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Amir receives newly-appointed ambassadors, Capital Markets Board

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Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah
Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

MEW needs to learn from neighboring countries

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah
Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

IN my recent article, I wrote "The carpenter's door is always broken". This saying perfectly applies to a number of sectors, most notably the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy.

Despite Kuwait enjoying year-round sunshine, the country fails to harness solar energy for electricity generation and instead burns thousands of barrels of crude oil daily to produce electricity. Since the 1960s, Kuwait has been suffering from recurring power crises and blackouts every summer. Does this make any sense? Wouldn't it be more logical to find a sustainable solution rather than simply accept this ongoing dilemma?

Before each summer every year, discussions about solving this problem resurface. Yet, the scorching heat comes and goes with no real improvement, and thus the same old situation repeats itself.

We keep hearing the same excuses such as interference from MPs, vested interests, influential figures, and the instability of the ministerial post, as if the minister, a holder of the political position, is the one personally "switching on the electricity", or the large workforce at the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy plays no role, or they simply wait around for the minister's directives.

Years ago, the ministry's name was changed to include "Renewable Energy," yet no one has actually seen any sign of that energy, or renewal. What we have seen instead is the same ongoing crisis.

While it is true that political stability at the ministerial level matters, it is not the root cause of the problems in

a service-oriented ministry with a clear and specific mandate.

Since 1991, 25 ministers have taken the helm of the ministry, with some serving for just a month or two.

In other countries, does work come to a halt every time leadership changes? Or is there a stable, well-established system in place?

Even during times of war, there are no power cuts because maintenance and operations continue around the clock. That's why electricity in these countries remains uninterrupted, even in the midst of crises.

Power outages are not a concern in countries like the UK, the United States, or even in smaller nations such as the Comoros and Bahrain.

On the other hand, some countries like Iraq and Syria experience power outages for obvious reasons, primarily security issues. In places like Lebanon and Somalia, the issue stems from corruption, political quotas, and senseless conflicts. So, what exactly is the reason behind Kuwait's persistent electricity problem?

Yes, it is a valid question every citizen has the right to ask. Why does Kuwait continue to face this crisis year after year? Is it because of influential figures or MPs?

Today, there is no National Assembly for the ministry to use as an excuse.

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Light dimmed ... A legacy eternal

World mourns Pope Francis



VATICAN CITY, April 21, (AP) - Pope Francis, history's first Latin American pontiff who charmed the world with his humble style and concern for the poor but alienated conservatives with critiques of capitalism and climate change, died Monday. He was 88.

Bells tolled in churches from his native Argentina to the Philippines and across Rome as news spread around the world.

"At 7:35 this morning, the Bishop of Rome, Francis, returned to the home of the Father. His entire life was dedicated to the service of the Lord and of his Church," Cardinal Kevin Farrell said from the chapel of the Domus Santa Marta, where Francis lived.

Francis, who suffered from chronic lung disease and had part of one lung removed as a young man, was admitted to Gemelli hospital on Feb. 14, 2025, for a respiratory crisis that developed into double pneumonia. He spent 38 days there, the longest hospitalization of his 12-year papacy.

He made his last public appearance on Easter Sunday - a day before his death - to bless thousands of people in St. Peter's Square, drawing wild cheers and applause. Beforehand, he met U.S. Vice President JD Vance.

Francis performed the blessing from the same loggia where he was introduced on March 13, 2013, as the 266th pope.

From his first greeting that night - a remarkably normal "Buonasera" ("Good evening") - to his embrace of refugees and the downtrodden, Francis signaled a very different tone for the papacy, stressing humility over hubris for a Catholic Church beset by scandal and accusations of indifference.

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Pope Francis holds the pastoral staff as he leaves after celebrating a Mass in St. Peter's Basilica, at the Vatican, to mark Epiphany in this Jan. 6, 2014 photo. Pope Francis, history's first Latin American pontiff who charmed the world with his humble style and concern for the poor but alienated conservatives with critiques of capitalism and climate change, died Monday. He was 88. (AP)



Photo by Rezk Tawfiq
Drivers face Monday traffic jam while electronic boards flash reminders of Kuwait's new Traffic Law taking effect on Tuesday.

Stricter Traffic Law hits Kuwait's roads

By Munif Naif
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Ministry of Interior has announced that the implementation of the revised Traffic Law will start on Tuesday, stressing the need to strictly comply with traffic regulations.

In a press statement released by the Public Relations and Security Media

Department on Sunday, the ministry revealed the major amendments; particularly the stipulation allowing law enforcement personnel to apprehend those who violate traffic signals, utilize vehicles for unauthorized purposes or engage in the unlicensed transportation of passengers.

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Two African nationals caught selling counterfeit USD notes

KUWAIT CITY, April 21, (KUNA): The Ministry of Interior announced on Monday that it arrested two African nationals involved in fraudulent activities.

In a press statement, the ministry stated that investigations revealed the suspects were offering counterfeit USD 100 bills at half their actual value, exploiting victims by promoting the idea that these fake bills

could be exchanged for Kuwaiti Dinars to gain fictitious profits.

It added that a well-planned operation led to the suspects being caught red-handed, in possession of evidence proving their involvement.

Legal procedures are currently being completed in preparation for referring them to the competent authorities.

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Drug crimes face death

Kuwait eyes mandatory tests, massive fines and no second chances

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The committee tasked to address procedural loopholes in the Anti-Narcotics Law has submitted its report; which includes a draft law containing amendments aimed at rectifying deficiencies, curbing the spread of drugs, and increasing penalties for related crimes.

Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah formed the committee with Advisor Mohammad Rashid Al-Duaij as chairman.

Following are the important amendments in the draft law:

- Trafficking in narcotics and psychotropic substances is punishable by death penalty and a fine of up to KD2 million, increased from the previous maximum sentence of seven years imprisonment.
- The death penalty applies to individuals who trade in drugs within a prison, as well as those who facilitate or contribute to the introduction of these substances into a prison.

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Language, legacy, logistics: Kuwait-China ties expand

China powers up Kuwait's mega port vision

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei praised the visit of the Chinese delegation, headed by Chinese Vice Minister of Transport Fu Xueyin, to Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port on Bubiyan Island in North Kuwait last week.

The delegation, accompanied by Minister of Public Works Noura Al-Mashaan and Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Ambassador Samih Hayat, described the visit as

an important step toward implementing the agreements reached during the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to China in September 2023.

In a press statement on the sidelines of the celebration of World Chinese Language Day, Jianwei disclosed that the Ministry of Transport and Communications is responsible for implementing the memorandum of understanding regarding Mubarak Port.

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Rain, dust ahead Kuwait's 2025/2026 budget sees modest rise in non-oil revenues

KUWAIT CITY, April 21, (KUNA): Acting Director of the Meteorological Department Dhirar Al-Ali said that Kuwait would be affected on Monday by scattered rain, possibly thunderous at times, with dust-raising winds, low visibility especially in open areas, and high sea waves.

In a statement to KUNA, Al-Ali said that this was a transitional period known as 'Sayarat' season, marked by rapid weather changes, noting that unstable weather was expected to continue intermittently until Tuesday morning.

He urged the public to follow the department's website, application and social media for any weather updates.

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Ministry of Finance has estimated the non-oil revenues from 36 ministries and government agencies at KD242 million in the general budget of the State for fiscal 2025/2026 -- an increase of 1.86 percent compared to the 2024/2025 budget.

The newspaper obtained a copy of the budget report, stating that the estimated revenues in the current budget amounted to KD18.231 billion, including KD15.305 billion oil revenues (83.95 percent of the total revenues); while non-oil revenues amounted to KD2.926 billion or 16.05 percent.

The estimated non-oil revenues for the current budget year include taxes and fees amounting to KD631.26 million or 3.46 percent of the total, KD120 million for social security contributions or 0.66 percent, and other revenues amounting to KD2.068 billion or 11.34 percent.

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NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) has denied the reports circulating on social media with false advertisements about job openings in KAC that include inaccurate details regarding salaries and benefits in various specialties, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The airline stressed the need to rely solely on official sources, its website or verified social media accounts, for accurate information, in order to avoid falling for misleading or fraudulent job offers.

KAC clarified that it has taken the necessary legal action against individuals responsible for publishing or spreading false information that damages the company's reputation and harms the interests of the national carrier.



10 General Assembly of Commercial Real Estate Company approves the distribution of cash dividends of 3% and bonus shares of 3%

Prayer Timings

Fajr	03:53	Asr	15:22
Sunrise ..	05:16	Maghrib ..	18:18
Zohr	11:47	Isha	19:39

Local

Weather

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Rather hot and partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind, with speeds of 15-45 km/h with a chance for rising dust with a chance for rain that might be

thunderly at times.

By Night: Mild and partly cloudy with light to moderate southeasterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-38 km/h.

Station Max Exp Min Rec
Kuwait Airport 35 18

Abdaly	35	18
Jahra	36	21
Salmiyah	30	23
Jal Aliyah	34	19
Nuwaisib	32	17
Wafra	35	17



Amir Diwan photo

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives His Excellency the Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalifa Abdullah Al-Ajl Al-Askar, the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the Capital Markets Authority, and the honorable members.

HH Amir receives Commerce Minister, newly-appointed Capital Markets Board

KUWAIT CITY, April 21, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Monday at Bayan Palace Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya, accompanied by five newly appointed Kuwaiti ambassadors who took their constitutional oaths before His Highness.

their appointment to the CMA board.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also received Minister Al-Ajeel and the CMA board members at Bayan Palace on Monday to mark the board's formation.

Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah received the same delegation on Monday at Bayan Palace, congratulating them on their appointments to the CMA Board of Commissioners.



Amir Diwan photos

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives His Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya and heads of diplomatic missions.

Amir hosts FM, newly-appointed ambassadors

KUWAIT CITY, April 21, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Monday at Bayan Palace Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya, accompanied by five newly appointed Kuwaiti ambassadors who took their constitutional oaths before His Highness.

The ambassadors include Saleh Al-Bannai (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Khaled Al-Yassin (Indonesia), Mohammad Hayati (Sweden), Mohammad Al-Arefan (Armenia), and Meshari Al-Nibari (Philippines). Senior state officials attended the ceremony.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also received Minister Al-Yahya and the five new envoys in a separate meeting attended by senior officials.

Additionally, Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah welcomed Minister Al-Yahya and the newly appointed ambassadors. The meeting was attended by the Head of the Prime Minister's Diwan, Abdulaziz Dakhil Al-Dakhil, and Assistant Foreign Minister for Protocol Affairs, Abdulmohsen Jaber Al-Zaid.

GCC Capital Markets push for deeper integration

Taifuni stresses regulatory upgrades and digital connectivity at the 30th meeting

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of Capital Market Authorities Emad Taifuni has affirmed that significant strides have been made in the realm of collaborative economic endeavors among the Gulf states since the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in the early 1980s.

In his speech while presiding over the 30th meeting of the Committee of Heads of Capital Market Authorities or their equivalent in the Gulf states hosted by Kuwait, Taifuni pointed out that the council has played a pivotal role in advancing the economies of the GCC states and enhancing their standing and competitiveness, both individually and as a unified economic

entity capable of achieving sustainable development, ensuring economic and social stability, and addressing the escalating cross-border challenges and unrest prevalent in various locales.

He said the integration process within the securities and capital markets of the GCC countries has progressed substantially and yielded noteworthy accomplishments.

He elaborated that despite this progress, further concerted efforts are imperative to build upon these achievements and expedite integration among the GCC capital markets. "The objective is to attain the highest level of excellence in their regulatory and supervisory frameworks, culminating in the establishment of electronic connectivity between these markets in order to maximize the advantages of the prevailing digital revolution, especially since market integration is one of the pillars of the requisite comprehensive economic integration," he explained.

Participants at the 30th meeting of the Committee of Heads of Capital Market Authorities or their equivalent in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, under the chairmanship of Kuwait, specifically the chairman of

the Board of Commissioners of the Capital Markets Authority include Assistant Secretary General for Economic and Development Affairs at the Secretariat General of the GCC Khalid Ali Al-Sunaidi, Chief Executive Officer of the Securities and Commodities Authority (United Arab Emirates) Waleed Saeed Al-Awadhi, Director of the Financial Markets Supervision Department at the Central Bank of Bahrain Ali Haroon Al-Amer who represented the Kingdom of Bahrain, Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Capital Market Authority of Saudi Arabia Yousef bin Hamad Al-Blehed, Chief Executive Officer of the Qatar Financial Markets Authority (Qatar) Dr. Tami bin Ahmed Al-Binali, Chief Executive Officer of the Capital Market Authority of the Sultanate of Oman Abdullah bin Salem Al-Salmi, and Deputy Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the Capital Markets Authority of the State of Kuwait Rayan Mohammed Al-Zaid.

The committee deliberated on the Secretariat General's memorandum concerning advancements in the implementation of the Inter-Registration Regulations and methods to expedite the enactment of these regulations and activate the

regulatory framework.

It also reviewed the execution of its resolutions from the 29th meeting, in addition to the executive plan devised by the Secretariat to realize initiatives that will augment coordination among financial market regulators within the GCC countries.

It is pertinent to note that the Capital Markets Authority in Kuwait was established under Law No. 7/2010, pertaining to the Establishment of the Capital Markets Authority and the Regulation of Securities Activities and its amendments, which was ratified by the National Assembly in February 2010.

Pursuant to this law, the Authority is mandated to regulate and supervise securities activities, ensure adherence to the principles of transparency, fairness, and efficiency, and compel listed companies to uphold corporate governance principles and safeguard investors from unethical practices that contravene the Authority's law.

Furthermore, the law stipulates the supervision of mergers, acquisitions, and disclosures. The Authority also endeavors to provide educational programs on securities activities.

Apply by June 12 for research or undergrad study at top Japanese universities

Japan Embassy launches 2026 MEXT scholarship drive for Kuwaitis

KUWAIT CITY, April 21, (KUNA): The Japanese embassy in Kuwait announced on Monday the launch of its government scholarship (MEXT 2026 for Research Students and Undergraduate Students), which allows Kuwaitis to study at Japanese Universities.

According to a press release by the

embassy, the government of Japan was offering a scholarship for Kuwaiti students who wish to study or conduct research at Japanese Universities, registration starts from Thursday, May 1, 2025.

On the qualifications and eligibilities, the embassy revealed that Kuwaiti applicants must be born on or after April 2,

1991 for research students, and April 2, 2001 for undergraduate students.

The embassy went on to say that, "Research student applicants must have completed 16 years of school education, and Undergraduate student applicants must have completed a 12-year school curriculum and have good academic standing."

Adding that, "Applicants must have a good command of English, and willing to learn Japanese language." The embassy revealed that all necessary information and application forms are available through the link: https://www.kw.emb-japan.go.jp/tp/top_en/index.html

It also noted that applications must be

submitted to the Japanese Embassy by hand and after receiving the applications, the embassy would conduct the document screening, written exam in English and Japanese, and personal interview in order to select the scholarship awardee.

The embassy indicated that the deadline for submitting applications was

Thursday, June 12, 2025 at 03:00 P.M., local-time Kuwait.

The Japanese Government Scholarship was established in 1954 in order to increase mutual understanding between the people of Japan and other countries as well as to make an international contribution to the intellectual field.

Other Voices

Lions of the Peninsula and Kuwaiti Penalties

By Ahmad alsarraf

Throughout history, punishments for violators, dissenters, and lawbreakers have taken many forms. With the advancement of civilization and legal systems, these penalties have largely been limited to three main types: fines, imprisonment, and the death penalty. The latter is still actively enforced by countries such as China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Egypt, many U.S. states, Yemen, and Kuwait.

Some countries, like India, Japan, Malaysia, Cuba, and Guyana, have retained the death penalty in law but rarely implement it. Globally, there is a growing movement toward either abolishing the death penalty or restricting its use to only the most heinous crimes or acts of high treason.

However, in Kuwait, there appears to be a unique and unofficial "fourth" form of punishment, one not seen anywhere else in the world, which is the suspension of the civil ID card. Whether done intentionally, by mistake, or due to any other reasons, the suspension of a civil ID effectively erases the individual from society. The affected person becomes physically, legally, and commercially invisible – cut off from their business dealings, financial access, and, in some cases, even their family life.

In Kuwait, perhaps unlike any other country in the world, there exists a unique fourth form of punishment: the suspension of the civil ID card. Whether done intentionally, accidentally, or due to any other reasons, this suspension renders the individual physically, legally, and commercially invisible. Those affected find themselves cut off from their businesses, finances, and in some cases, even their families.

The legal definition and interpretation of life imprisonment varies from one country to another.



alsarraf

to my surprise, I learned that some individuals have spent over 30 years in prison, simply because their case files were lost.

One of the notable achievements of this era has been the implementation of radical reforms, which even extended to the prison system. Pardon programs began to expand, and mercy was shown to many prisoners who had already served the majority of their sentences.

In December 2005, the Court of First Instance issued its verdict in the case of the "Peninsula Lions Cell," involving 37 defendants, including nine fugitives. The court sentenced

six individuals to death, one to life imprisonment, and the remaining defendants to varying prison terms.

In June 2007, the Court of Cassation issued its final ruling in the case, commuting the death sentences of four defendants to life imprisonment and upholding the remaining sentences.

In January 2025, a decision was made to revoke the citizenship of five individuals convicted in connection with the cell. This was part of a measure targeting 38 individuals found guilty in terrorism-related cases, in accordance with a legal provision that allows for the revocation of citizenship from those proven to have engaged in actions contrary to national loyalty.

Personally, I believe, out of compassion, that it is important to expand pardon initiatives and release as many prisoners as possible, especially those who have already served nearly 20 years in prison, provided they have shown remorse for their crimes and proven their righteousness. This is especially relevant considering that their actions can be monitored and managed within specific boundaries. The recent decision to release the seven members of the Peninsula Lions cell may have stemmed from this very perspective.

Each prisoner imposes a huge cost on the public budget. Releasing those who no longer pose a threat, and requiring them to wear a security bracelet for a specific period, would not only save the government substantial financial resources but also reduce effort, and allow these individuals and their families to return to normal life.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Minister of Interior for his efforts in this regard.

□ □ □

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DGCA approves, final licensing under review

Private jet firms await green light

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The concerned officials at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry are currently studying two applications for the establishment of private jet companies, reports Al-Rai daily quoting reliable sources.

Sources revealed that one of the companies will be exclusive for 'high-class' clients -- luxury travel for VIPs; while the other will focus on private flight clients in the economy class, including wealthy individuals and business owners. Sources said both companies will provide their services to individuals and companies.

Sources stated that the two companies have obtained approval from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to offer paid passenger transport services using private jets, apart from regular commercial flights. They explained that following this approval, the files of the two companies were referred to the ministry in order to review the final procedures for their establishment, such as the authorized capital and paid-up capital. They confirmed there is nothing preventing the establishment of the two companies, provided their founders complete the required procedures; indicating that the two licenses are independent from the investor submitting the application.

Sources said one investor has made significant progress in fulfilling the regulatory requirements for a license, and that he has aircraft ready to take off as soon as he obtains the ministry's approval, which is expected to be issued soon. "Discussions are still open with the second investor, whose license is likely to be issued at a later date," sources clarified.

Sources pointed out that if the license

is granted to either of the two companies to operate private aircraft in the local market, it will be the first license granted for private air transport after a five-year hiatus. Sources believe this license will revitalize the private aircraft business in the country.

Sources added if the ministry approves the license, both entities will be established as public shareholding companies. "This is likely to be done in accordance with the model for public subscription previously offered in the country; which stipulates offering 50 percent of the company to citizens and 20 percent to government investment entities, most likely Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA). Sources clarified this point is still subject to legal and procedural debate, and that one of the proposals is for the founder to commit to contributing 10 percent of the company's capital, with the possibility that the capital of the company will be offered for public subscription at a later stage of operations.

Sources said the business model of private aircraft companies is generally directed at the business and financial community; providing private aircraft that specify their destinations according to the customer's request, including landing at private airports.

Regarding the expected list of private jet charter prices the country, sources expect them to be competitive and they could vary greatly -- starting at around \$1,000 per hour up to \$25,000 or more; depending on the type of aircraft, services required, and the duration and route of the flight.

Sources said the establishment of new private jet companies in the country coincides with the current growing demand for private jet travel for business travelers.

The Toxins of Muslim Brotherhood

"WHILE the Muslim Brotherhood's voice continues to be absent from local and regional political developments, particularly in Jordan, an artificial calm, deliberate silence, and declining public interest in all events in Kuwait and elsewhere are noticeable, unlike the Brotherhood's usual practice," Dr. Khaled Ahmad Al-Tarrah wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"The Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait has been keen on leading the political scene in various Arab countries, with the aim of intervening, influencing public opinion and decisions, and simultaneously increasing the dose of political Islam.

"The religiosity and politicization of issues, events, files and conflicts is the specialty of the Muslim Brotherhood. They are cautiously selective and shrewd in seizing opportunities to mix religion with politics and exchange roles, strengthening the social and educational penetration of political Islam and their approach to life.

"The role of the Muslim Brotherhood in political life is not marginal, so we should ignore the margins. Its role sometimes arises at the will of a group of people and through proposals, through the window of the street's pulse, with the aim of achieving a goal and attacking conflicts, disputes, and events of all kinds and types.

"On the margins of questioning democracy, the issue of the Muslim Brotherhood should neither be neglected nor overlooked, and its role and significance should not be underestimated. It relies on the weakness of human memory and the reluctance of official stakeholders to confront and hold them politically and legally accountable, in order to spread its poison!

"Mubarak Al-Duwailah, a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait, wrote an article in a Kuwaiti newspaper more than two decades after the Iraqi invasion, about a message from the Deputy Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood International Organization, Mustafa Mashhour, to the Jeddah Popular Conference, which contradicts reality and the conference documents!

