



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.

Addressing Zelenskyy, 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 war.

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

Ramadan. The event, hosted at Al-Sabah Diwan, Bayan Palace, on Saturday evening, materialized the traditional bonds of amity and fraternity characterizing the Kuwaiti society from one generation to another.

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

42,885 cars seized over unpaid debts

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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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 Sanaabel 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.

Ramadan Timings

Iftar Monday 17:49
Imsak Tuesday 04:51

NewsWatch

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 Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh 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)

KUWAIT CITY: On Sunday, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal 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)



A cannon is fired at sunset at Nayef Palace, Kuwait City, signaling the end of the day-long fast for Muslims during Ramadan.

Photo by Rezk Tawfik

KPI gears up for 'Europe-wide' 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 bi-liquefied natural gas in Italy; Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI) is now aiming to expand the distribution of its petroleum derivatives throughout Europe.

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 kilometers.

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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 Rumaithiya.

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 grandmother."

The Ministry of Interior announced on Sept 27, 2024 that

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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 to 1:30 pm.

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).

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

11 NBK accelerates its commitment to a sustainable future

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

Prayer Timings

Fajr 04:54 Asr 15:19
 Sunrise .. 06:13 Maghrib .. 17:48
 Zohr 12:00 Isha 19:05

Local

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.

Station

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	21	11
Kuwait Airport	22	09
Abdaly	23	06
Bubyan	21	07

Jahra	23	11
Failaka Island	19	12
Salmiyah	20	13
Ahmadi	20	08
Jal Aliyah	22	08
Nuwaisib	18	09



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



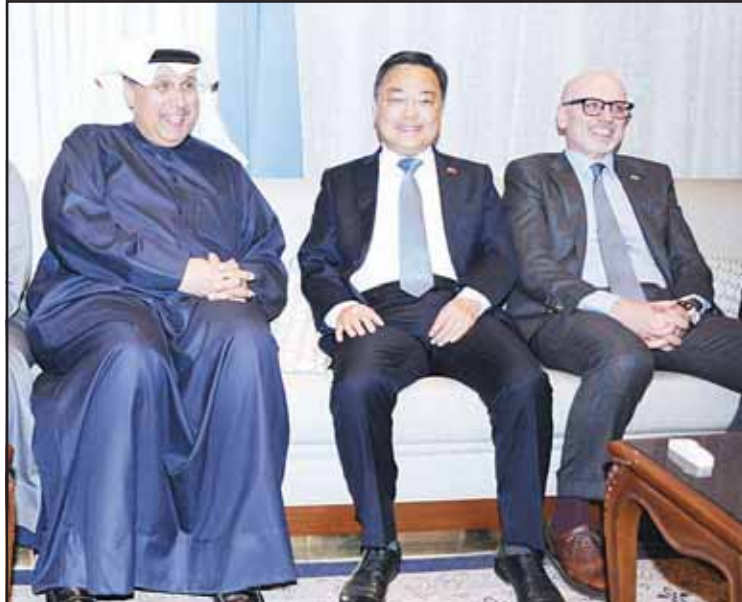
Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali and some members of the ruling family.



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 well-wishers, 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 generations".

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

I HAVE an inherent doubt, if I may express 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 Awqaf. 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 Investment 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 include 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

compatible with the knowledge economy, the private sector's capacity is still stronger as it uses all means 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 technology 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 Association 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 e-commerce, 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 Mauritians 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 328.

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 ديوانية

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 graduated 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** daily.



Hassan Ali Karam

"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 nationalities 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 jobs.

"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 genders.

"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."

Also:

"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 realizes 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 no one 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 times.

"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 education in society.

"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 future."



"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 **Al-Rai** daily.

"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 realize the importance of paying zakat 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 funds 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 (endowment) funds.

"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 burdensome, 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 Department.

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 tech-

niques, 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-Seyassah/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 photo

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 attention.

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.

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MORE THAN 40 CHOICES

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 project.

