



Pages 14-16



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THURSDAY, APRIL 17, 2025 / SHAWWAL 19, 1446 AH

emergency number 112

NO. 18874

16 PAGES

150 FILS

# Kuwait champions unity at key GCC-Central Asia talks

Crown Prince affirms Kuwait's support for strategic partnerships

- Khor Abdullah dispute an internal Iraqi matter
- Kuwait backs Palestinian cause
- GCC-Asia ties strengthen
- Peace, trade top agenda
- Samarkand summit set

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

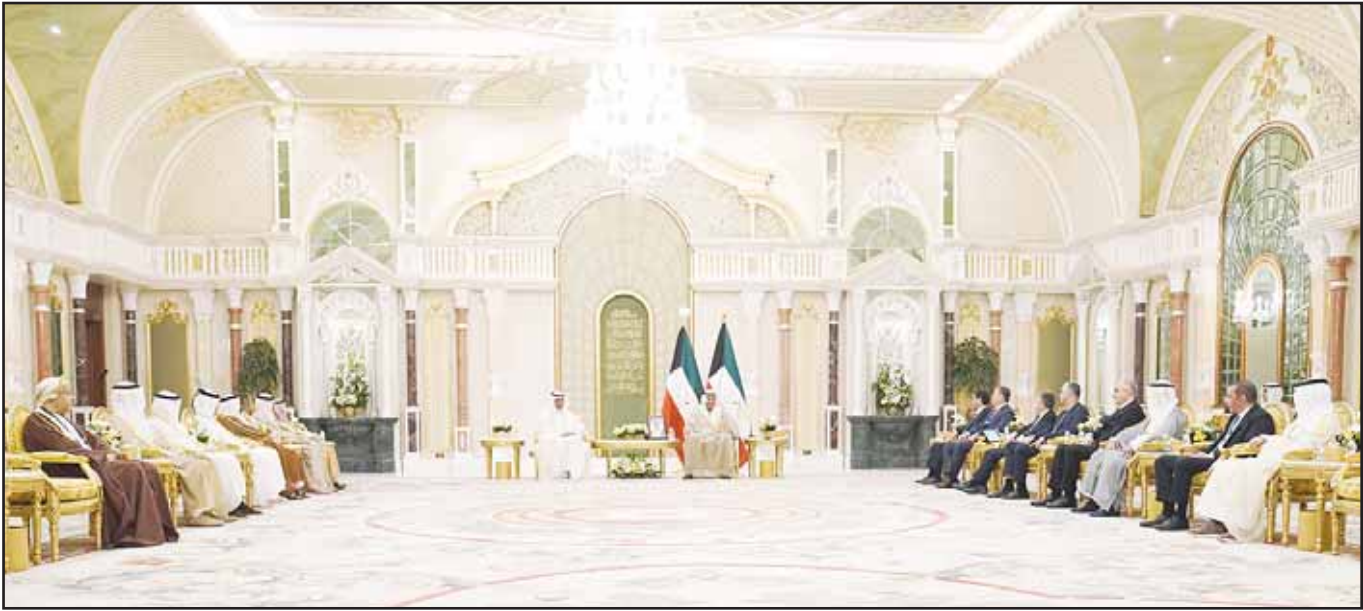
KUWAIT CITY, April 16: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received on Tuesday at Bayan Palace Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya, who presented to His Highness the Foreign Ministers and representatives from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and the Central Asian states.

The meeting was held on the occasion of the Third Ministerial Meeting of the Strategic Dialogue between the GCC and Central Asian countries, hosted by Kuwait.

His Highness the Crown Prince conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

His Highness affirmed the keenness of both the GCC and Central Asian states on continuing to strengthen cooperative and coordinated relations across political, economic, and cultural fields.

Continued on Page 5



Crown Prince Diwan photo  
His Highness the Crown Prince receives Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya, who presented to His Highness the Foreign Ministers and representatives from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and the Central Asian states.



Photo by Samer Shiqer  
Foreign ministers and representatives from the GCC countries and the Central Asian states pose for a group photo during the Third Ministerial Meeting of the Strategic Dialogue between the GCC and Central Asian countries, hosted by Kuwait.

## Kuwait, Egypt agree on Khor Abdullah navigation accord

KUWAIT CITY, April 16, (KUNA): Kuwait and Egypt have agreed on enhancing economic, commercial and investment relations.

This came in a joint statement issued on Tuesday on the occasion of the visit paid by Egypt's President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi to Kuwait on April 14-15, in response to an invitation of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The visit was made out of the deep-rooted historic relations between Kuwait and Egypt and in the enhancement of their strategic partnership.

His Highness the Amir held talks with President El-Sisi that were preceded by a wide session of the two delegations' members.

The talks covered the bilateral ties between the two sisterly relations, and both sides extolled and deeply appreciated these bonds.

ated these bonds.

The Kuwaiti side expressed its determination to carry out investment projects in Egypt, exploiting multiple opportunities in the domains of energy, agriculture, industry, information technology, real estate development, banking sector and pharmaceutical industries, according to the joint statement.

The two sides discussed boosting collaboration in a number of fields like energy, infrastructure, healthcare, education, culture and tourism.

They commended progress in these sectors and bilateral relations, expressing determination to enhance commercial and investment ties in the upcoming phase in a manner that achieves their common interest.

Continued on Page 5



9 ABK holds Ordinary and Extraordinary General Assembly meetings for the financial year ended 31 December 2024



11 Zain Group holds AGM with a quorum of 79.2%; Assembly approves extension of a minimum 35 fils dividend policy for another 3 years until 2028

### Newswatch

## PAM to pause

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) announced that its electronic services will be temporarily suspended on Saturday to conduct routine maintenance on its network, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The suspension will affect all its electronic portals, including its official website and the "Ashal" systems. This is part of the authority's ongoing efforts to upgrade and improve the quality of its services.

KUWAIT CITY: The US Embassy in Kuwait affirmed that national security is a top priority for the United States, due to which all visa applicants undergo strict security procedures, including a thorough review of law enforcement and counterterrorism databases, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The embassy stated via a post on its X account that no visa will be issued until all security concerns have been thoroughly addressed.

## 16 held over national security threats

## Kuwait condemns terror plot in Jordan

KUWAIT CITY, April 16, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait condemned and denounced the terrorist plots that aimed to undermine national security in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

In a statement Wednesday, Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed Kuwait's rejection of all forms of violence and terrorism, and anything that would spread chaos and destabilize security

and stability.

The ministry lauded the vigilance of the Jordanian security services and their success in thwarting these terrorist plots, stressing its support for the brothers in Jordan in all the measures they take to maintain security and stability in the Kingdom.

Continued on Page 5

## Sahel app flags bogus payment links

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The Sahel app circulated to its users a warning issued from the Ministry of Interior about fake or fraudulent websites that promote discounts on traffic fines, with the intent of stealing banking information, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The Ministry of Interior urged citizens and residents to use official government applications, such as Sahel,

for electronic payments and avoid engaging with any suspicious links.

The Sahel app also reminded users that the ministry stresses the importance of verifying the authenticity of links before using them and refraining from entering banking details on any unofficial or untrusted websites.

## Kuwait-Tajikistan relations celebrate 30-year milestone

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



Photo by Samer Shiqer  
The ceremonial cutting of the cake during a celebration hosted by the Embassy of Tajikistan to commemorate the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Ambassador Samih Jawhar Hayat has affirmed the strength of the relationship between Kuwait and Tajikistan, stressing that both nations are committed to deepen bilateral cooperation and explore promising avenues for mutual benefit and sustainable development.

Speaking at a celebration hosted by the Embassy of Tajikistan to commemorate the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries, Hayat asserted that "from the beginning, Kuwaiti-Tajik relations have been grounded in mutual respect and constructive cooperation."

He pointed out that in the last three decades, the relationship has steadily grown -- a manifestation of both countries' dedication to solidify their friendship, enhance coordination and promote shared interests. "Today, we proudly celebrate 30 years of diplomatic ties with the Republic of Tajikistan. These relations started in 1995 and steadily strengthened through mutual understanding and a genuine desire to expand cooperation between the two friendly nations," he added.

He also cited the historic visit of Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon to Kuwait in November, and his meeting with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah; considering it milestone on the path of bilateral ties. "We value the cooperation between Kuwait and Tajikistan, as well as with the wider Central Asian region. Kuwait remains steadfast in its commitment to advance this important partnership," he added.

Continued on Page 5



### HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

**Anwar Sadat was 30 years ahead of his time, and his predictions came true**

Saddam Hussein was reckless, and his only concern was to occupy Kuwait.

I have never seen anyone more cowardly than Hafez al-Assad and his brother.

I urged Yasser Arafat to take over Palestine within the 1967 borders, but he refused.

I opposed the Iranian Revolution because it was sectarian in nature.

His statements angered Islamist movements.

Syria collapsed on the third day of the October 6, 1973 War.

The Arabs turned against me because Egypt made peace.

Ali Abdullah Saleh never grasped the true significance of Yemen.

Gaddafi acted like a child, and in doing so, he destroyed his country.

### Day by Day

THEY say happiness can be found in two places - a heart content with giving and a soul at peace with fate.

Fear of what the future holds is unnecessary, as caution cannot change destiny. What matters is to live your life with the understanding that, if you have been granted the ability, you should remember God's power over you. This means avoiding injustice and wrongdoing.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar



Prayer Timings			
Fajr .....	03:59	Asr .....	15:22
Sunrise ..	05:21	Maghrib ..	18:15
Zohr .....	11:48	Isha .....	19:35

# Local

**Expected weather for next 24 hrs:**  
**By Day:** Rather hot with light to moderate freshening at times northerly wind to northwesterly wind, with speeds of 12-40 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.  
**By Night:** Mild to rather cold

Weather			
with light to moderate northwest-erly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-30 km/h and some scattered clouds will ap-pear.	Abdaly	30	14
	Jahra	31	18
	Salmiyah	28	20
	Jal Aliyah	29	14
	Nuwaisib	29	21
	Wafra	31	13

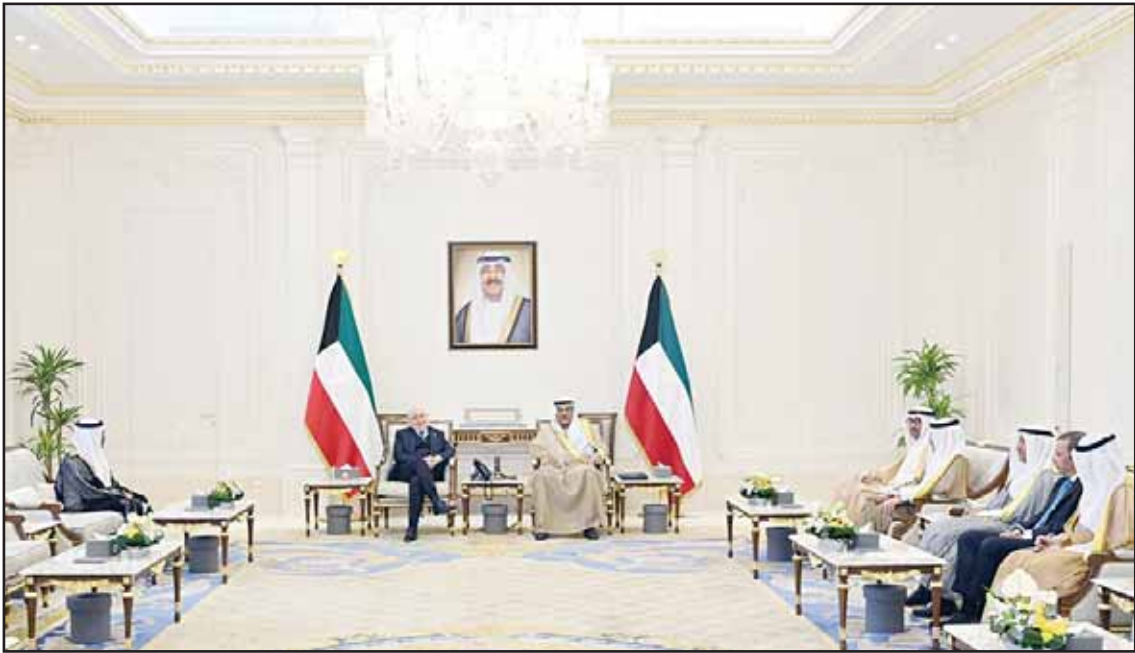
## Kuwait affirms aviation ties during high-level visit

### Crown Prince hosts ICAO president at Bayan Palace

KUWAIT CITY, April 16, (KUNA): His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received on Tuesday at Bayan Palace Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, and the President of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Sheikh Humoud Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

During the meeting, they introduced the President of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Council Salvatore Sciacchitano to His Highness the Crown Prince, and ICAO Regional Director for the Middle East Office Mohamed Abubaker Abdullah Farea, on the occasion of their visit to the country.

The meeting was attended by Director of His Highness the Crown Prince's Office, Retired Lieutenant General Jamal Mohammad Al-Theyab, and the Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs at the Crown Prince's Diwan, Mazen Eissa Al-Eissa.



Crown Prince Diwan photo  
His Highness the Crown Prince during the reception of the Minister of Defense, Acting Minister of Interior, and the President of the General Directorate of Civil Aviation, where they introduced to His Highness the President of the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization.

#### Crown Prince, PM extend condolences

### Amir offers sympathy to Malaysia over death of ex-Premier Badawi

KUWAIT CITY, April 16, (KUNA): His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received on Tuesday at Bayan Palace Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, and the President of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Sheikh Humoud Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

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### Kuwait Deputy FM welcomes Saudi, Bahraini counterparts

KUWAIT CITY, April 16, (KUNA): Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received the Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud, at Kuwait International Airport, upon his arrival to participate in the third ministerial meeting of the GCC and the Central Asian countries strategic dialogue.

Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received the Bahrain Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Abdullatif Al-Zayani, at Kuwait International Airport, upon his arrival to participate in the third ministerial meeting of the GCC and the Central Asian countries strategic dialogue.



Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah receives Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs.



KUNA photos  
Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah receives the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain, Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani.

# Cabinet assesses notable diplomatic outcomes, affirms strategic alliances

## National cybersecurity program launched to bolster digital defense

KUWAIT CITY, April 16, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Cabinet held its weekly meeting on Wednesday, April 16, 2025, at Bayan Palace, chaired by Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereeda Abdullah Al-Moushejri provided a briefing on the meeting's key outcomes. The Cabinet was updated on the state visit of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi to Kuwait from April 14 to 15, 2025, during which official talks were held with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The discussions covered a wide range of topics, including trade, investment, energy, healthcare, education, and tourism. The two sides issued a joint statement emphasizing their determination to strengthen bilateral relations and expand cooperation in multiple sectors.

The joint statement highlighted the importance of finalizing the demarcation of the Kuwaiti-Iraqi maritime border, ensuring compliance with international law, and protecting Kuwait's sovereignty. Both countries reaffirmed their commitment to Security Council Resolution



Prime Minister Diwan photo  
Photo during the Cabinet meeting.

No. 833 (1993) and the Maritime Navigation Agreement in Khor Abdullah. The statement also reiterated Kuwait's support for the return of Kuwaiti property, including national archives, and humanitarian efforts regarding missing persons and prisoners.

In addition, the statement emphasized that the Dorra gas field lies entirely within Kuwait and Saudi Arabia's maritime territories, rejecting any claims to the area by other parties.

The Cabinet was also briefed on the recent visit of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya to Antalya, Türkiye, where they led the Kuwaiti delegation at the

Fourth Antalya Diplomatic Forum, held under the patronage of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Noura Al-Fassam presented updates on the outcomes of the joint annual meetings of Arab financial institutions and the 16th session of the Council of Arab Finance Ministers, which were hosted in Kuwait. Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, and other senior officials attended the meetings. Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef emphasized the importance of deeper Arab economic cooperation, youth empowerment, and support

for small and medium enterprises, aligning with Kuwait's ongoing commitment to development initiatives.

Additionally, the Cabinet heard a briefing from Minister of Information, Culture, and State Minister for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Badah Al-Mutairi on Kuwait's participation at Expo Osaka 2025. The Minister reported on the opening of Kuwait's pavilion, under the theme "Lighthouse of the Future," highlighting the country's contributions to arts, culture, innovation, and youth development. The exhibition runs for six months, with participation from 158 countries.

Minister of State for Communications Affairs Omar Saud Al-Omar presented updates on the implementation of the Kuwait-Google Cloud framework agreement, which aims to enhance digital government services while ensuring data security.

He also shared details about the launch of the "Newborn Journey" service on the unified government app Sahel. This service streamlines processes for newborn registration, including issuing a civil number, birth certificate, and civil ID.

The Cabinet praised Minister Al-Omar and his team for their efforts in advancing digital government initiatives, which aim to simplify procedures and improve public service efficiency. Finally, the Cabinet reviewed and approved several agenda items and referred others to relevant ministerial committees for further study and action.

## Other Voices

### Citizenship for the 'Good Boy'!

By Ahmad alsarraf

Article 5 of the Kuwaiti Nationality Law states that citizenship may be granted by decree, upon the recommendation of the Minister of Interior, to individuals who have rendered distinguished services to Kuwait. However, the law does not define what qualifies as "distinguished services," leaving the provision open to interpretation, and in some cases, misuse.

Over the years, thousands have been granted citizenship under this article, including around 2,200 individuals after the liberation of Kuwait. Yet, many of these recipients were far from deserving, with some of their deeds being far from being described as "distinguished". In fact, some of these individuals were barely over twenty years of age and had little to no knowledge of where Kuwait even was.

Countries around the world adopt different policies when it comes to granting citizenship to foreigners. In most cases, there are few barriers, particularly in Western countries, where citizenship is often encouraged due to the growing demand for labor that supports development and contributes by paying taxes. Countries such as the United States, Canada, and Australia have achieved high economic



alsarraf

growth, due to the efforts of immigrants.

Notably, a few years ago, the German Chancellor granted permanent residency, and in many cases, citizenship, to over a million Syrians.

China is one of the countries that rarely grants citizenship to foreigners, as it seeks to preserve its national identity. Japan follows a similar approach, requiring applicants to fully integrate into Japanese society, demonstrate proficiency in the language, and possess a deep understanding of the culture, which makes the process long and challenging.

In Europe, Liechtenstein (with a population of just 40,000) is known for having some of the most stringent citizenship policies, alongside countries like Bhutan, North Korea, and Qatar. These countries prioritize preserving their national identity, controlling population numbers, and limiting foreign influence.

Most countries around the world establish specific criteria for granting citizenship to individuals who have made exceptional contributions to fields such as science, arts, sports, or culture, or who have financially invested significantly in major projects and created job opportunities. This practice is common in countries like Malta, Cyprus, and Portugal.

Also, some countries offer citizenship to those who have rendered distinguished national services, such as military service, diplomatic work, or contributions to national security.

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## Kuwaiti women hailed as vital partners in nation's prosperity

### Capital Governor inaugurates 'Sait Harayer' event

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Under the patronage of Sheikha Amthal Al-Ahmad, Capital Governor Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Sabah inaugurated the "Sait Harayer" event on Monday evening at the Women's Market in Mubarakia in the presence of several ministers and prominent public figures, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The event celebrates the vital role of Kuwaiti women and their contributions to the nation's development and progress.

In his speech, the governor affirmed that Kuwaiti women have always been, and continue to be, vital partners in the country's journey of growth and prosperity.

He praised their continuous contributions and ever-evolving creativity, passed down through generations.

The governor expressed his pride in participating in the event, which honors women and celebrates their rich legacy.

He said Kuwaiti heritage is filled with inspiring examples of women who have made lasting contributions in various fields.

Sheikh Abdullah also praised the artistic performances and the diverse booths that reflected the nation's cultural identity, stressing that "Sait Harayer" is more than just an event, it is a journey through the nation's collective memory that highlights the achievements of Kuwaiti women as a source of inspiration for future generations.

In conclusion, the governor extended his gratitude to Sheikha Amthal Al-Ahmad for her patronage and unwavering support, as well as to all the entities involved in organizing the event.

He called for continued efforts to support and empower women in all sectors.



Photos by Mohammad Morsi  
Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Sabah together with top officials inaugurate the 'Sait Harayer' event.



HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah



# Anwar Sadat was 30 years ahead of his time, and his predictions came true

THE late President of Egypt, Anwar Sadat (May God have mercy on him) made several statements that proved prophetic. One such statement was, “Saddam Hussein stands against me and against Egypt because I signed a peace treaty with Israel. I know he is powerful, but I am certain he is reckless and doesn’t know how to calculate his moves. He will misuse his power. Saddam Hussein’s recklessness will one day set the Gulf on fire and destroy the most important country in the Arab East.”

