grandson who killed his grand-

The Ministry of Interior announced on Sept 27, 2024 that

**Continued on Page 5** 

## reach and clean fuel leadership

#### By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 2: After acquiring the companies 'Agriferr' and 'Arma', which specialize in the production of biogas, biomethane and bioliquefied natural gas in Italy; Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI) is now aiming to expand the distribution of its petroleum derivatives throughout

Reliable sources told the newspaper that KPI intends to increase its reach from 22 to approximately 26 European countries within the next two years, with the longer-term goal of covering all 27 European Union countries.

They said the company is exerting tremendous efforts to develop hydrogen fuel distribution outlets in Italy, underscoring the environmental benefits of hydrogen-powered vehicles. "One kilogram of hydrogen fuel, for example, allows a vehicle to travel about 110

**Continued on Page 5** 

## KPI gears up for 'Europe-wide' MoH modifies outpatient clinic hours in hospitals for Ramadan

#### By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff KUWAIT CITY, March 2: The Ministry of Health has adjusted the visiting hours for outpatient clinics in public hospitals

during the holy month of Ramadan. Jahra Hospital announced that its outpatient clinics will operate in two shifts: the first from 9:00 am to 1:30 pm, and the

second from 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm. Farwaniya Hospital stated that its outpatient clinics will be open from 9:00 am

Meanwhile, in a press statement, the hospital revealed that the Emergency Department Training Center, in collaboration with the Medical Emergency Department and Mubarak Al-Kabeer Ambulance Center Training Center, organized a training course and open day to raise awareness on life-saving procedures. The event focused on Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), Basic Life Support (BLS), Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) and Advanced Stroke Life Support (ASLS).

**Continued on Page 5** 



**Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali hosts Ramadan reception** at diwaniya





initiative **NBK** accelerates its commitment to a sustainable

**Desert-inspired Jawaher Tent boosts Ramadan** spirit and

connections at Four **Seasons Kuwait** 

**future** 

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12

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:
By Day: Mild and clouds will
increase gradually with light variable wind to light to moderate
northwesterly wind, with speeds
of 08-30 km/h.

By Night: Cold to cold and partly cloudy to cloudy with light

Weather

variable wind, with speeds of 06-22 km/h. **Min Rec** Station **Max Exp** Kuwait City **Kuwait Airport** 22 Abdaly

Bubyan

Jahra Failaka Island Salmiyah 13 Ahmadi 08 Jal Aliyah Nuwaisib



Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali with HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah

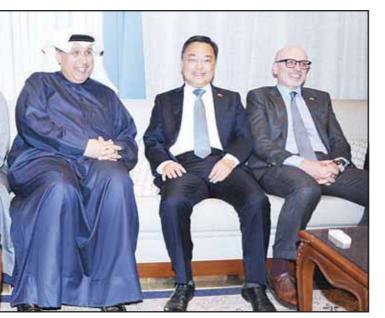


Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali and some members of the ruling family.



Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali and ministers.

Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali receives Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah.



Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali meets ambassadors

#### Royals, diplomats attend event

#### Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali hosts Ramadan reception at diwaniya

KUWAIT CITY, March 2: Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali received wellwishers, led by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, at his diwaniya in Shamiya recently on the advent of the holy month of Ramadan.

According to a press release, the Shamiya Diwan was filled with many ruling family members, current and former ministers, dignitaries, ambassadors, and members of the diplomatic corps, as well as a number of citizens and residents.

Sheikh Hamad exchanged warm congratulations with his guests for the holy month and extended his well-wishes to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad and the Kuwaiti people and residents in Kuwait.

He said, "Ramadan is a time to strengthen the values of affection and compassion, which have long distinguished Kuwaiti society across gen-

Sheikh Hamad prayed for the continuation of this spirit of unity, which he said is vital for reinforcing societal cohesion.

At the end of the meeting, Sheikh Hamad expressed his hopes for the holy month to bring goodness and peace to the Arab and Islamic nations and the peoples of the world, praying that God would return it to all with blessings and prosperity.

#### **Other Voices**

#### 'Review endowment systems'

#### By Ahmad alsarraf

THAVE an inherent doubt, if I may Lexpress it, about the work of the bodies overseeing religious charity financial activities in any country. This doubt stems from the aura of sanctity often surrounding those who run these organizations, which typically shields them from oversight and auditing. Many of those in charge insist on rejecting "outsiders," even if they possess more experience. As a result,

throughout history, none of these bodies has been free of violations or transgressions. This is simply the nature of things!

I have written extensively about the violations of many bodies involved in charity work



or supervising their activities, including a minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, who is affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood Group, appointing a member of his party as the director of the General Secretariat of Awgaf. Shortly after, that "Muslim Brother" was convicted of stealing a million dollars. He then managed to flee the country, and the charges against him were eventually dropped.

This highlights that managing the endowment through the ministry or the secretariat is a matter known only to a select few. It was therefore not surprising that the "New Era" government, for well-known reasons, transferred the authority to oversee endowment funds to the Kuwait In-

vestment Authority. The tenth forum of the Ja'afari Endowments was recently held under the title "A 20-Year Journey." As usual, several recommendations emerged from the forum, but unfortunately, no one took them seriously. The body overseeing the endowment, with all due respect to its members, has not, for well-known reasons, made any major efforts to develop its work beyond what it has been accustomed to over the past 20 years. Moreover, the individuals responsible for managing it have remained largely the same since the establishment of the Ja'afari Endowment Advisory Committee. This situation persisted even after the committee's role evolved from advisory to executive. In the absence of the committee's chairman, the deputy secretary-general of the endowment banks, by virtue of his position in the General Secretariat of Endowments, his powers were, oddly, transferred to a virtuous figure - the deputy chairman of the advisory committee. This individual then became the CEO while also remaining a member

of the advisory committee! It is said that the advisory/executive committee insists on following the same approach without any change or development.

I believe this opinion is accurate based on my previous experience with a senior endowment official in the private sector. I once asked him to collaborate with me, using the "Shiite" endowment funds he managed, to establish a school for "slow learners," as there was a dire need for such an institution. My request was rejected on the grounds that the endowment's expenditures were predetermined and did not in-

clude establishing schools. I certainly do not doubt the integrity of the members of the advisory committee that I know, but I am unfamiliar with the rest of the members of the various semi-executive committees that have emerged from the parent advisory committee. These individuals work semi-voluntarily, and their names have not changed radically in the past 20 years.

One can observe that the formation of committees often follows a quota or "sectarian-political" balance, aimed at pleasing everyone. The reason behind this may be a reluctance to "modernize" the committee's work, as doing so would require navigating the complexities and discussions involved in selecting new members. This is despite the fact that, as far as I know, there is no committee or institution in Kuwait that has been supervised by the same individuals for twenty years without any significant change.

#### **Financial**

Perhaps the large financial scale and considerable influence of the Advisory Committee and its branches contribute to the resistance to change and the reluctance to transfer responsibility to others. It is even said that the stability of the situation in the committee extends to the scholars who are called upon to provide advice to it!

All of this prompts the observer to call for a thorough review of all endowment systems, whether Sunni or Shiite, and to specify a time period for each member, with a commitment to periodically changing, for example, half of the members. There is a need to enhance transparency in the work of the Advisory Committee and reduce its members, despite the challenges in achieving this goal, which may make it difficult to satisfy all religious and political parties. It is also necessary to involve financial experts, even if they are not from the same party, in the formation of the committee.

Moreover, there should be strict internal oversight of the endowment's work by an independent institution. The integrity of the new members who will succeed the current ones cannot be guaranteed indefinitely.

In addition, new activities must be introduced to diversify the spending and investment of endowment funds, moving beyond the specific activities that have been adopted over the past 1,000 years.

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## 'Kuwait needs to step up use of AI, up economical output'

'Digital transformation vital to support Kuwait Vision '35'

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, March 2: The** National Knowledge Economic Center (NKEC), which is affiliated with the Secretariat General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, aims to support the strategic direction of Kuwait Vision 2035 towards integrating knowledge inputs and modern technology to build a national economy with added value that employs innovation and renewal and enhances investment, productivity and competitiveness.

The objectives of this center include the preparation of a national strategy for the knowledge economy that defines an advanced economic model based on the widespread use of information technology and the Internet in different aspects of

economic activity and e-commerce. In order to know how far the knowledge economy has reached in the country and the extent to which this center has achieved its goals, the newspaper's staff met with technology and economic experts who called for the country's strong entry into the knowledge economy due to its potential to increase industrial and agricultural production.

#### **Effective**

This is in addition to its effective role in increasing e-commerce rates by establishing an executive body for this economy, especially since the country is lagging behind in this field compared to its counterparts in the Gulf and it is at the bottom of the ranking in most indicators.

The experts told the newspaper that the era of digital transformations is currently leading the world, and those who do not have information do not have power quoting American President Donald Trump who appointed Elon Musk as one of his advisors. They said the Gulf Cooperation

Council (GCC) countries have led Arab countries in digital transformations. President of the Kuwait Information Security Association Dr. Safaa Zaman stated that Kuwait needs to immerse itself more in the knowledge economy, especially since the Gulf countries have made progress in this field by establishing bodies concerned with data and analysis that contribute to the use of technology in developing trade, industry and agriculture. She pointed out that Dubai was a pioneer in this aspect and other Gulf countries are working hard to catch up with it, specifically Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

She said the private sector has made progress in the knowledge economy. "Despite the Kuwaiti government developing some of its systems to be



related to development that contribute to increasing production, in addition to the role of technology in increasing e-commerce rates," she explained. She stressed the need to rely on artificial intelligence tech-Dr. Zaman

nology in different economic sectors in Kuwait, so that artificial intelligence can be used to expand the agricultural sector and increase industrial energy, just as

it was used in the oil sector; which led to increased production and ease of exploration. She pointed out that oil companies have become pioneers in the use of all technological means. She added that artificial intelligence has become part of the development of military mechanisms and soft wars. Former Vice President of the Accountants As-

sociation Abdullatif Al-Ahmad asserted that Kuwait needs to enter the digital and technological economy. He stated that the government is still moving slowly despite the importance of this economy in driving the wheels of development, especially since it is one of the important tools for diversifying sources of income, in addition to the State's capabilities to harness technology.

He stated that using artificial intelligence can solve employment problems, especially since private companies are suffering in this regard, as

mechanization can develop the mental capabilities of working humans by acquiring all production skills. Professor of E-Learning Technology at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) Dr. Bader Al-Khudari said the knowledge economy has advanced tremendously in the world in recent years, particularly since artificial intelligence technologies have become one of the most important technological tools related to economic development.

#### **Expressed**

He expressed his hope that Kuwait will work hard to advance all aspects related to digital transformations in its economy, considering the knowledge economy plays a major role in the industrial renaissance and e-commerce. He added this type of economy possesses data and information studies, especially since those who do not possess information are not considered advanced, and therefore the conflict between countries is not only military, but more importantly, the possession of information.

He pointed out that the only negative problem with digital technology is killing personal creativity among children; so it is preferable to teach children technology in the primary stage and focus on mental aspects in all stages, while teaching them technological skills.

He clarified that the knowledge economy, through artificial intelligence, has developed economic concepts such as the digital economy, which has developed methods of analyzing big data in addition to its use of local and global market variables with its superior means of storing data, indicating the knowledge economy has come to predict economic conditions now and in the future.

Lecturer and Head of the Accounting Department at Kuwait University Dr. Sadiq Al-Bassam believes that the future for all countries is the future of knowledge due to its role in activating ecommerce, industry, agriculture and tourism.

He disclosed that Kuwait has entered the knowledge economy system in the current era, but at the same time it must enter with greater force due to the importance of the language of data, knowledge and numbers in economic progress; calling on the government to work on increasing scientific specializations in universities and enhancing curricula with modern technological means.

### Egypt tops list of Arab teachers in private schools, says report

**By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari** Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 2: The Education Statistical Group revealed that the total number of teachers in the private sector reached 14,668 -- 4,474 men and 9,912 women of different nationalities mostly Arabs and Asians.

According to the statistics, Egypt topped the list of Arab countries in terms of the number of teachers working in private schools; as the number of Egyptian teachers reached 6,527 -- 3,680 men and 2,847 women, followed by Jordan with 999, Syria with 605, Lebanon with 460, Palestine with 163, Iraq with 33, Yemen

with 32 and Sudan with nine. At the same time; the statistics showed that the number of Moroccan teachers reached 13, Libyans 13, Tunisians 98, Algerians 18, eight Mauritanians and Somalia 13; bringing the total number of teachers from Arab countries to 8,978.

The number of Kuwaiti teachers reached 282 -- 241 men and 41 women, Saudi Arabia with 37, the United Arab Emirates with six; while Bahrain, Qatar and Oman has one each. The total number of teachers from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries reached

As for foreign countries (non-Arab), India came in first place with a total of 1,934; followed by Pakistan with 539, then the 'others' category consisting of several nationalities with 2,566; Iran with 104, bringing the total number of teachers from foreign countries to 5,143.

Also, the number of teachers from the Bedoun category reached 219 -- 201 female teachers and 18 male teachers.

### **Islamic Affairs ministry to** adjust Ramadan work time

By Mohammad Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 2: The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs is currently reviewing the possibility of adjusting the evening working hours of the Islamic Studies Sector during Ramadan, proposing a shift to 2:30 pm to 5:00 pm, rather than the current schedule, which begins after Isha and Taraweh prayers.

Sources told the newspaper that the timing set by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) for Ramadan does not align with the operational needs of educational centers within the sector. They emphasized that the sector relies on a comprehensive educational system, distinct from other service sectors; and that the newly proposed times fail to reflect the nature of the study periods, which generally last no longer than 2.5 hours. This schedule aligns better with students' needs during the holy month.

Furthermore, sources pointed out that the circular did not consider the practices from previous years, which accounted for the unique nature of educational schedule during Ramadan.

Moreover, they disclosed that the circular overlooked the schedule in correctional institutions, where classes are typically held late into the night; and no coordination had occurred with the concerned authorities in this regard.

## diwaniya 🕝 چیوانیة

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

### 'Kuwaitis competent enough, private sector must give jobs'

"A RESIDENT among our Arab brothers has a son who graduated from one of the private universities here in Kuwait. After he received his engineering degree, Allah facilitated for him a job in one of the largest local contracting companies, especially since he gradu-

ated from one of the globally trusted universities, in addition to the fact that -- and here is the most important thing -he is not Kuwaiti. This is the crux of the matter,' journalist Hassan Ali Karam wrote for Al-Seyassah



Hassan Ali Karam

daily.
"Why do private Kuwaiti companies employ non-Kuwaitis, and refuse or evade employing Kuwaitis? This is the secret in the government's belly because there is a complex in the private sector where they claim that Kuwaitis are 'not up for business'. Hence, there is an old complex or an old intrigue that the Palestinians spread or introduced into the minds of merchants, as well as the mind of the government -- their claim that 'Kuwaitis are not up for business', a cancer seeping from one stinking mouth to another stinking mouth.

"The Kuwaiti built this country from a barren desert to a country full of people and buildings, houses, streets and markets, before the Palestinians and other Arab and foreign races and nation-

alities honored us.
"The Kuwaitis did not leave a job without engaging in it, in a country whose people believed in the sanctity of work and the sanctity of the land on which they lived. In the 1950s and 1960s, you would not see a single Kuwaiti employee, while foreigners, Arabs and others, occupied the offices.

"The government is currently in the worst condition, as schools and universities pump in thousands of university graduates and dropouts of both genders every academic year. There is no refuge to contain them except government departments, as the private sector rejects them, because they do not want Kuwaitis, because 'the Kuwaiti is not for work' and 'the Kuwaiti is exposed'.

"This is how private companies and commercial sectors deal with Kuwaitis. So what is the solution, oh government that lives in the Kuwaiti mentality of 'not working'? Will the government continue to pay gifts and unemployment, and every year the numbers of those who give are increasing in number, and the Civil Service Commission remains not a door of hope for thousands of unemployed young men and women, sitting in their homes waiting for government mercy?

The other Gulf citizens in their countries (Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Oman and Saudi Arabia) have solved or almost solved the problem of the unemployed. You currently see young men and women in these Gulf countries working in shops, restaurants, hotels and garages. They do not feel embarrassment or humiliation in such

"The government should open the doors of private work for our youths, and encourage or even compel private companies, especially tender companies, to employ Kuwaitis of both gen-

"We are not better, higher, descended from the sky or are our children suckling the milk of birds, so let the government make a firm decision to solve the problem of widespread unemployment.

"It is not just a passing moment. Although it is the daughter of a humanitarian stance par excellence, it is rather a tear of loyalty, and before this, a feeling of pride. It is the result of a long journey of combined efforts in an operetta that expresses the great struggles this country has gone through," Eng. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"This is how I saw the tear of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid when the flowers of private schools displayed their paintings on 'The Fifth Wall'

"Whoever knows this man fully re-alizes how he melts in the love of Kuwait, which he always sees as in need of sacrificing time and effort, and even the soul, for its elevation, so it was not surprising that tears fell from an eye that never looked at a son of the homeland except as a partner in construction, and that for him, there is no difference between this and that, as everyone is fused with a high national spirit so the banner

is raised higher, fluttering with glory. "Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid, with all due respect, I have been his contemporary in many missions, whether in the National Assembly or the Council of Ministers. I have known him closely, and since then, I have felt that the man is not soft-spoken, as he is firm in the truth. He is one of the fiercest fighters for his positions that he adorns with a golden scale, so that they do not go in vain, as he proceeds from the interest of Kuwait, first and last.

"Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid is an eloquent speaker, quick-witted. He puts his words only in the right place and his feelings are always sincere. He takes the initiative when the initiative is an act of faith in what can serve his country.

"I remember him very well during the Corona pandemic. In compliance with the directives of His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, may Allah have mercy on him, he exerted tremendous efforts to save Kuwaitis, whether abroad or at home. He sent

planes to the farthest spot on Earth, so that Kuwaitis could come home to their country, and be safe from a pandemic that closed the airspace and people endured hardships in it. The Kuwaitis alone, with the Council of Ministers headed by His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid, are the watchful eyes on their safety and stability.

"This tear is big, in a moment of loyalty to Kuwait, as it indicates the values that have been rooted in our society since time immemorial, so it is dear to every citizen, and a source of many hopes, because when humanity meets with great tasks, such as those performed by His Highness, a great capacity for giving is transformed, and this is what His Highness appeared to be in many of the challenges he faced several

"I am not here to evaluate the man's career, whether political or social, as he does not need that, especially in social relations, as he is keen to communicate with all Kuwaitis, whoever they are, but what I saw in those tears is that they are the definite expression, in a touching moment, of his pride in the students' achievements, and the position of edu-

"It stirred the feelings of the attendees, as they remembered the challenges that the students and their families are facing, in addition to the importance of the educational system in promoting values and principles. It reflects the human side and the responsibility that leaders feel towards education and the



"Zakat, which is one of the five pillars of Islam, plays a major role in bridging the gap between the rich and the poor, columnist Dr. Turki Al-Azmi wrote for

"As stated on the website of Sheikh Ibn Baz (May Allah have mercy on him), zakat is both a purification for wealth and a means of increasing blessings. The Prophet (PBUH) said, "Wealth does not decrease from charity," and Allah Almighty says, "Establish prayer and give zakat."

"In His infinite wisdom, Allah has outlined the eight categories for the distribution of zakat in His verse: "Zakat is for the poor, the needy, those employed to collect it, for reconciling hearts, for freeing slaves, for those in debt, for the cause of Allah, and for the stranded traveler. It is an obligation from Allah,

and Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise." "We are in the blessed month of Ramadan, during which the devils are chained, and people draw closer to Allah through acts of worship. Therefore, we will briefly discuss the pillar of zakat with the hope that the wealthy will real-



and giving charity. "Let us assume,

for example, that deposits amount to seven billion dinars. This would mean that the zakat value would be 175 million dinars, just from the deposits alone!
"These fu

Dr. Al-Azmi

could cover three of the categories mentioned by Allah - the poor, the needy, and those in debt. The indebted are many, and some have reached the point of poverty, or are so needy that they cannot cover their basic needs.

"Many of our brothers speak about the issue of loans, and I don't think anyone has resorted to borrowing except out of dire necessity. So, where are we in applying one of the pillars of Islam? If we delve deeper, we would find that it is possible to build world-class hospitals and universities using waqf (endow-

"The difference between us and the Western world is that Islam is a great religion that covers every aspect of life in ways that are beyond imagination. After the global financial crisis of 2008, caused by usury, some financial institutions in Western countries turned to the Islamic system. Given the importance of zakat in Islam, and as we live in a Muslim country, we have tried to remind people of its significance.

"A wealthy person with weak faith, when calculating the amount of zakat and seeing it as large, may find it bur-densome, unaware of the blessings that will come from paying zakat.

"Allah has warned those who are miserly with zakat and fail to pay it, saying in the Qur'an: "And those who hoard gold and silver and do not spend them in the way of Allah, give them tidings of a painful punishment." The number of dignified families, according to reports from sources, is many.

"If we conducted thorough research into the number of borrowers and the reasons that led them to borrow, we would understand the root causes of the problem. Many of them borrow to complete the construction of their homes, many to marry off their children, some for treatment abroad, and others to pay their children's tuition fees abroad... and the list goes on with many other cases of what could be described as "needy".

"In conclusion, we hope for the enactment of a law that mandates the payment of zakat and the establishment of an official body to collect and distribute it to the people of Kuwait... I repeat, the people of Kuwait (within the country), as the funds for charity for our Muslim brothers abroad have other institutions that handle it. May Allah help us.

— Compiled by Mahmoud Attiyeh/ Simi K. Kutty



KFF boats display spray power.

KFF photos



KFF personnel demonstrate use of fire extinguisher.



Some of the KFF equipment on display.

#### KFF depicts prowess at national days event

Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) took part in Kuwait's National Day celebrations by organizing a series of engaging shows and events near the Kuwait Towers with the participation of the Prevention and Combating sectors, as well as the Public Relations and Media Depart-

In a press release issued by KFF, Direc-

tor of the Public Relations and Media Department Brigadier General Muhammad Badr Al-Gharib explained that the event included displays of the latest land and marine firefighting machinery and equipment, as well as fire prevention and protection tools. An awareness team was present to educate the public on fire prevention and combating techniques, and offer safety tips and messages to improve overall fire safety awareness. A marine firefighting and rescue demonstration was held, as well as educational activities for children. These activities allowed children to learn about fire ladders, how to use them, and receive hands-on training in fire extinguishing techniques.

## Jobless couple held stealing cars

15 stolen vehicles found abandoned

**By Munif Naif** 

Al-Sevassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, March 2: The** Ministry of Interior announced that the Farwaniya Investigations Department of the Criminal Security Sector's General Department of Criminal Investigations arrested a gang consisting of a man and a woman that specialized in stealing vehicles using professional tools in

#### various areas of Kuwait.

The ministry explained that investigations led to the identification of the suspects, who are unemployed citizens using a professional criminal method to steal vehicles. The suspects would use the stolen cars for a brief period before stealing their contents and abandoning them in the desert.

