



# KPC posts \$8.4bn net for FY '22-'23

## Opinion

### Prime Minister ... Kuwait needs a revolution of old and outdated law

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

THERE is no doubt that the continuity of the government depends on a number of criteria that cannot be overlooked; otherwise it will be like its predecessors, especially since after liberation. There have been 14 governments to this day, but all of them were unable to do the right thing either because of its shortcomings in decisions or due to the instability of the ministerial position, or its boss was not sagacious in decision-making.

That is why they passed quickly. Some of them ended in scandals, either in relation to its prime minister or the ministers. This cleared the path for some to persist in putting pressure on the Cabinet to achieve their goals without any confrontation.

Your Highness the Prime Minister, there is no doubt that all Kuwaitis seek to see a stable government that continues to play its role without any obstacles. You have what qualifies you to continue in office, provided that the approach is correct, and the decisions and laws serve the public interest and the people.

This is especially with regard to breaking away from oil and searching for alternative sources of income. This is because it is not possible to rely on the surge of high prices currently, because we have suffered a lot from their decline, which caused large financial deficits reaching the point of the previous thinking about delaying the payment of salaries to the public sector.

All this is due to the aging of laws that must be amended in line with contemporary developments, the movement of countries and the fierce competition between them to attract capital and foreign investment.

This cannot be achieved with the luxury of entertaining anti-social laws and violating its freedom, such as proposing the ban on tattoos, plastic surgeries, and other things that do not serve the people, and overlooking what could activate the economic movement.

We are tired of repeating the words that you should follow the example of the neighboring countries and even all the countries of the world, and not ignore the disbelief of the citizens about the decisions that serve no interest except for short-sighted people who do not see more than

their noses.

This is especially with regard to locking down the country, and banning visitors except under ridiculous conditions, which even the Afghan "Taliban" government did not implement, as these conditions neither serve the country, nor allow for a sound financial cycle.

There is no doubt that there are some violators of the visit visa facility but it is the duty of the security services to prevent such violations.

The visitor that we are preventing from entering is someone who will use local taxis and hotels, and will spend his own money here. If he is a businessman or has an industry and wants to transfer it to the country, then it will provide many job opportunities, and thus save a lot of public money and reduce disguised unemployment as a result of random employment in the public sector.

In addition, it will also help with the liberation of the industry from the restrictions imposed on it, and the documentary cycle that has no basis at all, not forgetting that this sector is an added value to the national product, which suffers from limited sources of income. The e-government must also be freed from complex procedures that indicate the lack of understanding of its function.

That is why we keep on saying over and over again - Look at the neighboring countries, and how they issue their visas within minutes. A visitor does not need a university degree or be over fifty years old.

Indeed, Your Highness the Prime Minister, there must be a revolution in the aging laws, which may have been suitable in the past, but are no longer needed by Kuwait, which has money, human wealth, and youth who are able to work. It also has initiatives and ideas. It needs experts who understand the meaning of advancing the national economy, and not people who deliberately shut the country down because they do not understand the meaning of state administration.

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Commission for elections eyed

## Cabinet okays draft law to adjourn Assembly session

KUWAIT CITY, July 31, (KUNA): Kuwait's Cabinet on Monday approved a draft law to adjourn the ordinary session of the National Assembly's 17th legislative term after the conclusion of the forthcoming session of parliament.

The draft law has been referred to His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, pending approval, the government's communication center said on its social media platforms.

Meanwhile, the National Assembly will hold a special session Tuesday and Wednesday to discuss a draft of establishing a general commission for elections, in addition to presenting the

state's financial status.

The agenda of the special session includes discussing the state's financial status in accordance with the text of Article (150) of the Constitution in addition to four reports of the Budgets and Parliamentary Calculation Committee.

It also includes a report of the Budgets Committee and the Parliamentary Final Account on a draft law linking the budget of ministries and government departments for the fiscal year (2024/2023) and the Minister of Finance's statement on the economic, financial and monetary conditions for the fiscal year (2024/2023).

## ABK holds conference call

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## Day by Day

OH MINISTER of Municipality, I urge you to review the laws and decisions of your ministry and make necessary improvements. Currently, it appears that completing transactions has become a daunting task due to seemingly impossible conditions set forth. It is essential to ensure that the laws are fair and do not serve the interests of specific groups of people indefinitely.

A revolution in decisions and laws is long overdue. It is time to take action and work towards amending outdated and impractical regula-

tions. Asking for a certificate of description for every transaction from institutions that have been in existence for 20 or 50 years seems unnecessary and burdensome. Simple tasks such as painting a wall of a room or office or relocating a toilet should not require such excessive documentation.

Oh Minister of Municipality, have mercy on the visitors, and develop the laws.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zaher Matar

Tehran 'ready for dialogue with Kuwait'

## Al-Durra field challenge to Saudi-Iran rapprochement

DUBAI, July 31, (AP): An escalating dispute over a gas field in the Arabian Gulf poses an early challenge to a Chinese-brokered agreement to reconcile regional rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Saudi Arabia and neighboring Kuwait jointly claim the offshore Al-Durra gas field. Iran says it has rights to the field, which it refers to as Arash. The two sides held talks in Iran in March but were unable to agree on a border demarcation.

A spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, Nasser Kanaani, said the country would not tolerate any infringement on its rights, echoing remarks by the country's oil minister the previous day.

"We have expressed our readiness to engage in dialogue with the Kuwaiti side," Kanaani told reporters Monday. "But if there is no interest in mutual utilization of this joint field, the Islamic Republic of Iran has naturally put the exploration and utilization of the resources on its agenda."

Kuwait's oil minister told Sky News Arabia last week that his country would commence drilling and production without waiting for a deal.

Saudi Arabia has sided with Kuwait, saying the two countries have exclusive ownership of the field, and has called on Iran to return to negotiations.

Saudi Arabia and Iran, which have backed opposite sides in conflicts across the Middle East and accused each other of destabilizing the region, formally restored diplomatic relations in April following a seven-year freeze. They have since reopened embassies and welcomed senior officials on visits.

But they continue to back opposite sides in Yemen's civil war, which is ongoing despite a 15-month ceasefire. Saudi Arabia is also in negotiations with the United States over potentially normalizing relations with Israel, which Iran's leaders have said should be wiped off the map.

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Palestinian demonstrators throw stones and burn tires during a protest against the territory's chronic power outages and difficult living conditions, in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, Sunday, July 30, 2023.

Several thousand people briefly took to the streets across the Gaza Strip chanting 'what a shame' and in one place burned Hamas flags, before police moved in and broke up the protests. (AP)



Palestinian residents flee their home after clashes that erupted between members of the Palestinian Fatah group and Islamist militants in the Palestinian refugee camp of Ein el-Hilweh near the southern port city of Sidon, Lebanon, Sunday, July 30, 2023.

The death toll rose to nine Monday in three days of clashes between Palestinian factions at a refugee camp in Lebanon that have pitted members of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah party against Islamist groups. (AP)

## Kuwait-Iraq talks transparent, frank

KUWAIT CITY, July 31, (Agencies): The Iraqi Ambassador to Kuwait Al-Manhal Al-Safi has described the visit of Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Iraq as "successful and fruitful," noting that the meetings took place in an atmosphere of transparency, frankness, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Al-Safi told the daily that all outstanding files were discussed between the two countries, adding: "There were many participants, and it was agreed that the specialized technical committees would continue to work, and these files were discussed and completed on time."

He revealed that the next meeting of the technical committee for demarcating the maritime borders will be held in Baghdad in mid-August, adding: "It was also discussed to make and coordinate joint efforts to combat drugs."

He pointed to inviting Kuwaiti investors and businessmen to enter the Iraqi market, as it represents great investment opportunities in construction, con-

tracting, and other fields.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah held on Sunday, official talks with the Iraqi counterpart Dr. Fuad Hussein.

The session is within the framework of the official visit that Sheikh Salem and his accompanying delegation are making to the capital of Iraq, Baghdad.

Discussion focused on all aspects of bilateral relations and the frameworks for strengthening and developing them in various fields in order to achieve common benefits for the two countries and their peoples.

The talks also highlighted ways to increase the level of cooperation in a number of vital and important fields, especially economic, investment and developmental ones, and tackled everything that would achieve the aspirations of the two countries' leadership.

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Highest in decade

KUWAIT CITY, July 31, (KUNA): The Kuwait Petroleum Corporation and its subsidiaries have posted KD 2.6 billion (about 8.4 billion US dollars) in net profits for the fiscal year 2022-2023, ending on March 31.

"These are the highest net profits we achieved in the past ten years," the Corporation's CEO Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Sabah boasted in a press statement on Sunday.

"The driving factor for this achievement: is the Kuwaiti oil sector's success in operating new projects which raised output of crude oil and clean, high-quality products that are highly-demanded around the world," he clarified.

Sheikh Nawaf Saud disclosed that the Kuwait Oil Company and the Kuwait Gulf Oil Company succeeded in increasing Kuwait's crude oil production capacity by more than 200,000 barrels per day to 2.8 million barrels per day in the same period.

"After more than eight decades of oil and gas production from the mainland of Kuwait, the KOC drilled Kuwait's first offshore well, as part of a broader KPC's plan to raise production capacity to four million barrels per day by 2035," Sheikh Nawaf Saud said.

With regard to global exploration and production, he stated that the Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company posted in the same fiscal year the highest net profits since its inception in 1981, amounting to more than one billion US dollars.

The Corporation's CEO added that the local refining capacity of Kuwait surged from 800,000 barrels per day to 1.2 million barrels per day in the FY 2022-2023.

It would climb more to 1.4 million barrels per day with the full operation of the Al-Zour refinery in this quarter of the new fiscal year, he projected.

He pointed out that thanks to its refining expansions and innovations in operation, the Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) recorded the highest profits in its history this year, hitting KD 1.016 billion (about USD 3.3 billion).

