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Opinion

'We will not allow democracy to destroy the state' ... The sun of the new era has risen

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

"We will not allow democracy to destroy the state." This powerful phrase was part of an operetta held in the presence of His Highness the Amir during the national celebrations.

The phrase, drawn from one of His Highness's speeches, carries huge weight in an era that marks the dawn of a new phase for Kuwait. This follows a bitter struggle that has undermined the achievements made in the early decades of the state's establishment, leaving a heavy legacy after the train of

progress stopped at the station of personal interests and gains, often at the expense of the people's well-being and the country's fate.

Amid all this, laws were being crafted to further plunder public funds, and appointments were made to consolidate control over important institutions for the benefit of powerful representatives and influential figures.

As a result, nearly 900 laws have either become outdated without updates or were never improved. Any amendments that were made tended to serve personal interests, rather than the public good. Many institutions were based on the principle of "carry me and I will carry you".

Legislation was exploited to carry out destructive

actions, including manipulating national identity, a policy that the Crown Prince addressed from the moment he assumed power. He understood that no true reform could take place without unwavering loyalty to the homeland.

A person cannot live with two hearts. Many countries prohibit acquiring citizenship through fraud, manipulation, or dual loyalty, stressing that no one will be wronged in the process, because injustice only brings darkness.

On the other hand, there were those who proudly boasted about their encroachments on public funds and showing no shame. Some even justified theft and plunder, which led to the saying, "The winner is the fastest to catch" became widespread.

Development projects were greatly affected by "change orders" causing many projects to be stalled for years, with others facing significant delays. The lack of oversight over funds only fueled the appetites of thieves. Tender terms were often crafted to ensure that only the privileged benefited.

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Astronomy seals Eid start March 30

'Brief crescent'

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: The Al-Ojairi Scientific Center has announced that the first day of Eid Al-Fitr will be on March 30, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The center explained it will be difficult to see the crescent moon in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia on March 29, as it will be visible only for eight minutes.

According to the center, the crescent moon will rise at 1:57 pm on March 29 and will set before the Sun in some Islamic cities in Southeast Asia, making it impossible to see the moon in these areas on the sighting day.

It added that the crescent moon will be visible in the skies of some Arab and Islamic capitals and cities between four to 20 minutes, depending on the geographical location of each country.

The legal decision on the beginning of Shawwal is within the jurisdiction of the Sharia Moon Sighting Authority.

Kuwait calls for unity against Islamophobia

KUWAIT CITY, March 15, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait acclaimed on Saturday international efforts for boosting the culture of tolerance among nations.

The stand was expressed by the Foreign Ministry in a statement marking the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, endorsed by the UN General Assembly, in 2022, to enhance efforts against all forms of discrimination and fanaticism against Muslims.

The ministry also called for boosting dialogue, peaceful co-existence among nations of diverse religions, cultures and disseminating mutual respect among the peoples to ensure a secured and stable world. (KUNA)

Ramadan Timings

Iftar Sunday 17:58
Imsak Monday 04:36



A colorful scene from Kuwait City's Girgian celebration, where children in traditional dress light up the streets with song, laughter, and the sweet exchange of treats, bringing families and neighbors closer in a timeless festive tradition. - See Page 5

Photo by Rezk Tawfiq

Ministry bans political discussions, orders workers to stay neutral

MolA sets new standards for Kuwait's mosques

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: The Ministry of Islamic Affairs issued a strongly worded circular regarding the administrative controls for all mosques in Kuwait and their employees, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The circular, issued by the Assistant Undersecretary for the Mosques Sector Bader Al-Otaibi, includes the following guidelines:

First: Mosque building regulations:
1. Adherence to the opening and closing

times of mosques as specified in administrative resolution No. 6586/2022.

Mosque doors should open half an hour before prayer times, except for the Friday ceremony, which opens three hours before

prayer.

Doors must close half an hour after the ceremony ends.

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KSR Ramadan initiative brings iftar to Gaza's neediest families

GAZA, March 15, (Agencies): Kuwait Society for Relief (KSR) launched on Friday an iftar project to feed thousands of Gazan families affected by the Israeli occupation's brutal assault on the Strip.

Head of Gaza's Al-Daraj Zakat committee Abdulqader Abu Al-Nour indicated in a press statement that the campaign had targeted those severely affected by the Israeli occupation aggression.

He expressed gratitude to the KSR for its nonstop support to the Palestinian people, noting that the project was part of the ongoing aid to the people of the Gaza Strip.

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Kuwait Society for Relief (KSR) volunteer hands a food pack to a Palestinian child as part of an iftar project to feed thousands of Gazan families affected by the Israeli occupation's brutal assault on the Strip.

Anti-corruption authority moves against ex-minister

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: The Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) announced that it has referred a former minister to the Public Prosecution on suspicions of embezzling public funds, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This case is also linked to the crime of using a document that has lost its legal validity, as criminalized under Articles 2/a, 2/b and 10 of Law No. 1/1993 regarding the protection of public funds, as well as Article 261 of the Penal Code, and

Continued on Page 5

Newswatch

WASHINGTON: The State of Kuwait Embassy in Washington has urged Kuwaiti citizens present in the south of the United States to take precautions against wildfires.

The embassy in a statement urged the Kuwaiti nationals to take safety precautions in the southern states namely Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri, Mississippi, Tennessee, Illi-

nois and Kentucky.

The diplomatic mission affirmed that the citizens must stay away from the regions where the fires are raging and contact the embassy, the consulates and affiliate bureaus for help.

The US embassy in Washington is reachable via the phone number 2022620758, the general consulates in Los Angeles (3102793644), the consulate in New York (9172426688), the cultural office (2023642106, and the health office (202320202415). (KUNA)

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2 Farwaniya governor welcomes royals, diplomats, dignitaries, media professionals



10 NBK's General Assembly approves 25 percent cash dividends for 2nd half and 5% bonus shares for FY'24

Prayer Timings

Fajr	04:40	Asr	15:22
Sunrise ..	05:59	Maghrib ..	17:56
Zohr	11:57	Isha	19:13

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Warm and cloudy to partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times northwesterly wind changing to southeasterly wind, with speeds of 10-45 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times and a chance for rising dust.

Weather

By Night: Rather cold and partly cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speeds of 06-26 km/h with a chance for scattered light rain.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	29	20
Kuwait Airport	30	13

Abdaly	32	14
Bubyan	28	15
Jahra	31	18
Failaka Island	27	17
Salmiyah	28	20
Ahmadi	27	16
Jal Aliyah	30	16
Nuwaisib	30	14

Kuwait, UN to enhance role of women

Multiple women-specific programs in pipeline: Dr Al-Huwailah



KUNA photo
Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah and CEO of the UN Women Sima Bahous discussed means of enabling women in different fields.

NEW YORK, March 15, (KUNA): Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah and CEO of the UN Women Sima Bahous discussed means of enabling women in different

ent fields.

The meeting took place late Thursday in New York, on the sidelines of the 69th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

The minister underlined Kuwait's efforts to achieve gender equality, noting that the country established a national committee to implement the UN Security Council Resolution No. 1325 on enabling women.

On her part, Bahous said she is looking forward to enhance cooperation with Kuwait, adding that the two sides agreed on creating partnership and organizing training programs to support women. She also applauded Kuwait's role in the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah reaffirmed Kuwait's commitment to supporting women and empowering them in all areas.

Speaking on behalf of Kuwait at the 69th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69) in New York on Thursday, the minister said that gender equality was an integral part of Kuwait Vision 2035 for development.

The State of Kuwait believes strongly in the principles of equality and freedom of expression, which are enshrined in the constitution since 1962, she said, noting that those principles are consistent with the international standards advocated by UN SCW.

"The State of Kuwait has taken practical steps to empower females and give full play to their role in the sustainable de-

velopment drive.

"Those steps include the launching of a national commission on the implementation of the landmark UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security of October 31, 2000," Dr. Al-Huwailah pointed out.

In addition, the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (SCM) set up a committee on women in business in May 2024, which serves as a platform for qualifying females to assuming leading posts at the state institutions.

The Kuwaiti women were able to make numerous achievements on all levels, taking up 48 percent of jobs in the private sector and up to 60 percent in the public sector, she noted.

Dr. Al-Huwailah affirmed that females account for growing percentage of nominations at leading posts in government, judiciary, security, economic, business, scientific and technological, banking and sports fields.

The State of Kuwait is reviewing and amending the legislations related to women, with a view to creating a fairer legal environment that could better protect women's rights in education, occupation, social protection, and the political and economic participation as per the world's best practices.

Regarding protection against family violence, she said this protection is laid down in the executive statute of the legislation of 2023 which criminalizes any forms of abuse or mistreatment, and makes remedy for victims.

She noted that a fund was founded to provide the necessary care and support to victims of family violence.

The legislations related to housing were also amended to



KUNA photo
Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah renders a speech at the UN.

avoid any forms of gender discrimination.

The State of Kuwait also encourages the civil society to promote women causes and back their role in decision-making and the socio-economic development, the minister went on.

She reaffirmed Kuwait's resolve to continue working on women empowerment, bridging any gender gaps and promoting international cooperation while pressing ahead for comprehensive sustainable development.



Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times and Al-Seyassah newspapers (2nd left), guests at the gathering.



Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah with royal family members.



Photos by Samer Shaqair
Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah with diplomats and dignitaries.

Farwaniya governor welcomes royals, diplomats, dignitaries, media professionals

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: In the presence of several ministers, ruling family members, governors, dignitaries, diplomats, media professionals, officials of State institutions in Farwaniya Governorate, citizens and expatriates; Farwaniya Governor

Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah warmly welcomed well-wishers recently at the Farwaniya Governorate headquarters to celebrate the holy month of Ramadan.

The event took place in a welcoming, fraternal and social atmosphere.

Sheikh Athbi extended a heartfelt welcome to the distinguished guests who gathered to express their greetings on the blessed occasion of Ramadan.

He affirmed his commitment to continue holding such a gathering on this significant occasion, which

is a vital means of strengthening social bonds and fostering direct communication with citizens. He said this gathering is an integral part of Kuwait's national heritage, deeply rooted in the traditions of the Kuwaiti people.

He also conveyed his warmest greetings and blessings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah, the political leadership and the Kuwaiti

people. He implored Almighty Allah to grant them continued success. "May peace, prosperity and blessings prevail upon Kuwait, its leadership, government and people; as well as upon all nations of the Arab and Islamic world," he added.



Coptic Church brings together Muslims, Christians at event

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: In an atmosphere of love and unity, members of the Egyptian community in Kuwait -- both Muslims and Christians -- gathered for the 'Ghabqa of Love'.

This is an annual tradition reflecting the spirit of unity and solidarity among the people of one nation. High-level officials and religious figures attended the event.

In his speech at the event, Egyptian Ambassador Osama Shaltout affirmed the strong fraternal ties that unite the Egyptians and Kuwaitis. He praised the tradition of the Coptic Church in bringing together the Muslims and Christians in this annual event -- a manifestation of national and human cohesion.

Shaltout pointed out that the Muslim fast during Ramadan coinciding with the Coptic Great Lent this year created a special festive atmosphere, emphasizing that these moments bring hope and happiness.

He said Egypt is moving forward with its development plans as part of the 'New Republic' vision, in addition to the implementation of national projects that contribute to economic and social advancement. He affirmed the interest of his country in developing Egyptian human resources through the improvement of education and health services, as well as the creation of new job opportunities.

At the end of his speech, he thanked the Kuwaiti leadership for supporting the Egyptian community, while wishing the State of Kuwait continued se-

curity and prosperity.

Meanwhile, Father Bigol Anba Bishoy, a priest at the Egyptian Coptic Church in the country, welcomed the attendees with words that reflected the spirit of brotherhood and love that unites everyone under one roof.

He confirmed that Kuwait always embraces everyone with its large heart; indicating the 'Ghabqa of Love' conveys a message of peace and brotherhood, social cohesion, and coexistence between various religions and cultures in the country.

He said "Throughout its history, Kuwait has proven it is an oasis of peace and coexistence, where everyone gathers for various religious and national occasions, which instills the values of love and brotherhood among all of its residents."

Moreover, Musaed Al-Zamel welcomed the attendees and expressed his happiness over attending such an event, which embodies the values of brotherhood and tolerance -- values that have been deeply rooted in Kuwaiti society since ancient times.

He asserted that Kuwait has always been a beacon of culture and dialogue among civilizations, having been selected as the Capital of Arab Culture for the second time and the Capital of Arab Media -- a proof of its pioneering role in promoting human values.

He then greeted everyone on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, while Dr. Wasfi Aziz opened the gathering with poetic verses expressing the spirituality of the event.



Top and above: Some pictures from the gathering.



Photos by Rizk Taufiq

Suspect still on loose as murder charges filed

Grocery worker loses life in fight with fleeing thief

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: An expatriate working as a salesperson at a mobile grocery store in Mutlaa desert tragically lost his life after being run over by a driver who then dragged him for a long distance, reports Al-Anba daily.

The driver, after requesting items from the worker and refusing to pay, fled from the scene; leaving the worker clinging to the vehicle. This ultimately cost the worker his life.

In response, the Public Prosecution ordered the filing of a premeditated murder and robbery by force case; and instructed detectives to investigate and apprehend the perpetrator. Eyewitnesses revealed that the vehi-

cle of the suspect was previously used in at least 15 other robberies.

According to a security source, the Operations Unit at the Ministry of Interior received a report about the incident in Mutlaa desert. Security personnel and an ambulance quickly responded and found the worker on the ground, bleeding heavily from multiple fractures and in critical condition after being dragged for a considerable distance. The source added "the expatriate was rushed to Jahra Hospital, where he later succumbed to his injuries."

Eyewitnesses informed detectives that a silver four-wheel-drive vehicle stopped in front of the mobile grocery store. The driver of the vehicle

ordered food items and drinks, but fled without paying. The worker attempted to stop the driver and clung to the vehicle, which resulted in him being run over and dragged. The victim's body was later transferred to the Forensic Medicine Department.

In a similar incident reported on Feb 20, an unidentified individual stole items from a mobile grocery store and then dragged the worker by pinning him to the vehicle's window. The driver drove for about 30 meters, causing severe injuries to the worker who was admitted to the intensive care unit at Jahra Hospital. The case was classified as robbery by force.

One eyewitness described the inci-

dent, stating that "while waiting in my car, I saw a gold-colored four-wheel-drive vehicle parked in front of the grocery store. After the driver placed an order, a dispute between him and the worker ensued. The driver then closed the window and the worker clung to the vehicle as the driver drove for about 30 meters, dragging him along the ground before reopening the window, causing the worker to fall. The driver fled and I noted down the vehicle's license plate number."

Upon investigation in cooperation with the General Traffic Department, it was revealed that the suspect is wanted by law for a misdemeanor theft case filed at Sulaiybiya Police Station.

World must unite in fight: GCC

'Tackle pollution, climate change'

GENEVA, March 15, (KUNA): The GCC stressed on Friday the necessity of bolstering international cooperation to combat pollution and climate change, saying that global accords in such regard must be respected.

The GCC call for cooperation was delivered during a speech by Kuwait Permanent Representative at the UN and Other International Organizations headquarters in Geneva Ambassador Nasser Al-Hayen as head of the Gulf Ambassadors Council. The speech came at the special session on the rights of people in a health and sustainable environment during the 58th session of the Human Rights Council held in Geneva.

Ambassador Al-Hayen affirmed that the GCC had a strong conviction in the importance of protecting oceans of the

world due to its vitality and being a source of income and food security for millions of people around the globe.

He stressed the right for a clean and healthy environment for all, saying it was an essential component of human rights, which includes food, healthcare, and sustainable development.

Ambassador Al-Hayen indicated that the GCC took measures to protect marine environment from pollutants, stressing the importance of the oceans and seas for the welfare of humans and other lifeforms. The GCC also took part in international efforts to protect the environment, he added, saying it took part in initiatives for governance of oceans and made cross-border partnerships to tackle pollution and bolstering environmental protection.

Support for new Syrian setup grows despite many hiccups

"IN REALITY, there are many political interests and players whose mission is to cloud the atmosphere, tarnish the reputation of the transitional government, the era of change, and the administration of the new Syria." Kuwaiti author **Tareq Idris** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Definitely, this chaos, both internally and externally, is driven by the interests of players and those who sabotage the political, social, economic and administrative processes during the transitional period. This is intended to halt the wheel of development and ensure a dignified life for the brotherly Syrian people, following the convergence of the people's interests, their welcome of change, and the triumph of their revolution over the regime that has passed away. This comes after all this international support and recognition of the new era in Syria, both Arab and Western.



Tareq Idris

"The success of the new political regime in quelling hotbeds of tension and thwarting coup attempts by outlaws and the new political authority is due to their reliance on a worn-out and criminal remnant, backed by foreign supporters who have interests with the former regime and others who have interests with the enemy of the Syrian nation and people.

"Hence, we see the sinful role of those who tamper with the interests of the brotherly Syrian people, obstructing the process of reform and democratic change, and rallying the people's sects around their new regime and government. However, there are signs of a rallying of all positions and parties from various Syrian factions, representing the strength of national will, to support the decisions of their new transitional government to impose order and stability across the Arab world in sisterly Syria.

"The Arab nation's rallying today around the new Syrian regime, following its return to the fold of the Arab world, completes the process of supporting the supreme Arab interests. The Syrian people are a latent force, possessing vast and diverse capabilities, which the Arab nation needs at this important and sensitive time. This will enable them to utilize their strength and will in their honorable political and social positions to serve the causes of the nation and the region, following the demise of the 'incubus' of the defunct regime, its aides, and those who support it from within and without.

"We wish our sisterly Syria, its people, and its young, new government the return of peace, stability and prosperity after the tampering of the 'tamperers' and haters, and their supporters, both from within and without was extinguished.

"May Allah protect Syria and its people."

Also :

"As previously mentioned, humans possess inherent behavioral qualities, such as love for good, hatred for evil, and the natural inclination toward seeking good and avoiding evil." Kuwaiti author **Dr. Hamoud Al-Hattab** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"These values do not need to be 'instilled' in individuals, as they are part of human nature. However, certain needs related to these behaviors stem from our divine nature, which is unchanging, as ordained by Allah.

"Among these inherent needs, which are related to religious and national education, is the strengthening of such a natural disposition. Although humans are born with good nature, they can be vulnerable to corruption due to improper upbringing, exposure to negative influences, such as bad company, and incorrect guidance from parents.

"A Prophetic hadith affirms this point. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) states 'every child is born in a state of fitrah (natural disposition), but his parents make him a Jew, a Zoroastrian or a Christian.' In this hadith, 'fitrah' refers to the natural inclination toward monotheism, emphasizing that a person is not born with polytheism unless he is misguided.

"Therefore, 'fitrah' is an instinct that can be nurtured but also distorted or diverted through the educational efforts of parents or societal institutions, whether intentionally or unintentionally.

"Thus, institutions involved in education -- particularly those that share the responsibility of nurturing and reinforcing values, especially moral and national values -- play a critical role. These institutions include religious bodies, such as the Ministry of Endowments, which supports mosques and their activities, as well as the affiliated departments. The explanation of this process is extensive, so I will leave it at that for now."

"Visit the National Library in Kuwait and ask for a daily newspaper, such as **Al-Ahram** from Egypt from the early 20th century, over a hundred years ago. You will be surprised to find that what you read closely resembles what is written in our newspapers today!" columnist **Dr. Khaled Ahmad Al-Saleh** wrote for **Al-Rai** daily.

"Decades have passed, yet we find ourselves stuck in almost the same cycle. I say 'almost' because today we are facing a very dangerous new addition compared to what we used to read in the past.

"They, like us, were preoccupied with issues such as poverty, housing,

freedoms, and westernization. We continue to grapple with these issues today, but we have now added sectarianism - a force that has been resurrected from the distant past and promoted by various countries and hostile entities. These groups have all been actively spreading sectarianism among us, and expanding the closed circle in which we are trapped. Anyone caught in a closed circle can never move forward, and it seems that this is the true aim behind this sectarian attack on our nation. Sectarianism today is on the verge of extinguishing every hope for our Arab nation in terms of liberation and progress.

"Don't you see Syria, which was ruled by sectarianism for fifty years? It barely had a chance to breathe before those around it, and even those far away moved to pull it back into that hateful cycle. Don't you see Lebanon, where a militia has seized control and exerts all its efforts to maintain its weaponry, using it to challenge the state and relying on its sect outside the country? Don't you see how intellectuals and those with advanced degrees have had a solid wall built around their minds, to the extent that they now breathe sectarianism? All their arguments are reduced to nothing more than the slogans and rhetoric they are fed.