"Mr. Mubarak Al-Duwailah neither presented conclusive evidence of the Brotherhood's international message to the conference nor commented on what I previously published about this subject in the international electronic newspaper, 'Elaph', and on my X account; so that we all benefit from documentation, not fabrication.

"The reference and leader of the Brotherhood in Kuwait, Mr. Mubarak Al-Duwailah, repeated this on Oct 24, 2023, after the 'Al-Aqsa Operation,' by broadcasting allegations about a meeting between HH the late Amir Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah and a Hamas delegation in December 1990 in Jeddah; that is, during the Iraqi invasion!

"I investigated the alleged meeting of the Hamas delegation with Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah, may Allah have mercy on him, from relevant and credible sources and figures in the Council of Ministers and the government during the Iraqi invasion. Everyone who witnessed the Kuwaiti political backstage denied the claim.

"Equally important is a leaked recording broadcasted by Al-Arabiya about another Brotherhood leader, Issam Al-Suwaidan, who talked about 'training 70,000 youths in Sudan'; and about the Brotherhood's 'freedom' to operate in Kuwait, passed without question or investigation!

"Question: Did Mr. Issam Al-Suwaidan's training in Sudan focused on Quran memorization and jurisprudential aspects, or on combat skills or civil disobedience? We do not know!

"Mr. Al-Suwaidan was a member of the Brotherhood delegation that visited Washington during the Iraqi invasion. Al-Suwaidan wanted to meet with representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss the Iraqi invasion, but his wish was not fulfilled. He also sought funding with former Minister and Ambassador Sheikh Saud Al-Sabah (may Allah have mercy on him), and negotiated a deal to obtain '\$50 million, later reduced to \$5 million'!

"The former Minister and Ambassador, my dear brother Sheikh Saud Al-

Sabah (may Allah have mercy on him), testified to these details and provided accurate information in several television interviews, statements and talks in Kuwait and abroad. However, the relevant official authorities failed to take action... to investigate and investigate!

"The Muslim Brotherhood has no other refuge but Kuwait. Will the government learn from the recent terrorist attack in Jordan and the group's direct connection to it?

"I leave the assessment of the importance of reading and investigating these facts and political and security developments to the Ministry of Interior to determine the feasibility of a political and security resolution to the Muslim Brotherhood's poisons in Kuwait and abroad."

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"The head of state in any country views matters from a broader and more strategic perspective, much like someone standing atop a tall tower or mountain. From that elevated vantage point, they can see much more than someone standing at the base. While the person at the bottom may only observe a few cars and the nearby street, the leader sees a vast array of things below and far on the horizon", columnist Ahmad Al-Dawas wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"Similarly, a head of state should not let emotions cloud their judgment. Take the leader of North Korea, for example, who has caused huge harm to his own country. His lack of understanding of economics stands in stark contrast to the rest of the world, which has benefited from the capitalist system and developed accordingly. Even Cuba, once isolated, has begun opening up to the United States. North Korea, however, remains hungry and underdeveloped. Instead of focusing on the well-being of his people, the North Korean leader is busy building missiles and threatening others. He once even declared that he would sink Japan and reduce America to ashes. Such dangerous and reckless statements only further isolate his nation and risk global security.

"A country should be led by a seasoned leader who remains calm and rational, and always considers the long-term interests of the nation. Some heads of state, unfortunately, harm their countries by failing to recognize the opportunity for negotiation and political settlement. True leadership lies in the art of finding solutions and reaching compromises.

"Relations between countries should not be governed by the 'I win, you lose' mentality. Instead, the principle should be 'I win, and you win too.'"

"Successful negotiations require both sides to make concessions. The goal is to reach an outcome where neither party feels like a loser. As a result, the negotiation process often leads one party to say, 'I gave up on A, B, and C, but I gained C, K, and Z.'"

"These concessions, though painful for all parties involved because they are based on the principle of 'give and take,' benefit the state. If Iran had adopted a more diplomatic approach, improved its relationships with its adversaries, and encouraged investments from Arab, American, European, and other nations, it could have prospered in various sectors, achieved significant economic growth, and improved the living standards of its people. Unfortunately, this has not been the case.

"Recently, Hezbollah in Lebanon refused to negotiate regarding its disarmament, which continues to harm the country and its interests. One must ask: do its followers not realize that Lebanon's interests are in line with those of all Lebanese people, and that the Lebanese army should be the sole entity responsible for military affairs?"

Similarly, the Houthis in Yemen, which we consider as a rebel group that emerged from the turmoil of 2011, took up arms against the legitimate government, caused huge damage to Yemen, and disrupted international shipping routes in the Red Sea, including those vital to Egypt. Would it not be in Yemen's best interest for the Houthis to consider negotiations, lay down their weapons, and work toward rebuilding the country?"

— Compiled by Mahmoud Attiyye/Simi K. Kutty



Dr. Al-Tarrah



Al-Dawas

Cassation Court upholds jail terms for ex-MPs in political controversies

Appeal fails in KD10.5K gift case

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Court of Cassation upheld the three-year prison sentence issued by the Court of Appeals against former MP Waleed Al-Tabtabaei in a case filed against him for challenging and interfering with the constitutional powers granted to His Highness the Amir.

The Court of Cassation also sentenced former MP Hamad Al-Alayan to two-year imprisonment, after rejecting his appeal against the Court of Appeals' decision to refrain from pronouncing a penalty for his posts on the X platform that were deemed to challenge the powers of His Highness the Amir.

In another case, the Court of Cassation upheld the two-year prison sentence with hard labor issued against former MP Hussein Al-Qallaf on charges of offending the Amiri entity through a social media post in which he criti-

cized the Ministry of Interior's procedures on the organization of Husseiniyas and the practice of Shiite religious rituals.

The Court of Cassation also upheld the three-year prison sentence issued by the Court of Appeals against former MP Anwar Al-Fikr, after rejecting his appeal against the Court of Appeals' decision to refrain from pronouncing penalty in a case involving interference in the powers of His Highness the Amir, including his statements regarding the appointment of the Prime Minister.

In the same context, the Court of Cassation upheld the Court of Appeal's ruling against former MP Abdullah Fahad, which suspended his six-month prison sentence for three years, with a bail of KD 3,000, on charges related to offending the judiciary.

The Court of Cassation also upheld the Court of Appeal's ruling that sentenced former MP Musaed Al-Quraifa to four years in prison with hard labor on charges of offending the Amir and challenging the Amir's powers during his election campaign.

In another case, the Court of Cassation accepted the Public Prosecution's appeal against the acquittal of former MP Saadoun Hammad and others in a case related to vote-buying in

the 2023 National Assembly elections. The Court of Cassation overturned the acquittal, refrained from pronouncing a sentence, and required the defendants to sign a pledge of three years' good conduct.

Meanwhile, the Family Court of Appeals upheld the ruling of a lower court that dismissed the case filed by a citizen to compel a female compatriot to return KD10,500 in cash and in-kind gifts he gave her during their engagement period. However, the female citizen claimed he did not propose to her.

Case files indicate the citizen demanded for the return of KD10,500 worth of gifts he gave to his female compatriot based on bank transfers and gift receipts. He stated his supposed fiancée is a divorcee, indicating he was surprised when she cut off all contacts with him.

Attorney Mohammed Al-Sayegh, who appeared in court on behalf of the female citizen, said his client denied being engaged to the plaintiff. He indicated they are just friends who exchanged gifts. He requested for dismissal of the case due to lack of factual and legal basis, as well as the absence of the element of debt.

Governors and officials hold coordination meeting

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received several senior officials at his office in Farwaniya Governorate this morning.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, the attendees included Hawally Governor Ali Salem Al-Asfar, Capital Governor Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor Sheikh Sabah Badr Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Director General of the General Administration of Administrative Affairs Sheikh Nasser Mohammed Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, Director of the Fatwa Department at the Ministry of Interior Colonel Omar Al-Ali, Chairman of the Committee for Distributing Support/Subsidy Colonel Khaled Zaben Bu Dhahir, Vice Chairman of the committee Colonel Abdullah Al-Abbad, committee member Colonel Salah Al-Muhaini, and committee member Lieutenant Colonel Fahd Al-Adwani.

During the coordination meeting, discussions centered on the committee's vision for determining spending priorities related to governorate support. They also explored ways to enhance cooperation among the governorates and discussed the common needs that would strengthen their collective role.

The governors stressed the importance of intensifying efforts, maintaining ongoing coordination, and working as a team to achieve the political leadership's vision for advancing



Photo during the coordination meeting.

infrastructure and public facilities, improving service quality, and keeping pace with global developments in public service enhancement.

They also highlighted the need to strengthen cooperation mechanisms between governorates to ensure timely and efficient project completion in accordance with defined schedules.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Governor Sheikh Athbi praised the high spirit of cooperation and consensus that prevailed throughout

the discussions.

He emphasized that such coordination meetings enhance integration and have a positive impact on the development of work in all governorates.

The governor noted that this meeting is an extension of previous gatherings and represents another milestone in boosting collaboration among the governorates to continue giving back and serving Kuwait.

Crackdown on bachelor housing intensifies

By Inaas Awad

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Deputy Director General of Farwaniya and Mubarak Al-Kabeer Municipalities Nawaf Al-Kandari says the municipality's field teams are continuing to intensify inspection campaigns to monitor and deal with violations related to bachelors staying in

private residential areas, as part of efforts to curb this growing issue.

He explained that recent campaigns led to power being disconnected from six violating properties in Rabiya and Firdous. Also, 14 eviction notices were issued to other properties found to be housing bachelors, in violation of municipal laws and regulations.

These measures reflect the municipality's commitment to preserving the residential character of private neighborhoods and ensuring a safe and suitable living environment for families.

Al-Kandari affirmed that inspection campaigns will continue and legal action will be taken against all violators.

News in Brief

411 residency violators arrested in crackdown

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The General Department of Residence Affairs Investigations carried out intensive security campaigns in various governorates from April 13 to 17, which resulted in the arrest of 411 violators who have been referred to the relevant authorities for legal action, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The Ministry of Interior affirmed its keenness to strictly enforce the law against all violators, stressing that responsibility lies with both the worker and the employer for maintaining public security and upholding the rule of law.

The ministry urged the public to cooperate with security personnel and report any violations, stressing that adherence to the law is a shared responsibility that plays a vital role in ensuring the safety and stability of society.

□ □ □

Temporary road closures: The General Traffic Department has announced the closure of the secondary exit on Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al-Saud Road (Fahaheel Road) toward Sabahiya, as well as the entrance leading to the Fahaheel Club intersection on Road 212, from Sunday evening and to May 4, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

□ □ □

Egaila substation blast injures 2: An explosion in Egaila's main substation led to the injury of two engineers conducting periodic maintenance, and resulting in a power outage in all parts of the Egaila area, said the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy in a statement, Monday.

Ministry spokesperson eng. Fatima Johar Hayat said in a press release that the injured were immediately transferred to Al-Adan Hospital.

The statement added that Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Sabeeh Al-Mukhaizeem and Undersecretary Dr. Adel Al-Zamel were present at the accident site to inspect and assess the damage.

Emergency teams of Kuwait Fire Force and the Ministry of Interior were immediately at the site as well and took all necessary measures to contain the situation and ensure safety of the workers.

Undersecretary Al-Zamel directed the formation of a specialized investigation committee to determine the causes of the accident, and take legal action against any proven faults in this matter. (KUNA)

Safety concerns prompt legal action

PAAAFR cracks down on illegal camel grazing along Kabd Road

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) has announced that it has identified several camel herders violating the law by allowing their camel to graze in areas outside the designated zones along Kabd Road, from Al-Farda Roundabout to the Police Station Roundabout, as well as adjacent roads.

PAAAFR explained that such behavior threatens the safety of both citizens and road users, and necessary legal actions were taken against the violators. They were made to sign pledges not to repeat

the offense and to fully comply with the designated grazing areas, in accordance with Law No. 41/1988 on livestock grazing, and the decision of the Municipal Affairs Committee regarding the allocation of grazing areas.

The permitted grazing areas extend from Abdali in the north, along the western side of Abdali Road, merging into Al-Salmi Road, and continue south to the Wafra area and the southern international border.

The authority affirmed that prohibited areas, such as oil fields, pipeline routes, military bases, army installations, residential areas, and agricultural beautification projects, must be avoided.

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Project in Shuwaikh set to include advanced specifications

CAPT approves KD25.75 mln tender for new SAB building

By **Mohammad Ghanem**
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) has approved the request of the Ministry of Public Works to award the contract for the construction of the

State Audit Bureau (SAB) northern building at a cost of KD25.75 mln.

This decision was taken upon completion of procedural requirements and submission of an assessed budgetary allocation.

Reliable sources said this project is a vital construction endeavor to be

undertaken by the ministry for SAB -- one of the governmental entities whose infrastructure projects are executed by the Construction Projects Sector in the ministry.

Sources disclosed that the new building will incorporate a range of sophisticated technical and engi-

neering specifications designed to effectively address the operational requirements of SAB.

Sources also confirmed the completion of the comprehensive study and design of the building that will be located in Shuwaikh Administrative Area on land measuring 10,000

square meters.

Sources stated that the new building mirrors the existing structure; indicating it will include eight storeys, two basement levels, two storeys on top of the adjacent existing parking structure and a connecting bridge to the current building.

Sources added the ministry will complete all outstanding requirements stipulated by the agency, formulate an assessed budgetary allocation, finalize procedural steps to refer the tender to SAB for preliminary review and approval, and then start the implementation of the project.



Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi with UAE's Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Matar Al-Neyadi. KUNA photo

Kuwait, UAE boost healthcare cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, April 21, (KUNA): Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi discussed on Sunday with UAE's Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Matar Al-Neyadi strengthening healthcare ties and exploring cooperation avenues.

Following the meeting, attended by assistant undersecretary for external health services Dr. Hisham Kalandar, Al-Awadhi affirmed the Ministry's commitment to building an advanced healthcare system through international partnerships,

especially with GCC countries. He also highlighted the Ministry's goal of enhancing medical expertise exchange and improving healthcare services according to highest global standards, according to a ministry statement.

MoE guarantees benefits for revoked-citizenship women

Ministry finalizing new contracts

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Ministry of Education has started implementing the decisions of the Council of Ministers and the Civil Service Commission (CSC) on amending the status of female employees whose Kuwaiti citizenship was revoked in accordance with Article Eight of Nationality Law No. 15/1959 and its amendments.

In coordination with the relevant

sectors, the ministry is currently finalizing new employment contracts that guarantee the continuation of financial and other employment benefits for these women; similar to those enjoyed by their Kuwaiti colleagues like vacation days, allowances, bonuses and incentives.

This is in line with a governmental directive to make sure that the employment rights of these women are not neglected during the performance of their duties.

Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Administrative Affairs and Administrative Development Mansour Al-Dhafiri issued a directive to all sectors in the ministry to follow up the amendment of the status of

these employees, based on letters from the Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers and the CSC. He underscored the need to implement such decisions and circulate them to the concerned educational authorities.

The decision is in response to the letter of Secretary General of the Council of Ministers Saleh Al-Mulla to Minister of Education Dr. Jalal Al-Tabtabaei. The newspaper obtained a copy of the letter, which emphasized the necessity of adhering to Council of Ministers Resolution No. 67 issued in its Meeting No. 3/2025; indicating all government agencies must amend the status of these employees to ensure they continue to receive financial and other employment benefits.

PAM opens Kuwaitization jobs in MoH

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) has announced job opportunities in the Ministry of Health's Kuwaitization program under the "Hospital Nutrition Contracts," aimed at supervising the ministry's cleaning staff,

reports Al-Rai daily.

It affirmed that applications for Kuwaiti nationals will be accepted from April 24 to May 8.

PAM stated that the positions are open to both men and women, provided they hold a high school di-

ploma and are between the ages of 18 and 35.

The monthly salary is KD 400, in addition to the national labor subsidy. Work will be conducted in morning and evening shifts, six days a week, with one day off.

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Other Voices



His Holiness Pope Francis

The Legacy of Pope Francis

By **Nasser Al-Hajeri**

The world mourns the passing of His Holiness Pope Francis, a beloved spiritual leader who guided the Roman Catholic Church with humility, wisdom, and unwavering dedication to the Gospel. Born Jorge Mario Bergoglio in Buenos Aires, Argentina, he made history as the first pope from the Americas and the first Jesuit to be elected to the papacy. From the moment he stepped onto the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica in March 2013, Pope Francis captured the hearts of millions with his simple greeting, "Buona sera."



Al-Hajeri

Throughout his papacy, Pope Francis embodied a deep commitment to the poor, the vulnerable, and the forgotten. He chose simplicity over grandeur, famously residing in the modest Vatican guesthouse instead of the traditional papal apartments. He often reached out to those on the margins of society, visiting prisons, refugee camps, and impoverished communities, always emphasizing the dignity of every human life.

Just one day before his passing, Pope Francis appeared at the Easter Sunday service, greeting the faithful from the Vatican. His brief but heartfelt presence offered comfort and continuity to many, even as concerns for his health lingered quietly in the background. One of the most enduring aspects of his legacy is his call for a Church of the poor and for the poor. He tirelessly advocat-

ed for social justice, calling on world leaders to address poverty, inequality, and the exploitation of natural resources. His 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'* was a powerful appeal to care for creation, reminding the world that stewardship of the environment is a moral responsibility and a spiritual duty.

In recent months, he also made headlines for his heartfelt concern for Gaza. He remained in regular contact with a parish there and repeatedly called for an end to the violence, urging the international community to act in the name of peace and human dignity. His voice was one of the few at the global level to speak with such urgency and clarity about the humanitarian crisis unfolding there.

Pope Francis will be remembered for his deep humanity and his rare ability to connect with people from all walks of life. He often spoke about the importance of kindness, understanding, and truly listening to others, especially those who felt overlooked or voiceless. His leadership was marked by empathy, humility, and sincerity, which earned him respect across cultures and communities. Whether meeting with world leaders or greeting everyday people, he left a lasting impression as someone who genuinely cared. His legacy is one of compassion, simplicity, and a steady reminder to treat others with dignity and respect.

As the world reflects on his passing, tributes from across the globe highlight the profound impact of his life and leadership. Pope Francis will be remembered not only as a global figure but as a man of humility, courage, and deep compassion. His words and actions touched countless lives, and his legacy will continue to inspire generations to come. May he rest in peace.

DGCA under fire over KD200m tender

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Directorate General for Civil Aviation's (DGCA) tender documents for the supply, installation and operation of a passenger registration and early information system for border security have raised serious concerns over a potential conflict of interest, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Sources told the daily that the documents included specifications and references that align closely with the systems and equipment of a company participating in the bid; suggesting the tender may have been tailored to favor that company.

Sources said the tender is intended to award a specialized firm a comprehensive 10-year contract to manage, operate and provide training for the passenger system, with an estimated project value ranging from KD150 million to KD200 million.

Sources revealed that the documents contain technical terminology and product descriptions uniquely associated with one of the bidders. "In a further indication of bias, the documents also featured direct links to the company's services to clarify certain requirements and definitions—raising red flags among other participants," sources said.

Continued from Page 1

MEW needs

The government holds both legislative and executive powers. There is no one left for the government to clash with or blame. Tenders are fully under its control, and ministerial positions have been stabilized. So what excuses are left for the government to hide behind?

Have things become so entangled that no official is even considering a practical solution, let alone working to implement one?

Isn't there anyone willing to learn from other countries that have successfully entrusted production, maintenance, and bill collection to specialized companies?

Why don't we see power outages in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, or Qatar? Isn't it painfully obvious that the root of this issue is poor management?

In many countries, even those with limited resources, their governments have started generating electricity from solar energy and have facilitated the procedures for their citizens to obtain it. So why isn't solar energy widely available to everyone in Kuwait? Why can't owners of large and small homes and residential buildings use it for lighting, heating water, and running air conditioners for free, while conserving crude oil and gas for export instead?

The solution is simple. It requires nothing but strong will, sound decision-making, and a bit of common sense to tackle a chronic issue. I stress once again that the answer lies in studying the experiences of neighboring countries, as well as those in Europe and even Africa.

As the old saying goes, "Your knowledge is your capital, and your number one enemy is ignorance." There is no shame in learning from others' experiences.

Kuwait's 2025/2026

The report added that non-oil revenues include KD106 million asset disposal revenues and other non-operating revenues or 0.59 percent of the total.

Drug crimes

The death penalty extends to any employee who exploits his professional position to engage in the trafficking of narcotics or psychotropic substances.

Distribution of narcotics or psychotropic substances to two or more individuals — without compensation — for the purpose of consumption or promotion, warrants the death penalty.

Soliciting a service or benefit —

whether lawful or unlawful — in exchange for delivering narcotics or psychotropic substances to another for consumption, or promising to do so, is punishable by death.

Drug and psychotropic substance testing is now mandated for prospective spouses, driving license applicants and public job candidates.

Random drug and psychotropic substance testing will be conducted for all military personnel, regardless of rank, in the ministries of Interior and Defense, National Guard and Kuwait Fire Force (KFF).

Random testing for drugs and psychotropic substances will be carried out on all students in schools, institutes and universities.

Refusal to undergo testing without a valid reason, excluding marriage applicants and students, is punishable by up to four years imprisonment.

Penalties for drug use within prisons, schools and health clubs have been increased.

Penalties for individuals who commit violent crimes or cause harm while under the influence of drugs or psychotropic substances have been increased.

Police officers are authorized to make immediate arrests upon suspicion of drug use.

Association with drug users, even without personal use, is punishable by three years imprisonment.

Incitement of others to use drugs warrants a three-year prison sentence.

Physicians who dispense psychotropic substances without legitimate medical justification are subject to three years imprisonment.

Pharmacies that fail to secure psychotropic substances will be fined up to KD100,000. The court may order the closure of a violating pharmacy for up to five years.

Confidential reporting of drug users is available through modern electronic channels, with the potential for involuntary placement in a rehabilitation center for up to six months.