On Kuwait's overseas refining capacity, Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Sabah indicated that the Duqm refinery in the Sultanate of Oman would be fully operational by the end of this year, which would push Kuwait's refining capacity from joint ventures in Oman, Italy and Vietnam up to over 600,000 barrels per day of Kuwaiti crude oil.

## NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Monday sent a cable of condolences to President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi over the victims of the terrorist attack that took place in northwestern Khyber province, resulting in multiple casualties.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir expressed Kuwait's denunciation of this heinous terrorist act that targeted the lives of innocent people and which contradicts laws and values, wishing speedy recovery to the injured.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Sadoun also sent a cable of condolences to President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi over the victims of the terrorist attack that took place in northwestern Khyber province, resulting in multiple casualties. (KUNA)

TOKYO: China and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) will hold their first-ever joint air force training next month, the Chinese Defense Ministry said on Monday.

According to the annual plan and the consensus reached by the two countries, the Falcon Shield-2023 joint training exercise will be held in China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, the ministry said in a statement. (KUNA)

HELSINKI: Denmark's foreign minister said Sunday the government will seek to make it illegal to desecrate the Holy Quran or other religious holy books in front of foreign embassies in the Nordic country.

Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen said in an interview with the Danish public broadcaster DR that the burning of holy scriptures "only serves the purpose of creating division in a world that actually needs unity." (AP)

EL-ARISH, Egypt: A shooting Sunday at a heavily fortified security facility in the restive part of Egypt's Sinai Peninsula killed at least four police, including a senior officer, two security and health officials said.

At least 21 other forces were wounded in the shooting at the National Security headquarters in el-Arish, the capital city of North Sinai province, they said. (AP)

A list of casualties obtained by The Associated Press showed that some forces suffered from gunshots and others faced breathing difficulties from tear gas that was fired inside the facility. There were eight officers among the wounded, the list showed. (AP)

TOKYO: Japanese Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada and Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman confirmed on Monday that defense cooperation and exchanges between the two countries are being promoted, Japan's Defense Ministry said.

During their meeting in Tokyo, Hamada and Prince Khalid exchanged views on bilateral defense cooperation and exchanges, including in the field of defense equipment and technology, the ministry said in a statement. (KUNA)

## Prayer Timings

Fajr ..... 03:38    Asr ..... 15:30  
 Sunrise .. 05:07    Maghrib .. 18:41  
 Zohr ..... 11:54    Isha ..... 20:07

# Local

## Expected weather for the next 24 hours:

**By Day:** Very hot with light to moderate freshening at times northwesterly wind with speeds of 15-50 km/h with a chance for rising dust.

## Weather

**By Night:** Hot to rather hot with light to moderate northwesterly wind with speeds of 12-35 km/h.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	48	37
Kuwait Airport	49	31

Abdaly	48	31
Jahra	50	33
Salmiyah	46	36
Ahmadi	46	37
Nuwaisib	47	31
Wafra	49	30

BIOMETRIC/FINGERPRINT APPOINTMENT: <https://meta.e.gov.kw/En/>



Editor-in-Chief Ahmed Al-Jarallah, Russian Ambassador Vladimir Zheltov, and Diplomatic Attache Alexander Andreev



Editor-in-Chief Ahmed Al-Jarallah, Russian Ambassador Vladimir Zheltov, Mishaal Ahmed Al-Jarallah, Diplomatic Attache Alexander Andreev (extreme left) and Bassam Al-Qassas (extreme right). Photos by Samer Shiker

## Editor-in-Chief receives Russian ambassador

The Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times and Al Seyassah newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah, received in his office at Dar Al-Seyassah, the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Kuwait, H.E. Vladimir Zheltov, and the diplomatic attache,

Alexander Andreev, in the presence of Managing Director Mishaal Ahmed Al-Jarallah. Friendly conversations were exchanged, and issues of common interest were discussed, especially with regard to the media field.

# Absolute ban on virtual assets

Bid to combat money-laundering, terror financing



Four authorities impose total ban on use of virtual assets.

**KUWAIT CITY, July 31:** Four supervisory authorities - the Capital Markets Authority, the Central Bank of Kuwait, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and the Insurance Regulatory Unit - which are members of the National Committee for Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism, have affirmed the absolute ban on using virtual assets as a payment or investment tool, reports Al-Qabas daily.

This came within the scope of strengthening efforts to combat money laundering and terrorism financing, and was based on the conclusions of the study prepared by the National Committee for Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism regarding the required commitment for applying recommendation No. 15 of the international requirements, issued by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) related to dealing with virtual assets.

According to informed sources, these moves come within the framework of the State of Kuwait's preparations for the process of mutual evaluation, to which the State of Kuwait will be subjected, in the field of combating money laundering and terrorism financing by FATF.

### Assets

Virtual assets are defined as assets that have a digital representation of their value, that can be digitally traded or transferred, and that can be used for payment or investment purposes or the other corresponding value.

In separate circulars, the four entities affirmed that virtual assets do not include digital representations of paper currencies, securities, and other financial assets that were discussed in another part of the FATF recommendations. Those entities affirmed their commitment to the following:

1. Absolute prohibition of the use of virtual assets as a payment tool/method, or to recognize it as a decentralized currency in the State of Kuwait. Therefore, you must refrain from conducting transactions whereby virtual currencies are used as a payment tool/method within the scope of this prohibition.

2. It is prohibited to deal with virtual assets as a means of investment. Therefore, it is necessary to refrain from providing this type of services to any of the clients.

3. It is prohibited to issue or grant to any natural or legal person within the State of Kuwait a license to provide virtual asset services as a commercial business for his own benefit or on behalf of others (in addition to the fact that no licenses have been previously issued in this regard).

4. Securities regulated by the Central Bank of Kuwait and other securities and financial instruments regulated by the Capital Markets Authority are excluded from this prohibition.

5. Absolute ban on all virtual currency/asset mining activities.

The regulatory authorities called on the institutions that subject to their supervision to constantly educate customers about the risks that may result from dealing in virtual assets (which are carried out through transactions outside the State of Kuwait with the knowledge of customers), especially encrypted currencies because they do not carry a legal status, and does not get issued or supported by any government. It is also not linked to any asset or issuer, and the prices of these assets are always driven by speculation that exposes them to a sharp decline.

The measures or penalties stipulated in article 15 of law No. 106/2013 on combating money laundering and terrorism financing shall apply to anyone who violates this circular without prejudice to the penalties stipulated in each supervisory authority.

## Unified e-visa for trip to Russia starts Aug 1

**KUWAIT CITY, July 31:** The Russian Ambassador to Kuwait Vladimir Zheltov announced that the amended system for issuing entry visas to the Russian Federation will enter into force on August 1 through the electronic platform for issuing the unified electronic visa, according to the list of countries approved by the Government of the Russian Federation, reports Al-Qabas daily.

In a press statement, Ambassador Zheltov said the list of countries currently includes Kuwait and 51 other countries.

He explained that the new system enables citizens of these countries wishing to visit the Russian Federation to obtain entry visas of a new type - the unified electronic visa - through the electronic website - <https://visa.kdmid.ru/> - or via a mobile application available for download on the same site.

In order to obtain the unified electronic visa, the visa applicant must enter his personal data through the aforementioned electronic platform, and attach a personal photo in addition to the photo of the main page of the passport. There is no need to submit any other documents.



Deputy Minister of Defense Sheikh Dr. Shamayel Ahmed Khaled Al-Sabah during her meeting with the Chief of Army Staff of the People's Republic of Bangladesh General S M Shafiuddin Ahmed. KUNA photo

## Kuwait, Bangladesh discuss cooperation

Deputy Minister of Defense Sheikh Dr. Shamayel Ahmed Khaled Al-Sabah reviewed with the Chief of Army Staff (CAS) of Bangladesh Army General S M Shafiuddin Ahmed, SBP (BAR), OSP, ndu, psc, PhD, aspects of cooperation and bilateral work between the two friendly countries.

The Ministry of Defense said in a press statement today, Monday, that Sheikh Dr. Shamayel Al-Sabah received Army General S M Shafiuddin

Ahmad and his accompanying delegation.

During the meeting, they discussed a number of issues of common interest, in addition to reviewing aspects of cooperation and joint bilateral work between the two friendly countries.

The meeting was attended by Chief of the General Staff of the Administration and Manpower Authority, Major General Dr. Khaled Al-Kandari, and a number of army leaders. (KUNA)

## 'India ban not to hit rice supply'

Water use exceeds 19 mln gallons

**KUWAIT CITY, July 31:** Informed sources in the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy expect the electrical loads, Tuesday and Wednesday, the power and water consumption to reach record levels, surpassing the highest recorded in the current summer, which amounted to 16,370 MW in July, reports Al-Rai daily.

The sources said this is due to the high temperature and the maximum expected ranges between 50 and 52 degrees Celsius.

The sources pointed to the efforts made by the officials and employees of the operation and maintenance of power stations, during the current period, to avoid the occurrence of any emergency problems in the production units to ensure that the ministry's services reach all consumers around the clock, pointing out that the rate of water consumption during the past two days exceeded the rate of production by up to about 19 million imperial gallons.

The sources explained that "the ministry is making up for the shortage through the strategic reserve, which currently stands at 3,793 million imperial gallons," noting that consumption rates reached a record of 518 million gallons, while the production rate was 499 million gallons.

On the other hand, meteorologist Fahd Al-Otaibi expected that the maximum temperature would be recorded in the middle of this week, a temperature ranging between 50 and 52 degrees Celsius, and that the high temperatures would begin to gradually decline by the end of next August.