The suspects were apprehended in Andalous, and they confessed during interrogations to committing 22 vehicle thefts in various governorates. Fifteen stolen vehicles were recovered from different locations, along with a number of stolen items. The suspects have been referred, along

with the seized items, to the concerned authorities for further legal action.

**'Keep Kuwait clean':** The Public Relations Department of Kuwait Municipality affirmed that the cleaning teams effectively carried out their duties during the national holidays in cleaning the streets and areas designated for the National Day and Liberation Day celebrations, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The municipality praised the excellent cooperation from both citizens and residents.

It highlighted the noticeable decrease in waste, which facilitated the cleaning teams' efforts in all celebration sites and helped maintain high standards of public hygiene.



Traces of fire seen on the building.

#### KFF tackles Hawally flat blaze; one person hurt

KUWAIT CITY, March 2: Firefighters from Hawally and Salmiya fire stations extinguished a fire that engulfed an apartment in a building in Hawally on Friday morning. According to a press release issued by Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), an individual who sustained injuries in the

incident was handed over to paramedics for medical at-Meanwhile, firefighters from Umm Al-Hayman and Mina Abdullah centers controlled a fire that broke out in a house in Ali Sabah Al-Salem recently.

According to a press release issued by KFF, the firefighting teams rushed to the location after receiving information about the house fire, and quickly began battling the flames, thus preventing any injuries.

### 'Apply for canteens project'

KUWAIT CITY, March 2: The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) has announced that it is now accepting applications from food companies interested in investing in the school canteen development project, in line with the relevant regulations and ministerial decision No. 5/2021, following the approval of the PAFN Board of Directors, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

PAFN revealed that the application process will remain open until early May, and applications can be submitted either at its headquarters in Sabah Al-Salem or via its official website. The authority affirmed the importance of submitting

all required documentation, including approval from the Educational Activities Department at the Ministry of Education, as well as obtaining both a health license and a commercial license for the facility from which the food will be supplied or invested in.



#### **CAPT** reviews bids for major broadcasting tech upgrade

## Ministry of Information set to select best offer for media revamp

By Mohammad Al-Enezi Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 2: The Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) has opened bids for a tender aimed at supplying, installing, and guaranteeing television and radio broadcasting and operation equipment for the Ministry of Information.

The tender witnessed the participation of eight companies, all vying for the opportunity to execute the pro-

According to sources, CAPT has instructed the ministry to review the submitted bids and select the most suitable bid from technical and financial perspectives; and based on the criteria outlined in the tender docu-

Sources also indicated that the bids varied considerably, with the lowest bid amounting to approximately KD 139,000; adding that other bids were higher, reflecting differences in technical specifications and the technologies proposed.

The ministry is set to evaluate the bids as per the key standards; including quality, technical efficiency and financial feasibility, in order to ensure optimal perfor-

mance in providing broadcasting equipment. This is part of the ministry's ongoing efforts to modernize its media

This tender is included in the broader strategy of the ministry to upgrade the media broadcasting system to remain in line with the latest technological advancements; thereby, improving its ability to deliver high-quality content through its various channels.

Al-Rajhi named acting Sec-Gen

KU's Al-Hajri receives prestigious

KUWAIT CITY, March 2, (Agen-

cies): Kuwait University recently

announced on Friday that Dr.

Nawaf Al-Hajri from the Faculty

of Life Sciences has been honored

with the Khalifa International

Award for Date Palm and Agricul-

The UAE award, in its 17th ses-

Dr. Al-Hajri

sion, was given to Dr. Al-Hajri

statement, the university empha-

sized that Dr. Al-Hajri's innova-

tive development and production

projects have significantly impact-

Dr. Al-Hajri thanked the award

organizers, Kuwait University and

the Kuwait Foundation for the Ad-

ed the agricultural sector.

tural Innovation for 2025.

recogni-

tion of his

exceptional

contributions

to sustainable

agricultural

practices and

his commit-

ment to en-

hancing food

and water se-

CUSTOMS

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## **Kuwait set to shine at Expo 2025** Osaka, strengthening Japan ties

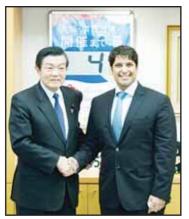
Al-Mutairi oversees final touches to ensure excellence

TOKYO, March 2, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait is eager to shine during its participation in the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, showcasing Kuwaiti rich history and traditions, said Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi on Saturday.

Minister Al-Mutairi's statement came during his Tokyo meeting with Japan's Minister for the World Expo 2025 Yoshikata Ito.

Al-Mutairi, also State Minister for Youth Affairs, discussed with Ito during the meeting preparations for the upcoming global event scheduled on April and Kuwait's participation in the Expo.

Al-Mutairi noted that Kuwait partook in the Osaka Expo in 1970, affirming that after 55 years, the participation came at a time when both nations were celebrating over 60 years of cooperation and friendship.



KUNA photo Minister of Information Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi during the meeting with the Japanese Minister in charge of

He affirmed that the success of Japan in this grand event was a success for Kuwait, noting that his country was

the exhibition Yoshikata Ito.

keen partaking in the event, a sentiment reflected in Kuwait being the first Arab country and the eighth on a global level to sign the Expo participation contract.

He added that Kuwait was keen on revealing its Expo pavilion during a press conference in Japan in a step reflective of the strong bilateral relations liking the two countries.

He commended the Kuwaiti embassy in Japan for its relentless efforts to support Kuwait's participation via facilitating visits of Kuwaiti delegations to the pavilion in preparations for the global

On his current visit to Japan, the Minister affirmed that he was keen on directly oversee in the latest developments connected with the construction of the Kuwaiti pavilion to make sure that the facility was up to the highest standards.

On his part, Minister Ito commended the unique design of the Kuwaiti pavilion, which would hopefully impress and attract the expo visitors.

Minister Ito affirmed that the Expo would further help connect Japan with

the world through Expo Osaka.

He expressed gratitude to Minister Al-Mutairi's invitation to Yoshihiro Murai -- Governor of Miyagi Prefecture and the Chairman of the National Governors' Association -- who visited Kuwait and took part in the opening celebrations of Kuwait as the 2025 capital of Arab media and culture, delivering a speech at the event.

The minister also expressed gratitude to Kuwait for its support to Japan during the devastating earthquake and Tsunami of 2011, saying that the humanitarian stance would always be enshrined in the memory of the Japanese people.

Also providing his statement, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Japan Sami Al-Zamanan stressed Kuwait's keenness on a successful participation of in the World Expo, noting that he had organized a meeting for Arab Ambassadors in Tokyo with the participation of Japanese Foreign Ministry personnel and the Expo organizing committee to coordinate Arab participation and supporting Japan in the Expo.

Khalifa International Award 2025 vancement of Sciences, for their

> research career. Dr. Al-Hajri is well-regarded in his field, having presented numerous research projects that promote sustainability in agriculture and the environment.

steadfast support throughout his

The Khalifa International Award, established by late president of the UAE Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed in 2007, aims to advance agricultural innovation and date palm research worldwide, recognizing outstanding contributions and fostering knowledge exchange among professionals in this domain.

Meanwhile, Director of Kuwait University Dr. Dina Al-Milhem issued a decision to end Dr. Mishari Al-Eifan's assignment as Secretary General of the university upon his request, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

She instead appointed Professor of Criminal Law at the Faculty of Law Dr. Badr Al-Rajhi as the acting Secretary General until further

### Faculty of Basic Education holds tree planting activity on campus

KUWAIT CITY, March 2: In an attempt to promote environmental sustainability and raise environmental awareness among students and faculty members, the Department of Sciences at the Faculty of Basic Education organized an agricultural activity of planting native wild and desert trees on campus with the participation of the college's Dean Dr. Mubarak Al-Dharwa, and several leading academic staff, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Dr. Al-Dharwa affirmed the vital role of academic institutions in promoting environmental culture, and highlighted that such activities contribute to expanding plant coverage and achieving environmental balance

In this regard, Head of the Department of Sciences Dr. Qais Majeed explained that native wild trees play a huge role in combating climate change, absorbing carbon dioxide, and reducing desertifica-

He stressed the importance of such initiatives in enhancing environmental sustainability and supporting national efforts toward achieving sustainable devel-



#### **KTA** strengthens

Co-op protocol

Chairman of the Board of Directors of Kuwait Teachers Association Hamad Al-Holi said the association is currently focusing on developing the professional qualifications of teachers and implementing the cooperation protocol with the Ministry of

In his remarks at the opension and Practical Reality

He affirmed that the association is committed to provide global training programs for educators, which are developed in collaboration with training experts. He said the kindergarten training program is a key initiative within the cooperation protocol, recognizing training as an essential pillar for excellence in the educational process.

sociation ensures these programs are based on the best international practices, while considering their practical application to maximize their effectiveness. He further emphasized that these initiatives align with the association's mission to support and empower teachers with the latest knowledge and tools, ultimately improving the quality of education.

with the skills needed to stay abreast of global educational trends, the association aims to contribute to building a bright future for Kuwaiti children. This goal supports Kuwait's broader vision of empowering citizens through skill development," he elab-

Training Consultant Hiba Al-Saad pointed out that the protocol with the ministry aims to help teachers benefit from global educational programs, improve their professional performance, and evaluate the impact of training in the educational field. She revealed that over

the past two years; the association has implemented 20 programs under the protocol, totaling 108 days and 324 training hours, for the benefit of 720 teachers.

The event also witnessed the participation of several female teachers, along with acting General Technical Supervisor for Kindergartens Fatima Al-Kandari who tackled topics related to early childhood education and the vital role of technical guidance in advancing the educational process at this stage.

### teacher training KUWAIT CITY, March 2:

Education, reports Al-Anba

ing of the educational evening organized by the association in collaboration with the ministry titled, "The Impact of Training on Kindergarten Teachers: A Scientific Vi-Al-Holi explained that the event is part of the ongoing collaboration between the two entities to support professional development and training for kindergarten

He stressed that the as-

part of Kuwait's National Day and Liberation Day celebrations, and in recognition of the strong ties and historical relations between Kuwait and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, the Ahmadi Governorate, in coordination with the Kuwait Gulf Oil Company, organized a celebratory event at the Nuwaiseeb land "By equipping educators port on Thursday.

According to a press release issued by Ahmadi Governorate, GCC citizens arriving through the port were invited to join Kuwait in its national holiday celebrations. During the event, Ahmadi

Governor Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his delegation toured the port facilities, and extended congratulations to the employees of the Ministry of Interior, the General Administration for Customs, and representatives of various government institutions on the occasion of the national celebrations.

Governor Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah leads efforts to enhance border services and promote

Governor leads efforts to promote unity

**Ahmadi Governorate hosts National** 

**Day celebrations at Nuwaiseeb port** 

As part of the event, hospitality was shown to guests arriving at the port and souvenirs were provided to them. An artistic performance by the Ardha band showcasing Kuwait's cultural heritage was also held.

The governor affirmed that the event was an expression of appreciation for the GCC citizens to welcome them to their "second homeland", which reflects the deep-rooted Arab and Gulf traditions.

He stressed that this collaborative effort between the local government and participating institutions is part of the ongoing efforts to enhance services, especially at border crossings, and to present a positive image of Kuwait while sharing the joy of the national celebrations with everyone.

On this occasion, the Kuwait Gulf Oil Company affirmed that its involvement in the celebration reflects its commitment to participating in national events and strengthening ties with the community in all sectors.

The governor also visited the service facilities in Khairan City, where he personally congratulated the personnel of the Ministry of Interior at the Khairan Police Station, the firefighters at the Khairan Fire Station, and the medical team at the Khairan Medical Center.

He commended their crucial role in serving the nation, and highlighted their professionalism and dedication throughout the year, especially during the holidays.

The governor was briefed on the services provided by these departments, and discussed ways to improve collaboration and enhance service quality.



Ahmadi Governor's visit to key service facilities.



Kuwait Gulf Oil Company joins in the celebration.



Dean of the College of Basic Education, Dr. Mubarak Al-Dharwa, participates in the agricultural activity in celebration of the national holidays.

#### Temporary Debt List / National Company for Infrastructure Development (K.S.C.C.)

Based on the decision of the Bankruptcy Judge issued on 19 / 2 / 2024 in request No. 140 / 2023, registered under serial number 232490310, for bankruptcy declaration, as well as requests No. 144 / 2023 (serial No. 232491400), No. 145 / 2023 (serial No. 232491560), and No. 148 / 2023 (serial No. 232492060), the requests have been accepted, and the bankruptcy procedures against the debtor company have been initiated.

The bankruptcy trustees, Dr. Faleh Al-Azmi and Certified Public Accountant Nasser Al-Enezi, have been appointed for the bankruptcy of the National Company for Infrastructure

Following the publication procedures in the official gazette (Issue No. 1676, dated 25 / 2 2024), the request has been accepted, and the bankruptcy declaration has been opened. The deadline for submitting claims has been set as 6 / 8 / 2023, considered as the temporary date of cessation of payment.

The ruling endorsed with the executive formula was issued on 13 / 1 / 2025, declaring the bankruptcy of the debtor company and confirming 6/8/2023 as the temporary date of cessation of payment. The Bankruptcy Administration has been instructed to register this ruling in the commercial register and publish a summary in the official gazette.

For details on creditor balances (temporary debt list), please scan the QR Code. For English QR Code





Note: According to Article (111) of Law No. 71 of 2020 on Bankruptcy,

«The debtor and any creditor, even if their name is not included in the debt list, have the right to object to the Bankruptcy Administration regarding the debts listed in the schedule within ten days from the date of its announcement. The Bankruptcy Court is responsible for ruling on such objections. Creditors must submit their claims through the designated electronic system within the specified period to ensure they are reviewed and audited as quickly as possible.»

Website for submitting claims: List.info@mge.financial Bankruptcy Trustees, Address: Kuwait – Qibla, Block (11), Plot (18), Munira Hamoud Al-Ameeri Building, 1st Floor, Office (6) Contact Numbers: 51530012 - 99081109 - 00965 22442424 Bankruptcy Trustees: Dr. Faleh Al-Azmi Certified Public Accountant: Nasser Al-Enezi

## Namaa charity equips Great Omari Mosque

RAMALLAH, March 2, (KUNA): Kuwait Namaa charity, part of the Social Reform Society, completed equipping the main prayer hall of the Great Omari Mosque in Gaza in collaboration with its field partner, the Palestine Al-Ghad Society for Community Development.

In a statement, Executive Vice President of Namaa Charity, Abdulaziz Al-Kandari stated that this initiative is to meet the needs of Gazans, as the mosque faces infrastructure challenges amid the ongoing aggression by the Israeli occupation.

He explained that the preparation includes providing new carpeting for the

prayer hall, upgrading the sound and light systems, installing fans and air conditioning for the worshippers' comfort, and renovating facilities.

Al-Kandari affirmed that the charity is proud to be part of this initiative and to support the people of Gaza in this sa-

He further said that mosques are not just places of worship but social, educational gatherings, hoping this project would create a suitable environment for the worshippers during Ramadan.

Al-Kandari reaffirmed the charity's firm commitment to create humanitarian projects that make a tangible impact, emphasizing the organization's dedication to supporting mosques and Islamic

He expressed gratitude to Kuwaiti donors, stressing that these initiatives would not be possible without their continuous support to Gaza and other communities in need, calling for everyone to continue this support.

The Great Omari Mosque is one of the oldest and most significant mosques in Palestine, dating back to the Islamic conquest during era of the Caliph Omar bin Al-Khattab, it is the third-largest mosque in Palestine, following Al-Aqsa Mosque and Al-Jazzar Mosque.

#### **Continued from Page 1**

#### Thank you

We have many examples in the Arab world like Muammar Gaddafi, Saddam Hussein and Bashar Al-Assad. Certainly, we should not forget the butcher or Benjamin Netanyahu.

Diplomats use a certain rule to prevent the opponent from achieving his goals. The idea is to foil the opponent's plots by exposing them. This is exactly what Donald Trump did. Trump deserves gratitude for the public dialogue with Zelenskyy.

#### No pay,

The statistics also revealed that the total number of various procedures of the administration reached 4,460,069 during the first half of 2024

The procedures for requesting executive seizure of the debtor's assets held by others accounted for the largest percentage at 48%, while the procedures for opening an alimony file and the procedures for "reopening a file" made up the smallest percentages at 0.01% and 0.02%, respectively. The statistics also indicated that the total number of procedures across various travel ban departments reached 100,323 during the first half of 2024.

The travel ban order due to debt constituted the largest portion, making up about 43.2% with 43,290 procedures. Comparing the procedures of the travel ban departments between the first half of 2024 and the same period in 2023, the statistics revealed a 31.7% increase in the total number of procedures during the second period, due to the rise in procedures across most sections.

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#### **Court orders**

procedures in most sections.

the Criminal Investigation Department, with the support of the Public Security Sector, arrested a person accused of murdering his grandmother after receiving a report stating that the crime occurred in a house in Hawally

Immediately after receiving the report, specialized teams from the Criminal Investigation Department were formed, and they succeeded in identifying the location of the accused and arrested him in record time.

#### **MoH** modifies

With the theme, "Your Care is Our Priority," the training course aimed to improve the scientific skills of healthcare professionals. Participants were awarded certificates to empower them to save lives in emergencies.

The hospital also affirmed the involvement of various departments that responded to visitors' questions about the training and rescue procedures.

Present at the event were Director of the hospital Dr. Ali Al-Mutairi, head of the medical authority Dr. Ahmed Al-Dosari, and specialists from the emergency and ambulance departments.

#### **KPI** gears

Once the project is completed, it is expected to significantly reduce carbon emissions from vehicles powered by traditional fuels, yielding substantial environmental benefits," the sources explained.

According to these sources, KPI currently operates 4,623 fuel stations abroad, with 3,810 fully owned and 813 in partnership with major European fuel companies. "The company aimed to increase this number to more than 5,500 stations by 2024 to boost its market share across Europe. Italy stands out as a key focus for KPI due to the country's strong preference for Kuwaiti fuel. The Italian Ministry of Environment regularly praises KPI for its role in providing clean energy, and the company has made significant investments in digital fuel stations across

Italy," sources disclosed. Meanwhile, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of KPI Talib Shafi Al-Ajmi continues to coordinate closely with CEO of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Sheikh Nawaf Al-Saud Al-Sabah to implement the Kuwait Oil Sector Strategy 2040.

Sources pointed out that as one of the main arms of KPC abroad, KPI is focused on acquiring additional companies worldwide to strengthen KPC's position in the clean energy sector; particularly since European nations increasingly rely on petroleum derivatives affiliated with KPI.

In the aviation sector, sources indicated that KPI is working hard to expand its presence in the global aviation market by supplying fuel to aircraft in more than 90 countries within the next five years, up from the current 70. "KPI's external marketing division is also striving to meet the goals of KPC by increasing sales in European, Asian and African markets," sources added.

They said KPI achieved a major milestone last year by selling 310,000 tons of ultra biodiesel -- a product created by blending diesel with hydrogenated vegetable oil -- in a pioneering initiative. "This blending process was implemented at over 30 KPI-owned fuel stations in Italy. KPI also intends to expand its storage facilities to accommodate larger quantities of ultrablended diesel and other products," the sources revealed.

#### **Council to review proposal on roofed setbacks**

### Municipality weighs regulatory changes

#### **By Inaas Awadh**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 2: The Kuwait Municipality has submitted a statement to the Municipal Council regarding the proposal of member Abdullatif Al-Da'i to allow roofed setbacks for commercial activities.

The newspaper obtained a copy of the statement, which was approved by acting Director General of the Municipality Manal Al-Asfour, indicating that the implementation of the proposal requires the formation of a working team to review and study Ministerial Resolution No. 30/2021

issued on Dec 17, 2021 concerning the regulations for licensing the occupancy of public roads, yards, sidewalks and public squares.

The statement clarified that should the team be formed and amendments made to the relevant provisions of the ministerial resolution, the proposed changes will be forwarded to the Municipality's Legal Department for review and legal formulation. However, it was emphasized that a decision regarding the formation of the working team has not yet been issued.

Moreover, the Municipality responded similarly to the proposal of members Sherifa Al-Shalfan and Abdullatif Al-Da'i on the amendment of Article Four of the Roads and Public Squares Occupancy Regulations. This proposal was presented in the minutes of the Municipality's General Cleanliness Committee meeting no. 24/2024, dated Aug 27,

The Municipality explained that examining the proposal will also require forming a working team to review Ministerial Resolution No. 30/2021 -- the regulation on the licensing and occupation of public roads, sidewalks and public



H.E. Augustine Ntshomane Makgonatsotlhe, the Republic of Botswana Ambassador to Kuwait.

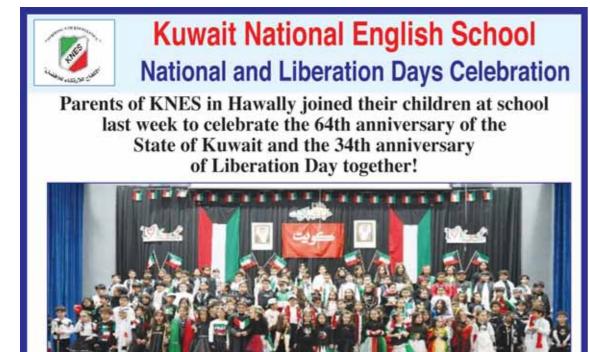
## **Republic of Botswana Ambassador** bids farewell at Al-Qadiri Gallery

KUWAIT CITY, March 2: The Republic of Botswana Ambassador to Kuwait, H.E. Mr. Augustine Ntshomane Makgonatsotlhe, visited Al-Qadiri Gallery in Mishref last Monday to bid farewell after the completion of his mission in the State of Kuwait.

H.E. Mr. Augustine Ntshomane Makgonatsotlhe was welcomed by Mr. Mohammed Al-Qadiri, the general manager of Al-Qadiri Gallery, and his wife, Kuwaiti artist and writer Thuraya Al-Baqsami, who presented the ambassador with one of her recent paintings as a token of friendship and a memento of Kuwait.

Many ambassadors, diplomats, and friends attended the event.





Kuwait National English School marked the occasion with music and traditional costumes with the colours of the Kuwaiti flag, in the presence of proud parents. Each department provided separate performances: the EYFS little ones enjoyed fun activities in the KG Garden, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 children performed for their parents in the school theatre, and Secondary Students organised a day of celebration to honour the State of Kuwait, where everyone can now live in peace.