Sadat also said, “Saddam Hussein is inciting the weak states of the Arabian Gulf against me in the Arab League, even though his true dream is to occupy Kuwait and annex it to his country.”

What Sadat predicted in 1980 became a reality in 1990, just a decade later.

Sadat once said, “Hafez al-Assad and his brother Rifaat are thugs protected by the Russians. They have never cared about the true interests of the Arabs. Their only concern is the Alawite sect to which they belong. I have never seen anyone more cowardly than Hafez al-Assad and his brother Rifaat. They are willing to set the world on fire for their own personal gain. They act as if they are leaders of the Arab world, despite the fact that Syria collapsed by the third day of the October 6, 1973 war because of their betrayal.”

These remarks, made by Sadat in 1977 following his historic visit to Jerusalem, which sparked deep hostility from the Syrian regime, proved prophetic during the Hama massacre in 1983.

Sadat once said, “I asked Arafat to accept the offer of establishing Palestine based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, under the protection of a group of countries he himself had selected, but he refused. I don’t think Arafat will ever receive a better offer.” And that’s exactly what happened.

He also warned, “I was among the first to strongly oppose the Iranian revolution because it was a sectarian movement that would try to export sectarianism and hatred across the region.”

Sadat said this during the 1979 Khomeini revolution, which sparked backlash from Islamist move-

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● I urged Yasser Arafat to take over Palestine within the 1967 borders, but he refused.

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● His statements angered Islamist movements.

● Syria collapsed on the third day of the October 6, 1973 War.

● The Arabs turned against me because Egypt made peace.

● Ali Abdullah Saleh never grasped the true significance of Yemen.

● Gaddafi acted like a child, and in doing so, he destroyed his country.

ments at the time. Yet, every word he said proved to be true.

He once said, “Sergeant Ali Abdullah Saleh, who became the president of Yemen, is illiterate and afraid to step even one meter outside of Sana’a. Despite

this, he criticizes my policies and objects to Egypt’s position. One day, the Arabs will understand who Ali Abdullah Saleh truly is. He never recognized the value or significance of Yemen.”

Sadat’s words came true, as history later revealed the consequences of Saleh’s rule and the turmoil he brought upon Yemen.

Regarding Muammar Gaddafi, he said, “This is a crazy young man with deep psychological issues who behaves like a child. Give him a well-functioning country today, and by tomorrow, he will reduce it to rubble.” And that’s exactly what happened.

Sadat said: “Those who claim to speak in the name of Nasserism care only about their personal interests. They change their stance like chameleons and are ready to shift their loyalty in an instant just to gain power. There is no such thing as Nasserism or Sadatism. Every president must prove his worth through his own actions and character.”

He was absolutely right in everything he said. We have all seen how the Nasserists, who claimed to stand with the poor, ended up becoming billionaires, along with their children and grandchildren, all at the expense of the naive.

Sadat declared, “With a single stroke of the pen, I ended the bloodshed of Egyptian youth. Had I hesitated out of fear of how the barbarians would react, I would have been a traitor. The Arabs never understand, as they always demand war. My mission is to ensure that Egypt’s youth live without tears or bloodshed.

To fight on behalf of the Arabs, I must first have weapons factories that ensure a balance of power. Without that, the October 1973 War will remain the last and final war. After that, development must take priority. Strangely, Egypt makes the decision, and its enemy understands it, while the Arabs attack it. They will understand one day, but it will be too late.”

Sadat was, without a doubt, at least 30 years ahead of his time. He was able to see the full picture clearly, while others were too busy chasing hollow heroism and finding excuses to blame him.

A small dispute can sometimes reveal deep-seated grudges. Life is full of things that are hard to understand - this person is angry, that one has changed with time, another has bought some things and sold some things. In the end, we must simply remember that a genuine person stays true, and that no one can stop life from moving forward.

●●●●

The best thing about this new era is that it has put an end to plundering, looting, theft, and the smuggling of stolen funds abroad. What we hope to see now is steady and accelerated development.

●●●●

Kuwait has 982 laws, most of which are outdated and obsolete. It is time for all of them to be amended. Today, we are witnessing ministerial stability, and with it comes the opportunity to breathe new life into these laws. We have grown weary of these laws and their humiliating procedures.

●●●●

The wise once said, “There is no good in a nation whose sword is in the hands of cowards, whose wealth is in the hands of thieves, and whose pen is in the hands of hypocrites.” Words more precious than gold.

●●●●

There is no such thing as a “vacation sale” anywhere else in the world, meaning that an employee, whether in the public or private sector, can forgo their vacation time and sell it back to the government. In some cases, employees are granted up to 90 days of annual leave, which is three full months, but some of them are still frequently absent from work. This is unbelievable.

●●●●

Frankly, Trump managed to shake the world with his bold actions. Now, the world has agreed to discuss whatever he demands. Stock prices have dropped, and the global economy has taken a hit. Some parties have gained, but overall, things have settled. President Trump emerged victorious... He played his cards smartly.

## Court ‘reinstates’ Finance Ministry employee after unjust termination

Lack of objective grounds for dismissal during probation

By Jaber Al-Hamoud  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The Administrative Court has overturned the decision of the Ministry of Finance to terminate the service of a female employee working as a “junior financial researcher” during her probationary period. The court ordered the Ministry of Finance to reinstate the employee, as it was determined that the decision**

**to terminate her was not based on sufficient objective grounds.**

Lawyer Nasser Al-Farhoud, who filed the case on behalf of the employee, explained that his client was appointed as a junior financial researcher at the Ministry of Finance. However, since her appointment, she was not provided with an office or computer, nor was her account activated on the official correspondence system. She was also not assigned any job duties by her superiors throughout the probationary period.

His client was surprised by the decision to terminate her service on the grounds of “lack of competence during the probationary period”,

and she filed a grievance against the decision but received no response.

Lawyer Al-Farhoud stressed that the contested decision violated the law and amounted to an abuse of power.

The court explained that the plaintiff’s performance evaluation during the probationary period was marked by clear inconsistencies. The first and second evaluation reports were positive, but the third and fourth reports were negative. However, there was no explanation for these changes or any mention of specific violations committed by the employee, even though all evaluations were issued by the same entity.

### 97 scrap cars cleared in sweeps

## Capital Municipality steps up clean-up enforcement efforts

By Inaas Awadh  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The Public Relations Department of the Kuwait Municipality announced that recent inspection campaigns carried out by field teams from the Public Hygiene and Road Occupancy departments resulted in the removal of 97 abandoned and scrap vehicles, and the issuance of 380 warnings.

The department affirmed its commitment

to strict enforcement of the law, stressing that it will not be lenient towards violators of public sanitation regulations and road obstruction laws.

In this regard, Al-Rai daily quoted Faisal Al-Otaibi, Director of the Public Hygiene and Road Occupations Department at the Capital Municipality, who stated that the goal of intensifying the campaigns is to identify violators and take all necessary legal action against them.

Al-Otaibi affirmed that field inspections by the team from the Public Hygiene and Road Occupations Department will continue.

## Interior Ministry cracks down on road chaos and criminal activity

By Munif Naif  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Last week, police patrols referred 28 individuals to the Drugs Control General Department (DCGD) at the Interior Ministry for the possession of drugs, and arrested 241 wanted persons who were handed over to the concerned authorities.

According to the weekly statistics of the emergency police patrols; the officers dealt with eight physical altercations and controlled all involved parties.

They also handled 161 traffic accidents; issued 19,151 traffic violation citations and impounded three vehicles.

Meanwhile, over the past six days, officers from the General Traffic Department

(GTD) at the Interior Ministry arrested 110 juveniles for driving without a license, and referred them to the Juvenile Prosecution.

According to the department’s weekly report, 39 individuals were placed in precautionary detention and 56,708 traffic violations were recorded.

Moreover, 18 vehicles were impounded, two individuals were referred to the Drugs Control General Department (DCGD), five were detained as they were in an abnormal condition, and six were nabbed for failure to present valid identification documents.

Authorities also arrested 48 wanted individuals and seized 46 vehicles linked to civil cases.

The department reported that it dealt with 1,480 traffic accidents during the week; including 178 that resulted in injuries.

### Ex-MPs await verdicts

## Former Minister of Defense referred to Ministerial Court

KUWAIT CITY, April 16, (Agencies): The Permanent Investigation Committee for the Trial of Ministers has decided to refer former Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad to the Ministerial Court, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The committee’s decision was based on a report regarding secret expenses submitted by the Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef.

The committee, chaired by Counselor Omar Al-Masoud and including counselors Saud Al-Sanea and Ahmed Al-Muqallad, took the decision on the referral after reviewing documents related to the disbursement of funds for the purchase of watches and vehicles, which involved Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad and his former office manager, who has also been included in the referral.

Mewanwhile, the Court of Cassation has postponed until April 20 the announcement of its verdicts on several cases involving former members of Parliament and electoral candidates accused of violating the State Security Law and the Penal Code, reports Al-Anba daily.

The deferred cases include the appeal of former MP Hussein Al-Qallaf against a two-year prison sentence with hard labor for insulting the Emirate. The charge stems from a social media post criticizing the Ministry of Interior’s procedures regarding the regulation of Husayniyas and the practice of Shia rituals.

The court also delayed ruling on the appeal of former MP Hamad Al-Alyan who was convicted over tweets deemed to challenge the powers of His Highness the Amir. The Court of Appeals had earlier refrained from issuing a sentence on his case.

It postponed its decision on the petition of former MP Anwar Al-Fikr , who faced accusations of interfering with HH the Amir’s authority following remarks about the appointment of the Prime Minister. The Court of Appeals had also opted not to issue a sentence on his case.

The ruling on former National Assembly election candidate Musaed Al-Quraifa’s appeal was deferred as well. He was sentenced to two years in prison with hard labor for allegedly insulting HH the Amir and challenging the latter’s authority during his election campaign.

In another case, the court postponed its decision on former MP Abdullah Fahad’s appeal against a suspended six-month prison sentence. He was charged with insulting the judiciary and was released on KD3,000 bail with a three-year suspension of the sentence.

## National Guard Chief orders energy and water conservation measures

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The Chief of the Nvational Guard Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah has issued directives to senior National Guard commanders to ensure all personnel adhere to measures for rationalizing electricity and water usage in various National Guard camps and facilities during and after official working hours, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press release, the National Guard highlighted Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah’s emphasis on adhering to the National Guard’s strategic goals for rationalizing energy consumption, expanding the use of renewable energy, and managing re-

sources through smart systems.

It stressed that the National Guard has been a pioneer in this effort, as it has been taking serious and practical steps over the years to rationalize electricity and water consumption.

The National Guard called for the activation of the cooperation protocol signed with the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, which provides support to the ministry when needed. Also, relevant units have been tasked with inspecting National Guard sites to ensure compliance with the ministry’s energy and water conservation requirements.

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# Kuwait reaffirms commitment for youth empowerment in all sectors

Kuwaiti delegation showcases ongoing initiatives at UN forum

**NEW YORK, April 16, (KUNA):** Kuwait has reaffirmed its commitment to adopting youth-empowering policies and increasing youth participating in the decision-making process.

“Kuwait also launched a series of youth-focused entrepreneurship and innovation programs and established a ministry for youth affairs,” Acting Deputy Director General of the Public Authority for Youth Abdullah Al-Adwani told KUNA on the sidelines of his participation in the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum held at the UN headquarters in New York during the period from April 15 to April 17.

Youth constitute over 70 percent of Kuwaiti population, he stated, emphasizing “investing in youth capabilities is not an option, but rather a national necessity.”

Al-Adwani pointed out that the Kuwaiti delegation includes an elite group of active Kuwaiti youth who are participating in this conference with their ideas and contributions.

Their presence at this event is a practical embodiment of the state’s commitment to supporting and empowering youth, he said.

Al-Adwani underlined the importance of strengthening international cooperation to ensure that every young man and woman, everywhere, has an equal opportunity to participate, influence, and lead toward a more just and sustainable future.

He stated that this important forum is a global intellectual platform for purposeful dialogue and knowledge exchange between countries.

It also provides an opportunity to unify international efforts toward a better tomorrow for youth, he clarified.

Al-Adwani added that the conference’s agenda and comprehensive topics aim to formulate shared international visions that enhance the empowerment and qualification of youth in all fields.

In addition to Al-Adwani the Kuwaiti delegation to the forum also includes Asrar Al-Ansari, the official spokesperson for the



Acting Deputy Director General of the Public Authority for Youth, Abdullah Al-Adwani, and the Kuwaiti delegation participating in the Youth Forum of the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

Public Authority for Youth, and six young people, who contribute the Authority’s projects and programs namely: Maryam Al-Omran, Ali Al-Damkhi, Fahad Al-Dhuwaihi, Abdullah Al-Failakawi, Sarah Al-Tuwaijri, and Sarah Ali.

The three-day Forum provides a platform for young people to engage in a dialogue with Member States and other stakeholders to share their views and concerns as well as galvanize actions and recommendations to transform the world into a fairer, greener and more sustainable place led by the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The ECOSOC Youth Forum will be guided by the 2025 theme of ECOSOC and the High-level Political Forum (HLPF): “Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind.”

It will also provide opportunities to discuss concrete actions and commitments to realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for in-depth review at the 2025 HLPF, namely SDG 3 (Good health and well-being), SDG 5 (Gender equality), SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), SDG 14 (Life below water) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

## Reception to take place April 19–20

### St. Mark’s Cathedral opens doors to well-wishers for Easter celebrations

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Head of the St. Mark’s Cathedral in Kuwait Father Bigol Anba Bishoy announced that the church will receive well-wishers for the Blessed Easter on Saturday, April 19, starting at 9:00 pm during part of the Divine Liturgy, and on Sunday, April 20, from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm in the reception hall, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Father Bigol praised the spirit of love and tolerance that has prevailed in Kuwaiti society for many generations, and flourished during the reign of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad.

He said, “We pray from our hearts that His Highness’s reign continues and is filled with goodness and prosperity, and that the Kuwaiti people will experience a great cultural shift.”

Father Bigol expressed his sincere appreciation and gratitude to the agencies that contribute to securing the celebrations, particularly the leadership and staff in all its sectors and branches of the Ministry of Interior, as well as Hawally and Ahmadi governorates, the media, and others.

He also expressed his pride in the many heartfelt congratulations that express great love and warmth.

Father Bigol said, “During such holidays, we are accustomed to receiving



Father Bigol Anba Bishoy – Head of the St. Mark’s Cathedral in Kuwait

well-wishers from various segments of the Kuwaiti community, including state officials, citizens, social figures, members of diplomatic missions, and many members of the expatriate communities living on this blessed land. The bouquets of flowers we receive carry beautiful meanings and the spirit of brotherhood, which we deeply cherish. This reflects the atmosphere of harmony, coexistence, and stability in Kuwait. I wish prosperity and success to both the Kuwaiti and Egyptian peoples.”

Collaboration and achievements praised

## Al-Baghli Foundation recognizes top students in award ceremony

**By Fares Al-Abdan**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The Ibrahim Taher Al-Baghli Foundation for the Pious Son concluded its ‘Al-Baghli Award for the Pious Son’ competitions for the 2024/2025 academic year by honoring a distinguished group of students from the Ministry of Education schools.

The ceremony took place under the patronage of Minister of Education Eng. Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei. It celebrated the achievements of 87 winners out of a total of 4,020 participating students.

Held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel recently, the award ceremony was attended by the representative of the minister, Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Development and Activities Maryam Al-Enezi.

Speaking on behalf of his father, Ibrahim Al-Baghli, Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of the foundation, emphasized the significance of the 13th edition of the award. He affirmed that it supports the strategy and philosophy of the ministry by promoting educational programs and activities that benefit students and serve public interest.

He said the award affirms the alignment of the foundation with the vision of the ministry to instill values and principles drawn from Kuwait’s faith, heritage and constitutional foundations. “The award is rooted in a deep understanding of na-

tional identity, development needs, and the country’s interaction with the world around it,” he explained.

He also cited the Kuwaiti Constitution, stressing that the State bears responsibility for nurturing youths. He asserted that education is both a right and a duty for Kuwaitis, and a fundamental pillar of national progress; fully entrusted to the care of the State.

Meanwhile, Al-Enezi expressed her pride in honoring the students; calling it a celebration not just of achievement, but of the powerful collaboration between government institutions and civil society. She commended the Al-Baghli Foundation for its continuous efforts to reinforce core values rooted in Islamic teachings, the principles of the Constitution, and Kuwait’s Arab identity.

“This award – centered on honoring parents, showing kindness to the elderly, and deepening national belonging – demonstrates the positive influence such initiatives have on our society,” she said.

Al-Enezi added that the work of organizations like the Al-Baghli Foundation goes far beyond event organization. “They play a crucial role in fostering community cohesion, promoting positivity, and nurturing a shared sense of responsibility.”

She concluded by congratulating the award winners and extending her gratitude to the Al-Baghli Foundation and all those involved in this meaningful and long-standing humanitarian effort.



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Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah supporting 'Let's Spend Eid with the Disabled' event.

## Farwaniya governor attends Eid event for people with disabilities

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Under the patronage and in the presence of Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah, an event titled “Let’s Spend Eid with the Disabled” was held.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, the event was organized by visually impaired media advisor Abdulrahman Al-Adwani, in collaboration with the Abdullah Al-Mubarak Community Development Center. It was held in the presence of Supervisor of Community Development Centers Nawal Al-Ajmi and Head of the Abdullah Al-Mubarak Center Sharifa Al-Rashidi.

The event witnessed wide participation from individuals with disabilities, their families, public figures, and volunteer teams. It included various activities, competitions, and an exhibition.

Governor Sheikh Athbi toured the exhibition and honored the participants in recognition of their contributions.

He expressed his sincere gratitude and appreciation to all participants, supporters, and organizers of the event, affirming that people with disabilities receive the utmost attention from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and the government as a whole.

Meanwhile, Media Advisor Abdulrahman Al-Adwani thanked the Farwaniya Governor for his generous patronage, presence, interest, recognition, and active involvement in the event.

He said such support reflects the governor’s ongoing commitment to empowering people with disabilities and his appreciation for the efforts of all participating entities.







US judge presses WH on its refusal to return Abrego Garcia

Trump wants to give money and airplane tickets to immigrants who ‘self-deport’

WASHINGTON, April 16, (AP): US President Donald Trump said he wants to give money and an airplane ticket to any immigrant who is in the country illegally who chooses to “self-deport,” and work to get those who are “good” back in the US, a break from his usual headline immigration rhetoric.

Trump, who campaigned on a pledge to carry out mass deportations, said in a taped interview with Fox Noticias that aired Tuesday that his administration is focused right now on getting “murderers” out of the country. But for others in the US illegally, he said, he’s going to implement “a self-deportation program.”

Trump offered few details about the plan, including timing, but said the US would provide immigrants airfare and a stipend.

“We’re going to give them a stipend. We’re going to give them some money and a plane ticket, and then we’re going to work with them - if they’re good - if we want them back in, we’re going to work with them to get them back in as quickly as we can,” Trump said.

Fox Noticias interviewer Rachel Campos-Duffy, who is married to Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy, played Trump a clip of a Mexican man who she said arrived in the US illegally more than 20 years ago and has children who are American citizens.

It is not clear if the man now has legal permission to be in the country, but Campos-Duffy said the man said that even though he cannot vote, he would have supported Trump. She played a clip of the man saying he agrees that if someone commits a crime, they should be returned to their countries - including himself.

“I look at this man. I say, this is a guy that we want to keep,” Trump replied. “I’ll probably take heat for saying it.”

He then asked if the man was supposed to be deported and answered his own question: “No, he didn’t say that. Good.”

“I don’t think he’s in any danger of it,” Trump said.

The Republican president also said wants to help hotels and farms get the workers they need and recommend people to fill needed positions.

He said that would be “very soothing” to farmers and said he ultimately wants workers who are in the US illegally to leave and come back with legal permission, but he did not outline any steps to do that.

“We’re doing a self-deportation and we’re going to make it comfortable for people,” he said. “And we’re going to work with those people to come back into our country legally.”



US President Donald Trump speaks during the Commander-in-Chief trophy presentation to the Navy Midshipman football team in the East Room of the White House, on April 15, in Washington. (AP)

Fox Noticias said the interview with Trump was taped Monday.

**Also:**  
**GREENBELT, Md:** A federal judge said Tuesday that she will order sworn testimony by Trump administration officials to determine if they complied with her orders to facilitate the return of **Kilmar Abrego Garcia**, who was

were unable to bring back Abrego Garcia, describing their statements as “two very misguided ships passing in the night.”