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**Rice supply sufficient:** The Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Muhammad Othman Al-Aiban, stated that Kuwait's stock of rice is reassuring, and covers its needs for a full year, so citizens will not be affected by the repercussions of India's decision to ban the export of rice, and it will not affect the additional shipments of rice that the Kuwait Catering Company has signed contracts for supply as per scheduled dates, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Al-Aiban indicated that the Ministry of Commerce and Industry is closely following the changes and developments that supply commodities are exposed to in the

## List awaits nod

### 'Leave cash soon'

**KUWAIT CITY, July 31:** According to reliable sources, the work team for implementing the rules and controls for entitlement and disbursement of cash allowance for the balance of periodic leaves while serving in the Ministry of Social Affairs completed a new list of 68 employees eligible for the allowance worth a total of KD 183,000, which is expected to be disbursed very soon after the list is approved by the Acting Undersecretary Abdulaziz Sari, reports Al-Jarida daily.

They explained that the oversight authorities, represented by the Office of Employment Affairs of the Civil Service Commission (CSC), finished reviewing the names of these employees, and then submitted them to the ministry's Financial Affairs Department to complete their disbursement forms.

The ministry will continue to pay the allowance successively as soon as the oversight authorities finish reviewing and approving the lists of beneficiaries in accordance with the rules and conditions of eligibility set by the Civil Service Council.

Meanwhile, Undersecretary Sari issued a decision to rotate about 140 financial and administrative officers appointed from the Ministry of Social Affairs within the cooperative societies distributed over all parts of the country. This is aimed at developing work and renewing blood, and in accordance with the principle of transparency. Periodic rotation between supervisors is an essential part and a positive matter in order to advance collaborative work, just like with the employees in any oversight body, where there are changes implemented for the sake of work.

global markets, especially rice, given that rice and wheat are among the most important basic foodstuffs in Kuwait, so there are direct instructions to the Kuwait Catering Company to enhance the country's stock of rice and build a large food stock of food commodities, which guarantees the stability of food security locally, and enhances the country's ability to face any emergency conditions.

## Other Voices

## Cash handouts, pay hikes will not bring 'satisfaction'

By Ahmad alsarraf

The proposal to purchase 'earned annual leave' emerged from a standpoint that exuded arrogance. It presumed that money was abundant, and people deserved it, all the while aiming to buy public loyalty and convince citizens that the government genuinely cared for their welfare.

While there is no disagreement on the principle that citizens deserve to enjoy the country's prosperity, it's evident that true enjoyment doesn't come solely from cash amounts or quick salary increases that slip away through their fingers.

Rather, genuine enjoyment is derived from an improved standard of living: better infrastructure, well-maintained roads, the creation of parks, and access to quality education, modern hospitals and advanced healthcare, a secure social safety net, dignified retirement options, nursing homes for the elderly, vibrant cultural institutions, and active community engagement. Frivolous cash payments, as proposed, are prone to wastefulness.

The law promoting cash payments for vacations was presented as beneficial for citizens, and its cost was reduced to facilitate its passage. However, in response to a parliamentary question, it was revealed that the actual expense for purchasing employee va-

cations amounted to one billion dinars - more than three times the estimated cost.

The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Finance justified this increase, claiming it was due to pressure from representatives - an unacceptable excuse in the eyes of active MPs Abdel Wahhab Al-Essa and Al-Asfoor.

Further investigation uncovered another scandal - the 300 million dinars allocated for buying vacations were arbitrarily set, not grounded in reality, revealing a clear government miscalculation.

Additionally, the unexpected surge in demand for the sale of licenses from government employees caught the Ministry of Finance off-guard, leading to a submission to the fait accompli, with the requested amounts being disregarded.

The billion dinars spent on purchasing employee loyalty or vacations largely went to waste, as very few employees invested or saved it for the future. Instead, the money could have been strategically utilized to improve everyone's lives at a much lower cost, if managed with foresight and ingenuity.

The laxity and lack of responsibility in exceeding allocated amounts and obtaining supplementary credits indicate a disregard for laws, constitutional texts, customs, and accounting principles within the state. These actions suggest that our conditions have not been, and will not be, conducive to progress unless there is a fundamental change in approach and governance.

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## Move to allow rejoin military duty

**KUWAIT CITY, July 31:** Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmed Al-Fahd has cancelled the term condition for leaving the military service for those wishing to re-enlist among the non-commissioned officers and civilians, along with the adoption of the decision to increase the age requirement to 55 years old in accordance with the regulations set by the Kuwait Army General Staff, reports Al-Anba daily.

The minister's decision is aimed at giving

opportunity to the largest number of those wishing to re-enlist in the military service, in order to benefit from their scientific and field experiences to improve the level of readiness in all sectors of the Army. The Kuwait Fire Force announced the doubling of applicants' admission to Kuwait Fire Force courses from 300 to 600 applicants from various disciplines, under the directives of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, according to KUNA.



## LOCAL

# Reduced diesel quota expected to hinder shrimp fishing season

Council member calls for building parking for boats



Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Khaled during the graduation ceremony. KUNA photo

## Minister of Interior witnesses graduation ceremony of 5 female university students

KUWAIT CITY, July 31, (KUNA): First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah witnessed on Sunday, the graduation of five female university students (non-commissioned officers) and their promotion to the rank of lieutenant.

The General Department of Relations and Security Media at the Ministry of Interior said in a press statement that Sheikh Talal Al-Khalid stressed, during his meeting with the graduates, the need for them to

assume their responsibilities in applying the law, the sciences, and the skills they acquired during the study into a practical reality to advance security work.

The Minister of Interior congratulated the graduates on their new ranks, stressing their commitment to the oath, and that they put the country and the citizens as a trust and the fear of God before their eyes.

The acting director of the Officers Training Institute, Brigadier General Fahd Al-Ghareeb, had read

the appointment decision, while the head of the Examinations Affairs Department, Brigadier Bader Al-Mutaqa, read the oath.

The graduation ceremony was attended by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Lieutenant General Anwar Al-Barjas, the Assistant Undersecretary for the Office of the Minister of Interior, Major General Hamed Al-Baloul, and the Assistant Undersecretary for Education and Training Affairs, Major General Badr Al-Baloul.

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The shrimp fishing season is facing hurdles even before the season kicks off on Aug 1 as the reduced fuel quota for fishing came to an end and the fishing boats assembled at the pier, waiting to fill diesel, which is crucial for the upcoming shrimp fishing inside Kuwait's territorial waters, reports Al-Rai daily.

The head of the Kuwaiti Federation of Fishermen, Dhafer Al-Suwayyan, expressed concern as he mentioned that the diesel tanks at Naqat Al-Shamlan and Fahaheel piers remained empty, posing a serious threat to the shrimp season.

He emphasized that unless diesel became available and the quota returned to its previous level, the fishing boats would not be able to set out for their fishing activities.

Al-Suwayyan urged the government to pay attention to the fishing sector and remove hindrances that affect the fishermen, including visa restrictions, fishing restrictions, and stringent laws that favor the consumption of imported fish over fresh fish caught locally.

Meanwhile, citing the high cost of marine marinas in Kuwait, which ranges from 600 to 2,000 dinars annually per berth, a member of the Municipal Council, Fahd Al-Abdul Jader, has submitted a proposal to establish surface and multi-storey boat parking in various locations around the country, reports Al-Rai daily. In his proposal, Al-Abdul-Jader stressed that "Kuwait is considered one of the countries known for requesting boats, and one of the important countries for its factories."

Statistics also show that the Kuwaiti demand for purchasing boats represents 40 percent of boat sales in the Middle East, pointing out that due to the increase in the number of boat owners annually several complaints have been received from some citizens who complain about the parking of boats in random places within residential areas, which causes problems with neighbors.

He added, "The main problem facing boat owners and dealers is the lack of berths or parking lots near the beaches to accommodate the increasing number of boats."



Firemen on inspection round before closure of factories. Al-Rai photo

## 'Apply safety, fire protection requirements'

# DGFD shuts 3 factories for violating safety measures

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The Public Relations and Media Department of the Directorate-General of Fire Department (DGFD) said the department has administratively closed 3 factories in the Ahmadi and Sabhan regions for violating safety and fire prevention requirements because they contained chemicals and flammable liquids after the end of the period of notifications and warnings granted to these factories to remove these violations, reports Al-Rai daily.

This comes as a continuation of the cam-

paigned of the inspection teams of the prevention sector on various commercial and investment buildings, industrial plots, factories, etc., which are subject to safety and fire prevention systems, and safety procedures are followed in them.

The DGFD has called on the owners and tenants of factories, industrial plots, commercial and investment buildings to apply safety and fire protection requirements and remove violations in order to avoid administrative closure and to achieve community security.

## Three services included on 'Sahel'

# Total retirement pension, share must not exceed KD 1,020: min

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, and Acting Minister of Finance Dr. Saad Al-Barak, has issued a decision regarding the regulations for collection and determination of the minimum share in one or more pensions, following the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) Board of Directors' approval through circulation, reports Al-Anba daily.

The daily added, as per the amended Resolution 5/1978, the total sum of the retirement pension and share from one or more pensions must not exceed 1,020 dinars. This limit will be taken into consideration when redistributing the pension, in accordance with Article 75 of the PIFSS Law. The decision specifies that "the recipient can accumulate shares from multiple pensions, provided the total does not surpass 1,020 dinars."

The minimum shares to be granted are 273 dinars for widows or husbands, 210 dinars for each of the parents, 139 dinars for each son, son-in-law, and daughter-in-law, and 136 dinars for each brother, sister, or double the entitled share, whichever is lower."

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**3 e-services added:** Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Communications Dr Ahmed Al-Mejren has announced the inclusion of three electronic services on the 'Sahel' application, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a recent press statement, Al-Mejren disclosed this is part of the ministry's plan to develop its electronic services. He pointed out this is an essential stage towards accelerating digital transformation that will improve the efficiency and speed of completing government transactions.

He said the electronic services are related to collecting fees for the services provided by the ministry and issuing clearance to customers. He added these services are as follows:

■ Send notification to customers about their outstanding bills based on the civil identification numbers registered in the automated system of the ministry.