"Today, all social media platforms are being used to entrench hatred and sectarianism, to the point where we find ourselves living alongside figures who have long since passed away. We resurrect these figures now to judge them and fight over them. Our reference today has become a history with many doors and scattered entrances that will never converge.

"If you read old newspapers, you will feel that they were more at ease than we are. They faced colonization, but they were united in their resistance against it. They endured injustice, but no intellectual dared to support it. Today, we have thousands of politicians, journalists, and intellectuals, but sadly, many of them have become commodities for sale. They have sold themselves to a vile sectarianism that compels them to betray their own country.

"What is the solution? Should we wait another hundred years trapped in an ever-expanding circle only to find ourselves adopting new forms of negativity that keep us stagnant?

"The best course of action is to initiate a dialogue with Arab figures who truly believe in their nation and homeland. Those real free individuals who are not controlled by sectarianism and do not fall for the packaged excuses and rhetoric. These individuals must unite and communicate, and Arab governments must facilitate connections between their citizens and civil society organizations in our great homeland to protect our nation from this new and dangerous virus.

"Today, we face a threat far greater than the dangers we faced a century ago - a deadly threat that endangers our entire Arab nation. So, is it time for us to awaken? I certainly hope so."

"Our government has been quite confused lately regarding the issue of revoking citizenships, or what is referred to as the 'cleansing' policy," columnist **Abdul Latif Al-Duajj** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"While cleansing the country, we see, at the same time, our government comfortably turning a blind eye to many real problems and instead focusing on harassing those who are considered pure and righteous, individuals who have sought refuge in the law and the constitution. The citizen that the government recently expelled with pride is, in fact, a 'citizen'."

"This is the situation the government has put us in. The woman, as mentioned in the Ministry of Interior's statements, was once a 'Kuwaiti citizen' by law, with the government's approval and seals. She was a citizen before her expulsion, and even to this day, she remains a citizen. Yes, she is still a citizen at this moment because the government promised, though sadly did not fulfill, to treat those whose citizenships were revoked in the same way as Kuwaitis.

"According to the classification, her citizenship was revoked, but according to the government's promise, she should be treated as a Kuwaiti... and a Kuwaiti, according to custom as well as our constitution and laws, cannot be expelled!"

"Perhaps we do not have the right to object or even discuss the matter if the expulsion was due to betrayal of trust, a coup, or the use of force to undermine the system and destabilize national security. In such cases, expulsion might be justified.

"However, the woman was expelled for no reason other than expressing her opinion... and this is the core issue. Freedom of opinion and expression... this is what we unfortunately cannot tolerate from both people and government.

"Expressing an opinion or revealing what is in our hearts is always considered slander, insult, and even defamation. This is why the woman was expelled, because she expressed her feelings. And of course, this expression was interpreted as a 'violation' of the state's decisions. Her citizenship was revoked, her identity erased, and her past and present wiped out."

— **Compiled by Mahmoud Attiyeh/ Simi K. Kutty**



Damage caused by the fire.



Fire brigade at the site.

KFF photos

No injuries in Rumaithiya school fire; probe on

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: Firefighters from Al-Bida'a and Salmiya fire stations extinguished a fire that broke out in a fab-

ric canopy within the premises of a school in Rumaithiya on Friday evening, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

No injuries were reported, and investigations were carried out to determine the cause of the fire.

Kuwaiti teacher jailed for 7 years, fined heavily in med leave forgery

Man impersonates female singer, incites debauchery

By **Jaber Al-Hamoud**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: The Court of Cassation on Thursday sentenced a Kuwaiti teacher to seven years in prison for forging medical leave certificates for several years.

The teacher was also fined KD 100,000 for receiving undue salaries and ordered to repay double this amount.

The teacher, a public employee at the Ministry of Education, committed the offense from Feb 27, 2017 to May 5, 2022. She unlawfully obtained salaries totaling KD 68,000 from her employer by fraudulently submitting 17 medical recommendations falsely attributed to the Public Medical Council at the Ministry of Health.

These false medical recommendations prompted her employer to grant her exceptional leave. As a result, she continued to

receive her monthly salary without justification.

She was found guilty of forging official documents, conniving with an unidentified person, and helping public employees to commit forgery.

Jail for impersonation: The Court of Appeals upheld the verdict issued by the Criminal Court which sentenced a Kuwaiti citizen to three-year imprisonment with hard labor and a fine of KD 3,000 for inciting debauchery and immorality through a fake social media account and impersonating a female singer.

The accused was arrested for misleading his followers by pretending to be a woman.

Previously, the defendant admitted to the charges and expressed remorse during the session at the Criminal Court, which sentenced him to three years in prison with hard labor and a fine of KD 3,000. The defendant appealed the decision, but the Court of Appeals upheld the original verdict.

'Compensate creditor': The Court of Cassation, presided over by Judge Khaled Al-Mazini, ordered the owners of a limited liability company to pay a sum of money to a creditor after it was proven that the company had defaulted on its debts and financial obligations.

In its ruling, the court stated that the appellant had complained that the appealed ruling violated the law and was incorrectly applied, as the ruling had deemed the lawsuit inadmissible because it was filed against someone who had no standing in relation to the first respondent.

This claim was based on the argument that the individual was not the director of the company, and that responsibility solely rested with the second respondent, who was the company's director.

However, the court stressed that the company's documents did not include the term "limited liability", as the partners' liability is limited to their private shares, in accordance with Article 188 of Law No. 15/1960 and Article 273 of Law No. 1/2016.

Beggars, vendors on visit, family visas held near markets

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: The Department for the Protection of Public Morals and Combating Human Trafficking of the Criminal Security Sector's General Department of Criminal Investigations arrested 11 individuals of Arab and Asian nationalities who were caught begging in front of mosques and markets, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

These arrests were made based on the instructions of the acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef to combat all negative phenomena, and as part of the ongoing security efforts to eliminate the issue of begging, which intensifies during the month of Ramadan.

In addition, they also arrested 15 people on charges of illegal street vending. It was discovered that some of those arrested had entered Kuwait on visit visas or family residency permits, while others were brought into the country without permanent employment.

Necessary legal actions are being taken against the companies that facilitated their illegal recruitment.

The Ministry of Interior stated that strict legal measures will be taken against anyone who uses children for begging in order to elicit sympathy.

A case of "exploitation of minors" will be registered, the violators will be deported, those

responsible will be held accountable, and the files of the violating companies will be closed.

Caught running illegal grocery: The Farwaniya Investigation Department's Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh Investigations Unit arrested an Asian expatriate who was caught selling subsidized food supplies illegally and operating an unlicensed grocery store in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

Cash obtained from the illegal sales was found in his possession. He was referred with the confiscated money and other items to the concerned authorities for necessary legal action.

Female in traffic brawl

Duo snatching cash from Asian expatriates caught

By **Munif Naif**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: Taima detectives have arrested two unidentified individuals who robbed Asians in several areas.

According to a security source, a security team was formed to apprehend the suspects after several robberies of Asians in various areas were reported.

The source disclosed that the suspects stopped Asians in their vehicles, stole their money and fled from the scene. The source added that detectives were able to identify the suspects who confessed to carrying out robberies. They were referred to the concerned authorities for necessary action.

Female in traffic brawl: A case was filed at Abu Halifa Police Station against a female citizen on charges of insult, slander and property damage, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The accused, a Kuwaiti woman in her 30s, denied the allegations, claiming that she was not at fault and argued that the charge of vandalism is irrelevant. She explained that she stopped the complainant to reprimand him for halting suddenly, which led to her colliding with his vehicle from behind.

The Operations Unit at the Ministry of Interior received a report about a dispute in Abu Halifa. Upon arrival of police officers, the complainant stated that the defendant rear-ended his vehicle. Given the minor damage and the nature of the collision, which occurred from behind, the complainant believed the woman was at fault and continued on his way. He added "I was surprised to find the woman following me, which led me to stop. She then began insulting me and accusing me of causing her to crash into my vehicle from behind."

The police instructed the complainant and the accused to lodge a report at Abu Halifa Police Station for further investigation.

The clever crooks: The Mutla'a Investigations Unit of the Jahra Investigation Department arrested a gang that specialized in stealing construction materials from homes under construction in Mutla'a, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

The suspects had rented vehicles to monitor residential plots, and then stole and sold the construction materials. The suspects, along with the seized items, were referred to the relevant authorities for the necessary legal action.



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Environment Society calls for solutions to curb excessive consumption in Ramadan

57% of shoppers exceed budgets

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: The Kuwait Environment Protection Society affirmed the importance of monitoring consumption habits in society, particularly wasteful consumption during the month of Ramadan, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The society called for the introduction of innovative technological solutions to address this issue.

Society member Nawaf Al-Muwail presented several solutions that are based on artificial intelligence and smart technologies to curb excessive consumption, especially during the holy month of Ramadan.

This took place during the society's participation in a lecture

titled "Green Economy and Reducing Waste... Using Artificial Intelligence," presented by its member Al-Muwail.

The lecture was part of the "Kuwait Ramadan Diwaniya" evenings, organized on Tuesday by the Kuwait Social Responsibility Program, affiliated with the Regional Network for Social Responsibility, in collaboration with the Sustainable Development Endowment. The event was held under the patronage of Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi and chaired by Chair of the Program's Advisory Committee Dr. Shihab Al-Othman. The organizing committee was led by the UN Commissioner for Human Resources and Development Counselor Khalida Al-Kharraz.

During the lecture, Al-Muwail presented the results of a research study conducted by the society to assess environmental awareness regarding goal No. 12 of the Sus-

tainable Development Goals. The study surveyed 212 citizens and residents in Kuwait.

The results revealed that 57 percent of participants who set a budget for their purchases exceeded it, particularly during Ramadan and special occasions. This highlights the urgent need for practical solutions to curb excessive consumption.

He explained that wasteful spending on shopping, food, water, energy, and time presents both environmental and economic challenges. Large quantities of food, clothing, and sweets are often purchased due to promotions and discounts, leading to the waste of money and resources.

Al-Muwail proposed a range of solutions based on artificial intelligence and smart technologies to reduce waste, including:

■ Using smart apps to prepare shopping lists in advance, which help in minimizing unnecessary

spending.

■ Activating smart water sensors to reduce water flow when not in use, along with apps that monitor household consumption.

■ Implementing smart home systems, like Google Nest, to automatically control lighting and air conditioning, contributing to lower energy consumption.

■ Organizing time with apps like Screen Time and Google Assistant to set daily priorities and reduce screen time.

Al-Muwail affirmed the importance of community awareness through social media and the promotion of a culture of rational consumption among individuals.

He said, "Achieving a green economy requires collective efforts from society, the government, and the private sector, along with the adoption of effective technological solutions that contribute to building a more sustainable future."



KUNA photo
The Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the French Republic, Abdullah Suleiman Al-Shahin, presents his credentials to French President Emmanuel Macron.

Kuwait's envoy Shahin submits credentials to French President

PARIS, March 15, (KUNA): Ambassador Abdullah Al-Shahin presented on Thursday his credentials as Kuwait's envoy to French President Emmanuel Macron.

Speaking to KUNA in a statement following a ceremony held at The Elysée Palace in Paris, Al-Shahin conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His High-

ness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to the French president.

The ambassador expressed deep-rooted historic ties between Kuwait and France in varied domains and on popular and official levels.

Al-Shahin said he looks forward to continuing to enhance bilateral relations between the two friendly countries, and upgrade them for wider horizons in a manner that serves common interest and boost strategic partnership.

Al-Mishari extends mandate of Women's Housing Affairs team

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Abdullatif Al-Mishari issued a ministerial decision to extend the mandate of the Women's Housing Affairs team, led by Sheikhha Bibi Yousef Al-Sabah, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press release issued yesterday, the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) stated

that the minister's decision reaffirms the team's ongoing efforts, which began last October, to deal with issues related to housing care for women.

PAHW stated that the proposals submitted by the team during its previous term are currently under review and are being implemented in accordance with the regulations governing housing care.

Iraqi Foreign Ministry Undersecretary hails KRCS's global humanitarian role

KUWAIT CITY, March 15, (KUNA): Visiting Undersecretary of Iraq's Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Bilateral Relations Ambassador Mohammad Bahr Al-Uloom has commended the great humanitarian role of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS).

In statements following his visit to the KRCS' headquarters, Bahr

Al-Uloom said that the KRCS humanitarian contributions have reached distressed people everywhere, particularly in the war and disasters-hit zones.

Kuwait has presented an exemplary model for a humanitarian country which generously offers aid to all countries including Iraq, he said.



Academicians, professors and distinguished guests during the annual Ramadan Ghabqa at the Waldorf Hotel.

KU photos

Celebrating loyalty and academic excellence

KU honors former leaders in annual Ramadan Ghabqa

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: Under the patronage of Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Prof. Dr. Nader Abdullah Al-Jalal and President of Kuwait University Prof. Dr. Dina Musaed Al-Mailem; the Social Committee of the Faculty Members Association hosted the annual Ramadan Ghabqa at the Waldorf Hotel recently.

With the theme, "A Touch of Loyalty to Those Who Deserve Honor," the event was sponsored by Kuwait Finance House (KFH) and Fareej Al-Suwaileh. It gathered academicians, professors and distinguished guests like Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt Osama Shaltout, former university directors and former heads of the association.

Chairperson of the Social Committee Dr. Noura Al-Awadhi expressed her happiness in hosting the gathering, while highlighting its role in fostering camaraderie and celebrating the collective achievements of the academic community.

President of the association Dr.



President of Kuwait University Professor Dr. Dina Musaed Al-Mailem with distinguished guest.

Bader Al-Azmi underscored the importance of the Ghabqa in strengthening social bonds and countering the

isolating effects of technology. He also acknowledged the association's ongoing efforts to overcome univer-

sity challenges through effective communication and collaboration with the university administration and government bodies.

Speaking on behalf of the former university administrators, Prof. Faiza Al-Kharafi reflected on her nine years of service; affirming the significance of teamwork, cooperation and the lasting bonds of friendship formed during her tenure. She also shared insights into the challenges of leadership, emphasizing the necessity of a collective approach to overcome obstacles.

Dr. Mohammed Al-Muhaini, in his reflection on his 36-year academic career, praised the university for its strong commitment to continue aiming for academic excellence and its remarkable global achievements.

The gathering culminated in a heartfelt recognition ceremony honoring former directors of the university since its establishment in 1966, as well as past heads of the association and retirees; celebrating their invaluable contributions towards the advancement of Science and the whole nation.



KUNA photo
Meeting of the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Republic of Iraq, Ambassador Mohammed Bahar Al-Uloom, with the Chairman of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, Khaled Al-Mughamis.

Students' excellence in financial analysis shines on global stage

KU's College of Business Administration team wins CFA Research Challenge

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: In a remarkable academic achievement that underscores the excellence of the College of Business Administration at Kuwait University, the college's team won first place in the prestigious global CFA Research Challenge 2024/2025 competition organized by the CFA Institute.

The CFA Research Challenge is one of the most renowned global competitions in the field of financial analysis, wherein university students from around the world are tasked with analyzing publicly listed companies, and presenting detailed financial reports and investment recommendations to a panel of expert judges.

The winning team consists of the following students:

- Shahad Hamad Abdulaziz Al-Fahad
- Hilal Amer Ali Al-Mutairi
- Abdulwahab Jassim Ali Al-Jasmi
- Khaled Tariq Issa Al-Issa

The achievement was guided by Dr. Abdullah Nader Al-Awadhi, a faculty member in the Department of Finance and Financial Institutions, and su-

pervisor of the CFA Office at the college.

On this occasion, acting Dean of the college Dr. Awadh Al-Dhafiri expressed his immense pride in the team's victory. He pointed out that this achievement not only reflects the exceptional academic standards of the college; but also demonstrates its ability to compete on the global stage, further elevating the university's standing among leading business schools worldwide.

Al-Dhafiri added "this victory is a testament to the unwavering commitment of the college to nurture students, develop their practical skills and prepare them to become future leaders in the fields of finance, investment and economics."

He dedicated this prestigious achievement to the university, its administration, faculty and students; considering it a catalyst for future success.

He also affirmed the dedication of the college to celebrate this exceptional team and support them as they continue their academic and professional journeys toward even greater accomplishments.



Kuwait University President Dr. Dina Al-Mailem honoring the winning students.

KU photo

LOCAL



Children in traditional attire sing songs of joy as families in the Capital Governorate come together to celebrate a deep-rooted cultural practice, with the Governor leading the festive spirit.



Mid-Ramadan festivity keeps spirit of generosity and heritage alive

Girgian in Kuwait: A celebration of tradition, culture and joy

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: Girgian, also spelled "Qarqian" or "Garangao," is one of Kuwait's most beloved and colorful traditions, celebrated during the holy month of Ramadan. This festival, which brings families and communities together, is a joyous occasion for children, who dress in traditional attire, sing special songs, and receive sweets and nuts from neighbors and relatives. But where did this vibrant tradition originate, and how has it evolved over the years?

The Origins of Girgian

The history of Girgian in Kuwait and other Gulf countries dates back centuries. It is believed to have originated as a way to reward children who had successfully fasted for half of Ramadan. The name "Girgian" is thought to come from the Arabic word "Qarqar," which mimics the sound of sweets and nuts rattling in bags as children collect them.

While the exact origins remain unclear, Girgian has become an essential part of Kuwaiti culture, blending Islamic values with joyful social customs. Unlike Eid, which marks the end of Ramadan with prayers and feasts, Girgian is a mid-Ramadan celebration that focuses on children, hospitality, and the spirit of giving.

Preparations and Festivities

The excitement for Girgian begins weeks in advance, as families prepare for the celebration. Here's a look at how Kuwaitis get ready for this special occasion:

1. Traditional Clothing

Children wear colorful traditional attire that reflects Kuwaiti heritage. Boys typically dress in a dishdasha (long white robe) with a bisht (decorative cloak), while girls wear embroidered dresses called daraa and adorn themselves with gold jewelry and flowered headpieces.

2. Girgian Bags and Sweets

One of the main highlights of Girgian is the distribution



Capital Governorate celebrates Girgian with the Governor marking the occasion as a symbol of unity and culture.

of sweets. Families prepare or purchase beautifully decorated bags filled with a mix of candies, nuts, chocolates, and traditional treats like rahash (sesame-based sweet) and darabeel (Kuwaiti rolled wafers). Wealthier families sometimes customize these bags with their children's names and distribute them in style.

3. Singing and Neighborhood Celebrations

As night falls, children gather in groups and walk around their neighborhoods, joyfully singing traditional Girgian songs. One of the most famous songs includes:

"Girgian Girgian, bayt al-Harees wa Riyyan, 'Aatalikum Allah ya al-Sameen, khallifa Allah 'alaykum"

These songs, passed down through generations, create a cheerful and nostalgic atmosphere. Families welcome children at their doorsteps with smiles, handing them sweets while enjoying the festivity.

4. Modern Twists on Girgian

While the heart of Girgian remains unchanged, modern influences have added new dimensions to the celebration. Shopping malls, companies, and institutions now host

large-scale Girgian events, distributing gifts and organizing entertainment. Some families even hire event planners to make their Girgian parties more extravagant, featuring mascots, live music, and elaborate decorations.

The Cultural and Social Significance of Girgian

Girgian is more than just a festival; it carries deep cultural and social meanings:

■ **Strengthening Community Bonds:** It fosters a sense of unity and hospitality, as neighbors and relatives come together to share joy and generosity.

■ **Preserving Kuwaiti Heritage:** It connects the younger generation to their cultural roots, ensuring traditional customs remain alive in the modern world.

■ **Teaching Generosity and Gratitude:** Children learn the values of sharing and appreciation as they receive and give back through laughter and interaction.

The Positive Impact of Girgian

The celebration of Girgian has numerous benefits:

1. **Happiness and Social Connection** – The festival brings happiness to both children and adults, strengthening community ties.

2. **Economic Boost** – The demand for sweets, decorations, and traditional clothing supports local businesses.

3. **Reviving Traditions** – By continuing to celebrate Girgian, Kuwaitis ensure that their cultural identity is preserved for future generations.

Conclusion

Girgian is a cherished Kuwaiti tradition that blends history, faith, and joy into a beautiful celebration. It remains a time for laughter, generosity, and cultural pride, proving that some traditions only grow stronger with time. Whether in the streets, homes, or malls, Girgian continues to light up Kuwait every Ramadan, bringing communities together in a shared spirit of festivity and love.

Continued from Page 1

'We will

As a result, the second step in the long and difficult reform process was to abolish the local agent for closing the taps of financial waste and time-wastage. This step is the most important because delays in implementation have cost the state many benefits, particularly in projects such as the airport, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, university city, free zones, food security, and road restoration.