“The Supreme Court has spoken,” Xinis said, adding that what was said in the Oval Office on Monday “is not before the court.”

In her written order published Tuesday evening, Xinis called for the testimony of four Trump administration officials who work for US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department.

She expects the process to last about two weeks. Xinis wrote that Trump administration officials “have done nothing at all” toward returning Abrego Garcia. But, she wrote, they “remain obligated, at a minimum, to take the steps available to them toward aiding, assisting, or making easier Abrego Garcia’s release.”

The hearing came a day after White House advisers repeated the claim that they lack the authority to bring back the Salvadoran national from his native country. The president of El Salvador also said Monday that he would not return Abrego Garcia, likening it to smuggling “a terrorist into the United States.”

Abrego Garcia’s deportation has become a flashpoint as President **Donald Trump** follows up on campaign promises of mass deportations, including to an El Salvador prison. Following Tuesday’s hearing, a crowd outside the federal court house in Maryland chanted, “What do we want? Due process. When do we want it? Now!”

An attorney for Abrego Garcia said contempt proceedings could be the logical next step after the fact-finding phase. “This is still a win, and this is still progress,” **Rina Ghandi** said. “We’re not done yet, though.”

Abrego Garcia’s wife, **Jennifer Vasquez Sura**, said shortly before Tuesday’s hearing that he was working hard to achieve the American dream for his family.

“That dream was shattered on March 12th when he was abducted and disappeared by the **United States** government in front of our 5-year-old-child,” she said. “Today is 34 days after his disappearance ... I will not stop fighting until I see my husband alive.”

Meanwhile, Democratic US Sen **Chris Van Hollen** of Maryland said he’ll travel to El Salvador on Wednesday.

“My hope is to visit Kilmar and check on his wellbeing and to hold constructive conversations with government officials around his release,” Van Hollen said.



Parents are checked in to pick up their children at Wilmer-Hutchins High School, where police responded to reports of a shooting, in Dallas, Texas, on April 15. (AP)

Dallas high school shooting injures 4, suspect in custody

A suspect in a shooting at a Dallas high school that wounded four students and drew a heavy police response to the campus has been taken into custody, school district officials announced Tuesday night.

Three of the students were injured by gunfire and the fourth was injured in their lower body, according to the Dallas Fire-Rescue Department. The department said units were dispatched to Wilmer-Hutchins High School just after 1 pm and that the four students, all of whom are male, were taken to hospitals with injuries ranging from serious to not life-threatening.

“Quite frankly, this is just becoming way too familiar. And it should not be familiar,” Stephanie Elizalde, superintendent of the Dallas Independent School District, said at a news conference.

The school district said in a statement Tuesday night that a suspect was apprehended within hours of the shooting, but didn’t provide details about the person or say whether they had been arrested.

Christina Smith, assistant police chief for the Dallas Independent School District, said at the earlier news conference that the investigation was fluid and she did not have any information on what led to the shooting. (AP)

Rep Greene laughs off protests to deliver pro-Trump message at Georgia town hall



US Rep Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., speaks during a town-hall style meeting on April 15, in Acworth, Ga. (AP)

Three people were arrested at the event - including a second person police said they also shocked - and others were escorted out because Greene and police said they were being disruptive. But a majority of the crowd of more than 150 was supportive of the Republican, who represents a heavily GOP district stretching from Atlanta’s northwest suburbs to the Tennessee border.

“What am I going to do? I am going to stand by my president,” Greene said in response to a critical question as many audience members whooped in approval. She added that she would “fight for his agenda with everything I have in Congress.”

While Republican congressional leaders have advised their members not to hold town hall meetings, Greene has always courted the spotlight. After giving a speech and playing video clips of her supporting Trump, she answered questions that had been submitted in advance and printed on slides.

Most were supportive, like one asking when officials could begin arresting politicians accused of treason. Greene was dismissive of most of the hostile questions, twice suggesting that those behind them were Democrats “brainwashed” by their news consumption.

**Also:**  
**AUSTIN, Texas:** Former Republican US Rep **Mayra Flores** of Texas on Tuesday launched a bid to unseat Democratic Rep. **Henry Cuellar** in 2026, followed by her campaign announcing just hours later on social media that she had been hospitalized with no further details.

Flores was the first Mexican-born congresswoman in the US House after winning a 2022 special election in another Texas border district. She served about six months in Congress but lost her bid for a full term.

Her campaign did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment about why she was hospitalized.

“We pray that Mayra will return stronger than ever, ready to continue her unwavering commitment to serving our country,” her campaign said in a statement posted on X.

Russia glide bombs strike kills 1 in Ukrainian city

NATO chief reaffirms support for Ukraine

ODESA, Ukraine, April 16, (AP): NATO’s support for Ukraine remains “unwavering,” the alliance’s secretary-general said Tuesday, emphasizing that more than 20 billion euros - over \$22 billion - in security assistance has already been pledged by NATO allies in the first three months of the year.

Mark Rutte spoke on Tuesday in Ukraine’s port city of Odesa, where he met with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

His visit came days after two Russian ballistic missiles struck the city of Sumy on Palm Sunday morning, killing at least 35 people, including two children, and injuring 119.

The attack on the northeastern city, about 30 kilometers (20 miles) from Ukraine’s border with Russia, marked the second large-scale attack in just over a week to result in significant civilian casualties. Earlier this month, about 20 people were killed, including nine children, after a Russian ballistic missile struck Zelenskyy’s hometown of Kryvyi Rih on April 4.

“I’m here today because I believe Ukraine’s people deserve real peace, real safety and security in their country, in their homes,” Rutte said during a joint news conference with Zelenskyy. The two met with wounded Ukrainian soldiers at a hospital in Odesa.

This is Rutte’s first trip to Ukraine



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Presidential Press Office, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte watches as Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy awards a military medic with a state award in a hospital in Odesa, Ukraine on April 15. (AP)

since US President Donald Trump assumed the lead in ceasefire negotiations between Kyiv and Moscow, which have included several rounds of talks in Saudi Arabia.

**Also:**  
**KYIV, Ukraine:** Russian glide bombs and artillery struck a city in southern Ukraine on Wednesday, killing one person and wounding nine others as

**Moscow** forces continued daily attacks across the country.

The city of **Kherson** was struck with glide bombs on Wednesday morning, and when rescue teams arrived at the scene, Russian forces launched an artillery barrage, said the region’s head, **Oleksandr Prokudin**. “This is a deliberate tactic by t to hinder the rescue of the injured and harm doctors, rescuers, and police,” he said.



Protesting Serbian university students who rode bicycles from Novi Sad, Serbia, arrive at the heart of the European Union to seek support on April 15, in Strasbourg, eastern France. (AP)

Serbian students cycle hundreds of miles to take grievances to EU

Serbian university students who say their fight for justice is being overlooked in much of Europe arrived to a hero’s welcome Tuesday in the heart of the European Union. They cycled more than 1,300 kilometers (780 miles) from the Balkan country.

Around 80 students who set off on bicycles 13 days ago on a journey to Strasbourg, France, were aiming to draw EU attention to their monthslong protests against corruption in the Balkan nation. Serbia is formally seeking membership in the 27-nation bloc but has been backsliding in democratic freedoms and the rule of law.

They received an emotional welcome from hundreds of people, including members of the Serbian diaspora and French students and supporters upon arriving at the main square in Strasbourg where the European Parliament meets.

“I think that this protest action is a full success,” one of the cyclists said in a live N1 TV broadcast from Strasbourg where people gathered. “I think we have woken up Europe.” (AP)

Slovakia’s pro-Russian leader rejects call by EU not to attend military parade in Moscow

BRATISLAVA, Slovakia, April 16, (AP): Slovakia’s populist Prime Minister Robert Fico reacted angrily Tuesday to what he called “disrespectful” remarks by the European Union foreign policy chief who warned European leaders against traveling to Moscow for military celebrations of the end of World War II.

Known for his pro-Russian views, Fico has repeatedly vowed to attend the military parade in the Russian capital on May 9 that will mark the 80th anniversary of Nazi Germany’s defeat in WW II.

Kaja Kallas told reporters in Luxembourg on Monday after a meeting of EU foreign ministers that “what was also discussed and very clearly said by different member states is that any participation in the 9th of May parades, or celebrations, in Moscow will not be taken lightly on the European side, considering that Russia is really waging a full-scale war in Europe.”



Slovakia’s Prime Minister Robert Fico speaks at the Conservative Political Action Conference, CPAC, at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center on Feb 21 in Oxon Hill, Md. (AP)

Kallas also said that “We made it very clear that we do not want any candidate country to participate in these events on the 9th of May in Moscow” and called on the member states to send their representatives to the capital of Kyiv instead to show solidarity with Ukraine.

“I will go to Moscow on May 9,” Fico said in a statement.

“Mrs Kallas, I would like to inform you that I am a legitimate premier of Slovakia, a sovereign country,” he said. “Nobody can order me where to go or not to go.”

Fico said he will travel to Moscow to honor the Red Army soldiers who liberated his country and other victims of the Nazis.

The Kremlin has used the annual “Victory Day” celebrations to tout its battlefield prowess, and Putin hailed Russian troops fighting in Ukraine as “heroes” at last year’s event.

Canada election debate advanced by two hours to avoid conflict with hockey game

MONTREAL, April 16, (AP): Politics bowed to Canada’s most popular sport on Tuesday, when the French-language leaders’ debate was abruptly rescheduled to minimize a conflict with a Montreal Canadiens hockey game.

Two federal party leaders had called for the Wednesday evening debate to be moved, out of concern that the game could siphon off potential viewers. Five party leaders will debate each other twice this week, once in French and once in English, ahead of a national election set for April 28.

The televised event will now take place two hours earlier than planned, from 6 pm to 8 pm ET in Montreal. The NHL team will face off against the Carolina Hurricanes at 7 pm ET, in a game that could clinch them a spot in the Stanley Cup playoffs.

In a statement, Radio-Canada and the Leaders’ Debates Commission said they were “recognizing Canadians’ passion for hockey.”

“Citizens will be able to catch this crucial moment in the election campaign while also following the decisive periods of the hockey game that could put the Montreal Canadiens in the playoffs,” the statement reads.

Earlier in the day, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh and Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet had both called on debate organizers to reschedule the event.

“Hockey is in our blood,” Singh said in a statement. “This scheduling conflict makes the political system look out of touch and is going to have a serious impact on who tunes in to the only French debate of the campaign.”

During a press conference on Tuesday afternoon, Blanchet said he had written to the debates commission.

“Let’s not underestimate the importance of this debate for Quebec democracy, on the one hand,” he told reporters. “Let’s not underestimate the quality of the game, either.”



Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre speaks during a federal election campaign stop in Montreal on April 15. (AP)



# Afghan children will die because of US funding cuts, aid official says

KABUL, April 16, (AP): Afghan children will die because of US funding cuts, an aid agency official said Tuesday. The warning follows the cancellation of foreign aid contracts by US President Donald Trump's administration, including to Afghanistan where more than half of the population needs humanitarian assistance to survive.

Action Against Hunger initially stopped all US-funded activities in March after the money dried up suddenly. But it kept the most critical services going in northeastern Badakhshan province and the capital Kabul through its own budget, a measure that stopped this month.

Its therapeutic feeding unit in Kabul is empty and closing this week. There are no patients, and staff contracts are ending because of the US funding cuts.

"If we don't treat children with acute malnutrition there is a very high risk of (them) dying," Action Against Hunger's country director, Cobi Rietveld, told The Associated Press. "No child should die because of malnutrition. If we don't fight hunger, people will die of hunger. If they don't get medical care, there is a high risk of dying. They don't get medical care, they die."

More than 3.5 million children in



Staff members wait for their director at Action Against Hunger's therapeutic feeding unit in Kabul, Afghanistan on April 15. (AP)

Afghanistan will suffer from acute malnutrition this year, an increase of 20% from 2024. Decades of conflict - including the 20-year US war with the Taliban - as well as entrenched poverty and climate shocks have contributed to the country's humanitarian crisis.

Last year, the United States provided 43% of all international humanitarian funding to Afghanistan.

Rietveld said there were other non-

governmental organizations dealing with funding cuts to Afghanistan. "So when we cut the funding, there will be more children who are going to die of malnutrition."

The children who came to the feeding unit often could not walk or even crawl. Sometimes they were unable to eat because they didn't have the energy. All the services were provided free of charge, including three meals a day.

# Australian prime minister trusts Trump and Xi during debate with election rival

MELBOURNE, Australia, April 16, (AP): Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said he had no reason not to trust U.S. President Donald Trump or Chinese President Xi Jinping while debating his rival on Wednesday ahead of the May 3 election.

Albanese and opposition leader Peter Dutton faced off in a televised debate when Australian Broadcasting Corp. moderator, David Speers, asked both if they trusted the presidents of the United States and China, Australia's most important security and trading partners, after they defied bilateral treaties negatively affecting Australian exports.

Albanese, whose center-left Labor Party government came to power in 2022, said the 10% tariffs the Trump administration had placed on Australian imports were as low as any country had been burdened with. "We made it very clear that was an act of self-harm by the United States," he said.

Dutton, of the conservative Liberal Party, said he didn't know either.



Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese looks at Opposition Leader Peter Dutton, right, during the second leaders' debate of the 2025 federal election campaign at the ABC Studios in Parramatta, Sydney on April 16. (AP)

**Also:**

**MELBOURNE, Australia:** A 6.6-magnitude earthquake struck far off southwest Australia on Wednesday, but no tsunami warning was issued.

The epicenter was in the Indian Ocean 2,069 kilometers (1,283 miles) southwest of Albany on the southwest tip of Western Australia state at a depth of 10 kilometers (6 miles), the U.S. Geological Survey said.

The Joint Australian Tsunami Warning Center said there was no tsunami alert for Australia or Antarctica.

‘We’re talking about a full battle test’

# US, Philippine combat drills show Trump not scaling back on South China Sea region

MANILA, Philippines, April 16, (AP): About 14,000 American and Filipino forces will take part in battle-readiness exercises in the Philippines, including live-fire drills, in a largescale deployment that shows the Trump administration is not scaling back its commitment to help deter aggression in the region, a senior Philippine military official said Tuesday.

The annual joint Balikatan - Tagalog for "shoulder-to-shoulder" - exercises between the longtime allies will be held from April 21 to May 9 and involve about 9,000 United States and 5,000 Filipino military personnel. They will involve fighter aircraft, navy ships and an array of weaponry, including a US anti-ship missile system, Philippine Brig. Gen. Michael Logico said. Australia will deploy about 200 military personnel. and Japan and a number of other friendly nations will send smaller military delegations.

China has frowned on such war drills in or near the disputed South China Sea and in northern Philippine provinces close to Taiwan, especially those that involve the US and allied forces that Beijing says aim to contain it and consequently threaten regional stability and peace. Logico said the Balikatan exercises were not aimed at any particular country.

Taiwan is the island democracy which China considers as its own, to be annexed by force if necessary. China conducted large-scale drills in the waters and airspace around Taiwan this month that included an aircraft carrier battle group as it renewed a warning to Taiwan against seeking formal independence.

US Marine Col Doug Krugman, of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, told reporters most of the joint exercises would be staged within Philippine territory except for multi-nation sea exercises, which he did not specify.

Trump's "America First" foreign policy thrust has triggered concerns in Asia about the scale and depth of US commitment to maintain a longstanding security presence in the volatile region.

"As you can see, there is no scale back," Logico said during a news briefing.



Philippine Brig Gen Michael Logico, (left), gestures beside US Marine Corps Colonel Doug Krugman of the 1st Marines Expeditionary Force as he answers questions regarding the upcoming joint military exercises during a press conference at Camp Aguinaldo military headquarters in Quezon city, Philippines on April 15. (AP)

"We're talking about a full battle test."

The comprehensive drills would generally involve a command post issuing orders to field forces in mock battle scenarios, according to Logico and Krugman.

The exercises will include aerial surveillance, the use of a barrage of artillery and missile fire to sink a mock enemy ship, deploying a US anti-ship missile system and countering the landing of enemy forces on an island.

A US mid-range missile system, which was deployed to the northern Philippines last year, would be used again in the combat exercises, Logico said, without elaborating. China has repeatedly expressed alarm over the missile deployment and demanded that the Philippines pull out the weaponry from its territory which it said could spark an arms race.

A Philippine official told The Associated Press early this year that the U.S. Army's mid-range missile system, which consists of a mobile launcher and at least 16 Standard Missile-6 and Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles, was repositioned from the northern Philippine city of Laoag to a strategic area in a western coastal province facing a disputed South China Sea shoal, where Chinese and Philippine coast guard and navy forces have engaged in tense faceoffs.

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth visited Manila in March in his first trip to Asia and said the Trump administration would work with allies to ramp up deterrence against China's aggression in the South China Sea.

The US was not gearing up for war, Hegseth said, while underscoring that peace would be won "through strength." He said the U.S. would deploy an anti-ship missile system, called the Navy Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System, as well as unmanned sea vessels to enable the allies forces to train together to defend Philippine sovereignty during the Balikatan exercises.

Additionally, the allied forces agreed to stage special operations forces training in Batanes province, a cluster of islands in the northernmost tip of the Philippine archipelago across a sea border from Taiwan, he said.

As well as China and the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan also have overlapping claims in the busy waterway, a key global trade route which is also believed to be sitting atop large undersea deposits of gas and oil.

## Africa

**US pastor rescued:** An American pastor who was kidnapped last week by armed and masked men during a sermon in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa was rescued on Tuesday after three of his abductors engaged in gunfire with officials and were killed, police reported Wednesday.

The 45-year-old American citizen, Josh Sullivan from Tennessee, has been based in the Motherwell township branch of the Fellowship Baptist church since 2018 alongside his wife and two children.

The missionary was abruptly abducted on Thursday evening when four men broke into the Fellowship Baptist church in Motherwell. They stole two cellphones from members of the congregation before seizing Sullivan from the pulpit and bundling him out of the building. His truck was found abandoned a few hours later.

A multi-agency task force, including the Anti-Gang Unit and the Serious Organised Crime unit, took over the investigation. On Tuesday night they approached the location where they suspected Sullivan was being held, a house in KwaMagxaki, Gqeberha about 20 minutes' drive from the Baptist church. (AP)

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**Belgian teens arrested:** Two Belgian teenagers were charged Tuesday with wildlife piracy after they were

found with thousands of ants packed in test tubes in what Kenyan authorities said was part of a trend in trafficking smaller and lesser known species.

**Lornoy David** and Seppie Lodewijckx, two 19-year-olds who were arrested on April 5 with 5,000 ants at a guest house, appeared distraught during their appearance before a magistrate in Nairobi and were comforted in the courtroom by relatives. They told the magistrate they were collecting the ants for fun and did not know that it was illegal.



David

In a separate criminal case, Kenyan Dennis Ng'ang'a and Vietnamese Duh Hung Nguyen also were charged with illegal trafficking in the same courtroom, following their arrest while in possession of 400 ants.

The Kenya Wildlife Service said the four men were involved in trafficking the ants to markets in Europe and Asia, and that the species included messor cephalotes, a distinctive, large and red-colored harvester ant native to East Africa.

The illegal export of the ants "not only undermines Kenya's sovereign rights over its biodiversity but also deprives local communities and research institutions of potential ecological and economic benefits," KWS said in a

statement.

Kenya has in the past fought against the trafficking of body parts of larger species of wild animals such as elephants, rhinos and pangolins among others. But the cases against the four men represent "a shift in trafficking trends - from iconic large mammals to lesser-known yet ecologically critical species," KWS said. (AP)

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**Gambian ex-soldier convicted:** A former member of Gambia's military was convicted in federal court Tuesday of torturing five people accused of involvement in a failed coup against the West African country's longtime dictator nearly 20 years ago, capping a rare prosecution in the United States for torture committed abroad.

Jurors at the weeklong trial in Denver also found Michael Sang Correa guilty of being part of a conspiracy to commit torture against suspected opponents while serving in a military unit known as the "Junglers," which reported directly to Yahya Jammeh.

Correa came to the US in 2016 to work as a bodyguard for Jammeh, eventually settling in Denver, where prosecutors said he worked as a day laborer.

Correa, who prosecutors say overstayed his visa, was arrested by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement in 2019 and then indicted the following year under a seldom-used law that allows people to be tried in the US judicial system for torture allegedly committed abroad. (AP)

## RSF suffered multiple battlefield setbacks

# Sudan paramilitary groups form rival govt

CAIRO, April 16, (AP): A notorious paramilitary group fighting against the Sudanese military announced that it was forming a rival government, which will rule parts of the country controlled by the group including the western Darfur region where the United Nations says recent attacks by the group have killed over 400 people.