■ Send notification to customers upon completion of the payment process including the updated balance statement. Through this process, the subscriber can obtain the invoice electronically.

■ Issue a clearance electronically if the customer has no outstanding bill.

## Kuwait-Iraq

Continued from Page 1

The session also delve into ways to bolster development and prosperity between the two sides.

During the session, the two ministers agreed on the importance of resolving all outstanding issues between the two countries, foremost of which is the issue of completing the demarcation of the maritime borders between the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Iraq beyond the 162 mark, in a way that would contribute to strengthening bilateral relations and achieves common interests, in addition to limiting smuggling operations.

Combating drugs, illegal hunting or trespassing on sovereign borders and joint cooperation were also reviewed in this regard.

For his part, Sheikh Salem praised the positive steps and measures taken by the technical committees in this regard, notably the issue of the remains of Kuwaiti martyrs, prisoners and missing persons, Kuwaiti property, and the Kuwaiti National Archives, which were all tackled during the session.

Sheikh Salem also praised efforts exerted by the Iraqi government towards finding the remains of the Kuwaiti martyrs, prisoners and missing persons since the war, stressing on the need to end this humanitarian issue.

The Kuwaiti minister also asserted on the importance of continuing efforts to recover all Kuwaiti properties, Kuwaiti National Archives, and to completely end these issues.

For his part, the Iraqi minister affirmed on the sincere commitment and effective work towards reaching the desired results, namely towards determining the fate of all prisoners and missing persons and overcoming all obstacles in this regard.

The talks also highlighted the latest developments on the regional and international arenas, geopolitical changes, and their repercussions on the security and stability of the region.

The two sides also exchanged views and ways for the most effective solutions to crises and challenges regionally and internationally, in addition to the importance of strengthening cooperation.

Iraqi President Dr. Abdul Latif Rashid received on Sunday visiting Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabha.

Deep-seated bilateral relations, means to further develop them on all levels, namely in trade and investment, were discussed during the meeting, where Sheikh Salem conveyed greeting to President Rashid from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabha, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabha and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabha, as well as best wishes to the brotherly people of Iraq.

Completion of maritime demarcation process between the two countries was also

discussed during the meeting.

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Al-Sudani also received on Sunday Sheikh Salem.

During the reception, the Kuwaiti top diplomat handed a letter from His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabha to Premier Al-Sudani on deep-seated bilateral relations, especially in trade and investment, as well as on continuing talks between the two sides through the joint technical and legal committee, which resumed meetings after the successful November 2022 visit of Al-Sudani to the State of Kuwait. The committee is tasked with completing border demarcation process between the two countries.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabha also met with the Iraqi Parliament Speaker Mohammad Al-Halbousi and a number of Iraqi lawmakers and heads of committees.

In the meeting, Sheikh Salem conveyed greetings on behalf of the Kuwaiti leadership to the Speaker and to the Republic of Iraq and its people, extending his wishes for sustained growth, prosperity, and progress.

The meeting then delved into the strong relations that bind the two countries and the frameworks for supporting and strengthening bilateral cooperation in various fields, especially parliamentary cooperation, in a way that serves common interests and achieves the aspirations of the two countries.

The two sides also discussed vital and diverse areas of cooperation and to how to develop the economic, cultural, educational and security sectors, exchange experiences and strengthen partnership between the two countries.

Two sides mulled enhancing political and parliamentary coordination, cultural and security cooperation, and ways to enhance joint action towards ending all outstanding issues and removing everything that could impact the fraternal relations.

## Al-Durra field

Continued from Page 1

"Any step in the direction toward normalization of ties with this aggressive regime will only serve to give it more leeway to commit more atrocities against the Palestinian nation," Kanaani, the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman, said.

It's unclear whether the dispute over the gas field, which goes back to the 1960s, will escalate beyond rhetoric. But tensions are already high in the Arabian Gulf, where the U.S. is building up military forces in response to what it says is Iran's unlawful seizure of oil tankers and harassment of commercial vessels.

Saudi Arabia and Kuwait agreed last year to jointly develop the gas field. Kuwait said at the time that they aimed to produce 1 billion cubic feet of natural gas and 84,000 barrels of liquefied gas per day. Iran denounced the agreement as illegal and said it should be included in any such plans.



# August

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## LOCAL

# SAB's report on work of MoSA reveals a number of violations

Social aid disbursed to undeserving beneficiaries

**KUWAIT CITY, July 31:** The annual report of the State Audit Bureau, which included several observations and shortcomings that marred the audit and review of the work of the Ministry of Social Affairs for the 2022/2023 fiscal year, revealed a number of violations, most notably related to the disbursement of social aid in the light of law No. 12/2011 regarding public aid, reports Aljarida daily.

According to the report, the audit showed the accumulation of financial aid disbursed to undeserving beneficiaries during the aforementioned fiscal year at KD 4.627 million. This resulted in an increase in the balance of accumulated debts since the 2017/2018 fiscal year by KD 21.658 million.

The balance of new amounts that are proven as debts owed by their bankers without right during the current fiscal year increased by one million dinars compared to the 2021/2022 fiscal year. Its balance at the end of this year reached 3.616 million, a percentage increase of 28 percent, as a result of granting aid to groups that do not fulfill requirements for such disbursement, in addition to the continuation of disbursement for cases that are not entitled to the aid.

#### Observations

There are observations of previous years that are pending without settlement, including those related to computer contracts. The ministry confirmed that all facts related to this department are referred to the concerned investigation authorities to take the necessary action regarding them.

Sources from the Ministry of Social Affairs attributed the reasons for the accumulation of debts to the delay of some government agencies in completing the automated linking process with the ministry, in addition to reducing the value of the monthly deduction of debts from the principal debt (the value of assistance disbursed without right), which resulted in low collection rates and the length of time taken for that.

The continuation of the concerned committee in discovering new debts for



Part of the meeting of the Executive Office of the Forum of specialized qualitative Arab federations.

#### SAFF's executive bureau meets in Oman

The Executive Bureau of the Specialized Arab Federations Forum convened its sixth session in Salalah city, in southern Oman, on Saturday under auspices of the Arab League.

The meeting, organized by the Arab Union for Tourist Media, discussed a number of organizational issues and the operating mechanism of the Forum, said Ambassador Plenipotentiary Mohammad Abdul-Qader, director of the Arab League's organizations dept.

The agenda of the meeting included launching a website for the SAFF as well as the challenges facing the Arab unions, he told KUNA.

It also discussed the agenda of the seventh session of SAFF, due on Monday, and the opening of the third Arab forum for tourism and heritage (the 2023 Oscar for Tourist Media) and the sideline award ceremony of the Arab tourist media and creators. (KUNA)

aid that was disbursed in violation of the law and the regulations and adding them to the current financial obligation stands as an obstacle to increasing collection rates, explaining that the follow-up of such obligations to cases of suspension and deaths takes a lot of time due to the routine procedures in force.

The sources added, "The cases of suspension that have a source of income that can be deducted from (the employer, or the salaries of the Public Institution for Social Security) require a lot of time to address these agencies and pension institutions.

As for cases that do not have a

source of income that can be deducted from, they require communication with the beneficiary or his relatives to pay in amicable ways, and in the event that this is not possible, then the matter takes some time to address the legal authorities in the Ministry and outside to take the necessary action.

#### Council of Ministers gives high priority to implementation of project

## Tender docs for Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project ready

**KUWAIT CITY, July 31:** According to informed sources, the authorities concerned with the implementation of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project have

finished preparing the tender documents to complete the implementation of the project. They are working on offering contracts for manufacturing, supplying, installing, testing, operating and maintaining the handling equipment that are necessary to operate the port on October 1, reports Al-Qabas daily.

They explained that the Council of Ministers gave high priority to the implementation of the project, which will be implemented after determining the government agency that will assume the tasks of management, supervision and operation of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project, and assigning the Silk City and Boubyan Island Development Authority to supervise, follow-up, manage and operate Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port in coordination with the Ministry of Public Works to move forward with the procedures related to the project.

This will involve completing the necessary executive contracts for it and overcoming all the obstacles facing it in a way that guarantees its completion as quickly as possible, and in a way that ensures the consistency of the schedule for construction works with the project's operating plan.

#### Advisory studies

The Council of Ministers assigned the Public Authority for Investment to carry out the necessary advisory studies for the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project in coordination with the Silk City Development Authority.

All details regarding completing the procedures of the memorandum of understanding between Kuwait and China were discussed. It was agreed to prepare an executive memorandum during the coming period to complete the memorandum of understanding signed in 2019, in line with Kuwait's vision, which aims primarily at transforming the country into a financial and commercial center that attracts investment.

In this regard, the Council of Ministers reviewed the letter of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which includes a request for urgently operating the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port and overcoming obstacles in this regard in order to implement the manifestations of the sovereignty of the State of Kuwait over that region.

One of the obstacles facing the Ministry of Public Works in implementing the project is that its completion requires the implementation of three contracts whose legal procedures have not been completed, namely:

- 1 - Building and infrastructure contracts.
- 2 - Holding equipment and cranes.
- 3 - Deepening the basin and the connecting channel with the existing channel.

The reason for not implementing the contracts for the construction of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port is the decision of the Ministry of Finance and the Supreme Council for Planning and Development to postpone offering these contracts until the operator is determined.

The Council of Ministers instructed the Ministry of Finance to approve the financial appropriations to start implementing the three contracts related to the process of establishing the first phase of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port.

#### 'Operation Triangulation'

## Kaspersky unveils latest APT trends for 2nd quarter of '23

**LONDON, July 31:** In Kaspersky's latest report on Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) trends for the second quarter of 2023, researchers analyzed the development of new and existing campaigns. The report highlights APT activity during this period including the updating of toolsets, the creation of new malware variants, and the adoption of fresh techniques by threat actors.

