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16 PAGES

150 FILS

Bill seeks varied residency periods for foreign nationals

— Details Page 2 —



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

Amir's health stable

The health condition of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is stable, said Amiri Diwan Affairs Minister Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah Wednesday.

He also went on wishing good health and speedy recovery for His Highness the Amir. (KUNA)

'Doha Declaration' urges Iraq to respect Kuwait sovereignty

Summit calls for Gaza ceasefire

DOHA, Dec 6, (KUNA): The 44th Session of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council held on Tuesday, adopted the Doha Declaration which underscores the importance of Iraq's respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the State of Kuwait pursuant to the provisions of bilateral and multilateral agreements.

The Declaration, citing the UN Security Council Resolution 833 (1993) on the delineation of the Kuwait-Iraqi land and maritime boundaries, urged Iraq to adopt a serious approach to the completion of the demarcation of the maritime boundaries beyond the Mark 162.

The document called on the government of Iraq to abide by the agreement on maritime navigation in the Khor Abdullah waterway, which was signed by both countries on April 29, 2012, took effect on December 5, 2013, and was jointly lodged to the United Nations on December 18, 2013.

The GCC leaders rejected categorically the historical disinformation contained in

Continued on Page 5

Kuwait Central Bank tightens grip on dollar use by banks, exchanges

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: The Central Bank of Kuwait has communicated to local banks that it will not cover dollar purchases directed to exchange companies if such acquisitions are intended for speculation or investment purposes, reports Al-Rai daily quoting informed sources.

The Central Bank emphasized that it will consistently supply any quantities of the dollar directed towards meeting the needs of customers engaged in money transfer operations.

Sources elucidated that the Central Bank has informed local banks that they are permitted to continue procuring dollars to fulfill transactions

with their customers, a practice that remains unchanged. However, banks are now required to ensure that the dollar amounts acquired from the Central Bank for exchange companies are primarily aimed at fulfilling the needs of their customers exclusively. Any shortfall in this regard must be independently covered by the bank.

It was further explained that any purchases of dollars by banks or exchange companies for investment, commercial, or speculative objectives must be covered by the bank or company's own

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Opinion

Stop subsidies and raise salaries

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

AFTER a three-year period of being included in the ration cards, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has decided to once again exclude 42 commodities from the list. These commodities include tea, cheese, meat, and frozen fish.

It was as if the goal was not to benefit the citizens, but rather to benefit the merchants importing these goods, which means that subsidies are a gateway to wastage at the expense of public money.

There is no doubt that the goods excluded from the ration cards are not what the citizens need. What is important in all of this is to not only improve their standard of living but ensure that the support given is useful, and not intended for profiteering.

When the state spends more than KD 7 billion on supporting goods and services while it still suffers from a financial deficit, it means a deviation from the correct goal.

This is why it is necessary to look at the sustainability of the state's financial strength, as the well-being of the wealthy and needy citizens cannot be at the expense of all citizens. It is also not fair to generalize support for everyone at a time when the annual deficit is increasing.

When the concerned ministry increases this number of commodities, which, by the way, were included in the year 2021, then does it not constitute an important factor in improving the nutritional status of the citizens, if we have good intentions?

It is actually in the hands of merchants who wanted to get rid of it by including it on the ration card. This is undoubtedly the most obvious form of corruption, and it does not serve the citizens in any way.

Just like others, we said on previous occasions that support, according to what is in practice, serves neither the citizens nor the state's finances. Rather it enhances the wealth of a few merchants. This is completely devoid of justice.

In subsidizing electricity, for example, the beneficiaries are many property owners who rent housing units to people, without paying the real price for this service.

There are many solutions to getting rid of this concern that annually puts pressure on public finances, starting with completely

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'Remote work' eyed MPs seek answers on budget spends

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: MP Majed Al-Mutairi submitted a proposal to allow citizens to establish temporary diwanias in areas near their houses. He suggested that these diwanias should be made of light materials; which can be disassembled easily in order not to disturb the neighbors. He said these diwanias should not be used for irrelevant purposes, while the maximum space is 100 square meters and the annual fee is KD2 per square meter. He added the concerned institution will demolish the diwaniya in case the owner violates the regulations; that is, after granting him a grace period of one month to address the violations.

MP Dawoud Maarefi submitted a proposal to allow public sector employees to work from home if they wish to do so. He said the concerned institutions shall specify the jobs that can be done from home/online. He added a part of the allowances will be cut due to the fact that working from home will save time for the employees, as well as logistic services and stationery on the part of the employers.

Meanwhile, nine parliamentary committees on Wednesday discussed various items in their agenda and some of the tasks that the National Assembly assigned to them.

The Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee deliberated on the parliamentary and governmental bills regarding the development of the North Economic Zone.

These bills include the proposal of Assembly Speaker Ahmed Al-Saadoun to amend the bill of the government as follows:

■ Add space to the land allocated for the North Economic Zone.

■ Allow foreign investors accredited by Kuwait to utilize State properties, either individually or in partnership with Kuwaitis; and to allow foreign companies accredited by Kuwait to establish and manage investment projects in the North Economic Zone as per the regulations that will be laid down by the Board of Directors of the Zone.

The committee also discussed the establishment of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port.

Present at the meeting were Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil, Economic and Investment Affairs Saad Al-Barak, senior officials at the Silk City and Bubiyan Island Development Council, as well as representatives of the Ministry of Finance, State Audit Bureau (SAB), Ministry of Public Works and Secretariat General for Planning.

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A photo released by the Ministry of Interior unveils the contents of one of the six barrels seized at sea, containing approximately 100 kilograms of 'Shabu', with an estimated street value of 2 million Kuwaiti dinars. — See Page 2



Photo during the 5th Kuwait Primary Health Care Conference in the presence of the Assistant Undersecretary for Public Health Affairs Dr. Munther Al-Hasawi, the official spokesman for the Ministry of Health Dr. Abdullah Al-Sanad, and a number of doctors and specialists.

19mn visits to primary health care centers in 2023

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: Highlighting the qualitative shift witnessed in primary health care services, the expansion of a number of specialized clinics and digital health services, and other achievements, the Ministry of Health revealed that it received about 19 million visits to primary health

care centers during the current year, with a monthly average of 1.6 million.

This was revealed during an event held to launch the activities of the 5th Kuwait Primary Health Care Conference in the presence of the Assistant Undersecretary for Public Health Affairs Dr. Munther Al-Hasawi,

Continued on Page 5

Iran capsule launch sets stage for future 'astronaut missions'

TEHRAN, Dec 6, (AP): Iran said Wednesday it sent a capsule into orbit capable of carrying animals as it prepares for human missions in coming years.

A report by the official IRNA news agency quoted Telecommunications Minister Isa Zarepour as saying the capsule was launched 130 kilometers (80 miles) into orbit.

Zarepour said the launch of the 500-kilogram (1,000-pound) capsule is aimed at sending Iranian astronauts to space in coming years. He did not say if any animals were in the capsule.

He told state TV that Iran plans to send astronauts into space by 2029 after further tests involving animals.

State TV showed footage of a rocket named Salman carrying the capsule.

Iran occasionally announces successful launches of satellites and other space crafts. In September, Iran said it sent a data-collecting satellite into space. In 2013, Iran said it sent a monkey into space and returned it successfully.

Reports said the country's Defense Ministry built and launched the Salman rocket while the capsule was built by the Iranian civil space agency. Media reports did not say where the launch took place. Iran usually makes launches from Imam Khomeini Space Center in northern Semnan province.

Bahrain gathers experts against digital menace

MANAMA, Dec 6, (KUNA): Cybersecurity specialists stressed, Wednesday, the urgent need to raise the level of societal awareness in this regard, especially considering the great digital development.

On the sidelines of the Arab International Cybersecurity Conference and Exhibition (AICS) in Bahrain, specialists highlighted to KUNA the importance of enhancing security awareness, whether for individuals or institutions, and introducing them to the basic concepts of cybersecurity and how to protect against and counter intrusions.

For her part, Head of Child Protection Unit in Cyberspace in the General Department of Anti-Corruption and Economic and Electronic Security of the Bahraini Interior Ministry, Engineer Fouz Mohammad said to KUNA that children should be educated on the dangers of the Internet and ways to use it safely.

She explained that her unit is concerned with protecting children from all the dangers they may be exposed to when connecting to the Internet, whether using electronic games, social media applications, browsing the web, or anything related to cyberspace, said Fouz, adding that online bullying is one of the most important challenges that the unit focuses on.

Participating in AICS 2023 aims to explain the mechanism of communication with the Ministry of Interior, especially the Child Protection in Cyberspace unit if children were exposed to abuse or harassment, via the artificial intelligence (chatbot) application, Fouz explained.

Newswatch

DUBAI: Russian President Vladimir Putin began a trip Wednesday to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, hoping to shore up support in the Mideast from two major oil producers allied to the U.S. as his war on Ukraine grinds on.

Putin landed in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the Emirates, a federation of seven sheikhdoms now hosting the United Nations' COP28 climate talks. It marked his first trip to the region since before the coronavirus pandemic and the war - and as he faces an arrest warrant from the International Criminal Court over the war in Ukraine. (AP)

COPENHAGEN: A Dubai-based British hedge fund trader sought by Danish authorities for allegedly orchestrating a \$1.7 billion tax fraud, considered one of the largest in the Scandinavian country, has been extradited from the United Arab Emirates, officials said Wednesday.

Financier Sanjay Shah was convicted in May in Dubai of masterminding a scheme that ran from 2012 to 2015 in which foreign businesses pretended to own shares in Danish companies and claimed tax refunds for which they were not eligible. A court in the United Arab Emirates had cleared his extradition.

Danish media said he was aboard a plane from Dubai that landed in Copenhagen early Wednesday. (AP)



This photo released by the Iranian Defense Ministry on Wednesday, Dec. 6, 2023, claims to show a rocket with a capsule carrying animals launched from an undisclosed location into orbit in Iran. (AP)

Prayer Timings			
Fajr	05:04	Asr	14:31
Sunrise ..	06:28	Maghrib ..	16:49
Zohr	11:39	Isha	18:11

Local

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

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:
By Day: Warm with light variable wind to light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speed of 06-26 km/h.
By Night: Rather cold to cold

Weather		Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
with light variable wind, with speed of 08-20 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.	Kuwait Airport	28	08	
	Abdaly	28	09	
	Jahra	28	11	
	Salmiyah	26	18	
	Nuwaisib	27	11	
	Wafra	28	09	

Kuwait donates \$1m, total \$462m in decade to UNHCR

KRCS stresses strengthening joint Gulf action in field of media

DOHA, Dec 6, (KUNA): Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) stressed Wednesday the importance of strengthening joint Gulf action in the field of media to achieve aspirations of Gulf youth, which would reach the goals of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

In a statement to KUNA, KRCS Director of Public Relations and Media Department Khaled Al-Zaid, called for the development of joint Gulf programs and events that take into account future outlook and youth interest in media field.

This came following the conclusion of the 12th meeting of media and awareness official committee for the Red Crescent bodies in the GCC, held in Doha.



Khaled Al-Zaid

The committee discussed the implementation of the training program to qualify Gulf media cadres and identify priority topics and common interest within the framework of joint international cooperation between the GCC and the regional organizations, especially the Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Organization, he said.

The meeting also tackled preparing media cadres in the field of relief, humanitarian and environmental work, training programs and topics of common priority and interest in the field of volunteer media, the statement added.

The role of media in supporting humanitarian work, ways to deal with visual, audio and print content, how to develop the benefit of modern technology and improve the performance of the media staff in terms of covering relief and humanitarian work, were also discussed.

The GCC General Secretariat sought, during the previous and current period, to organize and hold workshops in the field of humanitarian media and disaster and crisis management, out of its keenness to train media cadres and volunteers to deal with all humanitarian and relief fields,

Al-Zaid said.

Donation

Meanwhile, the State of Kuwait pledged USD one million to the UN Refugee Agency as part of its voluntary contributions to the Agency's activities in 2024.

Announcing the donation at the UNHCR's Pledging Conference on Tuesday, the country's Permanent Representative to the UN Office at Geneva Nasser Al-Hayen reaffirmed Kuwait's commitment to supporting the humanitarian activities of the UNHCR and other UN aid agencies.

With today's pledge, Kuwait's contributions to the UN Refugee Agency over the past decade topped \$462 million.

The contributions of Kuwait to humanitarian action aims to alleviate the suffering of disaster-hit people around the globe away from any political agendas, he said.

On the one-day pledging conference, he said it coincided with exceptional disastrous incidents in several parts of the world which required doubling down on the UNHCR's effort to ensure the safety of vulnerable people.

On behalf of Kuwait, Ambassador Al-Hayen called on the conferees to respond to the urgent humanitarian needs of the people in the Gaza Strip and shoulder a collective responsibility for addressing the complicated challenges in the territory.

The Israeli occupation forces persist in their brutal aggression on Palestinian civilians, including refugee camps and facilities of the UN aid agencies, he pointed out.

The attacks of the Israeli occupation forces on civilian targets led to disruption of basic humanitarian services and deterioration of the economy and healthcare system in the Gaza Strip, forcing more than half a million people to flee their homes, Ambassador Al-Hayen went on.

He reiterated the call for the international community, particularly the UN Security Council, to shoulder their moral responsibility for halting the criminal war on Gaza and ensure sufficient support to the civilians there.

3 years jail, fine for visa traders

Bill reviews residence, transfer, visit visa fees

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: The parliamentary Interior and Defense Affairs Committee recently approved the bill on amending the Foreigners Residency Law and referred it to the National Assembly for inclusion in the session scheduled for Dec 19, reports Al-Anba daily quoting parliamentary sources.

Sources told the daily that the bill consists of 37 articles and seven chapters; focusing on articles specifying the mechanism for the entry and deportation of foreigners, notifying the competent authorities, visa trading, and penalties, a Kuwaiti woman married to a foreigner obtaining the right to sponsor her husband and children; provided that she has not obtained citizenship according to Article Eight.

Sources explained that the bill, which the government was keen to pass as soon as possible, specifies the fees related to residency, its renewal and all types of entry visas through a ministerial decision.

According to sources, the bill prohibits trading in residence permits by exploiting, recruiting or facilitating the recruitment of a foreigner in exchange for sums of money or a form of benefit, and imposes criminal penalties and complementary penalties of imprisonment for a period not exceeding three years and a fine of not less than KD5,000 and not more than KD10,000 for anyone who violates this. It stipulates that the Public Prosecution has exclusive jurisdiction over the exemption from penalty for visa trading.

The bill also grants a Kuwaiti woman married to a foreigner the right to obtain a residence permit for her foreign husband and children, as long as the Kuwaiti woman did not acquire the citizenship by extension of her marriage to a Kuwaiti. The foreign widow or divorcee of a Kuwaiti, who has children with him, is entitled to obtain a residence permit.

A foreigner may be granted temporary residence in Kuwait for a period not exceeding three months, and he must leave the country upon its expiration unless he obtains a renewal of this residence from the Ministry of Interior for a period not exceeding one year. A foreigner may be granted a license for regular residence for a period not exceeding five years, and a residence permit may be granted for a period not exceeding ten years and 15 years for the children of a Kuwaiti woman married to a non-Kuwaiti.

Invest

Foreigners can invest in Kuwait, as per the decision of the Council of Ministers, specifying the scope of their investments, their categories and the amounts to be invested.

A foreign employee in a government entity may not be granted a residence permit under another entity except with the approval of the entity in which he is currently working.

Likewise, a worker in a non-governmental entity will not be granted a residence permit except with the approval of the competent authority.

The Minister of Interior may deport a foreigner even if he has a residence permit in the following cases: - If the Minister of Interior deems that deportation is required to protect public interest, public security or public morals;

■ If the foreigner has no legitimate source of income. The decision to deport a foreigner may include the foreign members of his family whom he is supporting, and the foreigner whose deportation decision has been issued may be detained for a period not exceeding 30 days to be extended at the end of the specified period if it is necessary to implement the deportation decision.

The Minister of Interior may exempt the foreigner who is deported from the State of Kuwait from all fines resulting from his violation of the provisions of this law on the condition that he leaves Kuwait.

The bill includes amendments related to the domestic workers as follows:

■ The domestic worker and those of the same status may be granted a regular residence permit in accordance with the provisions of Article 13 of this law and within the limits of the duration of his recruitment contract.

■ If the worker's residency is canceled from the date he left work, he must leave Kuwait within the period specified by the competent authority in the Ministry of Interior unless he is authorized to obtain a new residency before the expiry of this period.

■ In all cases, the residency of the domestic worker or those of the same rank may not be transferred except with the approval of the employer.

■ The domestic worker should not remain outside Kuwait for a period exceeding four months, unless he obtains permission to do so from the Ministry of Interior before the expiration of this period.

Excluded from the application of the provisions of the law included in the draft are: heads of State and their family members; heads and official employees of diplomatic missions and their families on the condition of reciprocity; holders of diplomatic, special and political passports on the condition of reciprocity; and persons whom the Minister of Interior deems to be excluded with special permission for considerations related to courtesies.

'Door open for graduates in researchers shortage'

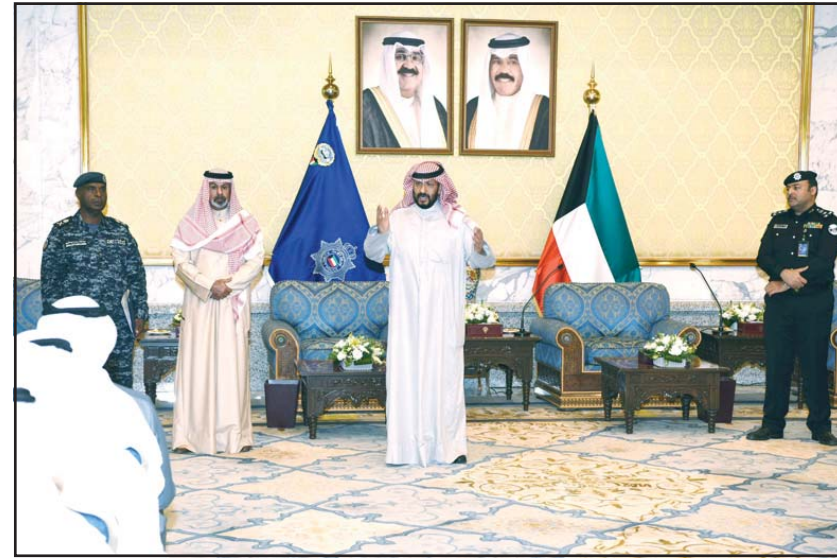
KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Development and Activities in the Ministry of Education Maryam Al-Anazi confirmed that there is a shortage of researchers in light of the urban expansion and opening of new schools in several areas; noting that the door is open for graduates of the College of Social Sciences who are specialized in Sociology and Psychology among Kuwaitis, children of Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis and other Gulf citizens, reports Al-Anba daily.

In an interview with the daily, Al-Anazi touched on many issues concerning the students. She disclosed that the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition provides companies specialized in operating canteens in schools in line with its regulations and that of the ministry.

She also highlighted the strong cooperation with many parties to implement awareness programs for students on the danger of drugs, smoking and stimulant; in addition to training teachers on first aid procedures in coordination with the Civil Defense Department, and Kuwait Firefighting Force as well in the field of fire prevention.