Gen Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, commander of the Rapid Support Forces, announced the move in a speech on Tuesday as the northeastern African nation marked two years of civil war.

"On this anniversary, we proudly declare the establishment of the Government of Peace and Unity," Dagalo said in a recorded speech, adding that other groups have joined the RSF-led administration, including a faction of the Sudan's Liberation Movement, which controls parts of Kordofan region.

Dagalo, who is sanctioned by the US over accusations that his forces committed genocide in Darfur, said that he and his allies were also establishing "a 15-member Presidential Council" representing all of Sudan's regions.

The move came as the RSF suffered multiple battlefield setbacks, losing the capital, Khartoum and other urban cities in recent months. The paramilitary group has since regrouped in its stronghold in the sprawling region of Darfur.

It raises concerns that Sudan is heading towards partition, or a prolonged conflict like that one in neighboring Libya where two rival administrations



Gen Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, the deputy head of the military council speaks at a ceremony in the capital Khartoum, Sudan, on Aug. 4, 2019. (AP)

have been fighting for power for over a decade. The nation of South Sudan won independence from Sudan in a 2011 referendum that followed a war in which Janjaweed militias, a predecessor to the RSF, fought on behalf of the government.

# Bolsonaro shares recovery footage from intensive care after 12-hour op

SAO PAULO, April 16, (AP): Brazil's former president Jair Bolsonaro shared footage on social media on Tuesday of his recovery in hospital where he remains in intensive care following bowel surgery.

The far-right leader, who has started physiotherapy, shared video of walking through the corridors of Brasilia's DF Star Hospital with medical support.

On Sunday, Bolsonaro underwent a 12-hour surgery to remove intestinal adhesions and reconstruct the abdominal wall. It was the sixth procedure related to long-term effects of being stabbed in the abdomen during a campaign rally in September 2018.

Doctors at the hospital issued a statement Tuesday saying there is no estimated discharge date from intensive care, and that Bolsonaro should not receive visitors.

Bolsonaro said earlier on social media that he was only having direct contact with his family and the medical team to avoid physical complications.

The latest surgery was the "most complex" procedure since the stabbing with a "very delicate and prolonged postsurgery," doctors told journalists



Doctor Claudio Birolini talks about the abdominal surgery on former Brazil president Jair Bolsonaro at DF Star Hospital in Brasilia, Brazil on April 14. (AP)

on Monday.

Bolsonaro has been in and out of hospitals since the attack at a campaign event before Brazil's 2018 presidential election. He underwent several surgeries during his presidency from 2019-2022.

On Friday, he was admitted with severe abdominal pain to a hospital in Santa Cruz, a small city in Rio Grande do Norte, and later transferred to a hospital in the state's capital, Natal. On Saturday, his family requested his transfer to Brasilia.

## Asia

**'Telesco' robot starts 2nd mission:** A remote-controlled robot on Tuesday embarked on its second mission to retrieve tiny bits of melted fuel debris from inside a damaged reactor at the Fukushima nuclear plant that was wrecked by a tsunami 14 years ago.

The mission, which follows the first such debris retrieval in November, is aimed at eventually developing the technology and robots needed for a larger scale cleanup of the plant, destroyed by the earthquake and tsunami in March 2011. The extendable "Telesco" robot carries cameras and a tong to grip tiny nuggets of radioactive debris. It entered the No. 2 reactor's primary containment vessel Tuesday, according to Tokyo Electric Power Company.

This time, the company aims to send the robot further into the containment vessel to get a sample from an area closer to the center where more melted fuel is believed to have fallen.

It is expected to take several days before the front tip of the robot reaches the targeted area, where it will lower a device carrying a tong and camera in a fishing-rod style.

That first sample retrieval in November, despite a number of mishaps, was a crucial step in what will be a daunting, decades-long decommissioning that must deal with at least 880 tons of melted nuclear fuel that has mixed with broken parts of internal structures and other debris inside the three reactors ruined in 2011.

After a series of small missions by robots to gather samples, experts will determine a larger-scale method for removing melted fuel, first at the No. 3 reactor, beginning in the 2030s. (AP)

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**HK defends immigration procedures:** Hong Kong's government on Monday defended its immigration procedures after a British member of parliament was denied entry to the Chinese city last week, an incident that has prompted



A bird flies within the premises of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Futaba town, north-eastern Japan on Feb 20. (AP)

concerns among UK officials.

Wera Hobhouse, a member of the Liberal Democratic Party representing Bath, on Sunday wrote on the social media platform Bluesky that authorities gave her no explanation for what she described as a "cruel and upsetting blow." She noted that she was the first British MP to face such a situation upon arrival in the former British colony since it returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

Hobhouse had told British media that she flew to Hong Kong to visit her newborn grandchild. She is also a member of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China that has scrutinized Beijing's human rights record.

The Hong Kong government, in a statement released late Monday, maintained that its immigration officers are duty-bound to question individuals to ascertain the purpose of any visit. (AP)



# Kuwait crude rises to \$69.03 pb

KUWAIT CITY, April 16, (KUNA): Kuwait crude oil edged 35 cents higher during Tuesday's trading to reach USD 69.03 per barrel compared with USD 68.68 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said Wednesday.

Brent futures dropped 21 cents to USD 64.67 pb and West Texas Intermediate declined 20 cents to USD 61.33 pb.

# Business

## Saudi Arabia presents Al-Shaya with the King Abdulaziz Medal of the Fourth Class

RIYADH, April 16, (KUNA): Saudi Minister of State and CEO of the Royal Commission for Riyadh City, Engineer Ibrahim Al-Sultan awarded Kuwaiti businessman Mohammed Al-Shaya the King Abdulaziz Medal of the Fourth Class.

The Saudi Press Agency reported that, in compliance with a royal order, Minister Al-Sultan awarded Saudi businessmen Abdullah Al-Fawzan and Kuwaiti businessmen Mohammad Al-Shaya the King Abdulaziz Medal of the Fourth Class in appreciation of their company Shomoul's initiative to develop the intersection of King Salman Road with King Fahad Road at a total cost of 646 million Saudi riyals (about USD 172.14 million).

Minister Al-Sultan the significant role of the private sector as a key partner in the development of the capital, Riyadh. He pointed out that such projects and initiatives contribute to improving the quality of life and enhancing the level of services provided to the city's residents, thus achieving the goals of the Kingdom's Vision 2030.



KUNA photo  
Mohammed Al-Shaya receives the King Abdulaziz Medal.

### This anniversary marks a legacy of trust and innovation: Yousef AlShaya

## KAICO & ExxonMobil celebrate 75-year partnership in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Kuwait Automotive Imports Co.W.L.L (AlShaya & AlSagar), an authorized distributor of Mobil-branded lubricants in Kuwait, proudly marks 75 years of a successful business relationship with ExxonMobil.

This landmark achievement highlights decades of delivering high-performance lubrication solutions that have contributed to the growth and development of Kuwait's automotive and industrial sectors, solidifying KAICO's position as a trusted leader in the automotive market.

A key player in Kuwait's automotive industry since 1936, KAICO (AlShaya & AlSagar) has been crucial to the Mobil brand's growth in the country since 1950, ensuring that industries, fleets, and individual customers benefit from cutting-edge lubrication technology. To commemorate these milestones, KAICO will work with ExxonMobil to host customer appreciation events, industry collaborations, and innovative marketing campaigns to showcase this successful relationship and reaffirm their shared dedication to excellence.

KAICO is focused on maintaining high service standards and expanding its market presence while driving growth in Kuwait's lubricant industry through technological innovation.

On this momentous occasion, Mr. Yousef AlShaya, CEO of KAICO, stated: "This anniversary celebrates a legacy built on trust and collaboration. We are proud to have joined with ExxonMobil to provide premium lubricants that enhance performance and reliability in the Kuwaiti market. We remain focused on driving innovation and sustainability in the years to come."

"Celebrating 75 years of working with KAICO is a testament to our shared vision and commitment to delivering superior value driven lubrication solutions,"



KAICO marks 75th anniversary with ExxonMobil in Kuwait.

said by Mr. Amr Abou Eita, ExxonMobil Egypt Lubricants Sales Manager.

Together, KAICO and ExxonMobil continue to set new standards of innovation, offering high-quality solutions tailored to the needs of customers across Kuwait. With a forward-looking approach centered

on innovation and customer satisfaction, KAICO is poised for continued success and progress in the years ahead.

For more information about our 75th anniversary celebrations and upcoming events, please visit <https://mobil-kuwait.com/>

### Banks enhance AML/CFT measures

## Central Bank of Kuwait orders banks to strengthen data update measures

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The Central Bank of Kuwait has instructed local banks to increase warning measures aimed at encouraging customers to update their personal data and monitor their account activity, reports Al-Rai daily.

According to informed sources, banks have been directed to take appropriate action against customers who fail to update their information within the designated grace period, including the potential freezing of their bank accounts. These measures are part of the efforts to strengthen anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing (AML/CFT) systems.

In line with regulatory directives, banks are ramping up communication efforts with customers through various official channels, and sending repeated reminders to customers to update their information to avoid disruptions in account access.

The sources explained that accounts belonging to customers who fail to up-

date their data within the period specified by each bank will remain blocked until the required information is updated and the customer visits a branch to request account reactivation.

The data update intervals vary based on each customer's risk classification. High-risk customers must update their data annually, medium-risk customers every two years, and low-risk customers every three years.

The Central Bank of Kuwait has issued directives to banks to waive the KD 5 fee for updating customer data at bank branches, in addition to the previously waived online update fee. It also suspended the monthly KD 2 deduction applied when a customer's account balance falls below KD 100.

The "Know Your Customer" (KYC) data update process typically includes updating the customer's civil ID number, current nationality (in cases of nationality change or revocation), personal details, residential address, and sources of income.

### Returning to Osaka after 55 years

## Kuwait participates in Expo 2025

OSAKA, April 16: The Expo 2025 exhibition officially opened on Sunday morning in Osaka, Japan, with the participation of 158 countries and regions, including the State of Kuwait. This global event will continue for six months and aims to highlight national visions, cultures, and the exchange of experiences that contribute to shaping a more sustainable and cooperative future among peoples. The Kuwait Fund for Development is participating within the State of Kuwait's pavilion alongside a number of government entities and institutions.

On the occasion of the opening of the State of Kuwait's pavilion at (Expo 2025), Acting Director-General of the Kuwait Fund for Development, Mr. Waleed Shamlan Al-Bahar, stated that the Fund's participation in the exhibition's activities confirms to the world the State of Kuwait's commitment to supporting economic and social development.

Al-Bahar said: "The State of Kuwait has adopted a firm approach in the field of support and development of developing countries around the world, and this approach has been embodied since its independence when it hastened to establish the Kuwait Fund for Development more than six decades ago."

Al-Bahar added: "The Kuwait Fund for Development is the first institution in the Middle East to play an active role in international development efforts, through its financing of development projects in developing countries and achieving the UN- Sustainable Development Goals. The Kuwait Fund today also constitutes a strong bridge of friendship and solidarity between the State of Kuwait and its sisterly and friendly countries."

The participation of the Kuwait



Fund aims to highlight the vital role played by the State of Kuwait in both the development and humanitarian fields. The Fund's participation affirms Kuwait's commitment to financing development projects around the world, reflecting its belief in the importance of achieving comprehensive and sustainable development.

The State of Kuwait's pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka is located in the (Empowering Lives) zone, bearing the title (the Visionary Lighthouse). It features a design inspired by the marine and desert environment, natural landscapes, and wildlife in Kuwait.

The title expresses Kuwait's national identity with cultural content that highlights the authentic Kuwaiti heritage in harmony with aspects of progress, reflecting an integrated image of a country that combines heritage with development and progress aspirations. The title also symbolizes the State of Kuwait's role in illuminating the path towards the future, based on its rich legacy and its openness to progress and sustainability.

It is worth mentioning that the State of Kuwait's participation in (Expo 2025) is the second of its kind in the same region, as Kuwait previously participated in (Expo 1970) in (Osaka, Japan) more than fifty years ago, and the exhibition attracted more than 64 million visitors at that time.



Agility, ESG continue facility management training for Kuwaiti graduates.



### Empowering 25 engineering graduates in Kuwait with facilities management skills

## Agility and Engineering Systems Group support Work-Maker Project by Youth Public Authority

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Agility, a supply chain services, infrastructure and innovation company, collaborated with Engineering Systems Group (ESG) to offer an accelerated facility management training that is tailored for 25 of Kuwaiti Youth for the third year-in-a-row.

The Facilities Management training program is part of the Work-Maker Project run by Kuwait's Youth Authority, and is a national workforce development initiative that equips young Kuwaiti engineering graduates from Kuwait, US, and UK universities with practical training and career opportunities in key industries, preparing them for public and private sector jobs based on real market needs. A total of 35 engineering graduates enrolled in the program, with 25 participating in the course delivered by Agility and Engineering Systems Group-representing 71% of total partici-

pation.

For the third consecutive year, Agility and ESG provided theoretical and hands-on training on best practices in industrial zone management, modern facility management technologies, and leadership in safety, security, and environmental management. Over five weeks, the young Kuwaiti engineers received 125 hours of training, including intensive workshops and field training at Agility's logistics facilities. Under the guidance of an experienced team, participants developed key skills before completing a final exam to earn a facility management certification.

Nader Sakeen, CEO of ALP Kuwait and Gulf, said: "As Kuwait and the region continue to advance their development projects, there is a growing need for highly skilled national talent in facilities management to oversee these projects

in line with global standards for safety, security, and environmental sustainability. We are proud to continue our partnership with ESG and Youth Public Authority for the third consecutive year and we remain dedicated to supporting initiatives that grow local talent and contribute to Kuwait's long-term development goals."

Ahmed B. Al-Eisa, Chairman and CEO of ESG, said: "At ESG, we are committed to investing in Kuwait's future workforce. With new projects being launched and existing ones progressing, the demand for skilled facilities management professionals is growing. This is why ESG is proud to collaborate with our partners at Agility and the Youth Public Authority to equip and train local talent, enhancing their practical skills and supporting the aspirations of both the public and private sectors."

### Kuwait Petroleum and OQ Group drive Duqm Refinery's success

## Duqm Refinery targets 5 million ton product exports in 2025

By Najeh Bilal  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Duqm Refinery, which is jointly owned by Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI) and Omani OQ Group, intends to increase its product exports to five million tons in 2025.

Omani oil sources revealed in an exclusive statement to the newspaper that the refinery exported around 4.1 million tons in 2024. They also confirmed the milestone achieved in December last year; when the refinery increased its production capacity from 230,000 to 255,000 barrels per day.

Sources attributed the strong performance and operational excellence of the refinery to several factors, the most important of which is the strategic cooperation between a unit of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and the OQ Oil Derivatives Trading Unit. Sources said this partnership, along with seamless integration and knowledge-sharing between the two entities, was instrumental in driving a notable increase in sales last year.

Sources disclosed that the refinery also played a vital role in supplying global markets amid the disruption of Russian diesel and gasoline exports due to the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war. "It helped alleviate fuel shortages in several markets over the past two years," they affirmed.

"Its strategic location within the Special Economic Zone of Duqm – overlooking major shipping routes in the Arabian Sea and close to global maritime lanes in the Indian Ocean – has further enhanced its logistical efficiency. In addition, the refinery benefits from being geographically removed from high-risk geopolitical areas, such as the Red Sea, where recent conflicts forced shipping traffic to reroute around the Cape of Good Hope," sources added.

Sources emphasized the value brought by KPI, whose expertise and global experience contributed significantly to the refinery's operational success. "This excellence was recognized as the refinery was declared the 'Best Refining Company of the Year 2024'; while its Chief Executive Officer (CEO) David Baird received the accolade of 'Best

Refining CEO of the Year 2024.'

"In another development, the refinery recently passed a key credibility test set by its lenders. As a result, \$4 billion in shareholder guarantees are expected to be released, having fulfilled the necessary conditions," sources disclosed.

OQ Group, according to the sources, continues to welcome Kuwaiti investment across its broad range of business sectors; including oil and gas exploration, energy transport, refining, petrochemical production, power generation and alternative energy. "The group's products currently serve more than 2,000 customers in 80 countries worldwide," sources revealed.

They also underscored the unwavering commitment of the refinery to guarantee safety and compliance with all security protocols, reporting zero work-related injuries or fatalities to date.

"Covering an area of 900 hectares, the refinery is connected through an 80-kilometer pipeline to the Ras Markaz crude oil storage and export facility, ensuring a steady supply of feedstock," sources concluded.



The assembly approves all items on agenda, including distribution of cash dividends at 10%

# ABK holds Ordinary and Extraordinary General Assembly meetings for the financial year ended 31 December 2024



Talal Mohammed Reza Behbehani – ABK Chairman



Talal Behbehani chairs the General Assembly meeting.



Abdulla Al Sumait – Acting Group Chief Executive Officer

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) Group held its Ordinary and Extraordinary General Assembly for the financial year ended 31 December 2024, with an attendance rate of 90.910% of shareholders. The meeting was chaired by the Chairman of the Board, Talal Mohammed Reza Behbehani, and attended by Acting Group CEO Mr. Abdulla AlSumait, members of executive management, and representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and Kuwait Clearing Company.

The assembly approved all items on the agenda, including the distribution of cash dividends at 10% (10 fils per share) and free bonus shares at 5% (5 shares for every 100 shares held). The meeting also reviewed the Board of Directors’ report on the 2024 results, the auditor’s report, and other items.

Following this, the new Board of Directors for the next three years (2025–2027) was elected, comprising Talal Mohammed Reza Behbehani; Salah Ahmed Al Serhan; Ali Ebrahim Hejji Hussain Marafi; Khaled Othman Abdulwahab Al Othman; Adel Ibrahim Yali Ahmed Behbehani; Raed Abdulkareem Al Moamen; and The Public Institution for Social Security as non-independent board members. This is in addition to Tarek Fared Abdulrahman Al Othman; Dr. Mahdi Ismael Ali Al Jazzaf; Ahmed Abdullah Mohammed Al-Baghli; Dr. Mohammad Munther Abdul Kareem Al-Zuhair as independent board members; and Shaimaa Mohammed Abbas Bin Hussain as a reserve independent board member. Furthermore, Behbehani Investment Company and Mohammad Saleh & Reza You-suf Behbehani as reserve non-independent board member.

### Sustainable Growth

On this occasion, Chairman Talal Mohammad Reza Behbehani stated, “We have maintained sustainable growth in our net profits and various financial indicators by consistently keeping pace with developments. This reflects our ongoing commitment to maximizing shareholder returns and providing added value to all our stakeholders, thereby strengthening their trust in the Group and reinforcing our leading position

in the banking sector in Kuwait and the regional markets in which we operate, including the United Arab Emirates and Egypt.”

He added, “The Group achieved net profits of KD 52.41 million by the end of 2024, a 16% increase, with earnings per share reaching 21 fils, up 17% year-on-year. Net operating profit rose by 11% to KD 107.41 million, while total assets reached KD 7.37 billion, growing by 17%. Customer deposits grew by 16% to KD 4.42 billion, while the loan portfolio increased by 13% to KD 4.83 billion. Operating income also increased by 9% to KD 200.75 million.”

He continued, “Our non-performing loan ratio (NPL) dropped to 1.23% from 1.67% in 2023, covered by provisions at 460%. Capital adequacy ratio (CAR) stood at 16.94%, and shareholders’ equity increased by 1.4% to KD 628 million.”

Behbehani confirmed that these indicators reflect the Group’s success in achieving its strategic goals, thanks to the outstanding performance of all divisions and their dedication to continuous achievement. He stressed the Group’s commitment to maintaining strong profitability, sustainable growth, and innovation in banking services, products, and solutions, in line with its newly approved strategy and clear vision across all levels, with a focus on strategic expansion and leveraging growth opportunities in local and regional markets.

He emphasized the Group’s forward momentum in enhancing service quality, maintaining growth momentum, strengthening its strong financial position, improving asset quality, and diversifying income sources. He also highlighted the Group’s readiness to seize opportunities arising from new economic decisions aimed at stimulating activity in the Kuwaiti and regional markets, and its preparedness to finance major development projects that will be launched as part of the New Kuwait 2035 vision.

He further noted that ABK continues to reinforce its leading position in Kuwait and the markets it serves, evidenced by winning over 15 awards in 2024 from global institutions specialized in

evaluating banking performance locally and regionally.

### Egypt and the UAE

Behbehani noted that ABK-Egypt achieved strong net profit growth of 137% in 2024, reaching EGP 6.6 billion. This was due to a sustainable growth strategy and flexible business plans aligned with the evolving banking sector in Egypt and a commitment to delivering added value for both customers and shareholders.