A significant new revelation was the exposure of the long-running "Operation Triangulation" campaign involving the use of a previously unknown iOS malware platform. Experts also observed other interesting developments that they believe everyone should be aware of. Here are key highlights from the report:

#### Asia-Pacific witnesses a new threat actor - Mysterious Elephant

Kaspersky uncovered a new threat actor belonging to the Elephants family, operating in the Asia-Pacific region, dubbed "Mysterious Elephant". In their latest campaign, the threat actor employed new backdoor families, capable of executing files and commands on the victim's computer, and receive files or commands from a malicious server for execution on the infected system. While Kaspersky researchers have observed overlaps with Confucius and SideWinder, Mysterious Elephant possesses a distinctive and unique set of TTPs, setting them apart from other groups.

#### Toolsets upgraded: Lazarus develops new malware variant, BlueNoroff attacks macOS, and more

Threat actors are constantly improving their techniques, with Lazarus upgrading its MATA framework and introducing a new variant of the sophisticated MATA malware family, MATAv5. BlueNoroff, a financial attack-focused subgroup of Lazarus, now employs new delivery methods and programming languages, including the use of Trojanized PDF

readers in recent campaigns, the implementation of macOS malware, and the Rust programming language. Additionally, ScarCruft APT group has developed new infection methods, evading Mark-of-the-Web (MOTW) security mechanism. The ever-evolving tactics of these threat actors present new challenges for cybersecurity professionals.

#### Geopolitical influences remain primary drivers of APT activity

APT campaigns remain geographically dispersed, with actors concentrating their attacks on regions such as Europe, Latin America, the



Emm

Middle East and various parts of Asia. Cyber-espionage, with a solid geopolitical backdrop, continues to be a dominant agenda for these endeavors.

"While some threat actors stick to familiar tactics like social engineering, others have evolved, refreshing their toolsets and expanding their activities. Moreover, new advanced actors, such as those conducting the 'Operation Triangulation' campaign, constantly emerge. This actor uses a previously unknown iOS malware platform distributed through zero-click iMessage exploits. Staying vigilant with threat intelligence and the right defense tools is crucial for global companies, so they can protect themselves against both existing and emerging threats. Our quarterly reviews are designed to highlight the most significant developments among APT groups to help defenders combat and mitigate related risks," comments David Emm, principal security researcher at Kaspersky's Global Research and Analysis Team (GREAT).



Aerial shot of Mubarak Port project.

#### Measures aim to ensure transparency

## Prepaid credit cards can be used only to pay for materials, gov't entities services

**KUWAIT CITY, July 31:** The Ministry of Finance has recently set new guidelines for use of prepaid credit cards by government institutions to meet their obligations, reports Al-Rai daily.

The new circular also specifies certain restrictions, such as prohibiting cash withdrawals from the cards and the cardholder's ineligibility for gift and reward programs or any bank privileges.

Additionally, the employee must present purchase or service invoices, provide monthly settlements for the bank account, and submit them to the Ministry of Finance for review.

The following measures aim to ensure transparency and accountability in the use of prepaid credit cards by government agencies.

- The government agencies must compare offers from various banks to secure the best possible deal for issuing the prepaid cards.
- Prior approval from the Ministry of Finance is required to open a bank account for card issuance, based on the agency's needs.
- The issuance of the card must be authorized by the Undersecretary of the relevant government entity or their designated representative, and the card should be registered in the entity's name.
- The maximum limit for the prepaid credit card is set at 2,000 dinars.
- The cardholder is personally responsible for its usage, and the department manager requesting the card shares joint responsibility. The trading of the card password is strictly prohibited.

- The card will be suspended if not used for three months or if the responsible employee is transferred. During an employee's leave, the card must be handed over to the concerned department.

- Only Kuwaiti nationals can be entrusted with holding the cards, and issuing multiple cards to the same individual is not allowed.

- The card can only be used to purchase materials and services required by the government entity for its official work.

- The card can also be used for paying government agency fees for mutual government services that require automatic payment, subject to an agreement with the issuing bank.

- Certain provisions regulating commodity and material purchases are exempted from the card's usage restrictions.

- All purchases must comply with the circulars issued by the Ministry of Finance.
- The cardholder must not engage with the issuing bank to obtain data or make modifications and should solely interact with the government agency.

- If the card is used for purposes other than its intended use, or if it is lost, damaged, or experiences a deficit, the employee holding the card is deemed responsible and the deficit will be deducted from their dues with the government.

- The card balance must be replenished whenever it falls below 75 percent of the total value.
- Government agencies must handle currency differences resulting from the card's usage.

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Takeda's OX2R agonist safe and effective

# TAK-994 improves sleepiness in patients with narcolepsy type 1

OSAKA, Japan, July 31: Takeda (TSE:4502/NYSE:TAK) has announced that data from the Phase 2 study of orexin receptor 2 (OX2R) agonist TAK-994 in patients with narcolepsy type 1 (NT1) was published in The New England Journal of Medicine. These data represent the first-ever clinical data to be published of an oral orexin agonist in NT1. The article appears in the July 27 issue of the journal and is titled, "Oral Orexin Receptor 2 Agonist in Narcolepsy Type 1."

"There is significant unmet need for patients with narcolepsy, a chronic neurologic disease caused by severe loss or absence of the neuropeptide orexin, also known as hypocretin. Today, most patients with NT1 require multiple therapies that only manage excessive daytime sleepiness and cataplexy. Moreover, none of the available agents target the underlying cause of the disease," said one of the TAK-994 study principal investigators Yves Dauvilliers, M.D., Director, Sleep-Wake Disorders Center, Department of Neurology, Gui de Chauliac Hospital, Montpellier, France. "Although this study was not designed to compare TAK-994, the first-in-class oral OX2R agonist, with other narcolepsy drugs, its effectiveness on objective measures of wakefulness, self-reported assessment of daytime sleepiness, and frequency of cataplexy was impressive. However, TAK-994 was associated with hepatotoxicity, therefore studies with new well tolerated OX2R agonists are strongly requested."

Patients aged 18-65 years with confirmed NT1 were randomly assigned to twice-daily oral TAK-994 30, 90, 180 mg, or placebo.

Primary endpoint was the change in mean sleep latency in minutes on the Maintenance of Wakefulness Test (MWT) from baseline to week 8 (test range: 0-40, normal >=20 minutes).

Secondary endpoints included change in Epworth Sleepiness Scale (ESS) score (scale range: 0-24, normal =20 minutes) for most patients. Similar effects were observed for the ESS.

**Safety results**

Forty-four (79%) patients treated with TAK-994 had adverse events; the most common were urinary urgency or frequency. More patients experienced TEAEs with TAK-994 than with placebo, with a greater number and severity of TEAEs observed with higher TAK-994 doses. Most TEAEs were mild in severity. Eight patients exceeded predefined alanine transaminase (ALT) and/or aspartate transaminase (AST) thresholds for subject discontinuation, including three cases meeting Hy's law criteria (ALT/AST abnormalities >3 x upper limit of normal combined with bilirubin >2 x upper limit of normal; two with TAK-994 180 mg and one with 90 mg), indicating drug-induced hepatotoxicity and leading to the early termination of the trial. No specific risk factors were identified. The current hypothesis is that TAK-994 associated drug-induced liver injury is caused by reactive metabolites and is unlikely to be an on-target effect of OX2R activation as orexin receptors are not expressed on human hepatocytes or on most immune cells.

"As leaders in orexin research and development, Takeda is committed to applying our learnings from the TAK-994 trial and our deep and growing understanding of orexin biology as we drive forward the research and development of multiple orexin assets. We would like to thank the patients, caregivers and investi-

gators who participated in the TAK-994 clinical trials and are committed to continue developing and delivering transformative treatments to people living with narcolepsy and other hypersomnolence disorders. Takeda is also exploring other indications that could benefit from this mechanism," said Sarah Sheikh, M.Sc., B.M., B.Ch, Head, Neuroscience Therapeutic Area Unit at Takeda. "Orexin programs in development include the oral OX2R agonist TAK-861, currently being evaluated in two Phase 2 trials for the treatment of narcolepsy type 1 (NCT05687903) and narcolepsy type 2 (NCT05687916), and danavorexton (TAK-925), an intravenously administered OX2R agonist we are investigating in a Phase 2 study of people with obstructive sleep apnea after general anesthesia (NCT05814016)."

Takeda is focused on creating better health for people and a brighter future for the world. We aim to discover and deliver life-transforming treatments in our core therapeutic and business areas, including gastrointestinal and inflammation, rare diseases, plasma-derived therapies, oncology, neuroscience and vaccines. Together with our partners, we aim to improve the patient experience and advance a new frontier of treatment options through our dynamic and diverse pipeline. As a leading values-based, R&D-driven biopharmaceutical company headquartered in Japan, we are guided by our commitment to patients, our people and the planet. Our employees in approximately 80 countries and regions are driven by our purpose and are grounded in the values that have defined us for more than two centuries.

Priveterra Acquisition Corp (Nasdaq: PMGM) ("Priveterra"), a special purpose acquisition company led by Chairman & CEO, Robert Palmisano, along with President, Vikram Malik, and COO and CFO, Oleg Grodnensky, have announced the successful completion of its business combination (the "Business Combination") with AEON Biopharma, Inc. ("AEON"), a Phase 3 stage-ready biopharmaceutical company developing a proprietary neurotoxin with initial focus on preventive treatments for episodic and chronic migraines along with other debilitating medical conditions.

The resulting combined company changed its name to AEON Biopharma, Inc. and is expected to commence trading of its shares of common stock and warrants on NYSE American LLC ("NYSE") under the ticker symbols "AEON" and "AEON.WS," respectively, on July 24, 2023. Mr Robert Palmisano will join the new 5-member board to serve as a Director.