Meanwhile, the new job budgets, which include the employment grades, in the 2023/2024 budget were approved in accordance with the requests submitted by ministries, agencies and institutions, reports Al-Anba daily quoting a reliable source.

The source affirmed that there has been no reduction in any of the requests; indicating one ministry has approved 4,000 nomination letters and the requested 2,000 new degrees were approved without reduction.



KUNA photo First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled addressing the awardees at the ceremony.

Minister honors securitymen

Keep up the good work: Mol

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled recently honored a group of security men for efficiently dealing with many cases, most notably the burning of the vehicle of Judge Sultan Buresli, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a statement released by the Public Relations and Security Media General Department at the Interior Ministry, the department disclosed that Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled affirmed during the awarding ceremony: "We are confident that the security personnel have the ability to keep up with all the criminal methods and to strike with an iron fist whenever anyone dares to destabilize the security of the homeland. It is necessary to intensify efforts and maintain the outstanding security performance. The awardees deserve to be honored for their efforts, outstanding contributions and hard work."

He also confirmed the application of the law on everyone, the continuous fight against all kinds of crimes, and the firm and severe response to any criminal or law-breaking act.

Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled conveyed the greetings of the country's supreme political leadership to the awardees; while imploring God Almighty to bless His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, may God protect him, and to grant him speedy recovery and good health.

He emphasized that the awardees truly deserve to be honored for their efforts

and hard work, which culminated in the arrest of many criminals, especially those behind the burning of Buresli's vehicle. He said His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah personally followed up the arson case. He urged the awardees to be more vigilant, intensify their efforts and maintain their outstanding security performance.

Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Lieutenant General Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf and a number of security officials attended the awarding ceremony.

Female judge nominated: In an achievement that confirms great confidence in the capabilities of female Kuwaiti judges, the Supreme Judicial Council has appointed Judge Lulwa Al-Ghanem as special advisor from Kuwait; as part of the staff of the Institute of Justice and the Rule of Law in Malta, with the initial assignment period of one year that is subject to extension, reports Al-Qabas daily quoting a reliable source.

The source informed the daily that Minister of Justice and State Minister for Housing Affairs, Fahd Al-Ruqabah approved the decision of the Supreme Judicial Council in this regard and it has been implemented.

The source pointed out that nominating a female Kuwaiti judge for an international position is an affirmation of the Supreme Judicial Council's trust in the competence of Kuwaiti female judges.



The suspects and the 100 kilograms of 'Shabu' found in their possession.

5 Iranians, 2 Indians arrested with drugs worth KD 2 million

By Munaf Naif
 Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: Under the directives of the First Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled, a team from the Directorate General of the Coast Guard, led by their Director Major General Talal Al-Munis, arrested seven individuals, 5 Iranians and 2 Indians who attempted to smuggle about 100 kilograms of "Shabu" (crystal meth), worth about KD 2 million, into the country by sea.

According to the General Department of Public Relations and Security Media of the Ministry of Interior, it received information about the entry of a ship in the territorial waters

of the State of Kuwait, carrying a substantial quantity of narcotic substances.

Immediately, a team was formed, and investigation into the ship's location intensified. After obtaining the necessary legal permission, the ship was seized in Kuwaiti territorial waters, and its crew of seven Asians was arrested.

An inspection of the ship revealed the presence of six jars filled with the narcotic substance "Shabu".

When the suspects were interrogated, one of them reported that a person was supposed to receive the shipment. After an ambush by the force, they were seized. They were referred along with the seized items to the concerned authorities to take the necessary action.

'Snacks harmful for heart, stressful'

'Croissants, chocolate, chips bad'

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: People usually reach for ready-to-eat snacks, such as croissants, a chocolate bar or a bag of potato chips, whenever their stress levels increase; but researchers from the University of Birmingham discovered in two recent studies that eating these high-fat foods while you are stressed may lead to a series of undesirable health interactions, reports Al-Qabas daily.

According to experts, stress causes changes in the heart and body, and the heart rate and blood pressure may rise immediately under stress.

"The Times" has reported that researchers confirmed these responses are completely normal. In healthy people, blood vessels expand well, which reduces pressure on the walls of blood vessels. However, in people at risk of heart disease, their blood vessels are not flexible enough, and this means that the blood does not get where it needs to be, they explained.

However, results published in the journal, 'Frontiers in Nutrition', showed that two croissants can cause a severe and potentially harmful decrease in the healthy elasticity of blood vessels in people who do not have a history of heart disease or other health problems.

The results showed that blood vessel function decreased by one percent increases the risk of heart disease by 13 percent, and it also showed that the elasticity of the artery did not return to normal 90 minutes after the end of the meal.

In addition, the arteries are not the only ones that suffer when people eat snacks during times of stress. Another research paper published in the journal, 'Nutrients', found that fatty snacks also affect brain function, as the flow of oxygen to the part of the brain decreases. It regulates people's thoughts, actions and emotions. This shift in mental state can make people feel more stressed than they initially did, they warned.

Doctor gets bail in forgery case

'Brutal murder' hearing Jan 10

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: The Criminal Court adjourned to January 10 the case filed against a Kuwaiti citizen who is accused of killing his wife in Qairawan, dismembering her body, and dumping her body parts in garbage containers in different areas.

According to a report submitted by a Kuwaiti woman to the security authorities, her sister had been missing for more than seven months since October last year. She did not know her whereabouts, and feared that something bad happened to her, especially since she failed to attend the weddings of two of her children during this period. Her sister has been separated from her husband (the father of her children) for a long time, and lives alone. However, she is secretly married to a citizen, and no one knows this secret except her (the informant).

When the secret husband was interrogated, he denied being involved in her disappearance. However, the investigators were not convinced by his words as he seemed nervous and confused. They examined his phone and discovered that his last call to the missing woman was actually in October last year.

The detectives tightened their grip on him. Eventually he confessed to killing her, cutting her body into twenty parts, and dumping them in several garbage containers in various governorates. He had also disposed off her phone and personal clothes.

However, during the court session, he denied the charges leveled against him.

Doctor gets bail: The Criminal Court has ordered the release of a doctor on bail of KD 500 after he was detained in the Central Prison on charges of forging a sick leave for a Kuwaiti woman.

When questioned at the court, he denied the charges of forgery or of having any

Top co-op jobs

Competency eyed

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: The special committee for Kuwaitization of supervisory positions in cooperative societies has asked the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) to include banking and Sharia specializations in the criteria of applicants for these positions, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources from the Ministry of Social Affairs.

According to the sources, the amendment came after the ministry completed a vision for adding other conditions to the text of Article 50 of Ministerial Resolution number 68/2023 on amending the regulations organizing cooperative work pursuant to Ministerial Resolution number 46/T of 2021, pertaining to the regulations and requirements for occupying supervisory positions in cooperative societies to add the graduates of Sharia Law and banking specializations among the required university qualifications of applicants.

On the other hand, sources confirmed that the Supreme Committee for Investigation into Cooperative Work will review the reports of committees formed to verify the work of cooperatives in order to rectify the observed violations, and then submit its recommendation to the minister to take the necessary action.

knowledge of the Kuwaiti woman.

He explained that, "I am a doctor in a clinic where we work with on shift basis from time to time. This means I am not fixed in a specific clinic. A case has been filed against me for the first time in my life."

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

'Young people be prepared, catch up with new tech ... or will be left behind'

"WE can say that the Kuwait International Book Fair - whose activities ended a few days ago - has increased in value during this 46th session, through the participation of many local, Arab and foreign publishing houses," columnist **Dr Muhammad Khaled Al-Hujaifa**, wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

"A total of 524 publishing houses from 29 countries around the world participated, and many cultural activities concerned with knowledge, culture and the arts were held on its sidelines, as the exhibition during the days of its establishment witnessed the visit of 360 thousand visitors, and for all of these efforts we thank the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters.

"Dr. Muhammad Khaled Al-Jassar -- Secretary-General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters -- is an educated personality, and has a strategic vision for the mechanisms of the work of the National Council, and he has revived it, after its stagnation during the Corona period, and the cessation of most, if not all, cultural activities.

"What is noteworthy about this year's exhibition -- according to the National Council itself -- is the participation of many Kuwaiti publishing houses in the "Our Book is Your Book" initiative, which includes giving school students a free book through a coupon provided by the exhibition management in coordination with Kuwaiti publishers, with the aim of encouraging students, children, adolescents and youth to read.

"This gesture of cultural knowledge has a positive impact on male and female students in Kuwait, and encourages them to recognize the importance of reading in their lives.

"We need that cultural advancement that develops the talents of young people and enhances the value of their culture, so that our children find a natural outlet for their energies, away from evil and evil people, who lie in wait for the future of the country by harming its children, and in this area we mean those who promote drugs among the youth, and we We hear and see how the Kuwaiti security services are watching out for them, and thwarting all their attempts to introduce this scourge into the land of Kuwait.

"In addition to these security efforts, cultural agencies and institutions have another role to play, by spreading cultural awareness among young people, bringing them closer to important concepts such as citizenship, belonging, and loyalty to the homeland, and encouraging them to acquire education and knowledge, in addition to developing their talents and abilities.

"We are in an era of great movement and change, an era of speed and modern

technologies, and whoever does not catch up will be greatly delayed, and for this reason young people must be prepared for this national mission.

"This is the Kuwait we want -- a conscious, educated youth who cares about science and culture, thinks about the interests of his country, and never looks at negative and destructive ideas, but rather rejects them categorically, in order to achieve prestige, progress and prosperity for his country."

Also:

"Today, global influence is wielded by networks of individuals who, united by a shared allegiance to Zionism, strategically exploit widespread queues. Collaborating in a nexus of animosity towards humanity, they hold privileged access to the confidential realms of nations, corporations, and entrepreneurs," columnist **Dr Abdul Rahman Al Jeeran**, wrote for **Al-Rai** daily.

"Distinguishing themselves from foreign or nearby spies, these Zionist operatives pursue self-interest and the interests of their ilk exclusively. Their ascendancy stems from a legacy in the banking and brokerage industry, positioning them at the forefront of industries reliant on clandestine insights.

"This clandestine knowledge, particularly in the realms of war and reconciliation, has the potential to amass or obliterate fortunes. Financial markets, influenced by concealed information, witness the rise and fall of stocks, with speculators wielding secrets that can reshape the destiny of nations.

"The wielders of wealth, exemplified in literary works such as 'The Merchant of Venice', exercise a formidable force that transcends the limitations of military might. "Contrary to military action, money operates discreetly, evading scrutiny through political maneuvering, international law, and reputational concerns. The story unfolds with the rejection of Uganda by Zionists, who foresaw a looming world war, leading to the gift of Palestine to the British in the aftermath.

"A revelation from the Jewish Chronicle in 1909 further illuminates the depth of influence, as Sir Stuart Samuel anticipates Churchill's support for laws favoring Jewish interests in the imminent future.

"These machinations represent a fifth column, comprised of money-changers, brokers, and businessmen, employing any means necessary to achieve their objectives. Their access to the secrets of impending conflicts allows them to manipulate outcomes to the advantage of Zionism. Their infiltration into pivotal decision-making centers and councils, as underscored by the statement regarding Parliament, epitomizes a calculated strategy to exert control and influence nations.

"People are working hard, and now we are ashamed of me and I am ashamed of you ... so when will we succeed?"

"The Jews occupied Palestine after arranging, preparing, and mobilizing the

world and the mobilization of America and Russia. If we want to regain Palestine, we must prepare not with slogans and shouts, but with the correct path of victory, and everyone knows it: "If you support God, He will support you," but unfortunately they do not want it, because it is a long road, so they replaced it with 'the end justifies' the means."



"Cancellation of conscription ... A monstrous law was issued within a lapse of time, which they unjustly and aggressively called the 'Conscription Law'. It is far from the goal for which it was approved and was proven to be a miserable failure after its implementation!" columnist **Talal Al-Saeed** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Five representatives recently submitted a draft law to abolish this monstrous law, which has neither benefit nor return, except for more conscription evaders who are prevented from traveling or referred for investigation, and penalties could be imposed on them. They did not benefit themselves or benefit the Kuwaiti Army, or contribute to the homeland. It is difficult for the Army to benefit those who are led by sticks or by the force of law!

"We appreciate the five representatives for their sophisticated practical thinking and their sensitivity to the suffering of Kuwaiti families. We urgently need a practical law that is attractive to young people and can be applied like the 'bully' law in previous years, which made military training a part of the academic curriculum for the high school graduates who passed a military course, after which they chose their future without coercion!

"When His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak assumed the Defense Minister post, one of his most important decisions was to abolish the previous conscription law, which proved to be very bad. The decision was welcomed by the Kuwaiti street. Then, the conscription page was turned and another minister came looking for an achievement to cover up his grave corruption, so it was the closest way to achieve such a goal. He reinstated the conscription law after it was amended, but in a way worse than the previous law.

"Unfortunately, he was able to convince the members of the National Assembly at the time to approve it within a short period -- to approve a monstrous law brought by a corrupt minister and the victims are the children of Kuwait. All we are hoping for is this Assembly to approve the draft law submitted by the five members, so this will be considered a real achievement of the legislature, not the achievement of the interrogation of His Highness the Prime Minister that conquered the Kuwaiti street."

— Compiled by **Mai Elsoukary**



Dr. Al-Hujaifa



Fire-fighters on the ladder.

Fire drill at hospital

Kuwait Firefighting Force (KFF) recently conducted a fire drill at the Physical Medicine and Health Rehabilitation Hospital in Andalus, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The Public Relations and Media Department at KFF revealed in a press statement that the Sulaibkhat Fire Station carried out the fire drill, during which the hospital was evacuated, the injured were rescued and a mock fire on the ground floor was extinguished.

The department explained that KFF organizes fire drills regularly in order to raise the level of readiness and efficiency of firefighters in dealing fire incidents in order to protect lives and properties.

Cabbie in trouble

Brawl over KD1.5 fare

By **Jaber Al-Hamoud**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: The Criminal Court presided over by Judge Ahmad Al-Sadi yesterday adjourned until next Wednesday the case filed against a taxi driver who was detained for fighting with four Arab expatriates.

According to the case file, the expatriates had stopped the taxi driver in Bneid Al-Gar. After they told him where they wanted to go, he said the cost for transporting them to their destination was two dinars. However, the four refused and told him, "We will pay you one and a half dinars." The taxi driver refused and drove off. Minutes later, he returned to location and hit one of them with his car, injuring the victim but the others were able to save themselves. The taxi driver then fled to the Shuwaikh Industrial Area and replaced the windshield of the taxi which broke when the car hit the victim.

The entire incident was captured by a camera installed outside a house in the area, using which the accused was arrested and placed in prison.

The victim testified that he and his friends were standing by the road in Bneid Al-Gar when a taxi driven by a Bangladeshi taxi driver stopped in front of them. They discussed the price of the trip, but they did not reach an agreement with him, after which they were told to look for another taxi driver. However, they were surprised when the taxi driver returned after some time, while they were still waiting for another taxi. He stopped in front of them for two minutes, and then charged at them, hitting one of them with his vehicle. The victim fell on the ground, and the taxi driver fled the scene.



Barrels filled with local liquor.

Bootleggers arrested

By **Mansour Al-Sultan**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

Personnel from the Criminal Investigation Department raided a local liquor factory run by 3 expatriates in the A-Wafra residential area and confiscated liquor ready for sale and also barrels filled with raw material.

During the investigation, the three detainees confessed to manufacturing local alcohol and charging 10 dinars for each bottle for home delivery service.

'Combating corruption vital for secure Kuwait'

EPA, Nazaha hold workshop

By **Abdul-Nasser Al-Aslami**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: The Environment Public Authority (EPA) organized a workshop aimed at raising awareness and introducing the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority and the most important relevant laws. This workshop is one among the steps to activate joint cooperation with the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) through training programs and workshops to enhance the values of integrity, transparency and exchange of experiences.



Al-Kandari

On the occasion of holding the workshop, Acting Director General Samira Al-Kandari said, "It is not lost on all of us - citizens and residents - that the continued prosperity and security of our country, both present and future, depends on combating corruption. It is a societal responsibility in which all of us - individuals and institutions - participate hand in hand.

Since EPA is an integral part of the country's institutional work system, one of its most important goals is contributing to creating an environment supportive of sustainable development.

Therefore, we need to work on coordinating efforts between the two parties and seeking more cooperation by intensifying courses and activities to support and de-

velop capabilities in a way that contributes to solving problems that the authority may face, and improving performance, as well as coordinating awareness efforts, introducing issues related to corruption, and determining responsibility for all groups working in the authority, as we are all responsible from our position.

We also support the cooperation efforts between EPA and the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority, not only for raising awareness about the dangers of corruption, but also by working to prevent it.

This can only be done by activating the tools of follow-up and control, tightening the sleeves, cooperating with the departments executing the work, and taking their guidance in order to achieve the optimal exploitation of resources to ensure the achievement of the principles of integrity and transparency in a way that reflects the honorable image of the work completed, services and the safety of procedures.

We look forward to expanding the horizons of fruitful cooperation with more activities and events aimed at raising the level of awareness and implementing controls and requirements to improve performance, in a way that contributes to preserving resources to meet the needs of the present and achieve sustainability without compromising the rights of future generations."

In addition, the Senior Law Specialist at the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority Dalal Ghazanfari gave a speech about the Anti-Corruption Law, speaking about the crimes that fall under the name of corruption, such as assault on public funds, tax evasion, the crime of bribery, customs evasion, financing terrorism, exploitation of influence, forgery, and illicit gain.

She said the possibility of harm from corruption operations does not affect the person who carried out the work, but it negatively affects all members of society, considering that the phenomenon of cheating in tests is the greatest disaster and the focus of corruption.

'Too many ... driving without plates'

330 cars with tinted glass seized

By **Munaf Nafi**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: A collision between two vehicles, a vanette without plates and a car driven by a citizen on the Fahaaheel Road yesterday brought to the fore the issue of vehicles without plates again, raising the need for stricter measures to protect people from reckless drivers.

In this context, a citizen documented the collision involving a driver of a pickup truck without both numbers plate -- rear and front -- on the Fahaaheel Expressway, and then fleeing, endangering the lives of others.

As the citizen was registering a case at Fahd Al-Ahmad police station, the detectives were assigned to arrest the suspect, the authorities are paying more attention not only to the issue of numbers plates, but also the front and rear window shades, saying these vehicles are increasing in number every day, without the slightest regard for the law, despite the great efforts exerted by the security men.

Al-Seyassah has learned that strict instructions were issued by the senior leadership in the Ministry of Interior to stop any vehicle that does not have front and rear metal plates or those vehicles with tinted

windshield in violation of the law, and to impound it immediately and refer it to the ministry garage and take the necessary measures against the violator.

The source pointed out that the General Traffic Department seized about 330 vehicles last week alone, including vehicles with tinted windows that violated the law.

The source pointed out that a circular was issued by the Director of Technical Inspection about two months ago stressing the necessity of not inspecting vehicles whose license plate number is damaged and not visible clearly.

The circular stated that if the vehicle owner has a letter from the Public Security Directorate "to replace a lost metal plate or traffic signs, the manufacture of the metal plates is then requested issue a replacement plate, and the vehicle is then inspected."