Meanwhile, ABK-UAE continued to significantly contribute to the Group’s financial results by enhancing its services and products. The DIFC branch participated in syndicated loans exceeding USD 10 billion across GCC countries, Europe, Asia, and others during 2024.

### Digital Transformation

Behbehani noted that 2024 was a landmark year in ABK’s digital transformation journey under its integrated strategy aligned with the ‘Simpler Banking’ vision. This included launching a newly designed website that offers customers a seamless, 24/7 experience with top-tier security standards.

He highlighted the Group’s collaborations with leading companies to introduce new digital solutions and its readiness to leverage artificial intelligence (AI) technologies by partnering with specialized institutions to enhance operations and drive innovation.

He thanked the regulatory authorities, including the Central Bank of Kuwait, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Kuwait Clearing Company, Boursa Kuwait, the Central Bank of Egypt, and the Central Bank of the UAE for their continued support of ABK and the banking sector.

He praised the executive management team for successfully executing strategic plans and commended employees as the Group’s most valuable asset, urging everyone to strive for further achievements in the coming period to meet the needs of existing and prospective customers.

### Strong Performance

Acting Group CEO Abdulla AlSumait stated, “The year 2024 witnessed significant developments in ABK’s operations, as

we continued to provide solutions that meet diverse customer needs and enhanced operational efficiency across all divisions.”

He emphasized that ABK’s strong 2024 performance reflects its adaptability and customer-first approach, noting success in enhancing the product portfolio, diversifying income sources, expanding market share, and attracting new customers to the ever-growing ABK family.

Al-Sumait added that these results were achieved through meticulous planning, coordination among departments, and adherence to excellence while offering innovative solutions in line with global developments.

### Branch Upgrades

AlSumait noted that ABK continued its branch renovation plan in 2024, reopening Jabriya and Zahra branches with modern designs featuring the latest banking technologies. The plan will continue in the upcoming period to include more branches across Kuwait.

He affirmed that ABK is committed to continuously upgrading its digital infrastructure and systems while adhering to the highest security standards to safeguard customer data—solidifying ABK as their preferred banking partner.

He highlighted the launch of several new accounts and successful campaigns in 2024, including a special offer for oil sector employees, a new family banking bundle, a UAE mortgage loan, and real estate escrow agent services in the UAE. These offerings reflect ABK’s ongoing commitment to providing integrated, tailored services and solutions for all customer segments.

He also revealed ABK’s intention to surprise customers with exclusive campaigns and offers designed to meet their needs and deliver benefits through diverse banking solutions.

### Employee Development

AlSumait affirmed ABK’s dedication to enhancing employee performance through continuous investment in training programs, promoting productivity, and fostering a positive work environment that drives innovation. He

also emphasized the Bank’s ongoing efforts to attract top talent and improve employee benefits to strengthen loyalty and engagement.

### ‘Let’s Be Aware’ Campaign

AlSumait stated that ABK continued to support the ‘Let’s Be Aware’ campaign in collaboration with the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Banking Association to raise awareness of banking services and promote financial inclusion. This included hosting events and offering targeted digital content on banking topics, helping ABK secure a top ranking in the campaign’s annual evaluation.

He stressed that social responsibility remains a cornerstone at ABK, which actively engages with all segments of society and supports educational, sporting, cultural, environmental, and humanitarian initiatives through sponsorships and participation.

### Sustainability Report

In 2024, ABK issued its fourth sustainability report, highlighting key operational developments, carbon emission reduction achievements, significant support for SMEs, and strong social responsibility efforts—demonstrating its leadership across sectors.

### Additional Tier 1 Bonds

In 2024, ABK issued USD 300 million in Additional Tier 1 capital bonds at a 6.5% annual yield. This marked ABK’s return to global debt markets since 2018, with overwhelming demand—oversubscribed by 4.5x—reflecting high investor confidence in the Group’s strength and financial stability.

### High Credit Ratings

ABK maintained strong credit ratings of A from Fitch and A2 from Moody’s. These ratings reflect global and institutional confidence in ABK’s financial position.

### Premier Market Listing

In 2024, ABK’s stock was promoted to the Premier Market on Boursa Kuwait due to its compliance with qualification requirements. This increased institutional trading and demonstrated ABK’s commitment to meeting regulatory standards and maintaining its status in the index.



A section of the audience.



Some members of the Board of Directors and Executive Management during the meeting.



Kuwait University students to benefit from ALSAYER’s training program

# ALSAYER Group signs two strategic agreements to advance sustainability with the Kuwait Green Building Council and the College of Architecture at Kuwait University



ALSAYER signs strategic sustainability agreements with KGBC and Kuwait University.

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: As part of its unwavering commitment to sustainable development and promoting green building practices in Kuwait, ALSAYER International Trading General and Contracting Co. announced the signing of two strategic agreements. The first is with the Kuwait Green Building Council (KGBC), under which the Group joins as a Platinum Member for the year 2025 and the second is with the College of Architecture at Kuwait University to train students under the “GSAS Certified Green Professional Program.”

The signing ceremony of the memorandum of understanding with the Kuwait Green Building Council was held at the ALSAYER Group headquarters, in the presence of Mr. Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer, CEO of the Group; Mr. Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer, Executive Board Member& Chairman of Sustainability Committee; Mr. Khaled Khudair Al-Meshaan, Chairman of the Kuwait Green Building Council and Dr. Omar Mohammed Khattab, Assistant Dean of the College of Architecture at Kuwait University along with a large number of attendees.

**Partnership Towards a More Sustainable Built Environment**

The partnership with the Kuwait Green Building Council aims to support and promote sustainable building practices in the country, raise community awareness on the importance of sustainability in the urban sector, and implement

training programs and field initiatives that help build qualified local capacities for this transformation.

**Commenting on the occasion, Mr. Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer stated:**

“At ALSAYER Group, sustainability is at the heart of our corporate strategy. Joining the Kuwait Green Building Council is a natural extension of our commitment to creating a work environment and society that is more aware of its environmental responsibilities. We believe that promoting green building concepts in Kuwait is the foundation for a more sustainable urban future, and we call on all stakeholders in both public and private sectors to adopt this responsible and forward-thinking approach.”

In turn, Mr. Khaled Khudair Al-Meshaan welcomed ALSAYER Group’s membership, stating: “We highly value this strategic cooperation that reinforces the importance of impactful partnerships between the private sector and civil society. It enhances our national potential to achieve sustainability goals and strengthen sustainable construction practices across Kuwait. The Kuwait Green Building Council was officially established in 2017 and is part of a global network of over 75 Green Building Councils operating under the World Green Building Council. Through its initiatives and strategic partnerships, the Council aims to foster a more sustainable built environment that enhances quality of life and safeguards future generations.”

**Empowering National Talent in Green Building**

As part of its commitment to academic empowerment and capacity building, ALSAYER Group signed a cooperation agreement with the College of Architecture at Kuwait University. The agreement aims to train students in the GSAS Certified Green Professional Program and provide them with field visits to green building projects certified by the Gulf Organisation for Research & Development (GORD) for the years 2025, 2026 and 2027. This initiative represents a significant step in reinforcing the role of higher education in advancing the national shift towards more efficient and sustainable built environments, by equipping students with practical knowledge and firsthand experience in one of the region’s most recognized green building certification systems.

**A Strategic Commitment to Sustainability**

ALSAYER Group partnerships reflect the Group’s firm commitment to embedding sustainability principles across all its business operations. The Group’s sustainability strategy is built around four main pillars: Environment, Economy, Society, and Quality of Life. Through these pillars, ALSAYER aims to reduce environmental impact, enhance social responsibility and adopt more efficient operational practices. These efforts are fully aligned with Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards, Kuwait Vision 2035and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Achieving 33.4%, on average, of the total trading value within the market maker portfolio

# Markaz Market Maker Desk solidifies leadership with strong 2024 performance

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Kuwait Financial Centre “Markaz” has reinforced its financial market leadership through the exceptional performance of its Market Maker Desk in 2024. The desk successfully traded KD 762 million, accounting for 33.4%, on average, of the total trading value within the market maker portfolio, and representing 5.1% of the total market trading value on Boursa Kuwait. These results highlight Markaz’s expertise in market making and its ability to drive liquidity, enhance market efficiency, and create tangible value for a diverse range of blue chip and small-sized companies. With a diversified portfolio encompassing 15 listed companies across various sectors, Markaz continues to lead among Kuwait’s largest market makers.

Throughout 2024, Markaz played a leading role in maintaining or securing Premier Market positions for 10 listed companies in Kuwait. Two additional companies, Combined Group Contracting Co. and Al Eid Food Co., also entered the watchlist for Premier Market eligibility. These achievements demonstrate the effectiveness of Markaz’s market-making strategies in strengthening the market positioning of its portfolio companies.

Backed by deep sectoral expertise and advanced trading infrastructure, Markaz is one of the largest market-making desks in Kuwait. The company continues to lead in providing financial solutions that enhance stability, price discovery, and overall trading activity. Markaz was also among the first financial institutions in Kuwait to obtain a Market Maker license from the Capital Markets Authority (CMA), reflecting its commitment to fostering a well-functioning and liquid financial market. The company’s approach to market making is rooted in a data-driven strategy that ensures listed companies meet liquidity requirements for Premier Market status while simultaneously contributing to a dynamic and efficient trading environment.



Mr. Azzam B. Al-Otaibi, Assistant Vice President, MENA Equities at Markaz said: “We are proud to be among the first financial institutions to obtain a Market Maker license from Kuwait’s Capital Market Authority (CMA). Today, our market maker portfolio comprises of a diverse set of 15 companies across different segments of Boursa Kuwait, 10 of which are listed on the Premier Market. Over the past year, we have played a key role in supporting consistent trading activity and enhancing overall trading efficiency across our portfolio.”

Mr. Al-Otaibi added: “Market making continues to have a profound impact, not only on local investors and the Kuwaiti market but also on the international stage. Increased trading activity has helped position companies in our portfolio for inclusion in key global indices, such as the FTSE Emerging Markets Index and the KIA Shariah Index, further reinforcing Kuwait’s position in the global financial landscape.”

With over 50 years of leadership in financial services, Markaz has consistently been at the forefront of investment banking and asset management in the region. The company has pioneered a range of innovative financial products and ser-



Markaz Market Maker Desk 2024

vices, including Mumtaz, Kuwait’s first domestic mutual fund; MREF, the first real estate investment fund in Kuwait; and Forsa Financial Fund, the first options market maker in the GCC since 2005. Markaz also launched the GCC Momentum Fund, the first passive fund of its kind in Kuwait and the wider GCC, which was awarded Best Momentum Fund Innovation by Global Finance

in its first year. Its commitment to excellence and strategic market-making expertise continues to support the growth and development of Kuwait’s capital markets, reinforcing its reputation as a leader in financial innovation.

As Kuwait’s capital markets evolve, Markaz remains committed to expanding its market-making role and empowering listed companies with the tools needed to thrive in a competitive financial environment. Markaz’s role as market maker is based on its firm belief in the importance of this tool on the financial markets and the shares of listed companies. The market maker service aim to create a balance between supply and demand, bridge the gap between the buying and selling prices, thus narrowing down bid-ask spreads to enhance trading efficiency. Market making can positively affect companies’ borrowing costs, and aids in price discovery. Market making services also support the overall development of the Kuwaiti economy by motivating companies to list their shares on the national stock exchange.

**About Kuwait Financial Centre “Markaz”**

Established in 1974, Kuwait Financial Centre K.P.S.C “Markaz” is one of the leading asset management and investment banking institutions in the MENA region with total assets under management of over KD 1.41 billion (USD 4.57 billion) as of 31 December 2024. Markaz was listed on the Boursa Kuwait in 1997. Over the years, Markaz has pioneered innovation through the creation of new investment channels. These channels enjoy unique characteristics and helped Markaz widen investors’ horizons. Examples include Mumtaz (the first domestic mutual fund), MREF (the first real estate investment fund in Kuwait), Forsa Financial Fund (the first options market maker in the GCC since 2005), and the GCC Momentum Fund (the first passive fund of its kind in Kuwait and across GCC that follows the momentum methodology), all conceptualized, established, and managed by Markaz.

# Malabar Gold & Diamonds launches Festive Edition Collection globally

# Kareena Kapoor unveils Malabar’s new ‘Festive’ jewellery line in Dubai

DUBAI, April 16: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer in the world with a global presence of over 390 showrooms across 13 countries, proudly unveiled its much-anticipated Festive Edition Jewellery Collection. The collection was officially unveiled by Bollywood icon and brand ambassador of Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Kareena Kapoor Khan at a function held in Dubai, UAE.

The Festive Edition features a stunning range of jewellery crafted in 22K gold, diamonds, and precious gemstones, capturing the essence of tradition blended with contemporary charm. The collection is spread across Malabar’s most sought-after exclusive brands and collections including Mine, Aanika, Era, Precia, Ethnix, and Divine. For those seeking a modern touch, the collection

also includes captivating designs in 18K gold. The designs in the Festive Edition jewelleryis available across all Malabar Gold & Diamonds showrooms globally.

Commenting on the launch, Mr. Shamlal Ahamed, MD-International operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds said: “At Malabar Gold & Diamonds, our commitment has always been to deliver designs that resonate with the aspirations of our customers. The Festive Edition is a tribute to the cultural vibrancy and the joyous spirit of the festive season. With a rich blend of traditional motifs and modern elegance, this collection is thoughtfully curated to offer something special for everyone. We are honoured to have our brand ambassador Kareena Kapoor Khan unveil this special collection. Her timeless charm and grace perfectly embody the beau-



Kareena Kapoor Khan launches Malabar Gold & Diamonds’ Festive Edition in Dubai.

ty of this collection”.

**About Malabar Gold & Diamonds**

Malabar Gold & Diamonds was established in 1993 and is the flagship company of Malabar Group, a leading diversified Indian business conglomerate.

With an annual turnover of \$6.2 billion, the company currently ranks as the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally and today has a strong retail network of over 390 outlets spread across 13 countries in addition to multiple offices, design centres, wholesale units, and factories spread across India, Middle East, Far East, the USA, the UK, Canada & Australia. The group, owned by more than 4,000 shareholders, has more than 22,000 professionals from over 26 countries working towards its continued success.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds also features an online store [www.malabargoldanddiamonds.com](http://www.malabargoldanddiamonds.com) providing customers the opportunity to purchase their favorite jewellery at any time and on any day from the comfort of their homes.

ESG (Environmental, Social & Governance) has been the primary commitment of the group since its inception. The key ESG focus areas of Malabar Group are Health, Housing, Hunger Free World, Education, Environment and Women empowerment. Integrating the principles of responsibility and sustainability into its core business, Malabar Group periodically strengthens its ESG goals to remain a socially conscious and responsible organization. The group contributes 5% of its profit to such initiatives in the same country of operation.



# Zain Group holds AGM with a quorum of 79.2%; Assembly approves extension of a minimum 35 fils dividend policy for another 3 years until 2028

Total cash dividend of 35 fils for 2024 amount to KWD 151.4 million reflecting an attractive 73% payout ratio

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The Zain Group Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held at the Zain Group's headquarters in Kuwait, attended with a quorum of 79.2% of shareholders whereby they were presented with the Zain Group's 2024 annual report entitled "Better Lives, Lasting Connections" which highlights the financial statements, Governance and Auditors reports and the major achievements of Zain Group and its operations and subsidiaries across Middle East and Africa, for the year ended December 31, 2024. Additionally, Zain Group released its 2024 Sustainability Report entitled "The New Paradigm Shift".

The shareholders approved all items on the AGM agenda, including the recommended cash dividend of 25% (25fils per share) to the shareholders already registered in the company's record date of Sunday, 4 May 2025. Cash dividends will be paid to shareholders commencing Wednesday, 7 May 2025. Notably, the Assembly also approved the extension of a minimum 35 fils dividend policy for another 3 years until 2028.

**Attractive dividends for Shareholders**

This 25 fils dividend for H2 2024 follows the semi-annual dividend of 10 fils distributed earlier in 2024, totaling 35 fils per share for the year and reflecting a 73% payout ratio, one of the highest in the region. Total cash dividends for 2024 amounted to KWD 151.4 million (\$492 million). In 2023, Zain adopted a minimum cash dividend policy of 35 fils per share for three years that has now been extended till 2028.

**Solid Financial Performance during 2024**

2024 was a defining year for Zain in growing the business and increasing shareholder value despite socio-economic challenges (primarily Sudan) across the company's footprint. The implementation of numerous ESG initiatives as well as the acceleration of digital transformation and revenue growth from new business verticals have future-proofed Zain and prepared the company for the next phase of growth.

During the AGM, Zain Group presented its financial results for the full-year 2024, whereby the company served 49 million customers. For FY-24, Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of KD 2 billion (USD 6.4 billion), up 3% YoY, a 15-year high. Consolidated EBITDA for the period reached KD 689 million (USD 2.25 billion), with normalized EBITDA growth of 2% (excluding number range claim in 2023), reflecting an EBITDA margin of 35%. Consolidated net income reached KD 208 million (USD 677 million), representing normalized net income growth of 15%, when adjusted for number range claim and Tower transaction gain in 2023 and gain on business combination from acquisition of IHS (Kuwait TowerCo) in 2024. Earnings per share amounted to 48 fils (USD 0.16).

**Excerpts from the Board of Directors statement at the AGM**

The Board of Directors welcomes all shareholders and affiliated parties to the Annual General Assembly of Zain Group.

Over the past year, Zain has reaffirmed its regional position as an innovative ICT and digital lifestyle provider, playing a major role in shaping digital economies in markets across the Middle East and Africa. The company's focus has been on enhancing financial inclusion, developing advanced fintech solutions, digital services and building data infrastructure centers. Zain's dynamic digital ecosystem has also focused on catering to meet the growing demand for cloud services, cybersecurity, data analytics, and emerging technologies to empower enterprises and government entities that provide the region's markets with a solid foundation for this digital economy.

Zain Group is committed to implementing a solid framework model for corporate governance, with an emphasis on enhancing its comprehensive governance environment. In this context, Zain was crowned World Finance's 'Best Corporate Governance' recipient 2024 for Kuwait for the fourth consecutive year. This excellence was further highlighted by Zain's recent upgrade to BBB in the recently issued Environmental, Social and Governance Standards Index (MSCI ESG).

Zain Group's ESG practices are consistently rated highly by S&P, MSCI, and FTSE rating agencies. ESG practices are critical for stakeholders as they reflect the Group's commitment to sustainability, and long-term, responsible management.

On behalf of Zain Group Board Members, executive management, and employees, I would like to express our combined sincere appreciation for the confidence shown in us by our valued customers and shareholders, as well as by all the government ministries, and regula-



Zain Group Annual General Meeting (AGM).

**Osamah Al Furaih:**

- "Zain's dynamic digital ecosystem is empowering enterprises and government entities across the region"

**Bader Al Kharafi:**

- "New business verticals achieved additional revenues of USD 253 million that will be further accelerated by the 4WARD corporate strategy"

tory authorities across our markets of operation.

**Excerpts from Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al Kharafi's AGM statement**

As a leading entity listed on Kuwait's Premier market as well as having local listings in Saudi Arabia (KSA), Iraq, and Bahrain, Zain has an unwavering commitment to drive profitable and sustainable growth, and create value for all stakeholders.

To achieve this, the Board and executive management have worked closely to overcome socio-economic challenges in our markets, where we maximize value creation by investing heavily in our networks, technologies, and people. We have succeeded in implementing future-focused strategies to drive forward the evolution of digital ecosystems across the Group's footprint, resulting in us extending our market leadership in many highly competitive, evolving, and complex markets.

**From 4SIGHT to 4WARD**

2024 witnessed the ongoing implementation of our 4SIGHT digital transformation strategy that delivered significant milestones and solid performances across all our markets, driving sustainable growth and value to our customers and stakeholders.

In December 2024, we unveiled the '4WARD-Progress with Purpose' corporate strategy to accelerate the company's evolution into a purpose-driven TechCo conglomerate providing 'Better Lives and Lasting Connections'. The strategy was formulated internally and builds on the significant momentum and transformational accomplishments achieved under the previous 4SIGHT corporate strategy.