In addition, the dawn of the new era has shed light on the remnants of human trafficking, which was a disgrace for Kuwait in the eyes of international institutions. This issue brought the country to a standstill, as residency traders sought to amass ill-gotten wealth. As a result, huge obstacles were placed in the way of labor recruitment. Workers, often impoverished, were burdened with exorbitant fees that they had to pay annually, and were cast out onto the streets to face an uncertain fate.

Residence traders played a major role in the rising crime rate, as hunger drives individuals to desperate measures in order to secure a meal. The situation becomes even more dire when those affected are living abroad, faced not only with hunger but also with a sense of helplessness.

Therefore, the new era ushered in the issuance of a new residency law, one that was more merciful not only to expatriates and residents but also to Kuwait itself.

The dawn of this new era revealed many evils, including exceptional pensions for influential figures and widespread corruption among ministers, undersecretaries, and others who saw Kuwait merely as a piece of cheese.

The corrupt individuals did not truly believe in Kuwait as a homeland. Their actions contradicted national loyalty and disregarded the great sacrifices made by our fathers and grandfathers for the sake of this country.

All of this contributed to a weakened gross domestic product, akin to eating one's own flesh in order to survive. As a result, esteemed research centers, both international and local, repeatedly raised alarms about the need to end the dependence on oil as Kuwait's only source of income. Unfortunately, these warnings fell on deaf ears.

Hence, there is a major structural imbalance that has yet to be addressed with a fundamental solution capable of driving true economic recovery.

What is needed are brilliant minds capable of managing investments, seizing opportunities, and laying the foundation for a resilient and sustainable economy. This is the government's responsibility

in carrying out the directives of the new era.

Indeed, the sun of the new era has risen, shedding light on much of the political, economic, social, and cultural turmoil left behind by the past, which nearly led the country to unbearable depths.

A common refrain, reflecting frustration and despair in finding solutions, is, "The brokenness is too big to be healed". It often feels as though Kuwait lacks reliable resources or the ability to seek international expertise, as many other countries do.

This prevailing reality was summed up by His Highness's statement when he said, "We will not allow democracy to destroy the state." It became the key to the solutions, and may God bless this remedy.

Many dreams inevitably blend truth with error. What matters is that we guide these dreams onto the right path. The one who does not work is the one who never makes mistakes.

Anti-corruption

Articles 4 and 1/22 of Law No. 2/2016 regarding the establishment of Nazaha.

In a press statement issued Thursday, Nazaha explained that this step is part of its ongoing efforts to combat corruption, mitigate its risks and consequences, prosecute those responsible, and activate its jurisdiction as stipulated in Article 24 of its establishment law.

Nazaha affirmed its keenness to continue its work of examining, collecting evidence, and investigating all credible information submitted through any means.

KSR Ramadan

Since the beginning of Ramadan, Kuwaiti charities had been launching campaigns to ease the pain of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, UN humanitarian aid on Friday that 63,000 metric tons of food await an end to the Gaza aid blockade, enough for 1.1 million people for two to three months.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said the 12-day aid blockade hinders relief operations.

"This means, for example, that the World Food Programme (WFP) has not been able to transport any food supplies into Gaza due to the closure of all border crossing points for both humanitarian and commercial supplies," OCHA said. "WFP has about 63,000 metric tons of food destined for Gaza, stored or in transit in the region."

WFP said it has enough stocks to support active bakeries and community kitchens for up to one month and can also provide ready-to-eat food parcels for more than 500,000 people for two weeks. However, before the ceasefire, WFP reduced the quantity of ready-to-eat food parcels so that families could stretch their supplies and serve more people.

It isn't just a shortage of food. A lack of fuel affects vehicle movements across Gaza and slows first responders.

OCHA said oxygen supplies and electricity generators are also critically needed to maintain life-saving operations at hospitals in Gaza. At least two dozen additional generators are in short supply for health centers, as the ones in use need maintenance and spare parts.

In the West Bank, the humanitarian office warned that settler violence is escalating in certain areas across the region, causing casualties, property damage and placing communities at high risk of displacement.

Over the past two years, OCHA has documented the displacement of more than 2,000 Palestinians across the West Bank due to heightened settler violence and access restrictions.

In the northern West Bank, the Israeli military operation entered its eighth week.

The office said people continue to be displaced, and last week Israeli forces raided at least 10 mosques across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

"Since Monday, operations in Jenin city have intensified, with more than 500 people displaced from three neighborhoods in the eastern part of the city, according to the municipality," OCHA said. "The UN and its partners warn that food insecurity is rising, as operations by Israeli forces, displacement, and movement restrictions limit access to food."

Also, OCHA said there was a sharp increase in the demolition of Palestinian-owned structures in the West Bank over the past week and a half. The number of structures demolished during the first 10 days of Ramadan this year exceeds the total for all of Ramadan in 2024.

MOLA sets

For Fajr prayer, mosques remain open until half an hour after sunrise.

For Maghrib prayer, mosques stay open until half an hour after the Isha prayer ends.

During Ramadan, mosque doors remain open from half an hour before Maghrib prayer and close immediately after Tarawih prayer ends.

MEW to finalize employee evaluations

Energy ministry to align shift systems with CSC guidelines

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Adel Al-Zamel has asked all ministry sectors operating on a shift system to select one of the shifts specified by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) in Resolution No. 12/2012, considering the CSC refused to maintain the current shift system in the ministry.

Sources from the ministry stated that "sector officials must adopt the shift that best suits their employees, so it does not affect their job performance evaluation of employees working on a shift system in the coming years."

Sources explained that "the undersecretary sent the letter to the sectors after the CSC repeatedly rejected the

proposal to maintain the current shift system of the ministry. In order to avoid violating the CSC regulations in this regard, which could have negative repercussions; the ministry is insisting that the concerned sectors adopt one of the shift systems specified in the CSC resolution."



Dr. Al-Zamel

Meanwhile, sources confirmed that the Administrative Affairs Sector has completed the annual job performance evaluation of 35,000 out of the total 38,000 employees in the ministry. Sources added the ministry is expected to complete the job performance evaluation of all employees next week.

CONDOLENCES

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Democrats confront limits of minority power

US Senate approves funding bill hours before government shutdown deadline

WASHINGTON, March 15, (AP): The US Senate passed a Republican-led spending bill Friday hours before a government shutdown, overcoming sharp Democratic opposition to the measure and sending it to President Donald Trump to be signed into law.

The essentially party-line vote, 54-46, didn't give the full picture of gnawing Democratic angst over how to confront the Trump administration as its Department of Government Efficiency fires federal workers and dismantles operations. Democrats argued over whether to fight even risking a shutdown and fumed that Republicans drafted a measure that included little of their input, shortchanging health care, housing and other priorities.

But in the end, enough of the Democratic senators decided a government shutdown would be even worse, and backed Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer's strategy to allow the bill to come forward.

"A shutdown will allow DOGE to shift into overdrive," Schumer said. "Donald Trump and Elon Musk would be free to destroy vital government services at a much faster rate."

Democrats were confronted with two painful options: allowing passage of a bill they believe gives President Donald Trump vast discretion on spending decisions or voting no and letting funding lapse. All told, 10 Democrats voted to break the party's filibuster to advance the bill to a final vote. On final passage, two Democrats supported the bill, and one Republican, Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky, opposed it. It funds the government for another six months.

Schumer gave members of his caucus days to vent their frustration about the options before them, but abruptly switched course and made clear on the eve of voting that he would not allow a government shutdown. His move outraged many in the party who want to fight the Trump agenda, but gave senators room to side with Republicans and allow the continuing resolution, often described as a CR, to advance.

Democrats from all corners looked to pressure senators to kill the bill. House members wrote letters, posted on social media and held press conferences in the hours before the vote.

"The American people sent Demo-



US Senate Majority Leader Sen John Thune, R-S.D., walks from the Senate chamber as the Senate works to avert a partial government shutdown ahead of the midnight deadline, at the Capitol in Washington on March 14. (AP)

crats to Congress to fight against Republican dysfunction and chaos," said a letter from 66 House Democrats to Schumer.

House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries and his team dashed back to the

a shutdown, given they controlled all the levers of power in Congress and the White House.

"If you refuse to put forward an offer that includes any Democratic input and you don't get Democratic votes, that's on Republicans," said Sen. Patty Murray, the top Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Senate Democrats were grim Friday as they left Washington after a brutal 10-week stretch that consistently showed the limits of their power in the minority - and culminated with a deeply personal rupture over how to best counter Trump.

"Everyone made hard decisions, right? Really hard decisions," said Sen. John Hickenlooper of Colorado, of the position in which Democrats found themselves over the last week as they had to decide between voting for a Republican spending bill they hated and shutting down the government. "It's like two horrible things, and you can't imagine either one."

In contrast, Schumer picked up one unexpected nod of support - from Trump himself, who just a day earlier was gearing up to blame Democrats

for any shutdown.

"Congratulations to Chuck Schumer for doing the right thing - Took 'guts' and courage!" the president posted on his social media account.

Congress has been unable to pass the annual appropriations bills designed to fund the government, so they've resorted to passing short-term extensions instead. The legislation before the Senate is the third such continuing resolution for the current fiscal year, now nearly half over.

The legislation would fund the federal government through the end of September. It would trim non-defense spending by about \$13 billion from the previous year and increase defense spending by about \$6 billion, which are marginal changes when talking about a topline spending level of nearly \$1.7 trillion.

The Republican-led House passed the spending bill Tuesday and then adjourned. The move left senators with a decision to either take it or leave it. And while Democrats pushed for a vote on a fourth short-term extension, GOP leadership made clear that option was a non-starter.



Workers clear a tree after it fell on a street during a storm on March 13, in Pico Rivera, Calif. (AP)

Threat of tornadoes moves to US South

The threat of tornadoes moved east into the Mississippi Valley and Deep South on Saturday, a day after a massive storm system moving across the country unleashed winds that damaged buildings, whipped up dust storms that caused deadly crashes and fanned more than 100 wildfires in several central states.

Multiple tornadoes were reported in Missouri on Friday, just some of the extreme weather that was forecast to affect an area home to more than 100 million people. Winds gusting up to 80 mph (130 kph)

were predicted from the Canadian border to Texas, threatening blizzard conditions in colder northern areas and wildfire risk in warmer, drier areas to the south.

The National Weather Service issued multiple tornado and severe thunderstorm warnings early Saturday morning for areas in Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Illinois, Indiana and Texas.

Three people were killed Friday in car crashes during a dust storm in Amarillo County in the Texas Panhandle, according to Sgt. Cindy

Barkley of the state's department of public safety. One pileup involved an estimated 38 cars.

"It's the worst I've ever seen," Barkley said, calling the near-zero visibility a nightmare. "We couldn't tell that they were all together until the dust kind of settled."

Evacuations were ordered in some Oklahoma communities as more than 130 fires were reported across the state. The State Patrol said winds were so strong that they toppled several tractor-trailers. (AP)

North Carolina GOP town hall gets rowdy as attendees hurl scathing questions on Trump

ASHEVILLE, N.C., March 15, (AP): Before answering an attendee's question about President Donald Trump's "destructive and disastrous trade war," US Rep Chuck Edwards made a plea to the rowdy crowd at his Thursday town hall in Asheville, North Carolina.

"Let me answer and then if you don't like it, you can boo or hiss or whatever you'd like to do," Edwards said, visibly exhausted.

As he expanded on Trump's use of tariffs as a negotiating tactic, it took less than a minute for the crowd to break out in outrage. He continued to plow ahead in his response and eventually punctuated it by telling attendees he would "stop there and you can yell." The crowd gladly took him up on the offer.

For about an hour and half, Edwards endured a constant barrage of jeers, epithets and searing questions on Trump administration policies. About 300 people crammed inside a college auditorium for the town hall, while the boos from more than a thousand people outside the building rumbled throughout the event.

House Speaker Mike Johnson told GOP representatives last week to skip out on town halls, saying demonstrations outside of them were the work of "professional protesters." Edwards addressed the Republican leader's advice, saying he didn't want to "shy away" from conversations with the people of western North Carolina - even if they disagreed.



Protesters show up with signs to a town hall held by Rep. Chuck Edwards in Asheville, NC on March 13. (AP)

But less than 30 minutes into the town hall, Edwards started to change his tune as a majority of attendees interrupted him with vitriolic disruptions. Asheville is a deep-blue dot amid a sea of red in North Carolina's mountains. North Carolina went for Trump in the 2024 election.

"And you wonder why folks don't want to do these town halls," Edwards said over shouting.

Edwards kicked off his town hall discussing western North Carolina's recovery from Hurricane Helene. Asheville is still rebuilding after the devastating storm, which killed more than 100 people in North Carolina and caused a record-shattering amount of damage - about \$59.6 billion in damages and record needs, according to the state.

But as Edwards touted the work he said the Trump administration has been doing for the region's recovery - which could include the president's proposal to dissolve the Federal Emergency Management Agency - attendees shouted him down and demanded he address questions immediately.

Starmmer tells global leaders to 'keep pressure' on Russia's Putin over ceasefire in Ukraine

LONDON, March 15, (AP): UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer has told global leaders to "keep the pressure" on Russian President Vladimir Putin to back a ceasefire in Ukraine.

In his opening remarks Saturday to a virtual gathering of what he has termed the "coalition of the willing," Starmer said Putin will "sooner or later" have to "come to the table."

Unlike the first summit on March 2, the meeting of what Starmer has termed the "coalition of the willing" is being conducted virtually. The call is expected to delve into how countries can help Ukraine militarily and financially as well as gauging support for any future possible peacekeeping mission.

"If Russia finally comes to the table, then we must be ready to monitor a ceasefire to ensure it is a serious, and enduring peace," Starmer told leaders, in remarks released by his office ahead of the meeting. "If they don't, then we need to strain every sinew to ramp up economic pressure on Russia to secure



UK's Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer departs 10 Downing Street to attend Prime Minister's Questions at the Houses of Parliament in London, England on March 12. (AP)

an end to this war."

Like last time, there will be no representative from the United States, which has shifted its approach on the

war since the return of President Donald Trump to the White House. The change of approach relative to that taken by Trump's predecessor, Joe Biden, became particularly notable after Trump clashed with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Feb 28 in the Oval Office.

Saturday's meeting takes place in the wake of a US proposal for a 30-day ceasefire in Ukraine, which Zelenskyy has backed.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has indicated that he supported a truce in principle but has set out a host of details that need to be clarified before agreeing to a ceasefire. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has voiced "cautious optimism" about the possibility of Putin, who met with U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff, on Thursday, backing a ceasefire.

Starmer appears to be less optimistic, and is telling leaders that concrete commitments are required now as Putin plays "pointless games" with Trump's peace plan.

Hard-liner named as migration minister

Greek Premier Mitsotakis reshuffles cabinet

ATHENS, Greece, March 15, (AP): Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis ordered a cabinet reshuffle as his conservative government works to address declining public approval over a deadly 2023 rail disaster and a rise in support for far-right parties.

In a nod to traditional conservatives, Makis Voriadis, a politician with a far-right background, was named as the new migration minister - a high-profile appointment as the governing party battles a loss of support to fringe rightist parties.

Other notable changes include moving a popular former minister of digital governance, Kyriakos Pierrakakis, to head up the finance ministry. Pierrakakis, 42, is seen as a rising star in the governing New Democracy party and a political centrist.

Kostis Hadtzidakis, the outgoing finance minister, was named as a new deputy prime minister. Foreign Minister Giorgos Gerapetritis and Defense Minister Nikos Dendias held on to their positions along with several other ministers in key government posts.

The new government ministers will be sworn in on Saturday.

The cabinet reorganization came a day after veteran conservative lawmaker Constantine Tassoulas was sworn in as Greece's new president, replacing Katerina Sakellaropoulou, who was the first woman to hold the largely ceremonial position.

Opposition parties criticized the appointment of Voriadis, 60, who was a prominent member of far-right and nationalist political groups and parties before joining New Democracy in 2012.



Newly appointed Finance Minister Kyriakos Pierrakakis, (centre), stands between Deputy Prime Minister Kostis Hatzidakis, (left), and Minister of Education Sofia Zacharaki, during a swearing in ceremony at the Presidential palace, in Athens, Greece on March 15. (AP)



People welcome protesters from provinces who have arrived ahead of a major rally this weekend in downtown Belgrade, Serbia on March 14. (AP)

Serbia's capital braces for major anti-government rally

A deafening sound of whistles and vuvuzelas echoed throughout downtown Belgrade on Saturday as Serbia's capital geared up for a major rally against populist President Aleksandar Vucic and his government.

Huge crowds have been converging on downtown Belgrade for the gathering seen as a culmination of months of almost daily anti-corruption protests that have posed the biggest challenge to Vucic's 13-year firm grip on power in Serbia.

On Friday evening, tens of thousands of people staged a joyous welcome for the students who have been marching of cycling for days from across Serbia toward Belgrade for the main rally on Saturday afternoon. From early morning, people started assembling in various parts of the city, preparing to march toward the center.

Tensions have been running high ahead of the demonstrations with Vucic repeatedly warn-

ing of alleged plans for unrest while threatening arrests and harsh sentences for any incidents.

Fueled fears of clashes, Vucic's supporters have been camping in central Belgrade in front of his headquarters. The crowd included ex-members of a dreaded paramilitary unit involved in the assassination in 2003 of Serbia's first democratic Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic, as well as soccer hooligans who are known for causing violence. (AP)

Heavy rains hit Italian regions

ROME, March 15, (AP): Heavy rains hit the Italian regions of Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna on Friday, pushing the main rivers in the regions above alert levels for flooding.

In the central Tuscany region, schools remained closed in several cities, including Florence, where the local administration closed museums, cinemas and theatres.

Local authorities and civil protection heightened the alert level for the main river Arno, which crosses the cities of Florence and Pisa, and was expected to reach its peak later on Friday afternoon.



Sandbags are placed on a street in Bologna, Italy on March 14 as heavy rain battered the northern Emilia-Romagna region, where local rivers were above alert levels. (AP)

INTERNATIONAL

'G7 members filled with arrogance, prejudice'

China lashes out at G7 over statements on maritime security

TAIPEI, Taiwan, March 15, (AP): China has lashed out at accusations it is endangering maritime safety made by top diplomats from the Group of 7 industrialized democracies in a joint statement, saying the G7 members are "filled with arrogance, prejudice and malicious intentions."

Even for China's generally overheated diplomatic language, the statement issued Saturday was unusually vitriolic, although it did not threaten any retaliation.

In the Friday statement that sparked the Chinese response, the G7 said, "We condemn China's illicit, provocative, coercive and dangerous actions that seek unilaterally to alter the status quo in such a way as to risk undermining the stability of regions, including through land reclamations, and building of outposts, as well as their use for military purpose."

"We reaffirm that our basic policies on Taiwan remain unchanged and emphasize the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait as indispensable to international security and prosperity," the statement said, referring to the crucial waterway separating China from the self-governing island republic it claims as its own territory.



From left: Japanese Foreign Minister Iwama Takeshi, Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani and EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas attend the G7 foreign ministers meeting in La Malbaie, Canada on March 14. (AP)

In the response issued through its embassy in Canada, where the two-day G7 meeting was held in La Malbaie, Quebec, China said the statement "repeated the same old rhetoric, ignored facts and China's solemn position, grossly interfered in China's internal affairs, and bla-

stantly smeared China."

"The statements are filled with arrogance, prejudice and malicious intentions to suppress and attack China. China strongly deplores and opposes this and has lodged solemn representations with the Canadian side," the statement said.

China claims virtually the entire South China Sea, through which passes around \$5 trillion in global trade. It has dismissed and occasionally clashed with other countries that claim parts of the sea, especially the Philippines, a U.S. treaty partner.

China is not a member of the G7 but closely follows all comments and references to its international status made by international organizations or in foreign countries, responding to criticism with caustic language.

China has firmly rejected a U.N.-affiliated court's ruling that invalidated most of its claims to the South China Sea and says its claim to Taiwan is non-negotiable, even if China has to use force against the island.

China routinely sends ships and warplanes into airspace and waters near Taiwan, built military bases on human-made islands in the South China Sea and recently staged surprise live-fire exercises in the Tasman Sea between Australia and New Zealand for which it gave no advance notice.

Australia's aviation authority said it learned of the drills just 30 minutes before they began, not from Beijing but from a pilot flying in the area, and 49 commercial flights were forced to alter their flight paths in response.