'President using classic elected authoritarian playbook'

## Trump moves test limits of presidential power, resilience of US democracy

WASHINGTON, March 2, (AP): During his first six weeks in office, President Donald Trump has embarked on a dizzying teardown of the federal government and attacks on long-standing institutions in an attempt to increase his own authority

He has pardoned those who attacked the US Capitol to overturn his 2020 election loss, placed loyalists atop the FBI and military, and purged the Department of Justice, which dropped investigations against Trump allies. He declared control over independent agencies such as the Federal Election Commission, punished media outlets for coverage he dislikes and his allies suggested he could defy court orders.

Those who monitor democracy across the globe had warned that a second Trump term could endanger America's 240-year experiment with democracy. His opening weeks in office have done nothing to dispel those concerns.

"Trump is using the classic elected authoritarian playbook," said Brendan Nyhan of Dartmouth College, who joined more than 800 other political scientists in signing a letter warning that Trump is undermining the rule of law and the basic constitutional principle of checks and balances. "It's almost embarrassing how crude it is.'

Nyhan said some of Trump's moves echo those made by others who won democratic elections and then moved to centralize control, such as Hungary's Viktor Orban. Those who have resisted authoritarians in other countries say they are alarmed by what is happening in the United States.

"I feel like I'm living through this twice," said Maria Ressa, a journalist who won a Nobel Prize after being prosecuted by the government of former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte in 2019, on a call last week about the threat of Trump to democracy.

"What you're seeing is exactly that think about it as death by a thousand cuts," she said. "You're bleeding so much that, at some point, the body politic dies.'

Trump has certainly embraced the image of a strongman.

The president declared, "we are the federal law" and posted on his social media site that "He who saves his country does not violate any law" - a quote often attributed to Napolean Bonaparte. The official White House account posted on the social media site X an image of a smiling, crowned Trump with the words "LONG LIVE THE KING."

Trump's supporters say he actually



Demonstrators rally during the No Kings Day protest on Presidents Day in Washington DC, in support of federal workers and against recent actions by US President Donald Trump and Elon Musk. (AP)

is trying to preserve American democracy by giving voters what they want - a strong president. How strong Trump can become is in question. Courts have paused several of his executive orders, including ones seeking to eliminate agen-

cies created by Congress and ending birthright citizenship for the children of parents who are in the U.S. illegally.

Trump campaigned last year promising to dismantle what he contends is a corrupt government bureaucracy, which

he blames for failures during his first term and his subsequent prosecution. On his first day in office, the new president told reporters his goal was to "give the people back their faith, their wealth, their democracy and indeed their freedom."

Speaking to reporters in the Oval Office in February, billionaire Elon Musk, who Trump tapped to spearhead cuts to the federal government, claimed he is the one trying to "restore democracy." Some of the lawsuits seeking to stop Musk's actions have been unsuccessful, allowing him to proceed.

"The people voted for major government reform and that's what the people are going to get," Musk told reporters.

"That's what democracy is all about." But many who track democracy warn

that Musk's conception is incomplete. "The power you gain through the ballot box is not unlimited power. That's the essence of liberal democracy," said Kevin Casas-Zamora, secretary general of the Stockholm-based pro-democracy group International IDEA.

On the world stage, Trump and his administration have alarmed longtime allies in Europe over whether the US remains committed to NATO and his siding with Russia in talks to end the war in Ukraine, a country the Kremlin invaded three years ago, and at the United Nations last month.

On Friday, Trump berated Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the Oval Office. Russian officials and many Trump allies expressed glee; European nations reacted in horror.

US Sen Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., said the close relations between the Trump administration and Russian President Vladimir Putin's government amounted to an existential threat. "This Putin-Trump alliance means abandoning our allies, supporting authoritarianism and undermining our democratic traditions," he said in a social media post.

The common theme throughout Trump's moves is about expanding his personal power, said Josh Chafetz, a Georgetown law professor.

"It's not even clear what it's power in service of," he added, noting that Trump has few strong ideological convictions.

Despite concerns that the administration would disregard the judiciary, Trump and Musk said it would obey court rulings and eventually seek congressional approval for the changes they are making. Still, Musk and some other Republicans have also called for impeaching judges who rule against the administration.

Are we in a constitutional crisis or not?: Levin

## **Democratic activists fueled anti-Trump protests at GOP town**

WASHINGTON, March 2, (AP): Furious Democrats filled Republican town halls across America last week to protest President Donald Trump's power grab in Washington.

But in recent days, the activists behind those protests have turned their anger toward elected officials in their own party, who they believe are not fighting the Republican president and billionaire adviser Elon Musk with the urgency, aggression or creativity that the moment deserves.

"Are we in a constitutional crisis or not?" said Ezra Levin, co-founder of the anti-Trump resistance group Indivisible, which encouraged progressives to attend town halls and protest outside Tesla dealerships.

Of Democratic leaders, he added, 'There's zero tactical or innovative

Indeed, as Trump moves to consolidate control in Washington with little regard for precedent or judges ruling against him, the nation's most powerful Democrats are offering mixed messages while struggling to break from the rules and norms that have long governed US politics.

Key Democratic governors have spoken out with varying levels of concern, but they have also promised to work with the Trump administration

to ensure resources flow to their states. House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York has taken heat for spending part of last week's congressional recess promoting a children's book he wrote about democracy. Asked about activists' frustration he



US House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-NY, (right), is joined by Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-NY, for a news conference in Statuary Hall at the Capitol on Feb 12, in Washington. (AP)

pointed to his party's united opposition to the GOP budget bill and to the more than 100 lawsuits brought against the

"We have to continue to push back aggressively in every way possible in defense of the American people," Jeffries insisted, acknowledging voters' "concern, fear, shock and anxiety."

Republicans have control of the House and Senate. Some Democrats think they are nearing the limit of what they can do to stop Trump, and so the party should stand back.

Veteran Democratic strategist James Carville said as much out loud earlier in the week in a New York Times

opinion piece in which he encouraged his party to embrace a "strategic retreat" to let Trump and his Republican allies take the blame for the chaos they

"It's time for Democrats to embark on the most daring political maneuver in the history of our party: roll over and play dead," Carville wrote.

The piece infuriated Democratic activists. But some officials in Washington quietly welcomed Carville's call for Democrats to get out of Trump's way.

"The Carville point was that there's got to be an opportunity for people to start experiencing and coming to their own conclusion," said Sen. Peter

Welch, D-Vt.

"What's easier said than done on Carville is that people are freaked out and they do want us to do something and we want to do something," Welch added. "That's the dilemma."

In Trump's first month in office, he and Musk have moved with extraordinary speed to cut tens of thousands of jobs from the federal workforce. The president is trying to eliminate entire agencies established by federal law. He has signed dozens of executive orders and begun to exact retribution against perceived political enemies across the government, firing independent inspectors general, federal prosecutors and FBI agents involved with his previous prosecutions.

Trump and his allies have lashed out against judges and threatened to defy court rulings.

So far, neither Jeffries nor Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York has been willing to employ perhaps the most dramatic tool at their disposal to stop Trump: their vote and the ability to withhold their vote in protest - even if it means shutting down the government.

There are some Democrats who want their party to pursue a shutdown on March 14 when current funding expires. But historically, shutdowns have been a Republican strategy only. Democrats generally see themselves as the political grown-ups in the room.

Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., said Democrats "need to be more imaginative and ingenious and aggressive in our tactics

#### Cuomo launches comeback bid for New York City mayor

NEW YORK, March 2, (AP): Former New York Gov Andrew Cuomo announced Saturday that he is running for mayor of New York City, relaunching his political career following a yearslong exile over a barrage of sexual harassment accusations.

17-minute video, Cuomo pitched himself as an accomplished moderate who can save a city he described as threatening and "out of control," and capable

Cuomo

of navigating the delicate balance between working with Republican President Donald Trump and fighting him, when necessary.

"I am not saying this is going to be easy. It won't be easy, but I know we can turn the city around, and I believe I can help," he said.

The Democrat is expected to mount a formidable campaign, despite entering the race deeply wounded by the scandal that forced his resignation as governor in 2021.

He takes on a large field of primary opponents with low name recognition plus an incumbent, Mayor Eric Adams, who - for now remains under indictment on federal corruption charges and under scrutiny from critics who question his independence from Trump.

Cuomo brings fundraising prowess, a record of accomplishments over three terms as governor and potential support among moderate voters who helped propel Adams to office. Yet it is unclear whether voters

are willing to give Cuomo another chance following his remarkable downfall, when he went from being hailed for his leadership during the onslaught of COVID-19 to being castigated for his behavior with women and questioned about his pandemic response.

In his campaign video, Cuomo acknowledged past "mistakes" but did not directly address the harassment allegations.

"Did I always do everything right in my years of government service? Of course not," he said. "Would I do some things differently knowing what I know now - certainly. Did I make mistakes, some painfully? Definitely, and I believe I learned from them and that I am a better person for it, and I hope to show that every day."

Adams, caught on a city street by a Politico reporter Saturday, welcomed Cuomo to the race.

"Come one, come all. Everybody should put their position forward," Adams said. "I have a great record to run on. We look forward to the campaign.'



People crowd a square during a student-led protest and a 18-hour blockade of the streets to protest the deaths of 15 people killed in the November 2024 collapse of a train station canopy, in the town of Nis, Serbia on March 1. (AP)

#### Latest anti-graft rally adds pressure on govt

#### Serbian students declare 'we deserve better'

NIS, Serbia, March 2, (AP): Tens of thousands of people in Serbia gathered on Saturday for a huge student-led rally that vowed to turn the troubled, populist-run Balkan country into a free nation of justice and rule of law, while sending a message that "We deserve

University students in the Balkan country that has been ruled firmly by a right-wing, pro-Russia government for over a decade have been holding nationwide protests since the fatal train station canopy collapse in November that killed 15 people and which critics blame on government

The almost daily protests regularly draw tens of thousands of people and have rattled President Aleksandar Vucic's firm grip on power. "We want the (state) institutions that

work in the interest of all of us and not to our damage," the students said in a statement. "We want a system that values knowledge and work, and not obedience and silence.

Protesters from across the country gathered in Nis, some 200 kilometers (120 miles) south of Belgrade, for Saturday's festival-style rally lasting for 18 hours. "We rally because we know

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we deserve better," the statement said. The event in Nis passed a symbolic decree that proclaimed the "values for which we fight as a pledge for the future," and in order to build a state "in which justice and freedom will be stronger than any individual.' The next major protest will be held

in the capital, Belgrade, on March 15, organizers said. Vucic, who has described the pro-

tests as a Western-orchestrated attempt to oust him from power, on Saturday dismissed the Nis rally, declaring that "support is falling" and that he thinks "nothing special" of it.

US District Judge Amy Berman Jackson sided with Hampton Dellinger, who leads the Office of Special Counsel, in a legal battle over the president's authority to oust the head of the independent agency that's likely headed back to the US Supreme Court.

after he was fired, even though the law says special counsels can be removed by the president "only for inefficiency, neglect of duty, or malfeasance in office." Jackson, who was nominated to the bench by Democratic president Barack Obama, quickly reinstated Dellinger in the job while he pursued his case. (AP)

## **UK, France and Ukraine agree to work on** ceasefire plan for Russia's war in Kyiv

LONDON, March 2, (AP): Britain, France and Ukraine have agreed to work on a ceasefire plan to present to the United States, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Sunday as he prepared to host a summit of European leaders to discuss ending the war.

The summit has been overshadowed by the extraordinary scolding by US President Donald Trump of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the White House on Friday for being ungrateful for U.S. support in Ukraine's

battle against the invasion by Russia. But Starmer said he's focused on being a bridge to restore peace talks and he used the collapse of those talks as an opportunity to re-engage with Trump and Zelenskyy



From left: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiyy applaud during a video conference meeting with Ukraine's Finance Minister Sergii Marchenko in London, England on March 1. (AP)

and French President Emmanuel Macron rather than "ramp up the rhetoric."

"We've now agreed that the United Kingdom, along with France and possibly one or two others, will work with Ukraine on a plan to stop the fighting, and then we'll discuss that plan with the United States," Starmer told the BBC. Starmer and Macron have both spoken to Trump since Friday.

The London meeting has taken on greater importance in defending the war-torn ally and shoring up the continent's defenses.

Sunday's summit is likely to include talks on establishing a European military force to be sent to Ukraine to underpin a ceasefire. Starmer said it would involve "a coalition of the willing."

Starmer said he does not trust Russian President Vladimir Putin but does trust Trump. "Do I believe Donald Trump when he says he wants lasting peace? The answer to that is yes," he said.

Starmer said there are "intense discussions" to get a security guarantee from the US as one of three components for a lasting peace.

"If there is to be a deal, if there is to be a stopping of the fighting, then that agreement has to be defended, because the worst of all outcomes is that there is a temporary pause and then (Russian President Vladimir) Putin comes again," Starmer said.

#### **America**

## **Border czar targets Boston:** As Mayor Michelle Wu prepares to go to Congress to defend Boston's pro-

tections of immigrant communities, the city is in a war of words with the Trump administration and Republican representatives over how much police should support deportations.

President Donald Trump's border czar Tom Homan teed off against Boston's police commissioner in a speech to the Conservative Political Action Conference, saying there are at least nine accused "child rapists" in jail who local authorities won't turn over to U.S. Immigration and



any travel plans. (AP)

'Dellinger must keep job': The head of a federal watchdog agency must remain in his job, a judge in Washing-

ton ruled on Saturday, saying President Donald Trump's bid to remove the special counsel was unlawful.

Dellinger sued Trump last month

#### Protesters hold rally ahead of Romania's election rerun

BUCHAREST, Romania, March 2, (AP): Tens of thousands of protesters gathered in Romania's capital on Saturday in the latest anti-government demonstration by far-right groups after a top court canceled a presidential election in the European Union country last year.

Protesters converged in front of the government building in Bucharest, waving Romania's tricolor flag and chanting slogans such as "Down with the Government" and "Thieves." Many expressed support for Calin Georgescu, who emerged as the frontrunner in December's canceled election, and demanded they be resumed from the second round.

George Simion, the leader of the far-right Alliance for the Unity of Romanians, which organized the protest, told supporters on Saturday: "We are united, we are strong. We are here because our vote was stolen. Because democracy was trampled on."

Simion told reporters that the protest aimed to "restore democracy and free elections" and demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu. "We do not trust that the upcoming elections will be

free and fair," he said.



Calin Georgescu, the winner of the first round of presidential elections, later annulled by the Constitutional Court, is helped off a stage after addressing supporters during a protest outside the government headquarters, joined by tens of thousands, calling for the resignation of the country's Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu of in Bucharest, Romania on March 1. (AP)

#### 'Jailed journalist tortured for revealing abuses of prisoners'

## UN rights chief concerned over escalating violence in Myanmar

GENEVA, March 2, (Agencies): The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk expressed deep concern over the escalating violence in Myanmar's Rakhine State where members of the (Rohingya) Muslim community are being directly targeted by warring parties.

Presenting his report on the human rights situation in Myanmar to the 58th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Turk said that more than 8,000 people fled by sea in 2024 an 80 percent increase compared to the previous year resulting in at least 650 deaths nearly half of whom were children.

He described the situation in Myanmar as one of the worst in the world amid ongoing conflict displacement and economic collapse mentioning several human rights violations since the military coup in 2021 including indiscriminate shelling forced recruitment arbitrary arrests torture and the use of human shields.

Türk also noted that 2024 saw the highest death toll since the coup with at least 1.824 people killed including 531 women and 248 children most of whom were civilians.

He accused the military of conducting airstrikes and artillery shelling on villages and of targeting healthcare



Sai Zaw Thaike, a photojournalist for the independent news website Myanmar Now, works at his desk in Yangon, Myanmar in August 2020. (AP)

facilities reporting over 1500 attacks since the coup which killed 131 healthcare workers.

He also warned that 15 million people are facing hunger this year with two million at risk of famine while 20 million people require humanitarian assistance.

Türk also warned about the sharp economic decline saying that GDP has fallen by 17 percent since 2020 and inflation reaching 30 percent this

He also emphasized the importance of ending impunity welcoming legal steps taken by the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice in cases related to crimes committed against the Roh-

He called on the international community to take measures to protect civilians including imposing an arms embargo and targeted sanctions on individuals and companies linked to the military.

Meanwhile, an independent online news agency in Myanmar said Friday that one of its journalists arrested two years ago has been subjected to daily physical and mental abuse after exposing human rights violations in the country's main prison where he's be-

The actions taken against photojournalist Sai Zaw Thaike were also to punish him for leaking information from the prison to media outlets, and because the ruling military government holds a grudge against him for his reporting about them before his arrest, said his employer, Swe Win, editor-in-chief of Myanmar Now.

The military government has cracked down heavily on media freedom since the army seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021. A report released Wednesday by the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists, or CPJ, said that Myanmar ranked as the world's thirdworst jailer of journalists after China



Staff members of a polling station sing the national anthem in Dushanbe, Tajikistan on March 2. (Xinhua)

#### **Tajikistan holds elections**

Voting in the elections for the lower house of Tajikistan's parliament began at 6:00 am local time (0100

GMT) on Sunday.
A total of 220 candidates, including representatives from six political parties and some independents, are competing for 63 seats in

the lower house.

Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon, leader of the ruling People's Democratic Party, cast his ballot on Sunday morning at polling station No. 15 in the capital city of According to data released by tajikistan's Central Election Commission (CEC), the country currently has more than five million registered voters. There are 3,513 polling stations nationwide, along with 36 overseas polling stations.

Forty-one seats out of all 63 seats in the lower house will be elected from among 152 candidates across 41 constituencies, while the remaining 22 seats will be contested by 68 candidates nominated by the six parties which are participating in the elections. (Xinhua)

#### N.Korea opens to group of int'l travelers for first time in years

SEOUL, South Korea, March 2, (AP): A small group of foreign tourists has visited North Korea in the past week, making them the first international travelers to enter the country in five years except for a group of Russian tourists who went to the North last year.

The latest trip indicates North

Korea may be gearing up for a full resumption of its international tourism to bring muchneeded foreign currency to revive its struggling economy, ex-



The Beijing-based travel company Koryo Tours said it arranged a five-day trip from Feb. 20 to Feb. 24 for 13 international tourists to the northeastern North Korean border city of Rason, where the country's special economic zone is located.

Koryo Tours General Manager Simon Cockerell said the travelers from the UK, Canada, Greece, New Zealand, France, Germany, Austria, Australia and Italy crossed by land from China. He said that in Rason, they visited factories, shops, schools and the statues of

Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, the late grandfather and father of cur-

rent leader Kim Jong Un.
"Since January of 2020, the country has been closed to all international tourists, and we are glad to have finally found an opening in the Rason area, in the far north of North Korea," Cockerell said. "Our first tour has been and gone, and now more tourists on both group and private visits are going in, arranging trips," he added.

After the pandemic began, North Korea quickly banned tourists, jetted out diplomats and severely curtailed border traffic in one of the world's most draconian COVID-19 restrictions. But since 2022, North Korea has been slowly easing curbs and reopening its bor-

In February 2024, North Korea accepted about 100 Russian tourists, the first foreign nationals to visit the country for sightseeing. That surprised many observers, who thought the first post-pandemic tourists would come from China, North Korea's biggest trading partner and major ally.

A total of about 880 Russian tourists visited North Korea throughout 2024, South Korea's Unification Ministry said, citing official Russian data. Chinese group tours to North Korea remain

#### **US** aircraft carrier arrives in South Korea amid N.Korea threats SEOUL, South Korea, March 2, (Agencies): A US aircraft carrier arrived in South Korea on Sunday in a show of force, days after North Korea test-launched cruise missiles to demonstrate its counterattack capabilities. The arrival of the USS Carl Vinson

and its strike group at the South Korean port of Busan was meant to display a solid US-South Korean military alliance in the face of persistent North Korean threats, and boost interoperability of the allies' combined assets, the South Korean navy said in a state-

It said it was the first US aircraft carrier to travel to South Korea since

The deployment of the carrier is expected to infuriate North Korea, which views temporary deployments of such powerful US military assets as major security threats. North Korea has responded to some of the past deployments of US aircraft carriers, long-range bombers and nuclear-powered submarines with missile tests.

Since his Jan. 20 inauguration, President Donald Trump has said he will reach out to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un again to revive diplomacy. North Korea hasn't directly responded to Trump's overture but alleged US-led hostilities against North Korea have intensified since Trump's



'A show of force'

The USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier is escorted into a navy port in Busan, South Korea on March 2. (AP)

inauguration.

North Korea said Friday it testfired strategic cruise missiles earlier last week to inform its adversaries of its military's counterattack capability and the readiness of its nuclear operations. After watching the launches, the North's fourth missile testing event this year, Kim ordered his military to be fully ready to use its nuclear weap-

Experts say Kim won't likely accept Trump's overture anytime soon as he is now focusing on his support of Russia's war against Ukraine with provision of weapons and troops. They say Kim could consider resuming diplomacy with Trump when he thinks he cannot maintain his country's current booming cooperation with Russia

Kim and Trump met three times

from 2018-19 during Trump's first term to discuss the future of North Korea's nuclear program. Their highstakes diplomacy eventually collapsed due to wrangling over U.S.-led economic sanctions on North Korea.

Meanwhile, South Korea's constitutional court unanimously ruled that the acting president's non-appointment of a constitutional court justice was unconstitutional.

The court said that the non-appointment of Ma Eun-hyuk, a justice candidate approved by the National Assembly, infringed upon the parliament's right offered under the constitution.

Minister of Economy and Finance Choi Sang-mok, who became an acting president following the impeachments of both President Yoon Suk-yeol and Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, rejected the appointment and left the nine-member bench one justice short.

In December last year, the National Assembly voted for the appointment of three justices, among whom two were nominated by the main opposition Democratic Party and one by the ruling People Power Party.

The appointment of the three justices was required to be ceremonially approved by the president, but Choi refused to appoint Ma, recommended by the Democratic Party.



Uruguay's newly sworn-in President Yamandu Orsi, (center back at podium), addresses Congress on Inauguration Day, in Montevideo, Uruguay on March 1. (AP)

#### Orsi faces financial balancing act

## Uruguay's new leftist president takes office

MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay, March 2, (AP): Yamandú Orsi, a telegenic left-leaning former mayor and history teacher, took office as Uruguay's new president on Saturday, at the helm of a government that has pledged to strengthen the social safety net while reversing years of economic stagna-

The inauguration of Orsi, 57, marks the return of Uruguay's Broad Front - a center-left mix of moderates, communists and hardline trade unionists - after a five-year interruption by the country's outgoing conservative president, Luis Lacalle Pou.

Cheers erupted as Orsi recited the oath of office before Congress on Saturday in Uruguay's capital of Montevideo. Outside the chamber, in the city's main square, thousands of Uruguayans watching his swearing-in on giant screens shouted in support.

The ceremony came three months after Orsi's presidential victory in a remarkably civilized election race between two moderates, praised as an antidote to the polarization gripping the region. In his speech, he took a dig at growing disillusionment with democratic norms across Latin America, which has resulted in a shift to the right, from neighboring Argentina to El Salvador.