Criminal proceedings will not be initiated against individuals who voluntarily seek treatment for addiction.

The Minister of Health retains the authority to suspend any physician who violates regulations concerning the handling of narcotics or psychotropic substances.

Financial rewards will be given to those who report information regarding drug users.

Wearing apparel or carrying publications that promote the use of narcotics or psychotropic substances will result in a fine.

All judgments rendered in drug-related cases are subject to immediate execution.

Coercing another individual or providing another with narcotics

or psychotropic substances without their consent warrants a 15-year prison sentence, with the possibility of the death penalty if the victim is convicted.

Stricter Traffic

Furthermore, the new law also authorizes the enforcers to nab those driving in a reckless, negligent or dangerous manner; driving without or with an invalid license or driving a vehicle without registration plates.

It allows the arrest of those driving under the influence of intoxicating substances, those causing accidents resulting in injury or fatality, those participating in unauthorized vehicular races, individuals attempting to evade responsibility following an accident causing harm, and those who disregard a lawful order to stop.

Arrests may also take place for those exceeding speed limits by more than 50 kilometers per hour or driving recreational vehicles in unauthorized areas.

The new law stipulates significant fine increases as follows:

Running a red light: increased from KD50 to KD150

Parking on spaces designated for persons with disabilities: increased from KD10 to KD150

Using a mobile phone while driving: increased from KD5 to KD75

Non-compliance with seat belt regulations: increased from KD10 to KD30

Reckless driving: increased from KD30 to KD150

Certain offenses are deemed non-reconcilable and will be referred to the appropriate judicial authority. These are categorized into three tiers:

The first category includes those driving a vehicle under the influence of alcohol, drugs or psychotropic substances, with fines ranging from KD1,000 to KD 3,000 and imprisonment from one to two years.

The second category addresses incidents involving driving under the influence and causing property damage, with fines between KD 2,000 and KD 3,000, and imprisonment from one to three years.

The third category concerns driving under the influence resulting in personal injury or fatality, with fines ranging from KD 2,000 to KD 5,000, and imprisonment from two to five years.

The affirmed these augmented penalties aim to enhance road safety and safeguard all road users. Citizens and expatriates are strongly advised to exercise due diligence and adhere to all regulations to avert penalties and familiarize themselves with the details of these amendments.

An ongoing public awareness

campaign complements the implementation of this revised legislation to inform the public about the major amendments and reinforce traffic safety and security measures.

Meanwhile, the General Traffic Department (GTD) at the Interior Ministry continued its traffic campaigns in various governorates.

The campaigns carried out last week resulted in the issuance of 51,759 traffic violation citations, impoundment of six vehicles, arrest of 47 individuals, and referral of 58 juveniles to the Juvenile Prosecution for driving without a license.

The weekly statistics of GTD showed the impoundment of 56 wanted vehicles, and arrest of 66 individuals wanted by law for involvement in criminal and civil cases, and 37 individuals who violated the Residency Law.

The statistics also indicated that the department dealt with 1,204 traffic accidents, some of which led to 286 injuries.

Two African

The Ministry affirmed its continued pursuit of anyone attempting to undermine security and urged everyone to remain vigilant and not fall victim to fraudulent schemes aimed at achieving illegal gains.

China powers

He affirmed this is a massive and strategic project for Kuwait, and a very important project for Chinese-Kuwaiti cooperation.

He stated "we are currently working with the Kuwaiti side to accelerate the pace of work to push the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project to a new and advanced stage. The inspection tour conducted by the Vice Minister of Transport is a very important step towards the continuity of the project."

He added that Al-Mashaan met with the Chinese delegation to advance this project smoothly. "The two sides reached an agreement to accelerate the pace of work," he reiterated.

He said the Chinese company has entered Mubarak Port to begin marine survey work, indicating that the arrival of the Chinese delegation in Kuwait reflects the commitment of the Chinese side to cooperate with Kuwait.

On the timeframe for the completion of the project, he explained that the project is huge; hence, it requires a long time and several stages. "Through intensive coordination between the two sides, we are confident that this project will be completed as per the desire of both sides," he

stressed.

He also praised the relationship between the two countries, which is at its best, having witnessed numerous achievements through their concerted efforts. He expressed optimism about the future of such cooperation.

On the impact of US tariffs (the 'trade war') on the global economy, he said the actions of US President Donald Trump are causing chaos throughout the world. These actions contradict the free trade system. He affirmed that the Chinese side does not want escalation or a trade war with the US. "If the US wants to negotiate, we welcome such negotiations, and if they want to continue a trade war, we are also prepared," he asserted.

World mourns

The Argentine-born Jorge Mario Bergoglio brought a breath of fresh air into a 2,000-year-old institution that had seen its influence wane during the troubled tenure of Pope Benedict XVI, whose surprise resignation led to Francis' election.

But Francis soon invited troubles of his own, and conservatives grew increasingly upset with his progressive bent and crackdown on traditionalists. His greatest test came in 2018 when he botched a notorious case of clergy sexual abuse in Chile, and the scandal that festered under his predecessors erupted anew.

And then Francis, the crowd-loving, globe-trotting pope of the peripheries, navigated the unprecedented reality of leading a universal religion through the coronavirus pandemic from a locked-down Vatican City.

"We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented," Francis told an empty St. Peter's Square in March 2020. Calling for a rethink of the global economic framework, he said the pandemic showed the need for "all of us to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other."

World leaders on Monday extolled Francis' commitment to the marginalized. French President Emmanuel Macron, whose country is largely Catholic, wrote on X: "From Buenos Aires to Rome, Pope Francis wanted the church to bring joy and hope to the poorest. ... May this hope forever outlast him."

Flags flew at half-staff in Italy, and crowds gathered in St. Peter's Square. When the great bells of St. Peter's Basilica began tolling, tourists stopped in their tracks to record the moment on their phones.

Johann Xavier, who traveled from Australia, hoped to see the pope during his visit. "But then we heard

about it when we came in here. It pretty much devastated all of us," he said.

Francis' death sets off a week-long process of allowing the faithful to pay their final respects, first for Vatican officials in the Santa Marta chapel and then in St. Peter's for the general public, followed by a funeral and a conclave to elect a new pope.

Stressing mercy, Francis changed the church's position on the death penalty, calling it inadmissible in all circumstances. He also declared the possession of nuclear weapons, not just their use, was "immoral."

In other firsts, he approved an agreement with China over bishop nominations that had vexed the Vatican for decades, met the Russian patriarch and charted new relations with the Muslim world by visiting the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq.

He reaffirmed the all-male, celibate priesthood and upheld the church's opposition to abortion, equating it to "hiring a hit man to solve a problem."

But he added women to important decision-making roles and allowed them to serve as lectors and acolytes in parishes. He let women vote alongside bishops in periodic Vatican meetings, following longstanding complaints that women do much of the church's work but are barred from power.

Sister Nathalie Becquart, whom Francis named to one of the highest Vatican jobs, said his legacy was a vision of a church where men and women existed in a relationship of reciprocity and respect.

"It was about shifting a pattern of domination - from human being to the creation, from men to women - to a pattern of cooperation," said Becquart, the first woman to hold a voting position in a Vatican synod.

Still, a note of criticism came Monday from the Women's Ordination Conference, which had been frustrated by Francis' unwillingness to push for the ordination of women.

"His repeated 'closed door' policy on women's ordination was painfully incongruous with his otherwise pastoral nature, and for many, a betrayal of the synodal, listening church he championed. This made him a complicated, frustrating, and sometimes heart-breaking figure for many women," the statement said.

While Francis did not allow women to be ordained, the voting reform was part of a revolutionary change in emphasizing what the church should be: a refuge for everyone - "todos, todos, todos" ("everyone, everyone, everyone"). Migrants, the poor, prisoners and outcasts were invited to his table far more than presidents or powerful CEOs.

- See Also Page 6

Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning

وزارة الإسكان والتخطيط العمراني

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning would like to announce the tender for the following works :

Tender Title	Tender No.	Tender Bond	Documentation Fee	Closing Date & Time	
Completion of Construction of 507 Villas & Its Associated External Works in Village A2 & A3 Madinat Al Hidd Housing Project in the Kingdom of Bahrain funded through the Kuwait Grant under the GCC Development Program to the Kingdom of Bahrain.	HP / 02/ 24	BD 30,000/-	BD 100/-	Wednesday, 25 th June, 2025	1:30 PM (Bahrain local time)

- Suitably eligible and qualified contractors are invited to participate in the above-mentioned Tender Package. Eligibility to participate shall be given to Kuwaiti Grade 'A' Contractor registered with the Kuwaiti Central Tender Committee; and Contractors registered in Bahrain either a Housing or a Building Contractor in a Joint Venture with any Kuwaiti Eligible Contractor. Full details of the tenderer's eligibility and qualification criteria are provided in the Invitation for Qualification document.
- This is a public tender whereby the qualification of tenderers is combined with the submission of their technical and financial proposals. Full details are provided in the Invitation for Qualification Document no. QD-EHH-HP-2024 attached to the tender package. This tender is a two-envelope tender and the qualification & technical bids will be opened first and the financial bid of technically qualified tenderers only will be opened later.
- This tender is advertised through the Bahrain Tender Board E-Tendering System and eligible contractors who wish to participate for above mentioned Project shall have to purchase and download the Documents online through the Bahrain Tender Board's portal <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.bh>. The tender documents shall be available for purchase and download beginning from Wednesday, 16th April 2025 up to Wednesday, 11th June 2025.
- Contractors who are not yet registered in the Bahrain Tender Board's e-tendering system shall be required to register through the below-mentioned link. Details of registration are provided online at the Bahrain Tender Board website. For technical assistance please contact the Tender Board through email address helpdesk@tenderboard.gov.bh or call on Tel No. + 973 - 17566666.

<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.bh/Tenders/registerUser>

- The completed Tender which comprise of the Application for Qualification, Technical and Financial Proposal documents shall be submitted online in accordance with the Instruction to Tender and the E-Tendering Guidelines of the Bahrain Tender Board. The Tenderer should include and enclose in his offer the Tender Bond for the amount specified above. The Tender Bond should be in the form and manner as prescribed in the tender document valid for 180 days from the closing date.
- This Tender is in accordance with the provision of the Kingdom of Bahrain's Law Regulating Government Tenders & Purchases No. (36) of 2002 and Its Implementing Regulations issued by Decree No. (37) of 2002; and is subjected to the Unified Rules for Giving Priority to National Products and Products of a National Origin (Article 8, Prime Ministerial Edict No. 21 of 1987).

For any query regarding the invitation, please contact:
 Cost Engineering Section, Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, P.O. Box 5802, Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain, Tel. No.: +97317533000 - ext.519,
 Email: Chandramohan.Krishnapilla@housing.gov.bh.

This advertisement shall be a supplementary to the Tender Documents.

Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning

وزارة الإسكان والتخطيط العمراني

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning would like to announce the tender for the following works:

Tender Title	Tender No.	Tender Bond	Documentation Fee	Closing Date & Time	
Contract Management & Site Supervision for Construction and Completion of 507 Villa in Madinat Al Hidd - Village A2 & A3 in Kingdom of Bahrain funded through the Kuwait Grant under the GCC Development Program to the Kingdom of Bahrain	HP / 03/ 24	BD 10,000/-	BD 100/-	Wednesday, 25 th June, 2025	1:30 PM (Bahrain local time)

- Suitably eligible and qualified consultants are invited to participate in the Tender. Eligibility to participate shall be given to Kuwaiti Category A Consultants registered with the Kuwaiti Central Tender Committee; and Consultants registered in Bahrain should be licensed as Category A with the Council for Regulating the Practice of Engineering Professions (CRPEP), Kingdom of Bahrain in a Joint Venture with any Kuwaiti Eligible Consultant. Full details of the tenderer's eligibility and qualification criteria are provided in the Invitation for Qualification document.
- This is a public tender whereby the qualification of tenderers is combined with the submission of their technical and financial proposals. Full details are provided in the Invitation for Qualification Document no. QD/EHH/S-HP/2024 attached to the tender package. This tender is a two-envelope tender and the qualification & technical bids will be opened first and the financial bid of technically qualified tenderers only will be opened later.
- This tender is advertised through the Bahrain Tender Board E-Tendering System and eligible consultants who wish to participate for above mentioned Project shall have to purchase and download the Documents online through the Bahrain Tender Board's portal <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.bh>. The tender documents shall be available for purchase and download beginning from Wednesday, 16th April 2025 up to Wednesday, 11th June 2025.
- Consultants who are not yet registered in the Bahrain Tender Board's e-tendering system shall be required to register through the below-mentioned link. Details of registration are provided online at the Bahrain Tender Board website. For technical assistance please contact the Tender Board through email address helpdesk@tenderboard.gov.bh or call on Tel No. +973 - 17566666.

<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.bh/Tenders/registerUser>

- The completed Tender which comprise of the Application for Qualification, Technical and Financial Proposal documents shall be submitted online in accordance with the Instruction to Tender and the E-Tendering Guidelines of the Bahrain Tender Board. The Tenderer should include and enclose in his offer the Tender Bond for the amount specified above. The Tender Bond should be in the form and manner as prescribed in the tender document valid for 180 days from the closing date.
- This Tender is in accordance with the provision of the Kingdom of Bahrain's Law Regulating Government Tenders & Purchases No. (36) of 2002 and Its Implementing Regulations issued by Decree No. (37) of 2002; and is subjected to the Unified Rules for Giving Priority to National Products and Products of a National Origin (Article 8, Prime Ministerial Edict No. 21 of 1987).

For any query regarding the invitation, please contact:
 Cost Engineering Section, Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, P.O. Box 5802, Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain, Tel. No.: +97317533000 - ext.519,
 Email: Chandramohan.Krishnapilla@housing.gov.bh.

This advertisement shall be a supplementary to the Tender Documents.

Election shrouded in secrecy

What are the church's rites after death of pope and election of a new one?

VATICAN CITY, April 21. (AP): The death of a pope starts a centuries-old ritual involving sacred oaths by the cardinals electing a successor, the piercing of ballots with a needle and thread after they're counted, and then burning them to produce either the white or black smoke to signal if there's a new leader for the world's 1.3 billion Catholics.

The election itself is shrouded in secrecy, with cardinals forbidden from communicating with the outside world what happened during the voting in the conclave behind the frescoed walls of the Sistine Chapel.

St. John Paul II rewrote the regulations on papal elections in a 1996 document that remains largely in force, though Pope Benedict XVI amended it twice before he resigned. Here is what happens when a pope dies, a period known as the "sede vacante," or the "vacant See."

If the pope has died, the camerlengo, or chamberlain, must certify the death and seal the papal apartment. He runs administrative and financial duties of the Holy See until a new pope takes over.

The largely ceremonial job of camerlengo is currently held by Cardinal Kevin Farrell, the Irish-born American head of the Vatican's laity office.

Nearly all prefects of Vatican offices lose their jobs when a pope dies, but a few stay on, including the foreign minister and the master of liturgical ceremonies, who plays a key role in assembling the conclave.

The dean of the College of Cardinals summons the cardinals for the funeral, presiding at the Mass before the conclave begins. That position is currently held by Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, the retired head of the Vatican's office for bishops.

In November 2024, Francis reformed the rites to be used for his funeral, simplifying them to emphasize his role as a mere bishop and allowing for burial outside the Vatican. Francis has chosen to be buried in St. Mary Major Basilica, where his favorite icon of the Virgin Mary, the Salus Populi Romani, is located.

The death of a pope begins a precise sequence of events that include the confirmation of death in the pontiff's home, the transfer of the coffin to St. Peter's Basilica for public viewing, a funeral Mass and burial. Interment must take place between the fourth and sixth day after his death.

After the funeral, there are nine days of official mourning, known as the "novendiali."

During this period, the cardinals arrive in Rome. To give everyone time to assemble, the conclave must begin 15-20 days after the "sede vacante" is declared, although it can start sooner if the cardinals agree.

Only cardinals under age 80 are eligible, and current regulations limit the num-



The dome of St. Peter's Basilica seen through the Bernini colonnade at the Vatican, after Cardinal Camerlengo Kevin Joseph Farrell announced the death of Pope Francis on April 21. (AP)

ber of electors to 120. According to the most recently updated Vatican statistics, there were 135 cardinals under age 80 and eligible to vote, though that number may change before the conclave begins.

Those over 80 can't vote but can participate in pre-conclave meetings, known as general congregations, in which church problems are discussed. It was in these meetings in 2013 that then-Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio spoke about the need for the church to go to the "existential peripheries" to find those who suffer - an off-the-cuff speech that helped his election.

Any baptized Roman Catholic male is eligible to be pope, but since 1378, only cardinals have been selected. Some current leading candidates:

■ Cardinal Pietro Parolin of Italy, 70, Francis' secretary of state and a veteran Vatican diplomat.

■ Cardinal Marc Ouellet of Canada, 80, head of the Vatican's bishops office from 2010 to 2023.

■ Cardinal Christoph Schoenborn of Austria, 80, a student of Pope Benedict XVI, and thus ostensibly having appeal for conservatives.

■ Cardinal Luis Tagle of the Philippines, 67, brought by Francis to head the Vatican's massive missionary office.

■ Cardinal Matteo Zuppi of Italy, 69, a Francis protégé who headed the Italian bishops conference.

A first ballot is held in the Sistine Chapel on the afternoon after the initial Mass. If no pope is elected, over the ensuing days two ballots are held each morning and two each afternoon.

The ballots are rectangular pieces of paper with the words: "Eligo in Summum Pontificem" ("I elect as supreme pontiff") written on top, with a space for a name. Each cardinal makes his choice, folds the paper in half, walks to the front of the chapel.

He then puts the ballot on a tray and tips it into a receptacle.

Three designated cardinals, known as scrutineers, check each ballot to see if it is filled out correctly. Each name is read aloud and counted, with the results announced to the conclave after each round.

If no one gets the needed two-thirds of votes, the ballots are pierced with a needle and thread, which is then knotted and placed on a tray, and another round of voting is prepared.

Benedict modified some of John Paul's 1996 conclave rules, most notably excluding his vision that a pope could be elected by a simple majority if voting was stalemated. Benedict decreed that a two-thirds majority is always needed, no matter how long it takes. He did so to prevent cardinals from holding out for the 12 days foreseen by John Paul and then pushing through a candidate with a slim majority.

Benedict also tightened the oath of secrecy in the conclave, making clear that anyone who reveals what went on inside faces automatic excommunication.

In John Paul's rules, excommunication was always a possibility, but Benedict revised the oath that liturgical assistants and secretaries take to make it explicit, saying they must observe "absolute and perpetual secrecy" and explicitly refrain from using any audio or video recording devices.

Cardinals also are bound by secrecy, although the threat of excommunication only hangs over them explicitly if they are found to have accepted payment for their vote, allowed secular powers to influence it, or entered into pacts with other cardinals to back a candidate.

Tornado-producing storm deals deadly weather to Oklahoma, Texas

WASHINGTON, April 21. (AP): A slow-moving, active storm system brought heavy rain, large hail and tornadoes to parts of Texas and Oklahoma and left three people dead as severe weather warnings Sunday continue to threaten parts of the south-central and Midwest U.S.

On Easter Sunday, communities in Texas and Oklahoma were beginning to assess the damage wreaked by tornadoes. There were 17 reported events Saturday, according to Bob Oravec, lead forecaster with the National Weather Service's Weather Prediction Center. Five were confirmed in south-central Oklahoma, including one that inflicted substantial damage on a small town that was still recovering from a March tornado.

The storm also brought heavy rain to a broad swath of north-central Texas across central-eastern Oklahoma, much of which saw 2 to 4 inches (5 to 10 centimeters) accumulate Saturday into Sunday.

Police in Moore, about 10 miles (16 kilometers) south of Oklahoma City, received dozens of reports of "high-water incidents" over the weekend, including two cars stranded in flood waters Saturday evening.

One car was swept away under a bridge, and police said they were able to rescue some people, but a woman and 12-year-old boy were found dead. "This was a historical weather event



Debris covers the ground after severe storms passed the area in Ada, Okla on April 19. (AP)

that impacted roads and resulted in dozens of high-water incidents across the city," Moore police said in a statement Sunday. Moore has about 63,000 residents.

The storm also killed one person about 80 miles (129 kilometers) farther southeast after a tornado touched down in Spaulding, according to the Hughes County Emergency Management.

The department wrote on Facebook that several homes and structures were destroyed and there were "numerous washouts" of county roads.

Anti-Trump resistance sees another leader in Van Hollen

NEW YORK, April 21. (AP): Now, it's Chris Van Hollen's turn.

The mild-mannered Maryland senator has suddenly emerged as a leading figure in the resistance to Donald Trump's norm-busting presidency, becoming the latest in a small but growing collection of Democratic officials testing the strength of their political power in a weakened party with no clear leader.

Van Hollen's rise follows his decision to travel 2,000 miles to El Salvador last week to meet with Kilmor Abrego Garcia, who was wrongly deported and federal courts have said should be returned.

Van Hollen did not secure the release of the Salvadoran citizen who had been living in Maryland. But simply by meeting with him, in defiance of Trump and his ally El Salvador President Nayib Bukele, Van Hollen created a new sense of hope and momentum for Abrego Garcia's family and the anti-Trump resistance.

"Sen. Van Hollen's leadership in this moment is exactly how Democrats should be pushing back against a wannabe dictator like Donald Trump - calling for law and order over chaos and adhering to the Constitution instead of a tyrant," Democratic National Committee Chair Ken Martin told The Associated Press.



US Sen Chris Van Hollen, D-Md, is welcomed by supporters upon his arrival from meeting with Kilmor Abrego Garcia in El Salvador, at Washington Dulles International Airport, in Chantilly, Va on April 18. (AP)

"No matter how much Trump tries to act out his dictatorial fantasies, Democrats will always defend democracy when it's on the line."