Thai rescue workers work the scene after an elevated road being built collapsed in Bangkok, Thailand on March 15. (AP)

Bangkok elevated road collapse kills 5

An elevated road being built in Thailand's capital Bangkok collapsed, killing at least five people, officials said.

The collapse, which happened in the early morning in southwestern Bangkok, also injured 24 other people at the construction site, said Transport Minister Suriya Jungrungreangkit.

Suriya offered his condolences and said victims would be compensated by contractors and relevant agencies. He said four workers and

an engineer were killed, and no road users were affected as traffic lanes near the construction were closed at the time.

Bangkok police commander Siam Boonsom said authorities were still investigating to determine the cause of the collapse and that they would pursue legal actions against those found responsible.

Photos from the site showed that large metal and concrete structures fell on the ground and completely blocked the road. (AP)

Philippine ex-prez Duterte appears by video link at International Criminal Court hearing

THE HAGUE, Netherlands, March 15, (AP): Jailed former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte appeared Friday by videoconference before judges at the International Criminal Court, days after his arrest in Manila on murder charges linked to the deadly "war on drugs" that he oversaw while in office.

The 79-year-old Duterte didn't show up at the court in The Hague, but appeared on a video screen from the detention center where he is be-

ing held, about a mile (1½ kilometers) away.

For families of victims of the drugs crackdown, Duterte's appearance in court was a long-awaited sign of hope. Duterte's vocal supporters call the arrest illegal.

His lawyer, Salvador Medialdea, used the hearing to slam his arrest in Manila as a "pure and simple kidnapping." He said Duterte "was denied all access to the legal recourse in the country of his citizenship,

and this all in the nature of political score-settling."

Presiding Judge Iulia Antoanella Motoc set a pretrial hearing date of Sept. 23 to establish if prosecution evidence is strong enough to merit sending the case to trial. If a trial does go ahead, it could take years, and if Duterte is convicted, he faces a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

Estimates of the death toll during Duterte's presidential term vary, from the more than 6,000 that the national police have reported and up to 30,000, according to numbers from human rights groups.

The ICC judge said that Duterte had been allowed to participate in his first hearing by videoconference because he had just come off a long flight.

Duterte, wearing a jacket and tie, listened to the hearing through headphones, often with his eyes closed. He spoke in English to confirm his name, and his date and place of birth. He was not required to enter a plea. The hearing, which started about a half-hour late, lasted around 30 minutes.

Medialdea said that Duterte had been under observation at a hospital because of health issues.

The judge, addressing Duterte, said: "The court doctor was of the opinion that you were fully mentally aware and fit."



Former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte is seen on a screen in the courtroom of the International Criminal Court (ICC) with his lawyer Salvador Medialdea seated left, in The Hague, Netherlands on March 14. (AP)

Police arrest man in fatal knife attack on YouTuber

Japan PM criticized over gifts to lawmakers

TOKYO, March 15, (AP): Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba is being criticized for distributing gift certificates to 15 first-year lawmakers in his party in a scandal shaking his already weak grip on power.

Ishiba has denied breaking political funding laws and said he won't resign. But opposition lawmakers and rivals in his own party have said the gifts were excessive and showed Ishiba was out of touch, especially after the governing Liberal Democratic Party had a disastrous election loss last year due to its earlier political funding irregularities.

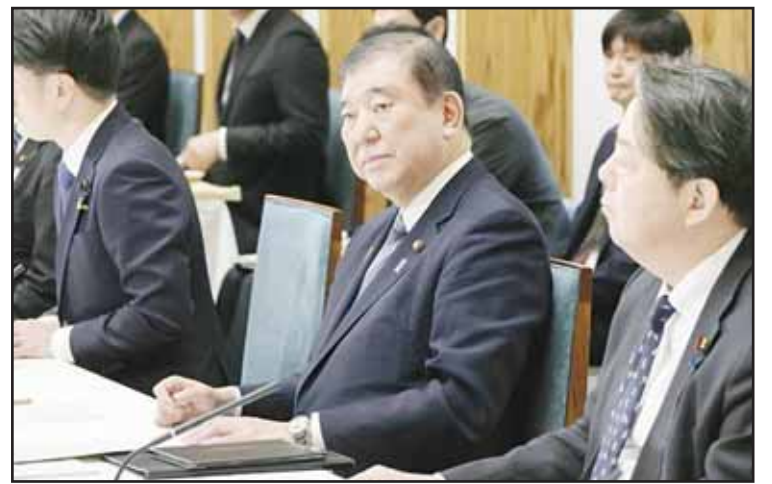
Japanese media reported earlier this week that Ishiba's aide delivered gift certificates worth 100,000 yen (\$670) to the offices of the 15 lawmakers prior to their private dinner with the prime minister.

Ishiba is leading a minority government after his LDP and its junior coalition partner Komeito lost the October election in the lower house, the more powerful of Japan's two-chamber parliament. LDP remains the largest party, but its steep losses made it less cohesive.

The beleaguered prime minister has already struggled to get his budget approved and rival conservatives are looking for chances to oust him.

Ishiba on Thursday night admitted giving the gift certificates as a souvenir and in appreciation for their work.

He apologized for causing concern and displeasure, but said the vouchers were not intended as donations for their



Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba attends a cabinet meeting at the prime minister's office in Tokyo, Japan on March 14. (AP)

political activity and that none of the recipients live in his electoral district. The gift certificates can be used for purchases at department stores in Japan.

Also:

TOKYO: Police in Japan said Friday that they had arrested a suspect in the fatal stabbing of a YouTuber while she was livestreaming on a downtown Tokyo street.

Tokyo metropolitan police said they had arrested **Kenji Takano**, 42, on the spot on suspicion of attempted murder Tuesday. He has since been sent to the prosecutors but has not been charged

yet. The victim, **Airi Sato**, 22, was rushed to a hospital with critical injuries after the attacker stabbed her repeatedly in her upper body, police said, and was later pronounced dead.

Witnesses and livestream viewers said that they heard her screaming for help, and the stream suddenly went black.

The suspect told police that he got to know Sato through her livestreaming and had seen her in person a number of times, and that they had a financial dispute, according to media reports, including the Asahi newspaper.

S.Africa's ambassador to US 'is no longer welcome' in country: Rubio

WASHINGTON, March 15, (AP): US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Friday that South Africa's ambassador to the United States "is no longer welcome" in the country, in the latest Trump administration move targeting the African nation.

Rubio, in a post on X, accused **Ebrahim Rasool** of being a "race-baiting politician" who hates President Donald Trump. Rubio declared the South African diplomat "persona non grata."

Neither Rubio, who posted as he was flying back to Washington from a Group of 7 foreign ministers meeting in Canada, nor the State Department gave any immediate explanation for the decision.

But Rubio linked to a story by the ultraconservative Breitbart news site about a talk Rasool gave earlier Friday as part of a South African think tank's webinar in which he spoke about actions taken by the Trump administration in the context of a United States where white people soon would no longer be in the majority.

Both Trump and his ally Elon Musk, who grew up in South Africa, have criticized the country's Black-led government over a new land law they claim

discriminates against white people.

It is highly unusual for the U.S. to expel a foreign ambassador, although lower-ranking diplomats are more frequently targeted with persona non grata status.

At the height of U.S.-Russia diplomatic expulsions during the Cold War and then again over Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, allegations of interference in the 2016 U.S. election and the 2018 poisoning of a former Russian intelligence officer in Britain, neither Washington nor Moscow saw fit to expel the respective ambassadors.

A statement from the office of South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said it had "noted the regrettable expulsion" of Rasool and called on its diplomatic officials "to maintain the established diplomatic decorum in their engagement with the matter."

"South Africa remains committed to building a mutually beneficial relationship with the United States of America," the statement said.

Rasool previously served as his country's ambassador to the U.S. from 2010 to 2015 before returning to the post in January.

As a child, he and his family were evicted from a Cape Town neighborhood designated for white people. Rasool became an anti-apartheid campaigner, serving time in prison for his activism and identifying as a comrade of the country's first post-apartheid president, Nelson Mandela.



Rasool

Peru's ex-president ends hunger strike

LIMA, Peru, March 15, (AP): Former Peruvian president **Pedro Castillo** has ended a four-day hunger strike that he began in protest of his trial on rebellion and other charges, judicial authorities announced Friday.

A judicial clerk informed the Supreme Court's panel overseeing the case that Castillo ended the hunger strike Thursday afternoon after being released from a hospital where he was taken that same day because of a "health problem."

Castillo has been detained since Dec. 7, 2022, when he gave a televised speech in which he declared the dissolution of

Congress and his intent to rule by decree. Congress removed him from office that same day.

Now, the former president faces a trial on charges of rebellion, grave abuse of authority and disturbing public tranquility in a case that has polarized the South American nation. The prosecution is seeking 34 years in prison for the former president.

Castillo has described his trial as "politicized" and a "pantomime" and has refused legal counsel provided by the judicial system.



Castillo



M23 rebels enter the centre of east Congo's second-largest city, Bukavu, and take control of the South Kivu province administrative office on Feb 16. (AP)

S.Africa, Tanzania and Malawi to withdraw troops from conflict-torn eastern Congo

HARARE, Zimbabwe, March 15, (AP): African leaders announced the withdrawal of thousands of troops from South Africa, Tanzania and Malawi who were sent to quell insurgencies in mineral-rich eastern Congo, where M23 rebels have killed some of the peacekeepers while overrunning the region this year.

Troops from the three countries were sent in 2023 under the banner of the Southern African Development Community, or SADC, but public opposition to the deployment has surged since 14 South African and three Malawian peacekeepers were killed by the rebels in January.

The decision was announced after a virtual meeting of the 16-member bloc, which also includes Congo, and came a day after Angola announced it would host peace talks next week between the Con-

golese government and the M23 rebels. No timetable was announced for the pullout of troops, who have numbered up to 3,000, but the SADC said in a statement that it would be a "phased withdrawal."

South African Foreign Minister Ronald Lamola told his country's national broadcaster, SABC, that other belligerents should also now withdraw. "All the forces that are not invited, non-invited parties, in that conflict must also withdraw and be engaged in a process of ceasefire," Lamola said.

Speaking at a meeting in South Africa with European Union leaders in the coastal city of Cape Town, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said the decision to withdraw troops was made because a ceasefire process

"has now been embraced."

He expressed confidence in the planned peace talks between Congo and M23 under the mediation of Angolan President João Lourenço, but said there would need to be humanitarian support for the people of eastern Congo and political support for the country to ensure a ceasefire holds. The SADC mission was part of a myriad of forces operating in the mineral-rich region plagued by decades of armed violence. They include Congolese government soldiers, foreign mercenaries, a United Nations peacekeeping force and more than 100 groups that are fighting for power, land and valuable mineral resources. Others try to defend their communities. Some armed groups have been accused of mass killings targeting ethnic groups.

Pakistan's army accuses India of sponsoring terror after 26 hostages killed in train attack

ISLAMABAD, March 15, (AP): Pakistan's military accused neighboring

India on Friday of sponsoring insurgents in the restive southwest as more

survivors recounted their ordeal from the unprecedented attack by armed separatists this week that killed 26 passengers aboard a hijacked train.

The scope of the attack in Balochistan province underscored the struggles that Pakistan faces in efforts to reign in militant groups as attacks across the country escalated in recent years.

Accusing India and neighboring Afghanistan has been Islamabad's go-to strategy in the past. No evidence was offered for the latest accusation, which New Delhi promptly rejected.

In the attack Tuesday, members of the outlawed Baloch Liberation Army ambushed a train in a remote area, took about 400 people onboard hostage and triggered a firefight with security forces. The standoff lasted until late Wednesday, when the army said 33 hijackers were killed.



Relatives comfort each other during the funeral prayer of a victim of a train attack, in Quetta, Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province on March 13. (AP)

Cuba suffers power outage leaving millions in dark

HAVANA, March 15, (AP): Cuba suffered a massive power outage Friday night affecting Havana and the country's provinces that left millions in the dark.

Cuba's Ministry of Energy and Mines said at around 8:15 p.m. local time an outage at the Diezmero substation on the outskirts of Havana had caused "a significant loss of generation in western Cuba and, with it, the failure of the National Electric System."

The ministry said on its account on the social platform X that it is "working on the recovery process."

The streets of Havana were dark and empty, with light coming only from the windows of hotels that had generators. Internet service was affected.

People in provinces as far away as Guantánamo, Artemisa, Santiago de Cuba, and Santa Clara reported experiencing blackouts with just flickers of light.

Earlier, the Electric Union, the state agency that regulates the sector, said in its daily report that peak-hour demand would be around 3,250 megawatts and the deficit would reach around 1,380 megawatts, meaning 42% of the national energy system would be shut down. This figure is not the highest in recent memory.

Cuba suffered the ree widespread outages in its national energy system at the end of last year, leaving the island in the dark amid a serious economic crisis.

Kuwait oil price drops to \$74.35 pb

KUWAIT CITY, March 15, (KUNA): Kuwaiti oil price fell by 55 cents to USD 74.35 per barrel in Friday's trading compared to Thursday's rate of USD 74.90 pb, reported Kuwait Petro-

leum Corporation (KPC).

In global markets, Brent futures increased by 70 cents to USD 70.58 pb, as West Texas crude rose by 63 cents to reach USD 67.18 a barrel.

Other Voices

'A secure investment option'

Gold surges past \$3,000 per ounce amid rising demand

By **Kamel Al-Harami**
Independent Oil Analyst

Gold is reaching its peak value of nearly \$3,000 per troy ounce. Demand is skyrocketing and is sustaining longer than usual, lasting more than three months instead of the typical one to two weeks.

It is expected that gold could surpass \$3,500 per ounce by the end of this year. Fears of trade wars by the US administration and inflation are pushing investors toward safer investments, with gold being the preferred choice in the short term.

Gold has surged past \$3,000 per ounce, marking a tenfold increase since the year 2000 and significantly outperforming major stock indices.

Gold has been performing well among assets, particularly with the arrival of the new U.S. administration. It has risen by about 15 percent since January of this year, due to U.S. tariff policies and the imposition of various import taxes. These factors are contributing to inflation concerns

as well as raising fears of an economic slowdown. As a result, investors are turning to gold as a safe asset to secure their investments both in the short and long term.

One advantage of gold is its transparency. It can be bought and sold anywhere in the world. Its price is transparent, with no major restrictions.

London and New York are the world's main gold trading centers. In London, gold is typically traded in 400-troy ounce bars, weighing about 12.5 kg. In New York, however, the standard is a 1 kg bar, similar to those used in Kuwait.

This means gold is often transported from London to New York via Switzerland, which is home to the world's largest gold refineries, where it is melted down and recast.

Recent changes in U.S. trade policies and the imposition of tariffs have led to higher gold prices in the U.S. compared to London, creating trading opportunities to transport gold across the Atlantic.

Gold is the yellow metal found in almost every home, and for good reason. It is easy to buy, easy to sell, and most importantly, its price is transparent. Above all, gold is a long-term safe haven for security. It is always there when you need it most.



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Al-Harami

Business

Boursa Kuwait sees mixed performance

23 companies show positive stock movement

KUWAIT CITY, March 15, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait witnessed over the past week diverse performance as the indexes of the number, volume and value of the traded chips turned bullish while the benchmark was bearish.

AlShall Consulting Company said in a report released on Saturday that Alshall index (value) reached in the end of Thursday's trades some 700.2 points, falling by 15.9 points, 2.2 percent compared to the past week's closure. However, it remained bullish by 64 points, some 10.1 percent, compared to the 2024 closing.

Number of the companies' stock prices of which climbed, last week, reached 23 vis a vis 12 the previous week, while chips' prices of two companies steadied -- against three.

Bourse Kuwait, since 2016, has been playing a pivotal role in the development and innovation in the financial market.



Gulf Bank team with Kuwait Food Bank volunteer team.

Iftar meal distribution reaches Souq Sharq

Gulf Bank distributes iftar meals in Ramadan initiative

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: As part of its 2025 Ramadan initiative, Our Traditions Always Bring Us Together, Gulf Bank, in collaboration with the Kuwait Food Bank, is distributing Iftar meals to those in need across various areas in Kuwait over 20 days.

With the active involvement of the Sawa'ed Al-Khaleej volunteer team, Gulf Bank recently distributed a large number of Iftar meals at Souq Sharq. This initiative reflects the Bank's dedication to supporting the community, spreading joy, and reinforcing its commitment to social sustainability during the holy month of Ramadan.

Gulf Bank extended its appreciation to the Kuwait Food Bank for its dedication to providing and distributing meals to those in need. The Bank also commended its long-standing partnership with the organization, now in its eighth consecutive year, emphasizing their shared commitment to promoting sustainability within the community.

"For 64 years, Gulf Bank has played an integral role in Kuwait's economic and social growth, re-



Gulf Bank distributes Iftar meals in collaboration with Kuwait Food Bank.

maining committed to supporting those in need. We deeply understand the positive impact these efforts have on beneficiaries, especially during Ramadan," the Bank stated.

This initiative highlights Gulf Bank's deep commitment to sustainability, driving carefully curated

programs that create meaningful impact for both the Bank and the community. These efforts align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Kuwait's Vision 2035.

As a leading financial institution, Gulf Bank remains dedicated to sup-

porting active civil society organizations, particularly the Kuwait Food Bank, in recognition of its vital social and humanitarian contributions. The Bank firmly believes that the private sector plays a vital role in increasing awareness and driving meaningful change for important causes.

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

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



A group photo of KIB staff volunteers - Iftar Saem

KIB organizes meals distribution initiative throughout 'Ramadan'

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) organized an Iftar meals distribution initiative throughout the month of Ramadan in various areas around Kuwait. This initiative reflects the Bank's commitment to its comprehensive social responsibility strategy during the holy month. It also reinforces its efforts to foster meaningful collaboration in pursuit of sustainable development in Kuwait, in line with its dedication to supporting the community.

Commenting on the initiative, Abdullah Al Khamees, from the Marketing Department and the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, said: "The daily distribution of Iftar meals throughout the holy month underscores the Bank's commitment to supporting underprivileged communities, including low-income families and individuals in need. KIB is dedicated to spreading joy, bringing smiles to their faces, and upholding its social responsibility. The initiative also aligns with the Bank's ongoing efforts to create a positive impact and leave a meaningful humanitarian mark during this blessed month."

Al Khamees added that this volunteer-driven initiative, led by a team from KIB, plays a vital role in strengthening solidarity and cohesion within the community. He also emphasized the importance of volunteer organizations and charitable institutions in fostering a more united and cooperative society. Expressing his appreciation for the efforts of those involved, he urged all entities to continue their dedication and collaboration in delivering social and humanitarian services. This, he noted, is essen-

tial for ensuring the sustainability of efforts to support all segments of Kuwaiti society in a comprehensive and lasting manner.

It is worth noting that KIB considers the distribution of Iftar meals during Ramadan a vital and integral part of its comprehensive social responsibility program, reinforcing its active and meaningful role in the community. The Bank remains committed to leading Ramadan campaigns that encompass a diverse range of social and charitable initiatives, reflecting its main slogan 'Bank for Life'.

About KIB

Kuwait International Bank (KIB) is a bank that operates according to the Islamic Shari'ah, based in the State of Kuwait. Incorporated in 1973, and originally known as Kuwait Real Estate Bank, KIB made the transition to its current Islamic operating model in 2007. In 2018, KIB embarked on a new phase of its journey full of innovation and development. As part of its new strategic direction, the Bank focuses on offering a next-level customer experience under the slogan: "Bank for Life".

Through a network of branches spread across the State of Kuwait, KIB offers a broad range of banking products and services, as well as innovative digital banking solutions in line with international best standards. As part of its duty towards the community, the Bank also encompasses a leading social responsibility program that aims at positively impacting all members of the community through a wide range of impactful initiatives and activities.

Today, KIB has taken concrete steps in implementing its new strategic objectives. The Bank has cemented its role as a key player in the local banking industry and has continued to maintain its strong financial performance; enabling it to be globally recognized for its strong credit rating and financial position.



Al Khamees

Bringing joy to foster care children in collaboration with Dabdoob

Zain holds its annual Girgeaan celebration at social care centers



Al-Mahanna and Al-Musaibeeh with Zain's team and official partners.



Event brought joy to care center residents.



Theatrical performances joined by the centers' residents.

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: As part of its annual tradition, Zain held its Girgeaan celebration (traditional candy distribution) at the Ministry of Social Affairs' social care centers. This year, the company partnered with Dabdoob to spread joy among the residents of these centers, including foster care children, people with special needs, and elderly individuals, by distributing Zain Girgeaan, gifts, and toys.