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 document.

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

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.

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 the exhibition Yoshikata Ito.

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

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 linking 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 event.

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 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.

Al-Rajhi named acting Sec-Gen

KU's Al-Hajri receives prestigious Khalifa International Award 2025

KUWAIT CITY, March 2, (Agencies): 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 Agricultural Innovation for 2025.

The UAE award, in its 17th session, was given to Dr. Al-Hajri in recognition of his exceptional contributions to sustainable agricultural practices and his commitment to enhancing food and water security.

In a press statement, the university emphasized that Dr. Al-Hajri's innovative development and production projects have significantly impacted the agricultural sector.

Dr. Al-Hajri thanked the award organizers, Kuwait University and the Kuwait Foundation for the Ad-

vancement of Sciences, for their steadfast support throughout his research career.

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

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 notice.



Dr. Al-Hajri

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 desertification.

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

Co-op protocol

KTA strengthens teacher training

KUWAIT CITY, March 2: 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 Education, reports Al-Anba daily.

In his remarks at the opening of the educational evening organized by the association in collaboration with the ministry titled, "The Impact of Training on Kindergarten Teachers: A Scientific Vision and Practical Reality," Al-Holi explained that the event is part of the ongoing collaboration between the two entities to support professional development and training for kindergarten teachers.

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.

He stressed that the association 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.

"By equipping educators 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 elaborated.

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.



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

Governor leads efforts to promote unity

Ahmadi Governorate hosts National Day celebrations at Nuwaiseeb port

KUWAIT CITY, March 2: 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 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-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.

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 Development (K.S.C.C.).

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 Arabic 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

LOCAL

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 sacred month.

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 centers.

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

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 Governorate.

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 tra-

ditional 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 ultra-blended 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, 2024.

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 squares.



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-Baqami, 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.



The ambassador presented with a painting.



Kuwait National English School


National and Liberation Days Celebration

Parents of KNES in Hawally joined their children at school last week to celebrate the 64th anniversary of the State of Kuwait and the 34th anniversary of Liberation Day together!




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.