Van Hollen's emergence in a critical national debate offers a fresh wind into the Democratic Party's month-long leadership carousel as it struggles to counter a series of Trump administration policies with far-reaching consequences, from slashing the federal

workforce to stripping funding from universities, pushing back against court orders and launching a trade war that's rattling the global economy.

The Democrats' most visible elected leaders, Rep. Hakeem Jeffries and Sen. Chuck Schumer, both of New York, have lost the confidence of many progressive activists for not fighting Trump with the urgency or creativity that the moment demands.

Ezra Levin, co-founder of the resistance group Indivisible, said the growing protest movement is directed both at Trump and "the Schumers of the world, those who want us to roll over and play dead."

"Courage is impressive and contagious," Levin said, noting that he's hearing "a ton of positive feedback for (Van Hollen) among our folks on the ground." He said the reaction is akin to the outpouring of support for Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., earlier in the month.

Booker had stepped into the leadership void by delivering a record-breaking 25-hour speech on the Senate floor that briefly served as a rallying point for the frustrated anti-Trump movement. Concerned voters also have packed into rallies hosted by Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., who have launched a national "Stop Oligarchy" tour.

At the same time, potential 2028 presidential contenders such as Govs. Gavin Newsom of California and Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan have gone the other way by downplaying their Trump criticism at times. Others, including Govs. Josh Shapiro of Pennsylvania and Wes Moore of Maryland, have largely avoided stepping into the national debate.

Drones pose increasing risk to airliners near major United States airports

WASHINGTON, April 21. (AP): A commercial airliner was on final approach to San Francisco's international airport in November when the crew spotted a drone outside the cockpit window. By then it was too late "to take evasive action," the pilots reported, and the quadcopter passed by their windshield, not 300 feet away.

A month earlier, a jetliner was flying at an altitude of 4,000 feet near Miami's international airport when its pilots reported a "close encounter" with a drone. In August, a drone came within 50 feet of clipping the left wing of a passenger jet as it departed Newark International Airport.

The incidents were all classified as "near midair collisions" - any one of which could have had catastrophic consequences, according to aviation safety experts. They were also not isolated encounters.

An Associated Press analysis of an aviation safety database reveals that drones last year accounted for nearly two-thirds of reported near midair collisions involving commercial passenger planes taking off and landing at the country's top 30 busiest airports. That was the highest percentage of such near misses since 2020, when air traffic dropped during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first reports of near misses involving drones were logged in 2014, the AP found. The number of such



A drone hovers in airspace outside the safety perimeter surrounding St. Louis Lambert International Airport as an airliner approaches for a landing on March 10. (AP)

encounters spiked the following year. Over the last decade, drones accounted for 51% - 122 of 240 - of reported near misses, according to AP's analysis.

Passenger jets have long been subject to risks around airports - whether from bird strikes or congested airspace - as was made clear by the January collision between a military helicopter and commercial jet near Washington, D.C., that killed 67 people.

The threat from drones has become more acute in the last decade as the use of quadcopters and remote-controlled

planes has exploded in popularity. The FAA estimates that Americans are operating more than a million drones for recreational and commercial purposes.

"If you have the money, you can go on the internet and buy a pretty sophisticated drone that can reach altitudes they really have no business being at," said William Waldo, a professor of safety science at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. The risk is most acute near airports because that is where the flight paths of drones and airplanes most overlap, experts said.

Trump's tough talk might help Liberal Carney win full term as Canada's prime minister

TORONTO, April 21. (AP): Mark Carney's political career is only months old, and it's already been a roller-coaster ride. The former central banker appeared destined to become one of Canada's shortest-serving prime ministers until President Donald Trump picked a fight with the US's northern neighbor.

Carney, who was sworn in on March 14 following Justin Trudeau's resignation and a Liberal Party leadership race, now leads in the polls heading into the April 28 parliamentary elections, marking a dramatic turnaround for a party that seemed headed for a crushing defeat until the American president started attacking Canada's economy and sovereignty almost daily.

Trump's trade war and threats to make Canada the 51st state have infuriated Canadians and led to a surge in Canadian nationalism that has helped Liberals flip the election narrative. In a mid-January poll by Nanos, Liberals trailed the Conservative Party by 47% to 20%. In the latest Nanos poll, which was conducted during a three-day period that ended April 19, the Liberals



Liberal Leader Mark Carney looks at a battery as he tours Nova Bus with company president Paul Le Houillier, during a campaign stop in Saint-Eustache, Quebec, Tuesday on April 15. (AP)

led by six percentage points. The January poll had a margin of error 3.1 points while the latest poll had a 2.7-point margin.

"Timing is everything in politics and Carney entered the political arena at a most favorable time," said Daniel Béland, a political science professor at McGill University

in Montreal.

Carney's opponent is Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre, a career politician and firebrand populist who has campaigned with Trump-like swagger, even taking a page from the "America First" president by adopting the slogan "Canada First."

German police expands manhunt for suspect on loose after two shot dead

BERLIN, April 21. (AP): German police in a spa town north of Frankfurt were expanding a manhunt for one or more suspects still on the loose after two Turkish men were fatally shot a day earlier, reports said Sunday.

Police in the Hesse region said the two victims were gunned down in a residential area of Bad Nauheim, about 35 kilometers (about 22 miles) north of Frankfurt, and a motive was not immediately known. German news agency DPA said authorities could not rule out that one or more suspects might have been involved, and the crime appeared to have been motivated by personal reasons. Citing police and prosecutors, the agency said the two victims were a father-in-law aged 59, and a son-in-law aged 28.

According to Hessenschau, a regional publication linked to a public



Police officers investigate the scene of a shooting in Bad Nauheim, Germany on April 19. (AP)

broadcaster, a large police contingent was deployed after the shootings on Saturday, and local residents indicated

that special forces had been sent to the site, along with emergency vehicles and a police helicopter.

Europe

Russian attacks on Ukraine kills 3: Russian attacks during the 30-hour Easter ceasefire unilaterally declared by President Vladimir Putin over the weekend killed three people in Ukraine's southern Kherson region, the local governor said Monday. Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin wrote on Telegram that the casualties occurred over the last 24 hours, adding that three others were wounded.

Overall, Russia violated the ceasefire more than 2,900 times, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a Telegram statement in the early hours on Monday. Zelenskyy said that Russian forces carried out 96 assault operations along the front line, shelled Ukrainian positions more than 1,800 times and used hundreds of drones during the course of the ceasefire. "The nature of Ukrainian actions will continue to be mirror-like: we will respond to silence with silence, and our blows will be a de-



Putin

fense against Russian blows. Actions always speak louder than words," he said.

Putin announced a temporary Easter truce on Saturday, citing humanitarian reasons. Ukraine said that it would reciprocate any genuine ceasefire by Moscow, but voiced skepticism over the Kremlin's intentions. Both sides traded accusations of violations shortly after. The ceasefire expired at midnight (2100 GMT) following Easter Sunday. (AP)

Kosovo new lawmakers sworn in: Kosovo's legislature on Saturday swore in the 120 lawmakers who will sit in the newly elected Assembly, or Parliament, after procedural disputes between the political parties but failed twice to elect a new speaker, a process which may take the country into a prolonged legislative crisis.

All parties who won seats in the Feb. 9 election voted unanimously in favor of taking up their mandates, opening the way to the election of the new speaker and deputy speakers. The left-wing Self-Determination Movement, or Vetevendosje!, of acting Prime Minister Albin Kurti won 48 out of 120 seats in the election, falling short of the majority needed to elect a new speaker or to form a cabinet on its own. In 2021, the party won 58 seats. (AP)

INTERNATIONAL

US general says allied forces can repel Asia aggression as Philippines combat drills open

MANILA, Philippines, April 21, (AP): Thousands of allied American and Filipino forces opened annual combat drills Monday that are set to include repelling an island attack to simulate the defense of the Philippine archipelago and seas in a "full-scale battle scenario" that has antagonized China.

The annual Balikatan military exercises between the longtime treaty allies are scheduled from April 21 to May 9 with about 9,000 American and 5,000 Filipino military personnel. Fighter jets, warships and an array of weaponry including a US Marine anti-ship missile system will be involved, US and Philippine military officials said.

China has steadfastly opposed such war drills in or near the disputed South China Sea and in northern Philippine provinces close to Taiwan, especially if they involve US and allied forces that Beijing says aim to contain it and, consequently, threaten regional stability and peace.

"We are ready," US Marine Corps Lt. Gen. James Glynn told a news conference when asked if US and Philippine forces have built up the capability to address any major act of aggression in the Taiwan Straits or the South China Sea after years of joint combat exercises.

"Our combined strength ... possesses a degree of lethality for a force that possesses an indomitable warrior ethos and spirit," Glynn said in a speech in the opening ceremony of the annual combat-readiness exercises. "It's all dedicated to one purpose, to ensure the defense of the Philippines and to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific."

"All of us want to resolve any regional conflict peacefully but should deterrence fail, we need to be prepared," said Glynn, who previously helped lead special operations forces against the Islamic State and served in Fallujah, Iraq.

Philippine army Maj Gen Francisco Lorenzo said the

exercises during Balikatan, meaning shoulder to shoulder in Tagalog, are not aimed at any particular country.

"It's joint training with the US forces to increase our capability in securing our territory and, of course, it will increase our capabilities and our preparedness and responsiveness to any eventuality," Lorenzo said.

The exercises are set to include a mock allied counter-assault against an enemy attack on an island, the use of a barrage of artillery and missile fire to sink a mock enemy ship, joint navy sails in or near the disputed South China Sea and aerial combat surveillance, according to the Philippine military.

A Philippine military statement described this year's largescale combat exercises as "a full-scale battle scenario meticulously designed to rigorously test and enhance the combined capabilities of both nations' armed forces under the most realistic and challenging conditions."

Aside from US and Philippine military personnel, Australia plans to deploy about 260 participants, an Australian military officer said. Several countries including Japan intend to send military observers.

A mid-range missile system, which was deployed to the northern Philippines by the U.S. Army last year, will be used again in the combat exercises, U.S. and Philippine military officials said without offering additional details.

China has repeatedly expressed alarm over the missile deployment and demanded the Philippines pull the weaponry from China's territory, which it said could spark an arms race.

The US Army's mid-range missile system consisting of a mobile launcher and at least 16 Standard Missile-6 and Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles has been repositioned in the Philippines, a Philippine official told The Associated Press early this year.



Filipino and US soldiers participate during a joint military drill called Salaknib at Fort Magsaysay, Nueva Ecija province, northern Philippines on March 31, 2023. (AP)

Beijing to retaliate with sanctions on US officials, NGO leaders over HK issues

China, Indonesia agree to boost maritime security cooperation in South China Sea

TAIPEI, Taiwan, April 21, (AP): Indonesia and China said Monday they committed to maritime cooperation promoting safety and security in the South China Sea, amid longstanding Indonesian suspicions about China's actions in waters controlled by Jakarta.

The sides agreed to cooperate in infrastructure building, minerals development and joint security, the last being the most significant because of Indonesia's concerns over Chinese development near the Natuna island group in the South China Sea, which Beijing claims virtually in its entirety.

While neither side mentioned the islands directly, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said the officials agreed to further enhance their security cooperation in a comprehensive and sustainable way.

"We will enhance law enforcement and security cooperation to jointly combat transnational (inaudible) cooperation," Wang said following the first joint meeting of foreign and defense ministers from the two sides in Beijing.

"We agreed that safeguarding peace and stability in the South China Sea is in line with the interests of all parties, and we will set up an example in maritime cooperation," Wang said, adding that the coast guards signed a memorandum of understanding on maritime security and safety.

Indonesia borders the strategic waterway through which an estimated \$5 trillion in world trade passes annually, but it is not formally one of the six parties that share overlapping sovereign maritime claims with China. Such disputes have raised fears of a larger conflict that could put China and the US on a collision course.

Despite that, China's southernmost territorial claim lies within Indonesia's 370-kilometer (200-nautical-mile) exclusive economic zone, and Indonesian security patrols routinely drive off or seize Chinese fishing boats, fueling tensions between the countries. Meanwhile, officials in Jakarta are mulling over Beijing's plans for the Natuna island chain, part of which lies inside China's "nine-dash line," which it uses to roughly demarcate its claim to most of the South China Sea.

Chinese coast guard ships have escorted fishing vessels - some of which have been confronted by the Indonesian coast guard - while Indonesia has increased the number of patrols and size of garrisons on the hundreds of scattered islands.

Last year, during a state visit by Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, the sides pledged to "joint maritime development" in the area, while having no effect on sovereignty claims, seemingly calming the situation somewhat.

While that appeared to apply mainly to economic opportunities, Chinese Defense Minister Adm. Dong Jun on Monday said the sides had also agreed to boost communication and stage joint counter-terrorism exercises later this year.



Indonesian Defense Minister Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin, (center left), and Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun, (center right), shake hands as Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, (center), and Indonesian Foreign Minister Sugiono, (right), look on after a press briefing about the first meeting of China-Indonesia joint foreign and defense ministerial dialogue at the Diaoyutai State Guest House in Beijing on April 21. (AP)

The South China Sea, especially its parts lying close to Indonesia, has at times become notorious for piracy in which ships are repainted, renamed and have their electronic identities altered in the countless ports and islands in the archipelago.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Sugiono and Defense Minister Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin largely echoed the Chinese sides' comments, underscoring their joint desire to smooth over economic and security divisions.

"We also agreed to stand united against terrorism, violent extremism and cyberthreats and we shared concerns over the threat of transnational crime in the region which increasingly targets our nationals," said Sugiono, who like many Indonesians uses just one name.

Indonesia is also in the process of establishing a consulate in the southwestern Chinese city of Chengdu, which has close relations with Southeast Asia, Sugiono said.

Indonesia's economic ties with China have flourished in recent years. China became Indonesia's largest trading partner and plowed billions into major infrastructure projects such as the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway and Cirata, Southeast Asia's largest floating solar power project, on a reservoir in West Java, 130 kilometers (80 miles) from the capital, Jakarta. Disagreements have emerged over the pricing and timing for the projects, but China has been determined to follow through on them in keeping with President Xi Jinping's signature "Belt and Road" initiative to build infrastructure throughout the region.

Also:

HONG KONG: China will sanction United States officials, lawmakers and leaders of non-governmental organizations who it says have "performed poorly" on Hong Kong issues, the foreign ministry announced.

The US in March sanctioned six Chinese and Hong Kong officials who it alleged were involved in "transnational repression" and acts threatening to further erode the city's autonomy. The officials included Justice Secretary **Paul Lam**, security office director **Dong Jingwei** and former police commissioner **Raymond Siu**.

In a retaliatory move against **Washington, DC**, on Monday, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson **Guo Jiakun** in Beijing said China strongly condemned the acts, calling them "despicable." The US has seriously interfered in the affairs of Hong Kong and violated international law principles, he said.

"China has decided to impose sanctions on US congressmen, officials, and NGO leaders who have performed poorly on Hong Kong-related issues," Guo said, adding the response was made according to the anti-foreign sanctions law.

He did not provide more details about who is being targeted.

Guo also issued a warning about Hong Kong, saying the southern Chinese city's affairs are not subject to US interference. Any actions considered wrong by the Chinese government that are taken on Hong Kong-related issues will be met with firm countermeasures and reciprocal retaliation, he said.

The tit-for-tat sanctions over Hong Kong's human rights issues are the latest sign of rising tensions between Beijing and Washington, which are already locked in a trade war that has rattled businesses on both sides.

Beijing separately warned other countries on Monday against making trade deals with the U.S. to China's detriment.

'Review progress in bilateral relations'

US VP Vance arrives in India for 4-day visit

NEW DELHI, April 21, (AP): US Vice President JD Vance arrived in India on Monday for a four-day visit as New Delhi looks to avoid US tariffs, negotiate a bilateral trade deal with Washington and strengthen ties with the Trump administration.

Vance was to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the first day of his largely personal visit. The two leaders are expected to hold discussions on bilateral ties outlined in February when Modi met President Donald Trump in Washington.

The US is India's largest trading partner and the two countries are now holding negotiations aiming to seal a bilateral trade agreement this year.

They have set an ambitious target of more than doubling their bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030. If achieved, the trade deal could significantly enhance economic ties between the two countries and potentially strengthen diplomatic ties as well.

Vance's first visit to New Delhi

comes amid the backdrop of Trump's now-paused tariff program against most countries, including India. It also coincides with a rapidly intensifying trade war between Washington and Beijing, which is New Delhi's main rival in the region.

Modi and Vance are expected to "review the progress in bilateral relations" and "exchange views on regional and global developments of mutual interest," India's Foreign Ministry said last week. On Monday, spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said Vance's visit will "further deepen the India-US comprehensive global strategic partnership."

Vance was greeted with an Indian classical dance performance after he arrived at New Delhi's Palam airport on Monday, following his visit to Rome, where he met Pope Francis on Easter Sunday. He is accompanied by his wife, Usha Vance, a practicing Hindu whose parents are from India, along with their three children and officials from the U.S. administration.

The family visited the Akshardham Hindu temple in New Delhi after their arrival and are expected to tour the iconic Taj Mahal monument and the 12th-century Amer Fort - a UNESCO world heritage site - during their trip.

India is a close partner of the US and an important strategic ally in combating the rising influence of China in the Indo-Pacific region. It is also part of the Quad, which is comprised of the US, India, Japan and Australia and is seen as a counterbalance to China's expansion in the region. Trump is expected to attend a summit of Quad leaders in India later this year.

Washington has long sought to develop a deeper partnership with New Delhi, which is seen as a bulwark against China. Modi particularly established a good working relationship with Trump during his first term in office and the two leaders are likely to further boost cooperation between their countries.



US Vice President JD Vance arrives in New Delhi, India on April 21. (AP)

'Attacks in N.Darfur caused displacement of population'

PORT SUDAN, April 21, (KUNA): United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan, Clementine Nkweta-Salami stated Sunday that the recent attacks in North Sudan have caused mass displacement of people.

"The current mass displacement - particularly from Zamzam, Abu Shouk, and other displaced camps - has pushed an estimated 400,000-450,000 people toward Tawila, areas surrounding Jebel Marra, and further," Salami said in a statement.

"These population movements are increasingly fluid, unpredictable, and fueled by ongoing hostilities and fears of a broader offensive on El Fasher."

She warned that the situation is further compounded by rising levels of food insecurity, with displaced populations increasingly cut off from supply chains and assistance, placing them at heightened risk of epidemic outbreaks, malnutrition and famine.

Salami laid it bare that the scale and gravity of reported violations,



A damaged plane is seen at Khartoum International Airport after it was recaptured from the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on April 17. (AP)

including direct attacks on IDPs and humanitarian personnel, are unacceptable. "Civilians must never be

a target. Forced displacement must never be a precondition for accessing life-saving aid," she stressed.

Bukele proposes prisoner swap with Maduro for Venezuelan deportees

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador, April 21, (AP): Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele proposed carrying out a prisoner swap with Venezuela on Sunday, suggesting he would exchange Venezuelan deportees from the United States for what he called "political prisoners" in Venezuela.

In a post on the social media platform X, directed at President Nicolás Maduro, Bukele listed off a number of family members of high-level opposition figures in Venezuela, journalists and activists detained during the South American government's electoral crackdown last year.

"The only reason they are imprisoned is for having opposed you and your electoral fraud," he wrote to Maduro. "However, I want to propose a humanitarian agreement that includes the repatriation of 100% of the 252 Venezuelans who were deported, in exchange for the release and surrender of an identical number (252) of the thousands of political prisoners you hold."



El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele waves as he departs following a meeting at the White House with President Donald Trump on April 14, in Washington. (AP)

Among those he listed were the son-in-law of former Venezuelan presidential candidate Edmundo González, a number of political leaders seeking

asylum in the Argentine embassy in Venezuela, and what he said were 50 detained citizens from a number of different countries across the world.

Total assets surge 8.7% to KD 41.6 bln

NBK reports Net Profit of KD 134.1 mln for 1Q2025

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has announced its financial results for the three-months period ended 31 March 2025. The Bank reported a net profit of KD 134.1 million (USD 434.8 million), compared to KD 146.6 million (USD 475.3 million) for the corresponding period in 2024. Profit before tax for the period reached KD 173.4 million (USD 562.3 million) compared to KD 172.0 million (USD 557.7 million) recorded in 2024.

Total assets as of the end of March 2025 grew by 8.7% year-on-year to reach KD 41.6 billion (USD 135.0 billion), whereas customer loans and advances increased by 9.9% year-on-year to KD24.6 billion (USD 79.8 billion).

Customer deposits grew by 5.6%, reaching KD23.5 billion (USD 76.2 billion) by the end of March 2025. Meanwhile, shareholders' equity stood at KD 4.0 billion (USD 13.1 billion), reflecting a growth of 6.4% year-on-year.

Solid Results

Commenting on the Bank's annual financial results, **Hamad Al-Bahar**, NBK Group Chairman stated, "NBK entered 2025 on a strong note, delivering solid financial results in the first quarter despite a challenging global landscape. The performance came amid persistent geopolitical tensions on both global and regional fronts, rising concerns over a potential global trade war following recent U.S. tariff measures, and increasingly complex macroeconomic conditions across many parts of the world."

"Once again, NBK reaffirms its resilience and adaptability to evolving economic conditions, underpinned by a well-diversified mix of products, services, and international operations across various parts of the world. This strategic positioning is supported by the Bank's strong balance sheet, solid capitalization, high liquidity, and high asset quality – all reinforced by a prudent risk management approach," Al-Bahar added.

He emphasized that NBK is well-positioned to sustain its leadership in the domestic financial sector while delivering long-term value to shareholders, customers, and the communities it serves. He noted that the Bank continues to realize the benefits of its strategic investments in both technology and human capital.

"In 2025, NBK is set to accelerate its sustainable financing efforts in pursuit of its target to expand its sustainable assets portfolio to USD 10 billion by 2030. The Bank will also continue to advance a range of initiatives in support of its broader commitment to achieving carbon neutrality," Al-Bahar confirmed.