The event was attended by Wafaa Al-Mahanna, Director

General of the Public Authority for Disability Affairs; Hamad Al-Musaibeeh, Zain Kuwait Corporate Relations Department Manager; as well as officials from Zain, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the Public Authority for Disability Affairs, alongside administrative and nursing staff from the care centers.

Zain takes great pride in hosting this humanitarian event each year under the umbrella of its Ramadan campaign, Zain Al-Shuhoor, where it shares the joy of Girgeaan

with foster care children, people with special needs, and elderly individuals residing in social care centers. The celebration featured a variety of cultural and theatrical performances presented by the residents, bringing happiness to their hearts.

This year, Zain collaborated with Dabdoob, the online children's toys platform, to distribute gifts and toys at the event, fostering a warm, family-like atmosphere, which embraced the essence of Ramadan's rich traditions

while adding a heartfelt touch of appreciation to these cherished members of the community.

Year after year, Zain Al-Shuhoor continues to evolve, expanding its programs and initiatives. Through this campaign, the company strengthens its collaboration with various entities across Kuwait, embodying the spirit of generosity that defines the Holy Month while reflecting the deep-rooted values of Kuwaitis in helping others and promoting love and peace.

Ramadan initiative strengthens social responsibility efforts

ABK reinforces commitment to community support through annual Ramadan iftar distribution initiative

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is proud to announce its ongoing commitment to the community through its annual Ramadan iftar distribution initiative in cooperation with Kuwait Red Crescent Society. This initiative witnessed noteworthy participation from various employees across the Bank and is a testament to ABK's dedicated support towards those in need throughout the year, aligning with its role as a responsible banking institution in Kuwait.

Sager Albenali, Chief Communications Officer at ABK, highlighted that the act of giving during Ramadan contributes to supporting those in need, and enhancing the sense of responsibility towards others. This effort underlines the importance of building a cohesive community characterized by solidarity served as an opportunity for the Bank's employees to volunteer in serving the community.

He remarked, "The holy month of Ramadan is a time for giving. We believe in the importance of extending a helping hand where this initiative embodies the noble values that represent the essence of Ramadan, and demonstrates ABK's continued dedication to society."

The annual Ramadan campaign is part of ABK's social responsibility program aimed at helping as many people in need in Kuwait. Albenali explained, "This program reflects the Bank's belief in and commitment to CSR, emphasizing our endeavour to promote the spirit of volunteering. The Bank continuously endeavours to support all segments of society."

He concluded by asserting, "ABK strives to promote initiatives that create a long-lasting impact on the community. The Bank believes that these efforts are a true investment in its future, and we continue to commit to these efforts, thereby solidifying ABK's position as an integral part of the community."

Since its establishment in 1967, ABK has progressed to become one of the leading Kuwaiti banks in the region that offers a wide array of personal, corporate, and private banking



A group of bank volunteers.



Distributing iftar meals in one of the areas.



Distribution of food baskets.



Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Red Crescent Society teams in a group photo.



Part of the iftar meals distribution.



Great turnout for the bank's Ramadan initiative.

products and services. ABK also provides a broad range of local, regional, and global investment solutions and services through its subsidiary, ABK Capital.

Across the region, the Bank offers individuals and corporates the convenience of comprehensive

banking and financial services in the Egyptian market through ABK-Egypt's network of 45 branches.

This is in addition to ABK's three branches located in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) in the United Arab Emirates, servicing both Ku-

waiti and Emirati individual and corporate clients.

ABK is a strong supporter of Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association's 'Let's Be Aware' awareness campaign. Through its various initiatives, the Bank aims to promote financial

inclusion by educating Kuwaiti society about customer rights, responsibilities, and the different types of banking and special needs services. Additionally, ABK consistently provides strategic information on how to avoid banking and financial fraud, loan

application requirements, digital services, and more.

For more information about ABK, please follow the Bank's Instagram account @abk_kuwait, visit eahli.com, contact Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 or visit one of the Bank's branches across Kuwait.

Lebanon seeks IMF support

IMF mission praises Lebanon's economic stabilization efforts

BEIRUT, March 15: An International Monetary Fund (IMF) team, led by Mr. Ernesto Ramirez Rigo, concluded a fact-finding mission to Lebanon this week, acknowledging the positive steps taken by the Central Bank of Lebanon (Banque du Liban, BDL) since August 2023 while emphasizing the need for comprehensive reforms to address the country's deep-rooted economic challenges.

The IMF team, which visited Beirut from March 10-13, 2025, held discussions with key Lebanese officials, including President Joseph Aoun, Speaker Nabih Berri, Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, and BDL Governor. The mission welcomed the authorities' request for a new IMF-supported program to help tackle Lebanon's ongoing economic crisis, which has been exacerbated by the 2019 financial collapse and the recent conflict.

Praise for Monetary Policy and Stabilization Efforts

The IMF highlighted the Central Bank of Lebanon's recent policy actions as critical in maintaining a degree of economic stability. Since mid-2023, the BDL has ended monetary financing and foreign exchange subsidies, contributing to a decline in inflation and a stabilization of the exchange rate. These measures, coupled with improved revenue collection, have supported essential government spending despite intensified expenditure pressures in late 2024.

"The Central Bank of Lebanon has taken commendable steps to stabilize the economy," said Mr. Ramirez Rigo. "The elimination of the fiscal deficit and the reduction of inflationary pressures are positive developments, but much more needs to be done to address the broader economic and social challenges."

Persistent Challenges and the Need for Comprehensive Reforms

Despite these efforts, Lebanon's economy remains in severe distress. The IMF noted that poverty and unemployment rates are exceptionally high, and the banking sector's collapse continues to hinder economic activity and credit provision. The recent conflict has further worsened the situation, with significant infrastructure damage, housing destruction, and displacement adding to the country's humanitarian and reconstruction needs.

Lebanon's hosting of a large refugee population also places additional strain on its economy. The IMF stressed that addressing these challenges will require coordinated international support and a robust reform agenda.

A Path Forward

The IMF emphasized the importance of a comprehensive economic rehabilitation strategy to restore growth, reduce unemployment, and improve social conditions. Key areas of focus include fiscal and debt sustainability, financial sector restructuring, governance reforms, and measures to enhance transparency and data provision.

"The IMF, alongside the international community, stands ready to support Lebanon's efforts to overcome these challenges," Mr. Ramirez Rigo stated. "A well-designed reform program is essential to lay the foundation for sustainable economic recovery."

The IMF team expressed gratitude to the Lebanese authorities for their constructive engagement during the mission and pledged to remain in close contact to assist in developing a detailed reform plan.

As Lebanon navigates its complex economic landscape, the Central Bank's recent achievements offer a glimmer of hope. However, the IMF's assessment underscores the urgent need for broader structural reforms and international collaboration to ensure long-term stability and growth.

Confirming the soundness of its risk management strategy and overall institutional resilience

Burgan Bank attains ISO 22301: 2019 BCMS certification

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: Burgan Bank announced that it has received – Business Continuity Management Systems (BCMS) certification, ISO 22301:2019, attesting to the Bank's forward-thinking risk management and mitigation strategies and confirming its ability to uphold its operations during times of disruption as per the best international practices. The certification further cements Burgan's position as a reliable financial partner for its customers and stakeholders, validating the Bank's robust frameworks, continuous investment in technology, and skilled workforce to ensure seamless banking operations.

"We are honored to be certified with ISO22301:2019 standard that published by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and recognized for our uncompromising safety and risk management measures," commented Ms. Moudi Al-Mahmoud, Executive Manager – Business Continuity Risk at Burgan Bank.

"In a market as sensitive and competitive as banking and finance, we spare no effort to be among the first to adopt the latest technologies across all fronts, especially those that fortify our institutional resilience and bolster our risk assessment and mitigation operations. As a trusted financial partner, we are committed to taking all necessary and extra measures to guarantee offering our customers a reliable and satisfactory banking experience despite any market turbulence."

It serves to note that BCMS-certified institutions have a proven track record of implementing and maintaining successful business continuity management systems that respond to the organization's evolving needs. Accredited BCMSs are required to showcase consistent qualitative and quantitative improvements, documented business continuity policies, system performance assessments, and qualified staff with clear responsibilities who super-



Ms. Moudi Al Mahmod, Executive Manager – Business Continuity Risk at Burgan Bank.

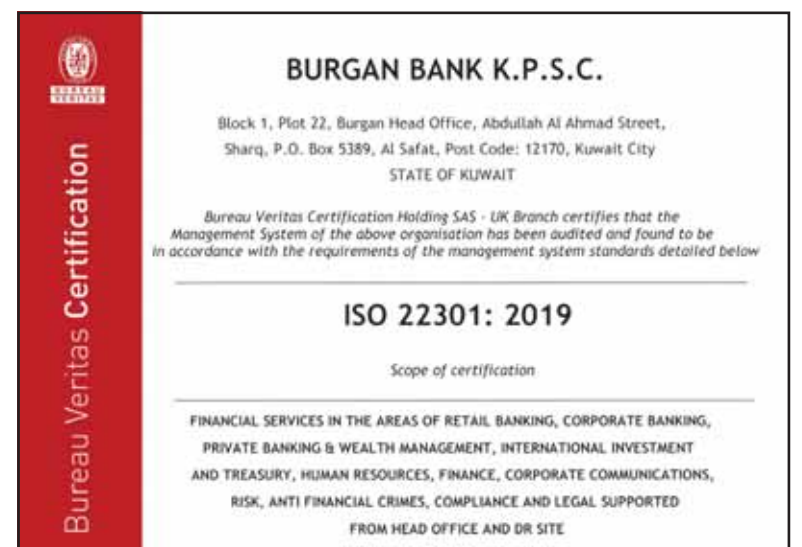
vised the planning, implementation, and operation of the BCMS.

In line with its committed adherence to international standards of service quality, Burgan Bank was awarded the ISO certifications 9001:2015 for Quality Management System, 27001:2022 for Information Security Management Systems, and 20000-1:2018 for Information Technology Service Management System.

About Burgan Bank

Established in 1977, Burgan Bank is a Kuwait-based conventional bank with a significant focus on the corporate and financial institution sectors. From its earliest days, the Bank has significantly sought to diversify its offering to cater to its growing retail and private banking customer base.

Burgan Bank has majority-owned subsidiaries, collectively known as the "Burgan Bank Group", in the MENAT region. This Group is supported by one of the largest branch networks across the region and includes: Gulf Bank Algeria – AGB (Algeria), Tunis International Bank – TIB (Tunisia), Burgan Bank Tur-



The ISO 22301:2019 Business Continuity Management System (BCMS) certification obtained by Burgan Bank.

key and United Gulf Bank B.S.C – UGB (Bahrain). Furthermore, Burgan Bank has a presence in the UAE through its corporate office, Burgan Financial Services Limited.

The Bank has continuously improved its performance over the years, through an expanded revenue structure, diversified funding sources, and a strong capital base. The adoption of state-of-the-art services and technology has positioned it as a trendsetter in the domestic market and within the MENA region. Moreover, Burgan Bank's brand has been built on a foundation of real values – trust, commitment, excellence, and progression – which serve as a reminder of the high standards to which the Bank always aspires. In fact, the Bank's core philosophy of 'Driven by You' is the foundation on which its products and services are continuously developed.

Burgan Bank has achieved the LEED v4.1 O+M: EB Gold Certification for its Head Office in Kuwait City. The Bank has also obtained the ISO/IEC 27001:

2022 Information Security Management Systems certificate (ISMS), ISO / IEC 27701:2019 Privacy Information Management Systems (PIMS), ISO/IEC 20000-1: 2018 Information Technology Service Management System (ITSMS) and was re-certified with the prestigious ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System (QMS), making it one of the few banks in the GCC and Kuwait to receive such certification for five consecutive times. At the same time, the Bank has the distinction of being the only Bank in Kuwait to have won the JP Morgan Chase Quality Recognition Award for twenty consecutive years. Moreover, in a testament to its dedication to the development of its human capital, Burgan Bank is the first bank in Kuwait to be certified as a Great Place to Work®, earning the distinct honor in 2023.

Burgan Bank is a majority-owned subsidiary of KIPCO (Kuwait Projects Company), one of the largest holding companies in the MENA region.

Yemeni banks relocate from Sanaa to Aden amid US sanctions

ADEN, March 15, (Xinhua): Several Yemeni banks headquartered in the capital city of Sanaa have decided to relocate their operations to the temporary capital, Aden, to avoid sanctions imposed by Washington on the Houthis group, the Central Bank of Yemen said Saturday.

In a statement, the central bank welcomed the commercial banks' relocation decision, noting that it is ready to provide all possible support and protection to

ensure the continuity of their services to Yemeni citizens at home and abroad.

The central bank expressed its readiness to work with all international and regional financial and relief institutions to safeguard the country's banking system and enable their smooth operation.

Acknowledging the complexities of the situation, the central bank said it is dealing with it cautiously and responsibly to avoid any repercussions that could harm

the interests of citizens and the national economy, particularly the banking sector.

In May last year, the central bank suspended dealings with six major commercial banks in the country due to their failure to relocate from the Houthi-controlled capital Sanaa to Aden and their cooperation with the militant group.

However, the decision was canceled later following external mediation.



Hamad Al-Bahar, Isam Al-Sager, Shaikha Al-Bahar and Salah Al-Fulaij during the General Assembly meeting.

All other agenda items okayed

NBK's General Assembly approves 25 percent cash dividends for 2nd half and 5% bonus shares for FY'24

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) held its Annual General Assembly (AGM) for the financial year 2024 on Saturday, March 15, 2025, with a quorum of 60.63%. The AGM approved all agenda items, including the Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute 25% cash dividend for the second half of the year (25 fils per share), bringing the total cash dividend for 2024 to 35% (35 fils per share). Additionally, shareholders approved the distribution of 5% bonus shares (5 shares for every 100 shares).

In his address to the AGM attendees, Mr. Hamad Al-Bahar, NBK Group Chairman, expressed the Board of Directors' pride in the Bank's outstanding achievements over the past year. He emphasized NBK's strong market position, reaffirming its ability to sustain its leadership in the financial sector, deliver added value to shareholders, and contribute to the long-term prosperity of the communities it serves.

"The year 2024 marked a milestone in NBK's journey, distinguished by significant achievements, including the issuance of our inaugural green bonds, the successful expansion of Weyay Bank, and the introduction of innovative and sustainable financial solutions," Al-Bahar said.

He highlighted NBK's unwavering focus on enhancing governance and delivering sustainable value to all stakeholders, emphasizing that collective efforts have driven exceptional results, further solidifying the Bank's leadership in the financial sector both locally and regionally.

Furthermore, Al-Bahar affirmed that throughout 2024, NBK remained committed to delivering innovative solutions and services tailored to evolving customer needs, showcasing its agility in keeping pace with rapid market shifts, fulfilling customer aspirations, and enhancing operational efficiency across its various business sectors.

Financing Strategic Projects

Al-Bahar emphasized NBK's long-standing commitment to driving economic growth and development in Kuwait, highlighting its role in financing strategic infrastructure projects, supporting entrepreneurs, and advancing financial inclusion – all in alignment with the objectives of Vision 2035.

He further highlighted NBK's active role in fostering prosperity across the markets in which it operates, underscoring its expanding international presence as a key enabler of trade, investment, and broader economic growth. He also noted that this unwavering commitment to driving economic progress aligns with NBK's vision of creating a more prosperous future for all stakeholders.

2025 Outlook

"As we look ahead to 2025 and beyond, I reaffirm our steadfast commitment to delivering value to all stakeholders, ensuring the sustainable long-term success of our organization, and driving further achievements and strategic progress. Our journey is built on solid financial foundations and reinforced by your continued trust and confidence," Al-Bahar stated.

He emphasized that NBK remains committed to financing strategic projects, fostering strong relationships with regulators, and maintaining its competitive edge in the local market while actively pursuing business growth in international markets. Additionally, the Bank continues to enhance its wealth management services across the GCC, leveraging its strategic advantage in offering Islamic banking solutions through Boubyan Bank.

Moreover, Al-Bahar reaffirmed NBK's unwavering commitment to sustainability, highlighting the bank's ambitious initiatives in sustainable financing, investments in responsible environmental projects, and its ongoing dedication to serving the communities in which it operates.

Acknowledgements

Al-Bahar commended the Bank's Board of Directors for its pivotal role in NBK's achievements, emphasizing the BOD members dedication, commitment, and strategic guidance in steering the Group's operations forward. He also praised the executive management and leadership team, extending his gratitude to every NBK employee, whom he described as the backbone of the Group's success.

Al-Bahar extended his sincere appreciation to the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Capital Markets Authority for their efforts in enhancing the operating environment and supporting the banking sector. He also expressed gratitude to NBK's shareholders for their unwavering support of the Board of Directors' vision and the executive management's strategic steps toward achieving the Bank's long-term objectives.

Al-Bahar concluded his speech by expressing his deep gratitude to 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, for their steadfast support in ensuring the stability and growth of Kuwait's economy.



Hamad Al-Bahar



Isam Al-Sager

Hamad Al-Bahar:

- 2024 marks a milestone in NBK's journey towards an inclusive and sustainable financial future with significant achievements
- NBK remains firmly positioned to sustain its leadership in the financial sector and maximize shareholders' value
- The Bank has demonstrated agility in adapting to market dynamics, fulfilling customer aspirations, and optimizing operational efficiency
- We are committed to driving economic growth in Kuwait and financing strategic projects
- We are dedicated to serving all stakeholders while strengthening our local competitiveness and expanding internationally
- The Bank continues to advance with ambitious initiatives in sustainable financing and responsible environmental investments

Resilience & Adaptability

Meanwhile, Mr. Isam Al-Sager, NBK Group Vice Chairman and CEO, underscored the Bank's key achievements for the financial year ended December 31, 2024. He emphasized that throughout the year, NBK stood as a symbol of strength and adaptability, delivering exceptional financial performance under the guiding theme: "Driving Innovation for an Inclusive and Sustainable Financial Future".

Addressing shareholders, Al-Sager stated: "Despite a rapidly evolving landscape marked by unprecedented global economic challenges, supply chain disruptions, and geopolitical complexities, NBK has showcased exceptional adaptability and resilience. We have successfully executed effective diversification strategies, leveraged technological innovation, expanded our global footprint, and capitalized on promising opportunities. Our diversified approach, spanning products, services, and markets, has been instrumental in driving our long-term, sustainable growth".

He stated that this strong performance led NBK Group to report a net profit of KD 600.1 million in 2024, reflecting a 7.0% year-on-year increase. Total assets surged to KD 40.3 billion as of December 31, 2024, marking a 7.1% growth, driven by robust performance across diverse business segments.

Furthermore, Al-Sager highlighted that the loan portfolio grew by 6.4% year-on-year, reaching KD 23.7 billion. Customer deposits saw a notable increase of 4.2% compared to 2023, rising to KD 22.9 billion, while shareholders' equity climbed to KD 3.9 billion, reflecting a year-on-year growth rate of 5.9%.

Al-Sager noted that the return on average assets stood at 1.55% in 2024, compared to 1.53% in 2023, while the return on average shareholders' equity reached 15.1%, up from 15.0% in the previous year.

He further stated that NPL/gross loan ratio stood at 1.34% as of the end of 2024, while the NPL coverage ratio reached 263%. This underscores the robustness of NBK's credit portfolio and financial position, reflecting the Bank's prudent

Isam Al-Sager:

- The Bank successfully delivered exceptional financial performance, demonstrating resilience and adaptability despite unprecedented economic headwinds
- We successfully executed our diversification strategies, leveraged technological innovation, and expanded global reach to capitalize on new opportunities
- We continued to offer innovative and diversified solutions, encompassing both conventional and Islamic banking through Boubyan Bank
- NBK Wealth achieved substantial growth in AUMs, strategically diversifying its investment portfolio across multiple asset classes
- NBK launched impactful sustainability initiatives as we continue affirming our commitment to ESG
- NBK issued Kuwait's first green bond worth USD500 million, reinforcing the Bank's dedication in solidifying its position as a leader in sustainable finance
- Our social contributions in community development reached KD 30 million in 2024, reflecting a 9% increase compared to 2023
- We remain committed to playing a key role in Kuwait's economic growth by leveraging financing opportunities arising from the National Development Plan and mega projects

risk management policies.

"This strong performance has enabled the Board of Directors to reward shareholders with a semi-annual dividend of 10 fils per share and propose a distribution of 25 fils per share in cash dividends for the second half of 2024, bringing the total cash dividends for the year to 35 fils per share. Additionally, the Board recommended a 5% bonus share distribution; a move that underscores the bank's financial strength and resilience," Al-Sager added.

Robust Operational Performance

Al-Sager emphasized that NBK Group's core business segments were instrumental in driving the Group's robust operational performance in 2024.