4WARD comprises four primary forces, each with three accelerators (thus 12 key accelerators in total) to meet the ever-growing demand for superior and dynamic consumer and enterprise services. These four

- 2024 revenue reached 15-year high of KD 2 billion (USD 6.4bn), with net income exceeding guidance given to the investor community
- Larger investments in technology, 5G upgrades and network expansion empowers management's focus on digital transformation, innovation, and operational efficiency
- Strong revenue growth in Enterprise space powered by ZainTECH and local B2B teams
- ZOI revenues soared, highest-ranked carrier network in the region and top 100 worldwide
- Monetization initiatives in Fintech and digital VAS entertainment services driving growth
- A concerted focus on Sustainability, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity programs
- Solid Corporate Governance practices result in MSCI upgrading Zain ESG's rating to 'BBB'
- Zain brand valuation up 14.5% year-on-year (YoY), reaches a milestone of USD 3.5 billion

forces - Customer Delight; Digital Zain; Purpose and Action; and Collaborative Growth - will focus on continuity, acceleration, collaboration and digital innovation, all designed to foster value creation by fast-tracking Zain's evolution from a predominantly mobile-centric operator into a purpose driven, customer-centric, future-proof, and impactful leading regional TechCo.

We are confident that 4WARD will build on the success of the 4SIGHT strategy and provide the necessary impetus for Zain's continued evolution, growth, relevance, and impact on shaping societies and drive the Zain brand value to even greater heights.

**CAPEX investments in network expansion and cutting-edge technologies is driving revenue growth and improving mobile and data experience for customers**

During the year, Zain enhanced its operational capabilities signifi-

cantly through substantial capital expenditure (CAPEX) amounting to USD 1.1 billion (reflecting 17% of revenues), which primarily focused on expanding the company's 4G and 5G networks, as well as enhancing fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) infrastructure.

This has driven revenue growth in profitable areas such as our Enterprise and Government businesses, as well as in our digital services to consumer offerings across our footprint.

Our state-of-the-art networks are empowering the spectacular growth of all the new business verticals, including Fintech, ZainTECH, ZOI, FOO and Dizlee, generating additional revenue of USD 253 million in 2024, which reflects revenue growth of 130% YoY. Consolidated data revenue reached USD 2.44 billion, representing 38% of the Group's 2024 revenue.

The main impact of our CAPEX investment is the massive enhance-

ment that it provides mobile and data experience for individuals, businesses and government clientele.

**Numerous achievements of the 4SIGHT strategy (2019-2024) have future-proofed Zain**

This solid 2024 performance can be attributed to the successful implementation of the '4SIGHT' corporate strategy that was born in 2019 and concluded in December 2024, achieving its aim to transform the company into a multi-faceted provider of digital services for consumers, governments, and businesses. 4SIGHT was based on two strategic directions, centered on evolving Zain's core telecom business to maximize value and leverage the company's many strengths to invest in selected high-growth verticals beyond standard mobile services.

Since then, 4SIGHT has successfully steered Zain's transformation from being a mobile-centric company to a multi-faceted organization, successfully transforming its fixed and mobile services, and expanding into several new business verticals including ICT, Digital Mobile Operations, Fintech, Entertainment, Digital Infrastructure, Subsea and Cross-Border Connectivity, and more.

Landmark achievements concluded under 4SIGHT among many others include the creation of:

1. **ZainTECH:** the Group's regional ICT and Digital Solutions arm was established in 2021, positioning Zain as a key player in the digital transformation of enterprises and governments across the region.
2. **Fintech:** Zain launched fintech offerings across several markets, gaining strong market traction with Tamam, a microfinance play in KSA, Bookey in Kuwait, and Bede in Bahrain, and the revamping of Zain Cash to become a market leader in Jordan and Iraq.
3. **Network Tower strategy:** This created enormous value

through the sale and leaseback deal of Zain towers in KSA, Jordan, and Iraq over the years. The landmark merger of the tower portfolios of Zain and Ooredoo will create the largest TowerCo in the region with over 30,000 towers. In December 2024, Zain increased its 30% ownership in IHS Kuwait Limited to 100%.

4. **Zain Omantel International (ZOI):** In partnership with Omantel, Zain established ZOI, a regional wholesale powerhouse serving operators, international carriers, and hyperscalers. Notably ZOI was the highest-ranked carrier network in the region, and top 100 worldwide, out of 70,000 active networks.

5. **Digital Operators:** In KSA, under the Yaqoot brand, in Iraq under the oodi brand, and in Kuwait in partnership with RedBull Mobile, we have cumulatively witnessed impressive customer and revenue growth. By delivering a market-leading app-based experience targeting a younger audience, we provide digital-grade platforms to digitize customer journeys to streamline processes.

6. **Dizlee:** Zain's Group-wide dynamic API platform and digital monetization ecosystem offers innovative entertainment and gaming solutions, direct operator billing, messaging, and digital authentication.

The multiple digital transformational initiatives and expansion of new business verticals achieved under 4SIGHT has driven business growth and positioned Zain firmly as a leading provider of innovative ICT and digital lifestyle services, delivering meaningful connectivity that empowers societies.

**Zain's Sustainability and climate change efforts are leading the region**

Zain maintains an unwavering commitment to integrating climate action into its corporate sustainability strategy, which was first announced in 2020, paving the way for a resilient, low-carbon future while addressing the pressing environmental challenges facing the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

Building on the foundation of its five-year corporate sustainability strategy, Zain made significant progress in 2024, as it marked a pivotal step in the company's journey toward establishing long-term sustainable value for all stakeholders by accelerating its climate action agenda. Zain submitted and received approval on its Net-Zero targets from the Science-Based Targets initiative (SBTi), reflecting the company's dedication to a Net-Zero economy and making Zain the only Kuwaiti-based corporate to have its emission reduction targets verified by the SBTi.

**The powerful and admired Zain brand is a key aspect of the company's success**

Our efforts in every aspect of the business resulted in a 14.5% YoY increase of Zain's brand value to USD 3.5 billion (according to the BrandFinance 2025 rankings), ranking it among the top 25 strongest telecom brands and top 40 most valuable telecom brands globally. The continual growth in our brand valuation and rankings some 18 years after the initial Zain brand launch in September 2007 is testament to the passionate actions, services, and investment the company has placed in establishing its name and identity.

The innovative media campaigns, numerous corporate sustainability, inclusion, diversity, and equity (IDE) initiatives Zain has instituted over the years have won us the hearts and minds of our customers and employees, which are key drivers for the Zain brand's value success.

Today, we have a social media following exceeding 35 million, and annually, we count over 200 million YouTube views of our creative videos, with many of them going viral.

**Conclusion**

On behalf of the executive management team, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the talented 8,000-strong Zain workforce, our 49 million individual customers and other corporate clientele and government bodies, all of whom contribute to the Zain ecosystem and our success in providing meaningful connectivity to the communities we serve.

Our focus for 2025 will be on executing our '4WARD-Progress with Purpose' corporate strategy, accelerating our evolution to a TechCo through investment in network expansion, digital technologies, strategic business opportunities, and talent, in a collaborative and sustainable manner, to ensure the company reaps the rewards of being at the forefront of digital transformation in the ever-growing mobile and ICT sector. This will take the Zain brand to new heights.

Please feel free to download the 2024 Zain Group Annual Report and Sustainability Report (<https://zain.com/en/agm2024>) available in digital format



Zain HQ building.



## Authorities release records on couple's last days

## Hackman's wife researched illness days before her death

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M., April 16, (AP): Authorities on Tuesday released a trove of records related to the deaths of Gene Hackman and his wife, including a lengthy investigation report detailing some of the last emails, phone calls and internet searches by Hackman's wife indicating that she had been scouring for information on flu-like symptoms and breathing techniques.

Betsy Arakawa died in February of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome - a rare, rodent-borne disease that can lead to a range of symptoms that include flu-like illness, headaches, dizziness and severe respiratory distress, investigators have said. Hackman is believed to have died about a week later of heart disease with complications from Alzheimer's disease.

The partially mummified remains of Hackman, 95, and Arakawa, 65, were found in their Santa Fe home Feb. 26, when maintenance and security workers showed up at the home and alerted police.

Photos, hours of footage and other documents were made public Tuesday after a recent court order that mandated any depictions of the deceased couple would be blocked from view. Authorities said additional records including dashboard camera footage could later be released.

The records had been restricted from release by an earlier, temporary court order. The Hackman estate and family members had sought to keep the records sealed to protect the family's privacy.



Actor Gene Hackman arrives with his wife, Betsy Arakawa, for the 60th Annual Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills, Calif., Jan. 19, 2003. (AP)

According to the lengthy investigation report, a review of Arakawa's computer showed she was actively researching medical conditions related to COVID-19 and flu-like symptoms between Feb. 8 and the morning of Feb. 12. The searches included questions about whether COVID-19 could cause dizziness or nosebleeds.

She also had mentioned in an email to her massage therapist that Hackman had woken up Feb. 11 with flu or cold-like symptoms but that a COVID-19 test was negative and she would have to reschedule her appointment for the next day "out of an abundance of caution."

Arakawa's search history also showed a query for a concierge medical service in Santa Fe the morning of Feb. 12. A review of her phone records by investigators showed she had a call with the service that lasted less than two minutes and missed a return call later that afternoon.

Investigators reviewed a call history to the home phone along with voicemails and security footage from stores that Arakawa had visited Feb. 11.

The redacted police body camera footage showed investigators working inside the home as they tried to piece together what had happened to the couple.

Investigators found one of the couple's dogs sitting in the bathroom near Arakawa's body. They then walked to the other side of the house, where Hackman was found dead.

"Two totally separate areas of the house," an officer comments.

"Mhm, it's strange," another responds.

The officers, worried about a possible gas leak or carbon monoxide poisoning, opened doors and windows around the house. Subsequent testing showed there were no leaks.

The footage showed them going through rooms of the

home and finding nothing out of the ordinary and no signs of forced entry, with the couple's art collection still adorning shelves and walls throughout. The investigators also can be seen counting cash that was found around the home and looking at the prescription medication on the bathroom counter as one of the couple's dog barked in the background.

An environmental assessment of the Hackman property by state health personnel found rodent feces in several outbuildings along with live traps on the property. There was no evidence of rodent activity inside the home.

Nestled among the piñon and juniper hills overlooking Santa Fe, the Hackman home is not unlike others in the area as mice are common within the surrounding landscape.

One of the couple's three dogs also was found dead in a crate in a bathroom closet near Arakawa, while two other dogs were found alive. A state veterinary lab tied the dog's death to dehydration and starvation.

An attorney for the estate, Kurt Sommer, argued during a hearing last month that the couple had taken great pains to stay out of the public light during their lifetimes and that the right to control the use of their names and likenesses should extend to their estate in death.

The Associated Press, CBS News and CBS Studios intervened in the matter, saying in court filings that they would not disseminate images of the couple's bodies and would blur images to obscure them from other records.

## Obituary

## Early Presley interviewer

## Wink Martindale, game show host, dies aged 91

LOS ANGELES, April 16, (AP): Wink Martindale, the genial host of such hit game shows as "Gambit" and "Tic-Tac-Dough" who also did one of the first recorded television interviews with a young Elvis Presley, has died. He was 91.

Martindale died Tuesday at Eisenhower Health in Rancho Mirage, California, according to his publicist Brian Mayes. Martindale had been battling lymphoma for a year.

"He was doing pretty well up until a couple weeks ago," Mayes said by phone from Nashville.

"Gambit" debuted on the same day in September 1972 as "The Price is Right" with Bob Barker and "The Joker's Wild" with Jack Barry.

"From the day it hit the air, 'Gambit' spelled winner, and it taught me a basic tenant of any truly successful game show: KISS! Keep It Simple Stupid," Martindale wrote in his 2000 memoir "Winking at Life." "Like playing Old Maids as a kid, everybody knows how to play 21, i.e. blackjack."

"Gambit" had been beating its competition on NBC and ABC for over two years. But a new show debuted in 1975 on NBC called "Wheel of Fortune." By December 1976, "Gambit" was off the air and "Wheel of Fortune" became an institution that is still going strong today.

Martindale bounced back in 1978 with "Tic-Tac-Dough," the classic X's and O's game on CBS that ran until 1985.

## Outhouse

"Overnight I had gone from the outhouse to the penthouse," he wrote.

He presided over the 88-game winning streak of Navy Lt. Thom McKee, who earned over \$300,000 in cash and prizes that included eight cars, three sailboats and 16 vacation trips. At the time, McKee's winnings were a record for a game show contestant.

"I love working with contestants, interacting with the audience and to a degree, watching lives change," Martindale wrote. "Winning a lot of cash can cause that to happen."

Martindale wrote that producer Dan Enright once told him that in the seven years he hosted "Tic-Tac-Dough" he gave away over \$7 million in cash and prizes.

Martindale said his many years as a radio DJ were helpful to him as a game show host because radio calls for constant ad-libs and he learned to handle almost any situation in the spur of the moment. He estimated that he hosted nearly two dozen game shows during his career.

Martindale wrote in his memoir that the question he got asked most often was "Is Wink your real name?" The second was "How did you get into game shows?"

He got his nickname from a childhood friend. Martindale is no relation to University of Michigan defensive coordinator Don Martindale, whose college teammates nicknamed him Wink because of their shared last name.

Born Winston Conrad Martindale on Dec. 4, 1933, in Jackson, Tennessee, he loved radio since childhood and at age 6 would read aloud the contents of advertisements in Life magazine.

He began his career as a disc jockey at age 17 at WPLI in his hometown, earning \$25 a week.

## Hired

After moving to WTJS, he was hired away for double the salary by Jackson's only other station, WDXI. He next hosted mornings at WHBQ in Memphis while attending Memphis State. He was married and the father of two girls when he graduated in 1957.

Martindale was in the studio, although not working on-air that night, when the first Presley record "That's All Right" was played on WHBQ on July 8, 1954.

Martindale approached fellow DJ Dewey Phillips, who had given Presley an early break by playing his song, to ask him and Presley to do a joint interview on Martindale's TV show "Top Ten Dance Party" in 1956. By then, Presley had become a major star and agreed to the appearance.

Martindale and Presley stayed in touch on occasion through the years, and in 1959 he did a trans-Atlantic telephone interview with Presley, who was in the Army in Germany. Martindale's second wife, Sandy, briefly dated Presley after meeting him on the set of "G.I. Blues" in 1960.

In 1959, Martindale moved to Los Angeles to host a morning show on KHHJ. That same year he reached No. 7 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart with a cover version of "Deck of Cards," which sold over 1 million copies. He performed the spoken word wartime story with religious overtones on "The Ed Sullivan Show."

"I could easily have thought, 'Wow, this is easy! I come out here, go on radio and TV, make a record and everybody wants to buy it!'" he wrote. "Even if I entertained such thoughts, they soon dissipated. I learned in due time that what had happened to me was far from the ordinary."

A year later he moved to the morning show at KRLL and to KFVB in 1962. Among his many other radio gigs were two separate stints at KMPC, owned by actor Gene Autry.

His first network hosting job was on NBC's "What's This Song?" where he was credited as Win Martindale from 1964-65.



Host Wink Martindale looks at a card during game show, May 22, 1997. (AP)

## Film



Anna Kendrick poses for photographers at the photo call for the film 'Another Simple Favour' on Tuesday, April 15, in London. (AP)

## People

## Defamation lawsuit back in court

## Palin brings NYT libel case to new jury

NEW YORK, April 16, (AP): Sarah Palin's 8-year-old defamation claims against The New York Times were being heard anew Tuesday by a Manhattan jury after they were revived by an appeals court last year.

Lawyers for the one-time Alaska governor and Republican vice presidential candidate and the newspaper told the civil jury that they will show through testimony and exhibits how a 2017 editorial was written and corrected.

Palin has asserted that the newspaper defamed her by falsely linking her campaign rhetoric to a mass shooting.

In his opening statement, attorney Shane Vogt told jurors that the newspaper had engaged in a "sickeningly familiar pattern" by targeting a popular Republican personality.

He told jurors they would learn the effects of the editorial on his client when Palin testifies, likely early next week.

The Times admits it made an error, but its attorney Felicia Ellsworth said in her opening that the newspaper "corrected the record as loudly, clearly and quickly as possible."

She said the correction was posted within 14 hours, and jurors will have to conclude that the newspaper's editors knew they were saying something false and said it anyway to reach a ver-



Former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin leaves federal court Tuesday, April 15, in New York. (AP)

dict against the Times and its former editorial page editor, James Bennet.

Palin sued the Times for unspecified damages in 2017, accusing it of damaging her career as a political commentator with the editorial about gun control published after U.S. Rep. Steve Scalise, a Louisiana Republican, was wounded when a man with a history of anti-GOP activity opened fire on a congressional baseball team practice in Washington.

In the editorial, the Times wrote that before the 2011 mass shooting in Arizona that severely wounded former US Rep. Gabby Giffords and killed six others, Palin's political action commit-

tee had contributed to an atmosphere of violence by circulating a map of electoral districts that put Giffords and 19 other Democrats under stylized crosshairs.

In a correction, the Times said the editorial had "incorrectly stated that a link existed between political rhetoric and the 2011 shooting" and had "incorrectly described" the map.

Elizabeth Williamson, a feature writer at the Times who was on the editorial board in 2017 and came up with the idea for the editorial to address the effects of political rhetoric, was the trial's first witness.

Ellsworth asked her if she had any negative feelings toward Palin.

"No," she answered.

The trial is occurring after the 2nd US Circuit Court of Appeals in Manhattan restored the case last year.

In February 2022, Judge Jed S. Rakoff rejected Palin's claims in a ruling issued while a jury deliberated. The judge then let jurors deliver their verdict, which also went against Palin.

In restoring the lawsuit, the 2nd Circuit said Rakoff's dismissal ruling improperly intruded on the jury's work. It also cited flaws in the trial, saying there was erroneous exclusion of evidence, an inaccurate jury instruction and a mistaken response to a question from the jury.

## Variety

**NEW YORK:** As jury selection began Tuesday in **Harvey Weinstein's** New York City rape retrial, some prospective jurors made clear they couldn't be fair in judging the one-time Hollywood mogul-turned-#MeToo pariah.

Mark Axelowitz, an actor who plays a Manhattan prosecutor in the new Robert De Niro film "The Alto Knights," was one of more than a dozen candidates who raised a hand when the judge asked if anyone felt they couldn't be impartial. "I don't like the guy, he is a really bad guy," Axelowitz told a reporter after being dismissed from consideration. Another disqualified prospective juror disqualifed herself because she had previously been sexually assaulted. Yet another wondered whether anyone could be impartial.

The first day ended with no one chosen for the panel of 12 jurors and six alternates. Jury selection will resume Wednesday.

Weinstein is being tried again after New York's highest court last year overturned his 2020 conviction and 23-year prison sentence and ordered a new trial, finding that improper rulings and prejudicial testimony tainted the original one. That Court of Appeals ruling gave Weinstein a second chance to fight the charges, with his retrial playing out in a different atmosphere than the first, which was held amid a global reckoning over sexual misconduct.

Weinstein, 73, has pleaded not guilty and denies he raped or sexually assaulted anyone. He is older and more frail, in and out of the hospital regularly for a variety of health problems and far removed from his time among the most powerful men in show business.

Weinstein's lawyer, Arthur Aidala, said the ex-studio boss is "cautiously optimistic that when all the evidence is out, the jury will find that all of his relationships were consensual and therefore reach a verdict of not guilty." (AP)



Weinstein



Kim Kardashian

## Kim to testify in Paris heist trial

PARIS, April 16, (AP): Kim Kardashian will testify in person at an upcoming trial over a 2016 heist in Paris in which armed robbers allegedly tied her up and locked her in a bathroom while they stole millions of dollars' worth of jewelry, her lawyer said Tuesday.

Ten suspects accused of armed robbery, kidnapping or other criminal charges are going on trial in Paris from April 28 through May 23. The October 2016 robbery took place in a Paris apartment where Kardashian was staying for Paris Fashion Week.

"We can confirm that Ms. Kardashian will be testifying in person at the upcoming French criminal trial involving the 2016 incident in which she was bound and robbed at gunpoint by a number of masked assailants," lawyer Michael Rhodes said in a statement provided to the AP.

The reality TV star and entrepreneur has "tremendous appreciation and admiration for the French judicial system" and wishes for the trial to proceed in an orderly fashion in accordance with French law and with respect for all parties to the case," the lawyer said.



Wildlife finds refuge in Qatar’s expanding reserves

Nature reserves: Qatar’s eco-defense against desertification

This is the second in a series of articles on State of Qatar’s nature reserves, environment and sustainability.

Al-Riffa Reserve is also a nature reserve. It is a group of meadows near the Al-Rayyan area, and close to the Al-Wajba area. Its area is approximately 53 square kilometers.

Al-Riffa Reserve is elevated compared to the surrounding lands, and is home to a wealth of wild plants that distinguish it from other areas of Qatar. It was an important destination for Qatar’s residents, who sought to enjoy the magnificent nature.