He highlighted that during the first quarter of 2025, NBK played a key role in launching and supporting a wide range of initiatives across various fields, reinforcing its position as the leading contributor to social responsibility in Kuwait. Among these efforts was NBK's annual Ramadan campaign, "Doing Good Deeds", which featured a diverse lineup of health, sports, cultural, and recreational activities.

Strong Buffers

Meanwhile, Mr. **Isam J. Al-Sager**, NBK Group Vice Chairman and CEO, said: "NBK's first-quarter financial results this year underscore the strength of its buffers, which have enabled it to withstand global economic headwinds and their ripple effects across regional and local markets."

Al-Sager noted that NBK's diversified business mix, strategically planned investments, and prudent risk management enabled the Bank to maintain operational flexibility across its various business segments during the first three months of 2025. This was led by the core banking business, which played a key role in mitigating the impact of an increasingly challenging economic conditions during that period.

He stated that NBK's net profit for the first quarter of 2025 was impacted by the effective implementation of the Domestic Minimum Top-Up Tax (DMTT) on multinational enterprises (MNEs) operating in the country. This led to net profit recording a year-on-year drop of 8.5% while profit before tax was flat year-on-year.

Al-Sager revealed that NBK Group recorded a net operating income of KD310.7 million (USD 1.0 billion) in the first quarter of 2025, reporting a growth of 0.6% year-on-year. He also noted that both the International Banking and Boubyan Bank, its Islamic banking arm, remain key revenue and profit growth contributors to the Group.

Seizing Opportunities

Al-Sager emphasized that NBK remains committed to investing in technology and fostering innovation to build an inclusive and sustainable financial future. He added that the Bank aims to expand its customer base while capitalizing on opportunities in promising markets and key sectors.

He further noted that during the first quarter of 2025, NBK continued to deliver innovative solutions and services tailored to the evolving needs of its customers,



Hamad Al-Bahar, NBK Group Chairman



Isam J. Al-Sager, NBK Group Vice Chairman and CEO



NBK Headquarters.

Al-Bahar:

- Once again, NBK reaffirms its agility in navigating economic shifts
- The Bank's strong financial performance reflects the success of its diversification strategy, solid capitalization and high-quality assets
- NBK is well positioned to sustain its leadership in the financial sector
- We are driving sustainable finance towards a USD 10 billion portfolio by 2030

Al-Sager:

- NBK maintains strong buffers to withstand global volatility
- Our diversified operations and prudent risk management ensures operational resilience
- Our International Operations and Boubyan Bank remain key revenue and profit growth contributors
- Our ongoing investments in technology and innovation fuels our inclusive and sustainable financial growth
- We are committed to driving Kuwait's economic growth through strategic project financing
- We maintain a positive outlook for projects market activity as government prioritizes development initiatives
- The ongoing economic reform momentum is expected to enhance Kuwait's business climate

showcasing its agility in keeping pace with rapid market developments. The Bank also entered into strategic partnerships with leading local and international institutions across key sectors, reinforcing its commitment to offering customers an exceptional and comprehensive banking experience.

On the wealth management front, Al-Sager stated that NBK Wealth has continued to enhance its offerings by delivering a broad range of integrated solutions across private banking, asset management, financial planning, and advisory services. Supported by a wide global network of operations, these efforts have further solidified its position as the largest wealth management entity in Kuwait and among the leading players in the region.

Al-Sager emphasized the Bank's commitment to actively contributing to Kuwait's economic growth and development through financing strategic infrastructure projects, ongoing support for entrepreneurs, and efforts to promote financial

inclusion. He also highlighted NBK's focus on maintaining its competitive edge in the local market while continuing to grow its presence in international markets.

Furthermore, he emphasized the Bank's commitment to enhancing operational efficiency across all business sectors, while reinforcing its role in supporting sustainability efforts within the communities it serves. He also highlighted NBK's dedication to being a strategic partner for customers in their pursuit of sustainable financing solutions.

Operational Environment

Regarding his outlook for the business environment in Kuwait, Al-Sager noted, "Several indicators suggest a positive shift in the operational landscape for Kuwait in 2025. At the forefront is the continued momentum in awarding and implementing projects. This positive trend is expected to persist as the government focuses its economic agenda on prioritizing major development projects and accelerating their implementation in alignment with Vision 2035."

Al-Sager emphasized the government's commitment to advancing financial and economic reforms, highlighted by the recent adoption of key legislation such as the Financing and Liquidity Law (debt law) and the anticipated issuance of the mortgage law. These initiatives are expected to support economic growth and positively impact the business environment in Kuwait. However, he noted that the challenges posed by US tariffs, concerns over a potential global trade war, and ongoing geopolitical tensions will remain among the most significant uncertainties that are facing the markets in the near term.

The Strongest & Most Valuable Brand

NBK reaffirmed the strength of its brand in 2025, maintaining its position as the most valuable and strongest banking brand in Kuwait. According to the annual report issued by Brand Finance, NBK widened its lead over competitors in the Kuwaiti banking sector, achieving a 22% increase in brand value compared to 2024. Moreover, Global Finance recently named NBK the Best Bank in Kuwait - 2025, further solidifying its leadership in the Kuwaiti banking sector.

Key Financial Indicators For 1Q2025

- Net operating income stood at KD 310.7 million (USD 1.0 billion), up 0.6% year-on-year
- Total assets grew by 8.7% year-on-year, at KD 41.6 billion (USD 135.0 billion)
- Customer loans and advances increased by 9.9% year-on-year to KD 24.6 billion (USD 79.8 billion)
- Customer deposits grew by 5.6% year-on-year to KD 23.5 billion (USD 76.2 billion)
- Shareholders' equity amounted to KD 4.0 billion (USD 13.1 billion), registering an annual growth of 6.4%
- Strong asset quality metrics, with NPL/gross loans ratio at 1.38% and an NPL coverage ratio of 251%
- Robust Capital Adequacy Ratio of 16.6%, comfortably exceeding regulatory requirements

Financial Highlights



1st Quarter 2025

Net Profit

31/03/2024
KD 146.6
Million

31/03/2025
KD 134.1
Million

Profit Before Tax

31/03/2024
KD 172.0
Million

31/03/2025
KD 173.4
Million

Total Assets

31/03/2024
KD 38.3
Billion

+8.7%

31/03/2025
KD 41.6
Billion

Shareholders' Equity

31/03/2024
KD 3.79
Billion

31/03/2025
KD 4.03
Billion

+6.4%

Earnings Per Share

31/03/2024
16
fils

31/03/2025
15
fils

Customer Deposits

31/03/2024
KD 22.3
Billion

+5.6%

31/03/2025
KD 23.5
Billion

Customer Loans & Advances

31/03/2024
KD 22.4
Billion

+9.9%

31/03/2025
KD 24.6
Billion

Net Operating Income

31/03/2024
KD 309.0
Million

+0.6%

31/03/2025
KD 310.7
Million

MOODY'S RATINGS
A1

FitchRatings
A+

S&P Global
A

1801801
nbk.com

In ceremony with Education Minister and Anti-Corruption Chief, under strategic bank partnership

NBK honors schools participating in Bankee for the academic year 2024-25

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: In recognition of their pivotal role in helping Bankee succeed and achieve its goals of enhancing the financial literacy of students at a young age, the National Bank of Kuwait organized a ceremony to honor the schools that participated in the program for the current academic year 2024-2025.

At the forefront of attendees was Engineer Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaie, Minister of Education, Mr. Abdulaziz Al-Ibrahim, President of Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority "Nazaha", Ms. Abrar Al-Hammad, Assistant Secretary General for the Prevention Sector at "Nazaha", Mr. Isam Al-Sager, Vice-Chairman and GROUP CEO of NBK, Ms. Shaikha Al-Bahar, Deputy Group CEO of NBK, Mr. Salah Al-Fulajji, CEO-Kuwait, Mr. Sulaiman Al-Marzouq, Deputy CEO-Kuwait, and the bank's executive management.

In his speech, Vice-Chairman and Group CEO of NBK, Mr. Isam Al-Sager said: "We are pleased to have you here on this special day in which we honor a distinguished group of public and private schools in Kuwait that effectively took part in the success of Bankee program during the academic year 2024-2025, which is Kuwait's largest national program aiming to enhance the financial literacy."

Al-Sager highlighted that the Bankee program, which is the culmination of a unique strategic partnership between NBK, the Ministry of Education, Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority "Nazaha", with a contribution by the distinctive national institution Creative Confidence in the process of execution, played a pivotal role in raising the financial awareness of elementary school students and instilling in them foundational economic and financial concepts.

Al-Sager also emphasized that the program contributed to implanting in the students' minds significant social and ethical values, such as honesty, responsibility, commitment, preserving public money, and respecting the law, which positively influenced the students and their families, and subsequently society overall.

Moreover, Al-Sager added: "This success would not have been possible without the cooperation of the administrations and faculties of the participating schools, as they are the influencers and change makers. They have truly taken the initiative and made relentless efforts to help achieve the goals of the program over three academic years, which was evident to us during our recent recurrent visits to several participating schools. For this, we express our deep gratitude."

In the end of his speech, Al-Sager expressed his extreme appreciation for NBK's strategic partners who had faith in Bankee and made remarkable efforts to make it succeed, thanking the Minister of Education, Engineer Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaie, and the President of Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority "Nazaha", Mr. Abdulaziz Al-Ibrahim for their continuous support.

On his part, Engineer Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaie, Minister of Education, mentioned in his



Vice-Chairman and Group CEO of NBK, Mr. Isam Al-Sager



Engineer Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaie, Minister of Education



President of Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority 'Nazaha', Mr. Abdulaziz Al-Ibrahim



The Minister of Education and the President of Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority with the executive management of the National Bank of Kuwait in a group photo on the sidelines of the schools' honoring ceremony.

speech that this aspiring national program is the product of distinctive efforts and a valuable collaboration between national institutions that believe in the importance of building people and enhancing their abilities. He also indicated that this program is a true reflection of government-private partnerships, further emphasizing that the Ministry of Education views this partnership as one of the foundations of educational and sustainable developments.

Al-Tabtabaie also mentioned that the partnership between Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority, the Ministry of Education, and NBK is a remarkable embodiment of institutional collaboration with the private sector to support national educational values, which has played a highly influential role in enhancing the students' financial literacy through a comprehensive educational program.

In addition, Al-Tabtabaie thanked all the participating schools and encouraged all school administrations to take part in this program and benefit from the unique educational opportunity it offers, as it affects the students' personalities and their future in a positive way.

In addition, President of Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority "Nazaha", Mr. Abdulaziz Al-Ibrahim, said: "I am pleased to be here in this occasion that reflects the true meaning of enlightened government-private partnerships,

which aim to instill values such as integrity, transparency, and anti-corruption efforts.

He mentioned that protecting the youth against corruption risks is the nation's first line of defense that should help build an honest society committed to promoting transparency, justice, equality, and law enforcement.

Al-Ibrahim also emphasized that the strategic partnership between "Nazaha", the Ministry of Education, and NBK that produced the Bankee program is a unique model of collaboration that joined the government's determination with the private sector's experiences and resources. In addition, he expressed his deep pride in this remarkable partnership that will pave the way for future strategic partnerships.

Moreover, Al-Ibrahim stated: "What makes us even more proud of the program's achievements is the praise we receive from participants in local, regional, and international conferences in which the authority attends and shares the Bankee experiment."

Showcasing Achievements

During the ceremony, some of the most significant achievements of Bankee over the last three academic years were highlighted along with their positive impact upon the life of students and their families. Moreover, some of the participating teachers shared their experience and big role in guiding the students and helping

them set their financial goals, supervising their progress, and providing the necessary support to maximize the benefits of the program.

Bankee is a pioneering program in Kuwait, which aims to enhance financial inclusion, especially among school students, to ensure better and sustainable future levels of financial literacy in society. It also aims to teach students core economic concepts and behaviors such as earning, spending, saving, and financial commitments in a fun and interactive way, by using the classroom economy model.

The program also aims to instill core values such as honesty, integrity, self-development and growth, responsibility, cooperation, and teamwork, as well as raise a young generation that understands the importance of financial independence and stability and has the necessary financial knowledge and skills to achieve sustainable development and economic well-being for individuals and society.

Bankee is a digital platform that serves as a virtual bank, on which students receive their allowance, salaries, bonuses, and pay their fines and expenses through a virtual bank account. The account also serves as a platform for students to play their financial commitments such as paying rent and water and electricity bills and purchasing from the Bankee store in a way that simulates real financial transactions.

Al-Tabtabaie: "The partnership between "Nazaha", the Ministry of Education, and NBK is remarkable embodiment of institutional collaboration with the private sector to support national educational values."

Al-Ibrahim: "We are proud of this outstanding strategic partnership which is praised by local, regional and international activities and conferences."

Al-Sager: This success wouldn't have been possible without the collaboration of the participating schools and their faculties, as they are the future change makers and influencers.

■ The program played a big role in instilling foundational economic and financial concepts in the students' minds as well as significant social and ethical values.

■ Bankee's positive impact on the life of the students and their families will strongly reflect on society overall.

■ We extend our deep gratitude to the Ministry of Education and "Nazaha" for their faith in the program and their relentless efforts to make it succeed.

NBK's Initiative of Bankee highlights its support to Kuwait Vision 2035 by enabling the youth and upskilling them. It also emphasizes the bank's commitment to supporting and developing the educational system as part of its social responsibility, as well as committing to its bigger goal of achieving financial inclusion for all society's segments.

32,235 Students and 7,200 Teachers in 61 Schools

The number of schools participating in the Bankee program during the current academic year reached 61 schools, with the participation of 32,235 students and 7,200 teachers.

The number of Bankee student employees who gained their first work experience exceeded 1500, and more than 1.5 million transactions were recorded varying from bonuses, salaries, jobs, and Bankee store purchases.

GCC project awards drop 26.8%

Kuwait's project awards surge 197.6% in Q1 2025 to \$1.4 bln

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The total value of awarded projects in Kuwait surged by 197.6 percent in the first quarter of 2025, reaching \$1.4 billion, compared to \$459 million during the same period in 2024, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

With this significant increase, Kuwait recorded the highest annual growth rate in contract awards among GCC countries, according to a report released by Kamco Invest.

The report explained that the majority of Kuwait's project awards were focused on modernizing the oil, energy, and transportation sectors, which are the main pillars of the New Kuwait 2035 vision.

There is a decline in the total value of project award activities in the Gulf

countries during the first quarter of 2025, as three out of five countries recorded a year-on-year decline in the pace of tender awards.

The total value of awarded contracts in the Gulf dropped by 26.8 percent year-on-year in Q1 2025, reaching \$52.4 billion, the lowest quarterly level in two years, compared to \$71.5 billion in Q1 2024.

Despite the slowdown, the report expects development projects in the Gulf to remain consistent with 2024 levels, with floated or pending tenders projected to reach around \$235 billion.

According to the report, Saudi Arabia accounts for nearly two-thirds of the total value of projects currently under preparation.

KPC awards \$2.35 million Microsoft licensing tender

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Higher Procurement Committee for Tenders at Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and its subsidiaries has confirmed the awarding of the public tender for Microsoft licensing agreement concerning the main building to a private entity at a value of \$2,352,432 as per the announcement published in the official gazette -- Kuwait Al-Youm.

This is in response to the request of Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (KUFPEC).

In addition, Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) has initiated a public tender for the provision of sodium hydroxide (caustic soda) to Zour Refinery, with a submission deadline of May 27, 2025.

KIPIC also announced public tenders for the replacement of pressure relief valves and reactor feed flow meters in its units requiring high-quality replacements, with a bid submission deadline of July 22, 2025.

Zain Kuwait earns ISO 37301 certification for compliance excellence

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Zain, Kuwait's leading digital services provider, has been awarded the ISO 37301:2021 certification an internationally recognized standard for Compliance Management Systems (CMS).

As one of the first mobile network operators in the region to achieve this significant milestone, this certification within the Telecom Regulatory compliance management scope is testament to the operator's unwavering commitment to regulatory adherence, and a culture of integrity across all levels of the organization.

Notably, this marks the seventh ISO certificate earned by Zain Kuwait, further reinforcing its leadership position as the telecom operator with the most ISO certifications in the country.

ISO 37301 provides a comprehensive framework for establishing, developing, implementing, evaluating, and improving an effective compliance management system, supporting an overall high standard in Regulatory Compliance.

Tangible benefits to organizations that attain ISO 37301 certification include: Improving business opportunities and sustainability; protecting and enhancing an organization's reputation and credibility; taking into account expectations of interested parties; demonstrating an organization's commitment to managing its compliance risks effectively and efficiently; increasing the confidence of third parties in the organization's capacity to achieve sustained success; minimizing the risk of a contravention



Nawaf Al-Gharabally, Zain Kuwait CEO

occurring with the attendant costs and reputational damage.

Nawaf Al-Gharabally, Zain Kuwait CEO commented: "Adhering to the highest compliance standards within our operation is a must, not an option. This ISO 37301 certification reflects our commitment to best global practices, a critical driver that will support our '4WARD' strategic aspirations to sustain long-term growth, create value and bolster investor confidence."

He added, "As the first operation within the Zain Group to be awarded this certification, other sister operating companies have the inspiration and blueprint to follow suit, as we collectively look to elevate and ensure the Telecom Regulatory compliance scope across our footprint."



Zain Kuwait Headquarters.

Al-Gharabally concluded by recognizing, "We owe this certification to the conducive cooperation between the Zain Group and Zain Kuwait regulatory team's commitment and hard work. Their diligence and integrity made it possible and remains a driving force to further enhance and strengthen the organization's Regulatory Compliance practices."

Zain Kuwait's leadership in ISO certifications is a direct reflection of the company's relentless pursuit of excellence, making it the telecom market leader in Kuwait when it comes to internationally accredited compliance and management systems.

More on ISO 37301:2021 CMS

A CMS based on the requirements and guidance of ISO 37301 equips Zain with a set of

tools (policies, processes, and controls) that allows the company to establish and maintain a culture of compliance. This CMS based on ISO 37301 reflects Zain's commitment to sound norms of corporate governance, good practices, and ethical conduct as well as improving the company's ability to identify and respond to noncompliance.

ISO 37301 includes requirements that address competence, communication, and awareness. By complying with these requirements, Zain ensures that the vision of the top management is translated and embedded into the conduct of its managers and employees. Above all, the governing body and top management of Zain actively and visibly demonstrate their commitment to the CMS through their actions and decisions.



Representatives of KIPCO and Loyac.



At the signing ceremony, from left: Loyac Executive Board Member and Founding Partner Ms Fetouh Al Dalali, Eman Al Awadhi of KIPCO, and Ms Abeer Al Essa of Loyac.

Loyac partnership continues to boost youth leadership, says Group SVP

KIPCO renews its partnership with Loyac for third year

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: KIPCO – Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) – announced the renewal of its partnership with Loyac, a non-profit organization that aims to empower youth to become impactful leaders in society, for the third consecutive year. The partnership allows KIPCO to continue to sponsor the '7 Habits for Highly Effective Teens' program sessions offered to young people between the ages of 12 and 18.

The '7 Habits' is a Franklin Covey Education program. The goals of this life empowerment program include increasing self confidence and self-esteem, being responsible, defining one's values, recognizing and prioritizing goals and resisting peer pressure.

As part of the partnership, KIPCO will also sponsor a 'Leadership Retreat' for teenagers to the UK at the end of the year. The retreat will incorporate the '7 Habits' workshop, together with activities that reinforce teamwork and leadership, fostering personal independence and building connections with peers.

Ms Eman Al Awadhi, KIPCO's Group Senior Vice President – Corporate Communications and Investor Relations, said:

"Our ongoing collaboration with Loyac has continued to yield impactful results for youth leadership development. Over the past year, we have collectively inspired and equipped close to 150 young individuals to realize their potential. We

are excited to extend our partnership for yet another year, with a renewed commitment to not only developing future leaders but also placing an increased emphasis on empowering young girls and fostering inclusive opportunities. Together, we aim to create a brighter future where every young person can thrive."

On her part, Ms Abeer Al Essa, Loyac's Executive Board Member and the Finance & Admin Manager, said:

"We are thrilled to renew our partnership with KIPCO for another year, as we continue our shared mission of empowering young people and cultivating the leaders of tomorrow. Building on the successes of our previous initiatives, we remain dedicated to the principles of the '7 Habits of Highly Effective People', which guide our training and development efforts. Together with KIPCO, we look forward to making a lasting impact on the lives of young leaders in our community."

During 2024, close to 150 teens, college students and community workers who support young people have had the opportunity to participate in the '7 Habits' program.

The '7 Habits' workshops focus on habits of effectiveness in young people, with the objective of improving student performance, reducing conflicts, enhancing cooperation and teamwork. It also helps the participants develop new skills through tools that help each individual excel.

Zain Group's Regulatory Compliance Program (RCP)

The RCP program was launched with the vision of enabling all Zain Groupwide Regulatory teams to establish a unified compliance framework, aimed at achieving complete and sustained adherence to directives issued by telecommunications regulatory authorities. A key focus of the program was to secure ISO certification for the operations, ensuring alignment with globally recognized leading practices.

In its initial phases, RCP equipped Zain operating companies with critical tools including centralized repositories, documentation databases, role clarity, automated reminders, management dashboards, and digitized workflows, ensuring compliance excellence remains integral to operations.

Considerable progress in institutionalizing regulatory compliance has been made underscoring the company's commitment to governance and regulatory excellence. The RCP has now been successfully implemented in Zain operations across Kuwait (now certified), Bahrain and Iraq. Furthermore, the RCP is now being rolled out in Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and South Sudan, and within ZainTECH, the Group's enterprise digital services arm.

These concrete actions further strengthen Zain Group's regulatory frameworks and operational efficiency to ensure continued compliance to directives from Telecommunications Regulatory Authorities across the company's footprint remain ongoing.