A security source explained to Al-Seyassah that Article 207 of Executive Regulation No. 81 of 1976 of Traffic Law No. 67 of 1876 allows the seizure of a motor vehicle or car of any type if it is caught driving on the road without plates, or with a single or illegible plate, or there is something obstructing its vision, or it carries plates not issued by the General Traffic Department.

Other Voices

Finkelstein's predicament

By **Ahmad alsarraf**

American Norman Finkelstein may be the only Jew who was prevented from entering Israel when he tried to visit it in 2008. He was returned to where he came from after being detained and interrogated for more than 24 hours, because of his views in support of Palestinian rights, and his being the loudest and strongest voice for decades in condemning Israeli crimes against the Palestinians.

Norman was born in 1953 in New York, to Jewish parents who were survivors of the concentration camps in Warsaw and Auschwitz. They next met in a camp for displaced people in Austria, from where they migrated to America, and from his mother he learned to call for peace and truth.

Norman received his doctorate from the prestigious Princeton University, held many academic positions at several well-known universities, and wrote many books and dozens of interviews, lectures and research, the majority of which focused on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Holocaust.

Because of his frank positions, many American media outlets fought him, the Zionist lobby was strongly hostile to him, and groups sought to expel him from his teaching jobs, but all of this did not fail him, and he did not surrender, and remained a supporter of Palestinian rights.

In a recent interview with the famous program presenter Spear Morgan, Norman mentioned several important matters, in response to the presenter's accusations of unjustified bias against Israel, and his refusal to condemn what "Hamas" did.

He said (in a manner of speaking) that, in principle, he condemns the atrocities committed by "Hamas" on October 7, but things must be put into perspective. Those who committed these atrocities must be tried and convicted, but the judiciary will inevitably look favorably on what they did, be-

cause they were "prisoners of a concentration camp," and the court will be very reluctant to convict them.

"The one thousand five hundred fighters who carried out the October operation were born in the concentration camp, and they were living without a past, present, or future, and they were suffering from various diseases -- hunger and despair, along with the loss of freedom and dignity, just as they and their families had been exposed to, for years, to various attacks and insults at the hands of the Zionists.

For 15 years, the Israeli forces had been launching air strikes on them, blowing up their homes, arresting them, and treating them with the utmost arbitrariness. Neither elderly women nor even children were spared from their oppression. When those young men broke through the security barriers that day, they knew that they would most likely not return. They are alive to their families, as Israel has not been fair or merciful to them since 1948."

Finkelstein adds that in 2020, he felt despair, due to the Palestinians' unwillingness to continue the struggle and revolution against their conditions, and he decided to put the issue and its owners behind his back, and go about his business, and he felt pain for his decision, knowing that in doing so he was abandoning the cause of a people, the person who had devoted 15 years of his life to defending their tragedy and their pain and fears, and I believe that he was the last voice representing them in the Western world, and they had no other hope. But he now believes more in the justice of their cause.

I repeat what I have previously said in more than one article, and interview: I am against everything that Hamas represents in terms of opinions, ideas, and positions, but that should not prevent me for a moment from sympathizing with the Palestinian right to a free and independent homeland.

I also repeat that the real problem is not with Israel, despite all its crimes, but with our backwardness. It is backwardness that lost the homelands, and because of it, they and others will be lost!



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'MEW shift into institution to help reduce budget's financial burden'

Linking 'treated water request' service said completed

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: According to informed sources in the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, the ministry is awaiting the responses of the Ministry of Finance, the Civil Service Commission (CSC), and the General Secretariat for Planning regarding its conversion into an institution, in preparation for discussing the matter in the Council of Ministers, reports Al-Seyassah daily.



Dr Al-Ostad

The sources explained that the ministry had previously addressed the three authorities in this regard, and had made nine amendments to the draft law establishing the corporation, which was then sent to the Council of Ministers after obtaining the approval of the Fatwa and Legislation Department.

PAM organizes event

Career day for job-seekers with disabilities

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6, (KUNA): Public Authority of Manpower arranged with Kuwait Finance House a career day for people with disabilities who have undergraduate, diploma or secondary school to work in private sector, it was held in the headquarter.

This step is a confirmation to their

Transforming the ministry into an institution will contribute to reducing the financial burden on the state budget and reducing the difference between the ministry's expenses and its revenues, which during the last fiscal year amounted to 2.683 billion in favor of expenses.

Several sister countries took this step years ago to correct the course, and began achieving financial profits for their countries' budgets.

The project to establish the institution included a detailed explanation regarding the status of the ministry's employees. It is expected that the ministry would receive responses from the parties it addressed soon.

Restructuring the ministry or transforming it into an institution would mean restoring all operating and maintenance systems and placing them in an economic model that

support to provide jobs opportunities for national cadres who have disabilities to work in the banking sector in cooperation with KFH, as well as have more opportunities to work in private sector, in which is compatible with the ambitions and qualifications of job-seekers, said (PAM) in a statement.

It stressed that people with disabilities are huge and equally important in our society, also, working on provide more opportunities to use their skills and potentials in these jobs.

The career day consist of an overview of the jobs and job interviews for jobseekers in KFH.

is not profitable, and will be managed by companies and institutions that are 100 percent owned by the government, provided that the ministry remains.

They will also supervise the public policy, either in terms of setting the requirements and future plans or in terms of monitoring the quality of services provided to consumers.

These companies will have independence, but will be affiliated with the institution, so that they will have representatives on the institution's board of directors. The sources also revealed the completion of linking the "treated water request" service with the Ministry of Public Works, with the aim of paying the state dues in various ministries with those requesting treated water.

They indicated that the linking mechanism with the Ministry of Public Works will not only cover

treated water, but will go beyond it to transfer all of the ministry's transactions and correspondence with other state agencies electronically.

The sources said the Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Jassim Al-Ostad gave directives to link the services of the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources with electricity, indicating that work is currently underway to develop a system for the authority that facilitates the connection.

They stressed that the electrical company is working to develop its systems for collecting its various dues on a permanent basis, in line with the latest systems in place in order to facilitate access to the customers and facilitate electronic payment processes for them through various means.

First phase of project ongoing to identify fraud callers

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: Director of Information Security and Emergency Response Department at the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) Layali Al-Mansoori revealed that the initiative to identify

callers from government agencies and well-known commercial and financial institutions has entered the testing stage and the actual application will take place soon, reports Al-Anba daily.

Al-Mansoori clarified that Kuwaiti

telecommunications companies and a number of entities and institutions appearing on individuals' telephones are also being identified by their names, not just their numbers.

Al-Mansoori confirmed that the authority, in coordination with Ku-

waiti telecommunications companies, has determined all the regulatory and technical matters related to identifying the callers on telecommunications networks; stressing that the actual testing phase began and it is expected to be completed this month.

HH Crown Prince, PM send greetings

HH Amir 'congratulates' Finland on National Day

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a congratulatory cable on Wednesday to the President of Finland Sauli Niinisto on his country's National Day.

His Highness Sheikh Nawaf expressed his sincere wishes of good health and prosperity to President Niinisto and the Finnish people.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ah-

mad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a congratulatory cable to President Sauli Niinisto on his country's National Day.

He expressed his sincere congratulation, wishing health and prosperity to President Niinisto and his people.

Also, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent a congratulatory cable to President Sauli Niinisto on his country's National Day.



KUNA photo Part of the Kuwaiti relief aid heading to Al-Arish International Airport in preparation for sending it to the Gaza Strip.

Charity org team to travel to Turkiye

Kuwait's 35th humanitarian aid airplane to Gaza Strip takes off

By Salman Al-Mutairi

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6, (KUNA): Kuwaiti humanitarian aid airplane took off Wednesday to Al-Arish airport carrying various supplies to provide relief to people in Gaza Strip, bringing the total number of Kuwaiti air bridge flights to 35.

Al-Salam Society for humanitarian and charitable works, is cooperating with the International Islamic charitable organization under the directions of the Kuwaiti ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense.

Deputy General Manager of Communication Sector in Charitable Organization, Ibrahim Al-Bader, told KUNA before take-off that with the help of Kuwaiti charities and Palestinian and Egyptian Red Crescent, the Kuwaiti air bridge continues to help and support the people of Gaza.

In order to prepare the most crucial instruments required during the winter, Al-Bader said that there is constant coordination and contact between the Palestinian Crescent and charity groups.

Al-Bader also stated that a delegation from the charity organization would travel to the Republic of Turkiye on Wednesday to get ready for the departure of two ships from the Turkish port that will go through Al-Arish Airport.

Details of the trip will be made public, he added revealing that KD 564,000 were allocated to previous projects.

Deputy Director General of the Peace Charity, Hamad Al-Aoun said in a similar statement to KUNA that in light of the current conditions in the Gaza Strip, especially with the winter season, it is imperative to provide necessary aid weighing 10 tons, in an attempt to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people.

Al-Aoun explained that the tents, onboard of the shipment, will be largely directed to those whose homes were bombed, as well as those who were not

Blankets, tents

New relief aid batch enters Gaza - KRCS

RAMALLAH, Dec 6, (KUNA): Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) announced, Wednesday, the entry of a new relief aid batch containing blankets and tents into Gaza Strip to help with the harsh weather conditions.

Speaking to KUNA, the head of volunteering teams Ahmad Abu Diyeh said that the KRCS successfully distributed supplies of blankets and tents to the Kuwait hospital in Gaza and across shelters in Rafah city.

Abu Diyeh added that in a time like this with the harsh weather conditions and the continued Israeli occupation aggression, this kind of aid was crucial.

Recently, the KRCS revealed that 90 percent of relief aid has successfully entered the Gaza Strip.

Since the onset of the Israeli brutal assault on the Gaza Strip on October seventh, the State of Kuwait had sent thousands of tons of relief aid to the Gaza Strip via its humanitarian air bridge.

accommodated by shelters and hospitals.

He pointed out that the recent campaign of Peace Charity, which came as an initiative of private companies in the country to dedicate a day of sales to support the Palestinian people, revealing that the total of its donations to date has reached million Kuwaiti dinar.

He pointed out that Al-Salam Charity warehouses contain more than 250 tons of aid, affirming that identifying and measuring demand is done by the Palestinian Red Crescent.

Al-Aoun also hoped sending out additional flights to provide relief soon as possible to those in need.

Opening and operating of student hostels, university club discussed

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: Acting Director of Kuwait University Dr Mishari Al-Harbi, recently, visited a part of the academic support buildings project to personally look into the level of the readiness of the male students hostel, female students hostel and the university club, reports Al-Anba daily.

During the field tour, Al-Harbi viewed a visual presentation on the abovementioned projects in the presence of acting Secretary General of the university Dr Fayez Al-Dhafiri, acting Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Support Services Dr Sulaiman Rafii, Director of the Office of the University President and the acting Assistant Secretary General for Facilities Management Affairs Muhammad Suleiman, acting Assistant Vice Chancellor for Planning Dr Majid Majeed, acting Assistant Dean of Student Affairs Dr Salem Al-Matroud, acting Director of the Construction Program Dr Abdullah Al-Hindal, and a number of directors and representatives of various university departments.

They discussed many issues related to the timelines for opening and operating the male and female students hostels and the university club.

Al-Harbi affirmed the university's commitment to ensure the well-being of the teaching and administrative staff and other university employees in general, indicating the campus is an integrated

city with many facilities and services that contribute to providing the appropriate atmosphere to improve working conditions and encourage creativity. The university administration believes that providing the best elements of work and university life for the employees will contribute to achieving the desired impact in enhancing the quality of outputs in all sectors, in addition to the quality of life, in a more comprehensive manner, he concluded.

Assistant Undersecretary for Press, Publishing and Publications Affairs at the Ministry of Information Lafi Al-Subaie has stressed the need for various media platforms to ensure the accuracy of news and information prior to publication, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a press statement, Al-Subaie revealed that media outlets are prohibited from publishing, broadcasting, rebroadcasting, sending or transmitting any content contravening media laws in Kuwait. He warned that anyone who broadcasts rumors will be dealt with in accordance with the law. He added the ministry is keen on fulfilling its duty to follow up and monitor incorrect news. He said media outlets have been referred to the Public Prosecution for spreading rumors and the necessary measures have been taken against them. He then urged everyone to be careful and obtain information from official sources only to avoid facing problems.



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'Int'l fairs give chance to build partnerships, promote local factories'

'Job security provided in private sector'

'Laws governing PAM, CSC completely different'

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: Linking the Civil Service Commission (CSC) and Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) will not encourage citizens to work in the private sector, reports Al-Anba quoting a reliable source.

He argued that PAM focuses on serving the private sector, while the CSC serves the government sector; and the laws governing the two sectors are completely different.

Another source pointed out in a statement to the daily that it only takes one step to encourage citizens registered in the government employment system to accept job opportunities in the private sector; that is, providing job security. He explained that it is easy to provide a work environment characterized by job security for citizens in the private sector, as it could be done by following certain procedures to guarantee

the rights of both the employee and the employer.

The source added that these procedures are formulated with conditions to guarantee the rights of citizens, the rights of the employer and the quality of work, including regular work hours, absence and continued presence during official working hours, "as this is when we have an employee with excellent competence."

Clinic for the treatment and rehabilitation of those addicted to drugs, liquor and intoxicants in coordination with Ministry of Health.

Present at the meeting were representatives of the ministries of Social Affairs, Labor and Health.

The Parliamentary Priorities Committee discussed the legislative priorities for the second round of the 17th parliamentary term, as well as revising the agenda of the ordinary session scheduled for Dec 12, 2023.

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of State for National Assembly and Cabinet Affairs Essa Al-Kandari and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil, Economic and Investment Affairs Saad Al-Barrak attended the meeting.

The New and Remote Areas Development Committee discussed its task to follow up the infrastructure works, and the establishment of hospitals and clinics in remote residential areas.

Representatives of the Ministry of Health and Kuwait Municipality attended the meeting.

Chairman of the committee MP Abdulhadi Al-Ajmi stressed the need to complete the medical district for the southern areas. He pointed out that the Ministry of Health had earlier conducted a presentation, which showed it will take a long time to complete the project; so the committee suggested the establishment of hospitals with medium capacity -- around 200 beds -- to serve those residing in the southern and northern areas. He clarified that the suggestion of the committee does not mean abandoning the idea of establishing an integrated medical district, indicating the suggested medium-capacity hospitals is just a temporary solution and on the condition that they will be established immediately. He affirmed that the required land is already available, as it has been allocated by the Kuwait Municipality.

He revealed the next committee meeting will be on Dec 17 to discuss the establishment of 306 Road that will connect the southern and northern areas. He highlighted the importance of the road in terms of saving time, avoiding traffic jams and for the residents in these areas to reach their destinations easily, especially the employees and students.

On the other hand, MP Mubarak Al-Tasha forwarded the same queries to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahd; Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil, Economic and Investment Affairs Saad Al-Barrak; Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for National Assembly and Cabinet Affairs Essa Al-Kandari; Minister of Commerce and Industry and State Minister for Youth Affairs Muhammad Al-Aiban; Minister of Health Ahmed Al-Awadhi; State Minister for Municipal and Communication Affairs Fahd Al-Shaulah; Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research Adel Al-Manea; Minister of Finance Fahd Al-Jarallah; State Minister for Social, Family, Women and Children Affairs Sheikh Feras Al-Sabah; Minister of Information, Endowments and Islamic Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi; Minister of Justice and State Minister for Housing Affairs Faleh Al-Raqaba; and Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and acting Minister of Public Works Jassem Al-Ostaid.

The queries are based on the report of SAB about how the ministries and other public institutions spent their budgets for fiscal 2022/2023, which showed decline in spending on development projects and delayed implementation of projects. He asked these ministers to provide him with a detailed report including the number of ongoing development projects of ministries and their subsidiaries; copies of contracts including the value, term and progress rate; number and value of variation orders in each contract if any; and penalties imposed on contractors who delayed the implementation of projects.

'Doha Declaration'
Continued from Page 1

the verdict of the Supreme Federal Court of Iraq on the Khor Abdullah agreement, affirming that any unilateral step by Iraq in this regard would be null and void.

They also stated their rejection of Iraq's decision to cancel the protocol on security exchanges signed in 2008, and the appended joint plan for the safety of navigation in the Khor Abdullah, signed on December 28, 2014.

The GCC Leaders renewed support to the UN Security Council Resolution 2107 (2013) which mandated the Special Representative for Iraq of the UN Secretary-General and Head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) to facilitate the efforts aiming to account for the missing Kuwaitis and other nationals in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross, and retrieve the stolen property of Kuwait, including the national archive.

Meanwhile, the 44th Session of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Coopera-

Stop subsidies

Continued from Page 1

removing subsidies on goods and services, increasing the salaries of the low-income and low-pension people, and restricting the distribution of ration cards to those who need it the most, instead of generalizing it, according to the segments with minimum and maximum limits for consumption.

The same applies to gasoline and other commodities that are given to those who are not in need. Some of them are even sold on the black market. And when some parliamentarians say that they are against touching the citizens' pockets, the government quickly acts according to what these people dictate. This is usually done without considering the economic reality of the country, or the ability of public finances to serve those demands. There is no doubt that this is not the correct way to run a country.

To speak frankly, the issue is not about the exclusion of some goods from the ration cards. Rather, it is about stopping the huge financial waste, which, if exploited in the correct manner, can provide enormous liquidity to implement industrial, food and transformational projects that will bring many benefits to the citizens.

As for continuing the game of excluding some goods or including others, this game has become exposed. Anyone who has followed the events from the time of the announcement of the Prime Minister's grilling until he ascended the podium, and the raw deals that were made, will realize that what we are witnessing is just the tip of an iceberg. What is beneath is far much greater than we can anticipate.

Kuwait Central

Continued from Page 1

resources. This can include utilizing its existing stock of the currency or acquiring it through the open market or other alternatives distinct from the Central Bank's facilities. The Central Bank is positioned to cater to the foreign currency needs of banks, aligning with the approach taken by other central banks in the region that adhere to a fixed exchange rate with another currency.

Highlighting Kuwait's exchange policy for the dinar, the sources emphasized its objective of maintaining the relative stability of the dinar's price against other currencies. According to this policy, the exchange rate of the dinar is determined based on a specially weighted basket of currencies from countries with significant commercial and financial ties to Kuwait. The sources underscored the effectiveness of the Central Bank's policy in achieving a notable degree of relative stability in the dinar's exchange rate against major global currencies.

MPs seek

Continued from Page 1

The Disabled Affairs Committee talked about the implementation of Disabled Affairs Law number 8/2010 by the Public Authority for Disabled Affairs (PADA) and other concerned institutions.

It also looked into the complaints of people with disabilities and discussed the relevant remarks.

The committee tasked to investigate the issues raised in the grilling motion of MP Dawoud Maarefi against former Minister of Public Works Amari Bugamaz discussed the violations stated in the motion with representatives of the Ministry of Public Works, Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART), Kuwait Municipality, Ministry of Communications and SAB.

The committee tasked to look into the violations in the distribution of agricultural, industrial and craft plots discussed its draft report on the issue.

The fact-finding committee tasked to investigate the armament deals -- Eurofighter and Caracal helicopters -- continued the investigations.