Moreover, he highlighted the Bank's commitment to delivering innovative and diversified banking solutions, spanning both conventional and Islamic banking through its Islamic banking arm, Boubyan Bank. He also noted key milestones during the year, including the launch of several fully digital prepaid cards and the continuous enhancement of the NBK Mobile Banking App, reinforcing the Bank's leadership in digital banking.

"NBK Wealth (NBKW) has enhanced its wealth management capabilities, achieving notable growth in Assets under Management (AUM) while deepening client relationships through innovative initiatives. By diversifying its investment portfolio across multiple asset classes and expanding its product range, NBKW has successfully attracted new clients and reinforced its position as a leading wealth manage-

ment powerhouse," Al-Sager noted.

He further highlighted that in 2024, NBK forged strategic partnerships with leading institutions such as JPMorgan Asset Management and Intervest, further expanding its investment solutions and enhancing opportunities for its customers.

Moreover, Al-Sager emphasized that the Corporate Banking Group reaffirmed its market leadership over the past year by delivering strategic support aimed at driving customer growth. He highlighted the Group's comprehensive solutions, including financial advisory services and efficient cash flow management, alongside its focused approach to expanding its client base by targeting high-growth companies and implementing advanced credit risk management strategies.

On the Consumer Banking Group front, Al-Sager highlighted that it successfully expanded its customer base by targeting new segments, including a tailored package for individuals entering the job market. He noted the introduction of innovative products such as digital prepaid cards, fixed savings accounts, and the Jeel account through the fully digital bank, Weyay, alongside the launch of several strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing customer experience.

Al-Sager also highlighted the success of NBK's International Banking Group (IBG) in maintaining a high-quality portfolio while expanding geographically. He noted the establishment of a Centralized Syndications Desk in the UAE, the diversification of operations in international markets through the launch of new retail banking services in Egypt and Bahrain, and the Bank's ongoing efforts to explore innovative growth opportunities to drive expansion into promising markets.

"The Operations and Information Technology Group made significant strides in NBK's digital transformation journey in 2024, launching a range of innovative projects across multiple markets that reinforced the Bank's leadership in delivering exceptional banking solutions, services, and digital products. Meanwhile, the Treasury Group focused on optimizing liquidity management by enhancing funding sources, reducing deposit maturities, and diversifying funding streams. These strategic initiatives played a crucial role in lowering financing costs while ensuring a strong and stable liquidity position, despite the challenges posed by regional geopolitical events," Al-Sager indicated.

Inaugural Green Bond Issuance

Al-Sager stated that in 2024, NBK achieved significant progress in advancing its ESG strategy, marked by the successful issuance of its inaugural USD500 million green bond, a testament to the bank's steadfast commitment to fostering a sustainable financial future and reinforcing its dedication to environmental responsibility.

Regarding NBK's social contributions, Al-Sager stated: "As the largest contributor to social responsibility in Kuwait, NBK's community investments reached KD 30 million (USD 97 million) in 2024, reflecting a 9% increase from the previous year". He highlighted that these investments were channeled into key initiatives, particularly in youth development, healthcare, and environmental protection, reinforcing the bank's commitment to creating a lasting and positive impact on society.

Future Outlook

Commenting on the outlook for 2025, Al-Sager stated: "NBK remains committed to playing a pivotal role in Kuwait's economic landscape by capitalizing on financing opportunities arising from the National Development Plan and mega projects. As part of our strategic expansion, we aim to further strengthen our presence in key international markets, with a strong emphasis on innovation and technological advancements to reinforce our leadership and drive sustainable growth."

He added that despite ongoing geopolitical shifts, NBK remains optimistic about seizing emerging opportunities. In 2025, the Bank will maintain its focus on business diversification through digital transformation, reinforcing its digital infrastructure with cutting-edge technology and agile models. Additionally, Weyay Bank will continue expanding its customer base by introducing innovative digital products.

A Legacy of Trust

Concluding his address to shareholders, Al-Sager stated: "On behalf of the Executive Team, I extend our deepest gratitude to our shareholders and all stakeholders for their invaluable contributions to the Bank's success. We reaffirm our unwavering commitment to safeguarding your interests and fostering our shared ambitions. Together, we will forge ahead toward a future defined by sustainable value creation, ensuring that our legacy of trust endures for generations to come."

Continued on Page 11



Part of the Board of Directors elections.



Anas Al-Saleh and Abdulwahab Al-Bader



Farouq Bastaki on the sidelines of the General Assembly.



A group photo of the Board of Directors.

Continued from Page 10

Prudent Policies

On the sidelines of the AGM, Ms. Shaikha Al-Bahar, NBK Deputy Group CEO, emphasized that the Bank's strong performance in 2024 underscores its agility in navigating market dynamics, driven by a commitment to innovation and a customer-centric approach that strengthens its future growth.

She highlighted that NBK's prudent risk management policies have reinforced its financial strength and sustained performance, further solidifying its market leadership. This resilience has enabled the Bank to navigate an evolving financial landscape, leveraging a flexible business model, a strategic focus on diversification and expansion, and a prudent approach to risk management.

International Banking Group

Al-Bahar highlighted that the International Banking Group (IBG) successfully navigated a challenging operating environment in the past year, overcoming economic uncertainties and currency fluctuations. She emphasized that the Group's achievements were driven by the strength of NBK's brand, an experienced team, and an innovative approach. The Bank further reinforced its financial position, with IBG's assets accounting for 44% of NBK Group's total assets and contributing 24% of net operating income and 23% of profits in 2024, underscoring its robust operational performance.

She highlighted that IBG successfully maintained a high-quality asset portfolio across various markets. Over the past year, the Group expanded its real estate financing offerings for non-residents to include several European countries while reinforcing its diversification strategy across international markets. She noted that the Singapore branch has been leveraged as a key hub for Asia, while the Bank's branch in France has played a pivotal role in expanding NBK's presence within the European Union. Additionally, IBG conducted feasibility studies to explore new expansion opportunities, further strengthening its global footprint.

Furthermore, Al-Bahar noted that in the retail banking sector, IBG introduced tailored offerings designed to meet the needs of affluent clients. This included the launch of Beyond Banking in Egypt and Privilege Banking in Bahrain, underscoring the Group's commitment to delivering premium banking services and staying ahead of evolving market demands.

"In 2025, the Group's strategic priorities will remain focused on reinforcing risk management frameworks, optimizing operational efficiency through cost rationalization and advanced technological integration, in addition to deepening its commitment to sustainability by aligning operations with global ESG standards; solidifying its position as a responsible and sustainable financial institution," Al-Bahar added.

Saudi Arabia and Egypt: Key Growth Markets

While reaffirming NBK's position as an international bank with a strong presence across multiple markets, Al-Bahar emphasized that the Bank is currently prioritizing the GCC, particularly Saudi Arabia, which stands as one of the most significant growth markets within NBK Group's international operations.

She highlighted that the Bank serves a broad spectrum of sectors within the Saudi economy and maintains strong relationships with clients across various industries. She further noted that NBK is actively fostering the growth of its wealth management business in Saudi Arabia through NBK Wealth while expanding its offerings to clients with diversified funds and tailored wealth management services.

Moreover, Al-Bahar emphasized that alongside its focus on the Saudi market, NBK remains committed to the Egyptian market as a key growth driver and a long-term strategic investment. She reaffirmed the Group's dedication to expanding its presence and further strengthening its position in the country.

Digital Solutions

Al-Bahar stated that in 2024, NBK reinforced its leadership position in Kuwait and the region, driven by substantial investments in technology and digital banking services over recent years. She emphasized the Bank's commitment to shaping the future of fintech and staying ahead of global advancements in the sector.

She also highlighted the Bank's unwavering commitment to enhancing customer value by redefining the banking experience through innovative products and advanced digital solutions. This dedication was reflected in a diverse range of new offerings and strategic initiatives implemented across various business sectors in 2024, reinforcing NBK's leadership in delivering cutting-edge banking services that not only meet but often exceed customer expectations.

Al-Bahar further emphasized that over the past year, NBK has continued to enhance its digital offerings to deliver a seamless and innovative banking experience. Notably, the NBK Mobile Banking App, Kuwait's highest-rated mobile banking application, underwent significant advancements in 2024, introducing numerous enhanced services and new features.



Shaikha Al-Bahar during the general assembly.



Salah Al-Fulaij

Shaikha Al-Bahar:

- Prudent risk management reinforced financial strength and ensured sustainable performance
- A flexible business model and a diverse strategy enabled NBK to navigate an evolving financial landscape
- International Operations maintains a high-quality asset portfolio across diverse markets
- NBK prioritizes growth in GCC markets, particularly Saudi Arabia, alongside its strategic focus on Egypt
- We continue preparing for the future of Fintech and keeping pace with the latest global developments in this space
- Elevating customer experience through cutting-edge technologies and data-driven strategies remains a key priority

Salah Al-Fulaij:

- NBK leads digital innovation across financial institutions, setting new benchmarks for the financial services industry
- Strategic investments in the next generation lay the foundation for long-term sustainable growth
- We continued to expand our digital banking solutions to meet the evolving needs of younger customers
- "Personal Banking" shifts from a traditional sales approach to an advisory-driven model tailored to customer needs
- We maintain an optimistic outlook for corporate banking, supported by the anticipated revival of major government projects
- We are leveraging technology and adapting to regulatory developments to mitigate risks and enhance decision-making
- The Bank provided 101.5K training hours to employees in 2024 and our Kuwaitization rate soared to 78%

Operational Automation

Al-Bahar highlighted NBK's advancements in leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) and automating banking processes, successfully implementing 102 technical operations using Robotic Process Automation (RPA) with a 98% success rate. She noted that the Bank is committed to expanding the adoption of RPA technology across its various international markets, having already deployed it in three global locations.

She emphasized that, as part of its forward-looking vision, NBK is committed to enhancing customer experience through cutting-edge technologies and data-driven strategies. Moreover, she highlighted the Bank's future plans, which include refining user journeys in mobile and internet banking, advancing call center technologies, expanding customer engagement across social media platforms, and exploring AI applications to create greater value for both customers and the Bank. These initiatives reinforce NBK's commitment to continuous innovation and adaptability in an evolving digital landscape.

She reaffirmed NBK's commitment to delivering best-in-class banking solutions by prioritizing customer feedback and leveraging it to drive informed decision-making. She explained that through advanced data analytics tools such as CleverTap, the Bank continues to gather comprehensive insights, enabling continuous enhancements to the customer experience while strengthening engagement and satisfaction.

Furthermore, Al-Bahar highlighted the launch of the NBK Tech Academy last year, underscoring the Bank's commitment to keeping pace with digital advancements in technology, information security, and data protection. She emphasized the vital role of digital skills in shaping the future of banking services, noting that the academy achieved remarkable success in its inaugural year, with 10 trainees successfully completing an intensive six-month training program.

Social Initiatives

Al-Bahar affirmed NBK's continued commitment to community initiatives over the past year, highlighting the expansion of the Bankee Program. This initiative, designed to enhance financial literacy, continues to equip school students with essential financial skills, fostering a deeper understanding of responsible money management from an early age. In its second year, the program grew to include 61 schools, engaging 32,235 students and 7,335 teachers. This expansion reflects the Bank's dedication to fostering a financially aware and independent generation, promoting financial inclusion, and instilling a culture of savings.

"As part of its unwavering commitment to fostering the next generation of women leaders, 2024 marked the launch of the second edition of the NBK RISE program, welcoming 25 trainees from diverse professional backgrounds," Al-Bahar stated. She further emphasized that the program has earned widespread acclaim and prestigious accolades, including the Special Recognition for Developing Women Leaders award from MERIT and Best Bank for Diversity and Inclusion – Kuwait from Euromoney Magazine.

Innovation and Digital Transformation

Reflecting on NBK's achievements in 2024, Mr. Salah Al-Fulaij, CEO – NBK Kuwait, stated on the sidelines of the AGM that last year, the Bank successfully reinforced its leadership in Kuwait and

strengthened customer loyalty through various strategic initiatives. He highlighted that customer satisfaction with NBK's services and products remained exceptionally strong at 93%.

Al-Fulaij further emphasized NBK's position at the forefront of financial institutions in digital innovation, noting that the bank received numerous prestigious awards in 2024 in recognition of its achievements in innovation, digital transformation, and advanced banking solutions that cater to evolving customer needs. Most notably, NBK was named "Best in Innovation- Global Winner" for 2024, outdoing conventional and Islamic banks, by Global Finance Magazine.

He added that NBK has continuously enhanced and upgraded NBK Mobile Banking App, introducing 65 new features over the past year to optimize both the user interface and overall customer experience. These advancements have positioned the app as a benchmark for digital banking excellence, earning several prestigious awards, including, Most Improved App for Digital Payments - Kuwait, Best in Innovation- Global Winner, and Best Mobile Banking App – Kuwait, from Global Finance Magazine.

"While NBK remains committed to delivering innovative and comprehensive financial solutions to its existing customers, it is also strategically investing in the next generation. By focusing on the youth segment, the bank aims to build a solid foundation for sustainable future growth, ensuring long-term engagement and financial empowerment for young customers," Al-Fulaij stated.

He emphasized that the remarkable success of Weyay Bank since its launch as Kuwait's first digital bank in 2021, and the demand for its services surpassing expectations by four times, underscores the strong preference among the country's youth for innovative digital banking solutions. He noted that in 2024, Weyay continued to cater to this demographic by introducing groundbreaking products, including the "Jeel" card, the "SELECT" digital prepaid card for students, and the saving pot "Pro", designed to foster a culture of financial responsibility and savings among young individuals.

Advisory Role

Al-Fulaij stated that the Consumer Banking Group has focused on enhancing its digital offerings to provide a smoother, more secure mobile banking experience aimed at reducing costs, minimizing customer waiting times at branches, and improving overall satisfaction. He noted that in 2025, the Group will prioritize fostering a culture of forward-thinking, shifting from a traditional sales approach to an advisory role that aligns with customer needs. Additionally, the Group plans to develop self-service channels and expand its customer base by introducing innovative digital products tailored to various segments, including high-net-worth clients, youth, new entrants to the labor market, and retirees.

Dynamic Approach and Innovative Thinking

Al-Fulaij emphasized that despite the challenges posed by economic fluctuations and political tensions in 2024, the Corporate Banking Group successfully navigated the complex operating environment. The Group's remarkable adaptability and forward-thinking strategy empowered it to not only overcome these challenges but also effectively execute its strategic priorities, further reinforcing its position as a leader in the banking sector.

Commenting on the Corporate Banking Group's

key priorities for 2025, Al-Fulaij said, "With major government projects set to resume, the outlook for Corporate Banking looks increasingly positive. NBK is poised to seize growth opportunities by enhancing its service offerings and driving operational efficiency through targeted strategic initiatives. The Bank will continue to adopt a proactive, customer-centric approach, further improving the user experience through Corporate Online Banking, ensuring smoother and more efficient services for our clients."

Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

Al-Fulaij explained that NBK consistently strives to offer the SME sector a comprehensive range of competitive financing options, all supported by its world-class banking platform. He highlighted that, in recognition of its ongoing efforts to support SME financing and its position as the leading local bank in providing diverse, seamless, and efficient banking products and services tailored to meet the needs of SME customers, NBK was honored with the "Best Bank for SME in Kuwait" award at the 2024 Euromoney Excellence Awards.

Risk Management

Regarding the future of risk management at NBK, Al-Fulaij explained that in 2025, the Bank will continue to prioritize investing in human resources, embrace digital transformation, and integrate ESG factors into its risk management framework.

"By leveraging technology and strengthening our risk management capabilities, while staying aligned with the evolving regulatory environment, we aim to mitigate risks, enhance decision-making, and contribute effectively to the Bank's long-term sustainability and success," Al-Fulaij added.

Professional Development

Al-Fulaij emphasized that NBK's exceptional operational and financial performance in 2024 was driven by the dedicated efforts of its exceptional workforce, acknowledging that the Bank's employees are its most valuable asset and the cornerstone of its success. He further highlighted that throughout the past year, NBK's human resources focused on fostering a work environment that empowers employees to excel, boosting their performance and elevating innovation across the organization.

"Over the past year, the bank dedicated 101,463 hours to employee training through various initiatives, workshops, and educational programs designed to align with the evolving banking landscape. Of this total, 86,374 hours were conducted locally, while 15,089 hours took place at international locations. Notably, the employee satisfaction rate for all training and development programs reached an impressive 90%," Al-Fulaij noted.

Additionally, he emphasized NBK's commitment to prioritizing employee well-being by introducing innovative initiatives, such as reducing working hours on Thursdays by one hour and offering luxury leave. Additionally, he highlighted the launch of a comprehensive strategy for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI), aimed at promoting equal opportunities at all levels and fostering a safe, supportive work environment for all employees.

Al-Fulaij noted that in recognition of its ongoing initiatives in this area, in 2024, NBK won the Gold Award for "Excellence in Health and Wellbeing" from the prestigious US-based Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM).

Kuwaitization Efforts

Al-Fulaij highlighted that, as part of its ongoing efforts to empower national talent and strengthen their role in the economy, NBK continued its nationalization strategy (Kuwaitization) at a steady pace. By the end of 2024, Kuwaiti employees represented 78% of the Bank's total workforce, with Kuwaiti citizens making up 92.3% of all new hires during the year. He emphasized that the bank is aligning its Kuwaitization goals with strategic requirements to attract top talent and skilled professionals, ensuring a sustainable workforce and contributing to the prosperity of the national economy.

Al-Fulaij emphasized that NBK adopts a unique approach to ensure equal opportunities for all employees, regardless of gender, which is reflected in the fact that women represent approximately 43.2% of the total workforce within the NBK Group.

Election of the board of directors

The AGM elected 11 members of the bank's board of directors for the next 3-year term, including 7 ordinary members and 4 independent members, in accordance with the law and the bank's articles of association as well as the rules and instructions of the regulatory authorities.

Ordinary Board Members:

- Hamad Al-Bahar
- Yaqoub Al-Fulaij
- Emad Al-Bahar
- Muthana Al-Hamad
- Isam J. Al-Sager
- Haitham Al-Khaled
- Huda Al-Refaei

Independent board members:

- Farouq Bastaki
- Abdulwahab Al-Bader
- Anas Al-Saleh
- Yousef Al-Obaid



ALSAYER Group takes part in desert ecosystem rehabilitation at Al-Liyah Wildlife Development Center.



A photo from the event.

Group joins KISR to enhance desert ecosystem in Al-Liyah

ALSAYER promotes environmental sustainability

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: As part of its commitment to environmental sustainability and social responsibility, ALSAYER Group, in collaboration with the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), participated in the Environmental Day initiative to rehabilitate the desert ecosystem at the Wildlife Development Center in Al-Liyah on February 13, 2025, attended by Eng. Ibrahim Al-Fouzan, Senior Business Director of Toyota and Eng. Nehad, Group Manager of Corporate Excellence Department.

ALSAYER Group places environmental sustainability at the heart of its responsibilities, fo-

cus on four key dimensions: Environmental conservation, Social responsibility, Employee and customer happiness and Financial performance. These dimensions work in harmony to achieve sustainable development. The group's participation in this event reflects its deep commitment to social responsibility and its dedication to educating future generations. ALSAYER Group firmly believes that students are the future leaders and the heartbeat of the nation and it is our duty to enhance their environmental awareness and sense of responsibility toward their surroundings.

Eng. Nehad Al-Haj Ali, Group Manager of Corporate Excellence, emphasized that planting in the desert environment and protecting wildlife habitats are fundamental pillars in our efforts to maintain ecological balance and combat desertification. Despite its harsh conditions, the desert ecosystem is full of life that requires care and protection. Planting trees and native vegetation not only enhances green cover but also contributes to supporting wildlife and ensuring the sustainability of natural resources. From this perspective, we encourage everyone to adopt afforestation initiatives and preserve biodiver-

sity, as our desert environment is an integral part of our identity and heritage, and it is our responsibility to safeguard it for future generations.

The private sector, represented by ALSAYER Group, values this meaningful initiative to rehabilitate the Al-Liyah area, which highlights the fruitful cooperation between the public sector, represented by the Environment Public Authority and the research sector, represented by KISR. This synergy among various entities strengthens efforts to achieve a sustainable environment and a brighter future for Kuwait.

Exclusive offer for credit, prepaid cardholders

KFH announces up to 20pct discount to its customers at Landmark Group

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: Kuwait Finance House (KFH), as part of its ongoing efforts to enhance customer experience and provide exclusive benefits, announced a discount of up to 20% at Landmark Group for all credit and prepaid cardholders.