Pivotal role in Islamic finance industry regionally and worldwide

Kuwait Finance House Group concludes participation in AAOIFI 23rd Annual Shari'ah Boards Conference



Abdullah Al-Saif receiving the Kuwait Finance House award from His Excellency Shaikh Ebrahim bin Khalifa Al Khalifa.



A part of KFH Group delegation's participation.

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: A delegation of Sharia Supervisory representatives from Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Group recently concluded its participation in the 23rd AAOIFI Annual Shari'ah Boards Conference, which was organized by the Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI) in cooperation with the Central Bank of Bahrain and held in Bahrain.

KFH's participation stems from its keenness to develop the Islamic banking industry and to continue supporting the advancement of financial products and services in accordance with Shari'ah, as the conference is one of the most prominent gatherings of Shari'ah scholars and decision-makers to discuss various topics and developments in the Islamic financial industry worldwide.

The participants expressed their appreciation for KFH's

valuable contributions. Furthermore, His Excellency Shaikh Ebrahim bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Chairman of the AAOIFI Board of Trustees, honored the KFH Group delegation on the sidelines of the conference. This recognition also commended KFH Group for its pivotal role in the Islamic finance industry, both regionally and worldwide, and acknowledged the Group's continuous and tireless efforts in advancing the Islamic financial services industry and expanding its scope, leadership, and success.

The conference convened scholars, leaders, and experts in the Islamic finance industry, alongside senior officials from central banks and supervisory authorities. Across five panel discussions held over two days, the conference explored the Shari'ah aspects pertinent to the Islamic finance industry, focusing on Shari'ah gov-

ernance frameworks for its institutions. The event also featured several live and virtual dialogue sessions where prominent figures in Islamic finance presented their visions for the industry's development, addressing challenges in upholding Shari'ah principles in transactions and tackling current issues. Following this, four workshops were conducted, focusing on the governance and financial accounting standards issued by AAOIFI.

KFH Group's participation in the conference represented an opportunity to exchange ideas, visions, and concepts with leaders' specialists in the Islamic banking industry, and to review the most important issues and topics in Islamic banking that require practical solutions and applications, especially that the Islamic banking sector needs continuous research and development efforts to address various issues

facing its development.

AAOIFI, established in 1991 and based in Bahrain, is the leading international not-for-profit organization primarily responsible for development and issuance of standards for the global Islamic finance industry. It has issued a total of 100 standards in the areas of Shari'ah, accounting, auditing, ethics and governance for international Islamic finance. It is supported by a number of institutional members, including central banks and regulatory authorities, financial institutions, accounting and auditing firms, and legal firms, from over 45 countries. Its standards are currently followed by all the leading Islamic financial institutions across the world and have introduced a progressive degree of harmonization of International Islamic finance practices.

85.653% of the shareholders present at meet

General Assembly of Commercial Real Estate Company approves the distribution of cash dividends of 3% and bonus shares of 3%

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The general assembly of the Commercial Real Estate Company approves the distribution of cash dividends of 3% and bonus shares of 3%

Mr. **Abdulfatah M. R. Marafie** – Chairman of The Commercial Real Estate Company "Al Tijaria" announced the holding of the Ordinary & extraordinary General Assembly meetings of the company on Monday, April 21, 2025, with a quorum of 85.653%, of the shareholders present.

Al-Tijaria ordinary general assembly, approved the recommendation of the Board of Directors of the company to distribute cash dividends at the rate of 3% of the nominal Value per share. Additionally, bonus shares will be issued at the rate of 3%. The extraordinary General assembly approved the amendments of capital based on the



Abdulfatah M. R. Marafie, Chairman. bonus share distribution. Al-Tijaria had previously announced



The ordinary & extraordinary General Assembly meetings in progress. that the financial results for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2024, resulted a net profit of KD 15,594,104 (Fifteen million five hundred ninety-four thousand one

hundred four Kuwaiti Dinars), with a growth of 8.11% compared to 2023. The results also witnessed an improvement in all financial indicators, with an increase in return on shareholders' equity, total assets, and company capital by 6.29%, 5.76%, and 8.11%, respectively, compared to the previous year.

Marafie also added that "the company remains committed to its methodology and strategy based on maintaining the diversity of its real estate and investment portfolio in terms of size, nature of investments, and geographic distribution within a business plan aimed at balancing risks and returns. This involves engaging in promising income-generating investments that benefit our shareholders.

He also highlighted the company's ongoing dedication towards its role in social responsibility and its com-

mitment to implementing corporate governance principles. The company has organized a series of events and initiatives throughout the year across a range of humanitarian, social, environmental, health, and educational initiatives to maintain its commitment to sustainable development by positively contributing towards environmental, social, and governance (ESG).

Marafie concluded his statement by praying to God to protect Kuwait and its people from all harm, and for Kuwait to enjoy peace, safety and stability under the wise leadership of His Highness, the Emir of the country, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister, Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, may God preserve and protect them.

Islamic Finance 2025-2026: Resilient growth amid upcoming headwinds

Kuwait's Islamic Finance sector set for steady growth amid GCC momentum

By S&P Global Ratings

The Islamic finance industry experienced a rapid asset increase in 2024, mainly from growth in banking assets and sukuk owing to higher foreign currency-denominated issuances. S&P Global Ratings expects this growth to continue in 2025 barring any significant macroeconomic or intrinsic disruption.

We have recently revised our oil price assumption to \$65 per barrel for the remainder of 2025 and \$70 per barrel from 2026. This will likely continue to support some growth in most core Islamic economies. Simultaneously, financing needs driven by economic transformation programs will remain high, and the inherent preference for Islamic finance will persist. As a result, despite growing uncertainty, we expect the Islamic finance industry to grow in 2025.

However, a further decline in oil prices could reduce the growth prospects for core Islamic finance economies and markets. In addition, adopting Sharia Standard 62 could disrupt the sukuk market from 2026 by potentially reclassifying the instruments from debt-like to equity-like. But the extent of this will depend on whether the standard is approved, its content, and when it will be implemented. If Standard 62 is adopted as proposed, we anticipate the industry could become more fragmented and less attractive to investors and issuers due to higher sukuk pricing for issuers and fewer fixed-income investors.

Strong But Concentrated Growth
In 2024, the Islamic finance industry's total assets increased by 10.6% compared with 2023, supported by growth in banking assets and the sukuk industry.

Banking assets account for more than half of this increase. Islamic banking assets contributed 60% of industry growth in 2024 compared with 54% in 2023.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) accounted for 81% of this growth, with Saudi Arabia alone responsible for two thirds of it. This

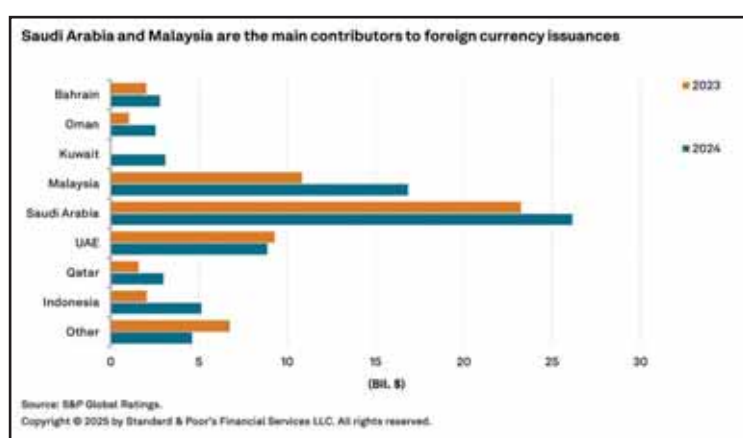
strong performance results from opportunities created by the

Saudi government's Vision 2030 program and the deep integration of the Islamic banking industry in Saudi Arabia, which represented about three-quarters of banking system assets at year-end 2024. Bahrain also experienced significant Islamic finance industry growth, particularly due to Ahli

United Bank's (BBB+/Stable/-) conversion from conventional to Islamic banking. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) also contributed to this growth, thanks to the non-oil economy's strong performance. Elsewhere, we have observed some growth in other countries, particularly in Malaysia and Turkey.

We expect economic growth in Saudi Arabia and the UAE will continue supporting Islamic banking asset expansion in 2025, barring any significant disruptions from global trade tensions or a further decline in oil prices. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 will continue to translate into significant banking system growth, provided it attracts sufficient refinancing sources, including sukuk issuances from the international capital market. In the UAE, the non-oil economy's performance, along with capital expenditure needs across various sectors will further support financing requirements and sukuk issuances in 2025, assuming current market volatility does not have a major impact. In other GCC countries, we expect growth to continue thanks to reforms in Oman, Bahrain, and Kuwait, as well as anticipated increases in gas production in Qatar.

In Asia-Pacific, we expect the Islamic banking industry to grow by high single digits over the next couple of years. Robust demand for Islamic products and services in Malaysia and significant market potential in Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Pakistan support this trend. Nonetheless, we expect Malaysia to continue controlling the majority of Asia-Pacific's banking industry. The financing growth of Islamic banks will continue to outshine



conventional banks' credit growth, facilitating market share gains. However, this growth might be somewhat tempered by local currency volatility, which is also a concern for Türkiye and Egypt. We expect local currency growth in these countries to continue, but overall performance will depend on that of their respective currencies.

Although Türkiye's contribution to Islamic banking growth in 2024 was modest in absolute terms, it ranked as one of the largest contributors to the industry's growth in relative terms.

Outstanding sukuk issuance crossed the \$1 trillion mark. Global sukuk issuance

is likely to reach about \$190 billion-\$200 billion in 2025, assuming current market volatility does not have a major impact, with foreign currency-denominated issuance contributing \$70 billion-\$80 billion. In 2024, total sukuk issuance declined slightly to \$193.4 billion from \$197.8 billion in 2023. However, a notable difference was the 29% rise in foreign currency issuance to \$72.7 billion as of Dec. 31, 2024.

We expect foreign currency-denominated issuance to remain elevated in 2025, provided there are no major disruptions due to the current volatility in global capital markets. Many issuers

sought to benefit from the improving global liquidity conditions in 2024, with major central banks easing their monetary policy. As it stands, we anticipate the Federal Reserve will lower its policy interest rate by just 25 basis points this year but widening spreads may result in higher overall financing costs. However, this is unlikely to significantly hinder the sukuk market's performance since it is primarily driven by high financing needs in core countries, pushing issuers to seize available market opportunities. A significant change in macroeconomic conditions, such as materially lower oil prices or increased geopolitical risks, could lead to a decrease in issuance volume.

Residential mortgage-backed securities could benefit Saudi Arabia's sukuk market. At year-end 2024, banks were sitting on more than \$180 billion in predominantly fixed-rate mortgages that were financed using sources—primarily domestic deposits—with short-term contractual maturities. While we note the behavioral maturity of these deposits is much longer than their contractual maturity, mismatches are still high.

As interest rates decline, banks will be able to resell these loans in the secondary market without incurring losses. A key hurdle remains investor confidence regarding the capacity of banks to foreclose on mortgages in the event of a default. A stronger track record could help kickstart issuances in this segment. In the meantime, banks may rely on backup coverage to cater for the lack of asset foreclosure, provided Sharia scholars approve this. A residential mortgage-backed sukuk market in Saudi Arabia, denominated in riyals or U.S. dollars to leverage the credible peg between the two currencies, could also act as a catalyst for similar movement in the GCC region.

The takaful and fund industries play a small but an important role.

Although their contribution to the industry is small, we expect the asset base in the takaful and fund sectors will continue to grow. We expect takaful to expand annually by 10%-15%, sup-

ported by ongoing business growth and increasing insurance penetration. Investment returns may be volatile in 2025, but we still expect some growth in the fund industry given the dominance of money market and sukuk funds followed by equity funds. The industry could also benefit from stronger disclosure in the fund industry since we are still using estimates to assess its performance.

Overall, we think the industry is likely to experience 9%-10% growth in 2025. Its performance in 2026 will depend on whether Standard 62 is adopted, and if so, its impact on sukuk issuance volumes. We continue to exclude Iran from our calculations due to the lack of disclosure and volatility in the country's exchange rate.

Standard 62 Is Driving Preemptive Market Activity

In a recent public hearing, the Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI) announced it will likely give issuers more time to implement Sharia Standard 62. Issuers will likely have between one and three years to implement the new requirements, depending on AAOIFI's final decision. The standard is supposed to be approved this year, but it's still not clear whether AAOIFI will consider the significant concerns raised by market participants, such as effectively transferring the ownership of underlying assets.

We still think a retroactive application of the standard to existing sukuk is unlikely since it would be subject to investor consent. At the same time, we consider sukuk issuers who are already under financial strain may use the standard to restructure their existing sukuk on the grounds that they do not comply with the new requirements. However, this risk should be mitigated by the fact that a sukuk's legal documents generally include clauses that are designed to prevent the issuer from reneging on its contractual obligations based on noncompliance with Sharia law. Therefore, although we do not currently expect a significant number of sukuk restructurings once the standard is adopted, this could change depending on its final terms.



A group photo of BSK officials, dignitaries, and the Class of 2025 graduates.

Ceremony highlights 48 years of educational excellence

BSK Graduation 2025: A journey of growth and achievement

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: In two unforgettable evenings marked by passion, pride, and perseverance, The British School of Kuwait (BSK) hosted its annual Graduation and Festivals of Achievement 2025 at The Regency Hotel. On the evenings of April 14 and 15, the school celebrated the academic and personal growth of students from Years 11, 12, and 13 – a cohort now ready to embark on the next chapter of their lives.

April 14 was dedicated to recognizing Year 11 students, while the following evening honored the graduates of Years 12 and 13. Each event carried its own unique atmosphere, filled with moments that captured the hopes, dreams, and ambitions of a new generation poised to shape the future.

These ceremonies were more than just an annual ritual; they marked the culmination of a transformative educational journey, a journey where minds were sharpened, characters were shaped, and aspirations took flight. The festivities coincided with the school's 48th anniversary, nearly five decades of excellence in education and were attended by distinguished guests including ambassadors, dignitaries, educators, and proud families.

Throughout both evenings, heartfelt words echoed across the ballroom, from faculty, parents, and guest speakers, all united in honouring a class whose determination, intellect, and compassion reflect a bright promise for tomorrow.

Sheikh Faisal Al-Hamoud Al-Malek Al-Sabah: Nations Thrive Through Knowledge and the Strength of Their Youth

In his keynote address, Sheikh Faisal



US Ambassador to Kuwait, Karen Sasahara

Al-Hamoud Al-Malek Al-Sabah, Advisor at the Amiri Diwan, congratulated the graduates and encouraged them to pursue higher academic goals, including master's and doctoral degrees. He praised the students' efforts, along with the dedication of their families and teachers, highlighting the moving joy reflected in the eyes of proud parents.

He also commended student Fatima Al-Shawaf for her heartfelt recitation of the Holy Quran, promising to honor her personally at the Amiri Diwan in recognition of her talent and commitment.

Reflecting on the role of BSK, Sheikh Faisal described the school as "an esteemed institution with decades of educational expertise," and emphasized the crucial role of knowledge in shaping nations, stating:



A section of the audition.

"No country can advance without the power of learning, the pursuit of knowledge, and the vision of its young people – the nucleus of its future."

US Ambassador Karen Sasahara: Let Passion and Curiosity Lead You

In her address, US Ambassador to Kuwait, Karen Sasahara congratulated the graduates and urged them to stay open to new experiences, embrace discomfort, and allow curiosity to guide them.

"Chase your passion, but remember: passion alone is not enough. It must be paired with guidance, strengthened by discipline, and deepened by commitment," she told the students.

Ambassador Sasahara warmly welcomed those planning to continue their academic journeys at American universities, underscoring the value placed on students who demonstrate

strong academic foundations, global perspectives, and the courage to dream big.

Sadiq Al-Mutawa: Embracing Innovation, Honoring Tradition

Chairman of BSK, Sadiq Al-Mutawa, expressed immense pride in the school's growth and its commitment to modern, high-quality education. Marking 48 years since the school's founding, he highlighted the integration of artificial intelligence into the academic ecosystem.

"AI is no longer a distant concept; it has become an active partner in our decision-making, creativity, and everyday work," he remarked, while reminding graduates of the importance of perseverance and giving back to their communities.

Vera Al-Mutawa: Technology Can Assist You, but Never Replace You



Sheikh Faisal Al-Hamoud Al-Malek Al-Sabah, Advisor at the Amiri Diwan.

Creativity

Vera Al-Mutawa, Founder and Director General of BSK, addressed the graduates with heartfelt pride, commending their transformation into young, confident, and capable individuals.

"As you step into the world, remember that life is all about balance," she said. "Work hard, but don't forget to enjoy the journey. Pursue success, but not at the cost of kindness. Stay connected, not only through screens but through real conversations and meaningful relationships."

While acknowledging the role of artificial intelligence, virtual, and augmented reality in the modern world, she reminded students that no app, shortcut, or chatbot could ever replace their creativity, curiosity, or the joy of discovery.

"Use technology wisely, but never let it control you," she concluded.

Dr. Hamad Yaseen: Seek Passion, Not Just a Job

Dr. Hamad Yaseen, Associate Professor at Kuwait University's Health Sciences Center and Visiting Researcher at Mayo Clinic, encouraged students to embrace challenges as the source of true resilience.

"Persistence is born not from comfort, but from adversity," he noted, urging graduates to never stop learning and to pursue their passions rather than simply seeking a job. He also reminded them that while technology may shape the world, it is human values that will preserve it.

Principal Emma Bowie: Nurturing Thinkers, Innovators, and Future Leaders

Emma Bowie, Principal of BSK, praised the graduates for their exceptional achievements and emphasized the school's dedication to preparing students for a world defined by constant change and infinite opportunity.

"In an era where AI and innovation are reshaping the world at an unprecedented pace, the success of our students will depend not only on what they know but also on what they contribute," she said.

She underlined BSK's mission to foster intellectual growth, emotional resilience, and personal integrity, supported by high expectations and a nurturing, student-centered environment.

"Our commitment is to ensure that every student feels valued, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential. Their success is not a coincidence, but the result of years of love, guidance, and relentless effort," she concluded.



A section of audience at the anti-smoking awareness session.

Empowering youth for a healthier tomorrow

ICSK, Senior hosts student awareness session on smoking and vaping risks

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Indian Doctors Forum, Kuwait in collaboration with The Indian Community School, Senior organized an awareness session on "Smoking and Vaping" for the students of Class XI on Wednesday, 16th April 2025. The session aimed to educate students about the dangers of tobacco use, the growing trend of vaping among youth, and to empower them with the knowledge and skills to make healthier choices.

The Guest Speaker, Dr. Susovana Sujit Nair, Vice President of Indian Doctors Forum, Kuwait & Medical Oncologist, Kuwait Cancer Control Center was welcomed with thunderous applause. The session commenced with Islamic prayer by Mst. Mujataba. The Principal and Senior Administrator of ICSK extended an august welcome to the gathering. He emphasized the critical need to raise awareness about such issues within the school and the wider community.

The highlight of the event was the enlightening address by the Guest Speaker, Dr. Susovana Sujit Nair. She delivered a powerful and engaging presentation that covered a wide range of topics, including the short- and long-term health effects of nicotine, the impact of smoking and vaping on lung and heart health, and the neurological and psychological effects of nicotine, especially on adolescents. She also exposed the manipulative marketing strategies used by tobacco and e-cigarette companies to attract young users, making students aware of how these industries specifically target their age group. Her talk included scientific data, visual aids, and real-life case studies, which made the session highly relatable for the students. The presentation also addressed common myths and misconceptions surrounding vaping and smoking.

Dr. Susovana Sujit Nair provided practical strategies for resisting peer pressure and making informed choices. She



A photo from the event

encouraged students to become advocates for a smoke-free generation and to spread awareness among their peers and families.

The session also featured an interactive Question – Answer segment, where students actively engaged by asking thoughtful questions and sharing their views and concerns. This helped clarify doubts and deepen their understanding of the topic. One of the most meaningful moments of the session was when students took a pledge to stay away from smoking and vaping, vowing to lead healthy lives and contribute to a cleaner, safer environment. The session ended with vote of thanks proposed by Dr. Waseem, Department of Biology.

The event concluded on a highly positive and inspiring note. It not only enriched the students' awareness but also encouraged them to become responsible individuals who value their health and the health of others.

Bold mix of flavor and function

Joe & The Juice launches new 'Steak' sandwich in Kuwait with Kevin Durant

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Light Food, a subsidiary of Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co. (AAW), announced today the launch of Joe & The Juice's new "Steak" sandwich, crafted in partnership with two-time NBA Champion Kevin Durant.

To celebrate the arrival of The Steak in Kuwait, Joe & The Juice hosted a special event at its Murouj branch. Guests, including influencers, basketball players, and fans, enjoyed samples of the new Steak sandwich.

The event also featured a public Highest Jump Challenge, where the winner took home a basketball signed by Kevin Durant.

Kevin Durant's involvement in the creation of "The Steak" reflects a shared focus on performance, simplicity, and high-quality ingredients.

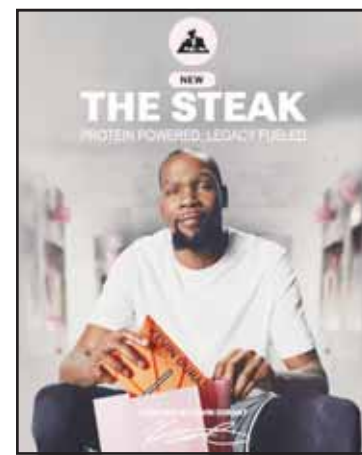
The collaboration highlights Joe & The Juice's commitment to offer-

ing flavorful, functional meals that support active lifestyles.

Kevin Durant stated: "The goal of this collaboration was simple: We got a great team together to create a great product. I hope my fans and fans of Joe & The Juice enjoy it!"