Mr. Palmisano said, "We are grateful to all investors that continue to support Priveterra's investment thesis in combining with AEON, along with their significant contributions of up to \$125 million in arranged funding. I look forward to continuing my journey with AEON as a Director along with its President and CEO, Marc Forth." Latham & Watkins LLP served as legal advisors to AEON. Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP served as legal advisors to Priveterra. Cohen & Company Capital Markets, a division of J.V.B. Financial Group, LLC served as sole financial advisor to Priveterra. Roth Capital Partners, LLC served as capital markets advisor to Priveterra.

Company announces first successful implantation

# Anteris' DurAVR THV heart valve used in life-saving valve-in-valve procedure

Drug approved in EU

## Empagliflozin cuts relative risk of kidney disease progression

BRISBANE, Australia, July 31: Anteris Technologies Ltd. (Anteris or the Company) (ASX: AVR), a structural heart company developing DurAVR™ THV, a new class of biomimetic heart valve and the world's only balloon-expandable, single-piece transcatheter aortic valve shaped to mimic the performance of a native human aortic valve, has announced that the DurAVR™ THV was used for the first time in a valve-in-valve (ViV) procedure as part of Health Canada's Special Access Program (SAP).

A ViV procedure is required for patients with a life-threatening situation wherein their current bioprosthetic aortic valve is failing due to calcification or structural deterioration, and a new heart valve must be implanted inside the failing valve. These patients are at high risk for another surgery and require a minimally invasive treatment option. Canada's SAP exists so that life-saving technology not currently available for commercial use in Canada can be provided when no other commercially available alternatives are suitable.

Dr. Anita Asgar, Co-Director of the Structural Heart Program at the Institut de Cardiologie de Montreal (Montreal, Canada), made the request to Health Canada to use the DurAVR™ THV in a patient with a failing valve that needed optimal hemodynamic results as well as a short frame height as they were very high risk of poor hemodynamic result with a conventional ViV procedure. Dr. Asgar performed the procedure on an 84-year-old male and implanted a DurAVR™ THV inside the failed surgical aortic valve replacement (SAVR).

**Complex**

The procedure was successful. The hemodynamic performance of the valve was outstanding in such a complex patient. The patient had an 88% reduction in mean gradient which brought the patient back to a near-normal physiologic state, with a final gradient of only 6mmHg after deploying the valve. These results mirror what DurAVR™ THV has seen in its extensive ViV bench-top studies. Dr. Asgar commented: "The DurAVR™ THV provided a life-saving solution for a patient requiring a new valve to be implanted without compromising hemodynamic performance or future coronary access. These hemodynamic results are not

INGELHEIM, Germany, July 31: The European Commission (EC) approved Jardiance® (empagliflozin) for the treatment of adults with chronic kidney disease (CKD),8 Boehringer Ingelheim and Eli Lilly and Company (NYSE: LLY) have announced. The approval has the potential to advance the standard of care for more than 47 million people in the EU living with CKD, and help relieve burden on healthcare systems by reducing the risk of all-cause hospitalization for people with CKD. With existing indications in type 2 diabetes and heart failure, empagliflozin could help manage the risks of cardio-renal-metabolic conditions, which are often interconnected. Cardio-renal-metabolic conditions affect over 1 billion people worldwide.

"We celebrate this significant milestone in the field of chronic kidney disease. CKD is a silent killer and prevention and early detection are crucial in the general population," said Daniel Gallego, President of European Kidney Patients' Federation. "This new treatment option has the potential to further improve the management of cardio-renal metabolic syndrome and renal disease,

offering renewed hope and improved quality of life for countless individuals living with CKD worldwide."

The approval is based on results from EMPA-KIDNEY, the largest and broadest dedicated SGLT2 inhibitor trial in CKD to date, which showed a significant benefit of empagliflozin in reducing the relative risk of kidney disease progression or cardiovascular death by 28 percent vs. placebo in people with chronic kidney disease (HR; 0.72; 95% CI 0.64 to 0.82; P<0.000001 [absolute risk reduction 3.8%]).

**Demonstrated**

The trial also demonstrated a statistically significant relative risk reduction in hospitalization for any cause by 14 percent vs. placebo (HR; 0.86; 95% CI 0.78 to 0.95; p=0.0025 [absolute risk reduction 4.4%]).4,5 The overall safety data was generally consistent with previous findings, confirming the well-established safety profile of empagliflozin.4,5 CKD doubles a person's risk for hospitalization3 and is a leading cause of death globally.2 In the EU, hospitalizations account for up to 70 percent of total healthcare costs for

people with CKD.

"Living with chronic kidney disease can have a drastic impact on patients and their family's lives. CKD not only affects individuals but also society overall due to the high economic burden to healthcare systems," said Carinne Brouillon, Head of Human Pharma, Boehringer Ingelheim. "As we deepen our knowledge in interconnected cardio-renal-metabolic conditions, we are very excited about the approval and the potential for empagliflozin to play an essential role in helping patients, their physicians and healthcare systems."

"CKD is closely linked to other cardio-renal-metabolic conditions such as type 2 diabetes and heart failure – thus an integrated approach is vital for optimized treatment of these interconnected conditions. We look forward to continuing conversations with other regulatory bodies worldwide so that empagliflozin can be made available for as many people living with these conditions as quickly as possible," continued Leonard Glass, M.D., F.A.C.E., senior vice president, Diabetes & Obesity Global Medical Affairs, Lilly.

shaped to mimic the performance of a healthy human aortic valve. Anteris' patented anti-calcification ADAPT® tissue technology has been used clinically for over 10 years and distributed for use in over 50,000 patients worldwide. The ComASUR™ Delivery System is designed to provide controlled deployment and accurate placement of the DurAVR™ THV with balloon-expandable delivery, allowing precise alignment with the heart's native commissures to achieve desired valve positioning. Aortic stenosis is a common and serious valvular heart disease. It is the narrowing of the aortic valve, reducing blood flow from the heart as it opens. This means the heart must work harder to push the blood needed to function. Severe AS affects an estimated 3.4% of those aged >75 years in Europe and the USA.1 In Australia, an estimated 150,000 people suffer from moderate to severe AS, with the figure projected to climb to 200,000 by 2031 due to the aging population.2 The global TAVR market is estimated to be USD 10 billion by 2028. Anteris Technologies is set to revolutionize the structural heart market by developing clinically superior solutions to meet significant unmet clinical needs. ViV procedures represent an additional, rapidly growing patient population for the treatment of aortic stenosis. ViV procedures have increased more than 10 times from 2014 to 2019, representing about 6% of commercial transcatheter aortic valve replacement cases in the US.

Chris Meduri, Anteris Technologies CMO, commented: "This successful procedure further validates our extensive pre-clinical work in valve-in-valve as well as our extensive clinical experience in native aortic stenosis. This signals the viability of a purpose-built valve designed to achieve life-saving outcomes in a patient population currently treated with tradeoffs in mind. Eliminating that compromise would be widely beneficial to a rapidly growing population of patients whose current valve is failing."

Anteris Technologies (ASX: AVR) is a structural heart company committed to designing, developing, and commercialising innovative medical devices. Founded in Australia, with a significant presence in Minneapolis, MN – a US MedTech hub, Anteris is science-driven, with an experienced team of multidisciplinary professionals delivering transformative solutions to structural heart disease patients. The Company's lead product, DurAVR™ THV, is a first-in-class biomimetic transcatheter aortic valve for the treatment of aortic stenosis (AS). The DurAVR™ THV, in concert with the ComASUR™ Delivery System, is designed to achieve pre-disease hemodynamic performance leading to improved clinical outcomes. DurAVR™ THV has been designed in partnership with the world's leading interventional cardiologists and is the first transcatheter aortic valve replacement (TAVR) to use a single piece of bioengineered tissue. This first-in-class biomimetic valve is uniquely



Dr Anita Asgar (centre) Co-Director of the Structural Heart Program at the Institut de Cardiologie de Montreal, Anteris Technologies Chief Medical Officer, Dr Chris Meduri (far right), with the Anteris Technologies clinical team with the DurAVR THV investigational device.

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# Fans pay tribute to Coco Lee, HK singer who had int'l success

HONG KONG, July 31, (AP) — Fans of singer and songwriter Coco Lee, who was known for her powerful voice and live performances, were gathered with flowers to pay their respects to their idol at her funeral in Hong Kong on Monday.

The evening services were expected to be attended by her family, friends and supporters. Lee died July 5 at age 48.

She was born in Hong Kong and attended school in San Francisco before releasing her first album in 1994 at age 19. She began her career as a Mandopop singer but branched out to release albums in Cantonese and English.

She was the first Chinese singer to break into the American market, and her English song "Do You Want My Love" climbed to #4 on Billboard's Hot Dance Breakouts chart in December 1999. In 2001, she sang "A Love Before Time" from Ang Lee's movie "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" at the Academy Awards, becoming the first Chinese American to perform at the Oscars.

Lee was also the voice of heroine Fa Mulan in the Mandarin version of Disney's "Mulan," and sang the Mandarin version of the movie's theme song "Reflection."

Lee was married to Bruce Rockowitz, former CEO of Hong Kong supply chain company Li & Fung. She had two stepdaughters.

Her death had shocked fans. Her siblings posted on Facebook that she had depression for years and had attempted suicide at home on July

2. She died a few days later.

On Monday afternoon, more than 100 fans dressed in black were waiting outside the funeral home.

Lin Jing, a fan from Fujian province in the southeast, said she admired Lee's smile and appearance, adding: "She was really talented. She always tried to improve and she inspired women to feel independent."

In a video for her memorial service, actors and singers from Hong Kong, mainland China and Taiwan recalled their memories with Lee and mourned her death.

## Proud

Action star Jackie Chan said in the video that everyone was proud of her when she sang at the Oscars.

"To friends like us, Coco was a passionate and kind friend who showed care to us. She was really a good person. That's why we are so reluctant to accept she has left us," he said.