"We all know well that we have to treasure our democratic construction in times where exclusionary logic and expressions of distrust in traditional politics proliferate," Orsi said in his inaugural address before a gathering of domestic and foreign leaders at the legislative palace in Montevideo.

He declared: "Let us always be adversaries, but never enemies. And let us distance ourselves as far as possible from cynicism.'

The night before the ceremony, Orsi dined in Montevideo with his likeminded regional counterparts, including Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Colombia's Gustavo Petro and Chile's Gabriel Boric.

The friendly scene cemented Orsi as the latest in the region's swath of allied left-wing leaders - many of whom have struggled in recent years to combat rising inequality and stalling growth.

9 fighters surrender: Nine separatist fighters, including a commander, have surrendered to Cameroonian authorities in the country's restive Anglo-phone Northwest region, local officials

to government officials in the town of

## In address to congress, Argentine President Milei promises IMF deal, lauds economic wins

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, March 2, (AP): Argentina's libertarian president Javier Milei signaled late Saturday that a new deal with the International Monetary Fund was imminent, as he used his annual address to congress to project an optimistic picture of his economic overhaul following a divisive first year in office and recent swirl of controversies.

In a speech that played to the sentiments of his right-wing base but included little in the way of new policy, Milei promised the crisis-stricken nation that, in the coming days, he would "ask congress to support the government in this new agreement with the International Monetary Fund" even as it seemed Argentina had yet to close the deal.

Revisiting the economic themes of his 2023 presidential campaign ahead of crucial midterm elections in October, Milei declared: "We went from talking about hyperinflation to talking about long-term stability." He cited his standard refrain about the government's success in dragging down the monthly inflation rate from a peak of 26% in December 2023, when he entered office, to just over 2% in January, and in helping the country claw its way out of a painful recession.

"We have gone from being a global laughing stock ... to being an unexpected protagonist," Milei said.

Tech billionaire Elon Musk, who waved a chainsaw gifted by Milei at the Conservative Political Action Conference last week in Washington, has cited the Argentine president's approach as inspiration for his own rampage through American federal bureaucracy. "The eyes of the world are now on Argentina after a long time," he said. "As is the case of Elon." On trade policy, Milei announced Argentina would leave

the Mercosur bloc of South American nations if needed to clinch a free trade agreement with the United States. It marked Milei's latest effort to align his nation with US

President Donald Trump's administration at the expense of Argentina's previous allies and regional partnerships.



Argentina's President Javier Milei arrives to deliver the annual State of the Nation address, which marks the start of the legislative year, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on March 1. (AP)

"To take advantage of this historic opportunity, we must be willing to make things more flexible or even, if necessary, to leave Mercosur," he said.

In his speech, Milei gave no further details about the supposed new financing deal with the Washington-based lender - a program his government has sought for months in order to help lift Argentina's strict capital and currency controls in hopes of reaping the benefits his free-market reforms, which, in 2024, delivered Argentina's first fiscal surplus in 14 years. Milei said his government would use a cash infusion from the IMF to replenish the central bank's diminished hard currency reserves, helping prevent a possible run on the peso as Argentina attempts to lift its complex web of capital controls before the year's end.

### South Sudan denies targeting opp'n supporters

JUBA, March 2, (Xinhua): The South Sudan transitional government on Friday denied ordering security forces to carry out targeted attacks on communities perceived to support the opposition Sudan People's Liberation MovementArmy-in-Opposition (SPLMA-IO).

Michael Makuei Lueth, minister of information, communication, technol-

ogy and postal services, said the gov-



South Sudan's President Salva Kiir, (right), and Vice President Riek Machar, (left), attend a Mass led by Pope Francis at the John Garang Mausoleum in Juba, South Sudan on Feb 5, 2023. (AP)

ernment is not targeting communities in Western Bahr el Ghazal, Western Equatoria, or Upper Nile, where tensions have reportedly been rising. "There is no national campaign tar-

geting any specific community or individuals in Western Bahr el Ghazal State. Security forces intervene only when there are violations of peace, particularly in cases of communal skirmishes," Makuei said at a briefing in Juba, the capital of South Sudan.

The development comes after First Vice President Riek Machar, head of the SPLMA-IO, penned a leaked letter to President Salva Kiir Mayardit on Thursday, detailing attacks on officials of his party, particularly in Western Bahr el Ghazal and Western Equatoria, between January and February.

Machar expressed concerns over the recent deployment of South Sudan People's Defense Forces (SSPDF) and allied troops in the restive Nasir area in Upper Nile State, saying the move has heightened tensions between local youth and the SSPDF.

## Africa

Nujoma laid to rest: Sam Nujoma, Namibia's founding president who steered the country to freedom from apartheid South Africa, was laid to rest in the country's Heroes Acre cemetery on Saturday following a state funeral attended by African leaders and foreign dignitaries.

Mourners from all corners of the country began to gather as early as 6 a.m. to pay their final tributes to a man they knew as their "founding father," an anti-apartheid activist who served



three terms as president from 1990 to 2005. Nujoma died on Feb. 8 at age

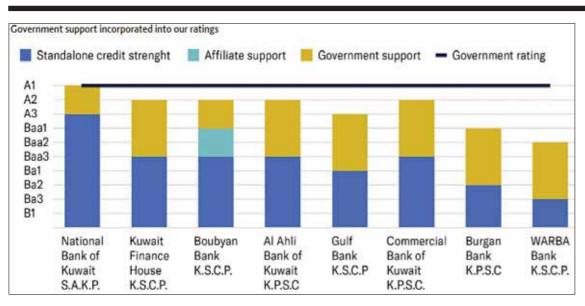
95 after spending three weeks at a Windhoek hospital. Nujoma's widow, Theopol-Nujoma, his children,

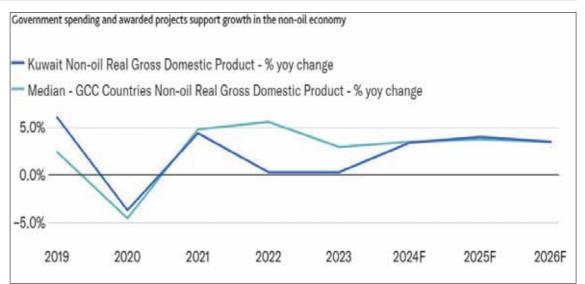
grandchildren and great-grandchildren were in attendance. (AP)

said on Saturday. The fighters turned themselves in

Bali. On Friday, they were presented to the public at a ceremony attended by local authorities, soldiers and residents. "We have come to apologize for any wrongs we have committed. We ask for your forgiveness," one of the former fighters said while addressing the crowd. (Xinhua)

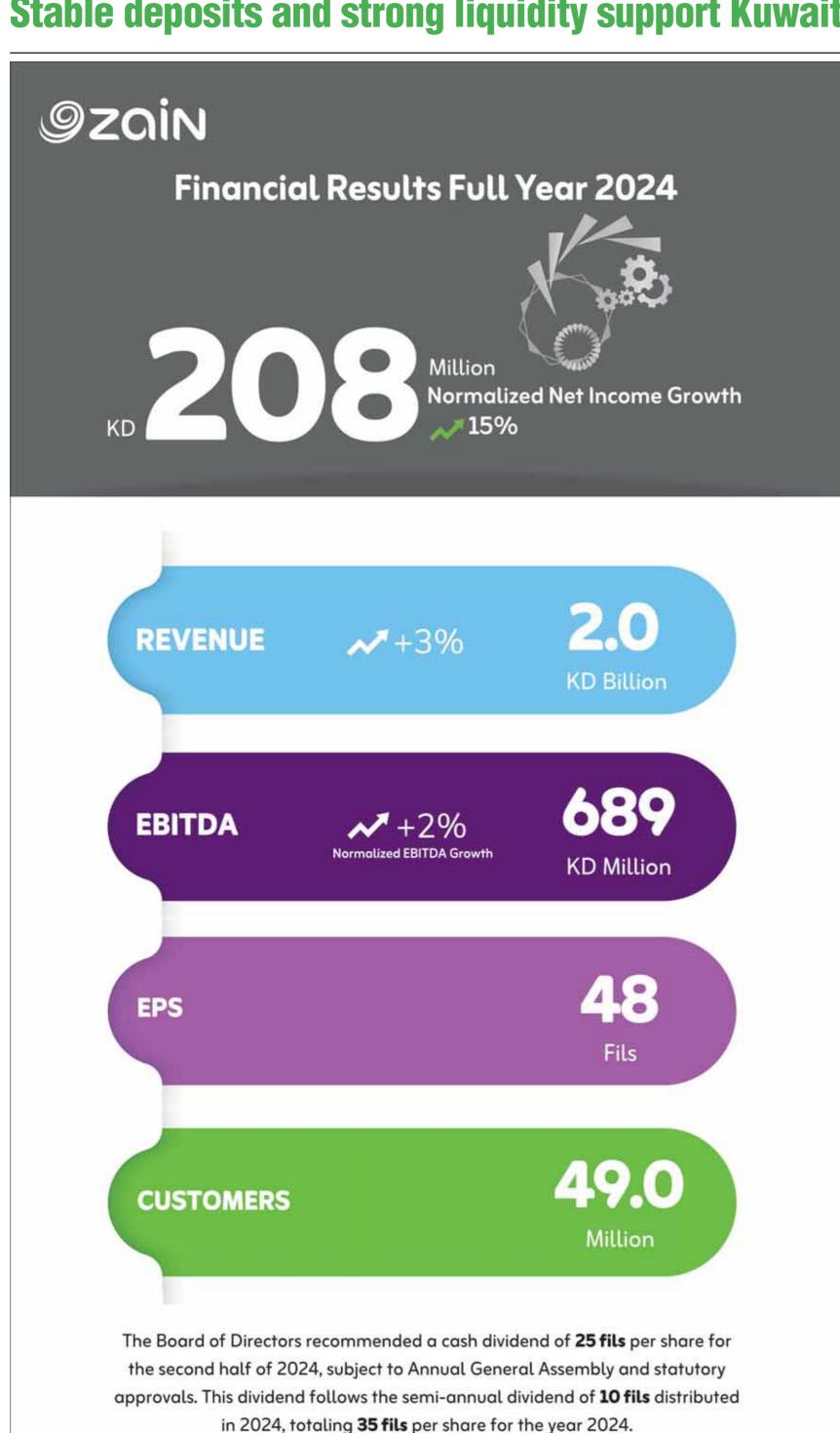
## Business





Credit growth expected at 5%-6% in 2025, driven by infrastructure projects

## Stable deposits and strong liquidity support Kuwait's banking system



zain.com

#### By Moody's Rating

The stable outlook for Kuwait's (A1 stable) banking ■ sector reflects our expectation that the country's non-oil economy will expand in 2025 at a pace similar to 2024, supported by an expected recovery in consumer spending and ongoing implementation of key projects. Kuwaiti banks will benefit from credit growth of around 5%-6% this year as loan demand is boosted by the government's commitment to its national development plan continues, and spending on key infrastructure and large projects like the Mubarak Al Kabeer port, the Sabah al Ahmad city project and the new airport terminal.

Domestic loan quality will remain sound, while banks' operations in weaker economies such as Turkiye and Egypt will still pose, but only small, downside pressure. Large-scale exposure to real estate remains a vulnerability but ample loan-loss reserves and robust capital provide a shield. Profitability will be slightly strained at large banks as new tax rules are implemented but overall will remain solid. Kuwait's banks are funded by steady inflows of stable deposits and their liquidity

#### Expansion of the non-oil economy, healthy capital and liquidity drive our stable outlook

Non-oil GDP growth will continue to expand, supporting banks' business generation. The government is focused on delivering key infrastructure projects as part of its Kuwait 2035 plan, to support growth in the nonoil economy. We expect growth in the non oil economy, where the banks conduct most of their business, to remain strong (forecast at 3-3.5% in 2025), driven by government investments and a pickup in consumer spending. This trend will support business conditions for the country's banks. We expect the projects and pick-up in consumer credit demand, which has been muted in recent years, will drive annual credit growth of 5%-6% over the next 12 to 18 months. We expect further consolidation for the Kuwaiti banking system, which will likely bolster the system in the long run as it lowers competition and potentially drives higher efficiency.

Loan quality will be stable. We expect problem-loan levels to stay low and stable, at around 1.5-2.0% of gross loans in 2025, driven by stable operating conditions for banks in their domestic market. International operations in weaker economies, such as Turkiye and Egypt, will pose some risk, but it remains relatively small and well-managed. Concentrated lending to single large borrowers, along with exposure to volatile real estate and equity markets, continues to present vulnerabilities. As of September 2024, exposure to the real estate and contracting sector stood at 24% of the total loan book. Consumer loans remain the largest single sector in Kuwait, comprising 41% of the loan book, however they are well-protected because they are largely to Kuwaiti government employees with high job security and salary assignments.

Capital will remain sound. The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) has taken a conservative approach to applying Basel III capital standards, ensuring banks hold strong capital buffers. Sectorwide tangible common equity1, our preferred measure of capital, will remain stable for the Kuwait banking sector at around 13.5%-14.0% of risk-weighted assets. Banks' capacity to absorb losses is further bolstered by high loan-loss reserves, which stood at 243% of problem loans as of September 2024. We anticipate moderate loan growth, which should keep Kuwaiti banks' capital steady over the next 12 to 18 months.

Profitability will be slightly strained as new tax rules are implemented. We anticipate that sectorwide net income will average 1.2%-1.3% of tangible assets over the next 12 to 18 months, down slightly from a high 1.5% in September 2024. Banks with significant international presences will be subject to a minimum tax rate of 15%, which will dent their profitability. Banks have very high loan-loss reserves and provisioning costs should remain low, although a slight pickup is expected because of potentially lower recoveries as banks have already recognized the benefit of such recoveries in the past few years which kept cost of risk very low. We expect slight pressure on margins from expected rate cuts, which will reduce asset yields but be moderated by lower funding costs. The system's small branch networks and large asset bases also contribute to strong efficiency.

Reliance on market funding will remain moderate and liquidity will stay strong. Kuwaiti banks will continue to be primarily funded by customer deposits, a credit strength. Concentration of costly public entities and government deposits remains a concern but these have been historically stable. As of September 2024, customer deposits accounted for around 73% of non-equity funding, while liquid banking assets made up roughly a third of total tangible assets. Nonetheless, credit growth has outpaced deposit growth in recent years, pushing the loans to deposit ratio (LTD) above 90% with a slight increase in market funding, which stood at 21% of tangible banking assets. We expect LTD to remain stable in 2025 as deposit growth picks up and matches loan

We assume a very high likelihood of government support. The government remains willing to support banks in distress and its capacity to do so will remain strong, as indicated by its A1 issuer rating with a stable outlook. A formal deposit guarantee supports our government support assumption. Most of Kuwaiti banks' long-term deposit ratings incorporate a four-notch uplift from their Baseline Credit Assessments (BCA) because of government support.

A Wonderful World

Firm declares 35 fils dividend for 2024, with 73% payout ratio

## Zain Group 2024 revenue reaches 15-year high of KD 2 billion, normalized net income grows 15% YoY to reach KD 208 million

KUWAIT CITY, March 2: Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative ICT technologies and digital lifestyle communications operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, serving 49 million customers, announced its consolidated financial results for the full-year 2024 (FY-24), and fourth-quarter (Q4-24) ended 31 December 2024.

#### **Group Key Performance Indicators** (KD and USD) for the Full-Year 2024

**Total Active** 

49 million Customers

Consolidated

Revenue KD 2 billion (\$6.4 billion)

**EBITDA** KD 689 million - (\$2.25 billion)

35% EBITDA Margin

Net Income KD 208 million - (\$677 million)

**EPS** 48 fils - USD 0.16

For FY-24, Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of KD 2 billion (USD 6.4 billion), up 3% YoY. Consolidated EBITDA for the period reached KD 689 million (USD 2.25 billion), with normalized EBITDA growth of 2% (excluding number range claim in 2023), reflecting an EBITDA margin of 35%. Consolidated net income reached KD 208 million (USD 677 million), representing normalized net income growth of 15%, when adjusted for number range claim and Tower transaction gain in2023 and gain on business combination from acquisition of IHS (Kuwait TowerCo) in 2024. Earnings per share amounted to 48 fils (USD 0.16).

#### **Board H2 2024 dividend recommendation.**

The Board of Directors of Zain Group recommended a cash dividend of 25 fils per share for the second half of 2024. This dividend follows the semi-annual dividend of 10 fils distributed in Q4-24, totaling 35 fils per share for the year and reflecting a 73% payout ratio, one of the highest among listed entities in the region and in line with the Board's previously committed minimum cash dividend policy of 35 fils in total, for three years that commenced in 2023 and ends in 2025.

Furthermore, the Board made another recommendation to renew the minimum annual cash dividend policy of 35 fils in total, for the forthcoming three years commencing in 2026, subject to Annual General Assembly and statutory approvals.

#### **Group Key Performance Indicators (KD and USD)**

Consolidated KD 526 million - (\$1.7 billion) Revenue **EBITDA** KD 184 million - (\$599 million)

**EBITDA Margin** 35%

KD 72 million - (\$235 million) Net Income USD 0.05 17 fils

For Q4-24, Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of KD 526 million (USD 1.7 billion), up 7% YoY. EBITDA for the quarter reached KD 184 million (USD 599 million), reflecting an EBITDA margin of 35%. Normalized net income soared 120% to reach KD 72 million (USD 235 million), representing earnings per share of 17 fils (USD

#### **Key Operational Notes for 4th quarter and 12** months ended 31 December 2024

Throughout 2024, Zain Group invested USD 1.1 billion in CAPEX representing 17% of revenue, mainly on 4G and 5G rollouts, and expansion of FTTH infrastructure and spectrum license fees

Consolidated data revenue grew 1% YoY to reach USD 2.44 billion, representing 38% of Group's 2024 revenue

Group wide Enterprise revenue grew 8% YoY due to B2B mobility and ZainTECH revenue growth of 103% YoY

Fintech group wide revenue up19% YoY, with total transactions value reaching USD 12.4 billion

Dizlee (API Platform) revenue up 19% YoY offering over 220 live services from 44 partners, introduces API Marketplace platform

Innovation driving robust revenue growth in digital operators, KSA's 'Yaqoot' and Iraq's 'oodi

Zain Omantel International (ZOI) revenues soared 455% YoY, highest-ranked network in region, top 100 worldwide

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion programs recognized through several prestigious global awards

Social media followers exceed 35 million, YouTube views exceed 200m through appealing, relevant content

MSCI upgrades Zain from 'BB' to 'BBB' in ESG 2024 rating

Boston Consulting Group ranks Zain in top 15 telcos globally of creating value for shareholders

Zain brand valuation grows 14.5% YoY to USD 3.5 billion according to Brand Finance 2025 rankings

Commenting on the 2024 full year results, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Zain Group, Mr.Osamah Al Furaih said, "It was a defining year ingrowing the business and increasing shareholder value despite socio-economic challenges across our footprint. The implementation of numerous ESG initiatives as well as the acceleration of digital transformation and revenue growth from new business verticals have future-proofed Zain and prepared it for the next phase of growth."

Regarding the ongoing crisis in Sudan, the Chairman commented, "We continue to work closely with our colleagues in Sudan to ensure the community remains connected, while ensuring the safety of our people. We have undertaken many concrete initiatives and invested vast



Osamah Al Furaih, Chairman



Bader Al Kharafi, Vice-Chairman & Group CEO

#### **Chairman, Osamah Al Furaih:**

"A defining year in growing the business despite socio-economic challenges; the implementation of ESG and operational initiatives have future-proofed Zain'

#### **Vice-Chairman & Group CEO, Bader Al Kharafi:**

"Financial performance for year exceeded guidance and positioned Zain among top 15 telcos in creating shareholder value over last 5 vears"

■ Q4 2024 revenue grew 7% to KD 526m (USD 1.7 bn), net profit soared120% to KD 72 million (USD235m)
 ■ Kuwait, KSA, Iraq, Jordan and Bahrain operations deliver strong

net-profit growth (normalized)

■ Ongoing crisis and currency devaluation in Sudan continues to impact Group financial KPIs

■ Data revenue grew 1% YoY to reach USD 2.44 billion representing 38% of total revenue

■ Fintech revenue up 19% YoY with transaction volume reaching 25 million, and total transaction value of USD 12.4 bn

■ Overall Enterprise revenue for 2024 grew 8% YoY including B2B Mobility and ŻainTECH ■ ZOI revenues soared 455% YoY, highest-ranked network in the re-

gion and top 100 worldwide ■Innovation driving robust revenue growth in digital operators, KSA's

'Yaqoot' and Iraq's 'oodi'
■ Unveiling of new '4WARD' corporate strategy to accelerate com-

pany's evolution to a TechCo ■ MSCI upgrades Zain ESG's rating to 'BBB'

■ Zain brand valuation up 14.5% YoY,reaches a milestone of USD 3.5 billion

amounts in maintaining the network that sees ap proximately 1,300 sites operational serving over 10 million Sudani citizens.'

The Chairman concluded,"The Board will continue to invest in network expansion, technologies, strategic business opportunities, and talent to ensure the company reaps the rewards of the ever-growing mobile and ICT sector. I would like to recognize the government bodies in Kuwait and across our markets for supporting the telecom sector and empowering Zain to provide meaningful connectivity to the communities, businesses, and governments we proudly serve.'

#### Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader

Al-Kharafi commented; "Our strong operational and financial performance have exceeded the guidance we provided to the investor community. These robust results are due to the successful implementation of our 4SIGHT strategy that has positioned Zain among the top 15 global telecom entities in creating shareholder value over the last 5 years. The focus on operational efficiency, digital transformation in better serving customers, the transactions related to passive tower infrastructure, huge investments in 5G network upgrades, targeting new enterprises and government clients, and the efforts in accelerating the growth of various lucrative business verticals, were instrumental in achieving 2024 strong results.

pose' will further accelerate our growth and take Zain to new heights."

Regarding the dividend distribution, "The third consecutive total annual dividend of 35 fils, reaffirms the commitment we made at the beginning of 2023 and provides a strong indication of our healthy balance sheet and financial solvency."

"The growth witnessed by the new business verticals born out of the 4SIGHT strategy (Fintech, ZainTECH, ZOI, FOO and Dizlee) is truly spectacular, generating an additional revenue in 2024 of USD 253 million, that reflects a revenue growth of 130% YoY."

"Our fintech entities in KSA, Iraq, Jordan, and most recently in Bahrain, as well as our pure digital operators in KSA (Yaqoot) and Iraq (oodi) are witnessing healthy revenue and customer growth. We will continue to expand these lucrative areas of the business across our footprint and look forward to launching fintech services in Kuwait and Sudan later in 2025.