The "Steak" sandwich, which debuted globally on March 5th at Joe & The Juice locations in the U.S. and Europe, delivers a bold mix of flavor and function, boasting over 30 grams of protein. It's made with premium steak, aged Grana Padano cheese, tangy pickles, arugula, tomato, and honey mustard, all served on warm, toasted bread.

The new premium sandwich is now available at all branches in Kuwait and online through the Joe & The Juice app and Deliveroo, for a limited time only until June 30, 2025.



The Steak - Kevin Durant

New degree aligns with Vision 2035

KU launches Data Science & AI Program

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: In line with global and local trends toward digital transformation, the College of Life Sciences at Kuwait University, represented by the Department of Information Sciences, launched the "Data Science and Artificial Intelligence Program" for the 2025/2026 academic year on Monday, April 14, under the patronage and in the presence of the acting Dean of the college Prof. Ahmed Al-Lafi.

According to a press release issued by Kuwait University, the event aimed to support the objectives of the New Kuwait 2035 vision and promote technological innovation in line with the ongoing digital and technological revolution.

The celebration was attended by college leaders and deans from Kuwait University, several academic and administrative staff members, and representatives from various public and private sector entities.

The event began with a speech by Dr. Aseel Al-Munais, a faculty member in the Department of Information Sciences and moderator of the ceremony.

Dr. Al-Munais stressed that the

launch of the Data Science and Artificial Intelligence Program was in line with the goals of the New Kuwait 2035 vision and in response to the rapid scientific and technological advancements in this vital and evolving field.

She added that the program aims to meet labor market needs and contribute effectively to promoting innovation and supporting informed decision-making.

Dr. Abdullah Al-Mutairi, a faculty member in the Department of Information Sciences at the College of Life Sciences, gave a visual presentation titled "Artificial Intelligence and Empowering the Future." The presentation highlighted the role of artificial intelligence in creating new professional opportunities. It emphasized that the Data Science and Artificial Intelligence Program represents a significant qualitative addition to the academic framework and a vital platform for scientific research and technological advancement.

He stressed that the program will offer students an exceptional opportunity to acquire future-ready skills and

specialize in one of the most impactful fields in today's world.

Dr. Bader Ali, a faculty member in the Department of Information Sciences at the College of Life Sciences, stated that this program is the only one at Kuwait University that is specifically designed to prepare qualified Kuwaiti specialists in the field.

He explained that the program was developed in accordance with international standards set by ABET and the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM), ensuring a field-specific curriculum that meets global benchmarks. This paves the way for the department to seek academic accreditation for the program in the future. The program has received positive feedback from international evaluators.

The ceremony included the first symposium titled "Innovating to Advance: Supporting and Empowering Institutions through Data Science and Artificial Intelligence," which included a panel discussion with officials from both government and private sectors on the importance of the program.

Ryan Coogler's film defies trends

'Sinners' surges past 'Minecraft Movie' to lead US box office

NEW YORK, April 21, (AP) — Brand names, not filmmakers or stars, are said to rule the box office these days. But Ryan Coogler's "Sinners," led by twin Michael B. Jordans, proved a bloody exception to modern movie rules, launching with \$45.6 million in ticket sales in US and Canadian theaters, according to studio estimates Sunday.

"Sinners," a Warner Bros. release that cost about \$90 million to produce, was a bold gamble on originality — albeit with genre elements — and one of the most bankable American directors in Coogler. The "Creed" and "Black Panther" director wrote and produced "Sinners," a 1932-set vampire movie about bootlegging brothers (both played by Jordan) who open a juke joint in their Mississippi hometown.

"A Minecraft Movie," the year's biggest Hollywood hit, followed close behind in second, collecting \$41.3 mil-

lion in its third week of release. That gave Warner Bros., after a handful of disappointments, an enviable one-two punch at the box office with one original, director-driven movie and one IP-based property.

"A Minecraft Movie," which Warner Bros. co-produced with Legendary Pictures, has amassed \$720.8 million worldwide in three weeks of release.

Pam Abdy and Mike De Luca, co-chairs of Warner Bros. Motion Picture Group, celebrated the two films' resonance with moviegoers. The studio accounted for a remarkable 64% of the domestic box office for the Easter weekend.

"Movies have the power to transport us to worlds only seen on the big screen, and Warner Bros. Pictures remains committed to bringing singular in-theater experiences to audiences looking for bold movies, both original and those based on beloved existing properties," Abdy and De Luca said in



This image released by Warner Bros Pictures shows Michael B. Jordan, (foreground from left), Michael B. Jordan and Omar Benson Miller in a scene from 'Sinners.' (AP)

a statement Sunday.

But all eyes were on the performance on "Sinners," which Warner Bros. went to extreme lengths to secure. Abdy and De Luca agreed to give

Coogler not just a cut of gross ticket sales but ownership of the film after 25 years — a virtually unheard of concession.

But Coogler and Jordan, whose col-

laborations stretch back to "Fruitvale Station," make up one of the industry's most potent director-actor duos. Reviews (98% "fresh" on Rotten Tomatoes) were stellar for "Sinners" and audiences, too, were enthralled by its supernatural twists. The film earned an "A" CinemaScore from moviegoers.

Overseas, "Sinners" faced a more uphill battle. It collected \$15.4 million in 71 international markets. Domestically, "Sinners" attracted a diverse audience: 38% Black, 35% white, 18% Hispanic and 5% Asian.

Before "Sinners," dual roles had been rough business for Warner Bros. The studio saw flops in both "The Alto Knights" (a period gangster film featuring a doubled Robert De Niro) and "Mickey 17" (a sci-fi movie with two Robert Pattinsons).

But the strong opening for "Sinners," which should be sustained in the coming weeks given the strong word

of mouth, cements Coogler's place as one of a handful of filmmakers whose name draws big audiences. Another would be Jordan Peele, whose "Nope" (2022) debuted similarly with \$44.3 million.

Angel Studios' "The King of Kings," an animated tale of Jesus' life aimed at Christian audiences, capitalized on the Easter weekend, grossing \$17.2 million in its second week of release. That was nearly equal to its opening weekend (\$19.1 million), and brought "The King of Kings" to a domestic total of \$45.3 million.

Bleecker Street's "The Wedding Banquet," Andrew Ahn's reimagining of Ang Lee's 1993 queer comedy of errors, opened on 1,142 North American screens with \$922,906 in ticket sales. "The Wedding Banquet," a hit at the Sundance Film Festival, stars Lily Gladstone, Bowen Yang, Kelly Marie Tran and newcomer Han Gihan.

Variety

LONDON: Some of the fastest canines on four very short legs have raced for glory in Scotland's annual Corgi Derby.

The Musselburgh Racecourse Corgi Derby was first held in 2022 to mark Queen Elizabeth II's 70 years on the throne. The late monarch



Queen Elizabeth II

was a devoted corgi fan who owned almost 30 of the breed over the decades, along with a few dorgis — a corgi-dachshund cross. Four-year-old Juno beat a 16-strong field of dashing dogs dressed in bright sweaters over the 230-foot (70-meter) race on Saturday at the racecourse outside Edinburgh. She came from behind in the final stretch to beat last year's winner, Rodney.

The winner and her owners, Alisdair Tew and Fran Brandon, were presented with a trophy and dog treats by tennis coach Judy Murray, mother of Scottish star Andy Murray. (AP)

ALGIERS: The Algerian Ministry of Culture said the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization approved "Kitab Al-Qanun fi Al-Tibb" (the Book of Medical Laws - Book Four) as a new entry to its Memory of the World Program.

Algeria had applied for adding this rare manuscript, which dates back to the medieval age, to the program due to its historical and scientific significance, the ministry said in a statement on Saturday.

The manuscript grew in importance over the centuries, both because of its worldwide medical usefulness and because of its author — Asaad bin Elias bin Jarjis, Muwaffaq al-Din Ibn al-Mutran, the personal physician of Sultan Saladin (1138-1193).

The manuscript, one of the cultural and scientific treasures of Algeria's National Library, materializes the constructive exchanges between the Islamic and Christian civilizations, the Ministry noted. (KUNA)

TETELA DEL VOLCAN, Mexico: Every year, the winding mountain streets of Tetela del Volcán are filled with a crush of vivid yellows, purples, greens, oranges and blues.

Hundreds of what appear to be human-sized caterpillars with elaborate stripes bob along the road.

Shaggy tissue paper hats resembling caterpillars sit atop the heads of men and women wearing bearded and mustached leather masks, and colored capes adorned with images of Jesus and Virgin Mary. The characters they portray are known as "sayones". These elaborate costumes, imitations of Roman soldiers, are part of a cherished Easter celebration dating back 350 years in the central Mexican town. Residents of town, which sits pressed up next to Mexico's active Popocatepetl volcano, prepare for months for the three-day celebration every Easter weekend. (AP)

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia: The Saudi Cultural Development Fund (CDF) has announced its participation in Expo 2025 Osaka as part of the Saudi Pavilion, taking place in Japan from April 13 to October 13, 2025. CDF's presence at the Expo underscores Saudi Arabia's commitment to developing the cultural sector and strengthening its role as a driver of economic growth and long-term sustainability-aligned with the National Culture Strategy and Vision 2030's goals for economic diversification.

In addition to reinforcing its role as a key financial enabler of Saudi Arabia's cultural sector, CDF will contribute to highlighting Saudi Arabia's rich heritage and flourishing cultural identity, shaped by the journey of Vision 2030. Furthermore, the participation aims to welcome global investment, foster cultural entrepreneurship, and encourage innovation-while showcasing the sector's potential to contribute to sustainable development. (AP)

Theater



Puppeteers move cardboard animals on the street of Lagos, Nigeria, Saturday, April 19, 2025, as part of 'The Herds,' a moving theatre performance that started its journey from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the Arctic Circle in a bid to bring attention to the climate crisis. (AP)

Floating realities, sinking futures

'The Herds' takes audiences into the heart of climate change in Nigeria

MAKOKO, Nigeria, April 21, (AP) — Several canoes paddle toward Makoko, a vast floating slum built on stilts in the lagoon at one end of Nigeria's economic hub of Lagos. Riding on the vessels are giant cardboard puppet animals along with their puppeteers dressed in black.

Once on the water, the animals — a gorilla, a leopard, an elephant, a wildebeest, a giraff and a donkey — all come alive. The gorilla hoots, the donkey brays and wags its tail as the leopard bends its neck toward the surface as if to drink but halts just before its face meets the water and then turns to look around.

It is Saturday, the second day of "The Herds" theatrical tour stop in Nigeria on a journey 20,000 kilometers (12,427 miles) from Africa's Congo Basin to the Arctic Circle with puppet animals. It's a journey organizers say is meant to bring attention to the climate crisis and "renew our bond with the natural world."

The tour started last week in Kinshasa, the capital of Congo, and will continue across the world with Dakar, the Senegalese capital, as the next stop.

The story goes that the animals will be forced out of their natural habitats due to global warming and displaced north, stopping in cities along the way and being joined by more animals.

The sprawling slum of Makoko — an old fishing village — was perfect to illustrate that because it has for many years shown resilience in the face of climate change, often finding

ways to adapt to extreme weather, said Amir Nizar Zuabi, "The Herds" artistic director.

Dubbed the Venice of Africa, the Makoko slum is a low-lying community vulnerable to rising sea levels and flooding. Lagos itself is no stranger to the impacts of climate change, with roads and houses across the coastal city often engulfed during annual flooding.

"We are on the edge of one of the greatest global crises, and ... I think the global south offers a lot of knowledge and a lot of resilience," Zuabi said, referring to developing countries in the Southern Hemisphere with lower incomes and higher poverty rates compared to the "global north."

Connects

Spread out beneath the Third Mainland Bridge that connects much of Lagos, Makoko came alive as "The Herds" moved in. People poked their heads out of windows in awe of the exhibition. Children and women stood on the plank porches outside their rickety wood houses, watching as the animals paddled in through the narrow waterways. Some mimicked the animals while others applauded and waved at them.

"It looked so real," Samuel Shemede, a 22-year-old resident of Makoko, said in awe of the puppets. "I had never seen something like that before in my life. It is not real, but they made it look so real."

As the tour left Makoko and moved to the Yaba suburb, the city's notorious traffic stood still for the

puppets as they towered over people and vehicles. The big animals had been joined by smaller primates like monkeys who hoot noisily, prance around, and even dance.

The tour was punctuated by dance and choreography performances from a local theater group whose performers, clothed in beige sack material and straw hats, intermittently charged toward the puppets as though they were about to attack them.

As they journeyed through the streets, spectators were treated to chants from the Hausa language song "Amfara," which loosely translates to "We have started."

At a time when African nations are losing up to 5% of their gross domestic product every year as they bear a heavier burden than the rest of the world from climate change, "The Herds" organizers said it is important to break down climate change and its impacts in a way that many people can relate to.

"A lot of climate debate is about science ... and scientific words don't mean anything for most people," Zuabi, the artistic director, said. "I wanted to create a piece of art that talks about nature, beauty and how animals are wild and majestic."

The animals invading cities is a metaphor for abnormal things now becoming normal as the world deals with climate change, he said. "And hopefully this becomes a way to talk about what we are going to lose if we continue burning fossil fuels."

Music

From heartbreak to hope

Davido's '5ive' ushers in a new era for Afrobeats icon

NEW YORK, April 21, (AP) — Afrobeats may be the hot sound of the moment, but Davido remembers a very recent past when music from Africa wasn't embraced globally, amid a perception the continent was one of only destitute poverty and primitive lands.

"I remember when Africans used to lie that they were Jamaicans," laughed the Atlanta-born "Fall" singer, who grew up between the US and Nigeria. "The narrative has immensely changed. And thanks to the people who are behind this, because it's not governments ... it's the innovators. The musicians. The lawyers. The doctors in America, pushing the narrative of being African."

The Grammy-nominated artist, who has multiple 100 million-streamed songs on Spotify and is often credited as playing a vital role in the global expansion of Afrobeats, drops his new album, "5ive," on Friday. Following 2023's "Timeless," the 17-track project boasts an international flare with features from Grammy winners Chris Brown and Victoria Monét, as well as Becky G and Afrobeats heavyweights Omah Lay and Victory. Davido began with 80 potential songs, then crowd-sourced opinions from family and friends, using a ranking system to help curate the album.

Suffering heartbreak in 2022 after his three-year-old son died from a drowning accident, the 32-year-old now looks at life with new perspective. "My life was going so fast ... now, things are clearer," said Davido, who now has five living children. "After the crazy loss we had, God gave us twins: a boy and a girl. So, life is just different now — the importance of family and good people around you. I feel like the energy is very, very important, and I feel like that energy is what I used to record this album."

The Associated Press spoke with the megastar about the popularity of Afrobeats, unity and inspiring through grief. The conversation has been edited for clarity and brevity.

Davido: It's my fifth album. But after I called it "5ive," I went to go and do more research on the number five and what it entails, which is a symbol of hope, grace, change, growth.

Davido: Not over-loving the conception of Western validation ... one song blows up, two songs blows up — only two songs — and they're running to America to do a tour. What happened to Ibado? What happened to the other places in Nigeria?

The most important thing that will make us last longer is if we don't forget where we came from.

Davido: Recently, the conversation has been had ... when I see Bad Bunny working with Peso (Pluma), and Peso working with Farruko, I'm like, yo, there's so much unity.

Imagine if all of us came together and busted out a tour? ... We're older now, we are more mature, so I feel like maybe in the greatest future, you might see that happen.

Davido: They can't do it better than us! I say this to Chris (Brown) every time we play around, I'm like, "Chris, I can't sing R&B like you, but never in your life can you sing Afrobeats like me!" (laughs) I don't see any problem with it as long as it's done right and everybody's credit is due ... at least come use an African producer.

Davido: Music-wise, I don't think it changed a bit because when I get to my artist mode, nothing distracts me. ... When I dropped the "Timeless" album and everything went crazy — like, the most streamed album in the (first) week in Africa ever — we celebrated the album with the people that were with us when we were in trying times.

I feel like that was the beauty of it. And apart from that, I just want people to just look at my story and know that you can overcome anything.



Davido



This cover image released by Sony shows '5ive' by Davido. (AP)

Health minister reaffirms commitment to boosting Kuwait's pharma sector

Pharma Conference promotes scientific collaboration, growth

By Marwa Al-Bahravi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi affirmed the ministry's keenness to support all efforts aimed at developing the pharmaceutical sector, improving the work environment, and encouraging scientific research.

In his speech at the inauguration of the second edition of the Kuwait Pharmaceutical Conference on Sunday, Dr. Al-Awadhi highlighted the ministry's efforts to adopt international best practices to ensure sustainable development, high-quality performance, and the ability to address health challenges efficiently.

Dr. Al-Awadhi expressed his great pride in sponsoring the conference, as it represents the culmination of the tireless efforts of a select group of national specialists. He highlighted that the event serves as a high-level scientific and professional platform that brings together pioneers from the pharmaceutical sector both inside and outside Kuwait, adding that it provides a unique opportunity to enhance academic achievement, exchange experiences, and build professional partnerships.

Dr. Al-Awadhi stated that the pharmaceutical sector in Kuwait is currently witnessing rapid advancements and qualitative leaps in line with global progress in health sciences, and contributing to the improvement of quality of the care provided to both citizens and residents, adding that this progress has been particularly evident in several important areas in recent times.

He explained that the conference complements the ongoing journey of scientific excellence in the field of pharmaceutical services. Its goal is to highlight the latest developments and exceptional, tireless efforts that contribute to the quality of care provided. Through discussion panels and scientific sessions, the conference aims to strengthen the integration between health services and scientific research.

Meanwhile, the conference chair Dr. Ahmed Taqi stated that this year's program includes scientific lectures, workshops, and symposiums presented by over 40 prominent specialists. He indicated that these sessions will be divided into four main themes - regulatory and economic issues, clinical practices, education and training, and the practice of the pharmacy profession.



A group photo taken at the opening of the Kuwait Pharmaceutical Conference on Sunday, April 20.

Photo by Samer Shiqer

Cause sought

US probes rise in autism cases

WASHINGTON, April 21, (AP): Health secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. warned that children in the US are being diagnosed with autism at an "alarming rate," promising on Wednesday to conduct exhaustive studies to identify any environmental factors that may cause the developmental disorder.

His call comes the day after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a report that found an estimated 1 in 31 US children have autism, a marked increase from 2020.

Autism experts applaud efforts to further understand the condition, but say the number of reported cases began to balloon as the definition of the condition expanded to include mild cases.

"Autism destroys families," Kennedy said. "More importantly, it destroys our greatest resource, which is our children. These are children who should not be suffering like this."

Kennedy described autism as a "preventable disease," although researchers and scientists have identified genetic factors that are associated with it. Autism is not considered a disease, but a complex disorder that affects the brain. Cases range widely in severity, with symptoms that can include delays in language, learning, and social or emotional skills. Some autistic traits can go unnoticed well into adulthood.

Those who have spent decades researching autism have found no single cause. Besides genetics, scientists have identified various possible factors, including the age of a child's father, the mother's weight, and whether she had diabetes or was exposed to certain chemicals.

Kennedy said his wide-ranging plan to determine the cause of autism will look at all of those environmental factors, and others. He had previously set a September deadline for determining what causes autism, but said Wednesday that by then, his department will determine at least "some" of the answers.

Kids improve motor skills, social interaction

Horse therapy program brings joy to children with learning disabilities

WINDHOEK, Namibia, April 21, (AP): Susan de Meyer's horses have different effects on different children. Hyperactive kids learn to be a little quieter around them while nonverbal children are moved to communicate and to bond with them.

De Meyer runs a program in the southern African country of Namibia that harnesses the power but also the gentleness of horses to help children with learning disabilities and conditions like ADHD and autism.

Each weekday morning, de Meyer's dusty paddock just outside the capital, Windhoek, is enlivened by a group of eight to 10 children from one of the special schools she helps. The children ride the horses, groom them, stroke them and often, de Meyer says, talk to them.

De Meyer grew up on a farm surrounded by horses and they've always been part of her life. She said they have a quality that is invaluable: They don't judge the children, no matter how different they are.

"The horse is the hero in this whole situation because these kids don't want to be around a lot of people," de Meyer said.

De Meyer's program, "Enabling Through the Horse," is supported by the Namibian Equestrian Federation and won an award last year from the International Equestrian Federation because it "underlines the wonderful characteristics of the horse in exuding sensitivity and intuition."



Immanuel Hoxobeb assists Alicia who participates in the 'Enabling Through the Horse,' therapy program outside Windhoek, Namibia, on Feb. 18, 2025. (AP)

Horse therapy has been promoted by autism groups and those that work with children with learning disabilities as having a positive impact. And animal therapy in general has been found to be useful in many instances, like dogs that help military veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder and therapy cats that are taken to hospitals and nursing homes.

Some survivors of the devastating 2023 Hawaii wildfires found relief in horse therapy while grieving loved ones they had lost.

De Meyer jokes she has "two-and-a-half horses." These include two Arabians - a white mare named Faranah and a brown gelding, Lansha - while the "half" is a miniature horse called Bonzi, who is about head-high for a 5-year-old.

Pakistan begins 2nd anti-polio vaccination drive

ISLAMABAD, April 21, (AP): Pakistan began Monday a weeklong second nationwide vaccination campaign aimed at protecting 45 million children from polio, officials said.

According to the World Health Organization, Pakistan and neighboring Afghanistan remain the only two countries where the potentially fatal, paralyzing virus hasn't been stopped.

Since January, Pakistan has reported only six polio cases. Last year, the South Asian country witnessed a surge in polio cases, which jumped to 74, though it reported only one polio case in 2021.

Pakistan's Health Minister, Mustafa Kamal, has urged parents to cooperate with the medical staff, who visit door-to-door to vaccinate children. Health workers are often attacked

by militants who falsely claim that vaccination efforts are part of a Western plot to sterilize Muslim children.