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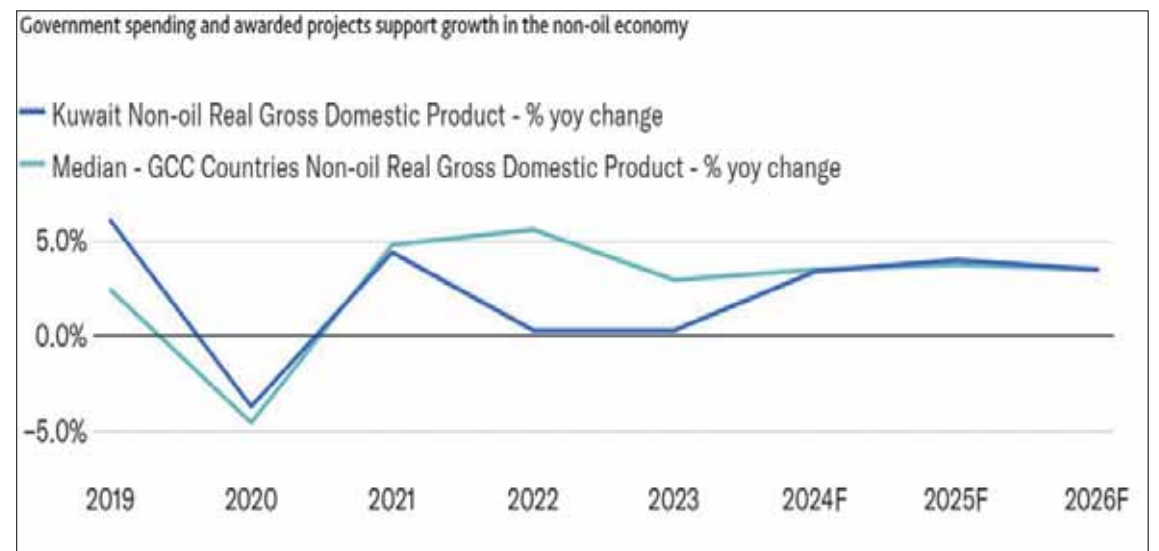
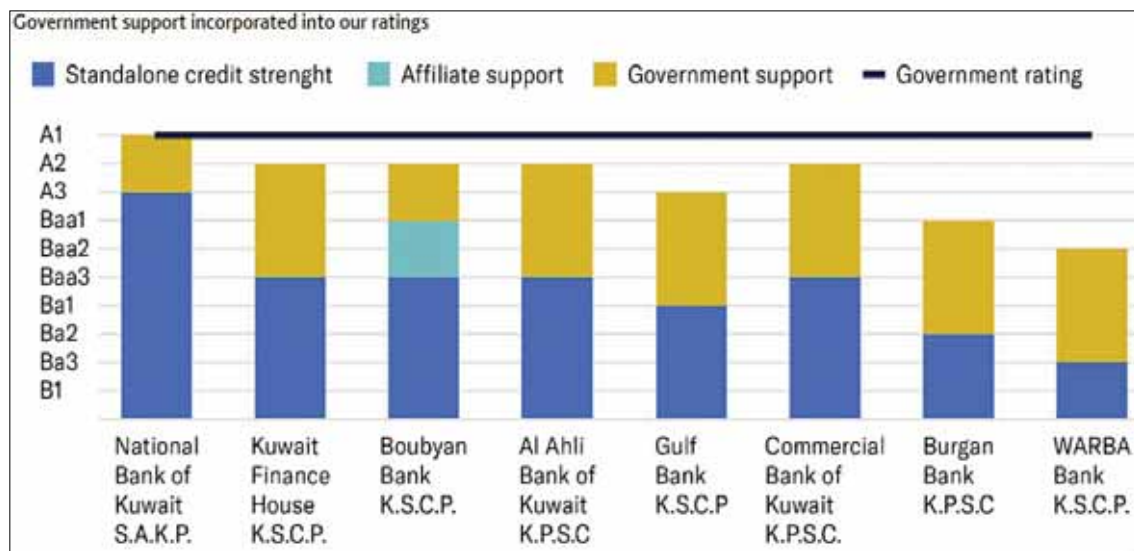


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Credit growth expected at 5%-6% in 2025, driven by infrastructure projects

Stable deposits and strong liquidity support Kuwait's banking system

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 Türkiye 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 is strong.

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 non-oil 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 Türkiye 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 growth.

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.

Financial Results Full Year 2024

208

Million
Normalized Net Income Growth
↑ 15%

REVENUE
↑ +3%
2.0
KD Billion

EBITDA
↑ +2%
689
KD Million

EPS
48
Fils

CUSTOMERS
49.0
Million

The Board of Directors recommended a cash dividend of **25 fils** per share for the second half of 2024, subject to Annual General Assembly and statutory approvals. This dividend follows the semi-annual dividend of **10 fils** distributed in 2024, totaling **35 fils** per share for the year 2024.

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 Customers	49 million
Consolidated Revenue	KD 2 billion - (\$6.4 billion)
EBITDA	KD 689 million - (\$2.25 billion)
EBITDA Margin	35%
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 in 2023 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) for the Fourth Quarter of 2024

Consolidated Revenue	KD 526 million - (\$1.7 billion)
EBITDA	KD 184 million - (\$599 million)
EBITDA Margin	35%
Net Income	KD 72 million - (\$235 million)
EPS	17 fils - USD 0.05

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 0.05).

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 up 19% 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 years"

- Q4 2024 revenue grew 7% to KD 526m (USD 1.7 bn), net profit soared 120% to KD 72 million (USD 235m)
- 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 ZainTECH
- ZOI revenues soared 455% YoY, highest-ranked network in the region 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 company'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 approximately 1,300 sites operational serving over 10 million Sudanese 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. The recently launched '4WARD-Progress with Pur-

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 unparalleled service and support to customers worldwide.