"The team of Zain Omantel International (ZOI) deserves acknowledgement in positioning the wholesale entity as the highest-ranked carrier network in region, making the top 100 worldwide. This achievement reconfirms its ambition of revolutionize the wholesale telecommunications sector by offering a unique proposition that combines the strengths of both Zain and Omantel to deliver unpar-

The recently launched '4WARD-Progress with Puralleled service and support to customers worldwide.

Zain headquarters.

Both our customers are benefiting from quality internet connectivity, voice, roaming, messaging, and more. We will continue to foster this fast-growing and lucrative business."

"ZainTECH's revenue growth of 103% YoY and acquisition of several strategic entities in recent years in cooperation with B2B teams across our operations, is driving solid enterprise revenue growth groupwide. This trajectory, bolstered by multiple partnerships with leading global solution providers, has made Zain the connectivity and enterprise partner of choice for enterprises and government bodies across the region. We have ambitious targets on the potential of this line of business and will dedicate the resources to ensure its continued success.'

"Our passive infrastructure strategic ambitions took further steps through the acquisition of the remaining 70% stake in IHS (Kuwait TowerCo), an independent licensed tower company that owns 1,675 sites, and manages approximately 700 additional sites in the Kuwaiti market. This transaction complemented the strategic agreement with Ooredoo to create the largest tower entity in the region. The aim of our sustainable and independent operating model is to provide passive infrastructure as a service, supporting the reduction of MENA's carbon footprint and empowering the region's digital

'The recent approval we received from the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) of our Net-Zero targets validates Zain's commitment to climate change, placing the company at the forefront of climate action in the region. As the only Kuwaiti-based corporate to have its emission reduction targets verified by the SBTi, the ESG rating upgrade to BBB by Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI) reaffirms Zain's commitment to sustainability, corporate governance and ethical leadership, that is value creative for all stakeholders."

Al-Kharafi concluded,"Brand Finance's recent valuation of the Zain brand that saw its value increase 14.5% from USD 3 billion to USD 3.5 billion, as well as enhancing its AAA- brand strength rating, is a testament to the investment Zain has placed in establishing its name and identity over the past 18 years. The successful media campaigns, having 35 million social media fans and over 250 million video views annually, the many corporate sustainability, DEI initiatives introduced over the years, combined with our ongoing innovation and investment in network upgrades that result in quality mobile and digital services and exceptional customer experience, has made Zain one of the most inspirational and recognized corporate brands in the region and beyond."

#### Financial KPIs of key markets for the 12 months ended December 31, 2024

Kuwait: Zain Group's flagship operation maintained its market leadership, with a customer base of 2.6 million. The Group's most profitable operation saw its full year 2024 revenue grow by 4% YoY to reach KD 373 million (USD 1.2 billion), with EBITDA increasing 6% to reach KD 139 million (USD 454 million), reflecting an EBIT-DA margin of 37%. For the full year, net income soared 37%, reaching KD 110 million (USD 358 million), driven by an \$80 million transaction gain from the step-up acquisition of IHS (Kuwait TowerCo) in Q4 2024. Data revenue represented 35% of total revenue.

Saudi Arabia: The operator generated all-time high revenue of USD 2.8 billion up 5% YoY, with EBITDA reaching USD 886 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 32%. Normalized net income for the year soared 354% YoY to reach USD 159 million (excluding the one-off gain of SAR 1.1 billion from sale of 8,069 towers recognized during 2023). With its dynamic 5G network covering 66 cities, data revenue for the year grew 5%, representing 40% of total revenue, while customers served stood at 9.3 million, up 4% YoY.

Iraq: Revenue grew 11% to reach USD 1.1 billion, with EBITDA amounting to USD 441 million, up 18% YoY, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 41%. Net profit jumped 47% to reach USD 130 million. The operator's customer base grew 10% to reach 19.7 million customers. The key drivers for the operator's impressive results were driven by the continued network expansion combined with the newly launched commercial offers and strong growth in the data segment.

Sudan: The continuing crisis and currency devaluation saw the operator's full-year revenue decrease 53% YoY, to reach USD 260 million, EBITDA dropped 58% YoY to reach USD 112 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 43%. Net income for the year dropped 47%, reaching USD 116 million. Restoration of dedicated customer service agents, appealing new packages and launch of new digital services saw the customer base reach 10.1 million.

A focus on providing coverage to communities saw Zain Sudan restore the network and operate nearly 1,300 network sites, of which notably the operator utilized the Star-Link service for BTSs backhauling that restored more than 100 sites. Furthermore, the operator has diversified its channel distribution, now leading the telecom market in the number of retail shops and digital service facilities with over 150 locations.

Jordan: Zain Jordan revenue increased 6% YoY to reach USD 556 million, EBITDA increased 4% to reach USD 224 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 40%. Net income for the year increased 3% to reach USD 79 million. With the expansion of 4G, Fiber and launch of 5G services across the country, data revenue grew 8% representing 51% of total revenue. Zain Jordan customer base grew by 6% to reach 4.2 million customers, maintaining its market leadership.

**Bahra**in: The operator generated revenue of USD 205 million, up 7% YoY. EBITDA increased 5% to reach USD 63 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 31%. Net income grew 2% to reach USD 15.7 million, with data revenue growing 6% to represent 46% of total revenue.

## Agility supports 1,000 families with Ramadan 'Maachlat Al-Khair' initiative

KUWAIT CITY, March 2: Agility, a supply chain services, infrastructure and innovation company, continues its annual Ramadan tradition by providing essential food supplies to 1,000 underprivileged families with Agility's 'Maachlat Al-Khair' initiative (Food for Good).

The initiative is a charitable partnership with the Kuwait Association for Needy Families, which sourced, prepared, and delivered the food packages to families in need in collaboration with Agility subsidiaries UPAC and Shipa. Each package includes essential groceries and staple items, providing comfort and support throughout the holy month.

"Agility is deeply committed to social responsibility and strives to make a meaningful impact on underprivileged communities in Kuwait and around the world. Each Ramadan, we partner with accredited charities as well as our subsidiaries to provide essential food assistance to families in need. This initiative reflects our core values and reinforces our commitment to giving back. We are proud of the Agility team's dedication and grateful to everyone who contributed to this meaningful effort." said Henadi Al-Saleh, Chairperson of

Hamad Malallah, Vice Chairman and CEO of UPAC, added: "UPAC is committed to supporting social and charitable initiatives that make a meaningful difference



Henadi Al-Saleh, Chairperson of Agility and Hamad Malallah, CEO of UPAC with the company's volunteers.

in people's lives. Today, through our participation in Agility's 'Maachlat Al-Khair' initiative, we reaffirm our deep commitment to giving back to the community we

live and work in by distributing 1,000 food baskets to underprivileged families in Kuwait."

Agility has a long history of humanitarian efforts. As

a member of the Logistics Emergency Teams (LET) and through its bilateral partnerships, Agility has supported over 75 humanitarian crises since 2006. Since 2008, it has supported the World Food Programme (WFP) and has donated 1 million meals to families in Gaza since the war began in October 2023. The company also partners with Mabarat Al-Khair Charity, providing aid to nearly 30,000 people in Kuwait since 2015.

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#### **About Agility**

Agility is a global leader in supply chain services, infrastructure, and innovation with 65,000+ employees across six continents. Listed in Kuwait and Dubai, Agility specializes in growing and scaling operating businesses. Agility's portfolio of companies include the world's largest aviation services company (Menzies Aviation); a global fuel logistics business (Tristar); and a leading logistics parks developer and operator across the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa (Agility Logistics Parks). Other Agility companies offer customs digitization services, remote-site infrastructure services, defense and government services, ecommerce-enablement and digital logistics, and waste management and recycling. Agility invests in supply chain innovation, sustainability, and resilience, and has minority holdings in a portfolio of listed and non-listed companies.

#### GCC sovereign debt issuances jump 68.2% to \$68.2 bln

## GCC bonds & sukuk issuances surge 55.1% to \$147.9 bln in 2024: Markaz

KUWAIT CITY, March 2: In its Fixed Income Report, Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" states that primary debt issuances of Bonds and Sukuk in the Gulf Cooperation Council ("GCC") countries amounted to USD 147.9 billion through 296 issuances during 2024, a 55.1% increase from the last year. The total value of primary issuances during the last quarter of 2024 was USD 21.2 billion compared to USD 15.9 billion during the last quarter of

Issuances by Geography: Saudi-based issuances led the GCC during 2024, raising USD 79.5 billion through 79 issuances, up from USD 52.5 billion in 2023, an increase of 51.2%, and representing 53.7% of issuances during the year. UAEbased issuances ranked second, with USD 38.5 billion through 109 issues, representing 26.0% of the market, and an increase of 28.1% from the previous year. Qatari entities were the third largest issuers in terms of value, with USD 15.8 billion issued through 74 issuances, representing 10.7% of the issuances over the year. Bahraini issuers follow, with a total issuance size of USD 6.9 billion through 10 issuances, a 29.1% increase from the previous year. Kuwaiti issuances recorded the largest year-over-year growth, a 358.6% increase from the previous year, recording a total value of USD 3.9 billion through 9 issuances. Omani entities recorded ing the year, with USD 3.4 billion raised through 15 issuances, representing 2.3% of issuances.

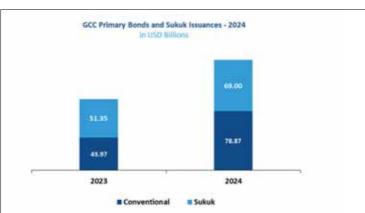
Sovereign vs. Corporate: Total GCC corporate primary issuances increased by 45.5% from 2023, amounting to USD 79.7 billion raised, compared to USD 54.8 billion raised in 2023. Corporate issuances represented 53.9% of total issuances for the year, following the same trend as in 2023, where corporate issuances represented 57.5% of total issuances. Government related corporate entities raised a total of USD 17.4 billion in 2024, representing 21.7% of all corporate issuances. Total GCC sovereign primary issuances increased by 68.2% in 2024, raising USD 68.2 billion throughout the year, representing 46.1% of total

Conventional vs. Sukuk: Conventional issuances increased by 79.4% in 2024 compared to 2023, raising a total of USD 78.9billion for the year.Sukuk issuances increased by 34.4% in 2024, resulting in a total value of USD 69.0 billion for year. As for issuer preferences, 2024 saw an increased appetite for conventional bond issuances in the GCC, representing 53.3% of total issuances for the year, compared to 46.1% in 2023. This contrasts with 2023, which saw more Sukuk issuances (53.9% of all issuances in 2023 vs 46.7% in 2024).

Sector Segmentation:Government issuances led the bond and sukuk issuances in 2024, with total value of USD 68.2 billion through 46 issuances representing 46.1% of total issuances. The financial sector follows, with USD 51.3 billion through 203 issuances, representing 24.7% of total issuances. This is an increase in both the size and the number of issuances for both the sectors when compared to 2023. The energy sector fol-







lows, with USD 20.3 billion through 28 issuances, with the remaining sectors together representing a small portion of total issuance (5.51%).

Maturity Profile:In 2024, primary issuances with less than 5-year tenors represented 36.5% of GCC debt capital markets with a total value amounting to USD 54.0 billion through 215 issuances. Primary issuances with 5-10-yeartenors followed, raising USD 51.3 billion through 43 issuances, representing 34.7% of total issuances. Primary issuances with 10-30-year tenors, represented 22.2% of GCC debt capital markets with a total value of USD 32.8 billion through 20 issuances during the year. One issuance came in with a maturity greater than ("GT") 30 years, with a value of USD 2 billion, compared to no issuances in that maturity bucket for 2023. Finally, perpetual issuances saw an increase in both the size and number of issuances when compared to 2023, with a total value of USD 7.8 billion through 17 issuances (2023: USD 4.2 billion through 11

issuances). Issue Size Profile:During 2024, GCC primary issuances ranged in size from USD 4.0 million to USD 12.6 billion. Issuances with issue size of USD 1 billion or greater raised the largest amount, totaling USD 69.3 billion through 43 issuances and representing 46.9% of the total amount issued in the GCC. Issuances sized between USD 500 million and USD 1 billion followed, with a total issuance size of USD 50.5 billion through 59 issuances. The highest number of issuances was under USD 100 million issue size, where there were 129 issuances that raised a total amount of USD 7.2 billion during 2024.

Currency Profile:US Dollar-denominated issuances led the GCC Bonds and Sukuk primary market in 2024, raising a total of USD 99.7 billion through 190 issuances, representing a substantial 66.9% of the total value raised in primary issuances during the year. The second largest issue currency was the Saudi Riyal (SAR), where SAR denominated issuances raised a total of USD 33.9 billion through 21 issuances, representing 23.0% of the total value raised during the year. As for currencies bucketed under "Other" which totaled USD 8.0 billion, the Chinese Yuan represented 0.53% of total issuances with a total value of USD

787 million through 19 issuances. Rating: In terms of value, a total of 62.4% of GCC Conventional and Sukuk bonds were rated in 2024 by at least one of the following rating agencies: Standard & Poor's, Moody's, Fitch and Capital Intelligence, a decrease from 2023 (69.1%). Issuances rated within the Investment Grade accounted for 55.5% of the total issuances during the year, while Sub-Investment Grade accounted for 6.8% of rated

## **Trump proposes wealthy immigrant** visa as consumer confidence drops

Unemployment claims surge to 242,000

#### By National Bank of Kuwait

**United States** 

President Trump Speaks

rump announced a new immigration initiative: a Trump announced a new managration manager "gold card" offering residency, work rights, and citizenship pathways to wealthy foreigners for a \$5 million fee. The plan, set to launch within weeks, would replace the existing EB-5 visa program, which has faced criticism and calls for reform. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick emphasized vetting for applicants, including potential Russian leaders. The EB-5 program, previously utilized by Trump-linked businesses, was renewed in 2022 under Biden with increased investment thresholds. Trump's proposal revives debates over the program's in-

CB Consumer Confidence

Consumer confidence fell sharply in February amid growing concerns over economic slowdowns and rising inflation, according to the Conference Board's latest report. The Consumer Confidence Index dropped to 98.3, lower than forecasts and marking its lowest level since June 2024. The decline reflected heightened pessimism about future business conditions, employment prospects, and income stability. Stephanie Guichard, a Conference Board economist, noted that worries about tariffs contributed to the downturn. Mentions of trade policies spiked to levels last seen in 2019, with respondents frequently citing concerns about the current administration's economic strategies. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent criticized prior reliance on government spending and outlined plans to diversify the economy through tax cuts, deregulation, and tariffs. Financial markets reacted negatively: Stocks dipped, and the 10-year Treasury yield fell to 4.29%, signaling weaker growth expectations. While some current economic conditions improved marginally, the Expectations Index plunged below recessionary thresholds for the first time since mid-2024.

**Unemployment Claims** 

Unemployment claims surged to their highest level this year, reaching 242,000 for the week ending February 22, signaling potential labor market strain. The figure exceeded expectations and matched October 2024's peak amid broader economic uncertainty. President Donald Trump's push to shrink the federal workforce via an advisory board led by Elon Musk has already cut tens of thousands of jobs, with further reductions anticipated. Washington, D.C., saw a 26% spike in new claims, the highest since March 2023, though neighboring states like Virginia and Maryland reported declines. Economists warned this could foreshadow wider layoffs, including in federal roles and companies like Starbucks. Continuing claims dipped slightly to 1.86 million, but the four-week average rose sharply

Core PCE Price Index m/m

The U.S. Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) price index rose 0.3% monthly in January 2025, matching December's pace and market expectations. Goods prices surged 0.5%, rebounding from a modest 0.1% increase the prior month, while services inflation slowed to 0.2% from 0.4%. Core PCE, excluding food and energy, edged up 0.3%, slightly exceeding December's 0.2%. Yearover-year, headline PCE cooled to 2.5% from 2.6%, its first decline in four months, and core PCE dropped to 2.6% from a revised 2.9%, hitting a seven month low. Energy costs softened to 1.3%, though food prices rose marginally to 0.3%. The Federal Reserve, which targets 2% inflation level, paused rate cuts in January, holding its benchmark rate at 4.25%-4.50% after reducing it by 100 basis points since September 2024. Markets now anticipate rate cuts resuming in June.

However, recent Fed meeting minutes highlighted concerns that former President Trump's proposed policies could reignite price pressures.

The Greenback surged the week, last trading at

Trump's recent immigration initiative announcement "Gold Card".

US CB consumer confidence came in at 98.3 versus expectations of 102.7.

US unemployment claims came in at 242K vs expectations of 222K.

US core PCE price index m/m came in at 0.3% in line with market expec-

Australia's consumer price index came in at 2.5% versus expectations of 2.6%.

Japan's core consumer price index y/y came in at 2.2% versus expectations of 2.3%.

#### **Asia Pacific**

Australia's CPI y/y

Australia's headline inflation remained steady at 2.5% year-over-year in January, matching December's figure and coming in slightly below economists' forecast of 2.6%. The data, released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), showed cooling price pressures in rents and new housing costs, supporting the Reserve Bank of Australia's (RBA) recent decision to cut interest rates. However, excluding volatile items inflation ticked up to 2.8% from 2.7%, indicating persistent underlying price pressures. While inflation has moderated significantly from post-pandemic peaks, government subsidies and cost-of-living relief measures have played a key role in dampening prices. Despite this progress, economists caution that disinflation trends could stall globally, as seen in recent warnings from central banks like the U.S. Federal Reserve about resurgent price pressures. Concerns persist that policies such as U.S. President Donald Trump's proposed tariffs could reignite inflation.

The AUD/USD currency pair last seen trading at 0.6207

Japan's Core CPI y/y

Tokyo's core inflation unexpectedly slowed in February, with the key consumer price index (CPI) rising 2.2% year-over-year, down from January's 2.5% and below market expectations of 2.3%. This marks the first decline in recent months, contrasting with accelerating national CPI, producer price index (PPI), and the Bank of Japan's (BoJ) core inflation metrics. Despite the dip, Tokyo's core CPI has now stayed above the BoJ's 2% target for four consecutive months, reinforcing the central bank's hawkish stance. Policymakers, who raised interest rates in January and upgraded inflation forecasts, signaled openness to further tightening. Markets anticipate continued monetary tightening, driving Japanese government bond yields to a 15-year high earlier in March. BoJ Governor Kazuo Ueda warned of potential intervention to stabilize bond markets, prompting a slight retreat in yields. While the softer Tokyo CPI data may ease short-term pressure, the BoJ remains focused on sustaining inflation above its target, with recent policy moves underscoring its commitment to gradual rate hikes amid broader economic

The USD/JPY currency pair last seen trading at 150.60.

**Kuwaiti Dinar** USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30840.

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	Forward
EUR	1.0398	1.0359	1.0419	1.0375	1.0300	1.0500	1.0427
GBP	1.2599	1.2556	1.2621	1.2577	1.2505	1.2680	1.2576
JPY	149.80	149.08	150.98	150.60	149.50	151.75	149.07
CHF	0.8996	0.8980	0.9037	0.9032	0.8980	0.9100	0.8938

#### Tesla share price drops nearly a third since Trump's election

## Protests erupt across US against Elon Musk and Trump's spending cuts

BOSTON, March 2, (AP): Demonstrators gathered outside Tesla stores across the U.S. Saturday to protest the automaker's billionaire CEO, Elon Musk, and his push to slash government spending on behalf of President Donald Trump.

The demonstrations are part of a growing backlash in North America and Europe to Musk's disruptive role in Washington.

Critics of Trump and Musk hope to discourage and stigmatize purchases of Tesla, the electric car company that is the world's most valuable automaker. Liberal groups for weeks have organized anti-Tesla protests in hopes of galvanizing opposition to Musk's Department of Government Efficiency and energizing Democrats still demoralized by Trump's November victory.

"We can get back at Elon," said Nathan Phillips, a 58-year-old ecologist from New-

ton, Massachusetts, who was protesting in Boston on Saturday. "We can impose direct economic damage on Tesla by showing up at showrooms everywhere and boycotting

Tesla and telling everyone else to get out, sell your stocks, sell your Teslas. Musk is taking direction from Trump to slash federal spending and sharply reduce the workforce, arguing that Trump's victory gave the president and him a mandate to restructure the U.S. government. DOGE officials have swiftly gained access to sensitive databases, directed thousands of federal job cuts, canceled contracts and shut down sections of the government, including the U.S. Agency for International Development. Musk's critics say his actions defy Congress's power to control the U.S. budget and present a host of ways for him to enrich himself. Musk leads several other companies, notably SpaceX, which conducts launches

for NASA and the intelligence community, and the social media platform X. "Protests will not deter President Trump and Elon Musk from delivering on the

promise to establish DOGE and make our federal government more efficient and more accountable to the hardworking American taxpayers across the country,' said White House spokesperson Harrison Fields.

Tesla did not respond to an emailed request for comment.

More than 50 demonstrations were listed Saturday on the website Tesla Takedown, with more planned later in March from coast to coast in the United States along with England, Spain and Portugal. News reports showed demonstrations in recent days in U.S. cities including Tucson, Arizona; St. Louis; New York City; Dayton, Ohio; Charlotte; and Palo Alto, California.

Embedding ESG standards into its business and corporate culture in 2024

## NBK accelerates its commitment to a sustainable future

- NBK becomes Kuwait's first bank to join the PCAF initiative, pioneering efforts to curb greenhouse gas emissions
- First financial institution in Kuwait to issue \$500 million green bond, reinforcing sustainability leadership
- NBK is in the process of developing a group-wide environmental and social risk management framework to strengthen ESG integration
- The bank expanded sustainable financing solutions, empowering clients to transition to greener business models
- Launched a comprehensive sustainable procurement strategy framework to address environmental, social, and economic impacts across the supply chain
- Institutionalized alignment with the recommendations of the Task Force for Climate-related Financial Disclosures(TCFD)
- Strengthened participation in global sustainability initiatives, including COP29 and COP16, to advance Kuwait's vision for sustainability and drive action against climate change.
- Championed equal opportunities in the workplace by implementing the Bank's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) statement

#### NBK's Achievements and Recognitions in 2024:

- Isam Al-Sager ranked first in Kuwait and third in the Middle East's banking and financial services sector on Forbes' 2024 Sustainability Leaders list
- NBK was named the Best Bank in the Middle East for ESG-Related Loans Award 2024by Global Finance
- Recognized as the Best Bank for SMEs in Kuwait by Euromoney
   Honored by Euromoney as the "Best Bank for Diversity and Inclusion in Kuwait" for the "NBK RISE" Program
- The only bank in Kuwait to earna designation fromCDP for the second year in a row, cementing its role as responsible leader in the banking industry
- Sustainalytics assigned NBK a "27.1" Medium Risk ESG Rating
- S&P Global recognized NBK's significant progress with an improved CSA score of 39/100, marking an almost 9-point increase
- MSCI reaffirmed the bank's sustainability performance with a "PRR" rating

NBK remains unwavering in its commitment to embedding sustainability at the core of its business, operations, and corporate culture, driving forward a vision of sustainable growth that aligns with the highest global standards.