Award-winning director Ang Lee recalled his exchanges with the late singer before the Oscars and said it was a pity she died so young. "We miss her very much. Coco, rest in peace," he said in the video.

In Coco Lee's recent social media posts, she kept spreading positivity. In March, she posted about having to relearn how to walk after undergoing surgery for an old leg injury.

"Successful surgery. Even though I'm in a lot of pain and I have to

re-learn how to walk again, I know I can do it," she wrote in a Facebook post. "Yes I can and I will!"

## Also:

**LOS ANGELES:** Quavo will release "Rocket Power," his first album since fellow **Migos** member Takeoff was shot and killed outside a bowling alley in November 2022. Quavo introduced the new LP with a trailer that features a massive CGI rocket preparing to launch into space. In a statement, he shared: "Through the process of healing I've learned to turn tragedy into triumph. I had to dig deep into my purpose and find the power to keep striving." This summer, Quavo and Future shared a new song, "Turn Your Clic Up," which followed recent singles "Greatness" and "Honey Bun." Shortly before his death, Quavo and Takeoff had shared their joint LP, "Only Built for Infinity Links."

**Rick Springfield**, whose hits include "Human Touch," and, of course, "Jessie's Girl," is putting out his 21st album, "Automatic." Written and produced by Springfield, the collection features 20 new songs. "My goal was solid three-minute tunes with the biggest hooks I could come up with," he said in a news release. Springfield previewed his sound by releasing the title track and "She Walks With the Angels." The album is dedicated to **Matty Spindel**, a friend and soundman of 25 years who died in 2022. Springfield will be hitting the road this summer on the I Want My '80s Tour.

## Variety



This image released by Lucasfilm shows Phoebe Waller-Bridge, (left), and Harrison Ford in a scene from 'Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny.' (AP)

## Film

Goodbye to most beloved character in 'Indiana Jones'

# Allen on one last hurrah as Marion

NEW YORK, July 31, (AP) — Indiana Jones. Karen Allen always knew he'd come walking back through her door.

Since 1981's "Raiders of the Lost Ark," Allen has been only a sporadic presence in the subsequent sequels. But the glow of the freckled, big-eyed actor who so memorably played Marion Ravenwood has only grown stronger over time.

Indiana Jones may be one of the movies' most iconic characters, but he's always needed a good foil. It was Kate Capshaw and Ke Huy Quan in "Temple of Doom" and Sean Connery in "The Last Crusade." Yet none could top, or out drink, Allen's Marion, a wisecracking, naturalistic beauty and swashbuckling heir to screwball legends like Katharine Hepburn and Irene Dunne.

Allen's place in the latest and last "Indiana Jones," the "Dial of Destiny," has long been a mystery. Now that the movie is in theaters - spoiler alert - we can finally let the cat out of the bag. Allen returns. And while her role isn't large - tragedy has driven Marion and Indiana apart - it's extremely poignant in how she figures into Harrison Ford's swan song as Indiana Jones.

"Secrets," Allen chuckled in a recent interview, "are not my specialty."

Allen, 71, was a magnetic presence in some memorable 1970s and '80s films, including 1978's "Animal House", 1984's "Starman" and 1988's "Scrooged." But while she's steadily worked ever since, the era's male-dominated Hollywood often seemed to squander her talent. Allen has lived for decades in the Berkshires, where she opened a textiles and clothing boutique and has frequently performed at Tanglewood.

Allen also returned to Marion in 2008's "Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull." But as much as "Dial of Destiny" signifies the end of Ford's run as Indy, it's also Allen's goodbye to her most beloved character. This time, Indiana's sidekick went to Phoebe Waller-Bridge, the "Fleabag" creator and star. Allen, praising Waller-Bridge as a strong woman, approves.

"If it wasn't going to be me," said Allen, "I'm glad it was her."

**AP:** Did Spielberg or "Dial of Destiny" director James Mangold reach out to you about returning as Marion?

**Allen:** There was a period of time when Steven

was going to direct the film. It was my understanding - although I never read any of those scripts - that it was being developed very much as a still-ongoing Marion-and-Indy story. When Steven decided to step down and James took over and brought in new writers, I knew it was going into a different direction. Having not even known what it was before, it was even more mysterious after they took it over. So I really didn't know anything for a long period of time until they had a script. And I have to confess, I was a bit disappointed that she wasn't more woven throughout the story and didn't have more of an ongoing trajectory. However, the way in which she does come back into the story was very satisfying. I just thought, "OK, I'm just going to embrace this." I certainly would have been wildly disappointed had Marion just sort of vanished into the ether.

**AP:** Did you always think Marion and Indiana were destined for each other? You don't exactly get a sense of permanence between them in "Raiders."

**Allen:** It's funny. When I first started working on it, I just decided that Indy was the love of her life. I just decided to make a deep commitment to that and to play through "Raiders of the Lost Ark" with the feeling they're soulmates. When we end up married in "Crystal Skull," I wept when I read that script.

**AP:** "Indiana Jones" could be a boys world but you were such a spirited force of nature.

**Allen:** Well, Steven and George had this experience as young boys with these Saturday afternoon matinee serial films. They were just a little bit older than I am, so I kind of missed that. I don't have a reference point for that. So I don't think that I necessarily understood the genre of film we were making. I thought we were making "Casablanca." I really, truly did. So I sort of defined my character in that sort of genre - which I think weirdly enough works quite well for the film. I never imagined Marion as a damsel in distress in any sort of way. I was always pushing back against that, and in the end, Steven was supportive of that.

**AP:** Do you ever wish you had gotten the chance to star in more Hollywood films?

**Allen:** I make movies all the time, although I have tended in the last 10 or 15 years to focus more on indie films. In truth, the kinds of roles I'm really hungry to play, particularly for someone my age, they're written more in the indie world. People kind of think, "Where

have you been?" There were times I was raising my son but I often do at least two films a year. They're very satisfying, probably more satisfying than the sort of roles I would be offered. A lot of times I turned down things. There's a lot of thankless roles for women in bigger budget films.

**AP:** What has Marion meant to you?

**Allen:** She's sort of at the core of my growth as an actor and certainly my relationship to the world. As I move through the world, I've become very identified with that character. There was maybe a brief period of time where I found it annoying. But that passed and now it's just this character that I love. I can't imagine anything more satisfying to have had the chance in life to create a character that has some meaning for people.

**AP:** What was it like to shoot your scenes with Ford in "Dial of Destiny"?

**Allen:** It was fantastic. We shot it all in one day or maybe two days. To just imagine these two people that have been wrenched apart through grief and loss and then she's coming back with this hope that they can move forward. When we played the scene, that was very, very affecting. We were both very affected by it and a little teary. And the crew was a little teary.

**AP:** How has it been keeping your role in the film secret?

**Allen:** It's been excruciating. (Laughs) I never have to do anything like this again. People have come up to me and they've been so upset because they didn't see my name on IMDb. People would be so mad I'd have to stand there and just be like, "What do I say? Do I say, 'Yeah, isn't that a drag?' or 'You never never know - wink, wink.'" I've had to say I just can't answer any questions about "Indiana Jones" - which I feel like is sort of saying that I'm in the film. It's a lose-lose situation. (Laughs)

**AP:** Does playing Marion one last time cap anything for you?

**Allen:** More so for Harrison than for me. He's such a fully developed character and has done all five of these. With Marion, I've kind of come and gone. But she will always be a character that moves through life with me. I don't know if I really have a sense of it being over. There always was a sense that one more would be done, even if it took 20 years. Now, they've been very clear that this is the last one. So it is a letting go.

# Features

## ARABO TIMES

TUESDAY, AUGUST 1, 2023

## Music

**NEW YORK:** A week later, the "Barbenheimer" boom has not abated.

Seven days after **Greta Gerwig's** "Barbie" and **Christopher Nolan's** "Oppenheimer" conspired to set box office records, the two films held unusually strongly in theaters. "Barbie" took in a massive \$93 million in its second weekend, according to studio estimates Sunday. "Oppenheimer" stayed in second with a robust \$46.2 million. Sales for the two movies dipped 43% and 44%, respectively — well shy of the usual week-two drops.

"Barbenheimer" has proven to be not a one-weekend phenomenon but an ongoing box-office bonanza. The two movies combined have already surpassed \$1 billion in worldwide ticket sales. **Paul Dergarabedian**, senior media analyst for data firm Comscore, call it "a touchstone moment for movies, moviegoers and movie theaters."

"Having two movies from rival studios linked in this way and both boosting each other's fortunes — both box-office wise and in terms of their profile — I don't know if there's a comp for this in the annals of box-office history," said Dergarabedian. "There's really no comparison for this."

Following its year-best \$162 million opening, the pink-infused pop sensation of "Barbie" saw remarkably sustained business through the week and into the weekend. The film outpaced Nolan's "The Dark Knight" to have the best first 11 days in theaters of any Warner Bros. release ever.

"Barbie" has rapidly accumulated \$351.4 million in US and Canadian theaters, a rate that will soon make it the biggest box-office hit of the summer. Every day it's played, "Barbie" has made at least \$20 million.

And the "Barbie" effect isn't just in North America. The film made \$122.2 million internationally over the weekend. Its global tally has reached \$775 million. It's the kind of business that astounds even veteran studio executives.

"That's a crazy number," said **Jeff Goldstein**, distribution chief for Warner Bros. "There's just a built-in audience that wants to be part of the zeitgeist of the moment. Wherever you go, people are wearing pink. Pink is taking over the world."

Amid the frenzy, "Barbie" is

already attracting a lot of repeat moviegoers. Goldstein estimates that 12% of sales are people going back with friends or family to see it again.

For a movie industry that has been trying to regain its pre-pandemic footing — and that now finds itself largely shuttered due to actors and screenwriters



Nolan



Gerwig

strikes — the sensations of "Barbie" and "Oppenheimer" have showed what's possible when everything lines up just right.