On Monday, police killed a militant when he opened fire on officers assigned to protect health workers on the polio drive in Azam Warsak, a district in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, according to local police chief, Alamgir Mahsud. He said all the officers were unharmed.

Meta improves teen safety

Instagram uses AI to identify teens pretending to be adults

NEW YORK, April 21, (AP): Instagram is beginning to test the use of artificial intelligence to determine if kids are lying about their ages on the app, parent company Meta Platforms said on Monday.

Meta has been using AI to determine people's ages for some time, the company said, but photo and video-sharing app will now "proactively" look for teen accounts it suspects belong to teenagers even if they entered an inaccurate birthdate when they signed up.

If it is determined that a user is misrepresenting their age, the account will automatically become a teen account, which has more restrictions than an adult account. Teen accounts are private by default. Private messages are restricted so teens can only receive them from people they follow or are already connected to. "Sensitive content," such as videos of people fighting or those promoting cosmetic procedures, will be limited, Meta said. Teens will also get notifications if they are on Instagram for more than 60 minutes and a "sleep mode" will be enabled that turns off notifications and sends auto-replies to direct messages from 10 p.m. until 7 a.m.

Meta says it trains its AI to look for signals, such as the type of content the account interacts, profile information and when the account was created, to determine the owner's age.

The heightened measures arrive as social media companies face increased scrutiny over how their platform affects the mental health and well-being of younger users. A growing number of states are also trying to pass age verification laws, although they have faced court challenges.

Meta and other social media companies support putting the onus on app stores to verify ages amid criticism that they don't do enough

to make their products safe for children - or verify that no kids under 13 use them.

Instagram will also send notifications to parents "with information about how they can have conversations with their teens on the importance of providing the correct age online," the company said.

Meanwhile, a federal judge permanently struck down an Ohio law on Thursday that would have required children and teens under 16 to get parental consent to use social media apps.

US District Court Judge Algenon Marbley's decision came in a lawsuit filed by NetChoice, a trade group representing TikTok, Snapchat, Meta and other major tech companies. The organization's complaint argued that the law unconstitutionally impedes free speech and is overly broad and vague.

The state contends the law is needed to protect children from the harms of social media. Marbley said that the state's effort, while laudable, went too far.

"This court finds, however, that the Act as drafted fails to pass constitutional muster and is constitutionally infirm," he wrote, adding that even the government's "most noble entreaties to protect its citizenry" must abide by the U.S. Constitution.

Bethany McCorkle, a spokesperson for Republican Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost, said, "We're reviewing the decision and will determine the next steps."

The law was originally set to take effect Jan. 15, 2024, but Marbley placed an immediate hold on enforcing it that he later extended. It is similar to ones enacted in other states, including California, Arkansas and Utah, where NetChoice lawsuits have also succeeded in blocking such laws, either permanently or temporarily.

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Last-gasp Valverde keeps Real in title hunt

Suspended Mbappé jeered by fans

MADRID, April 21, (AP): Still upset at their team's mid-week exit from the Champions League, Real Madrid fans jeered suspended Kylian Mbappé and then cheered Federico Valverde after he scored late in a 1-0 win over Athletic Bilbao in the Spanish league. Midtable Osasuna won 3-2 at last-placed Valladolid, which has lost 12 of its last 13 matches. Osasuna has won two in a row after nine matches without a win across all tournaments.

Sevilla, sitting in 15th place, drew 1-1 at home against 18th-placed Alaves.

The narrow victory for second-placed Madrid kept some pressure on leader Barcelona.

Mbappé, serving a red-card suspension, was jeered by many fans at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium four days after he had already been booted in Madrid's 2-1 second-leg loss to Arsenal in the quarterfinals of the Champions League. The Spanish powerhouse was eliminated 5-1 on aggregate from a competition it has won a record 15 times.

"We did well today," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said. "We wanted to win again and rebound from the elimination. The team came through and Fede was key. This victory gives us a boost."

Valverde scored with a well-placed shot into the top corner from the right edge of the penalty area three minutes into second-half stoppage time.

The Bernabeu was mostly behind the team on Sunday, but some fans jeered when Mbappé was shown in the stadium on the large video screens.

Vinicius Júnior, who also struggled on Wednesday but impressed on Sunday, had a goal disallowed around the 80th because of an offside by Endrick in the buildup. Vinicius reached 200 wins with Madrid.

Jude Bellingham, playing in a false-nine position in attack, also performed well for Madrid, which faces Barcelona in the Copa del Rey final on Saturday in Seville.

"He played well in that position," Ancelotti said. "We have done well with the formation in the past."

Defender Antonio Rüdiger played his 150th game with Madrid.

The victory moved Madrid back within four points of Barcelona, which rallied to defeat Celta Vigo 4-3 on Saturday. Third-placed Atletico Madrid stayed 10 points off the lead after losing 1-0 at Las Palmas. Fourth-placed Athletic is six points behind Atletico.

"The goal didn't want to come until Valverde once again came up with a wonder goal, like he does best," Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois said.

"This was a very important win, we want to keep fighting. Barça won yesterday and it was our turn to win."

Fifth-placed Villarreal, five points behind Athletic with a game in hand,



Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham, right, and Athletic Bilbao's Mikel Vesga jump for the ball during the Spanish La Liga soccer match between Real Madrid and Athletic Bilbao at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium in Madrid. (AP)

was held to a 2-2 draw with midtable Real Sociedad.

Athletic, which had only one attempt on target at the Bernabeu, was coming off two victories in a row in all competitions.

Among those in attendance at the Bernabeu were tennis player Novak Djokovic and gymnast Simone Biles, who were in Madrid for the Laureus Awards.

Cavaliers draw first blood against Heat

OKC routs Memphis for fifth-biggest margin of win in postseason history



Golden State Warriors' Stephen Curry (30) scores against Houston Rockets' Tari Eason (17) and Jalen Green (4) during the first half of Game 1 of an NBA basketball first-round playoff series in Houston. (AP)

OKLAHOMA CITY, April 21, (AP): The Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Memphis Grizzlies 131-80 in Game 1 of their Western Conference playoff series on Sunday, the fifth-biggest margin of victory in NBA postseason history.

Jalen Williams scored 20 points and Chet Holmgren had 19 points and 10 rebounds.

Oklahoma City, which finished the regular-season with a league-best 68-14 record, looked every bit the part of an overall No. 1 seed.

Oklahoma City's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, the league's scoring champion with nearly 33 points per game, scored just 15. The Thunder still shot 50.5% from the field.

Ja Morant scored 17 points for Memphis on just 6-for-17 shooting. Jaren Jackson Jr., who averaged just over 22 points in the regular season, scored four points on 2-for-13 shooting. Marvin Bagley III also scored 17, but the Grizzlies shot just 34.4% overall.

There have been two 58-point playoff margins in NBA history: Denver beating New Orleans 121-63 on April 27, 2009, and the Minneapolis Lakers beating the St. Louis Hawks 133-75 on March 19, 1956.

The Los Angeles Lakers beat Golden State by 56 (126-70) on April 21, 1973, and the Chicago Bulls beat the Milwaukee Bucks by 54 (120-66) on April 30, 2015.

And now, a 51-point game - where the Thunder had it well in

hand by early in the second quarter.

This was Memphis' first playoff game under interim coach Tuomas Iisalo. He coached just nine NBA regular-season games before the play-in games.

Game 2 is Tuesday.

Cavaliers 121, Heat 100

In Cleveland, Donovan Mitchell scored 30 points, Ty Jerome had 16 of his 28 points in the fourth quarter and the Cleveland Cavaliers beat the Miami Heat in Game 1 of the Eastern Conference first-round playoff series.

It was the seventh straight series where Mitchell has scored at least 30 points in Game 1, tying Michael Jordan, who had two streaks of seven games.

Bam Adebayo had 24 points and Tyler Herro added 21 for the Heat. They are the first No. 10 seed to advance to the playoffs out of the Play-In Tournament.

Darius Garland added 27 for the Cavaliers, who host Game 2 on Wednesday night. Garland and Jerome each had five 3-pointers for Cleveland, and the Cavaliers were 18 of 43 from beyond the arc.

Warriors 95, Rockets 85

In Houston, Stephen Curry scored 31 points and the Golden State Warriors built a huge lead and held on to beat the Houston Rockets in Game 1 of the first-round playoff series.

The seventh-seeded Warriors led by 23 in the third quarter, but second-seeded Houston cut it to

69-60 entering the fourth.

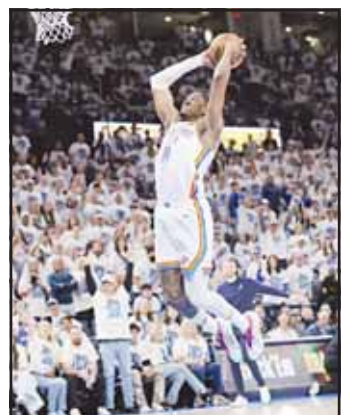
A basket by Amen Thompson with about 5 1/2 minutes remaining got the Rockets four. Curry hit his fifth 3-pointer of the night a few seconds later to make it 82-75.

The Rockets cut it to four again with about 2 1/2 minutes left on a 3 by Fred VanVleet. This time Moses Moody hit a 3-pointer to start a 7-0 run that made it 91-80 and sent fans streaming for the exits.

Game 2 of the best-of seven series is Wednesday night in Houston.

It was the 100th career playoff coaching victory for Golden State's Steve Kerr, who moved into a tie with Larry Brown for sixth-most playoff wins.

Curry was 12 of 19 from the



Oklahoma City Thunder forward Jalen Williams goes up for a dunk during the first half in Game 1 of an NBA first-round playoff series against the Memphis Grizzlies in Oklahoma City. (AP)

field, hitting 5 of 9 3-pointers. Jimmy Butler added 25 points, seven rebounds, six assists and five steals in his playoff debut for the Warriors after joining them in a trade from Miami in February.

Celtics 103, Magic 86

In Boston, Derrick White scored 30 points, Jayson Tatum had 17 points and finished the game after a scary late fall, and the Boston Celtics beat the Orlando Magic 103-86 in Game 1 of their first-round playoff series.

Payton Pritchard added 19 points off the bench for Boston, which hosts Game 2 on Wednesday night. Jaylen Brown played 31 minutes and had 16 points on 6-of-14 shooting after missing the final three games of the regular season due to a lingering knee issue.

With Boston leading 89-73 with 8:28 remaining, Tatum went up for a dunk and was hit hard by Kentavious Caldwell-Pope as he tried to block it. Tatum landed awkwardly on his right side.

He stayed down briefly before eventually rising to his feet, clenching his right hand. After a video review by referees, Caldwell-Pope's foul was upgraded to a flagrant foul. Tatum subsequently missed the two ensuing free throws but remained in the game.

Paolo Banchero led the Magic with 36 points and 11 rebounds. Franz Wagner added 23 points for Orlando, which has not made it out of the first round of the playoffs since the 2009-10 season.

Kuwait Handball League paused ahead of Arab Cup



Players in action during the handball league match in Kuwait.

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Kuwait Handball League - both Premier and First Division - will pause after today's matches to allow the national team to prepare for the 10th Arab Cup, which Kuwait will host from May 4 to 12 at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex.

The Premier League will resume on May 16, while the First Division will return on May 14.

The Arab Cup will feature nine teams: Kuwait (host), Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE.

The Kuwaiti national team, led by

newly appointed Icelandic coach Aron Kristjánsson and his Danish assistant Ansen, is entering intensive preparations. The official tournament draw will take place on April 26.

In the first round of the Premier League's second stage, Kuwait Club claimed a dominant 40-29 win over Al-Sulaibikhat. Burgan edged Al-Salmiya 31-30, while Kazma narrowly defeated Al-Arabi 30-29.

Kuwait Club remains atop the standings with 38 points, followed by Burgan (31), Kazma (26), Al-Salmiya (21), and Al-Sulaibikhat (18), with Al-Arabi close behind on goal difference.

Today's Premier League fixtures include Al-Fahaheel vs. Al-Yarmouk and Al-Sahel vs. Al-Qadisiya.

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Al-Qadsiya player dribbles past an opponent during the Zain Premier League match between Qadsiya and Tadamon.

Sports

Al-Qadsiya dominates Tadamon

Excitement builds in Zain Premier League as Al-Arabi narrows gap with Kuwait Club

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: As the second round of the Zain Premier League Championship Group concluded, the competition intensified between the top two teams, Kuwait Club and Al-Arabi. Al-Arabi trimmed the points gap to just two after securing a hard-fought 3-2 victory over Al-Salmiya, building on Kuwait Club's 2-2 draw with Al-Fahaheel earlier.

Following a four-point gap after the first round, Al-Arabi had hoped for other teams' help to halt Kuwait Club's momentum. With a draw against Al-Fahaheel, Al-Arabi successfully stopped Kuwait Club's progress, much like it did with Al-Green, leaving the title race in Kuwait Club's hands. The team now controls its own destiny for the league title.

Kuwait Club, still at the top of the table with 51 points, failed to impress in its draw with Al-

Fahaheel. Despite dominating possession for much of the match, it struggled to break down Al-Fahaheel's defense, with several scoring chances wasted. However, Kuwait Club still found a way to breach the formidable Ahmed Adi, Al-Fahaheel's goalkeeper, and came away with a crucial point. Meanwhile, Al-Fahaheel, in fifth place with 30 points, proved tough competition and made it clear it won't be an easy opponent in its upcoming Crown Prince Cup quarterfinal against Al-Arabi.

Al-Arabi, currently second with 49 points, put on a commanding first-half performance against Al-Salmiya, scoring three goals and missing several others. However, it was nearly caught off guard in the closing stages, with Al-Salmiya scoring two late goals. Despite the pressure, Al-Arabi held on for the win.

In the third spot, Al-Qadsiya (38 points) delivered a dominant 5-0 win over sixth-placed Al-Tadamon (20 points), solidifying its third-place position. The team's coach, Zeljko Petrovic, also took the opportunity to rotate his squad, giving substitute players like Faisal Al-Shatti, Khaled Sabah, and Jassim Al-Matar valuable match experience ahead of the Crown Prince Cup quarterfinal clash with Al-Salmiya.

Similarly, Al-Salmiya (32 points) rotated their lineup, with coach Ante Miša fielding substitutes such as Saif Al-Hashan and Yousef Al-Onaizan, to prepare for the upcoming match against Al-Qadsiya. Al-Qadsiya's Rashed Al-Dosari earned the Best Player of the Round award for his outstanding performance against Al-Tadamon. Al-Dosari was instrumental in several of the team's five goals, showcasing his influence throughout the match.



Al-Arabi player tries to bend the ball over the defensive wall.

Piastri wins Saudi GPrix, takes championship lead



Red Bull driver Max Verstappen of the Netherlands, left, steers his car followed by McLaren driver Oscar Piastri of Australia during the Formula One Saudi Arabian Grand Prix at the Jeddah Corniche Circuit in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Inset: Piastri of Australia celebrates on the podium after winning the Formula One Saudi Arabian Grand Prix. (AP)

Verstappen's off-track incident costs him victory

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia, April 21, (AP): Oscar Piastri has shown he has the pace to fight for the Formula 1 title. In winning the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix, he showed he can win an argument, too.

For the first time this season, a penalty played a key role in deciding a race win as Piastri went top of the standings with his victory.

Piastri's two earlier wins this season had been dominant drives from pole position. This time, he had to get past four-time champion Max Verstappen.

Verstappen started on pole but went off the track when battling for the lead with Piastri at the

very first corner. He stayed in front but got a five-second penalty. Piastri argued he had gotten in front of Verstappen on the inside of the corner and deserved the place.

"Once I got on the inside, I wasn't coming out of turn one in second," Piastri said.

"I tried my best. Obviously, the stewards had to get involved. I thought I was plenty far enough up, and that's what won me the race."

Charles Leclerc was third for Ferrari, and Piastri's McLaren teammate, Lando Norris, finished fourth thanks to a smart strategy and overtaking. Norris had started 10th following a crash in qualifying.

It was the second win in a row for Piastri, who took the victory in Bahrain last week and has three wins from five races this year. He'd only won two

before this season.

Piastri leads the standings by 10 points from Norris, with Verstappen two points further back in third.

Piastri was three points behind Norris going into Sunday's race, partly because of a costly spin at his home race in Australia, the first GP of the season.

He becomes the first Australian to lead the F1 standings since Mark Webber, who is now Piastri's manager, in 2010 as a Red Bull driver. No Australian has won the title since Alan Jones in 1980.

Piastri said the penalty was what gave him the win. He had problems keeping up with Verstappen's car before the pit stops without damaging his tires.

Al-Jahra bounces back

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Al-Jahra bounced back from its recent setback, securing a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Al-Sahel in the 14th round of the Zain First Division League.

In another match of the round, Al-Shabab and Burgan played to a 1-1 draw at Al-Sahel Stadium.

The win marked Al-Jahra's return to form after a 2-0 defeat to Burgan in the previous round. With the victory, Al-Jahra extended its lead at the top of the standings, now with 18 points, three ahead of both Al-Shabab and Burgan, who sit at 15 points each. Al-Sahel, currently in fifth place with 10 points, has seen its hopes of securing one of the two Premier League promotion spots



Players fighting for the ball during the Zain First Division match.

dwindle significantly.

Fourth-placed Al-Sulaibikhat, with 14 points, had a bye this round but will face a crucial match against Al-Jahra next Tuesday in the 15th round. On the same day, Al-Sulaibikhat will also meet Al-Sahel and Burgan.

Al-Salama confirms 'future' at Al-Arabi amid transfer rumors

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Al-Arabi's Bandar Al-Salama addressed rumors surrounding his potential transfer to Al-Qadsiya, confirming his commitment to the club. "Any player would be honored to play for either Al-Qadsiya or Al-Arabi. But for now, I am staying with Al-Arabi," he stated.

Reflecting on his team's recent victory over Al-Salmiya, which narrowed the gap with leaders Kuwait to just two points, Al-Salama acknowledged the timing of the win. "It came at the right time, and our ambition is to compete in all competitions this season," he said.

He also took the opportunity to congratulate his teammates, the coaching staff, the board of directors, and the fans for their collective effort in securing the win, expressing hope that the team will maintain these strong results in the upcoming rounds.

Looking ahead, Al-Salama emphasized that the focus is now on their upcoming match against Al-Fahaheel in the quarterfinals of the Crown Prince Cup. He expressed confidence that the



Bandar Al-Salama

team would secure a victory and advance to the semifinals.

Best of the Rest

US wins women's hockey worlds: Tessa Janecke scored the winner as the United States prevailed in overtime against defending champion Canada 4-3 to win the women's ice hockey world championship.

Janecke struck with 2:54 left in overtime for the Americans to claim their 11th title at the worlds.

Taylor Heise set up the winning goal in the gold-medal game.

With Sarah Fillier going to the bench, Canadian defenseman Jocelyne Larocque was pressured behind the net and sent a pass up the boards, with Heise intercepting the pass at the right point inside the blue line and feeding Janecke to score into the open left side of the net.

Janecke immediately celebrated her third goal of the tournament by throwing her stick into the stands.

"It's just sweeter, coming back from losing last year and being able to persevere," Janecke said. (AP)

□ □ □

Liverpool needs one more win: The Premier League title is so close Liverpool can almost touch it.

Trent Alexander-Arnold's second-half strike in Liverpool's 1-0 victory over Leicester on Sunday pushed the Merseyside club to within one more win of a record-equaling 20th English league crown.

It would not even require that if second-placed Arsenal loses to Crystal Palace on Wednesday. But regardless of any other result, Liverpool knows victory against Tottenham at Anfield next Sunday will be enough to seal the title.

"One win away now, it's very close," said Alexander-Arnold, who tore his jersey off in celebration after his decisive goal. Arsenal had ensured Liverpool would have to wait a while longer for its crowning moment after routing Ipswich 4-0 earlier Sunday. And for long periods at the King Power Stadium, Leicester threatened to frustrate the league leader - even having a Conor Coady goal disallowed before Alexander-Arnold's winner.

Defeat confirmed 2016 league champion Leicester's relegation. Wolves sealed top-flight safety by beating Manchester United 1-0 after Pablo Sarabia's brilliant second-half free kick. (AP)

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Italy postpones matches: The Italian soccer league postponed its games scheduled for Monday following the death of Pope Francis.

Francis, a lifelong soccer fan, died at 88. The Serie A games scheduled for Monday - a national holiday in Italy - were: Torino-Udinese; Cagliari-Fiorentina; Genoa-Lazio; and Parma-Juventus.

A date for the matches to be made up was not immediately announced. (AP)

Official lauds Kuwait ice hockey team achievement



Fahid Al-Ajmi, president of the Kuwait Winter Games Club, with members of the Board of Directors.

KUWAIT CITY, April 21, (KUNA): Kuwait's national ice hockey team secured a bronze medal at the Ice Hockey World Championship Division IV in Yerevan, Armenia, on Saturday, marking another milestone in their ongoing achievements, said Fahid Al-Ajmi, president of the Kuwait Winter Games Club, on Sunday.

In a statement to KUNA following the team's arrival back home, Al-Ajmi highlighted that Kuwait came close to clinching the title on several occasions.

He expressed the team's focus on the upcoming tournament in the third division.

Al-Ajmi praised the players for their strong performance throughout the championship, attributing their success to the hard work put in during training camps and the consistent support from the Public Authority for Sport. He reassured that the club would continue to support the players to help them elevate their performance, particularly emphasizing the excellence of the younger athletes.



Club Secretary Meshal Fulaitah presents the national team players with roses.

In a similar statement to KUNA, player Mashari Mohammad reflected on the competitive atmosphere at the championship, noting that the experience would motivate the team to achieve even better results in future competitions.

The national team's delegation was warmly welcomed by the club's secretary, Meshal Fulaitah, alongside officials from the Public Authority for Sport, including Iman Al-Medhadi and Jumana As-sad.