In 2024, the bank achieved significant milestones in executing its ESG strategy, demonstrating notable progress toward a sustainable future through a range of innovative initiatives, practices, and solutions.

Amid the escalating global challenges posed by climate change, the Bank has introduced a series of initiatives in 2024 focused on mitigating its impact, accelerating the shift to a low-carbon economy, advancing green projects, and bolstering economic resilience against environmental crises.

Moreover, NBK Group continues to prioritize diversity, equality, and inclusion throughout its operations, while creating value for stakeholders and empowering communities in the markets it serves by ensuring banking services are accessible to everyone.

In 2024, NBK achieved significant progress across the four pillars of its ESG strategy—Governance for Resilience, Responsible Banking, Capitalizing onour Capabilities, and Investing in our Communities. This advancement underscores NBK's leadership in shaping a better, more sustainable, and prosperous future for all.

#### Governance For Resilience

Under the pillar of Governance for Resilience, NBK has reached several key milestones in advancing its ESG strategy in 2024.

As a trailblazer in sustainability, NBK became the first bank in Kuwait and the sixth bank in the Middle East and North Africa (Mena) to join the Partnership for Carbon Accounting Financials (PCAF) initiative. Joining this initiative puts NBK alongsidethe world's leading financial institutions in measuring and managing greenhouse gas emissions linked to their lending and investment portfolios.

The PCAF initiative seeks to support financial institutions in their efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by offering methodologies for measuring and disclosing emissions linked to various asset classes within their lending and investment portfolios. These asset classes include listed equity and corporate bonds, business loans and unlisted equity, project finance, commercial real estate, mortgages, motor vehicle loans, and sovereign debt.

This significant step reinforces NBK's commitment to sustainability and its goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2060. It also supports the bank's efforts to enhance the measurement and disclosure of greenhouse gas intensity in its customers' activities, facilitating efforts to reduce carbon footprints and promoting the transition to a low-carbon economy.

The PCAF initiative is a crucial component of NBK's risk management framework, strengthening the bank's capacity to consistently assess carbon intensity and emission concentrations within its lending and investment portfolios. It also enhances NBK's ability to evaluate and manage climate-related risks and opportunities effectively.

The Bank also remained committed to the principles of the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), having joined its ranks in 2023. Notably, in 2024, NBK submitted its first Communication on Progress, further demonstrating its commitment to transparency and responsible growth. As the largest corporate sustainability initiative for responsible business practices, the UNGC underscores NBK's dedication to supporting practices that drive the sustainable development of Kuwait's economy.

The charter, which brings together more than 25,000 companies and nearly 3,000 non-commercial entities in 167countries around the world, is an important opportunity to collaborate with companies and organizations with a common vision and share best practices and ideas on how to make a positive impact on society and the environment.

In the meantime, NBK has enhanced its capabilities to address economic, environmental, and social risks across all segments of the Group, while establishing a strong and effective ESG governance framework both in Kuwait and internationally. The bank has also integrated climate change risks into Pillar II of the Internal Capital Adequacy Assessment Process (ICAAP).

In 2024, NBK institutionalized the alignment of its standards with the recommendations of the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), a framework designed to help companies address the increasing demand for transparency regarding climate-related risks and opportunities. The bank also developed a comprehensive, Group-wide environmental and social risk management framework.

#### Responsible Banking

As part of its responsible banking efforts, the second pillar of NBK's ESG strategy, the bank successfully issuedits inaugural \$500 million green bond in 2024. This issuance, part of its global medium-term securities program, has a 6-year maturity and first call date after 5-years.

curities program, has a 6-year maturity and first call date after 5-years.

This landmark transaction marks the first green bond issuance by a





Kuwaiti financial institution. It also stands as one of the largest green issues by a conventional financial institution in the region and represents the first green bond issuance by a bank in the Middle East in 2024.

Throughout 2024, NBK remained at the forefront of sustainable finance, offering tailored financing solutions and supporting customers in adopting sustainable business models. The bank capitalized on the growing trend towards sustainable finance by launching a range of green transformation services and products across the Group, including green mortgage loans, sustainability-related financing, low-emission housing loans, and reduced interest rates on loans for electric and hybrid vehicles

The Bank has also introduced a Sustainable Procurement Strategy Framework, a comprehensive approach to sourcing products, services, and goods. This strategy considers the environmental, social, and economic impacts across the entire supply chain, ensuring that procurement decisions not only meet immediate needs but also align with broader sustainability objectives.

To accelerate the transformation of its branch network into an environmentally friendly and energy-efficient operation, NBK completed the installation of solar panels in 18 of its branches across Kuwait in 2024. This initiative is part of the bank's commitment to reducing carbon emissions and supporting Kuwait's sustainability goals in alignment with Vision 2035.

This initiative reaffirms the bank's commitment to its interim goal of reducing total operating emissions by 25% by 2025, as part of its broader objective to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060.

#### Capitalizing on Our Capabilities

As part of its tangible efforts to enhance sustainability, NBK Kuwait employees received a total of 1,392 training hours dedicated to ESG topicsin 2024, with a focus on sustainability awareness, sustainable finance, and climate risk management.

NBK continues to promote equal opportunities as it finalizes its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) strategy and implements its supporting statement.

The bank implemented several strategic initiatives and specialized programs provided by the Bank to support and develop women leaders, which helped increase the number of women holding leadership and supervisory positions at all levels of the Bank.

NBK takes pride in being the workplace of choice that supports equal opportunities for both male and female employees. There are 347 professionals in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)working in NBK, with women representing 28.8% of this workforce.

#### **Investing in Our Communities**

NBK is dedicated to leaving a lasting social impact and creating value in the communities where it operates through its community investments. The bank strives to provide the best service to its customers, safeguard their interests, and protect their rights, while also promoting financial inclusion, enhancing access to financial services, and improving financial literacy.

Consolidating its leadership as the largest contributor to social responsibility in Kuwait, the total value of community investments made by the bank reached KD 30.19 million in 2024, marking a growth of 9.1% compared to 2023.

NBK is also committed to contributing KD 8 million to the redevelopSharq area, with new parking facilities and enhanced green spaces, in addition to donating KD 3 million for the development and beautification of Shuwaikh Beach. These initiatives underscore the bank's commitment to supporting the sustainable development of Kuwait's economy and aligning with the nation's development vision.

In support of entrepreneurs in Kuwait, NBK provided loans to SMEs in 2024 totaling KD 25.04 million, marking a growth of 23.5% compared to 2023.

Additionally, as part of its ongoing commitment to societal development, particularly in the field of education, NBK continued to provide comprehensive support for the advancement of this sector. The Bankee program, one of the bank's most prominent initiatives aimed at enhancing financial literacy and awareness among school students in Kuwait, continued its activities for the second academic year. During the 2024-2025 academic year, the program reached61schools, 7,335teachers, and 32,235students, building on the remarkable success achieved in the previous year.

Moreover, as part of its commitment to environmental stewardship and responsible waste management, NBK successfully recycled approximately 86% of its total paper consumption in 2024, reinforcing its dedication to sustainability and resource conservation.

In line with its commitment to enhancing the health, safety, and well-being of its employees, NBK has launched several initiatives and

policies designed to ensure the highest standards of care, in accordance with international regulations. Additionally, the Bank operates a medical clinic, managed by Wara Hospital, offering specialized medical support to employees. This is complemented by various awareness campaigns, focusing on mental health, as well as raising awareness of breast cancer and diabetes.

#### **Prestigious Awards and Rankings**

In a global recognition of NBK's leadership in sustainability, Mr. Isam Al-Sager, Vice Chairman and Group CEO of NBK, was recognized as Kuwait's Top Sustainability Leader and Ranked Third in the Middle East by Forbes.

Forbes based its ranking on a set of criteria, including the overall impact of sustainability initiatives at both regional and international levels. The evaluation considered the process of issuing sustainability and ESG reports, with an emphasis on transparency and accuracy, as well as efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Other factors included waste management, the efficient use of water, energy, and other resources, along with the bank's commitment to renewable energy and the adoption of energy-saving technologies.

NBK's sustainability efforts were further recognized in 2024 with several prestigious awards, including the title of the Best Bank for ESG-Related Loans in the Middle East by Global Finance magazine. This accolade highlights the bank's significant strides in sustainable finance, along with its other initiatives aimed at mitigating the adverse impacts of climate change and contributing to the creation of a more sustainable future for all.

Euromoney Magazine also awarded NBK the Best SME Bank in Kuwait in recognition of its efforts in supporting SME financing and confirming its leading position as the best bank in the local banking sector in providing smooth and fast banking services and products that meet all the needs of SME customers and help in their development.

NBK also received Euromoney's award for "Best Bank for Diversity and Inclusion in Kuwait" recognizing its Global Women Leadership Initiative "NBK Rise", a global program dedicated to promoting and supporting women leaders. This prestigious award underscores the bank's commitment to fostering an inclusive work environment where all employees can thrive. It reflects the bank's ongoing efforts to empower women and cultivate a culture of diversity and inclusion, which has become a key driver of organizational success.

For the second consecutive year, NBK received a score of "C" from CDP in the categories of Climate Change and Forests 2024. This recognition makes NBK the only bank in Kuwait to receive a rating under the CDP and places it among the highest-rated financial institutions in the GCC within the project.

This designation aligns with the Bank's roadmap to strengthen its commitment to transparency in disclosing the environmental impacts of its operations and its efforts to reduce emissions. NBK's involvement in the Carbon Disclosure Project dates back to 2024, when it began submitting its initial disclosures.

Further solidifying its commitment to ESG excellence, Sustainalytics assigned NBK a "27.1" Medium Risk ESG Rating, reinforcing its dedication to managing ESG risks effectively. Additionally, S&P Global recognized NBK's significant progress with an improved CSA score of 39/100, marking an almost 9-point increase. Meanwhile, MSCI reaffirmed the bank's sustainability performance with a "BBB" rating, reflecting NBK's ongoing efforts to integrate ESG considerations into its strategy. These strong ratings underscore the bank's progress in embedding sustainability into its business model and applying ESG standards.

#### Agreements & Partnerships

In 2024, NBK entered into a strategic partnership with DHL, a global leader in shipping, to adopt DHL GoGreen Plus, becoming the first bank in Kuwait to join this global sustainability initiative.

By joining GoGreen Plus, 100% of NBK's international shipments will be transported using sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) instead of conventional aviation fuel, resulting in a significant reduction in carbon emissions. This move aligns with the bank's ongoing commitment to achieving carbon neutrality by 2060.

In support of the transition to a sustainable, low-carbon economy and aligned with Kuwait's comprehensive vision for sustainability and global efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change, NBK participated in the 29thsession of the Conference of the Parties (COP29) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Baku, Azerbaijan. The bank also engaged in the 16thConference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to contribute to discussions on global initiatives to combat desertification and land degradation.

#### 2025 Goals

NBK aims to further advance its journey towards a sustainable future in 2025 by achieving a series of key objectives within its ESG strategy, including the following:

- Accelerate sustainable financing efforts, aligning with the Bank's goal of building a sustainable asset portfolio worth approximately \$10 billion by 2030.
- Publish the Bank's first green bond impact and allocation report, following the issuance of \$500 million green bond in 2024.
- Achieve a key milestone in sustainability by publishing the first Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) report.
- Strengthen relationships with corporate clients, collaborating closely to support their carbon reduction objectives.
- Establish a benchmark for emissions within the Bank's portfolio.
- Announce a comprehensive plan to achieve carbon neutrality by reducing emissions.
   Launch an Environmental and Social Risk Management (ESRM)
- Launch an Environmental and Social Risk Management (ESRM) framework aimed at enhancing capacity building, while increasing training hours focused on ESG, climate risk management, and sustainable finance.

#### Numbers and statistics:

- In 2024, NBK issued a \$500 million green bond, the first of its kind for a Kuwaiti financial institution.
- KD 30.19 millionvalue of community investments made by the Bank in 2024, marking a growth of 9.1% compared to 2023.
- KD 25.04 millionbank loans to SMEs in 2024, marking a growth of
- 23.5% compared to 2023. KD 8 million to establish a park and parking facilities in Sharq area.
- KD 3 million for the development and beautification of Shuwaikh Beach.
- 1,392 training hours for NBK employees in 2024 on topics related to Governance, Sustainability and Climate Risk Management.
- Solar panels were installed at 18 branches of the bank in Kuwait as part of its commitment to sustainability.
- 347 professionals in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)working in NBK, with women representing 28.8% of this workforce.
- $\blacksquare$  Successfully recycled 86% of its total paper usage.

## What's On



ACICO Academy officials and participants



ACICO Academy graduation participants.

#### **Comprehensive training for new graduates in various fields**

## ACICO Academy celebrates graduation of its inaugural cohort

KUWAIT CITY, March 2: ACICO Group is proud to announce the successful graduation of the first cohort of the ACICO Academy in a ceremony that was held at the company's headquarters and marked the conclusion of an intensive four-month program aimed at empowering and developing Kuwait's brightest young talents.

The ACICO Academy was conceptualized as part of ACICO's ongoing commitment to attract ambitious local talent and give back to the community by equipping youth with the tools and knowledge they need to excel in the private sector. The inaugural program, which began in October 2024 and concluded in January 2025, saw 30 carefully selected participants embark on a journey of professional and personal



Eng. Ahmad Rajab, Senior HR & Administration Director at ACICO

Over the course of the program, the young employees engaged in a blend of business knowledge sessions, practical training, and a final business project.

This structured approach ensured that participants gained the essential skills and hands-on experience needed for their roles within ACICO. Out of the 30 participants, 26 successfully completed the program, a testament to the academy's rigorous selection and training standards, which targeted motivated individuals ready to thrive in the

Eng. Ahmad Rajab, Senior Group Director - HR & Administration at ACICO, addressed the graduates during the ceremony, saying: "Today, we celebrate not just the conclusion of a program, but the beginning of a promising journey for these exceptional young talents. ACICO Academy reflects our dedication to fostering the next generation of professionals, and we are immensely proud of what our graduates have accomplished.

Their success represents the future of ACICO and the broader private sector in Kuwait."

The event was attended by ACICO's Chairman of the Board, top management, representatives from key partners, including Injaz, the Ministry of Youth, and the Public Authority of Manpower, as well as instructors, trainers, and proud families of the graduates.

This first edition of ACICO Academy marks a significant milestone in ACICO's efforts to empower local talent and contribute to the development of Kuwait's workforce. The academy not only highlights ACICO's leadership in the private sector but also reinforces its commitment to investing in the future of the community.

"We look forward at ACICO Group to continuing the success of the ACICO Academy and expanding its impact in the years to come," Rajab added. "The academy reflects our values of innovation, development, and commitment to our Kuwaiti community as part of our social responsibility by providing a robust foundation for graduates to start their careers. We look forward to welcoming the next generations and are confident that the program will play a critical role in the development of our beloved nation."

## الماجلة الرمضانية عليها كـاش بــــاك مع بطاقتي لـولـو ومـوح مسبقة الدفع للاسترداد النقدى لغاية

#### Lucky shoppers win free groceries

#### Gulf Bank gifts Machlat Ramadan groceries at Lulu, Shamiya Co-op

KUWAIT CITY, March 2: In celebration of the holy month of Ramadan, Gulf Bank has launched a special initiative as part of its Ramadan program, "Our Traditions Always Bring Us Together". Over two days, the Bank generously gifted "Machlat Ramadan" grocery to shoppers at Lulu Hypermarket and Shamiya Co-op, reflecting its commitment to supporting the community and enhancing customer experiences. Gulf Bank treated select shoppers at Lulu Hypermarket to complimentary groceries using the Gulf Bank Lulu Hypermarket Prepaid Card — the first of its kind in Kuwait. Exclusively designed for Lulu Hypermarket customers, the card provides up to 5% cashback on purchases made at Lulu Hypermarket branches across the country.

With its exclusive benefits, the Lulu Hypermarket Prepaid Mastercard has become a preferred choice for customers, offering convenience, security, and special discounts. It enables shoppers to take advantage of exclusive Ramadan offers and make seamless payments both in-store and online at Lulu Hypermarket.

Additionally, at Shamiya Co-op, Additionally, at Shamiya Co-op, Gulf Bank provided complimentary groceries to numerous shoppers using its "MOUJ" prepaid card. Offering up to 5% cashback on local and international purchases — up to KD 600 annually - this flexible and secure payment solution ensures a seam-

less and rewarding shopping experience. Shoppers at Lulu Hypermarket and Shamiya Co-op expressed their appreciation to Gulf Bank for this meaningful initiative, which supports community sustainability and provides added value to individuals. By offering exclusive benefits, the initiative also enhanced the security of financial transactions.

Gulf Bank remains committed to providing an exceptional banking experience for all segments of society, particularly during Ramadan. This initiative reflects the Bank's dedication to offering tailored financial solutions that cater to customers' needs, helping them manage their expenses efficiently and securely.

#### Explore global flavors and luxurious ambience in Kuwait

## **Desert-inspired Jawaher Tent boosts Ramadan** spirit and connections at Four Seasons Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, March 2: Vivid hues of cerulean sky and golden sand set a dramatic desert-inspired scene for Ramadan dining this year at Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya. Combining an opulent setting with world-class cuisine, the new-look Jawaher Tent is the emirate's most ambitious and sophisticated setting for communal gatherings and heartfelt memory-making this Holy Month.

Hot on the heels of its third consecutive year of Forbes Five-Star accolades for both its Hotel and Spa, the Jawaher Tent is the centrepiece of a monthprogramme revealed today by Four Seasons Kuwait City sanctuary. Lavish Iftar and Ghabga experiences, joyful Gergean celebrations, a flexible stay offer, a rooftop Eid Al Fitr brunch and 50-strong dessert spread add to the blessings of the season.

"As always, it is our pleasure to welcome guests to Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait for another unforgettable Ramadan," says General Manager Martin Kipping. "This year, Jawaher transforms into a breathtaking desertinspired retreat, adorned in rich shades of blue and gold — a setting where tradition and elegance come together in perfect harmony.'

On its part, Northern Gulf Trading Company, the exclusive distributor of Genesis vehicles in Kuwait, is pleased to continue its partnership with Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya. For the second consecutive year, Genesis proudly serves as the official sponsor of the Ramadan tent, enriching the Holy Month's experience with an atmosphere of refined luxury and hospitality. Through this collaboration, Genesis aims to offer a distinguished Ramadan experience for enthusiasts of sophistication and elegance, featuring an immersive ambiance, authentic Ramadan cuisine, and the unparalleled service that defines the Genesis brand.

With a seating capacity of over 550 guests, 2025's Jawaher Tent plays





The new-look Jawaher Tent at the Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya.

host to global flavours from Arabic, Kuwaiti, Mediterranean, Asian, and Indian cuisine. Iftar packages start at KD 27 per person and are available daily from sunset, while joyful Ghagba packages start at KD 28 and run from 9:30 pm until 2:00 am and feature live entertainment; both include hot and cold beverages, while children aged-6to 11 receive a 50% discount. New for 2025, Li Beirut offers an authentic Lebanese experience:vibrant Eastern Mediterranean classics from sizzling seafood and meats to piquant mezze served in a warmly welcoming space

of connection and belonging

Bringing each night's feast to a sweet conclusion is an exquisite selection of more than 50 dessert treats including handcrafted pastries, confections and a chocolate fountain. Promising further indulgence, the Hotel's Al Soor Lounge, also known as 'La Chocolaterie of Kuwait', is the place for hand-crafted chocolates and sweet aromatic dates - either to gift or savour.

With the season's focus on family time, the cherished tradition of Gergean is marked on the 14th and 15th days of Ramadan. Laughter, sweets, and surprises make for magical moments to share.A designated Kids' Corner provides child-friendly entertainment. In addition, parents with youngsters aged 12 to 16 can share a Family Harmony massage, facial or body scrub.

Health-conscious couples can also prioritise well-being with an exclusive couples' Gold or Silver Membership. March enrolments receive an additional month of annual membership with full access to the Hotel's Wellness Center, including training sessions and indoor and outdoor pools.



TEF-Kuwait technical seminar participants.



TEF-Kuwait 2025 Walkathon participants.

#### **TEF-Kuwait hosts technical seminar and 2025 Walkathon finale**

The Tamilnadu Engineers Forum (TEF-Kuwait) successfully organized its second Technical Seminar on Feb 20, at the Millennium Hotel, Salmiya. The grand finale of TEF-2025 Walkathon took place the next morning on Feb 21 at the Al Sahel Sports Club, Abuhalifa.

The technical seminar which featured an informative Legal Awareness session for NRIs by Mrs. A.S. Divya Advocate at Madras High Court followed by an engaging Q&A session. The second session of the seminar was a Technical Presentation by Vijay Kumar Budhlani Chief Operating Officer of Technical Sales at Dembla Valves Ltd. titled "Value Visionaries: Innovators Shaping the Future of Flow Control."

A key highlight of the event was the presence of the esteemed Special Guest, R. Gnanasekaran, an Asian Gold Medalist and Arjuna Awardee. Gnanasekaran, who won a silver medal in the 100m and a gold medal in the 200m at the 1978 Asian Games in Bangkok, shared inspiring anecdotes from his journey, emphasizing the importance of determination and perseverance

in achieving success. The TEF committee members honored the distin-

guished guests and presenters with shawls, garlands, and mementos.

The much-anticipated TEF-2025 Walkathon Finale took place the following morning at Al- Sahel Sports Club. Despite the breezy weather, a large number of TEF members and their families enthusiastically gathered for the event, which commenced at 6:30 AM. Mr. Gnanasekaran once again graced the occasion, delivering an inspiring speech titled "Feel the Motivation of

TEF had earlier launched a 26-day Walkathon com-

petition to encourage its members to adopt healthier walking habits. During the finale, winners were selected based on their daily step count averages, and Gnanasekaran personally presented them with awards, encouraging all participants to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle.

Both events were well organized by the TEF 2025 committee members, marking yet another successful initiative by TEF-Kuwait in fostering technical excellence, community engagement, and wellness among

#### Firefly's lander delivers NASA's lunar experiments

## Private lunar lander Blue Ghost aces moon touchdown

(AP): A private lunar lander carrying a drill, vacuum and other experiments for NASA touched down on the moon Sunday, the latest in a string of companies looking to kickstart business on Earth's celestial neighbor ahead of astronaut missions.

Firefly Aerospace's Blue Ghost lander descended from lunar orbit on autopilot, aiming for the slopes of an ancient volcanic dome in an impact basin on the moon's northeastern edge of

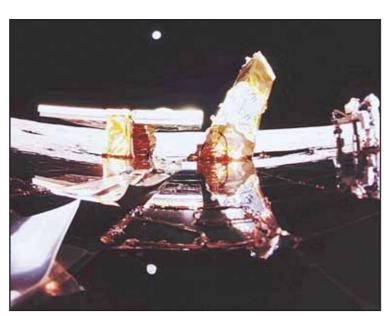
Confirmation of successful touchdown came from the company's Mission Control outside Austin, Texas, following the action some 225,000

miles (360,000 kilometers) away.