"Post-pandemic, there's no ceiling and there's no floor," Goldstein said. "The movies that miss really miss big time, and the movies that work really work big time."

Universal Pictures' "Oppenheimer," meanwhile, is performing more like a superhero movie than a three-hour film about scientists talking.

Nolan's drama starring **Cillian Murphy** as atomic bomb physicist **J. Robert Oppenheimer** has accrued \$174.1 million domestically thus far. With an additional \$72.4 million in

international cinemas, "Oppenheimer" has already surpassed \$400 million globally.

Showings in IMAX have typically been sold out. "Oppenheimer" has made \$80 million worldwide on IMAX. The large-format exhibitor said Sunday that it will extend the film's run through Aug. 13. (AP)

## People &amp; Places

## Music

## Classic heartbreak album

## 'Broken Hearts' stands as an island of Jones' career

NEW YORK, July 31, (AP): A sign of how much "Little Broken Hearts" represented a departure for **Norah Jones** was that she filmed not one, but two music videos for the album depicting herself as a murderer.

One victim was a lying, cheating boyfriend, the other his temptress. Both ended up at the bottom of a lake.

A decade after its release, the disc stands as an island in Jones' career. It's a little gem where she tested herself to leave a musical comfort zone to process romantic turmoil — and ended up with a concise, consistent statement that rivals some classic heartbreak albums.

"I just love it," Jones said recently. "It's one of my favorite things I've ever done. I also think that for people who weren't really on board with me or my music, some of them liked it when they didn't like the rest of my stuff, and I always thought that was kind of fun and funny."

This is Norah Jones, remember. Her sumptuous voice was everywhere in the early 2000s, songs from her jazz-inflected debut "Come Away With Me" pouring out of speakers in living rooms, boutiques and restaurants. It has sold a staggering 23.7 million copies.

It was music so pleasing and inoffensive, it offended some. The Jones who approached 2012's "Little Broken Hearts" was in her early 30s and just off "one of my more dramatic break-ups." Her voice seemed weary in the song "Good Morning," which sounded like dawn breaking on a sleepless night.

## Simple

On the musical "Dear John" letter, a resigned Jones sings of "folding my hand." You learn why in the ensuing 11 songs, as the rough outlines of a betrayal story emerge.

She worked with Brian Burton, the producer known as Danger Mouse whose edgy imprint was evident on discs by Gnarls Barkley, Broken Bells, the Black Keys and Beck. She had asked him to produce music she had written for a previous album, but he declined. That was not how he does things.

He liked to go into the studio with nothing written and see what happens.

"And I was like, 'what?'" Jones said. She had never worked that way.

That seems, to an outsider, a little disorganized, haphazard. They col-

laborated mostly alone in a studio for two months and the strengths of that approach became evident. The songs are simple, direct and tell a cohesive story both lyrically and musically.

At the beginning of the process, Burton asked whether Jones was willing to go someplace darker than she'd previously been. Under his direction, she told the stories in a hushed voice.

"He likes that kind of dark music, but I was just up for anything, you know?" she said. "I felt so comfortable with him because we were already friends, and we had already spent the last few years meeting up every once in a while, having a drink, talking about relationships and stuff."

"So it didn't feel like going into this vulnerable place with a stranger," she said. "That made it so much easier."

## Mesmerising

The work culminated in the song "Miriam," at once mesmerizing and kind of creepy, where she fantasizes about killing her rival. "Miriam, it's such a pretty name," she sings. "And I'll keep saying it, until you die."

When done, Burton told Rolling Stone magazine that the album was "obviously very different than anything Norah's ever done. I don't know what people will think. I hope they like it, and she doesn't lose a bunch of fans."

What one critic, Mark Saleski, found even more stunning than the musical shift was "this mind-boggling idea: Somebody cheated on Norah Jones."

"It happens to the best of us," Jones said over lunch in an outdoor cafe. "It's part of life."

No, the real woman's name isn't Miriam. And, no, Jones is no murderer. Songs aren't always literal. She's resisted referring to this as a heartbreak album — even though "broken hearts" appears in two song titles — because Jones worries that characterization overshadows the music and misses some of the playfulness.

Her reticence is evident when Jones is asked about how the real people who inspired the stories felt about the album. She didn't like those questions then — or now.

"Why do you need me to talk about my relationships?" she said. "I've just given you a whole album encapsulating the emotions and the inner workings of my brain. People are so nosy and it's so funny. It's like, I'm bleeding into this album. What more can I say that would be better than that?"

There's a rich history of artists pouring romantic torment into songs or albums.



This image released by Max shows John Wilson in a scene from the series 'How To With John Wilson.' (AP)

## Television

## Wilson on AI's impact on filmmaking

## 'How To' exploits the weird

LOS ANGELES, July 31, (AP): As John Wilson gears up to premiere the third and final season of his cult documentary series, "How To With John Wilson," the filmmaker reflected on how a video camera changes people's behavior — and how he exploits that for his show.

Each episode of the Emmy-nominated series starts off as a kind of "how to" video, but inevitably devolves into a hilariously bizarre and shocking portrait of humanity. In an interview with The Associated Press, Wilson shared how his style of cinematography was influenced by his time working for a private investigator, as well as his thoughts on how artificial intelligence will impact the future of filmmaking.

Season three of "How To" premiered July 28 on HBO and Max. The interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.

**AP:** How are you feeling going into this final season?

**Wilson:** I cannot wait for it to come out. I have been sitting on this for a few months now, and there's just so much I want to talk about with it. I think it's the best season yet. I can't wait.

**AP:** I used to be a videographer and I covered breaking news for AP for a long time. The whole idea of that job is I'm coming into a situation with a camera trying to document it and I'm trying to not change it. But I've thought a lot about the ways that bringing a camera into a situation inherently does change it. I'm curious about the ways you've thought about that.

**Wilson:** I've spent a lot of time in the documentary world and reading interviews and talking to people and studying what people do. And I just find it so weird when people try to ignore the fact that the presence of a camera does fundamentally change the energy in a room. And so rather than trying to disguise that, I really like to lean into that instead, because the tension that a cameraperson creates, I find really interesting. And being able to have that be an element that makes something more dramatic is something I'm surprised more people don't do.

**AP:** So you're saying you like to exploit that?

**Wilson:** Yeah. I personally try to remove as much artifice as I can within the work and that's a huge part of it. It's kind of funny. Sometimes I'll interview someone and they already know the show and they may have even seen it. But other times, I'll get through an entire interview with someone, and they'll ask, "So who's the host of this show?" And I'll be like, "Oh, it's me." And they'll be like, "Why don't you have a cameraperson? Can you not afford one?" And I'm just like, "Oh, no, I prefer this." And in their eyes, they just think that I'm like a really talkative cameraperson that's about to lose their job because I keep interrupting the shot.

**AP:** Do you go through each episode chronologically when you're making it, or is it like you have all these different threads that you're balancing at once?

**Wilson:** Everything is happening at the same time. I'll have six different episode titles in my head. And maybe I'll see someone underneath scaffolding, for



Singer-songwriter Norah Jones poses for a portrait in upstate New York on June 8, 2020. For Jones, the "Little Broken Hearts" album is a lesson in making the most of a bad experience. Now a decade old, the album stands out as a little gem. (AP)



Hopkins



Carponelli

## Variety

**SIoux CITY, Iowa:** What bills itself as "the world's longest, largest and oldest recreational bicycle touring event" was more like the world's biggest traffic jam as riders, packed together in a sinewy stream of brightly colored jerseys and shorts, churned across the Loess Hills on the western edge of Iowa.

It's called RAGBRAI — the Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa — and it promised to be bigger than ever this year, as the brainchild of two writers from The Des Moines Register celebrated its golden anniversary with a route similar to its first.

That meant a start in Sioux City, where ambitious riders ceremonially dipped their rear tires in the Missouri River, and a finish for those with the legs and the temerity to last that long seven days later in Davenport on the Mississippi River.

Along the way there is plenty of pie and countless spaghetti dinners served in church basements in tiny towns that dot the heartland. There are riders on bikes that cost the equivalent of a down payment on a house, others on hand-me-downs that announce their arrival with every creaking pedal stroke. The riders themselves come from all corners of the globe, including one intrepid group from **Australia**, and represent just about every US state.

"Participating in RAGBRAI is an extraordinary experience. It's truly a source of pride for many of us in the cycling community, especially if you call anywhere in Iowa home," said **Lisa Carponelli**, who along with business partner **Kim Hopkins** used the ride in 2015 to help launch their business, Velorosa, which produces cycling gear for women.

"You'll meet countless interesting people in every town and along every stretch of pavement," she said. (AP)

**WASHINGTON:** **Diageo** says it's cutting ties with rapper and entrepreneur **Sean "Diddy" Combs** following his move to sue the company over allegations of racism in the handling of his brands, according to court filing.

Combs' lawsuit, filed with the **New York** Supreme Court in **Manhattan** last month. Combs, who is Black, said Diageo leadership told him that his race was one of the reasons it limited distribution to "urban" neighborhoods and stunted sales growth of his brands. According to the suit, which seeks billions of dollars in damages in other legal proceedings against Diageo, Combs was also told that some Diageo leaders resented him for making too much

money.

"Cloaking itself in the language of diversity and equality is good for Diageo's business, but it is a lie," reads the May 31 complaint filed on behalf of Combs Wines and Spirits LLC.

Meanwhile, Diageo has denied the accusations and called Combs'



Combs

suit a "sham action." In the filing, which calls on the court to compel arbitration or dismiss Combs' complaint, Diageo accuses Combs of resorting to "false and reckless" allegations "in an effort to extract additional billions" from the company.

Diageo also said it was ending its brand partnerships with the music mogul — noting that the company had served the Combs parties a notice of intent to arbitrate breaches of the DeLeon agreement and a notice of termination for their Ciroc relationship. (AP)



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