The Youth and Sports Affairs Committee talked about the procedures adopted by the Public Authority for Sports to issue or cancel the licenses of sports clubs and associations, approval or cutting the financial subsidy granted to them, and plans of the authority to develop the sports sector.

The Health, Social and Labor Affairs Committee discussed five bills on amending Public Aid Law No. 12/2021; its task to follow up the implementation of recommendations on supporting the Palestinians against the Zionist attacks; reasons behind the withdrawal of Gaustave Roussy Hospital for cancer treatment from Kuwait; and its task to follow up the establishment of a health center for the treatment of addiction and Al-Amal

By Salem Al-Methen

DUBAI, Dec 6, (KUNA): Kuwait Public Authority for Industry (PAI) underlined Wednesday on the importance of participating in international exhibitions specialized in the field of building and construction to build partnerships and consolidate with relevant companies and organizations, as well as promoting local factories globally.

PAI Deputy Director General of the Industrial Exports Sector Dr. Sanad Al-Ajmi, told KUNA, on the

sidelines of the authority's participation in the "The Big Five 2023" exhibition that this gathering would contribute to transferring technology and expertise to Kuwait and strengthening local capabilities in the field of construction.

Al-Ajmi added that PAI is participating in the exhibition with a special pavilion that includes 10 diverse local factories, pointing out the importance of supporting the national industry to highlight its achievements and technical capabilities and gain experience in this international

event. He explained that the exhibition, which is held annually in Dubai, is an appropriate opportunity for exhibitors to promote their products and explore new markets, in addition to expanding their partner base in the region and obtaining broad investment opportunities, which enhances the economic development and infrastructure of the country.

The Big Five exhibition is one of the largest international exhibitions specialized in the construction field.



KUNA photo

The Kuwait's Public Authority for Industry delegation participating in 'The Big Five 2023' exhibition in Dubai.

Two authorities need to keep public interest above all: Haifi

Bid to appoint newly-graduated doctors, dentists

By Marwa Al-Bahravi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: The former minister of health Dr. Mohammad Al-Haifi says the relationship between the legislative and executive authorities is still cautious on both sides. Although there is a cautious consensus in terms of laws, the relationship between the government and the parliament is dominated by appeasements, intermediaries, and favoritism.

In a special press statement, Dr. Al-Haifi said, "Despite the end of the first session and the beginning of the second with the approval of many laws, providing governmental satisfaction to the parliamentarians is still the title of the stage. Optimism about the positivity of the relationship between the two sides has started collapsing gradually under the umbrella of favoritism and intermediaries."

He called for focusing on political reform, changing the electoral system, and distributing constituencies in a way that is closer to justice, and not giving in to the existing blackmail from both sides.

Dr. Al-Haifi insisted that the Ministry of Health is an integral part of appeasement and favoritism, especially with regard to appointments, transfers, and sending patients for treatment abroad.

He explained that, "With the beginning of the first legislative term, I expected the government and the parliament to address all the previous problems and challenges, but unfortunately I was disappointed, as the performance was worse than I expected, and even worse than it was before."

This applies to all ministries and sectors, as the transfers and appointments aimed to satisfy the members of the parliament, which is not permissible, as Kuwait is not a member state, but rather a state of competencies and institutions.

Following the approach of responding to parliamentarians' pressures will lead to major problems in the long run, and the members themselves may exploit the government's mistakes and its response to parliamentary pressures against them one day.

The street will not remain silent about this situation for long. It will explode in the face of both of them one day. Therefore, the two authorities must keep the public interest in mind and give priority to the interest



Photo by Sameer Shiqer

A photo from the event.

Relationship strong and friendly: envoy

Azerbaijan woos Kuwaiti tourists

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: The Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Kuwait Emil Karimov says the relationship between Kuwait and Azerbaijan is strong and friendly.

He said, "We have a deep history and are united by one culture and one religion."

We are very interested in Kuwaiti tourists and have close relations in this field. We are trying to develop our relationship in the cultural field and in the field of agriculture.

There is a joint committee between the governments of the two countries. Next year, we will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the establishment of our diplomatic relations. We will hold some cultural events in Kuwait on this occasion.

The two sides are discussing the date for the third meeting of the joint committee, which will be held next year in Kuwait.

Currently, there are more than 30 agreements signed between the two countries. There is an attempt to increase trade cooperation between our two countries, estimated at USD 200 million."

Regarding the number of Kuwaiti tourists to Azerbaijan, he said, "In the past, more than 22,000 Kuwaiti tourists visited Azerbaijan. We expect this number to increase this year. In the last 11 months, more than 25,000 Kuwaitis visited my country."

All flight reservations to Azerbaijan are full for the end of the year because a large number of Kuwaitis want to spend the weekend in Azerbaijan. There are direct lines between the two countries and Kuwaitis can obtain a visa either upon arrival or online, which is very easy."

Regarding investments, the am-

bassador said, "We have proposed a number of investment projects on the Kuwaiti side, but there is more interest in the tourism field. I do not know the percentage of Kuwaiti investments in Azerbaijan but it is not large, and so we are trying to raise it."

Regarding the anticipated visits by Azerbaijani officials, he said, "We are trying to prepare for the visit of the Azerbaijani Foreign Minister to Kuwait next year before March to chair the meetings of the joint committee from the Azerbaijani side. The two countries' celebrations of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of relations between them will take place in October."

Meanwhile, the Ambassador of Turkey to Kuwait Tübe Sonmez said, "Today's meeting serves as a reminder of Azerbaijan's hard-won victory, and a testimony to the steadfastness and determination of its people."

Turkey stands ready and willing to extend its hand in partnership for the development and reconstruction of these liberated lands. Our commitment to the prosperity of Azerbaijan is unwavering, which reflects the deep-rooted ties between our two countries.

There is meticulous work underway to clear the reclaimed lands of landmines, repair the infrastructure destroyed during the fighting, and establish the transit routes in the region, which have been paralyzed for nearly three decades amid the conflict. It is time to rebuild the city with a new face.

The economic potential of the liberated areas is enormous, and it is our duty to unleash this potential for the benefit of the people who consider these lands their homeland.

We realize that Turkey and Azerbaijan are not just two countries. We are, in essence, one nation. Our cultures, linked by shared history, destiny and aspirations, are inextricably intertwined.

of all, not individual interests, and look to the future in a better way."

Conditions added: The Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi approved additional conditions and controls for requests to appoint newly graduated doctors and dentists, within the framework of the Ministry of Health's keenness to implement the concept of comprehensive quality in the health and medical field, and improve the level of performance.



Dr Mohammad Al-Haifi

World News Roundup

Europe

'2.5b euros for Ukraine'

Ex-UK PM defends COVID-19 'record'

LONDON, Dec 6, (AP) - Former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson defended his handling of COVID-19 on Wednesday at a public inquiry into the pandemic, saying the government "got some things wrong" but did its best.

Johnson began two days of being grilled under oath by lawyers for the judge-led inquiry about his initial reluctance to impose a national lockdown in early 2020 and other fateful decisions.

Johnson opened his testimony with an apology "for the pain and the loss and the suffering of the COVID victims," though not for any of his own actions. Four people stood up in court as he spoke, holding signs saying: "The Dead can't hear your apologies," before being escorted out by security staff.

"Inevitably, in the course of trying to handle a very, very difficult pandemic in which we had to balance appalling harms on either side of the decision, we may have made mistakes," Johnson said. "Inevitably, we got some things wrong. I think we were doing our best at the time."

Johnson had arrived at the inquiry venue at day-break, several hours before he was due to take the stand, avoiding a protest by relatives of some of those victims.



Johnson

UK, Rwanda strike new treaty: The governments of Britain and Rwanda signed a treaty on Tuesday that aims to revive a plan to send asylum-seekers to the East African country that has been blocked by UK courts.

British Home Secretary James Cleverly said the legally binding agreement signed with Rwanda Foreign Minister Vincent Biruta would "address all the issues" raised by the UK Supreme Court when it ruled last month that the controversial policy was unlawful.

The court said the plan was illegal because Rwanda is not a safe country for refugees. Britain's top court said asylum-seekers faced "a real risk of ill-treatment" and could be returned by Rwanda to the home countries they had fled.

The treaty includes a promise by Rwanda not to send asylum-seekers back to their home countries, even if their applications are refused.

East London shooting kills one, 2 hurt: A woman has died and two people were wounded after a shooting in east London, British police said Tuesday.

The Metropolitan Police force said three people were found with gunshot wounds after officers were called to the scene following reports of a shooting in the east London neighborhood of Hackney.

A 42-year-old woman died at the scene, police said, while two others, a 20-year-old man and a 16-year-old boy, were taken to a hospital.

Police said a murder investigation was launched and detectives were working to establish what happened. No arrests have yet been made, and no other details were immediately available.

Detective Superintendent Vicky Tunstall described the incident as "shocking." Gun crimes are relatively rare in London and in the United Kingdom.

Dutch gov pledges 2.5b euros for Ukraine: The Netherlands announced Tuesday it would support Ukraine in 2024 with a 2.5 billion euros (nearly \$2.7 billion) allocation, as the 21-month war drags into another winter and concerns grow that Kyiv's war effort may falter without continued Western support.

Dutch Foreign Minister Hanke Bruins Slot announced the allocation during a visit to Ukraine. "Be assured of our support," she said at a press conference after a meeting with her Ukrainian counterpart, Dmytro Kuleba. "Your security is our security."

Bruins Slot said her country opened a training center for F-16s in Romania on Nov 13 and is working with the US, Denmark and other countries to see that Ukraine can deploy the fighter jets as soon as possible.

She added that the meeting also touched on Ukraine's aspiration to become a member of the European Union: "Your future is with us," she said.

Walesa hospitalized with COVID-19: Lech Walesa, Poland's 80-year-old former president and Nobel Peace Prize winner, has been hospitalized with a bad case of COVID-19, an aide said Tuesday.

A post on Walesa's Facebook shows him on a hospital bed with an oxygen mask on, with a caption that says "I have been hit by Covid." The aide, Marek Kaczmar, told Polish media that Walesa is seriously ill, but under good care in a hospital in Gdansk, the Baltic port city where he lives.

It's Walesa's second bout of COVID. Starting in 1980, Walesa spearheaded Poland's democracy Solidarity movement that nine years later led to the peaceful ouster of communism from Poland and inspired other countries to shed Moscow's domination.

Italian prosecutors seek 6 suspects: Milan prosecutors have identified six suspects who allegedly aided the escape from Italian custody of a Russian national a day after an Italian court ruled in favor of extraditing him to the United States to face sanctions-busting charges.

Artyom Uss, the 40-year-old son of the governor of Russia's Krasnoyarsk region in Siberia, was arrested as he was about to board a flight to Istanbul in October 2022. He was under house arrest with an electronic bracelet near Milan when he escaped five months later. He resurfaced in Russia in April.

Uss is wanted in the US on charges of smuggling Western technologies in violation of Western sanctions and money laundering. He faces up to 30 years in prison, Milan prosecutors said.

Bedbug hoax targets visitors in Athens: Greece's health ministry is seeking police help against hoaxers who tried to scare foreign tourists out of some Athens short-term rental apartments by inventing a bedbug crisis.

A ministry statement Tuesday said the posters stuck up outside apartment buildings in the city center, festooned with fake ministry and Athens municipality logos, were "absolutely false."

The posters, addressed to "dear visitors" in misspelled English, claimed health authorities had ordered local "private guesthouses" evacuated "to protect the public health of permanent Greek tenants."



Britain's Queen Camilla, King Charles III, Prince William and Kate, Princess of Wales pose for a photograph ahead of the Diplomatic Reception in the 1844 Room at Buckingham Palace in London, England on Dec 5. (AP)

Politics

'Democracy more at risk in 2024'

Trump is running & I just have to run: Biden

BOSTON, Dec 6, (AP) - US President Joe Biden told campaign donors Tuesday that he wasn't sure he'd be running for reelection if Donald Trump wasn't also in the race, warning that democracy is "more at risk in 2024" and that the former president and his allies are out to "destroy" democratic institutions.

The president was using a trio of fundraisers to caution against what might happen should his predecessor again claim control of the White House, noting that Trump has described himself as his supporters' "retribution" and has vowed to root out "vermin" in the country.

"We've got to get it done, not because of me. ... If Trump wasn't running I'm not sure I'd be running. We cannot let him win," Biden said, hitting the last words slowly for emphasis.

Biden's forceful rhetoric came as Trump, the current GOP front-runner, who tried to overturn the 2020 election he lost and is facing criminal charges connected to those efforts, attempted over the weekend to turn the tables by calling Biden the "destroyer of American democracy."

Power

Trump on Tuesday was asked by Fox News Channel's Sean Hannity to promise he "would never abuse power as retribution against anybody."

"Except for day one," Trump responded. "I want to close the border and I want to drill, drill, drill."

"After that I'm not a dictator," Trump added.

Biden's campaign quickly seized on the comments with an email that read, "Donald Trump: Day One Dictator."

Later, Biden was asked by reporters whether he would be running if Trump wasn't and gave a slightly different comment, saying, "I expect so, but look, he is running and I have to run."

He was asked if he would drop out if Trump did and said, "No, not now."

Biden, who said he is not alone in sounding the alarm over Trump, noted that Trump is the "only losing candidate" in US history to not accept the results. Biden also said that on Jan. 6, 2021, as Trump supporters violently stormed the US Capitol in a failed attempt to stop the certification of the election results, Trump sat in his dining room just off the Oval Office, "watching them threaten his own vice president."

Biden also highlighted recent warnings about Trump from former Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., calling her a "powerful voice."

"American democracy, I give you my word as a Biden, is at stake," the president said at the first of three campaign fundraisers in the Boston area. Drawing some laughter from donors, Biden also mused: "He didn't even show up at my inauguration. I can't say I was disappointed, but he didn't even show up."

Raise

The warnings by Biden are increasingly part of his pitch to donors: that democracy is at stake if Trump were to win again and he must be defeated. The president is pushing to raise money for his reelection effort before the end of the year, appearing at seven events through Monday - with more to come. The events in Boston on Tuesday benefit his campaign and the broader Democratic Party.

They included an evening event in the city's theater district featuring a concert by singer-songwriter James Taylor, who helped kick off a White House event in 2022 celebrating the Inflation Reduction Act, a climate and health care bill that Biden signed into law.

Onstage, Biden joked to the packed theater audience that he wouldn't be long because he knew he was "the only thing standing" between the audience and the performance by Taylor.

"We're always going to defend pro-

tect and fight for democracy," he said. "That's why I'm running."

November was the campaign's strongest grassroots fundraising month since Biden formally announced last April that he was seeking a second term, according to a campaign official who insisted on anonymity to discuss campaign finances before details are made public. The numbers will be released in January.

In October, Biden and the Democratic National Committee reported raising more than \$71 million for his reelection in the three months ending Sept. 30, a sign that donors remained behind him going into the 2024 presidential race.

Defray

Biden had only political events on his public schedule for Tuesday, which is rare. Presidents who are running for reelection typically include an official event, like a policy speech, on the schedule to help defray costs for their campaign.

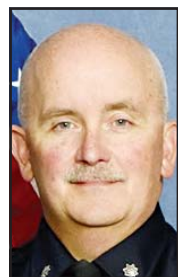
Biden will also attend a fundraiser Wednesday near the White House and another one Monday in Philadelphia. He'll headline fundraisers in Washington, D.C., and in Maryland later in December.

On Friday, Biden will head to Los Angeles for a big-dollar event that will be his first since strikes by writers and actors effectively ground his fundraising to a halt in the heart of the entertainment industry, which has long served as a major source of campaign money for Democrats.

The event is slated to be at the home of Michael Smith, a celebrity interior designer who decorated the White House for President Barack Obama, and Smith's partner, James Costos, a former HBO executive who was Obama's ambassador to Spain. It is expected to raise millions of dollars and draw a crowd of celebrities. Rucker Lenny Kravitz is slated to perform.



US President Joe Biden arrives at Boston Logan International Airport to attend several campaign fundraisers on Dec 5 in Boston. (AP)



Penn



Emerson

America

Man charged over online posts: A US citizen has been charged in Arizona over online comments that allegedly incited what police describe as a "motivated terrorist attack" in Australia a year ago in which six people died, officials said Wednesday.

Queensland state police officers Rachel McCrow and Matthew Arnold and innocent bystander Alan Dare were fatally shot by Gareth Train, his brother Nathaniel Train and Nathaniel's wife Stacey Train in an ambush at the Trains' remote property in the rural community of Wieambilla last Dec 12, investigators say.

Four officers had arrived at the property to investigate reports of a missing person. They walked into a hail of gunfire, police said at the time. Two officers managed to escape and raise the alarm.

Police killed the three Trains, who have been described as conspiracy theorists, during a six-hour siege. (AP)

'Man died in blast': The owner of a Virginia house that exploded as police tried to execute a search warrant is believed to have died in the blast, officials said Tuesday, as details emerged about numerous grievances he expressed against neighbors and others on social media and in lawsuits.

James Yoo, 56, was identified by Arlington County Police Chief Andy Penn at a news conference as the person whose actions brought police to the Arlington home after he fired a "flare-type gun" from inside the house into the neighborhood more than 30 times.

Penn said police responded to the house about 4:45 pm Monday after receiving reports of shots fired. When attempts to communicate with Yoo were largely unsuccessful, police obtained a search warrant.

As officers breached the door to enter the home, the suspect fired multiple gunshots from within the house, Penn said. (AP)

Ex-Alaska Airlines pilot indicted: The former Alaska Airlines pilot accused of trying to cut the engines of a Horizon Air flight has been indicted on 84 endangerment

charges, but is no longer charged with attempted murder, authorities said Tuesday.

The district attorney's office in Oregon's Multnomah County, home to Portland, announced the grand jury's indictment. Joseph Emerson is scheduled

to be arraigned Thursday on 83 charges of recklessly endangering another person - for each person who was on the plane - and one charge of endangering an aircraft. He previously pleaded not guilty to attempted murder charges filed by state



Migrants walk through the desert after crossing the border wall in the Tucson Sector of the US-Mexico border on Aug 29, near Lukeville, Ariz. So many migrants are crossing from Mexico into the United States around remote Lukeville, Arizona, that US officials say they will close the port of entry there so that the operations officials who watch over vehicle and pedestrian traffic going both ways can help Border Patrol agents arrest and process the new arrivals. (AP)

prosecutors and to a federal charge of interfering with a flight crew.

In Oregon, initial felony charges can be filed by prosecutors pending a grand jury's indictment. Such indictments can include different charges, depending on what the grand jury believes is supported by the evidence. (AP)

Memorials to be displayed: Volunteers and city workers on Tuesday removed mementos, signs and other items that accumulated at the sites of the deadliest mass shooting in Maine history, reflecting a change in season and a new chapter in the area's recovery.

The handwritten signs, cards, bouquets and other items - more than a 1,000 of them - will be archived, catalogued and prepared for exhibition at a museum in Lewiston.

Part of the process is practical: Snowfall makes it imperative to remove the memorials before they're destroyed by either the elements or plows. But organizers also say it feels like the right time as communities continue to heal and grieve after 18 people were killed and 13 injured on Oct 25.