"You all stuck the landing. We're on the moon," Firefly's Will Coogan, chief engineer for the lander, reported.

An upright and stable landing makes Firefly - a startup founded a decade ago - the first private outfit to put a spacecraft on the moon without crashing or falling over. Even countries have faltered, with only five claiming success: Russia, the U.S., China, India

A half hour after landing, Blue Ghost started to send back pictures from the surface, the first one a selfie



Private lunar lander Blue Ghost after touching down on the moon with a special delivery for NASA Sunday, March 2, 2025. Moon's surface and Earth are visible on the horizon, Blue Ghost's solar panel, X-band antenna, left, and LEXI payload at right. (AP)

somewhat obscured by the sun's glare. The second shot included the home planet, a blue dot glimmering in the blackness of space.

Two other companies' landers are hot on Blue Ghost's heels, with the next one expected to join it on the moon later this week.

species of fireflies - had its size and shape going for it. The squat four-legged lander stands 6-foot-6 (2 meters) tall and 11 feet (3.5 meters) wide, providing extra stability, according to the company.

Launched in mid-January from Florida, the lander carried 10 experiments to the moon for NASA. The space agency paid \$101 million for the delivery, plus \$44 million for the science and tech on board. It's the third mission under NASA's commercial lunar delivery program, intended to ignite a lunar economy of competing private businesses while scouting around before astronauts show up later this decade.

Firefly's Ray Allensworth said the lander skipped over hazards including boulders to land safely. Allensworth said the team continued to analyze the data to figure out the lander's exact position, but all indications suggest it landed within the 328-foot (100-meter) target zone in Mare Crisium.

The demos should get two weeks of run time, before lunar daytime ends and the lander shuts down.

It carried a vacuum to suck up moon dirt for analysis and a drill to measure temperature as deep as 10 feet (3 meters) below the surface. Also on board: a device for eliminating abrasive lunar dust - a scourge for NASA's long-ago Apollo moonwalkers, who got it caked all over their spacesuits and equipment.

On its way to the moon, Blue Ghost beamed back exquisite pictures of the home planet. The lander continued to stun once in orbit around the moon, with detailed shots of the moon's gray pockmarked surface. At the same time, an on-board receiver tracked and acquired signals from the U.S. GPS and European Galileo constellations, an encouraging step forward in navigation for future explorers.

The landing set the stage for a fresh crush of visitors angling for a piece of lunar business.

Another lander - a tall and skinny 15-footer (4 meters tall) built and operated by Houston-based Intuitive Machines - is due to land on the moon Thursday. It's aiming for the bottom of the moon, just 100 miles (160 kilometers) from the south pole. That's closer to the pole than the company got last year with its first lander, which broke a leg and tipped over.

Despite the tumble, Intuitive Machines' lander put the U.S. back on the moon for the first time since NASA astronauts closed out the Apollo program

A third lander from the Japanese company ispace is still three months from landing. It shared a rocket ride with Blue Ghost from Cape Canaveral on Jan. 15, taking a longer, windier route. Like Intuitive Machines, ispace is also attempting to land on the moon for the second time. Its first lander crashed in 2023.

The moon is littered with wreckage not only from ispace, but dozens of other failed attempts over the decades.

NASA wants to keep up a pace of two private lunar landers a year, realizing some missions will fail, said the space agency's top science officer Nicky Fox.

"It really does open up a whole new way for us to get more science to space and to the moon," Fox said.

Unlike NASA's successful Apollo moon landings that had billions of dollars behind them and ace astronauts at the helm, private companies operate on a limited budget with robotic craft that must land on their own, said Firefly CEO Jason Kim.

Kim said everything went like

"We got some moon dust on our boots," Kim said.

#### 'Owning pets isn't enough'

## Strong bond with pets tied to lower depression: study

By Brian N. Chin Trinity College

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

For many people, pets provide unconditional love, companionship and a sense of security. But not all human-pet relationships are beneficial, and some may contribute to stress and anxiety rather than relief.

Psychologists have been studying attachment theory for decades. This framework explains how people form emotional bonds, seek closeness and manage separation. People with secure attachment tend to feel safe in relationships, while those with attachment anxiety may crave closeness but frequently worry about rejection or loss.

Just like with human relationships, people form attachment bonds with pets. Some form secure attachments, finding comfort in their pet and viewing them as a reliable source of companionship. Others experience anxious attachment, feeling excessive worry, distress and a heightened need for reassurance when separated from

their pet. In our recently published research, my research team and I found that attachment anxiety is strongly linked to depression symptoms among owners. This suggests that well-being isn't just about having a pet, but about the quality of your bond.

My team and I set out to explore whether the way people bond with their pets has a measurable effect on their mental well-being.

1,000 pet We surveyed over owners in the US about their closeness to their pets; how often they engaged in activities like playing, cuddling or spending time together; and whether they felt secure or anxious in the relationship. We also measured symptoms of depression to examine how different character-

istics of pet bonds might influence mental well-being.

Our results revealed a clear pattern: Higher pet attachment anxiety was the strongest predictor of depression symptoms. In other words, people who felt overly dependent on their pets, constantly worrying about being apart from them or whether their pet "loved" them back, were more likely to experience depression symptoms.

Surprisingly, simply emotionally close to a pet was not enough to predict better mental health. While some may assume that a stronger bond with a pet automatically leads to greater wellbeing, our findings suggest that the quality of the attachment matters more than its intensity. People with secure pet relationships reported better well-being, while those with higher attachment anxiety experienced greater distress.

We also found that while frequent pet interactions were linked to stronger and more secure humanpet bonds, interaction frequency did not significantly predict mental health outcomes. This reinforces the idea that emotional security in the relationship, rather than just the frequency of interaction, is what truly matters for mental health.

Interestingly, people who owned both a cat and a dog reported more depression symptoms than those with only one type of pet. While our study did not determine the cause, one possibility is that managing multiple pets can add stress or in-

crease the burden of caregiving. Our findings highlight that pet ownership is not a one-size-fits-all solution for mental health. The way people bond with their pets - whether they feel emotionally secure or experience anxiety in the relationship - may be just as important as pet ownership itself in shaping well-

This research also raises important questions about the role of emotional support animals and animalassisted interventions. (AP)

Why vaccination is more important than ever

## Measles is one of the world's most contagious viruses ... how to avoid it

NEW YORK, March 2, (Agencies): Measles was rarely seen in the United States, but Americans are growing more concerned about the preventable virus as cases continue to rise in rural West Texas.

This week, an unvaccinated child died in the West Texas outbreak, which involves more than 120 cases. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the last confirmed measles death in the United States was in 2015.

There are also nine measles cases in eastern New Mexico, but the state health department said there is no direct connection to the outbreak in

Here's what to know about the measles and how to protect yourself. It's a respiratory disease caused by one of the world's most contagious viruses. The virus is airborne and spreads easily when an infected person breathes, sneezes or coughs. It most commonly affects kids.

"On average, one infected person may infect about 15 other people," said Scott Weaver, a center of excellence director for the Global Virus Network, an international coalition. "There's only a few viruses that even come close to that."

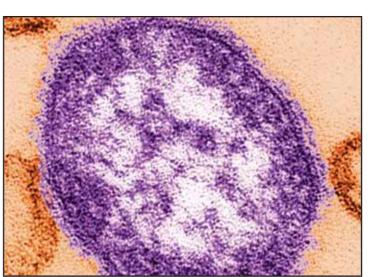
Measles first infects the respiratory tract, then spreads throughout the body, causing a high fever, runny nose, cough, red, watery eyes and a rash.

The rash generally appears three to five days after the first symptoms, beginning as flat red spots on the face and then spreading downward to the neck, trunk, arms, legs and feet. When the rash appears, the fever may spike over 104 degrees Fahrenheit, according to the CDC.

There's no specific treatment for measles, so doctors generally try to alleviate symptoms, prevent complications and keep patients comfort-

People who have had measles once can't get it again, health officials say. It usually doesn't kill people, but

Common complications include ear infections and diarrhea. But about



This undated image made available by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Feb. 4, 2015 shows an electron microscope image of a measles virus particle, center. (AP)

1 in 5 unvaccinated Americans who get measles are hospitalized, the CDC said. Pregnant women who haven't gotten the vaccine may give birth prematurely or have a lowbirthweight baby.

Among children with measles, about 1 in every 20 develops pneumonia, the CDC said, and about one in every 1.000 suffers swelling of the brain called encephalitis - which can lead to convulsions, deafness or intellectual disability.

It's deadly "in a little less than 1% of cases, mainly in children," said Weaver, who works at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. "Children develop the most severe illness. The cause of death in these kinds of cases is usually pneumonia and complications from pneumonia.

The best way to avoid measles is to get the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine. The first shot is recommended for children between 12 and 15 months old and the second between 4 and 6 years old.

"Before a vaccine was developed in the 1960s, everybody got" mea-

sles, Weaver said. "But then when the vaccine came along, that was a complete game-changer and one of the most successful vaccines in the history of medicine.'

There is "great data" on the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine, he said, because it's been around for de-

"Any of these outbreaks we're seeing can easily be prevented by increasing the rate of vaccination in the community," he said. "If we can maintain 95% of people vaccinated, we're not going to see this happening in the future. And we've slipped well below that level in many parts of the country.'

Vaccination rates have declined nationwide since the COVID-19 pandemic, and most states are below the 95% vaccination threshold for kindergartners - the level needed to protect communities against measles outbreaks.

Health care professionals are sometimes tested for antibodies to measles and given boosters if necessary, Weaver said - even if they've already had the standard two doses as a child.

#### **Ebola death**

#### HFMD cases rise in Philippines

MANILA, March 2, (Xinhua): The Philippines' Department of Health said on Saturday it has tallied 7,598 cases of hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) from January to Feb. 22 this year, three times higher than the same period last year.

Over 50 percent of the cases were de-

tected in the Philippine capital and three other regions on the main Luzon Island.

The agency said 4,225 cases were detected in children aged four and younger, while 2,069 cases were detected in children aged five and nine.

"HFMD is rarely fatal but highly contagious," said Health Secretary Teodoro Herbosa, urging Filipinos to wash hands with soap and water and avoid the crowd if experiencing symptoms. The World Health Organization said

HFMD is a common infectious disease that occurs most often in children but can also occur in adolescents and occasionally In most cases, the disease is mild and

self-limiting, with common symptoms including fever, painful sores in the mouth, and a rash with blisters on hands, feet and

However, more severe symptoms such as meningitis, encephalitis and polio-like paralysis may occur.

Ebola: Uganda on Saturday announced the second Ebola death in its capital, Kampala, just days after discharging all Ebola patients whom authorities said had fully recovered following isolation and treat-

A four-and-a-half-year-old child died from Ebola at Mulago National Referral Hospital in Kampala on Tuesday, Uganda's Ministry of Health said in a statement issued on Saturday.

"Following the outbreak of Sudan Ebola Virus Disease on Jan. 30, 2025, the Ministry of Health would like to update the general public about an additional positive case in Mulago, a resident of Kibuli linked to the primary cluster. The identified case is a four-and-a-half-year-old child who presented with and died from classical symptoms of Ebola at Mulago Hospital on Tuesday, Feb. 25, 2025," the statement read.

"As of today (Saturday), a total of 10 cases have been confirmed in Uganda. Unfortunately, the first case, also known as the index case, and the 10th case have succumbed to Ebola," the statement added.







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#### Potential missed knockdown looms large

### Davis and Roach fight to majority draw, Tank keeps title

NEW YORK, March 2, (AP): Gervonta Davis held onto his lightweight title when he and Lamont Roach fought to a majority draw, with a potential missed knockdown keeping Davis from what would have

been the first loss of his career. One judge gave the fight to Davis 115-113, while the other two scored it 114-114.

Davis (30-0-1) willingly went to a knee near his corner in the ninth round, then leaned over the ropes so they could towel off the area around his eye. Referee Steve Willis did not count it as a knockdown, as it should be when a knee hits the canvas. Had it been, Davis would have automatically lost a point.

The sold-out crowd of 19,250 at Barclays Center booed when Davis explained that it was grease from his hair that got in his eye that caused him to stop for

"It should have been a knockdown. If that was knockdown, I win the fight," Roach said. "He's saying grease got in his eye, but if he takes a knee and the ref starts counting, it should be a knockdown." Fellow boxers were among the stunned observers wondering how Davis escaped a deduction that seemed so obvious

"I never seen someone take a knee and they don't count it as a knock down. Must of forgot the rules for tonight," multi-division champion Terence Crawford wrote on X

Roach (25-1-2) fell just short in his attempt to add a belt in a second weight class after the 130-pound champion moved up to the 135-pound limit.

Davis knew much better than the oddsmakers. The Baltimore-based Davis had called Roach, an opponent in the amateur ranks from nearby Washington, the most-skilled fighter he had faced, rating him an

"A-plus fighter." And nearly a lightweight champion one on a night he landed more punches than Davis and stung him a few times with right hands, showing power that was rarely on display while he racked up just 10 knockouts in his career.

"I think I pulled it out in the last three rounds for sure," Davis said. "I was catching him with some clean shots. I feel I was breaking him down as the rounds were going on, but he kept coming so I didn't want to make mistakes and I kept it cautious." The Associated Press scored it 115-113 for Davis.

Roach called for a rematch afterward, disgusted that he was not credited with the knockdown in the ninth round.

The fight had been close up to that point, and had the knockdown been called, Roach could have won the round by a 10-8 score. Instead, Davis finished the



Lamont Roach, left, punches Gervonta Davis during the second round of a WBA lightweight championship boxing bout in New York. (AP)

## **South Africa romps into Champions Trophy semis**



South Africa's Rassie van der Dussen plays a shot during the ICC Champions Trophy cricket match between England and

#### Dussen's half-century highlights Proteas clinical performance

KARACHI, Pakistan, March 2, (AP): Rassie van der Dussen scored 72 not out off 87 balls to lead South Africa into the semifinals of the Champions Trophy by beating England by seven wickets.

Van der Dussen's half-century highlighted South Africa's clinical performance as it finished atop Group B.

The Proteas finished with 181-3 in 29.1 overs in reply to England's hapless effort of 179 all out (38.2 overs).

This was after England - already ousted from the tournament after backto-back losses - had won the toss and opted to bat.

Marco Jansen picked 3-39 in seven overs, while Wiaan Mulder took 3-25 in 7.2 overs as England's batting looked disinterested.

England had previously lost to Australia and Afghanistan and thus finished winless after three games, marking a dismal end to Jos Buttler's run as

Buttler announced on Friday that he would step down after England's surprising exit as well as its past failures in the 2024 T20 World Cup and the 2023 Cricket World Cup.

South Africa's victory Saturday eliminated Afghanistan, which finished third in Group B.

England's innings suffered early blows against Jansen. Phil Salt was out caught for eight and then Jamie Smith



England's Jofra Archer bowls during the ICC Champions Trophy cricket match between England and South Africa, in Karachi, Pakistan. (AP)

was caught for a three-ball duck. It became 37-3 when Ben Duckett returned a catch to Jansen for 24 off 21

"These were good conditions from a batting point of view, and the boys worked very hard," said Jansen, who was named player of the match. "I used my options well and hit my lengths."

Joe Root top-scored with 37 off 44 balls and made an effort to stabilize the innings. He added 62 off 61 balls with Harry Brook (19).

Left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj (2-35) got the breakthrough with Jan-

sen taking a nice catch at midwicket to dismiss Brook. Thereafter, England collapsed again.

over, and while Buttler held one end with 21 off 43 balls, regular wickets meant that the English innings never took flight. Jofra Archer scored 25 off 31 balls with four fours.

England lost its last seven wickets for 80 runs, finishing with a below par

"It was a really disappointing performance and we were short of our mark today," Buttler said after England's seventh straight ODI defeat. "It was a decent surface and Duckett got us into a nice position, but we couldn't take advantage of that. As a whole group, we are not getting results and that takes away the confidence from us.'

Chasing a paltry total, South Africa's start wasn't too good either. Archer bowled makeshift opener Tristan Stubbs for a five-ball duck, and then bowled Ryan Rickelton (27) later on

It was 47-2 when van der Dussen and Heinrich Klaasen came together, and they put on 127 runs off 122 balls for the third wicket.

Van der Dussen reached 50 off 72 balls, and his knock for the day included six fours and three sixes overall. Stand-in skipper Aiden Markram did

not bat as he had sustained a hamstring

injury while fielding. Klaasen finished with 64 off 56 balls with 11 fours before he was out caught off Adil Rashid (1-37) near the finish

#### **Iowa State survives late scare from Arizona** Gonzaga clinches No. 2 seed in WCC tourney

SAN FRANCISCO, March 2, (AP): Ben Gregg scored 23 points on Saturday night to help Gonzaga beat San Francisco 95-75 in the regular season finale for both teams and clinch a berth into the semifinals of the West Coast Conference Tournament.

The Bulldogs will be the No. 2 seed in the conference tournament, which begins March 6 in Paradise, Nevada. San Francisco falls to the third seed and earns a berth into the quarterfinals.

Nolan Hickman scored 17 points, Graham Ike 15 and Khalif Battle 14 for Gonzaga (23-8, 14-4). Ryan Nembhard finished with eight points and a career-high tying 15 assists.

Nembhard, who also had 15 assists in a win over Santa Clara last time out, became the first played to record consecutive games with at least 15 assists against Division-I opponents since Iona's Scott Machado in November 2011. Nembhard, a senior who spent his first two seasons at Creighton, went into the game leading the nation in assists (295) and assists per game (9.8) and was second in assist-to-turnover ratio (4.15).

Gregg scored in the paint to make it 7-6 a little more than three minutes into the game and Gonzaga led the rest of the way.

Milan Momcilovic scored 17 points as No. 9 Iowa State survived a late scare from No. 22 Arizona for an 84-67 win.

Tamin Lipsey added 15 for the Cyclones (22-7, 12-6 Big 12) while Curtis Jones and Nate Heise each contributed 12 points off the bench. Brandton Chatfield scored 10 points for a new season-high with Iowa State.

Jaden Bradley scored 18 points while KJ Lewis added 13 off the bench to lead the Wildcats (19-10, 13-5), who have lost four of their last



Texas A&M forward Andersson Garcia collides with Florida center Micah Handlogten. (AP)

Will Richard made six 3-pointers and scored 25 points, Thomas Haugh added 17 points and No. 3 Florida handed 12th-ranked Texas A&M a fourth consecutive loss.

Alijah Martin had 14 points for the Gators, who bounced back from a midweek loss at unranked Georgia and moved a step closer to securing a double bye in the Southeastern Conference Tournament in two weeks.

Texas A&M (20-9, 9-7 SEC) could fall out of the AP Top 25 college basketball poll. Florida (25-4, 12-4), meanwhile, improved to 14-1 at home this season.

Florida trailed by six early but started hitting from long range to close the gap and build a double-digit lead. Richard had the hot hand and scored 17 points in the second half, thanks mostly to five 3s. His 3 with 4:52 remaining was a dagger.

Jeremy Roach scored 21 points, Norchad Omier had a double-double and Baylor beat Oklahoma State 7161 to end a three-game losing streak. Baylor used a 12-0 run to take a 41-29 lead with 14:12 remaining. Roach scored eight points that included back-to-back 3s during the stretch. Oklahoma State pulled to 63-59 with 1:26 remaining but the Bears shot 6 of 8 from the foul line sandwiched between a Roach layup

Omier scored 10 points and grabbed 13 rebounds for his 17th double-double this season, and he's two away from matching the program record. Robert Wright III added 16 points and Jayden Nunn scored 11 points for the Bears. Roach and Nunn combined for seven of the Bears' eight 3-pointers.

Baylor (17-12, 9-9 Big 12) shot just 37% (22 of 59) but had 11 steals and scored 16 points from 18 Oklahoma State turnovers.

Silas Demary Jr. scored 14 of his career-high 26 points in the first half as Georgia built a 15-point lead at intermission and rolled to an 83-67 win

Fresh off an 88-83 win over No. 3 Florida, the Bulldogs (18-11, 6-10 SEC) scored the game's first six points and led wire-to-wire to hand the Longhorns their third straight

Tre Johnson's three-point play got Texas within a point, 9-8, but Georgia sandwiched two Asa Newell field goals around Dakota Leffew's threepointer to take a 16-8 lead, and after Demary scored on a tip-in and a layup, the Bulldogs had a double-digit lead. Blue Cain hit from deep with :12 left in the half to make it 46-29 at the break.

Georgia was 17 of 30 from the field (56.7%) in the first half, including 5 of 10 from long range. The Bulldogs finished 29 of 56 (51.8%) from the field and 8 of 22 from distance.



Iowa State guard Curtis Jones, (left) steals the ball from Arizona forward Tobe Awaka. (AP)

**Georgia's Metelkina/Berulava retain pairs title in Hungary** 

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#### BUDAPEST, March 2, (Xinhua): Anastasiia Metelkina and Luka Berulava of Georgia defended their title in the pairs competition at the ISU World Junior Figure Skating Championships in Debrecen, Hungary.

The Georgian pair won with 191.01 points overall. Ukraine's Sofiia HolichenkoArtem Darenskyi earned silver, while Canadians Martina Ariano KentCharly Laliberte Laurent secured bronze. China's Zhang Jiaxuan and Huang Yihang took fifth place with 151.41 points.

Zhang and Huang, who won two stops of the ISU Junior Grand Prix and the GP Final, made mistakes in their free skate as Zhang fell on her single jump and the triple throw.

"I'm not satisfied with my performance today," said Zhang. "I made many mistakes. Now, I really want to return and train harder. We'll be competing in the senior group next season, and we have a lot to improve upon." In the women's event, Japan's Mao Shimada soared to her third straight World Junior Championships title. The 16-year-old achieved a new personal best with 156.16 points, also a season best, in her free skate for 230.84 points overall. She landed a triple Axel, quadruple toeloop, and seven triple jumps.

Shin Ji-a of South Korea climbed from seventh to claim her fourth consecutive junior worlds silver medal, while Elyce Lin-Gracey of the United States earned bronze.

"I am happy with the title, but I am even happier that I was able to perform how I wanted to in both my short program and free skate," Shimada noted. "Now I know I can perform like this under any circumstances." China's 14-year-old Wang Yihan, fourth-place finisher

at the Junior Grand Prix Final, fell on her triple Flip and finished 12th.

"I feel pretty good. I think my performance today was acceptable, but I fell on the triple Flip, and only achieved a level three spin. So I really need to improve on this," she said.

"I've learned a lot this season. I feel that I've improved my jump height, but 've also seen many excellent skaters this season, and I really admire them. It makes me want to enhance my skating." Japan's Rio Nakata shone in the men's free skate, overtaking defending champion Seo Minkyu of South Korea. Slovakia's Adam Hagara took third.