This promotion features Home Centre, Splash, Centrepoint, and Max, available for in-store and online shopping (website or app). It runs through March, with the Home Centre's offer ending March 15th.

This offer is among the exclusive promotions and discounts KFH provides to its credit and prepaid cardholders, designed to enhance customer satisfaction and encourage card usage.

These offers add valuable benefits to KFH's core and exclusive promotions for credit and prepaid cardholders across various categories, including Oasis MasterCard, Visa Signature, and other premium cards.

The Oasis Mastercard, offered by



KFH offers exclusive discounts at Landmark Group for credit and prepaid cardholders.

KFH in collaboration with Kuwait Airways, enables cardholders to earn Oasis Club miles on every purchase

made within Kuwait, with accelerated mile accrual for purchases made internationally. Furthermore, it grants customers access to select renowned airport lounges worldwide, alongside a range of other benefits.

Moreover, the Visa Signature card is distinguished by offering a unique package that allows users to enjoy a world of exclusive offers, discounts, and benefits with both luxury and security. It features a cashback benefit of up to 6%, access to major international airport lounges, and the opportunity to earn points through KFH Rewards program. This program provides users with a diverse selection of well-known local and international brands, along with exclusive discounts and special promotions for KFH clients.

To explore KFH's card options and their benefits, and to apply for the card that suits them best, customers can visit KFH.com.



Photos from the blood donation camp.

Campaign draws generous volunteers

MBYA, BDK organize blood donation camp

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: The Mor Basilios Youth Association (MBYA), affiliated with the St. George Universal Syrian Orthodox Church in Kuwait, successfully organized a blood donation camp in collaboration with the Blood Donors Kerala Kuwait Chapter at the Adan Blood Transfusion Center. The event took place from 8:00 PM to 11:30 PM on March 7, 2025, attracting a remarkable turnout of generous volunteers eager to contribute to this life-saving cause. The camp was inaugurated by Rev. Fr. Stephen Neduvakattu, who emphasized the

vital importance of community service and the urgent need for blood donations to save lives. MBYA Secretary Kuriakos N. Y. extended a warm welcome to all attendees, fostering a spirit of unity and purpose. Parish secretary Jinu M. Baby passionately highlighted the collective impact of blood donations on the lives of those in need. The event also featured felicitations from MBYA trustee Eldos P. K., camp coordinators Emil Mathew and Sabi Mathew, and Blood Donors Kerala (BDK) coordinators Praveen, Rajan Thottathil, and Manoj Mavalikkara,

who also shared their insights. General Convener Nimish Kavalam expressed gratitude to all blood donors, volunteers, and blood bank staff for their invaluable contributions to the camp's success. To continue Blood donors mission of saving lives and providing critical support to patients in urgent need of blood, the organizers encourage individuals to participate in future blood donation initiatives. For those interested in organizing blood donation camps or campaigns, please contact BDK Kuwait at the following numbers: 90041663, 96602365, 99811972.



A photo from the discussion and Iftar Mahfil organized by the Bangladesh Quran Training Center.

Bangladesh association hosts 'Iftar Mahfil'

A discussion and Iftar Mahfil on Ramadan was organized by the Al Motairi branch of the Bangladesh Quran Training Center, Hasawi East Region, Kuwait. The meeting was chaired by Sirajul Islam, President of the branch and a member of the working committee of Hasawi East Re-

gion. The chief guest was Mr. Hafez Ruhul Amin Mustafa, the Khatib of the mosque, member of the advisory council of the Bangladesh Quran Training Center, and Vice-President of Hasawi East Region. The event was attended by all the Bangladeshis from this region.

Concerns over safety and academics cited

Parents choose homeschooling for 'twice-exceptional' kids

By Rachael Cody
Oregon State University

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

Homeschooling has exploded in popularity in recent years, particularly since the pandemic. But researchers are still exploring why parents choose to homeschool their children.

While the decision to homeschool is often associated with religion, a 2023 survey found that the two top reasons people cited as most important were a concern about the school environment, such as safety and drugs, and a dissatisfaction with academic instruction.

I studied giftedness, creativity and talent as part of my Ph.D. program focusing on students who are "twice exceptional" - that is, they have both learning challenges such as autism or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder as well as advanced skills. A better understanding of why parents choose homeschooling can help identify ways to improve the public education system. I believe focusing on twice-exceptional students can offer insights beyond this subset of the home-schooled population.

The truth is researchers don't know much about homeschooling and home-schoolers.

One problem is regulations involving homeschooling differ dramatically among states, so it is often hard to determine who is being instructed at home. And many families are unwilling to talk about their experiences homeschooling and their

reasons for doing so.

But here's what we do know.

The share of children being homeschooled has surged since 2020, rising from 3.7% in the 2018-2019 school year to 5.2% in 2022-2023 - the latest data available from the National Center for Education Statistics. Over 3 million students were homeschooled in 2021-22, according to the National Home Education Research Institute.

And the population of homeschoolers is becoming increasingly diverse, with about half of families reporting as nonwhite in a 2023 Washington Post-Schar School poll. In addition, homeschooling families are just as likely to be Democrat as Republican, according to that same Post-Schar survey, a sharp shift from previous surveys that suggested Republicans were much more likely to homeschool.

As for why parents homeschool, 28% of those surveyed in 2023 by the Institute of Education Sciences said the school environment was their biggest reason, followed by 17% that cited concerns about academic instruction. Another 17% said providing their kids with moral or religious instruction was most important.

But not far behind at 12% was a group of parents who prioritized homeschooling for a different reason: They have a child with physical or mental health problems or other special needs.

This group would include parents of twice-exceptional children, who may be especially interested in pursuing homeschooling as an alternative method of education for three reasons in particular.

These parents may notice that their child's needs are being overlooked in the public education system and may view homeschooling as a way to provide better individualized instruction.

Students who are twice exceptional often experience what researchers call the "masking" phenomenon. This can occur when a child's disabilities hide their giftedness. When this occurs, teachers tend to provide academic support but hesitate to give these children the challenging material they may require.

Masking can also occur in reverse, when a student's gifts tend to hide disabilities. In these cases, teachers provide challenging material, but they do not provide the needed accommodations that allow the gifted child to access the materials. Either way, masking can be a problem for students and parents who must advocate for teachers to address their unique range of academic needs.

While either type of masking is challenging for the student, it may be particularly frustrating for parents of twice-exceptional students to watch classroom teachers focus only on their child's weaknesses rather than helping them develop their advanced abilities.

By the time a child enters school, parents have spent years observing their child's development, comparing their progress with that of others their age. They're also likely to be aware of their child's unique interests.

While this may not be true for all parents, those who choose to homeschool may do so because they feel they have more of an ability and interest in catering to their child's unique needs than a classroom teacher who is tasked with teaching many students simultaneously. Parents of students who demonstrate exceptional ability have expressed concerns about their child's future educational opportunities in a public school setting.

Additionally, parents may become exhausted by their efforts to advocate for their child's unique needs in the school system. Parents of students who demonstrate advanced abilities often pull their children out of public school after repeated efforts to improve communication between home and school. (AP)

High alert in India's Bihar following bird flu outbreak

Lebanon, UNICEF launch program for war-wounded children

BEIRUT, March 15. (Agencies): Lebanon's Ministry of Health and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have launched Assistance & Care for War-Wounded and Affected Children (ACWA) Programme.

In a statement on Friday, the UNICEF said the scheme would be carried out, in coordination with International Network for Aid, Relief & Assistance (INARA) and Ghassan Abu Sittah Children's Fund, to offer full healthcare services to those vulnerable children.

Meanwhile, Lebanese health minister Dr. Rakan Nassereddine said "in the face of unimaginable hardship, our children's resilience remains our nation's most precious asset."

"The 'Assistance & Care for War-Wounded and Affected Children (ACWA)' Programme, forged in partnership with UNICEF, INARA, and the Ghassan Abu Sittah Children's Fund, is a testament to our unwavering commitment to safeguarding their health and well-being," he noted.

Also, Ghassan Abu Sitta said: "An injured child has a growing body, and the injury hinders the child's growth.



A Syrian man carries a crying child who fled with her family from the clashes in Syria, as they cross a river marking the border between Syria and northern Lebanon near the village of Heker al-Daher in Akkar province, Lebanon, March 11. (AP)

The goal of the 'ACWA' programme is to implement a comprehensive healing journey - from the moment of injury to reconstructive surgeries, physical

rehabilitation, psychological support, and reintegration into society. Whether a child requires a prosthetic limb or educational intervention to mitigate

the effects of war, our aim is to provide holistic care," according to Lebanon's National News Agency.

Ettie Higgins, UNICEF Deputy representative in Lebanon, said "We cannot allow these children to be forgotten. They have already lost too much-family members, homes, their sense of security. Through this lifeline programme, it is our collective responsibility to ensure they do not lose their future."

The ACWA programme takes a holistic approach to addressing children's physical, emotional, and social needs. It aims to provide life-saving medical care, including specialized surgeries and mental health support.

The war erupted in Lebanon resulted in the killing of at least 4,000 people, including 316 children, and the injury of 1,500 other children, Lebanon's ministry of health said in December 2024.

Bird flu: Authorities in the east Indian state of Bihar have sounded an alert in view of the bird flu (Avian Influenza H5N1) outbreak in some districts, officials said Friday.

The outbreak was reported from Patna, Bhagalpur, Nawada and Jehanabad districts.

The special teams from veterinary and animal husbandry officials have carried out culling of chickens at several poultry farms following the outbreak. The samples collected were sent to the Bhopal-based National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases, which tested positive.

Reports said the areas have been sanitized to contain further spread of the outbreak. Besides this, the control and containment measures are underway in the affected districts.

Authorities have put a blanket ban on the sale and purchase of poultry and poultry products in the infected zones.

Alerted over the spread of Avian Influenza, the local government has directed the officials of the education department to stop the supply of eggs served to government schools under the Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

The supply of eggs will be reinstated immediately after the situation returns to normal, according to local officials.

Meanwhile, the government has stressed upon the need for an aware-

ness campaign to check the spread of bird flu in the state.

Malnutrition: International medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) on Thursday warned of soaring malnutrition rates in Somalia, where chronic funding shortfalls have crippled humanitarian efforts.

According to the MSF, without immediate and sustained support, thousands of children face not only starvation but also weakened immunity, increased vulnerability to diseases, and irreversible developmental harm.

Mohammed Ali Omer, the MSF's head of programs in Somalia, said humanitarian assistance in the East African country is already dangerously low, and now, with reports of further funding cuts, the situation will only worsen, putting more lives at risk.

"The cuts to the nutrition programs are coming at the worst possible time. Malnutrition rates are soaring, displacement is rising, and the need for aid has never been greater," Ali said in a statement issued in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia.

'Sleep key to self-care'

How much sleep do you really need? Experts say it depends

NEW YORK, March 15, (AP): Chances are, if you're reading this, you got some sleep last night. But are you feeling rested?

Experts say it's an important question to consider.

Most of us spend a third of our lives sleeping, but you may need more or less than eight hours a night. The number of hours needed changes throughout your life, with babies and kids needing more sleep and people 65 and older able to function on slightly less than seven to nine hours.

Here's what sleep scientists and doctors say about how much you really need - and whether your gender plays a role.

Sleep is still a mystery, despite how critical it is for our health.

"The reasons aren't entirely clear, but it's an essential thing that we all do," said Dr. Rafael Pelayo, a sleep specialist at Stanford University. "Something remarkable happens when you sleep. It's the most natural form of self-care that we have."

Most of the population gets between seven to nine hours - and that particular category has the lowest association with health problems, said Molly Atwood, a behavioral sleep medicine clinician at Johns Hopkins.

Quality

Once people either dip into less than six hours of sleep or get more than nine hours on average, the risk of health problems inches up, Atwood said, but everybody is different.

When you're trying to figure out how much sleep you need, it's important to think about the quality of it, Pelayo said: "What you really want to do is wake up feeling refreshed - that's what it's about."

"If somebody tells me that they sleep many hours but they wake up tired, something is wrong," Pelayo said. "You shouldn't leave your favorite restaurant feeling hungry."

The amount of sleep we need changes throughout our lives. Newborns need the most - somewhere between 14 to 17 hours. "Definitely when we're ba-

bies and children, because we are growing so rapidly, we do need a lot more sleep," Atwood said.

The National Sleep Foundation recommends most adults between 26 and 64 get between seven to nine hours of sleep. People who are 65 and older can get slightly less, and young adults between ages 16 and 25 can get slightly more.

Humans cycle through sleep stages roughly every 90 minutes. In the first portion of the night, Atwood said that more of the cycle is slow wave sleep, or deep sleep, which is essential to repairing and restoring the body. It's also when "growth hormone" is released.

Consolidation

In the latter hours of the night, more of the sleep cycle is spent in rapid-eye movement sleep, or dream sleep, which is important for learning and memory consolidation, or the process in which short-term memory gets turned into long-term memory.

Kids get more "deep sleep," with about 50% of the night in that realm, she said. That drops at adolescence, Atwood said, because our body doesn't need the same kind of repair and restoration.

Something else interesting happens around puberty: Gender-based differences in sleep start to crop up.

Research doesn't show that women need more sleep - but women do get slightly more sleep on average than men, Atwood said.

It starts at a young age. Though they have the same sleep needs, teenage girls seem to get less sleep than teenage boys, Pelayo said. Additionally, teenage girls tend to complain of insomnia more frequently.

When women become first-time mothers, they often care for newborns throughout the night more frequently, which means less sleep, said Allison Harvey, a clinical psychologist and professor who studies sleep at UC Berkeley.

Hormones may also impact women's sleep quantity and quality during pregnancy and menopause.

Injury risks

Laughing gas misuse alert

WASHINGTON, March 15, (AP): US health officials are tracking a rise in injuries tied to the misuse of nitrous oxide, or laughing gas, including some brands that are sold in small canisters containing flavors like blueberry, strawberry and watermelon.

The Food and Drug Administration on Friday warned consumers that inhaling the gas for its euphoric effects can cause dangerously low blood pressure, leading to loss of consciousness and injuries. The agency flagged a number of products sold in colorful packaging at gas stations, vape shops and online including Cosmic Gas, Galaxy Gas and MassGass.

Nitrous gas is traditionally used as a sedative for patients in dental offices and hospitals. It's also found in pressurized cans of whipped cream. But teens and adults have long misused those products to get high. The gas can briefly disrupt oxygen flow to the brain.

Companies selling the products cited by regulators advertise them "for culinary use only" and often include disclaimers on their websites warning against inhaling. But videos of young people using the products recreationally have circulated on social media platforms for years.

Measles: Measles outbreaks in West Texas and New Mexico are now up to nearly 300 cases, and two unvaccinated people have died from measles-related causes.

Measles is caused by a highly contagious virus that's airborne and spreads easily when an infected person breathes, sneezes or coughs. It is preventable through vaccines, and has been considered eliminated from the US since 2000.

As of Friday, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said its count of confirmed measles cases in the US surpassed 2024. Here's what else you need to know about measles in the US.

Texas state health officials said Friday there were 36 new cases of measles since Tuesday, bringing Texas' total to 259. Five more people were hospitalized, for a total of 34. The outbreak has spread to two new counties: Cochran in West Texas with six and Lamar in the northeast part of the state with four.

Astronauts ready to return to Earth

SpaceX launches new crew to the space station to replace NASA stuck astronauts

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., March 15, (AP): The replacements for NASA's two stuck astronauts launched to the International Space Station on Friday night, paving the way for the pair's return after nine long months.

Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams need SpaceX to get this relief team to the space station before they can check out. Arrival is set for late Saturday night.

NASA wants overlap between the two crews so Wilmore and Williams can fill in the newcomers on happenings aboard the orbiting lab. That would put them on course for an undocking next week and a splashdown off the Florida coast, weather permitting.

The duo will be escorted back by astronauts who flew up on a rescue mission on SpaceX last September alongside two empty seats reserved for Wilmore and Williams on the return leg.

Reaching orbit from NASA's Kennedy Space Center, the newest crew includes NASA's Anne McClain and Nichole Ayers, both military pilots; and Japan's Takuya Onishi and Russia's Kirill Peskov, both former airline pilots.

They will spend the next six months at the space station, considered the normal stint, after springing Wilmore and Williams free.

"Spaceflight is tough, but humans are tougher," McClain said minutes into the flight.

As test pilots for Boeing's new Star-



A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket, with a crew of four aboard the Crew Dragon spacecraft, lifts off on a mission to the International Space Station from pad 39A at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla., Friday, March 14. (AP)

liner capsule, Wilmore and Williams expected to be gone just a week or so when they launched from Cape Canaveral on June 5. A series of helium leaks and thruster failures marred their trip to the space station, setting off months of investigation by NASA and Boeing on how best to proceed.

Eventually ruling it unsafe, NASA ordered Starliner to fly back empty last September and moved Wilmore and Williams to a SpaceX flight due back in February. Their return was further delayed when SpaceX's brand new capsule needed extensive battery repairs before launching their replacement.

To save a few weeks, SpaceX switched to a used capsule, moving up Wilmore and Williams' homecoming to mid-March. Already capturing the world's attention, their unexpectedly long mission took a political twist when President Donald Trump and SpaceX's Elon Musk vowed earlier this year to accelerate the astronauts' return and blamed the former administration for stalling it. Retired Navy captains who have lived at the space station before, Wilmore and Williams have repeatedly stressed that they support the decisions made by their NASA bosses since last summer.

China launches new satellites

Bahrain launches first satellite 'Al-Munther'

MANAMA, March 15, (Agencies): The Kingdom of Bahrain successfully launched its first nationally made and designed "Al-Munther" satellite into orbit, said state-run Bahrain News Agency (BNA) on Saturday.

BNA revealed that Al-Munther arrived successfully to its designated orbit aboard the SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket on mission Transporter-13 and it launched from the Vandenberg Space Launch Complex in California.

The satellite's earth observation is designed to take photos from space and relaying them to earth. It has auxiliary pay-

loads consisting of AI algorithms and cybersecurity. Meanwhile, China on Saturday launched a Long March-2D carrier rocket, placing a remote sensing satellite into space.

The rocket blasted off at 12:11 p.m. (Beijing Time) from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest China and sent the Gaojing-3 02 satellite into the preset orbit.

The mission also launched the Tianyan-23 satellite. It was the 564th flight mission of the Long March series rockets.

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Kuwait Shooting Club hosts successful Heritage Championship



Officials of the tournament.



A winner receives an award.

KUWAIT CITY, March 15, (KUNA): Sheikh Salman Al-Hamoud Al-Salman Al-Sabah Heritage Shooting Championship, organized by the Kuwait Shooting Club, concluded with the crowning of its winners.

Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah secured first place, followed by Eid Al-Waalan in second, and Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah again in third. Musaed Al-Najjar and Abdullah Al-Osaimi finished in fourth and fifth place, respectively.

Speaking after the championship, President of the Asian Shooting Federation and Honorary President of the Kuwait Shooting Sports Club, Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Hamoud Al-Sabah, highlighted the participa-

tion of General Assembly members in the event. He emphasized that the championship honors the legacy of Sheikh Salman Al-Hamoud Al-Salman Al-Sabah, whose contributions to the sport of shooting were instrumental in its development.

Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah noted that the tournament was a tribute to Sheikh Salman's unwavering support for the sport and his pivotal role in establishing the shooting club. He also extended his gratitude to the club's president and members for successfully organizing this Ramadan championship.

Kuwait Shooting Sports Club President Duaij Al-Otaibi echoed these sentiments, stating that the championship, held within the traditional rifle

(Kharaza) shooting competitions, was conducted professionally with a strong focus on safety, featuring specialized trainers and fixed target shooting. He highlighted the event's role in fostering community spirit during the holy month.

Al-Otaibi further announced that the club is now preparing for the prestigious His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Grand Shooting Championship.

The event, set for next April, will welcome elite shooters from around the world, reinforcing Kuwait's reputation as a key host for major shooting tournaments.

Nuggets hold off short-handed Lakers, Cavs win franchise-record 16th straight



Houston Rockets guard Jalen Green (4) shoots against Dallas Mavericks guard Dante Exum (0) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Houston. (AP)

Celtics add to Miami's misery

DENVER, March 15, (AP): Jamal Murray sank a 3-pointer with 5.6 seconds left and Russell Westbrook stole the in-bound pass for an exclamation-point dunk as the Denver Nuggets rebuffed the scrappy, short-handed Los Angeles Lakers 131-126.

Murray finished with 26 points and while the win was something to celebrate, there were enough red flags for coach Michael Malone to crumple up the stat sheet as he sat down for his postgame news conference.