"We want to make sure the community doesn't forget what happened and how the community came together. So bringing the items together feels like next stage," said Rachel Ferrante, executive director of the Maine Museum of Innovation, Learning and Labor, located at a former mill building in Lewiston. (AP)

Lat/Am

'We need to talk, Elon'

Peru court orders release of Fujimori

LIMA, Peru, Dec 6, (AP): Peru's constitutional court ordered an immediate humanitarian release Tuesday for imprisoned former president Alberto Fujimori, 85, who was serving a 25-year sentence in connection with the death squad slayings of 25 Peruvians in the 1990s.

The court ruled in favor of a 2017 pardon that had granted the former leader a release on humanitarian grounds but that later was annulled.

In a resolution seen by The Associated Press, the court told the state prisons agency to immediately release Fujimori "on the same day."

Fujimori was sentenced in 2009 to 25 years in prison on charges of human rights abuses. He had been accused of being the mastermind behind the slayings of 25 Peruvians by a military death squad during his administration from 1990 to 2000, while the government fought the Shining Path communist rebels.

Fujimori's 2017 pardon granted by then-President Pablo Kuczynski was annulled under pressure from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and its status was the subject of legal wrangling since then.

The constitutional court previously had ordered a lower court in the southern city of Ica to release Fujimori, but that court declined to do so, arguing in ruling last Friday that it lacked the authority. It returned the matter instead to the constitutional court.

"We need to talk, Elon," Milei replied on X, formerly Twitter.

This is not the first time that Musk, the founder of SpaceX and CEO of Tesla, has expressed support for Milei on social media. "Prosperity is about to come to Argentina," Musk wrote when Milei won the election runoff on Nov. 19.

In the interview excerpt that Musk posted, Milei spoke against efforts to make societies more equal, saying it is far more important for people to be free.

"There's a sublime phrase by Milton Friedman that I find to be outstanding, which is that when you prioritize equality over freedom, you end up achieving neither. But when you prioritize freedom over equality, you achieve many of both," Milei said in the interview, referring to the American economist who won the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1976.

In the same interview, Milei said that John Stuart Mill, a 19th-century British philosopher, economist and politician, argued that a society that emphasizes equality "ultimately becomes a society of looters and it sinks. That is the history of Argentina."

El Salvador seeing worst rights abuses: El Salvador is experiencing one of the worst human rights crises since the country's 1980-1992 civil war, because of President Nayib Bukele's harsh anti-gang crackdown, Amnesty International said in a report released Tuesday.

The rights group claimed that the almost 74,000 people jailed in the crackdown were subjected to "systematic use of torture and other mistreatment."

"The deterioration in human rights that we have documented in recent years is extremely worrisome," said Ana Piquer, the Americas director for Amnesty International.

"The adoption of a highly repressive security policy and the weakening of the rule of law has led the country to one of its worst crises since the civil war," Piquer said, referring to the 1980s conflict between leftist guerrillas and government forces that left 75,000 dead.

The group based its report on 83 interviews in El Salvador, including victims of abuses.

The Associated Press interviewed two former inmates who were on provisional release from prison, who said they had suffered and witnessed severe beatings by guards inside prison.

Paraguay rounds up ex-military leaders: Several former top military officials in Paraguay have been arrested as part of a cross-border law enforcement operation with Brazil to disband an arms smuggling ring that brought firearms from Europe to South America, officials said Tuesday.

The US Department of Homeland Security was also involved in the year-long investigation, according to Paraguay authorities.

"The weapons were imported from Europe to Paraguay, where they were defaced and resold to intermediary groups operating on the Brazil-Paraguay border, ultimately reaching major criminal factions in Brazil," Brazilian federal police said in a statement.

Close to 43,000 pieces of such weapons - worth around \$243 million - were imported to Paraguay over the past three years under the scheme, Brazilian authorities said.

At least 13 people have been detained in Paraguay, including the former head of Paraguay's office in charge of controlling the imports and distribution of firearms known as Dimabel, which is a division of the armed forces. The former chief of Paraguay's Air Force, Gen. Arturo González, was also detained.

Protest over delays in cleaning up spill: Residents in Mexico's northern state of Sonora on Tuesday protested against what they said is the government's continued failure to clean up an almost decade-old mine spill.

At a news conference held outside government offices in Hermosillo, the state capital, members of the local advocacy group the Sonora River Basin Committee described the situation as a health crisis that authorities continue to ignore.

"You have asked us for patience and our patience has lasted almost two years," Martha Patricia Velarde said. "Today we tell you again: Bureaucracy should never be above the health and life of the people."

Nine years ago, millions of gallons of toxic waste flooded from Grupo México's Buenavista mine into the Sonora and Bacanuchi rivers, just under 60 miles (100 kilometers) from the border city of Nogales, Sonora.

In the landmark 11-month trial, Aziz and other top Mauritanian officials were ac-

cused of siphoning money from the country to enrich themselves. It marked a rare instance in which an African leader was tried

for corruption, though Aziz's lawyers long framed the trial as a matter of score-settling between him and current President Moham-

ed Ould Cheikh Ghazouani.

"This is a political verdict whose ultimate objective is to deprive the president of civic rights," defense lawyer Taleb Kh-yar told The Associated Press. (AP)

Mining death toll rises to 13: The death toll from a mining tragedy last week in South Africa that involved an elevator has risen to 13 people after a worker died at a hospital, the mine operator said Monday.

Impala Platinum said that the worker died Sunday from injuries sustained when the elevator plummeted around 200 meters (650 feet) down the shaft of a platinum mine while carrying workers to the surface after their shift on Nov. 27. Eleven workers died that day, while the latest victim was the second mineworker to die at a hospital.

The mine operator said that 50 workers remained hospitalized, with eight of them in critical care.

Impala Platinum and the South African government announced an investigation into what mine officials called a highly unusual tragedy.

The industrial elevator was carrying 86 workers to the surface when it suddenly dropped back down into the shaft, which is a kilometer (about a ½-mile) deep. The mine in the northern city of Rustenburg was the world's biggest platinum producer last year. (AP)



In this photo provided by the Iloilo City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office - Urban Search and Rescue Unit, rescuers retrieve bodies from a damaged passenger bus in a ravine at the mountainous Hamtic town, Antique province, central Philippines on Dec 6. (AP)

At least 16 dead, 12 hurt as bus falls off ravine in central Philippines

A passenger bus lost control while negotiating a downhill curve in a central Philippine mountain village and plunged into a deep ravine, killing at least 16 people and injuring 12 others, officials said Wednesday.

Eight of the wounded in the accident, which happened Tuesday afternoon in Hamtic town in the province of Antique, were in critical condition at a local hospital, officials said.

The air-conditioned bus, which came from the nearby Iloilo province, was maneuvering through the accident-prone mountain road when the driver, who was among those killed, lost control. The bus smashed onto a concrete railing then fell into the ravine, officials said.

"The driver was repeatedly sounding his horn because he had apparently lost control of the bus before it plummeted into the ravine," Ronniel Pa-

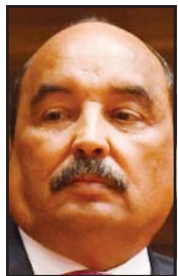
bustan, an Antique provincial crisis responder, told The Associated Press by telephone, citing accounts by some of the passengers.

Dozens of rescuers, including police, army troops and provincial emergency responders, worked to extricate the victims from the wreckage. They used stretchers and ropes to bring the victims up the ravine in an hourslong rescue and retrieval work that dragged late into the night, Pabustan said. (AP)

Asia



In this photo provided by Prime Minister Office, Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim speaks at a press conference on his first day at the prime minister's office in Putrajaya, Malaysia, Nov 25, 2022. (AP)



Aziz



Hichilema

Africa

Survivor pulled out of mine: A man has been pulled alive out of a Zambian mine nearly a week after dozens of informal miners were trapped under landslides caused by heavy rain, rescuers said Wednesday.

The 49-year-old survivor was rescued Tuesday night, according to a statement by Zambia's Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit. He told rescuers he had been struggling for five days to find a way out of one of the collapsed tunnels at the open-pit copper mine near the city of Chingola, around 400 kilometers (250 miles) north of the capital, Lusaka, the statement said.

A body was also recovered a few hours after the miner's rescue but was yet to be identified, it added.

The man was taken to the hospital, rescuers said. They gave no details on his medical condition but said he was able to talk to officials from his hospital bed.

The body was the first to be retrieved following the disaster last week. More than 30 miners may still be trapped under the rubble and debris in three separate tunnels at the Seseli mine in Zambia's Copperbelt province.

Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema visited the mine on Tuesday and said he hoped that there were survivors. A rescuer said earlier in the week that they had heard multiple voices coming from under the rubble at one of the tunnel sites. (AP)

Mauritania ex-press gets 5 yrs: A Mauritanian court handed down a five-year prison sentence to the country's former president Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz after finding him guilty of money laundering and self-enrichment, his attorneys said Tuesday.

The Monday verdict wraps up a rare corruption trial in west Africa and closes a chapter in the long trajectory of a strongman who helped lead two coups before serving two terms as president and becoming a counterterrorism partner to Western nations including the US.

In the landmark 11-month trial, Aziz and other top Mauritanian officials were ac-

Australia hopes to rush laws that could detain migrants

Malaysia's PM Anwar searches for support

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia, Dec 6, (AP): Marking his first anniversary of coming to power, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim admitted he was still struggling to win over ethnic Malay votes and acknowledged frustration over the slow pace of reforms. But he defended his unity government, saying it was now politically stable and able to fully focus on bolstering the economy and improving the people's welfare.

Navigate

In a candid interview with private television network TV3 late Tuesday, Anwar said that while he understood discontent because of the slow pace of his government's reform plan, "we must navigate wisely and prioritize political stability."

Anwar, 76, whose sacking and imprisonment in the 1990s led to massive street protests and a reform movement that rose into a major political force, has been a long-time opposition leader. He clinched victory last year in the country's general elections.

Despite a two-thirds majority in Parliament, Anwar's unity government has been plagued by the powerful opposition Islamic bloc that further expanded its influence in state elections earlier this year. The Perikatan Nasional (PN), underpinned by the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party, now rules four of Malaysia's 13 states.

In the interview, Anwar accused the opposition of falsely portraying his government as too liberal and sidelining Malays, who account for two-thirds of Malaysia's 33 million people, making it difficult for him to reach out to the community.

"There is some truth to it (that Malays do not support the government) but it is because they have been inundated by claims that the government isn't Malay and is against Islam," Anwar said. "This is disgusting political slander."

Opposition leader Hamzah Zainuddin claimed this week that Malays now

viewed the PN bloc as their preferred political vehicle after his bloc garnered a landslide by-election victory on Saturday.

Also:

CANBERRA, Australia: The Australian government hopes to rush legislation through Parliament on Wednesday that could place behind bars some of the migrants freed after the High Court ruled their indefinite detention was unconstitutional.

Top US, Chinese diplomats agree to build on recent progress in ties

BEIJING, Dec 6, (AP): The top US and Chinese diplomats agreed Wednesday to keep building on recent progress in bilateral ties and work together to keep the Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza from spreading.

Both Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken referred to a telephone call to last month's closely watched meeting between the two countries' leaders in San Francisco following years of frigid ties.

"The important task for both sides at present is to continue the positive impact of the San Francisco meeting, implement the consensus reached by the two heads of state, and consolidate the momentum of stabilizing Sino-US relations," Wang said, according to China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Blinken also emphasized that the two sides should build on progress at the summit, according to the US State Department.

President Joe Biden and President Xi Jinping agreed at their meeting to keep channels of communication open and resume

military-to-military talks. Yet, major political differences between the countries remain far from resolved.

Wang and Blinken also discussed the Israel-Hamas war, where China has been trying to play a role in negotiations, and agreed to maintain communications on the situation. Last Wednesday, China presented a four-point peace plan to the United Nations on ending the conflict, although the plan lacked detail.

Also:

WASHINGTON: Air Force Special Operations Command said Tuesday it has recovered the remains of six of the eight service members who were lost when their Osprey crashed off the coast of Japan last week, adding it is now focused on recovering the two bodies still missing and the aircraft debris.

The CV-22B Osprey crashed on Nov. 29 during a training mission. Ospreys have had a number of crashes, including in Japan, where they are used at US and Japanese military bases, and the latest has rekindled safety concerns.

The Senate on Tuesday passed draft legislation that would create so-called community safety orders.

Immigration Minister Andrew Giles would be able to apply to a judge to imprison migrants with criminal records for violent or sexual offenses because they pose an unacceptable risk to the public.

"We've already begun preparations to ensure that we can do all that we can as quickly as we can," Giles told reporters.



Government officials and miners are seen at the scene of the mine rescue mission on Dec 3 in Chingola, around 400 kilometres (248 miles) north of the capital Lusaka, Zambia. Seven miners were confirmed dead and more than 20 others were missing and presumed dead after heavy rains caused landslides. A man has been pulled alive out of a Zambian mine nearly a week after dozens of informal miners were trapped under landslides caused by heavy rain, rescuers said on Dec 6. (AP)

oil surges

The Kuwait oil price rose 52 cents to USD 81.37 per barrel on Tuesday, as opposed to USD 80.85 pb on Monday, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Wednesday.

In international markets, Brent crude dropped by 83 cent to USD 77.2 pb and West Texas Intermediate fell by 72 cent to USD 72.32 pb. (KUNA)

USD stable

The exchange rate of the US Dollar on Wednesday stood at KD 0.308 while the Euro dropped to KD 0.332, compared to Tuesday's rates, said the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK).

The CBK said in its online daily bulletin that the British Pound Sterling dropped to KD 0.388, while the Swiss Franc stood firm at KD 0.353, and the Japanese Yen at KD 0.002. (KUNA)

gold volatility expects to stay low ahead of US non-farm payrolls release

Gold prices saw an early-morning ascent on Wednesday, buoyed by a weakening dollar and lackluster US jobs data that reinforced expectations of the conclusion of the Federal Reserve's monetary policy tightening cycle, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Matt Simpson, Chief Analyst at City Index, commented on the prospects, noting that gold price volatility is likely to remain contained leading up to the release of the US non-farm payrolls data on Friday.

The precious metal had reached a historic high of \$2,135.40 the previous Monday,

fueled by increasing speculation that the US Central Bank would reduce interest rates. However, it experienced a sharp decline of over \$100 in the same session due to uncertainties surrounding the timing of monetary policy easing. Tuesday's data revealed that job openings in the United States had fallen to their lowest level in over two-and-a-half years in October, indicating that higher interest rates were dampening demand for labor. The dollar index dipped by 0.1 percent against a basket of currencies, retracing from its two-week peak on

Tuesday, making gold more affordable for holders of alternative currencies.

Market attention now pivots towards the November non-farm payrolls data scheduled for release on Friday, which could offer additional insights into US interest rate expectations leading up to the Federal Reserve's meeting next week.

As of 0415 GMT, spot gold transactions witnessed a 0.2 percent increase, reaching \$2,023.39 per ounce. In parallel, US gold futures for February delivery also experienced a 0.2 percent uptick, reaching \$2,041.

Market Movements

06-12-2023

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts
JAPAN - Nikkei	+670.08	33,445.90	EGYPT - EGX 30	-424.36	24,703.55
PAKISTAN - KSE 100	+750.62	63,778.75	PHILIPPINES - PSEi	-3.10	6,305.85
SAUDI - Tawadul	+30.19	11,174.02	UAE - DFM	-9.03	3,969.17

Business

Kuwait's annual oil and gas financing faces 34.7% drop

Personal & industrial sectors see growth in credit facilities

By Mahmoud Shendi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: In the month of October, local bank financing for the oil and gas sector witnessed an extraordinary surge, increasing by an astounding 1917% to reach the level of 125.1 million dinars. This marked a significant leap from the 6.2 million dinars reported in September. However, when viewed on an annual basis, this surge was tempered by a 34.7% decline, equivalent to 66.5 million dinars, in comparison to the figures from October 2022. Insights from the monthly statistics released by the Central Bank of Kuwait underscored that the cumulative credit facilities for the oil and gas sector amounted to approximately 1.5 billion dinars over the first ten months of 2023.

The financing landscape for the oil and gas sector in 2023 exhibited a certain degree of volatility. It saw a decrease from 152.6 million di-

nars in December to 78.8 million dinars in January. Subsequently, it rose sharply in February, reaching 243.3 million dinars, only to decline again by 61.2 million dinars in March. This pattern continued, with an upswing to 159.2 million in April, followed by a spike to 274.3 million in May. The trend reversed in June, dropping to 169.1 million dinars, only to decline further to 84.9 million dinars in July. Notably, there was another significant surge in August, reaching 298.7 million dinars, before the sudden dip to 6.2 million dinars in September, and the subsequent rise to 125.1 million dinars in October.

Credit facilities

As for the balances of credit facilities, they experienced a substantial increase of 297 million dinars, reaching the level of 53.125 billion dinars in October compared to 52.828 billion in September. On an annual basis, these facilities increased by one billion dinars, up from 52.126 billion dinars in October 2022. The specifics of the credit landscape include a noteworthy rise of 119 million dinars in personal credit facilities, reaching 18.771 billion dinars in October, compared to 18.652 billion dinars in September. Credit facilities directed to the industrial sector also registered an increase of 11 million dinars, reaching 2.754 billion dinars in October, as opposed to 2.743 billion dinars in the preceding month. In contrast, the value of facilities in the trade sector experienced a de-

cline from 3.603 billion dinars in September to 3.566 billion dinars in October.

Moreover, the value of consumer facilities and loans observed an uptick during October, rising by 14 million dinars and reaching 1.968 billion dinars, compared to approximately 1.954 billion dinars in September. However, government deposits underwent a decline of 181 million dinars in October, settling at 4.050 billion dinars by month-end, in contrast to 4.231 billion dinars in September. Over the course of ten months, government deposits exhibited an overall increase of about 675 million dinars from the end of December 2022.

In the context of global oil markets, prices experienced a noteworthy upturn following statements by the Saudi Energy Minister, suggesting the potential continuation of OPEC+ production cuts beyond March. Against a backdrop of uncertainty surrounding these voluntary production cuts, ongoing geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, and lackluster economic data from the United States, Brent crude futures rose by 63 cents to \$78.66 per barrel. Simultaneously, US West Texas Intermediate crude futures also increased by 63 cents, reaching \$73.67 per barrel. Kelvin Wong, Chief Market Analyst for the Asia-Pacific region at OANDA, emphasized that the Saudi Energy Minister's comments lent some support to the market, offering a degree of reassurance amid prevailing uncertainties.

Financial experts cite 'exits'

Bank sector restructuring seen as Lebanon lifeline

BEIRUT, Dec 6, (KUNA): Lebanon has been suffering from severe multi-aspect crises since 2019 when dramatic fall of the national currency value began; however, experts believe that there are some exits out of the bleak tunnel.

The multi-shape and thorny issue, classified by the World Bank as one of the hardest crises witnessed worldwide since the 19th century, persists despite bids by the government and the Central Bank of Lebanon to resolve it and relieve the Lebanese people who have been battered with a series and recurring crises since outbreak of the civil war in 1975.

Amid the bleak conditions, a glimmer of hope lies in a salvage scheme, a plan to restructure the banking sector, a term set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to bail out the country, and adopted by the government as part of an aspired package of financial reforms to remedy the ailing economy.