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 future."

"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 EBITDA 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.

Bahrain: 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.



Zain headquarters.

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 2024 by 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 earn designation from CDP for the second year in a row, cementing its role as responsible leader in the banking industry
- Sustainability 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 "BBB" 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 on Our 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 alongside the 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 167 countries 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.

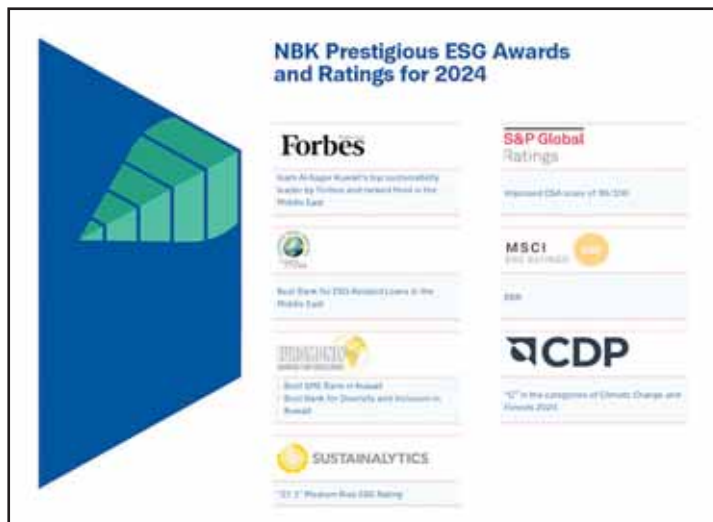
In the meantime, NBK has enhanced its capabilities to address economic, environmental, and social risks across all segments of the Group, while establishing a strong and effective ESG governance framework both in Kuwait and internationally. The bank has also integrated climate change risks into Pillar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

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 topics in 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 redevelopment of Sharq 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 Bank 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 reached 61 schools, 7,335 teachers, and 32,235 students, 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, Sustainability 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 29th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP29) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Baku, Azerbaijan. The bank also engaged in the 16th Conference 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) 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 million value of community investments made by the Bank in 2024, marking a growth of 9.1% compared to 2023.
- KD 25.04 million bank 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.
- 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

growth.

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 private sector.

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 to 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."



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 seamless 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 centerpiece of a month-long programme 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 desert-inspired 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 ambience, 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 Ghabga 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-6 to 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, Abuhalfia.

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 Walking."

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 its members.

Firefly's lander delivers NASA's lunar experiments

Private lunar lander Blue Ghost aces moon touchdown

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., March 2, (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.

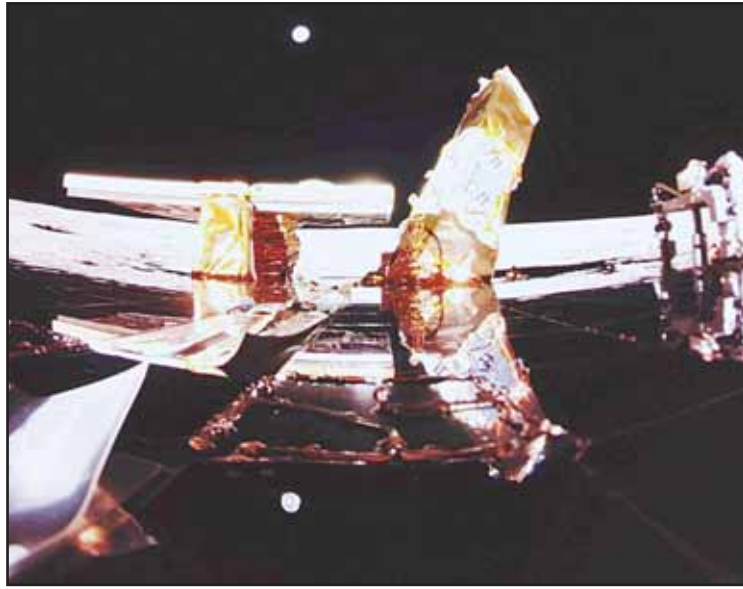
Firefly Aerospace's Blue Ghost lander descended from lunar orbit on autopilot, aiming for the slopes of an ancient volcanic dome in an impact basin on the moon's northeastern edge of the near side.