Austin Reaves scored 37 points and Dalton Knecht added 32 for the Lakers, whose lengthy list of injured players included LeBron James and Luka Doncic, who was ruled out on the second night of back-to-back games because of left calf injury management and a right ankle sprain.

Cavaliers 133, Grizzlies 124
In Memphis, Evan Mobley had 22 points and 11 rebounds, Darius Garland added 20 points and nine assists and the Cleveland Cavaliers recorded a franchise-record 16th straight victory with a win over the Memphis Grizzlies.

De'Andre Hunter scored 18 points, while Jarrett Allen had 16. The win eclipsed Cleveland's previous standard for consecutive wins with 15 to open this season.

Ja Morant led Memphis with a season-high 44 points to go with eight rebounds and seven assists. Jaren Jackson Jr. and Brandon Clarke finished with 13 points each. Jackson returned to the lineup against Cleveland after missing the previous five games with a left ankle sprain.

Celtics 103, Heat 91
In Miami, Jayson Tatum scored 28 points, Jrue Holiday added 25 and the Boston Celtics pulled away in the fourth quarter to beat the freefalling Miami Heat.

Derrick White added 18 for Boston, which made 19 3-pointers. The Celtics outscored Miami 25-14 in the fourth quarter and their victory, combined with Atlanta's loss to the Clippers, clinched a playoff spot for the defending NBA champions.

The Heat, who dropped their sixth straight and fell a season-low eight games below .500, got 23 points from Andrew Wiggins, 19 from Tyler Herro and 13 from Jaime Jaquez Jr.

Rockets 133, Mavericks 96
In Houston, Tari Eason scored a career-high 30 points to lead the Houston Rockets to an easy win over the Dallas Mavericks.

Jalen Green added 23 points with nine rebounds, despite sitting the entire fourth quarter to help the



Minnesota Timberwolves forward Jaden McDaniels (3) dunks during the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Orlando Magic in Minneapolis. (AP)

Rockets to their fifth straight win, tying their longest such streak of the season.

Houston led by double digits most of the night and was up by 16 in the third quarter before scoring the next seven points, with a 3 from Eason, to make it 80-57 midway through the quarter.

The Rockets were up by 21 later in the third before using a 10-0 run to push the lead to 96-65 near the end of the period, and most of their starters didn't play in the fourth.

Timberwolves 118, Magic 111
In Minneapolis, Anthony Edwards scored 28 points and the Minnesota Timberwolves rallied to beat the Orlando Magic for their seventh straight victory.

Down 90-82 with 10:23 left, Minnesota had a 13-0 run to take a 95-90 advantage. Donte DiVincenzo opened the run with reverse layup and capped it with another reverse layup and a driving float-er.

After Orlando tied it at 98 with 3:32 to play, the Timberwolves - fighting Golden State for the sixth spot in the Western Conference - scored nine straight points.

Clippers 121, Hawks 98
In Atlanta, James Harden and Kawhi Leonard each scored 25 points, with Harden scoring 13 in a dominant third quarter for Los Angeles, and the Clippers beat the Atlanta Hawks.

Leonard set a season high with five steals. Harden had eight rebounds and seven assists.

After trailing 61-53 at halftime, the Clippers outscored the Hawks 35-8 in a lopsided third quarter.

Clippers guard Bogdan Bogdanovic, making his return to Atlanta, scored 12 points and received an ovation and video tribute during a first-quarter timeout.

Hornets 145, Spurs 134
In San Antonio, LaMelo Ball had 27 points and 14 assists, and the

Charlotte Hornets made a franchise-record 26 3-pointers to roll past the San Antonio Spurs.

Nick Smith Jr. scored a career-high 26 points for the Hornets. Miles Green added 21 and Josh Green had 20.

Ball was 7 for 11 on 3-pointers and Charlotte led by as many as 31 points and won for the third time in four games.

San Antonio allowed the second-most points to an opponent this season a day after announcing De'Aaron Fox will undergo season-ending surgery to repair tendon damage in his left pinkie.

Pacers 112, 76ers 100
In Philadelphia, Pascal Siakam scored 17 of his 27 points in the second half, and the Indiana Pacers beat the Philadelphia 76ers.

Myles Turner added 18 points and seven rebounds, while Tyrese Haliburton had 14 points and 10 assists as the Pacers ended a four-game road losing streak.

Jeff Dowtin scored a career-high 24 points for the 76ers, who lost their third straight. Jared Butler added 17 points and Adem Bona had 16 points and nine rebounds.

Raptors 126, Jazz 118
In Salt Lake City, Scottie Barnes had 20 points and 10 rebounds, Immanuel Quickley also scored 20 points and the Toronto Raptors beat the Utah Jazz.

A.J. Lawson added 18 points, RJ Barrett had 17 and Orlando Robinson finished with 14 points, 10 rebounds and five assists.

Quickley hit a 3-pointer with 43 seconds left that gave Toronto the lead for good at 90-88 and sparked a 16-2 run to make it a 15-point lead - the biggest by either team - with about 8 1/2 minutes to play.

Jordan Clarkson led the Jazz, who have lost eight games in a row, with 19 points. Kyle Filipowski had 18 points and 11 rebounds.

Inaugural Ramadan carrom tourney aims to 'preserve' Kuwaiti heritage

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: The National Resalah Humanitarian Society, in collaboration with Diwan Al-Qattan, successfully hosted the inaugural Ramadan "Carrom" tournament. The event aimed to preserve Kuwait's national heritage by reviving traditional games and introducing them to younger generations. It drew a diverse crowd, with participants from all age groups.

Imad Bukhamsin, President of the National Resalah Humanitarian Society, expressed his delight at the success of the first "Carrom" tournament. He assured that the event would be held annually, with generous support from the Society and attractive prizes for the winners. He commended the excellent organization of the tournament, which allowed numerous young teams to take part and contribute to its success. Bukhamsin emphasized that the tournament, in partnership with Diwan Al-Qattan, not only aims to revive Kuwait's popular heritage but also to foster communication and friendship among different segments of society. He extended his gratitude to all participat-



Crowning of the tournament winners.

ing teams, congratulated the winners, and wished those who didn't win better luck in future tournaments. He also thanked the attendees for their encouragement and expressed appreciation for the efforts of the organizing and management teams.

Best of the Rest

Aldosivi stuns 10-man Argentinos: Argentinos Juniors missed the chance to go top of its group, falling 2-0 at home to Aldosivi in Argentina's Primera Division Apertura tournament.

Justo Giani put the visitors ahead in the 10th minute at the Diego Maradona stadium by curling a long-range effort into the top-right corner.

The hosts suffered another blow just after the half-hour when Federico Fattori was shown a straight red card for preventing a clear scoring opportunity with a deliberate hand ball.

Tobias Leiva put the result beyond doubt with a composed finish after Lucas Lazarte's pass on the counterattack.

The result leaves Argentinos Juniors second in the 15-team Group A standings with 21 points from 10 games, behind Tigre on goal difference.

Despite the victory, Aldosivi remains last in the group with five points from 10 games so far. (Xinhua)

FIFA lifts transfer ban on Pirates: The Namibia Football Association (NFA) confirmed on Friday that football's global governing body FIFA has officially lifted the ban on Namibia Premier League side Orlando Pirates regarding the registration of new players.

This decision follows the successful resolution of a financial dispute between Pirates and a former player.

"The club has reached a settlement agreement with the player, fulfilling the outstanding financial obligations that led to the imposition of the ban," the NFA said in a statement.

According to the NFA, Pirates is now free to register new players in accordance with FIFA and NFA regulations.

The Windhoek-based club had been hit with a FIFA transfer ban from January 31, 2024.

"From the NFA's perspective, Orlando Pirates has met all requirements and there are no further obligations or expectations related to this specific case," the NFA concluded. (Xinhua)

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St. Pauli's Noah Weïhaupt, left, and Hoffenheim's Leo Ostigard fight for the ball during the Bundesliga soccer match between FC St. Pauli - TSG 1899 Hoffenheim, Millerntor Stadium, Hamburg, Germany. (AP)

Sports

'Kuwait is ideal Arab Cup host'

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: Secretary-General of the Arab Handball Federation, Fakhri Al-Ghasshi, affirmed that Kuwait is the ideal host for the 10th edition of the Arab Men's Handball Cup, set to take place from May 4 to 12.

Speaking to Al-Seyassah, Al-Ghasshi stated, "We aim to make this tournament exceptional in every aspect, which is why Kuwait was the best choice. The country has a strong reputation for hosting top-tier sporting events, most recently the 26th Gulf Cup Football Championship, which was a resounding success. Additionally, the Asian Handball Federation has entrusted Kuwait with hosting the Asian Championship next January."

Expressing pride in the Arab nations' enthusiasm for the tournament's return after a 22-year hiatus, Al-Ghasshi expressed hope that more than 10 countries will participate.

He further noted, "I anticipate fierce competition in the Arab Cup, particularly given the continued organization of junior and youth championships. This event also presents a crucial opportunity for teams to evaluate their players and coaches ahead of the 2026 tournaments."

Al-Ghasshi extended his gratitude to the Arab Handball Federation, led by Fadel Al-Nimr, along with his deputies and members, for their trust in him and for granting him the responsibility of overseeing the tournament. He also confirmed that the Arab Federation will cover the participating teams' expenses.

Founded in 1975 and headquartered in Riyadh, the Arab Handball Federation consists of 16 member federations.



Secretary-General of the Arab Handball Federation, Fakhri Al-Ghasshi.

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef announces proposal for new league exclusively for Kuwaiti players

KFA President to meet AFC President to discuss 2031 Asian Cup bid

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Football Association, announced a proposal to be presented to the Board of Directors soon. This proposal aims to establish a league exclusively for Kuwaiti players of a specific age group to further develop local talent. Al-Yousef emphasized that this initiative would boost support for Kuwaiti players.

The announcement came during a coordination meeting held at the Association's headquarters, attended by key figures including Osama Hussein, Vice Chairman of Technical Affairs; Fahd Al-Hamlan, Board Member; Dr. Saleh Al-Majroub, Secretary-General; Abdulaziz Ashour, Chairman of Al-Arabi Club; Dr. Hamed Al-Shaibani, Director of Competitions; and representatives from Al-Qadisiya Club, including Faisal Al-Shammari, Shaker Al-Shatti, and Abdullah



Officials pose for a group photo after the coordination meeting at the Association's headquarters.

Al-Haeri.

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef reaffirmed the Association's full support for Al-Arabi and Al-Qadisiya Clubs and pledged to remove any obstacles preventing their participation in international

competitions, such as the AFC Challenge League and the Gulf Champions League. He expressed hope for their success on the international stage, stressing that the qualification of both teams is a source of pride for Kuwaiti sports. He also high-

lighted how winning these titles would elevate Kuwait's standing in international football.

Additionally, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef shared details about the proposal to create a new league, referred to as the "Professional League," aimed at supporting local players' growth and development.

Regarding the potential involvement of clubs or government institutions in local competitions, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef stated that meetings will be held with the Police Federation, National Guard, Ministry of Defense, and major companies to explore their participation in the federation's competitions. He clarified that participation would be conditional and open only to large corporations.

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef also revealed plans to meet with Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al-Khalifa, President of the Asian Football Confederation, on April 11 to discuss Kuwait's bid to host the 2031 AFC Asian Cup.

On the topic of Al-Jazeera Club's participation, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef confirmed that FIFA has approved the club's legal right to participate in local competitions.

Ashour praised the meeting, emphasizing the federation's and Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef's commitment to ensuring Al-Arabi and Al-Qadisiya compete for international titles. He further noted that the meeting established a clear strategy for both teams' paths in their respective tournaments, with the federation's support being key to their success in international competitions.

Iraq closes training camp

Kuwait steps up World Cup qualifiers preparations

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

DUBAI, March 15: The Kuwaiti national football team resumes training as part of its training camp in Dubai, UAE, in preparation for crucial Asian qualifiers for the 2026 FIFA World Cup. Kuwait is set to face Iraq on March 20 and Oman on March 25 in Group B action.

Players who featured in the friendly match against China on Saturday evening will be absent from today's session. Instead, head coach Juan Antonio Pizzi has opted for light gym training at the team's residence.

The Kuwaiti delegation is scheduled to depart for Basra, Iraq, on Tuesday, ahead of its upcoming clash against Iraq on Thursday.

Meanwhile, Iraq led by Spanish coach Jesús Casas, has closed its training camp in preparation for matches

against Kuwait and Palestine on March 20 and 25. Training, which begins today at Sports City stadiums, will be open to media for only 15 minutes of filming, according to an official statement from the Iraqi Football Association. No friendly matches are scheduled for Monday or Wednesday.

Iraq currently sits second in Group B with 11 points, trailing leader South Korea by three points and holding a two-point lead over third-placed Jordan. Oman is fourth with six points, while Kuwait sits in fifth place with four points. Palestine is at the bottom with three points.

Oman's head coach, Rashid Jaber, has announced the squad for their upcoming matches against South Korea and Kuwait. The roster includes key players such as Ibrahim Al-Mukhaini, Abdulmalik Al-Badri, Moatassem Al-Wahaibi, and Mohsen Al-Ghassani.



Players intensify training for the qualifiers.

Kuwaiti referee selected for U-19 World Championship

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: The International Volleyball Federation (FIVB) has appointed Kuwaiti international referee Abbas Ashkanani to officiate matches at the U-19 World Championship, set to take place in Uzbekistan from July 24 to August 3.

This recognition follows the significant improvement in the standard of volleyball refereeing in Kuwait, which has led international federations and continental bodies to tap into the expertise of Kuwaiti officials for major global competitions.

In local action, Kuwait Club triumphed in a thrilling match against Burgan Club, winning 3-2 (27-29, 18-25, 25-22, 25-15, 15-13), while Al-Shabab defeated Al-Yarmouk 3-1 (25-12, 14-25, 25-13, 25-22) in the General Volleyball League.

With the victory, Al-Shabab reclaimed second place in the league with 21 points,



Abbas Ashkanani

level with Kazma, who are also on 21 points. Kuwait Club sits in third with 20 points, while Al-Qadisiya has 15 points, Al-Arabi SC 12, Al-Nasr SC 11, Burgan 10, Al-Sulaibikhat SC 9, Al-Yarmouk 5, Al-Tadamon 3, and Al-Sahel SC 2 points.

Odermatt secures overall and GS World Cup titles

HAFJELL, Norway, March 15, (AP): Swiss ski star Marco Odermatt didn't win the race, but he did earn two crystal globes and set a national record in Alpine skiing on Saturday.

Odermatt finished second behind teammate Loic Meillard in a World Cup giant slalom to formally lock up his fourth straight overall and GS titles.

The only remaining challenger for the overall title, Henrik Kristoffersen, needed to finish the race well ahead of Odermatt to keep his mathematical chance alive, but the Norwegian finished in 16th place.

"Yeah, it's unbelievable, two more globes on my side," said Odermatt, who extended his lead to 635 points over Kristoffersen in the overall standings with only five events remaining.

Clinching the title was a formality since Kristoffersen doesn't compete in speed events, though the Norwegian would have the right to start in super-G and downhill at the World Cup finals in Sun Valley, Idaho, which begin next weekend.

The result also gave the 27-year-old Odermatt an insurmountable lead in the GS standings, where runner-up Kristoffersen is trailing by 106 points with only the season-ending race remaining.

"The big one I already felt like I had it, but the GS one was still a big fight with Henrik," Odermatt said. "He skied so good in Kranjska Gora (two weeks ago) and my GS shape is probably not at the very, very

best level like I skied last year." Odermatt started the season with two DNF's in giant slalom, leaving him on zero points after two races, but won three times in the course of the season.

"This GS globe has a different story. The last three years I really started well ... I wore the red (leader's) bib from the first until the last race and was almost all season pretty clear ahead," the Swiss standout said.

"This year I started with two zero points, so I really had to come from the back and win race by race To win this globe on this little bumpy road is amazing," Odermatt also set a Swiss record with his 87th career World Cup podium, moving him one past the previous best mark set by Pirmin Zurbriggen in 1990.

Odermatt became the sixth skier in men's World Cup history with at least four overall titles, but only the second to win four in a row. Austrian standout Marcel Hirscher won a record eight consecutive titles in 2012-19.

It has become typical for Odermatt to lock up the overall title even before the season-ending races at the World Cup finals.

His point-advantages in the final standings only grew over the years, from leading runner-up Aleksander Aamodt Kilde by 467 and 702 points, respectively, in his first two years as overall champion, to beating Meillard by 874 points last season.

Odermatt already secured the super-G champion-

ship last week and is favorite to add the downhill title as well. Winning four globes would mean a repeat of his achievement from last season.

Ahead of the last downhill next week, Odermatt leads teammate and world champion Franjo von Allmen by 83 points. Odermatt will win the title if he finishes 15th or better, or if Von Allmen does not win the race.

"It's definitely a different kind of skiing if you know you are super close to the globe but not done it yet," Odermatt said. "There is no space for error, so it helps a lot to have this GS globe in the pocket and just focus now on the last one in downhill." Kristoffersen still has a chance to win a globe this season, as he holds a commanding 77-point lead in the slalom standings ahead of Sunday's race.

In Saturday's GS on a course set by Swiss coach Julien Vuignier, Meillard led a Swiss sweep of the podium, leading Odermatt by 0.14 seconds and third-place Thomas Tumler by 0.23.

"I think it's the first time we do it in GS, three Swiss guys on the podium for our team," Meillard said. "So, that's something special that we are going to remember." Lucas Pinheiro Braathen, chasing Brazil's first-ever top-level ski race win since his switch from the Norwegian federation this season, briefly led the race in the second run before being bumped into fourth by the Swiss trio.

Best of the Rest

Miretti stars as Genoa beats Lecce: A first-half double from Fabio Miretti, his first brace as a professional, gave Genoa a 2-1 win over Lecce in Serie A.

The midfielder scored two exceptional goals to lift 12th-placed Genoa to equal on points with Torino, which has a game in hand.

The first was a volley taken over his shoulder and from a tight angle after 16 minutes. The second, in first half stoppage time, came when he took an excellent pass from Russian Malinovskyi and spun inside the box before firing home.

Nikola Krstović pulled a goal back from the spot for Lecce midway through the second half but Lecce remained 16th, just two points ahead of the relegation zone. (AP)

St Pauli earns rare home win: St. Pauli won for the first time in seven games after a Noah Weïhaupt goal gave the Hamburg side a 1-0 victory over Hoffenheim in the Bundesliga.

St. Pauli moved five points clear of the relegation zone after a rare home win. Weïhaupt scored but Philipp Treu did the hard work, seizing on a poor pass out from goalkeeper Oliver Baumann before neatly lifting it over the stranded goalie and feeding it sideways for Weïhaupt to score into the empty net.

St. Pauli completed a double over Hoffenheim, which was in 13th, one point above St. Pauli. (AP)

17-year-old Andreeva advances to Indian Wells final

INDIAN WELLS, Calif., March 15, (AP): Russian teen star Mirra Andreeva advanced to the BNP Paribas Open final, beating defending champion Iga Swiatek 7-6 (1), 1-6, 6-3 in chilly conditions to become the tournament's youngest finalist since 2001.

The 17-year-old Andreeva, seeded ninth, will face top-seeded Aryna Sabalenka in the final. Sabalenka routed fifth-seeded Madison Keys 6-0, 6-1 in 51 minutes in the second semifinal.

"I don't know why I felt so much confidence. I felt like, 'I'm going to go and play the tiebreak like it's the last tiebreak of my life,'" Andreeva said. "So I just went for all my shots. My serve was great, just felt super comfortable and super confident."

Andreeva and Swiatek both finished the match wearing pullovers, with the temperature dipping into the 50s in the

final set. It was in the mid-50s when Sabalenka finished off Keys.

Andreeva ran her tour winning



Mirra Andreeva, of Russia, returns to Iga Swiatek, of Poland, during the semifinals at the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament in Indian Wells, Calif. (AP)

streak to 11 matches and ended Swiatek's 10-match run in the California desert. The Russian won her first WTA Tour title last month in Dubai to become the youngest player to win a WTA 1000 event.

Kim Clijsters also was 17 in 2001 when she lost to Serena Williams in the final.

Swiatek, also the 2002 Indian Wells champion, was seeded second.

Sabalenka ended Keys' 16-match winning streak and got some revenge for her loss to the American in the Australian Open final. Keys beat Sabalenka in three sets in January at Melbourne Park, denying Sabalenka a third consecutive title.

"I didn't expect this match to be that fast," Sabalenka said. "I'm super happy with the way I played today - much-needed revenge."