Resolve

"The current monetary crisis is not hard to resolve," believes Samir Hammoud, a former chairperson of the Banks Supervision Commission as he has noted in an exclusive interview with Kuwait News Agency (KUNA). Solutions, he added, should not contradict with the constitution, Lebanon's free system and preservation of the private property.

Lebanon is gripped with monetary, banking, financial, economic and political problems. "The three latter topics are the most crucial and their tackling warrants consensus on establishing the State in the sound sense," Hammoud told KUNA, alluding roots of the economic crisis to the 80s of the past century when banks used to hefty borrowed from the central bank without coverage in the US dollars.

The banks had received deposits in the USD for lucrative interests and shifted the money to the central bank that was regularly lending the State that in turn heavily depended on this financial resource, instead of funding itself from other sources such as taxes and proceeds from key sectors such as the ports.

"This monetary policy has led with time to the crisis," Hammoud affirmed, adding that the banks currently stopped paying large amounts of US dollars to the clients because their funds are with the central bank or in the form of debt bonds that are not easy to liquidate to meet the clients' needs.

On possible remedies, the former banks supervision chief proposes that the central bank establish a local bank that buys deposits of individuals and institutions from the banks in hard currencies to relieve them of prospected shut-down.

Assets

Hammoud believes that once the banks are relieved of the difficult assets, they can recapitalize themselves according to the Basel norms -- as the WB also concurs. However, he indicated that such an approach may be thorny, noting that it requires that the banks conduct deleveraging, or "hair-cuts," of the assets "so they may be able to re-capitalize."

As to figures, he has assessed that the private sector's debts amount to USD eight billion, those of the State for the central bank some USD 70 billion. Clients used to have up to USD 95 billion worth of deposits in the banks, and by contrast, the banks now have only USD three billion where those of the



KUNA photo
Former chairperson of the Banks Supervision Commission Samir Hammoud.

central bank amount to USD seven billion.

"This is where the financial gap has taken shape amounting to USD 85 billion with deduction of the central bank and the banks' deposits from the total of the clients funds amounting to USD 95 billion," he clarified. Lebanon's gross domestic product reached approximately USD 20 billion in 2022. The GDP was estimated at USD 54 billion before start of the financial crisis late 2019, marked with public outcries and wide-scale demonstrations by citizens suffering from its impact on their living conditions and purchasing power.

Hammoud protested that he noticed "erroneous practices" in the banking sector over the past four years, suggesting that there must be legislations stipulating that the banks' assets must be larger than their liabilities.

Another prominent expert, Jasseem Ajaqa, a former adviser to the minister of economy and economy professor at the Lebanese University, said in an interview with Kuwait News Agency that the banks' restructuring is necessary and crucial, provided "there is willingness to rescue the sector but the issue in this respect lies in the methods."

Scheme

Ajaqa opines that the restructuring scheme should be carried out in "a scientific method without political calculations," indicating in this respect at a plan that had been presented by the US-headquartered financial advisory firm Lazard, essentially recommending that banks must be shut down and only five new ones be established.

The banks' restructuring must be done according to scientific criteria after auditing accounts and deposits by a reliable foreign financial company. Later on, a decision can be taken to choose which banks must cease to exist, those that can be integrated with others and those that are entitled to swell their capitals, he said.

It is quite difficult to revive the Lebanese economy without restructuring the banks, Ajaqa has emphasized in the interview with KUNA.

"What's at stake in such a process is preservation of the clients' deposits, he has continued."

Meanwhile, attorney Dina Abu Zor, member of the Commission for Protecting Depositors' Funds, established by the lawyers association, told KUNA that remedy of the banking issue begins with enacting legislations in parliament. The responsibility of paying the clients firstly hinges on the banks and secondly on the central bank, she said, utterly rejecting the approach to coerce the depositors incur losses in their savings.

'Award reflects KFH's prominence & expertise'

KFH wins 'Bank of the Year' award from The Banker

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has won the "Bank of the Year 2023 - Kuwait" award from The Banker, the world's most prestigious banking magazine owned by the Financial Times Group.

The winners are selected based on their robust financial performance and strategic advantages, either by investing in novel technology or innovating new cost-effective methods to expand their operations and increase customer satisfaction.

On this occasion, KFH Acting Group Chief Executive Officer, Abdulwahab Iesa Al Rushood said that receiving the "Bank of the Year 2023 - Kuwait" award from The Banker further affirms KFH's prominence and expertise in Kuwait's banking industry. Additionally, it highlights KFH's significant role in being at the forefront of the Islamic banking sector and its

ability to provide innovative banking solutions and services that cater to customers' needs.

He added that the award reflects KFH's record financial results and sustainable growth due to the ideal implementation of the Bank's strategy, strong operational performance, responsible banking practices, risk management, and the enhancement of the solvency and creditworthiness of KFH Group.

He highlighted the pioneering position that KFH enjoys as the largest bank in Kuwait in terms of assets, and the first among listed companies on Boursa Kuwait in terms of market capitalization. This leading standing reflects the remarkable capabilities and the high grasp KFH has in assisting companies and leading mega financing deals.

A sustained trust

Al Rushood mentioned that the recognition reflects KFH's leadership in different aspects, customers' constant trust in KFH's innovative financing products and services, strong brand, and the added value provided to them through the Bank's innovation strategy, as well as the adoption of the latest world-class digital solutions in the industry.

It is worth noting that the digital transformation of the banking services is a significant milestone in KFH's banking journey, as it contributes to enhancing the Bank's efficiency, financial performance, strong profitability, and offering high quality innovative services through its cutting-edge digital infrastructure

'Jordan's potential as global powerhouse in green energy transition'

Masdar signs agreements for 1GW wind & potential green hydrogen plant in Jordan

DUBAI, Dec 6, (PR Newswire): Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company PJSC - Masdar, the UAE's clean energy powerhouse, has signed a joint development agreement with the Jordanian Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources to develop a 1 gigawatt (GW) wind project with a battery energy storage system (BESS), and a memorandum to explore the feasibility of establishing a green hydrogen plant.

The agreements with the Ministry were signed at COP28 by Masdar Chief Executive Officer, Mohamed Jameel Al Ramahi and the Jordanian Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources, His Excellency Dr Saleh Al-Kharabsheh. The signing ceremony was witnessed by UAE Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology, COP28 President and Masdar Chairman, HE Dr Sultan Al Jaber and the Minister of the Environment for Jordan, H.E. Dr Muawieh Khalid Radaideh.

The study will examine the feasibility of establishing a green hydrogen project near The Port of Aqaba to produce the most cost-competitive hydrogen, utilizing desalinated seawater, and dedicated renewable power.

Masdar Chief Executive Officer, Mohamed Jameel Al Ramahi said: "With substantial wind and solar resources that can be used to generate large amounts of renewable energy, and produce cost-competitive green hydrogen and green fuels, Jordan has the potential to become a global powerhouse in the green energy transition. Building on the strength of our longstanding partnership, Masdar is delighted to bring our expertise in clean energy projects and technologies to help Jordan achieve its decarbonization plans and unlock the nation's enormous potential."

HE Dr. Saleh Al-Kharabsheh, Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources in Jordan, said: "The Jordanian government's efforts continue to enhance Jordan's role as a regional center for

that meets customers' aspirations.

He pointed out that the recent various accomplishments, including The Banker's award, confirm KFH's successful business model, quality of its services, efficiency of its digital transformation strategy, as well as its pioneering role at different levels. These factors boost KFH's standing, strong brand, and robust financial position. In addition, the approach which KFH follows is based on balancing innovation with investment in technology and providing the best banking solutions that suit



Jordanian Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources, His Excellency Dr Saleh Al-Kharabsheh; Jordanian Minister of Environment, H.E. Dr Muawieh Khalid Radaideh; COP28 President and Masdar Chairman, HE Dr Sultan Al Jaber; Masdar Chief Executive Officer, Mohamed Jameel Al Ramahi

green energy production and provide high-quality, cost-competitive green hydrogen fuel by taking advantage of the abundance of renewable energy sources and our nation's strategic geographical location in the region to provide excellent access to European markets."

HE Dr. Saleh Al-Kharabsheh added that Jordan valued cooperation at the regional and national level, and that the partnership with Masdar - through the signing of these agreements - will advance the Ministry's priorities and the Economic Modernization Vision (2023-2033) that was recently launched by the Jordanian government. This includes investment in green hydrogen production projects, which are part of Jordan's initiatives to transition towards the use of clean energy as it aims to achieve net zero.

Masdar already has a presence in Jordan through its Baynouna Solar Energy Company (BSCE) joint venture with Finnish investment and asset management group Taaleri, which in-

augurated the 200MW Baynouna Solar Park, the largest clean energy project in Jordan, in February of this year.

Masdar is pursuing a target of 1 million tonnes of green hydrogen production by 2030 as part of the UAE's plans to establish itself as a green hydrogen hub and capture 25 per cent of the global low-carbon hydrogen market by 2030.

As the UAE's clean energy powerhouse and one of the world's fastest growing and leading investors in clean energy, Masdar is at the vanguard of advancing the development and deployment of renewable energy and green hydrogen technologies to address global sustainability challenges.

Established in 2006, Masdar has developed and partnered in projects in more than 40 countries across six continents. Its worldwide portfolio of investments, which are either operational, under construction or in exclusive development, have a combined value of more than US\$30 billion.

investment and banking services that adhere to the latest technologies and international financial standards.

Founded in 1926, The Banker is the world's premier banking and finance resource, providing comprehensive economic and financial information. A specialized committee, comprising editors and field experts, oversees the nomination criteria for the 'Bank of the Year' awards for five months. This is why these awards are considered highly prestigious and widely recognized in the banking sector.

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Danish union to take action against Tesla

The labor conflict against Tesla in Sweden is spreading to neighboring Denmark where transport workers with the country's largest trade union said Tuesday they will take action in solidarity with Swedish workers against the Texas-based automaker.

Tesla is non-unionized globally, but the Swedish workers are demanding that the carmaker sign a collective bargaining agreement, which most employees in Sweden

have. Tesla has no manufacturing plant in Sweden but has several service centers.

The United Federation of Workers in Denmark, known in Danish as 3F, said there had been speculation that Tesla would deliver its cars to Danish ports and transport them on trucks to Sweden after Swedish dock workers blocked the reception of Tesla cars there.

"Concretely, this means that

dock workers and drivers will not receive and transport Tesla's cars going to Sweden," 3F said in a statement. "With the sympathy action, that model is no longer possible."

Jakob Lykke, local head of 3F Transport in Esbjerg, on Denmark's west coast, told the regional Jydsk Vestkysten daily that Denmark's fifth largest town is the only the harbor through which Tesla cars arrive by ship. (AP)

why have corporations not invested in renewables sooner?

Last year's United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP27, established a need for investment in renewable energy. However, now that COP28 has come around, corporations still hesitate to make the switch from fossil fuels to renewables. Why have corporations not invested in renewables sooner?

As 2023 marks world history, being the warmest year on record, this year's COP is critical. Critical

for encouraging global corporations to invest in renewables to avoid a 3° temperature increase by 2100. The world's future habitability lies in the hands of today's businesses and business leaders. Acumen is excited to document these business leaders' reasons for looking at renewable energy as a site for growth rather than decline, some of these businesses include ASICS, All4Labels and TDK Ventures.

Some of the reasons that corporations may have not invested in renewables sooner are due to uncertain financial returns, regulatory difficulties and a lack of land. In turn, corporations are changing their approaches to renewable energy - innovating the change that should have been made sooner. "We're going to get to the heart of the matter," states a spokesperson for Acumen. (PR Newswire)

Norwegian lawmakers make a deal to that effect

Deep-sea mining in the Arctic Ocean gets the green light

COPENHAGEN, Denmark, Dec 6, (AP): Norway's minority center-left government and two large opposition parties made a deal Tuesday to open the Arctic Ocean to seabed mineral exploration despite warnings by environmental groups that it would threaten the biodiversity of the vulnerable ecosystems in the area.

Norway said in June it wanted to open parts of the Norwegian continental shelf for commercial deep sea mining in line with the country's strategy to seek new economic opportunities and reduce its reliance on oil and gas.

The head of Greenpeace Norway, Frode Pleyrn, said the decision was "a disaster for the sea" and the mining would take place in "our last wilderness." "We do not know what consequences this will have for the ecosystems in the sea, for endangered species such as whales and seabirds, or for the fish stocks on which we base our livelihood," he said.

Martin Sveinsson Melvær of the Norwegian Bellona environmental group

said the move was "completely contrary to scientific recommendations" and believed it was "a dangerous derailment in the fight against climate change to open up seabed minerals."

The government - made up of the Labor and the Center Party - made the deal with the conservatives from Hoeyre and the Progress Party, Norwegian news agency NTB said.

Approve

It said they had agreed on a step-by-step opening process where the Norwegian parliament, or Stortinget, will approve the first development projects, in the same way as it has done for certain extraction projects in the petroleum sector.

Terje Aasland, Norway's minister for petroleum and energy, told Norwegian public broadcaster NRK that "we will do this carefully, we will do it step

by step. We will collect knowledge, then we will assess whether it is possible to start with this extraction."

The Scandinavian country, which is one of the world's wealthiest countries due to its vast oil and gas reserves, says there are significant mineral resources on the seabed of the Norwegian continental shelf.

According to the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate, there are sulphides and manganese crusts containing metals and minerals that are crucial for making batteries, wind turbines, PCs and mobile phones.

If proven to be profitable, and if extraction can be done sustainably, seabed mineral activities can strengthen the economy, including employment in Norway, while ensuring the supply of crucial metals for the world's transition to sustainable energy, the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy said in June.

The planned area is located southwest of the Arctic island of Svalbard.

Despite efforts loopholes remain

China raises the stakes in cyberscam 'crackdown' in junta-ruled Myanmar

BANGKOK, Dec 6, (AP): China is ramping up a crackdown on online scams operated by criminal syndicates in border areas of military-ruled Myanmar in an effort that has included a shootout, confession videos and national TV broadcasts of arrests of high-profile suspects.

But the drive has been confined to a limited area and appears unlikely to root out the kingpins behind the human trafficking and other illicit activities aimed at cheating people of their savings via phone calls and online overtures, schemes that are thought to generate tens of billions of dollars in revenue a year.

Over the summer, China announced a series of joint operations with neighboring countries that led to thousands of people being returned to China, many of whom had been lured by the promise of high-paying jobs. Experts say many are victims who were forced into conducting the scams. Those campaigns did not include arrests of ring leaders in Myanmar.

"As soon as we discover them, we hand them over," said Lu Jiantang, the vice-chair of foreign affairs in Wa, whose job is ensuring that people fleeing fighting in neighboring areas do not include scammers.

On Nov. 18, China's Ministry of Public Security announced that authorities in northern Myanmar had handed over some 31,000 suspects. Among them, police said, 63 were key players of scamming groups, the police said.

"China seems to be very focused and intent on cleaning its border," said Jason Tower, an expert on Myanmar's cyberscam industry at the U.S. Congress-backed think tank United States Institute of Peace said.

Among those arrested are a few related to some of the most powerful people in two special administrative zones close to China's border with military-ruled Myanmar.

The Kokang Self-Administered Zone and the Wa Self-Administered Division both share a border with China and are heavily influenced by their bigger neighbor. The people living in both places share language and culture with China. Those living in Kokang are ethnically Chinese. Wa senior politicians, who have their own Communist Party, have ties to China's Communist Party dating back decades and run their government along lines similar to Chinese party committees.

In mid-November, the Chinese police announced they had issued warrants for four people, all surnamed Ming, on suspicion of cyberscams, murder and illegal detention. The family is one of the most powerful in Ko-

kang, with members in the government and local police, and are said to have Chinese passports. A few days later, the state broadcaster CCTV showed footage of police taking three of the four suspects across the border in southwestern Yunnan province.

CCTV reported that Ming Xuechang, a family patriarch and one of the alleged leaders of a scam syndicate, died by suicide when local authorities tried to arrest him on Nov. 15. Myanmar's military government issued a statement saying that Ming had shot himself during the arrest.

The renewed effort to stamp out the scam rings followed a violent shootout Oct. 20 in Kokang in a compound belonging to the Ming family, according to local media. The former editor-in-chief of the Chinese state-backed news outlet Global Times, Hu Xijin, appeared to confirm that undercover police were killed in the incident.

"China is determined to eradicate the poisonous cancer of cyber scams in northern Myanmar ... and this ultimately led to the demise of the Ming family, who are said to have killed four of our undercover military police," Hu wrote in a recent Weibo post.

The Ministry of Public Security did not respond to a faxed request for comment.

The Ming family are not the only powerful Kokang families caught up in the drive.

A few days before the Chinese issued their arrest warrants for the Mings, Wei Qingtao, a member of another powerful Kokang family, was seen in a video circulated on Chinese social media, which is customarily censored, urging his relatives to let people forced into scamming rings go.

"This time the Chinese government has made its resolution, without clearing away the cyberscams, they'll never withdraw their police," Wei said.

Two other men appeared in similar videos. One, Liu Zhengqi, was the CEO of Fully Light Group, the biggest conglomerate in the Kokang zone. Another, Bi Huijun, is a son-in-law of Ming Xuechang.

In late October, China issued arrest warrants for two men who held senior government positions in the Wa Division. One was head of the Wa Construction Ministry. The other was a county chief. A few days later, the Wa Communist Party said they had been expelled from the party. It's unclear if they have been detained.

Wa police handed 194 Chinese nationals to Chinese authorities on Nov. 28, according to Wa's state media, Voice of Wa State. Wa officials says such handovers are routine.

Spanish newspaper association has filed a lawsuit against Meta

MADRID, Dec 6, (AP): A Spanish association representing more than 80 newspapers has filed a lawsuit against Facebook parent Meta accusing it of unfair competition in online advertising by allegedly ignoring European Union rules on data protection.

In a statement, the Information Media Association said it is demanding 550 million euros (\$600 million) from the social media giant. The association represents dozens of newspapers including Spain's principal dailies El País, El Mundo, ABC and La Vanguardia.

The association accuses Meta of "systematic and massive non-compliance" with EU data protection regulations between May 2018, when they took force, and July 2023.

It said Meta has repeatedly ignored the requirement that citizens give their consent to the use of their data for advertising profiling.

The company declined to comment, saying it hadn't seen the legal papers.

Meta's Facebook and Instagram platforms have long used behavioral advertising to make money. The practice involves tracking individual online behavior such as web browsing habits, mouse clicks and app usage, then using that data to build profiles for targeting ads to users.

But court rulings have eroded

Meta's ability to justify its methods under the EU's data privacy regulations. In July, the EU's top court ruled the company can't force users in the 27-nation bloc to agree to personalized ads, saying users need to freely give their consent. Meta responded by offering ad-free versions of Facebook and Instagram for European users for a monthly fee.

The Spanish association said the use of personal data of users of Meta platforms, tracked without their consent, allowed the U.S. company to offer advertising space based on an "illegitimately obtained competitive advantage," indirectly threatening the livelihood of Spanish media.

It called on advertisers in the public and private sectors "to entrust their advertising campaigns to safe, reliable and responsible media, respectful of the rights of citizens and committed to promoting democratic quality in Spain."

"The time has come to put an end to the behavior of technology companies that can afford to pay million-dollar penalties to continue failing to comply with regulations, destroying the market in which we operate and making the illegitimately obtained income their own," said Irene Lanzaco, director general of the association.