Saina Reserve is located in the northwest of Doha. Given its high biodiversity, it was regarded as a natural reserve to prevent and preserve urban sprawl.

Um Al-Amad Reserve is about 25 km from Doha, and is located in the north-eastern region of Qatar. It is rich in meadows and is characterized by dense vegetation. The nature reserves also include the Um Qarn Reserve, located approximately 25 kilometers from Doha in the northeastern region of the country, boasting abundant meadows characterized by dense vegetation.

The Erkia Reserve is located near the Erkia farm, 50 kilometers west of Doha on the Abu Samra Road, in the south-central plain of Qatar.

Erkia stands in the middle of the desert like a shining emerald, home to all resident species. It is located within the “flights of migratory birds and insects” that pass through Qatar. This reserve can even be seen from space on satellite maps.

A center-pivot drip irrigation system is used on the fields where animal feed is grown. The farm consists of sandy and loamy topsoil on a flat, sandy plain with pebbles polished by water. The rest of the area is a low, rocky limestone elevation with scattered boulders and sparse vegetation.

In northern Qatar lies the Um Al-Sheif Reserve, one of the region’s most prominent pearl diving sites and one of the most famous natural resources located within Qatar’s exclusive economic zone. It boasts a rich marine environment, thanks to the convergence of nutrient-laden currents, making it a rich habitat for marine life such as fish, shellfish, and coral reefs.

Um Al-Sheif Marine Reserve is a key site for preserving biodiversity and supporting scientific studies on coral reefs and marine organisms. It was designated a nature reserve to protect pearl diving sites and their unique biodiversity, in addition to being one of the most prominent marine areas teeming with organisms such as fish, shellfish, and coral reefs. Due to its strategic location and the confluence of nutrient-rich ocean currents, it represents an ideal environment for supporting marine life and enhancing biodiversity. This classification of the reserve aims to ensure the protection of this area from harmful human activities, such as overfishing and marine pollution, as well as to support scientific efforts to study coral reefs and marine organisms in accordance with the national strategy for biodiversity protection and the country’s sustainable development plans.

Protected

As part of its Third National Development Strategy 2024-2030, the State of Qatar seeks to increase the number and area of nature reserves with the aim of achieving a balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability. These efforts include expanding protected areas through the establishment of new reserves in addition to developing existing reserves by improving their infrastructure and enhancing their environmental management.

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change is also implementing strategic projects aimed at enhancing biodiversity in cooperation with relevant authorities in the country. This is achieved by developing policies to protect natural habitats, launching initiatives to conserve endangered species, and adopting modern technologies to monitor the environment and protect wildlife.

In this context, Director of the Natural Reserves Department at the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Saleh Al-Kuwari told QNA that Qatar is witnessing a significant expansion in natural reserves, which now cover approximately 25.73 percent of the country’s area, with plans to reach 30 percent by 2030.

He added that nature reserves cover approximately 23.6 percent of Qatar’s land area, while marine reserves extend over 2.6 percent of the country’s territorial waters. Qatar seeks to increase the area of marine reserves to 30 percent of its

exclusive economic zone, reflecting its commitment to protecting environmental resources and promoting sustainability.

Nature reserves play a key role in achieving environmental development as they contribute to protecting biodiversity by providing safe environments for wildlife. They also work to improve air and water quality, as plants help purify the air, while wetlands contribute to purifying groundwater. In addition, nature reserves play a key role in combating desertification by protecting the vegetation cover from negative environmental impacts.

In this regard, the Director of the Natural Reserves Department at the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change said that within the framework of Qatar National Vision 2030, plans have been developed to enhance green spaces and expand the scope of nature reserves. This is achieved through sustainable strategies that include the rehabilitation of natural environments, the development of environmental resource management policies, and the expansion of protected areas to protect fragile ecosystems from climate change.

He pointed out the vital role of nature reserves in revitalizing the ecotourism sector, which is currently witnessing tangible and rapid development in Qatar.

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change is developing an integrated plan to develop this sector, which includes comprehensive development of ecotourism sites, a map of all the landmarks and attractions in these sites, along with improving infrastructure and public services in visitor areas, as well as promoting sustainable practices, reducing negative impacts on ecosystems, and introducing visitors to the country’s cultural heritage.

Commenting on the contribution of nature reserves to the development of ecotourism in the country, Al-Kuwari considered nature reserves to be a fundamental element in the development of ecotourism in Qatar, as they provide unique tourist destinations for nature and environment lovers. He pointed out that the Al-Thakhira Reserve, for example, attracts visitors thanks to its mangrove trees and coral reefs, while the Khor Al-Udeid Reserve provides an exceptional experience for visitors through its sand dunes and intersecting marine waters.

To be continued



A Target logo is displayed outside of a store location, Dec. 20, 2022, in Westwood, Mass. (AP)

Target baby food recalled

A company that makes baby food sold under a Target store brand is recalling more than 25,000 packages of a product because it may contain elevated levels of lead.

Miami-based Fruselva issued the recall in March for Target’s Good & Gather Baby Pea, Zucchini, Kale & Thyme Vegetable Puree, sold in 4-ounce tubs, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

The packages include lot number 4167, with a best-by date of Dec. 7, and lot number 4169, with a best-by date of Dec. 9.

Consumers should not feed babies the products. The recall is listed as Class II, which means the products are unlikely to cause serious harm, but still have the potential to result in temporary or reversible problems. (AP)

Autism rates in US jump again to 1 in 31 kids: CDC

ATLANTA, April 16, (AP): An estimated 1 in 31 US children have autism, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Tuesday, marking another jump in a long string of increases.

The CDC’s data was from 14 states and Puerto Rico in 2022. The previous estimate - from 2020 - was 1 in 36.

Boys continue to be diagnosed more than girls, and the highest rates are among children who are Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native and Black.

To estimate how common autism is, the CDC checked health and school records for 8-year-olds, because most cases are diagnosed by that age. Other researchers have their own estimates, but experts say the CDC’s estimate is the most rigorous and the gold standard.

Here’s what you need to know about the new numbers, as well as Health

Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.’s plan to do a “massive testing and research effort” around autism. Autism is a developmental disability caused by differences in the brain. There are many possible symptoms, many of which overlap with other diagnoses.

They can include delays in language and learning, social and emotional withdrawal and an unusual need for routine. For decades, the diagnosis was rare, given only to kids with severe problems communicating or socializing and those with unusual, repetitive behaviors.

As late as the early 1990s, only 1 in 10,000 children were diagnosed with autism. Around that time, the term became a shorthand for a group of milder, related conditions known as “autism spectrum disorders,” and the number of kids labeled as having some form of autism began to balloon.

Treaty aims to prevent future global health crises

WHO member nations agree on draft pandemic treaty after COVID lessons

LONDON, April 16, (AP): Five years after COVID-19 triggered national lockdowns, economic uncertainty and killed millions, the World Health Organization’s member countries agreed on a draft “pandemic treaty” that sets guidelines for how the international community might confront the next global health crisis.

After the world’s largely disastrous response to the coronavirus, countries tasked the WHO with overseeing a pandemic treaty in 2021; negotiations concluded early Wednesday on an agreement expected to be adopted next month at the UN health agency’s annual meeting in Geneva.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus heralded it as a historic moment, saying countries have proven that “in our divided world, nations can still work together to find common ground and a shared response.”

Following U.S. President Donald Trump’s decision to withdraw the country from the WHO in January, American officials were barred from participating in the talks and are not expected to sign the treaty. During COVID-19, it was largely American research and development that produced the most effective vaccines and medicines.

Weeks after Trump’s decision, Ar-



Dolores Reyes Fernández, 61, hugs her father, José Reyes Lozano, 87, for the first time in nearly four months as visits resume at the nursing home in Barcelona, Spain, Monday, June 22, 2020. (AP)

gentina’s President Javier Milei also exited the WHO, citing “profound differences” with the UN agency.

Rachael Crockett, of the advocacy group Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative, described the draft pandemic treaty as “a product of compromise.” She said it contained strong provisions, but only if countries chose to implement them. “This could change what we saw in COVID, when some populations

didn’t get access to what they needed.”

The draft treaty notably includes a provision to guarantee that countries that share critical virus samples receive any resulting tests, medicines and vaccines, with the WHO to hold up to 20% of such products to ensure poorer countries get supplies. Negotiations on this provision are expected to continue after the treaty is likely accepted by member countries in May.

Patients murder

Doctor charged with 15 killings

BERLIN, April 16, (AP): A doctor in Berlin has been charged with murder over the deaths of 15 patients under palliative care, prosecutors said Wednesday. He is also accused of trying to cover up the evidence by starting fires in their homes.

The doctor was part of a nursing service’s end-of-life care team and was initially suspected in the deaths of just four patients. That number has crept higher since last summer, and investigators now say they’ve found evidence linking him to the deaths of 15 people between September 22, 2021, and July 24 last year.

The victims’ ages ranged from 25 to 94. Most died in their own homes.

He allegedly administered an anesthetic and a muscle relaxer to the patients without their knowledge or consent. The drug cocktail then allegedly paralyzed the respiratory muscles. Respiratory arrest and death followed within minutes, prosecutors said.

The doctor - a 40-year-old man whose name hasn’t been released, in line with German privacy rules - has been in custody since Aug. 6. Prosecutors said Wednesday that he has not yet responded to the case against him.

Wyoming abortion bans put on hold and struck down by a lower court judge, including the first explicit US ban on abortion pills, will be argued Wednesday before the state’s Supreme Court.

Arguments are set for 1:30 p.m. before the state high court in Cheyenne.

Abortion has remained legal in this conservative state since Teton County District Judge **Melissa Owens** in Jackson blocked a series of bans passed in the state since 2022.

One law would ban abortion except to protect to a pregnant woman’s life or in cases involving rape and incest. The other would make Wyoming the only state to explicitly ban abortion pills, though other states have instituted de facto bans on abortion medication by broadly prohibiting abortion.

Wyoming’s laws prompted lawsuits filed by four women, including two obstetricians, and two nonprofits including Wellspring Health Access, the state’s only abortion clinic. They argued in court filings that the laws stand to harm the women’s health, well-being and livelihoods and violate a state constitutional amendment.

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LA28 CEO unveils vision for ‘incredible’ Olympic Games

Dodger Stadium to host baseball, with surfing and cricket outside LA at 2028 Oly

LOS ANGELES, April 16, (AP): The 2028 Los Angeles Olympics will feature baseball at Dodger Stadium in its return to the program with surfing and cricket held outside the city as part of an updated venue plan released Tuesday by the organizing committee.

Surfing will be at Trestles Beach, a renowned collection of surfing spots between northern San Diego County and southern San Clemente in Orange County, about an hour’s drive south of downtown Los Angeles. It formerly hosted a World Surfing League competition and attracts about 2.5 million visitors every year.

“We’ve promised the world an incredible Olympic Games and today we’re proud to share the plan that will make it happen,” LA28 chief executive officer Reynold Hoover said in a statement.

Cricket will return to the Olympics for the first time in a century in a temporary structure at the Fairgrounds in Pomona, about 35 miles from L.A. Host committee chairman Casey Wasserman had

initially said it was likely to be played on the East Coast, which would have better aligned with the time zone in India, home of the sport’s biggest fan base.

Squash will make its Olympic debut on the Universal Studios lot, famous as the setting for movies and television shows.

Beach volleyball is going to Long Beach after negotiations fell through with the city of Santa Monica. Triathlon is moving from Long Beach to famed Venice Beach on the west side of L.A.

Joining the sports in Long Beach are target shooting at a temporary indoor range at the city’s convention center. Sport climbing will take place outside in the parking lot. Already planned for Long Beach is the new event of coastal rowing as well as marathon swimming.

Venice Beach will also be the starting location for the marathon and cycling road courses. The course layouts and finishing sites for both events will be announced later.

Boxing returns to the Olympic program with

preliminary matches at the Peacock Theater across from Crypto.com Arena, which will host the final stages in downtown LA. Weightlifting also will be at Peacock, while artistic gymnastics and trampoline will be in Crypto.com Arena.

Volleyball will be at Honda Center in Anaheim, about 27 miles from downtown Los Angeles.

The city of Carson will host archery at Dignity Health Sports Park after the Rugby Sevens tournament. Shotgun shooting will be in South El Monte, about 14 miles from downtown LA.

Equestrian is set for Santa Anita racetrack in suburban Arcadia, which hosted the sport during the 1984 Los Angeles Games.

Rhythmic gymnastics will be at Galen Center on the University of Southern California campus, along with badminton.

The Sepulveda Basin Recreation Area in the San Fernando Valley north of downtown LA will host 3x3 basketball, as well as modern pentathlon, BMX freestyle, BMX racing, skateboarding and skateboarding street.



In this file photo, Dodger Stadium is seen during the first inning of an opening day baseball game between the Los Angeles Dodgers and the San Diego Padres in Los Angeles. (AP)

Punjab defends lowest-ever total after dismissing Kolkata for 95



Punjab Kings’ Prabhsimran Singh plays a shot during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Punjab Kings and Kolkata Kings Riders at Maharaja Yadavindra Singh Cricket Stadium in Mohali, India. (AP)

Kings break into the top four with eight points

**MOHALI, India, April 16, (AP): Punjab Kings successfully defended the lowest total in the history of Indian Premier League and bowled out defending champion Kolkata Knight Riders for 95.**

Leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal ignited a sensational Kolkata collapse with 4-28 for Punjab’s 16-run win after the home team got dismissed for 111 in 15.3 overs.

Punjab broke into the top four with eight points from six matches while defending champion Kolkata is sixth after four defeats and three wins.

Kolkata had a bumpy start to its chase when Sunil Narine and Quinton de Kock both fell cheaply against fast bowlers Marco Jansen and Xavier Bartlett, playing his first IPL game for Punjab.

But impact player Angkrish Raghuvanshi (37) and captain Ajinkya Rahane showed plenty of intent as Kolkata cruised to 62-2 before Chahal turned the game on its head in the eighth over.

Rahane could have overturned



Punjab Kings’ Glenn Maxwell bowls a delivery during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Punjab Kings and Kolkata Kings Riders at Maharaja Yadavindra Singh Cricket Stadium in Mohali, India. (AP)

the on-field umpire’s lbw decision against him as the replays suggested the ball had hit the front pad outside the line of offstump but didn’t go for

a TV referral and that ignited a sensational Kolkata collapse.

“I’ll take the blame,” Rahane said. “I played the wrong shot ... but it started from there. We batted really badly as a batting unit. Too many things going through my head, very disappointed.”

Chahal had been struggling this season with only two wickets in the previous five games. He also had to pass a fitness test ahead of Tuesday’s game.

Kolkata slid further when Chahal went on to dismiss top-scorer Raghuvanshi, who was brilliantly snapped by Bartlett at point and then Glenn Maxwell got the key wicket of Venkatesh Iyer when he had the left-hander lbw while bowling around the wicket.

Kolkata slumped to 76-7 when Chahal first outfoxed Rinku Singh with a slower ball and had the batter stumped and Ramandeep Singh couldn’t resist to play a ramp shot of a low Chahal full toss but got caught at leg-slip.

Jansen (3-17) and Arshdeep Singh (1-11) then mopped up the tail quickly despite Andre Russell (17) showing a brief spark and smashing two sixes and a boundary.

Harshit Rana’s (3-25) triple strike

inside the power play had Punjab reeling at 54-4 that included a second-ball duck from captain Shreyas Iyer against his former franchise.

Iyer, who had captained Kolkata to the title last year, but was not retained for this season, was brilliantly snapped by diving Ramandeep Singh at deep point.

Josh Inglis’ IPL debut knock was short lived as the Australian wicket-keeper-batter was clean bowled by Varun Chakravarthy (2-21) when he went for an over ambitious slog sweep against the spinner in the power play.

Glenn Maxwell’s (7) below-par season continued when he got dismissed for his fourth single digit score in six games and Narine (2-25) made it 80-7 when impact player Suryansh Shedge edged the spinner to wicketkeeper de Kock.

Shashank Singh (18) and No. 10 Bartlett (11) made sure Punjab cross the 100-run mark before Bartlett got run-out.

“At the halfway mark there weren’t too many people around the world who would have defended that,” Punjab’s coach Ricky Ponting of Australia said. “That might just be about the best win I’ve ever had as coach.”



Milwaukee Bucks’ Giannis Antetokounmpo and Damian Lillard watch from the bench during the first half of an NBA basketball game against the Detroit Pistons. (AP)

Best of the Rest

**Chinese snooker star qualifies:** Chinese snooker star Zhao Xintong has qualified for the world championship, just a few months after returning to competitive action following a 20-month ban for his role in the sport’s biggest match-fixing scandal.

Zhao, who won the UK Championship in 2021, was ranked No. 9 in the world when his suspension began after accepting charges of being a party to another player fixing two matches and betting on matches himself.

A total of 10 Chinese players were sanctioned by the World Snooker Tour in the scandal, with two handed lifetime bans.

Zhao has been free to play since his ban expired in September and, in January, secured a return to snooker’s main professional tour.

Now he has qualified to play in the game’s biggest tournament, at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield starting Saturday, after coming through four qualifying rounds playing as an amateur - the latest being on Tuesday when he beat Elliot Slessor 10-8.

Zhao will discover his opponent in the world championship on Thursday. (AP)

□ □ □

**Fowler ruptures AC:** Australia forward Mary Fowler sustained a rupture to her anterior cruciate ligament while playing for Manchester City in the Women’s FA Cup semifinals, the English club said Wednesday.

The injury happened during City’s loss to Manchester United on Sunday. City didn’t give a timeline for Fowler’s likely absence, only saying: “Mary will remain under the care of the club’s medical team and start her rehabilitation.

“Everyone at City wishes Mary all the best on a full and speedy recovery.”

The 22-year-old Fowler has played for City since 2022. (AP)

Dalma describes room where her father underwent home hospitalization as ‘disgusting’

Maradona’s daughter testifies, says family was deceived by doctors

**Change Name**

I, Salate Rajkumar Marijeseu, holder of Indian Passport No. Z3830927, father of Maria Sana (Given Name), 13 years of age, holder of Indian Passport No. C0493682, do hereby change her name to Maria Sana (Given Name) Salate Rajkumar (Surname) for all purposes. She will henceforth be known in the name of Maria Sana Salate Rajkumar, and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all her documents.

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, April 16, (AP): One of Diego Maradona’s daughters testified Tuesday in the trial of seven medical professionals accused of negligence in Maradona’s death, describing the room where her father underwent home hospitalization in 2020 as “disgusting” and “smelling of urine.”

Dalma Maradona said she and her siblings were deceived by the doctors treating their father.

“They promised us a home hospitalization that never happened,” said Dalma, the eldest of the former Argentina captain’s five children and the first of them to testify in court.

“They made us believe in something that never happened. They deceived us in the cruelest way to support that,” she added.

Maradona, who led Argentina to the World Cup title in 1986, died on Nov. 25, 2020 while undergoing home hospitalization on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, days after undergoing surgery for a hematoma that formed between his skull and brain. He was 60. Dalma said the facility was not fit for medical treatment.

“It smelled like urine, the bed was disgusting,” she said. “There was a portable toilet. There was this panel on the windows to keep out the light. There was nothing. It was horrible. The kitchen was disgusting.”

Seven healthcare professionals, including a neurosurgeon and a psychiatrist, are on trial for failing to provide adequate care and could face a maximum penalty of 25 years in prison.

Dalma recalled that after the hematoma surgery, neurosurgeon Leopoldo Luque, psychiatrist Agustina Cosachov, and psychologist Carlos Díaz - three of the defendants whom she identified as “my father’s doctors” - suggested home hospitalization since Maradona did not want to remain hospitalized.

“There were three options (voluntary hospitalization, forced hospitalization, and home hospitalization), but they made us understand that home hospitalization was the only option,” Dalma said.

“They promised us 24-hour nurses to monitor his blood pressure and to give him medication.”

Last week, Diego Maradona’s ex-wife and a doctor also questioned

the decision to take him to a private home following the surgery instead of admitting him to a rehabilitation center.

The deficiencies in Maradona’s home care are one of the prosecution’s key pieces of evidence against the defendants.

Dalma Maradona said the last time she saw her father alive was at the hospital as she had not been allowed access to the house where he was rehabilitating until after he was dead.

“I went into the room (after he died), he was very swollen. He was covered with a sheet, but you could see he was swollen,” she said. “I threw myself on him because I thought he was going to wake up. His face was very swollen, his hands, his face. His stomach, his body. Everything.”