Skating to "Pirates of the Caribbean", Nakata went for a quad toe as his first jump but missed it. He fought back and landed the next quad toe-triple toe combination as well as six triple including two Axels.

He set a personal best with 162.95 points in his free skate and racked up a winning total of 248.99 points. Čhina's Tian Tonghe

failed on a triple Axel and eventually took 15th place. In the ice dance, Noemi Maria TaliNoah Lafornara

made history, winning the very first ISU World Junior Championships title for Italy. The American and German pairs finished second and third respectively.

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## **PSG blows Lille away to warm up** for Liverpool in Champs League



PSG's Joao Neves, left, and Lille's Benjamin Andre challenge the ball during the French League One soccer match between Paris Saint-Germain and Lille at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris. (AP)

#### Nice stays third with win at Saint-Etienne

PARIS, March 2, (AP): Paris Saint-Germain warmed up for Liverpool with a 4-1 win over Lille as it consolidated its runaway French league lead. Earlier, Nice stayed third with a 3-1 win at Saint-Etienne, and relegation-threatened Le Havre grabbed a 4-3 win at Lens thanks to a penalty from Egyptian forward Kouka in stoppage time. It was the first time Le Havre had taken the lead in the game.

Khvicha Kvaratskhelia watched the goals from the substitutes' bench as PSG coach Luis Enrique rested the Georgia star ahead of Liverpool's visit in the Champions League. Paris hosts the Premier League leader for the first leg of their last 16 meeting on Wednesday.

Lille, which had been fourth ahead of the 24th round, had pushed for Saturday's game to be postponed because of its own Champions League match at Borussia Dortmund on Tuesday.

PSG showed no sympathy.

Bradley Barcola opened the scoring in the sixth minute on a rebound after Lille goalkeeper Lucas Chevalier saved Ousmane Dembelé's initial effort.

Chevalier went on to make a string of saves as PSG made a furious start but he couldn't stop Marquinhos from heading in the home team's second in the 22nd. Dembelé was left free on the right to grab the third six

minutes later - his 18th of the season - and the 19-yearold Desiré Doué made it 4-0 in the 37th with a brilliant strike to the top left corner. Lille failed to have a single effort at goal in the first half. Génésio reacted at the break with two changes, sending on Icelandic midfielder Hakon Haraldsson and 18-year-old midfielder Ethan Mbappé, Kylian Mbappé's younger brother.

They didn't stop the PSG fans singing in the stands, but Chevalier had less work to do than before.

Enrique made four changes at once for the last half hour, with Achraf Hakimi and Dembelé among those going off for a rest, while Kvaratskhelia and Warren Zaire-Emery came on, the latter continuing his comeback from a left ankle injury.

Canada forward Jonathan David, also a substitute, scored Lille's consolation in the 80th on a rebound after Gianluigi Donnarumma saved Mbappé's shot.

#### Saudi clubs dominate Asian Champions League elite

## Ronaldo and Al-Nassr chase Asian glory

Ronaldo can take a major step towards the Asian Champions League elite title in Iran on Monday, though Al-Nassr is not the only Saudi Arabian club in contention for the big prize. Ronaldo has yet to win a major tro-

TEHRAN, March 2, (AP): Cristiano

phy since signing for the Riyadh club in December 2022 and victory over Esteghlal of Tehran in the two-legged Round of 16 tie would mean a place in the last eight for Al-Nassr.

The 40-year-old has won five UEFA Champions Leagues while Al-Nassr has yet to win one in Asia.

Domestically Al-Nassr is off the pace and its latest setback - a 2-1 defeat at Al-Orubah on Friday - saw it slip into fourth in the Saudi Pro League and increase the pressure on coach Ste-

"We had many chances but could not score," said Pioli. "We have a lot of games in a short period of time and only had two days rest before this game and now we have to get ready for another one in the Asian Champions



Players training for the Asian Champions League elite game.

Ronaldo has been in good form in

Asia scoring six goals in the group stage, helping Al-Nassr finish third in a 12-team group behind two other Saudi Arabian clubs

Nassr's Riyadh rival Al-Hilal won the group stage and continues its quest for a record fifth continental title against Pakhatkor of Uzbekistan. With talent such as Joao Cancelo

and Ruben Neves of Portugal as well as Brazilian stars Marcos Leonardo, Kaio Cesar and Malcom, Hilal is the strong favorite to beat the Central Asian team who won only one of eight games in the group stage.

Al-Ahli finished second in the group and meets Qatar's Al-Rayyan. Former English Premier League star Ivan Toney in fine form as he scored a hat trick on Friday as Al-Ahli won 3-2 at

Elsewhere, two-time champion Al-Sadd of Qatar faces Al-Wasl from the United Arab Emirates.

None of the eight teams in the eastern zone, the tournament is divided into two geographic zones until the quarterfinal stage, have won the tournament before.

#### **Preston, Bournemouth advance**

## City gets past Plymouth to reach FA Cup quarters

LONDON, March 2, (AP): The FA Cup could yet be a way for Manchester City to finish a disappointing season with a trophy

City needed two goals from teenager Nico O'Reilly to come from behind and beat second-division side Plymouth Argyle 3-1 on Saturday to reach the quarterfinals of the only competition it still has a chance to win.

An eventful day in the competition also saw two notable red cards, a sevenminute VAR check, a handshake snub and a tense penalty shootout as Crystal Palace, Preston and Bournemouth also advanced.

Wolves' star forward Matheus Cunha was then also sent off in the final minute of extra time against Bournemouth for headbutting an opponent - having earlier scored a superb equalizer - before his team went on to lose on penalties.

City's win was relatively routine in contrast, although Pep Guardiola's team had to wait until the 75th minute to find a winner. O'Reilly was on hand to head in a corner and Kevin De Bruyne then added the third goal in the 90th after being teed up by Erling Haaland, who had come on as a substitute when the score was still 1-1.

"It's an amazing feeling to score, especially at a club like this, the team I grew up playing for," the 19-year-old O'Reilly said.

Plymouth had taken the lead through Maksym Talovierov in the 38th as City looked in danger of another embarrassing defeat in a season that has already seen it exit the English League Cup and the Champions League while trailing Premier League leader Liverpool by 20 points. But O'Reilly leveled just before halftime with another header after a delivery from De Bruyne.

Palace also won 3-1 against 10-man Millwall after Roberts was sent off in the eighth minute for kicking Mateta in the face.

In Bournemouth, Cunha went from scoring with a spectacular long-range strike to being sent off for getting involved in a scuffle with Milos Kerkez where he first pushed, then kicked, and finally headbutted his opponent.

After a 1-1 draw, the penalty shootout also had its share of drama as Wolves had a chance to win it after goalkeeper Sam Johnstone saved Bournemouth's fourth spot kick from Dean Huijsen. But Matt Doherty dragged his penalty wide, and Boubacar Traore also missed for Wolves as his effort hit the crossbar before bouncing off goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga. Luis Sinisterra converted the decisive spot kick for Bournemouth.

Cunha, Wolves' leading scorer, would certainly have been among his team's penalty takers had he still been on the field. He had earlier equalized with a longrange strike that looped into the top of the net in the 60th minute to cancel out the



Manchester City's Nathan Ake, centre, challenges for the ball with Plymouth Argyle's Nikola Katic, right, during the English FA Cup soccer match between Manchester City and Plymouth Argyle at Etihad Stadium, Manchester, Englan. (AP)

#### **Al-Qadsiya targets key victory against Al-Tadamon to climb league standings**

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 2: Al-Qadsiya enters today's match against Al-Tadamon at 9:00 pm at the Federation Hall in Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex, determined to secure a victory that would propel it from seventh to fourth place in the volleyball league standings. Currently, "Banu Qadis" sits in seventh with nine points, while Al-Tadamon lingers in tenth place with just three points.

The odds favor Al-Qadsiya, given the team's superior capabilities under Bahraini head coach Reda Ali and the contributions of Iranian professional Mohammad Reza Beyk and Bulgarian star Branimir Grozdanov. This match marks Al-Qadsiya's first appearance since competing in the West Asian Clubs Championship in Bahrain, where it finished sixth.

The team aims to capitalize on Al-Tadamon's struggles, secure three crucial points, and strengthen its bid for a spot in the Golden Square after an underwhelming West Asian Championship cam-

Meanwhile, Al-Tadamon, having won just one match and lost



A file photo of players in action.

five, has little to lose and will be looking to cause an upset.

Kazma leads the league with 18 points, tied with Al-Shabab. Kuwait Club follows with 12 points, while Al-Arabi, Burgan, and Al-Nasr each have nine points. Al-Qadsiya and Al-Sulaibikhat hold six points, Al-Yarmouk has five, Al-Tadamon sits at three, and Al-Sahel remains at the bottom with just one point.

Baribo nets hat trick as Union cruise past Cincinnati

## San Diego inaugural home match ends in scoreless draw

SAN DIEGO, March 2, (AP): San Diego FC played to a 0-0 draw with St. Louis City in the Major League Soccer expansion club's inaugural home match on Saturday night.

Despite 14 shots and 67.1% possession, San Diego was unable to break through St. Louis goalkeeper Roman Bürki and his defense. St. Louis managed only two shots against CJ dos Santos and San Diego, but both were on goal.

The final score hardly dampened the excitement at sold-out Snapdragon Stadium, which was packed with 34,506 fans for the home debut of Major League Soccer's 30th franchise. San Diego began play last week with a 2-0 victory at the defending MLS Cup champion LA

Hirving "Chucky" Lozano, the star winger signed by San Diego last year as its first designated player, came off in the 31st minute against St. Louis after apparently injuring his leg. The Mexican national team star often struggled with injuries while playing in the Netherlands

San Diego was more aggressive throughout the match, but got credit for just one shot on goal. Marcus Ingvartsen had a promising header in the box in the 74th minute, but popped it over the crossbar.

The San Diego crowd was warned three times in the second half for doing the homophobic soccer chant that frequently occurs in the matches of the Mexico men's

national team.

Tai Baribo scored twice in the first half before finishing off a hat trick in the second and Philadelphia rolled to a 4-1 victory over FC Cincinnati, giving the Union two victories to begin a season for the first time in club history.

Philadelphia jumped in front in the 6th minute of its home opener on Baribo's third goal of the season. Defender Kai Wagner notched his third assist and Quinn Sullivan snagged his second. Baribo has 12 career goals in 20 starts and 28 ap-

Baribo thought he had his second goal waived off in the 30th minute after Dániel Gazdag was caught offside, but the call was overturned on video review.

Baribo scored in the 52nd minute for his second career hat trick. He also scored three times in a 5-1 victory over the New England Revolution last season. Gazdag was credited with his first two assists of the campaign on the final two goals. Wilfried Zaha waited for the start of the second half to officially introduce himself to his new hometown fans, setting up one goal four



St. Louis City defender Henry Kessler, right, clears a corner kick in front of San Diego FC midfielder Hirving Lozano, center, as St. Louis City goalkeeper Roman Burki awaits during the first half of an MLS soccer match in San Diego. (AP)

minutes into the half, then scoring himself five minutes later as Charlotte FC beat Atlanta United 2-0 in

its home opener. Making his debut with the club and expected to be an offensive spark after scoring 68 Premier League goals in 305 appearances, Zaha helped manufacture both goals on fast-break opportunities created by the Charlotte midfield.

Zaha got the ball in transition, dribbled into the box and threaded a perfect pass to a wide-open Pep Biel, who left-footed a shot past Atlanta keeper Brad Guzan. Five minutes later Charlotte created another fast break chance and Liel Abada fired a shot from the right side toward the upper left corner that Atlanta FC keeper Brad Guzan fisted away, but the carom landed at the feet of Zaha, who buried the ball into the bottom right corner.

A loan capture from Turkish club Galatasaray after a 10-year career with Crystal Palace, Manchester United and Cardiff City of the English Premier League, Zaha, from Cote d'Ivoire, missed Charlotte FC's season-opening 2-2 draw with the Seattle Sounders to be in London with his wife, Paige, for the birth of their daughter, Zuri.

FC Charlotte's stingy defense limited Atlanta to just three shots on goal, despite repeatedly getting touches within scoring range to launch 16 attempts. Charlotte keeper Kristijan Kahlina had three





Hamed Yousef Al-Shangeeti, the goalkeeper for the Saudi national team, was honored as the best goalkeeper at the 2024 AFC U-20 Asian Cup held in China. Throughout the tournament, Al-Shanqeeti delivered exceptional performanc-

# SOCIES

## **Crown Prince Cup begins Thursday as** Al-Qadsiya & Al-Arabi eye record title

#### By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 2: The 31st edition of the Crown Prince Cup Championship will begin next Thursday with two preliminary round matches. Kuwait Club faces Al-Tadamon at Sabah Al-Salem Stadium, while Al-Sulaibikhat takes on Khaitan at Ali Sabah Al-Salem Stadium.

The preliminary round continues on Friday with two more matches. Kazma meets Al-Yarmouk at Thamer Stadium, and Burgan goes up against Al-Salmiya at Al-Sadaka Al-Salam Stadium.

On Saturday, Al-Fahaheel battle Al-Shabab at Nasser Al-Osaimi Stadium, while Al-Jahra faces newly promoted Al-Jazeera at Al-Sadaka Al-Salam Stadium.

Meanwhile, the matches between Al-Qadsiya and Al-Nasr, as well as Al-Arabi and Al-Sahel, have been postponed. Al-Qadsiya is competing in the Gulf Club Champions League semi-finals, while Al-Arabi is en-



Crown Prince Cup trophy.

gaged in the first leg of the West Asia Zone final of the Asian Challenge

The tournament follows a singleelimination format.

Al-Qadsiya, Kuwait Club, and Al-Arabi have each claimed the title nine times, while Al-Salmiya has won twice, and Kazma once.

Al-Arabi won the most recent edition of the tournament in the 2022-2023 season, defeating Al-Salmiya 4-1 on penalties after a 2-2 draw in regulation time.

'Athletes' spirits are high'

## Kuwait targets new milestones in Turin

TURIN, March 2, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Special Olympics delegation set to participate in the 12th Special Olympics World Winter Games 2025, hosted in Turin, Italy, from March 8 to 15. The delegation has been preparing through several training camps with the goal of securing a national sporting achieve-

Hana Al-Zawawi, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Kuwaiti Special Olympics, shared with the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Sunday that the ath-letes' spirits are high, which serves as a major motivation to achieve top positions and further enhance the country's record in sporting achievements.

Al-Zawawi emphasized that despite limited training facilities for winter sports in Kuwait, the delegation has worked diligently under the guidance of the Special Olympics technical and administrative staff to achieve optimal results. She noted that the athletes are determined to overcome challenges, particularly the cold weather and their lack of experience with snow. She expressed hope that the delegation would set a new milestone for Kuwaiti sports, particularly for athletes with intellectual disabilities.

The delegation consists of three



KUNA photo

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The athletes representing Kuwait at Special Olympics World Winter Games.

athletes and their parents, as well as the head of the delegation and a doctor, who will be involved in the health screening program for athletes during the Games, which is affiliated with Spe-

Khaled Al-Nasser, head of the delegation, stated to KUNA that Kuwaiti athletes will face stiff competition, especially since participants from other countries are more accustomed to winter sports and cold weather. However, he emphasized that the technical staff of Kuwaiti Special Olympics has made great strides in preparing the athletes to bring home a new achievement. Al-Nasser also highlighted that camps were held in Egypt and the UAE to help athletes acquire the necessary skills to face the challenges of the Games.

## 76ers hold off Warriors to snap 9-game skid

#### Bucks surge into fourth in Eastern Conference

PHILADELPHIA, March 2, (AP): Quentin Grimes scored a career-high 44 points and the Philadelphia 76ers snapped a ninegame losing streak, beating the Golden State Warriors 126-119 on Saturday night in a game where Stephen Curry had his first dunk in six years.

Curry's one-handed jam on a break cut the 76ers' lead to 109-104 midway through the fourth quarter.

Kelly Oubre Jr. had 20 points for Philadelphia. Guerschon Yabusele added 18, and Paul George had 17 and seven rebounds. Philadelphia improved to 21-39, winning for the first time since Feb. 4 against Dallas.

Curry had 29 points and 13 assists for the Warriors, who had won five in a row. Quenton Post added 16 points and Gary Payton Ir had 15

**Bucks 132, Mavericks 117** In Dallas, Giannis Antetokounmpo had 29 points, nine rebounds and nine assists, Damian Lillard scored 28 and the Milwaukee Bucks beat the Dallas Mavericks.

Gary Trent Jr. added 20 points as the Bucks won for the sixth time in seven games, surging into fourth place in the Eastern Conference.

Kyrie Irving scored 31 points for the short-handed Mavericks, who are trying to stay afloat in the West playoff race until Anthony Davis returns from a groin injury, possibly by mid-March. The star forward got hurt in his Dallas debut after the seismic trade that sent Luka Doncic to the Los Angeles Lakers.

Irving made all 11 of his free throws, but was just 2 of 9 from 3-point range as the Mavs shot 28%

(11 of 40) from beyond the arc. **Spurs 130, Grizzlies 128** 

In Memphis, De'Aaron Fox broke a tie with a 20-footer with 2.6 seconds left for the last of his 20 points and the San Antonio Spurs beat the Memphis Grizzlies.

Memphis center Jaren Jackson Jr. had tied it with 22.3 seconds left on a 3-pointer that banked in, setting the stage for Fox's final basket.

Fox's teammates mobbed him after Santi Aldama missed a desperation heave as the horn sounded.

Stephon Castle had 24 points at seven assists to help the Spurs end a four-game losing streak. Devin Vassell matched Fox with 20 points, and Jeremy Sochan added 18

Jackson scored 42 points. Jaylen Wells had 18 for Memphis, and Zach Edey had 17 points, nine rebounds and three blocks.

#### Kings 113, Rockets 103

In Houston, DeMar DeRozan had 21 points and the Sacramento Kings overcome an early injury to Domantas Sabonis for their third straight victory, 113-103 over the Houston Rockets on Saturday night.

Zach LaVine added 20 points for Sacramento. The Kings had a 13-3 run to push their advantage to 97-85 with 10 minutes remaining. LaVine and Keon Ellis had 3-pointers in that stretch and DeRozan scored the last five points.

Alperen Sengun led the Rockets with 30 points and 10 rebounds. Jalen Green added 24 points in the loss that

#### ended a two-game winning streak. Pistons 115, Nets 94

In Detroit, Cade Cunningham broke out of a slump by scoring nine of his 15 points in the fourth quarter and the Detroit Pistons pulled away to beat the Brooklyn Nets.

Cunningham scored a seasonworst 11 points Friday in a 134-119 loss to Denver and only had six points through three quarters against the Nets, but had a 3-pointer and two three-point plays.

Tobias Harris, Malik Beasley and Jalen Duren all scored 18 points for the Pistons, who had their eightgame winning streak snapped by the Nuggets. Wizards 113, Hornets 100

In Charlotte, Khris Middleton



Philadelphia 76ers' Quentin Grimes, left, goes up for a shot against Golden State Warriors' Kevon Looney during the second half of an NBA basketball game Saturday in Philadelphia. (AP)

and Bilal Coulibaly each scored 17 points and the Washington Wizards defeated the Charlotte Hornets 113-100 on Saturday night in a matchup of the NBA's two worst

teams.

Richaun Holmes added 15 points and nine rebounds for the Wizards, who had eight players finish in dou-

ble figures in scoring. Mark Williams had 24 points and 12 rebounds for the Hornets, who've lost six straight. LaMelo Ball added 20 points and Miles Bridges had 18 for Charlotte.

The Wizards still have the league's

worst record at 11-48, but the Hornets (14-45) aren't far behind.

Washington began to pull away late in the third quarter on a pair of 3-pointers by Bub Carrington, then built a 14-point lead to open the fourth when Marcus Smart buried a 3-pointer and scored on a floater.

## Australia edges Saudi Arabia to win U20 Asian Cup



Shenzhen, south China's Guangdong Province. (Xinhua)

SHENZHEN, China, March 2, (Xinhua): Steven Hall saved the decisive spot-kick as Australia defeated Saudi Arabia 5-4 in a penalty shootout to win the AFC

U20 Asian Cup at the Baoan Sports Center Stadium. The match ended 1-1 in regular time, with neither team able to break the deadlock in extra time. In the shootout, both teams converted their first four attempts, but in the decisive fifth round, Australia scored while Saudi Arabia's Bassam Hazazi saw his shot saved by goalkeeper Hall, securing a 5-4 victory

Australia broke the deadlock in the 24th minute when Alexander Badolato's cross into the box was deflected into the path of Louis Agosti, whose shot from just outside the box sailed past Saudi Arabia goalkeeper Hamed Yousef and into the bottom-left

Saudi Arabia equalized as Hall was just unable to keep Talal Haji's header from crossing the goal-line, with the goal confirmed after a VAR review.

Both sides missed a handful of chances in the second half before a fruitless additional 30 minutes of extra time led to the decisive shootout.

### **Al-Qadsiya finalizes preparations for Gulf Club Champions League semis**

#### By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

DUBAI, March 2: Al-Qadsiya wrapped up its training session this evening in Dubai, UAE, as the team prepares to face Al-Nasr at Al-Maktoum Stadium in the semi-finals of the Gulf Club Champions League.

Al-Qadsiya will be without Libyan Mohammed Soula and Jassim Al-Matar due to injury, along with Nigerian Daniel Jibola, who is suspended due to card accumulation.

Meanwhile, UAE's Al-Nasr confirmed that Abdullah Toure, has suffered a second-degree tear in the posterior muscle of his left foot. The injury was sustained during the 17th round of the ADNOC Professional League against Al-Jazira.

Toure was absent from Al-Nasr's recent match against Ajman last Thursday, which ended in a 1-2 defeat in the 18th round. This result extended Al-Nasr's winless streak to four consecutive league matches, leaving them in seventh place with 26 points.

On the other hand, Al-Arabi resumed training on Saturday in preparation for hosting Oman's Al-Seeb this Wednesday at Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium in the first leg of the Asian Challenge League

quarter-finals. Coach Nasser Al-Shatti granted his players a rest following their 2-1 victory over Al-Nasr in the seventh round of the Zain Premier League. The win allowed Al-Arabi to share the top spot with Kuwait SC, boost-



Nasser Al-Shatti

ing team morale ahead of their crucial match against Al-Seeb.

Al-Arabi will have a full squad available, except for Salman Al-Awadhi, who remains sidelined due

The Al-Seeb delegation is scheduled to arrive today. The Omani club has been struggling with inconsistent performances domestically, recently dropping two points in the title race against Al-Nahda, and reducing itslead to just three points.

Notably, Al-Seeb suffered defeats in both the Sultan of Oman Cup final against Al-Shabab and the Omani Super Cup against Dhofar. Their performance has been in decline since the start of the league's second round.

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