The case was filed at Madrid's mercantile courts.

Fed regulators probing ExxonMobil's \$60 bln deal to acquire a Texas oil co

Commission asks for additional info from companies

WASHINGTON, Dec 6, (AP): Federal regulators are investigating ExxonMobil's \$60 billion deal to acquire a Texas oil company in what would be one of the largest mergers in the energy industry in two decades, according to securities filings.

The Federal Trade Commission, which enforces federal antitrust law, has asked for additional information from the companies about Exxon's proposed acquisition of Pioneer Natural Resources. The request is a step the agency takes when reviewing whether a merger could be anticompetitive under U.S. law. Pioneer disclosed the request in a filing Tuesday.

The investigation comes after Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and 22 other Democratic senators urged the FTC to investigate the Exxon-Pioneer deal and a separate acquisition by oil giant Chevron, a proposed \$53 billion purchase of Hess Corporation. Both deals are among the largest petroleum deals in U.S. history and could violate antitrust law, the Democrats said. There's no public indication of a federal inquiry into the Chevron merger.

Blockbuster

Schumer said Tuesday he asked the FTC to "take a hard look at Exxon's blockbuster merger and block it if it would lead to higher prices, hurt competition or force families to pay more at the pump. I'm glad the FTC is taking this step."

The FTC, which shares antitrust authority with the Justice Department, can sue in court to block a merger or decline to take action, effectively clearing the deal. A spokesman for the commission declined to comment Tuesday.

Chevron, Exxon and other oil companies have announced huge profits from strong energy prices and demand since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Exxon reported \$9.1 billion in profits in the quarter that ended Sept. 30, while Chevron reported \$6.5 billion in profits.

Exxon has said the proposed deal with Texas-based Pioneer Resources would enhance U.S. energy security and benefit the American economy and consumers.

Chevron said its proposed deal with New York-based Hess would strengthen long-term performance while "delivering higher returns and lower carbon" dioxide emissions that contribute to global warming.

Both deals must be approved by fed-



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, cyclists, some take selfie as they take rest against the sunrise in Pudong, China's financial and commercial hub, in Shanghai, China on Friday, Nov. 3, 2023. Credit rating agency Moody's cut its outlook for Chinese sovereign bonds to negative on Tuesday, Dec. 5, 2023, citing risks from a slowing economy and a crisis in its property sector. (AP)

Slowing economic growth, property crisis cited

Moody's cuts China credit outlook to negative

HONG KONG, Dec 6, (AP): Credit rating agency Moody's cut its outlook for Chinese sovereign bonds to negative on Tuesday, citing risks from a slowing economy and a crisis in its property sector.

Moody's said the downgrade, its first for China since 2017, reflects risks from financing troubles of local and regional governments and state-owned enterprises.

The world's second-biggest economy had been slowing before a 2020 crackdown on excessive borrowing brought on defaults by dozens of property developers. Those troubles have crimped local government finances and also imperiled some lenders, further dragging on the economy.

The need for government intervention to support banks and local governments poses "broad downside risks to China's fiscal, economic and institutional strength. The outlook change also reflects the increased risks related

eral regulators.

Environmental groups have denounced what some called "merger mania" in the oil industry that threatens competition.

"Exxon publicly promised to reduce emissions, yet subsequently

to structurally and persistently lower medium-term economic growth," Moody's said in a statement.

China's Ministry of Finance said it was "disappointed" with Moody's decision to lower the outlook.

"Since the beginning of this year, in the face of the complex and harsh international situations, and against the background of an unstable global economic recovery and weakening momentum, China's macro economy has continued to recover and has been advancing steadily," the ministry said, according to an online transcript of remarks at a Q&A session Tuesday.

Shares retreated in China on Tuesday, with Hong Kong's Hang Seng dropping 1.9% and the Shanghai Composite index down 1.7%.

Separately, Moody's affirmed China's A1 long-term local and foreign-currency issuer ratings.

The credit rating firm said it expects China's economy to grow at a 4% an-

nual pace in 2024 and 2025, slowing to an average of 3.8% for the rest of the decade.

Factors such as "weaker demographics," as the country ages, will likely drive a decline in potential growth to around 3.5% by 2030, Moody's said.

To offset the weaker property sector, China will need "substantial and coordinated reforms" to support more consumer spending and higher value-added manufacturing to support strong growth, Moody's said.

China's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic faltered after an initial burst of activity earlier in the year faded faster than expected. Despite prolonged weakness in consumer spending and exports, the economy is expected to grow at about a 5% annual pace this year.

China's economy still has "huge development resilience and potential" and will remain an important engine for global economic growth in the future, the Finance Ministry said.

Territory disputed

Maduro orders the 'immediate' exploitation of oil, gas and mines in Guyana's Essequibo

CARACAS, Venezuela, Dec 6, (AP): Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro has directed the country's state-owned companies to "immediately" begin to explore and exploit the oil, gas and mines in Guyana's Essequibo region, a territory larger than Greece and rich in oil and minerals that Venezuela claims as its own.

The announcement came a day after Maduro got the victory he sought in a weekend referendum on whether to claim sovereignty over the region.

Maduro said he would "immediately" proceed "to grant operating licenses for the exploration and exploitation of oil, gas and mines in the entire area

of our Essequibo." He also ordered the creation of local subsidiaries of Venezuelan public companies, including oil giant PDVSA and mining conglomerate Corporación Venezolana de Guayana.

It is not clear how the Maduro administration intends to implement the idea of exercising jurisdiction over the territory once it's officially declared part of Venezuela through a law that is to be soon discussed by the National Assembly, which is controlled by the ruling party.

In addition to the announcement regarding the exploitation of resources in Essequibo, Maduro announced Tues-

day the creation of a new Comprehensive Defense Operational Zone, Zodi in Spanish, for the disputed strip, similar to the special military commands that conduct operations in different regions of the country.

The 61,600-square-mile (159,500-square-kilometer) area accounts for two-thirds of Guyana. Yet, Venezuela has always considered Essequibo as its own because the region was within its boundaries during the Spanish colonial period, and it has long disputed the border decided by international arbitrators in 1899, when Guyana was still a British colony.

Venezuela's commitment to pursue the territorial claim has fluctuated over the years. Its interest piqued again in 2015 when ExxonMobil announced it had found oil in commercial quantities off the Essequibo coast.

Guyana has denounced Venezuela's actions and Sunday's referendum as pretext to annex the land. It had appealed to the International Court of Justice, the United Nations' top court, which on Friday ordered Venezuela not to take any action to change the status quo until the panel can rule on the two countries' competing claims, which could take years.

Action Fund, League of Conservation Voters and Sierra Club.

"The FTC is right to investigate Exxon's acquisition of Pioneer, which could raise prices at the pump and is aimed at keeping the U.S. reliant on fossil fuels," Witt said.

Padel tournament for students with special needs under the 'Because_We_Care' umbrella

stc commemorates International Day of Persons with Disabilities

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, organized a Padel Tournament for people with special needs, in collaboration with the Public Authority for Disability Affairs. stc was the main sponsor of the Padel Tournament for students with special needs held at Al Yousifi Stadium in Dasman. The event falls under stc's 'Because_We_Care' umbrella, conducted to commemorate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities and stc's commitment towards community inclusion and sustainable development.

The Padel Tournament at Al Yousifi Stadium, sponsored by stc, was a highlight event featuring 93 talented players from special education schools across Kuwait. Competing in doubles matches, these young athletes showcased their skills and demonstrated remarkable sportsmanship and ability. stc, affirming its commitment to community support, distributed gifts to all participants, celebrating their dedication and fostering a sense of community and inclusivity. The presence of stc's public re-



Group photo of participating students with officials of the Authority for Disability Affairs.

lations team also highlighted the Company's ongoing support for initiatives that empower people with special needs.

Danah AlJasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc, commented, "At stc, we are deeply committed to supporting various segments within our

community. Through our extensive & sustainable CSR program, we aim to provide continuous support and create inclusive opportunities for all. These initiatives aim to spread awareness and support for the special needs community, extending beyond stc's CSR framework to create a long-term, sustainable community impact. AlJasem added, "stc will continue to explore with more opportunities that are beneficial to the society through its partnerships with companies and institutions within Kuwait's public and private sectors."

AlJasem expressed her gratitude to the participating schools, and the Public Authority for Disability Affairs for their collaboration in making the event successful. She emphasized the importance of such collaborations, highlighting how these partnerships were instrumental in creating inclusive and enriching experiences for the students. AlJasem noted that the combined efforts of these organizations were key in achieving the shared goal of community inclusion and support for people with special needs, further underlining stc's commitment to social responsibility and community engagement.

Gallery exhibits 11 projects

Boubyan Bank conducts annual Lean Gallery Walk for Lean internal improvement projects

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: Boubyan Bank organized its Sixth Annual Lean Gallery Walk for internal improvement projects implemented utilizing the Lean Methodology. The main objective is to encourage Boubyan employees towards continuous improvement by submitting opportunities of enhancement which will positively reflect on customer satisfaction & service.

The Gallery was launched by Mr. Adel Al-Majed, Vice-Chairman & Group Chief Executive Officer of Boubyan Bank Group, and Mr. Abdullah Al-Tuwaijri, CEO - Private, Consumer & Digital Banking, and Mr. Abdul-Salam Al-Saleh, CEO - Corporate Banking, Finance, Treasury, and Legal, along with a number of the bank's leaders and attendance from Kuwait University and stc.

Mr. Abdullah Al-Mehri, the bank's Chief Operating Officer, commented: "Boubyan Bank is committed on showing appreciation for its employees who are interested in change and improvement. The Management of Boubyan would like to thank everyone for their participation, and we will keep conducting this annual gallery in the future, God willing, to support and recognize staff accomplishments."

On his part, Mr. Abdullah Al-Hussainan, Assistant General Manager - Change Management Office at Boubyan Bank, stated: "Boubyan Bank always seeks & encourages to improve its internal work process & environment, which shows the power of creativity and innovation of all employees of the bank, maintaining continuous process improvement concepts.

"Lean methodology adopts well-studied approaches and practices that can change the traditional concept & mindset of streamlining workflows and achieve sustainable growth to



Adel Al-Majed and Boubyan leaders at the gallery.



Abdullah Al-Mehri



Abdullah Al-Hussainan

contribute to the development and improvement of the bank & the employees.

He went on to add: "The 'Lean Gallery Walk' for internal improvement projects aims to create a work environment that encourages employees to identify 'improvement opportunities' through the challenges employees face in their day-to-day tasks, and to transform them into Lean projects which can be implemented & will have positive impact on improving work processes which will ultimately have a positive effect on customers and employees."

This year's gallery exhibited 11

projects & participants employees from various departments, who presented their projects during the gallery and answered queries from the attendees.

Lean is an international methodology aims of improving processes and reduce cost by minimizing waste, and focusing on customers and the quality of services and products. The bank's Continuous Improvement Department trains groups of employees on the Lean methodology annually, and offers them the necessary coaching and support to complete the project through specialized and highly competent employees in this field.

Building a healthier and more conscious society

Lexus invests in health for a better future at Lexus L-finesse boutique

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: Part of its social responsibility and its leading role to serve the community, ALSAYER Lexus recently organized a prostate cancer awareness campaign. A specialist doctor from Dar Al Shifa Hospital and a nutritionist from Of Course diet center were invited to the L-finesse boutique in the Assima Mall.

ALSAYER Lexus relies on an integrated strategy that combines social awareness and social responsibility to achieve a positive impact. Based on this, the company organizes cancer awareness campaigns, including early detection and prevention methods. Lexus is one of Kuwait's leading brands, not only providing luxury cars but also actively supporting societal and health causes.

The Lexus L-finesse boutique witnessed a great turnout of visitors who benefitted from the explanation on the importance of early checkup for prostate cancer, led by Dr. Ahmed Mustafa, Consultant Urology. Dr. Mustafa stressed the importance of prevention and avoiding complications, noting Lexus' strong support for health issues. Ali Darwish, Head of Nutrition at Of-course, explained the benefits of following a balanced diet program, stressing the importance of life Health considering the rise in cases of lifestyle-related diseases, especially cancer.

Lexus considers healthcare to be an integral part of its social responsibilities. Through such initiatives, ALSAYER Lexus adopts a leading role in spreading and improving health awareness and encouraging steps towards a healthy life. To achieve maximum effectiveness in these campaigns, Lexus hosts experienced medical professionals to highlight the risks of cancer as well as the importance of early detection, whether for women for breast cancer or for men for prostate cancer.

By offering souvenirs and coupons for early screening, the team seeks to motivate visitors to take care of their



Photos from the event.

health and plan routine check-ups. Lexus also encourages its employees and partners to actively participate in com-

munity events that promote health and contribute to raising awareness about the importance of caring for health.

talabat partners with American University of Kuwait to enrich students' learning experience

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: As part of the company's commitment to enriching the learning experience within the community, talabat, the leading tech platform, collaborated with the American University of Kuwait to welcome students from various majors to its headquarters. This engaging visit offered students a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in talabat's diverse departments, gaining exposure to the company's day-to-day operations and work environment.

During the visit, AUK students had the chance to meet with different department heads, gaining hands-on experience through insightful presentations and discussions. These interactions also provided them with a valuable understanding of the inner workings of talabat, shedding light on the company's operations as a tech platform bridging the gap between customers and vendors, as well as the company's culture. Additionally, students had the opportunity to ask questions, seek advice, and

engage in meaningful conversations with the department heads, enhancing their overall learning experience and career prospects.

Abdullah Al Mansour, Director of Corporate Communications, Public Relations, and Corporate Responsibility at talabat Kuwait, expressed his enthusiasm for the collaboration, emphasizing the company's commitment to making a positive impact in the communities it engages with. He stated, "At talabat, we believe in making a meaningful impact, and one of our primary objectives is to enrich the learning experience, as demonstrated by our collaboration with AUK."

Al Mansour further elaborated on the company's vision by stating, "We also believe that learning should be an engaging and transformative journey. Therefore, we're taking this collaboration further by offering AUK students internship opportunities in different departments at talabat. This internship aims to enhance their learning experience and provide them with

practical insights into our dynamic industry."

He concluded, "We are thrilled to host the AUK students and hope that this visit can ignite a passion in these students to explore new horizons and consider potential career paths that they might not have previously considered; as we firmly believe in nurturing young talent and providing them with the tools and knowledge they need to thrive in today's rapidly evolving world."

Additionally, one of the key insights that students gained from this experience was the realization that talabat extends beyond its role as a food delivery platform. It actively contributes to the enrichment of the local economy by serving as a vital link between customers, vendors, and delivery companies, underscoring talabat's deep commitment to enhancing and supporting the communities in which it operates.

Omar Mahdi, Director of the Student Life Department at the American University of Kuwait, expressed his enthusiasm for this partnership

by saying, "We are truly grateful for the opportunity provided by talabat to our students. This collaboration has offered our students a unique chance to gain invaluable insights into a dynamic tech company like talabat, as we believe that real-world experiences like these greatly enhance our students' academic journey and help them prepare for successful careers in the future." He then added, "We look forward to more collaborations and partnerships with talabat in the future that can continue to enrich our students' learning experiences."

As talabat continues to open doors for students to explore new horizons, both organizations look forward to future collaborations that will further enrich and empower students on their academic and professional journeys. This partnership not only underscores talabat's commitment to making a positive impact on the communities it engages with, but also emphasizes its pivotal role as a driving force behind local economic enrichment.



American University of Kuwait students from various majors during their visit at talabat's headquarters.



Shanghai Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese group photo.

Shanghai Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese explores Kuwait

By M. Irfan Shafiq

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 6: Shanghai Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese visited Kuwait on the invitation of Chinese Association in Kuwait from 5th-7th December, 2023.

On this special occasion, Chinese Association of Kuwait held a welcoming ceremony in a traditional Kuwaiti restaurant to enjoy the traditional Kuwaiti cuisine.

CAK Chairman Wang Wei introduced Kuwait's history and culture to Visiting Chairman Qi Quan Sheng and later engaged in discussion regarding the business situation in Kuwait and proposed to hold projects and Events in the upcoming year 2024. Chairman Wang Wei proposed about arranging exhibition in September for the introduction of Chinese Technological Advancement to Kuwait.

Further discussion was brought about the well-being of the overseas Chinese living in Kuwait and the education, health



Photo from a ceremony.

and family progression living in Kuwait.

The ceremony ended with Chairman Qi Quan Sheng experiencing the Kuwaiti culture and both parties signing an agreement regarding holding the Chinese Technological fair later next year and further upcoming business projects in the upcoming years regarding the well-being of the overseas Chinese in Kuwait. A Delicious Traditional Dinner was served Followed by exchange of gifts.

Hollywood actors approve deal, officially ending strike

LOS ANGELES, Dec 6, (AP): Hollywood's actors have voted to ratify the deal with studios that ended their strike after nearly four months, bringing an official finish to the labor strife that shook the entertainment industry for most of 2023.

The approval of the three-year contract from the members of the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists announced Tuesday night by union leaders was no certainty, with some prominent members voicing dissent on the deal their negotiators bargained for.

The 78% yes result in voting that began Nov. 13 and ended Tuesday was a far cry from the near-unanimous approval and widespread enthusiasm members of the writers guild gave to the deal that ended their strike in September.

But the outcome is a major relief for SAG-AFTRA leaders and an entertainment industry that is attempting to return to normal after months of labor strife. And it brings a final, official end to Hollywood labor's most tumultuous year in half a century, with two historic strikes that shook the industry.

The contract calls for a 7% general pay increase with further hikes coming in the second and third years of the deal.

Just over 38% of members cast votes, SAG-AFTRA said. All 145,000 members could vote on the deal, not just the approximately 60,000 TV and movie actors who went on strike and work under the contract.

"I'm very happy with the result," Duncan Crabtree-Ireland, SAG-AFTRA's executive director and chief negotiator, told The Associated Press Tuesday night. "I think having almost an 80% 'yes' vote with

almost a 40% turnout for our members, that's really unprecedented for any kind of contract where it's not just a unanimous chorus of yeses."

Some members agreed. "More yes votes than I expected and very happy to see because despite loud voices of complaint on social media, it shows the membership is still strong and united," actor "Can't Hardly Wait" actor Ethan Embry posted on X, formerly known as Twitter. "Back to work."

A rejection of the agreement would have meant a return to the bargaining table and, with that, the possibility of the actors going back on strike if leaders called for it.

Streaming

The union had freed actors to return to work, declaring the strike over as soon as the tentative deal was struck Nov. 8 with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, which represents studios, streaming services and production companies in union negotiations. Two days later, it was approved by the guild's board with an 86% vote.

"The AMPTP member companies congratulate SAG-AFTRA on the ratification of its new contract, which represents historic gains and protections for performers," the AMPTP said in a statement Tuesday night. "With this vote, the industry and the jobs it supports will be able to return in full force."

Control over the use of artificial intelligence was the most hard-fought issue in the long, methodical negotiations, and became the main driver of dissent during the voting.

"The reality is there are members who've spoken out a lot over the

last three weeks about their concerns, primarily about artificial intelligence. I'm very, very mindful of them, and I consider their concerns legitimate," Crabtree-Ireland said. "I also firmly believe that the approach we took to it and what we achieved in this negotiation were the best possible way to address AI at this time with these companies and in this industry."