She added: “I miss him every day of my life, and what pains me the most is knowing that if they (the doctors) had done their job, this could have been avoided,” Dalma concluded. “It’s still very painful to remember the abuse he suffered, and I didn’t know. If I had known this was going to be the outcome, I would have handled it differently. But I never thought about it.”



# Al-Arabi exits Challenge League after a heavy defeat to Arkadag

By Hassan Mosa  
AL-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

ASHGABAT, April 16: Al-Arabi bowed out of the AFC Challenge League after suffering a 3-0 defeat to Turkmenistan's Arkadag in the second leg of the semi-finals, at the latter's home ground.

Despite entering the match with a 2-0 lead from the first leg – secured through goals by Hamza Khaba and Salman Al-Awadhi – the “Greens” failed to maintain its advantage.

Coach Nasser Al-Shatti fielded a lineup that included Suleiman Abdul Ghafoor in goal, a backline of Hamad Al-Qallaf, Hassan Hamdan, Sofiane Bouchar, and Jumaa Aboud, with Kamil Al-Aswad, Hussein Ashkanani, and Ali Khalaf in midfield, and Hamza Khaba, Wanayo Iwala, and Christopher John up front.

Disaster struck early for Al-Arabi when defender Hassan Hamdan suffered an injury in the first minute following a rough challenge. Play was paused for five minutes before Hamdan was stretched off, and Mohammed Khaled came on as his replacement.

Arkadag capitalized on the disruption, scoring its opening goal in the 7th minute through Shenzar Turkishov, who fired a powerful shot into the bottom left corner past Abdul Ghafoor.

Al-Arabi tried to respond with at-



Al-Arabi player controls the ball as an opponent makes a tackle.

tacking efforts, but they struggled to break through Arkadag's organized defense. Meanwhile, the home team continued to threaten with aerial balls and crosses, keeping the pressure on until halftime.

In the second half, Arkadag maintained their dominance. They doubled their lead in the 58th minute when substitute Anadiev pounced on a rebound from Turkishov's shot that hit both the post and Abdul Ghafoor before slot-

ting it home.

Seven minutes later, Bazgilich Gurbanov nearly made it 3-0, but Abdul Ghafoor produced a crucial save. Al-Shatti then brought on Youssef Majed and Salman Al-Awadhi in an attempt to turn the tide. Al-Arabi's performance improved, and they created several chances, including a clear one-on-one opportunity for Al-Awadhi in the 88th minute, but Rustam Ahaliev blocked the shot.

Petrovic criticizes refereeing

# Ibrahim lauds Al-Qadsiya resilience despite defeat in the Gulf Champions League final

By Hassan Mosa  
AL-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Former Al-Qadsiya and national team coach Mohammed Ibrahim, known as “The General,” has commended Zeljko Petrovic for his successful tenure with the team, emphasizing the positive impact the Montenegrin coach has had on the squad this season.

Ibrahim highlighted the Al-Qadsiya board of directors' strong support for the team, along with the technical and administrative staff's efforts in maintaining high player focus, especially with the added strain of frequent travels for the Gulf Champions League alongside local tournament commitments.

Reflecting on the team's challenges before the Gulf Champions League final, Ibrahim noted the difficult circumstances Al-Qadsiya faced. The team was without Hussein Dhahiri due to suspension, Moaz Al-Dhafiri was injured the day before the match, and the loss of Khaled Ibrahim, who was forced off injured in the first half, was another setback. Despite these challenges, Ibrahim praised the technical staff's management of the match and their decision to include young talents like Khaled Sabah, Faisal Al-Shatti, Jassim Al-Matar, and Abdullah Mutawa.

Ibrahim congratulated the Qadisiya players, the board of directors, and the administrative and technical staff, led by Sheikh Fahad Talal, for their outstanding performance in the Gulf Championship despite the obstacles they faced.

Following their return from Iraq, Al-Qadsiya resumed training today in preparation for their upcoming match against Al-Tadamon on Sunday in the second round of the tournament's group stage.



Al-Qadsiya and Duhok players fighting for the ball.

In the final, Al-Qadsiya suffered a 2-1 loss to Iraqi club Duhok in the second leg of the Gulf Champions League the day before yesterday.

In post-match comments, Petrovic criticized the referee's decisions, stating, “It's difficult to win under these conditions. The referee didn't award many free kicks to my team, but he was quick to give them to the home side.”

The emotional coach was seen tearing up after Omani referee Qassim Al-Hatmi blew the final whistle.

Meanwhile, Mohammed Soula, Al-Qadsiya's Libyan professional, pointed to a lack of concentration in the final moments of the match as the key reason for the team's defeat.

# Warriors secure 7th seed

Orlando dominates Hawks

SAN FRANCISCO, April 16, (AP): Jimmy Butler and Stephen Curry threw their arms around each other and embraced.

Playoff Jimmy in all his brilliance on the big stage took all the pressure off Curry, and now they're taking the Golden State Warriors to the playoffs.

“I know I want to win a championship so he needs, his what, this would be No. 5?” Butler said.

Butler had 38 points, seven rebounds and six assists creating opportunities on both ends at every chance, Curry scored 37, and the Warriors earned the seventh seed in the Western Conference by beating the Memphis Grizzlies 121-116 on Tuesday night in the Play-In Tournament.

Curry knocked down a baseline 3-pointer with 1:50 to go and one from the left wing with a minute on the clock then converted four free throws in the closing five seconds.

Golden State is now headed for a best-of-seven first-round series with the Rockets beginning with Game 1 on Sunday at Houston.

After a pair of free throws by Curry with 5.4 seconds left, the Grizzlies had one last chance - but Santi Aldama couldn't inbound the ball before a five-second violation.

Desmond Bane scored 30 points and Ja Morant 22 for Memphis, which will head home to host the winner of the Mavericks-Kings matchup on Wednesday night in Sacramento to determine the eighth playoff spot.

With the Grizzlies on a roll midway through the third, Butler grabbed momentum back with a steal and dunk. He shot 12 for 20 in a second straight 30-point performance and his highest scoring game since joining the Warriors at the trade deadline. He made 12 of 18



Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry (30) drives to the basket against Memphis Grizzlies guard Scotty Pippen Jr. (1) during the first half of an NBA play-in tournament basketball game in San Francisco. (AP)

free throws - having been 63 of 68 from the line over the previous eight games in April.

Morant went down hard rolling his right ankle when he stepped on Buddy Hield's foot and was fouled by Quinten Post with 4:25 remaining in the third but got up and finished the three-point play to pull the Grizzlies within 82-81.

Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 18 points, while Zach Edey contributed 14 points, 17 rebounds and hit two free throws with 14.3 seconds left.

Curry had eight rebounds, four assists and shot 9 for 22 while regularly swarmed by Scotty Pippen Jr. before he fouled out late.

Curry had lit up the Grizzlies for

52 points on their home floor in a 134-125 win on April 1, and the Grizzlies made him a top priority this time - so Butler took charge.

Cole Anthony came off the Magic bench with 26 points and six assists to lead the Orlando Magic to a 120-95 win over the Atlanta Hawks on Tuesday night in the first game of the Play-In Tournament.

Paolo Banchero had 17 points, nine rebounds and seven assists for the Magic, and Wendell Carter Jr. added 19 points and seven rebounds. Anthony Black also came off the bench and scored 16 points on 6-of-7 shooting in the the Magic's first appearance in a play-in game.

Earning the Eastern Conference's seventh seed after a 41-41 regular season, the Magic will start their first-round playoff series at Boston on Sunday.

Trae Young led the Hawks with 28 points and six assists before getting two technical fouls and an automatic ejection with 4:47 left in the game.

The Hawks, who have reached the playoffs through the play-in route in two of the last three seasons, will play at home Friday night for the eighth spot against the winner of Wednesday night's game at Chicago between the Bulls and the Miami Heat.

# Nabila Al-Ali elected to Arab Equestrian Federation Board

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Kuwaiti international referee, equestrian commentator, and former Secretary-General of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation, Nabila Abdullah Al-Ali, has been elected to the Board of Directors of the Arab Equestrian Federation. Her election came during the Federation's extraordinary general assembly meeting.

The Arab Equestrian Federation is chaired by Prince Abdullah bin Fahd Al Saud. The newly elected board also includes Badr Al-Darwish (Qatar), Munther Al-Busaidi (Oman), Dr. Ismail Shaker (Egypt), Fareed Al-Subaie (Libya), and Fawzi Sahrawi (Algeria). Following the announcement, the Kuwait Equestrian Federation, led by Masoud Jawhar Hayat, extended its congratulations to Nabila Al-Ali on her achievement, wishing her continued success and excellence in representing Kuwait at the regional level.



Nabila Al-Ali

# Al-Qadsiya on track: Al-Musameh

By Khaled Al-Enezi  
AL-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Al-Qadsiya handball team manager Osama Al-Musameh affirmed that the team is back on the right path, showing steady progress and strong ambition to reclaim a spot in the Premier League next season.

Al-Musameh acknowledged the team's recent performance dip, attributing it to the lengthy league suspension caused by the national team's participation in the World Cup. He added, “Unfortunately, we weren't able to secure Premier League promotion last season due to a wave of nine injuries that weakened our lineup and led to a drop in form, resulting in relegation to the First Division.”

However, he emphasized that the team's situation is improving: “Thanks to the combined efforts of the technical staff, players, and continuous support from the club's board, we are now correcting our course. The team's performance has been consistently improving from one match to the next, and most importantly, we are now leading the First Division standings. Our goal is clear: to return to the Premier League next season.”

Al-Qadsiya climbed to the top of the

First Division table following its 30-24 win over Al-Fahaheel, coupled with Khaitan's 36-32 victory over previous leader Al-Nasr in the penultimate seventh round. This shift gave Al-Qadsiya 22 points, pushing Al-Nasr to second place with 20 points. Al-Qurain follows in third with 18 points, while the rest of the standings are: Al-Fahaheel (12), Khaitan (10), Al-Yarmouk (4), Al-Tadamon (3), and Al-Sahel at the bottom with no points.



Qadsiya players defend during the first division game.

French champion reaches last four

# PSG staves off gallant Villa fightback

BIRMINGHAM, England, April 16, (AP): Their players were rattled. Their goalkeeper was pulling off save after save. For Paris Saint-Germain, another brutal “remontada” looked on the cards in the Champions League.

This time, the French champion just about hung on.

PSG staved off a gallant fightback by Aston Villa to reach the semifinals of Europe's top competition despite a 3-2 loss to the English club on Tuesday.

Holding a 3-1 lead from last week's quarterfinal first leg, PSG built a four-goal cushion thanks to goals by full backs Achraf Hakimi and Nuno Mendes inside 27 minutes at Villa Park.

Villa, cheered on by Prince William, roared back thanks to a deflected shot before halftime by Youri Tielemans and then goals in a two-minute span from John McGinn and Ezri Konsa by the 57th.

Only a string of brilliant stops from PSG goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma denied Villa a fourth goal that would have taken the match to extra time and seen the French club blow another four-goal lead - just like it did famously when losing to Barcelona in 2017, when current Villa manager Unai Emery was in charge of PSG.

“I don't think we could have done anymore,” Konsa said.

PSG advanced 5-4 on aggregate

to knock out a second Premier League team, after Liverpool in the round of 16. Next up could be another in Arsenal, which leads Real Madrid 3-0 from the first leg.

PSG advanced to the semifinals for the third time in five seasons and this time they've done it without their “galacticos,” with Neymar, Lionel Messi and most recently Kylian Mbappé having left the club.

“I think over the two matches, we deserved to win,” PSG coach Luis

Enrique said. “We are very happy because this is the second year in a row in the semifinals. Now we want to go to the next phase.”

Before the return leg against Villa, this new-look PSG was being talked up as a potential Champions League winner but that viewpoint might be checked given the way the team nearly collapsed at Villa Park.

There was as much relief as joy in the celebrations of PSG's players, who are bidding to win the

club's first Champions League title. It lost in the final to Bayern Munich in 2020 and was eliminated in the semifinals by Dortmund last season.

“We believed in the end we were going to go through,” Marquinhos, PSG's Brazilian center back, said in comments from Portuguese to English on British broadcaster Amazon Prime. “But this is the Champions League - the games are always going to be difficult.”

Donnarumma ended up being PSG's savior, diving full length to claw away a powerful shot by Marcus Rashford and a header by Tielemans, and then standing tall to keep out Marco Asensio - a player on loan from PSG - when the playmaker was clean through.

Then, with virtually the last kick of the game, Villa substitute Ian Maatsen sent in a volley that might have been swerving into the bottom corner, only for PSG defender William Pachó to block the shot near the line.

And so for Villa, it marked the end of the road in the club's first European Cup campaign since 1982-83 season - when it was the reigning champion. Now it's all about qualifying again, with Villa sitting in seventh place in the Premier League and a point off the Champions League qualification spots.

“We showed tonight we can compete at the highest level,” Konsa said. “We want to do it again next season.”



PSG's Fabian Ruiz, left, challenges for the ball with Aston Villa's Lucas Digne during the Champions League quarterfinal second leg soccer match between Aston Villa and Paris Saint-Germain at the Villa Park stadium, in Birmingham, England. (AP)

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Orlando Magic forward Paolo Banchemo (5) and Atlanta Hawks forward Dominick Barlow (0) go after a rebound during the first half of an NBA play-in tournament basketball game in Orlando, Fla. Orlando beat the Atlanta Hawks 120-95. (AP) - See Page 15

# Sports

## Kuwait's rising stars rule squash championship

Blues edge Jordan in U-19 final

**KUWAIT CITY, April 16:** Kuwait claimed the overall title at the 29th Arab Squash Championship for youth and juniors, which concluded at the Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah International Squash Center, the headquarters of the Kuwait Squash Federation. Kuwait secured victory in three out of the four competitions held during the tournament.

In the Under-19 youth team category, Kuwait triumphed over Jordan with a 2-1 win in the final. The team featured Jassim Al-Gharib, Abdullah Hani, and Khaled Al-Fawzan. Qatar and Saudi Arabia shared third place. Meanwhile, the Under-19 singles title went to Saudi Arabia's Mohammed Al-Nusfan.

In the Under-15 junior category, Kuwait's Issa Al-Najadah clinched the singles gold after defeating Jordan's Hazem Tariq 3-1.

Teammates Abdullah Mayouf and Saleh Al-Kandari both secured bronze medals in the same event. In the junior team competition, the Kuwaiti trio of Issa Al-Najadah, Abdullah Mayouf, and Salman Al-Saleh defeated Jordan 2-1 to win first place.

Waleed Al-Sumaie, President of both the Kuwait and Arab Squash Federations, praised the significance of this edition, noting it marked a return after a ten-year hiatus due to technical reasons.

He emphasized the tournament's success, particularly for the Kuwaiti team.

Al-Sumaie also highlighted the extensive efforts behind Kuwait's achievements, crediting the players' commitment and the Federation's long-term planning.

He extended gratitude to the Public Authority for Sports for its unwavering support in hosting the championship and helping elevate Kuwait's status in regional squash.



Players celebrate with their trophies after the closing ceremony.

KUNA photo

## Kuwait Paralympic table tennis team returns from Jordan with seven medals



The heroes of International Table Tennis Championship.

**AMMAN, April 16:** The Kuwait Paralympic table tennis team returned with an impressive haul of seven medals, following its participation in the 16th National Club International Table Tennis Championship, held in the Jordanian capital, Amman. The tournament, organized by the Jordanian Paralympic Committee, featured 85 players representing 13 countries across Asia, Africa, and Europe.

Awad Al-Harbi earned silver in the men's doubles and bronze in the mixed doubles categories. Meanwhile, Ahd Al-Rashidi claimed two silver medals in the women's doubles and mixed doubles, as well as a bronze. Mohammed Bin Jabal and Ali Al-Sanea each secured a bronze medal in their respective singles competitions.

Head of the delegation, Duaij Al-Hajri, praised the athletes' strong performances, saying:

"This international championship witnessed intense competition in all categories. Our Kuwaiti champions delivered a remarkable performance, bringing home seven medals. Their success reflects the high technical level of Paralympic table tennis in Kuwait and highlights our responsibility to continue striving for excellence in future regional and continental events."

Al-Hajri also expressed his appreciation to the Kuwait Paralympic Committee and the Public Authority for Sports for their continued support and contributions to the development of Paralympic sports.

## 'Kuwait's shooting facilities are among the best globally'

## Trap finals take center stage in Kuwait

**KUWAIT CITY, April 16:** The final round of the 50-count trap shooting competition for both men and women will take place today as part of the prestigious His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Grand International Shooting Championship. Organized by the Kuwait Shooting Sports Club, the event is being held at the Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex. The women's final is scheduled for 2:00 pm, followed by the men's final at 3:00 pm.

Omani shooter Butti Al-Shabli expressed his enthusiasm for participating in the Amir's Championship for the second consecutive year, citing the tournament's prestige and the elite level of competition.

"Kuwait has world-class shooting ranges, and competing alongside Kuwaiti champions provides valuable experience," said Al-Shabli, who is aiming for a top finish in this year's event.

His teammate, veteran shooter Salib bin Nasser, who has been in the sport for 25 years, echoed similar sentiments.

"Kuwait's shooting facilities are among the best globally. The varied weather conditions actually add to the challenge in a positive way, and competing with world-class athletes only enhances our skills," he added.

Lebanese shooter Elie Bejani, a



Shooters in action during the Amir International Shooting Championship.

past medalist at the 2022 edition, praised the high caliber of competition.

"This is my second time participating. The tournament is tough, and making it to the finals is already a great achievement. I'm determined to earn another medal this year."

His compatriot Ashraf Alloush noted the unique stature of the championship.

"The Amir of Kuwait Champion-

ship stands out from other events because it is hosted at one of the best ranges in the world and attracts top-tier international shooters."

Turkish shooter Nadim Tolga Tolcer highlighted the fierce competition, underscoring the presence of world and Olympic champions.

"The championship is exceptionally well organized. The weather in Kuwait is ideal for shooting, and the level of competition is world-class," Tolcer said.

## Guirassy scores hat trick in vain for Dortmund

## Barcelona advances to Champions League semifinals

**DORTMUND, Germany, April 16, (AP):** Serhou Guirassy and Borussia Dortmund did what no else has been able to in 2025 - they beat Barcelona. It still wasn't enough to reach the Champions League semifinals.

Guirassy scored a hat trick and still ended up on the losing side as Dortmund's 3-1 win over Barcelona - the Spanish club's first defeat of any sort since December - wasn't enough to prevent a 5-3 aggregate loss.

After being swept aside 4-0 in the first leg of the quarterfinal, Dortmund had nothing to lose Tuesday and attacked Barcelona from the start, leaving the visitors off-balance.

Barcelona coach Hansi Flick, who has plenty of experience of facing - and beating - Dortmund from his time in the German league, said the passionate home crowd meant he'd expected a tough second leg despite his team's four-goal lead.

It was an unusually quiet game for Barcelona's prolific forwards Raphinha and Robert Lewandowski, who had 12 and 11 Champions League goals respectively this season.

The closest either came to scoring was a tame shot by Raphinha at Dortmund goalkeeper Gregor Kobel.

Dortmund had arguably lost the quarterfinal in the first leg, and in addition had captain Emre Can and midfielder Carney Chukwuemeka ruled out with injuries earlier in the day.



Barcelona's goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny, right, blocks a shot by Dortmund's Serhou Guirassy, center, during the Champions League quarterfinals second leg soccer match between Borussia Dortmund and Barcelona, at the Signa-Iduna Park in Dortmund, Germany. (AP)

ries earlier in the day.

For a while, Guirassy made the impossible seem

possible.

Guirassy had missed chances in the first leg and

spurned a couple more early in Tuesday's game but made no mistake from the penalty spot in the 11th minute after Barcelona goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny collided with Pascal Gross.

Guirassy's header made it 2-0 in the 49th minute before an own goal by Ramy Bensebaini made Dortmund's task even harder. Fermin Lopez's low cross that in off Bensebaini's ankle - a double disappointment for Dortmund because the defender been crucial in the comeback attempt, assisting Guirassy's second goal shortly before.

Guirassy seized on Ronald Araujo's defensive error to complete his hat trick with a powerful close-range shot in the 76th, in the process becoming the Champions League's top scorer this season on 13 goals.

It gave Dortmund fresh hope of completing what would have been one of the all-time great Champions League comebacks - one to rival Barcelona's against Paris Saint-Germain in 2017 - but Barcelona held on to progress.

As well as being Barcelona's first loss in all competitions since a 2-1 defeat to Atletico Madrid on Dec. 21, it was Barcelona's first Champions League loss since September, and only the seventh loss in Flick's 50 games in charge.

The German coach had won all seven of his previous games against Dortmund in charge of Barcelona and Bayern.