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 and Japan.

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.

Blue Ghost - named after a rare U.S. 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 as-

tronauts closed out the Apollo program in 1972.

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 clockwork.

"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.

We surveyed over 1,000 pet 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 feeling 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 well-being, 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 human-pet 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 increase 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-being.

This research also raises important questions about the role of emotional support animals and animal-assisted 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 Texas.

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."

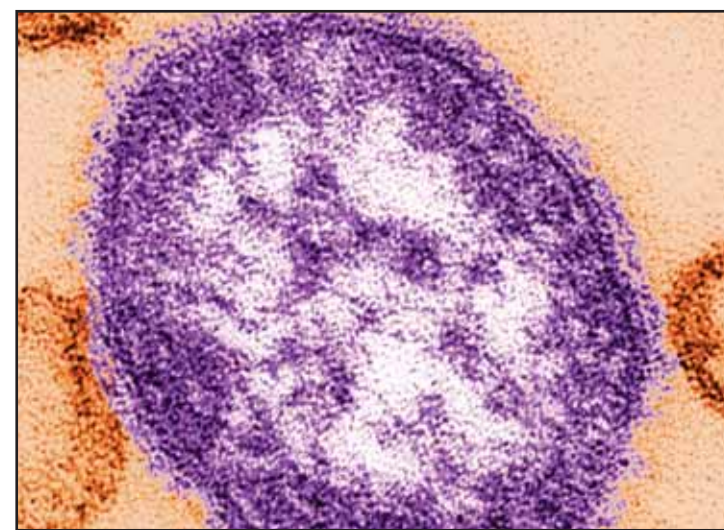
Measles first infects the respiratory tract, then spreads throughout the body, causing a high fever, runny nose, cough, red, watery eyes and a rash.

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 comfortable.

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

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 low-birthweight 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 that 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 decades.

"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 detected 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 adults.

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 buttocks.

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 treatment.

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 assistance.

"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 round strong.



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 South Africa in Karachi, Pakistan. (AP)

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 back-to-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 without after three games, marking a dismal end to Jos Buttler's run as skipper.

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 balls.

"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.

Mulder bowled Root in the 18th 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 score.

"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 as well.

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 line.

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. Brandon 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 six games.



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 71-

61 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 to seal it.

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 over Texas.

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 loss.

The Johnson's three-point play got Texas within a point, 9-8, but Georgia sandwiched two Asa Newell field goals around Dakota Leffew's three-pointer 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

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 Sofia Holichenko-Artem Darenkyi 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 compet-

ing 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 toe loop, 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 I'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 Min-kyu 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.

China's Tian Tonghe failed on a triple Axel and eventually took 15th place.

In the ice dance, Noemi Maria TaliNoah Laforama 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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SPORTS

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-year-old 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

TEHRAN, March 2, (AP): Cristiano 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 trophy 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 Stefano Pioli.

"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.

League." 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 Al-Hilal.

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 seven-minute 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 long-range strike that looped into the top of the net in the 60th minute to cancel out the first-half opener from Evanilson.



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-Qadisiya targets key victory against Al-Tadamon to climb league standings

By Khaled Al-Ezei

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 2: Al-Qadisiya 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-Qadisiya, 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-Qadisiya'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 campaign.

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-Qadisiya 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 Galaxy.

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 and Italy.

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 appearances.



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 Bürki awaits during the first half of an MLS soccer match in San Diego. (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

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 midfielder.

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 saves.

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