SAG-AFTRA President Fran Drescher told The Associated Press shortly after the resolution was reached that making sure AI reproductions of actors could only be used with their informed consent and compensation was a "deal breaker" in the talks.

But they did not fight hard enough for some prominent members, including actors Justine Bateman and Matthew Modine, who cited the issue as a reason to vote "no," and stoked fears many voters would follow their lead.

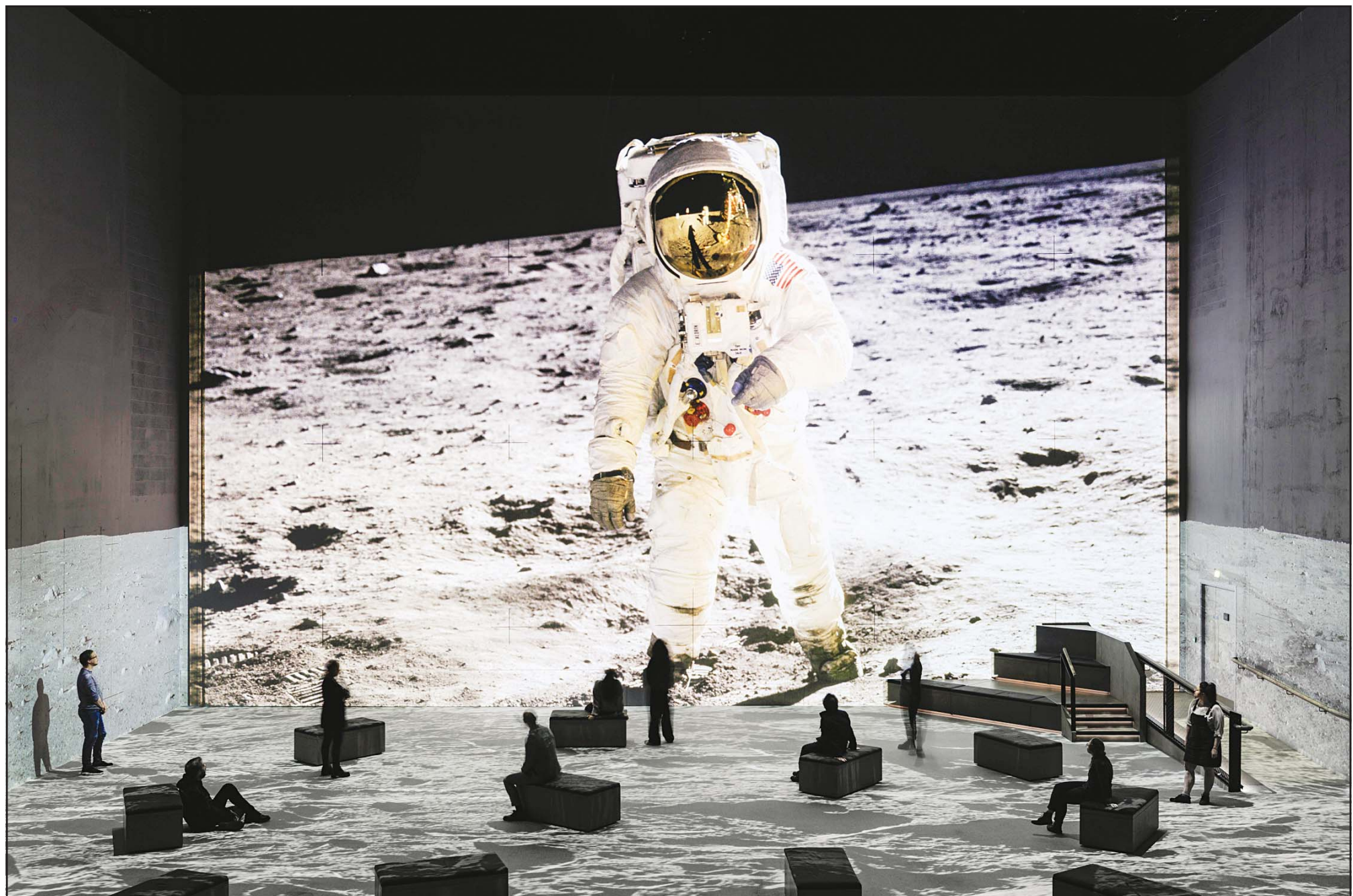
"I cannot endorse a contract that compromises the independence and financial futures of the performers," Modine, who ran against Drescher for union president in 2021 and was also among the board members to reject the deal, said in a statement. "It is purposefully vague and demands union members to release their autonomy.... Consent is surrender."

But many other prominent actors voiced strong support for the agreement, including Academy Award winner Jessica Chastain and Colman Domingo, who is getting major Oscars buzz this year for his performance in "Rustin."

"I believe that we have an incredible deal, I believe it's thoughtful and it's about moving the needle forward," Domingo told the AP last week. "I'm very happy with it. I voted yes."

Film

Variety



In this undated handout photo provided by Justin Sutcliffe, spectators attend the exhibition 'The Moonwalkers: A journey with Tom Hanks', at Lightroom in London. Hanks narrates the immersive film tracing the missions that landed 12 people on the moon between 1969 and 1972, and plans for future lunar exploration. (AP)

Film

Hanks takes audiences on a cosmic journey in docu

'Moonwalkers,' an ode to Apollo missions

LONDON, Dec 6, (AP): You won't see Tom Hanks on one of those space tourism flights that whisk celebrities and millionaires on a suborbital jaunt for a few hours. He says it wouldn't be enough time out of this world.

"I don't need to go up and down," Hanks said Tuesday. "I think I'd need a little bit longer in paradise."

Going to the moon is another matter - and the subject of "The Moonwalkers," an immersive documentary co-written and narrated by Hanks.

"I'd do that in a second," Hanks said. "I don't have the math. I do not have those abilities, but I'm sure there's something I could do in order to help the program."

The two-time Academy Award-winning actor is a lifelong space buff, and he has channeled his passion into "The Moonwalkers," which opens Wednesday at the Lightroom, a London venue specializing in interactive art and film experiences.

Visitors sit on benches surrounded by imagery as the 50-minute film brings NASA's Apollo space missions to life. The focus is on the 12 men who walked on the moon between 1969 and 1972, the thousands of people who helped them get there and a new generation of astronauts set to return to the moon as part of the Artemis program.

It's a high-tech blend of archive film footage, drawings, animation and digitally remastered photographs - but not, Hanks stresses, any computer-generated images.

"Every photograph, every image was a photograph taken by a human of the subject," Hanks told The Associated Press as he sat in the venue in front of a giant lunar landscape. "So there's nothing fake."

"The Moonwalkers," which runs to April 21, 2024, is subtitled "a journey with Tom Hanks." The actor narrates in his warm, avuncular style and co-wrote the script with British documentary filmmaker Christopher Riley.

The space race is presented as a deeply humanist endeavor that represents humanity's unquenchable curiosity and desire to do things - as President John F. Kennedy said of the moonshot - "not because they are easy but because they are hard."

Hanks, 67, has been enthralled by lunar exploration since he was a kid trying to simulate zero gravity by sitting at the bottom of a backyard swimming pool. His performance as Jim Lovell, commander of a space mission in jeopardy, in "Apollo 13" helped revive popular interest in the Apollo program in the 1990s.

Perhaps the signs were there early on that he'd become an actor, not an astronaut. What hooked Hanks on space was not so much the cutting-edge science as the human drama. His interest is in the people up there.

Science

"The science is cool, when you can grasp what the science is, but the science always goes hand in hand with, you know - Do they drink coffee up there? Do they have hot water? Do they need a shave?"

Hanks said the first time he was entranced by space was as a 12-year-old in 1968, seeing an image on his TV of the Earth beamed live from the Apollo 8 spacecraft orbiting the moon.

"It was a live broadcast, and you could see the cloud, you could see the gray of the ocean, you could see the darker gray of the land," he said, recalling his amazement that he was seeing "this great saga" on the same TV he used to watch "Batman" and John Wayne movies.

"I didn't view it as politics. I didn't view it as news. I viewed it as something that was like a great adventure out of Jason and the Argonauts ... a storytelling artistic achievement equal to all of the technological brilliance."

"The Moonwalkers" includes interviews with the

four astronauts due to join the Artemis II mission, humanity's first foray moonward in half a century.

Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, Christina Koch and Jeremy Hansen are due to fly NASA's Orion capsule on the first crewed Artemis mission, launching from Kennedy Space Center no earlier than late 2024. They will not land, but will fly around the moon and head back to Earth, a prelude to a lunar landing by two others a year later.

Countries including China and India also have plans to take astronauts to the moon.

Consummate team players, the Artemis crew members say they would be thrilled by the new lunar program even if they had not been selected for the mission.

"I would be just as excited to watch at home in my pajamas," said Glover, who will be NASA's first African American lunar astronaut. "It's just amazing that we're sending humans back to the moon."

Koch, the first woman to go on a moon mission, said Artemis is the start of a journey that will lead humans - some years from now - to Mars.

"I think we will go to Mars because we can answer one of the most fundamental questions that we all have there, which is, are we alone?" she said. "Everywhere I go, people ask me that question and what we think about that question. We're going to go there because our best chance of knowing the answer to that is there."

Also:

LOS ANGELES: Photojournalist Amanda Mustard turns her lens to her own family, investigating sexual abuses committed by her grandfather in "Great Photo, Lovely Life," streaming on MAX on Tuesday. On this eight-year-journey, Mustard tries to uncover the abuses, coverups and secrecy - her grandfather was a chiropractor in Pennsylvania - and understand the impact of the generational trauma inflicted on her family.

Features

ARABIC TIMES

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2023

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates: Iranian authorities have arrested a popular singer who had criticized the government after he was handed over by police in Turkey, the official IRNA news agency reported Wednesday.

Amirhossein Maghsoudloo, better known as Tataloo, has been critical of Iran's leaders since he had moved to Turkey. It wasn't clear why he was arrested by Turkish police on Monday, but IRNA reported he was facing complaints for allegedly inviting underage people to his home in Istanbul.

IRNA said Turkish police handed over him to Iranian authorities in the northwestern province of West Azerbaijan.

Iran's hard-liners regularly criticize artists and celebrities and authorities have summoned many of them in recent months on various charges, including violations of chastity.

Tataloo has never been allowed to hold a concert in Iran but was a popular underground singer with many young fans. During a 2017 presidential campaign, he met with the current president, Ebrahim Raisi. In 2015, he made a music video on an Iranian navy boat, defending the country's nuclear program. (AP)

NEW YORK: Denny Laine, a British singer, songwriter and guitarist who performed in an early, pop-oriented version of the Moody Blues and was later Paul McCartney's longtime sideman in the ex-Beatle's solo band Wings, has died at age 79.

Laine, inducted five years ago into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as a member of the Moody Blues, died Tuesday in Naples, Florida. The cause was interstitial lung disease, according to an announcement on Laine's Instagram page by his wife, Elizabeth Hines.

His death comes almost exactly 50 years after the release of McCartney's acclaimed "Band On the Run" album, on which Laine played guitar and provided backing vocals. On Tuesday, McCartney posted a tribute to Laine on Instagram, calling him a "great talent with a fine sense of humor." "We had drifted apart but in recent years managed to reestablish our friendship and share memories of our times together," McCartney wrote.

Laine was born Brian Freder-

ick Arthur Hines, and changed his professional name in his early teens, in part in homage to the singer Frankie Laine.

In 1964, around the time he turned 20, he joined Ray Thomas and Mike Pinder in forming the Moody Blues and sang lead on the group's breakthrough hit, "Go Now." But the Moody Blues



Jimin



Maghsoudloo

struggled to match their initial success, and by 1967 Laine had left, replaced by Justin Hayward. The Moody Blues then turned to the ambitious, classically influenced sounds of "Nights in White Satin" and other songs. (AP)

SEOUL, South Korea: Four

more members of the K-pop supergroup BTS are to begin their mandatory South Korean military duties soon, their management agency said.

Big Hit Music said in a statement Tuesday that the enlistments are "upcoming" but didn't disclose the starting dates. South Korean media reported that all four members will

begin their duties next week - RM and V on Dec. 11 and Jimin and Jung Kook, who are scheduled to enlist together, on Dec. 12.

There will be no official events on the day of their entrance to military bases, Big Hit Music said. The agency advised fans to refrain from visiting the sites to prevent any possible crowding-related issues. (AP)

People & Places

Film

'Holdovers' scores 4

Past Lives, A24 lead Spirit Awards noms

LOS ANGELES, Dec 6, (AP): Celine Song's "Past Lives," Todd Haynes' "May December" and Cord Jefferson's "American Fiction" got a leading five nominations, including best feature, from the Film Independent Spirit Awards. Natalie Morales and Joel Kim Booster announced the nominees Tuesday on a YouTube livestream.

Song's quietly romantic film, starring Greta Lee and Teo Yoo as childhood friends who reconnect later in life, earned nominations for her direction, script and for both actors. "May December," about an actress preparing to play a Mary Kay Letourneau-like role got nods for **Natalie Portman**, Charles Melton and screenwriter Sammy Burch. MGM's "American Fiction," featuring Jeffrey Wright as a frustrated novelist, got recognition for Wright, Erika Alexander and Sterling K. Brown. Jefferson was nominated for his script but not for his direction, however.



Portman

It was a good morning for A24. In addition to the nominations for "Past Lives," the indie film company received 11 overall for "All Dirt Roads Taste of Salt," "Earth Mama" and "The Zone of Interest." Kelly Reichardt's "Showing Up" was also named winner of the Robert Altman Award, which is given to one film's director, casting director and ensemble cast. Michelle Williams plays a small-time sculptor in the film, leading an ensemble that includes André Benjamin, Hong Chau, Judd Hirsch and Amanda Plummer.

Alexander Payne's "The Holdovers," about a curmudgeonly teacher played by Paul Giamatti, got four nominations including for cinematography, best screenplay, best supporting performance for Da'Vine Joy Randolph and best breakthrough for newcomer Dominic Sessa. Neither Payne nor Giamatti were nominated.

Directing nominees were: Andrew Haigh ("All of Us Strangers"); Ira Sachs ("Passages"); William Oldroyd ("Eileen"); and Haynes and Song.

"Passages" and "All of Us Strangers," nuanced portraits of gay relationships, were also nominated for best feature, as was "We Grown Now."

The Spirit Awards limit eligibility to productions with budgets of \$30 million or less, meaning films like "Oppenheimer," "Maestro" and "Poor Things" did not qualify for nominations. The organization also switched to gender neutral acting awards in 2022.

Performances

Lead performance nominees include Wright, Lee, Yoo, Portman, Jessica Chastain ("Memory"), Trace Lysette ("Monica"), Judy Reyes ("Birth/Rebirth"), Andrew Scott ("All of Us Strangers"), Franz Rogowski ("Passages") and Teyana Taylor ("A Thousand and One").

Supporting performance nods went to Noah Galvin ("Theater Camp"), Anne Hathaway ("Eileen"), Glenn Howerton ("BlackBerry"), Marin Ireland ("Eileen"), Catalina Saavedra ("Rotting in the Sun") and Ben Whishaw ("Passages"), in addition to the aforementioned Melton, Randolph, Brown and Alexander.

NFL veteran Marshawn Lynch was also nominated for his breakthrough performance in the wild high school comedy "Bottoms."

Films nominated for best international film include both Sandra Hiller films, Justine Triet's "Anatomy of a Fall" and Jonathan Glazer's "The Zone of Interest," from Poland, as well as Denmark/Iceland's "Godland," Nigeria's "Mama Wata" and Mexico's "Tótem."

Last year's big winner was "Everything Everywhere All at Once," which accepted seven awards including best feature, best director and acting prizes for Michelle Yeoh and Ke Huy Quan - categories in which it would go on to win Oscars.

Josh Welsh, the president of Film Independent, said the spirit awards look for films and shows that, "demonstrate the uniqueness of vision, original, provocative subject matter, economy of means and diversity, both on screen and off."

The Spirit Awards also recognize television series. The nominees include "Jury Duty," for best series and best ensemble cast, "Beef" for series, Steven Yeun and Ali Wong, and "The Last of Us" which got acting nods for Bella Ramsey, Murray Bartlett and Nick Offerman. Billie Eilish was also nominated for "Swarm."

Saturday Night Live's Aidy Bryant is hosting the show, which will take place on Feb. 25 in Santa Monica, California. The awards will be streamed live on IMDb and Film Independent's YouTube channels.

Also:

SEATTLE: IMDb unveiled the top stars, movies, and series of 2023. Rather than base its annual rankings on small statistical samplings, reviews from professional critics, or box-office performance, IMDb determines its definitive year-end lists using data from IMDbPro MOVIEmeter and STARmeter rankings, which are based on the actual page views of the more than 250 million monthly visitors to IMDb. To continue helping entertainment fans discover what to watch, IMDb also announced the launch of its new Interests feature. Available to IMDb app users starting today, this experience helps fans explore and find top trending movies and series from the genres they love most.

Oppenheimer tops the list of most popular movies, with The Last of Us as the top series. **Pedro Pascal** is this year's top star, fueled by his performances as Joel Miller in The Last of Us and the titular character in The Mandalorian (the IMDb No. 5 series). Throughout the year, Pascal spent four weeks in the No. 1 spot on the IMDbPro STARmeter chart and an additional nine weeks elsewhere in the top 10. Fans are eager to see him in the upcoming films Gladiator 2 and Drive-Away Dolls. Pascal's co-stars **Bella Ramsey** (No. 5, for her role as Ellie in The Last of Us) and **Katee Sackhoff** (No. 8, for her portrayal of Bo-Katan Kryze in The Mandalorian) are also IMDb Top Stars of 2023, trending consistently within the top 100 names on the IMDb-Pro STARmeter chart for the first time in their careers.

"Our lists of the most popular films, series, and stars reflect a year of truly outstanding stories and performances that delighted IMDb customers worldwide," said **Col Needham**, founder and CEO of IMDb. "From the 'Barbenheimer' phenomenon to 'The Last of Us' and the 'Succession' series finale, fans connected over these unique pop culture moments and once again turned to IMDb to learn more about the extraordinarily talented cast and creators who brought these stories to life."

Top stars list included Pedro Pascal; **Mary Elizabeth Winstead**; **Ana de Armas**; **Jenna Ortega**; **Bella Ramsey**; **Margot Robbie**; **Rebecca Ferguson**; **Katee Sackhoff**; **Carla Gugino** and **Cillian Murphy**.



This image released by A24 shows Greta Lee (left), and Teo Yoo in a scene from 'Past Lives.' (AP)

Stage

Chinese comedians winning fans abroad

Satirists juggle laughter, sensitivity

WASHINGTON, Dec 6, (AP): Comedian Xi Diao says he knows he should avoid talking politics on stage, but sharing a family name with Chinese President Xi Jinping makes it hard to resist.

Even his name is politically sensitive, the Melbourne-based amateur comedian tells audiences, setting up a joke about a group chat on the Chinese messaging service WeChat being shut down as soon as he joined it.

The 33-year-old civil engineer gets nervous laughs whenever he breaks a de facto rule of Chinese comedy: Don't say anything that makes China look bad. To most comedians, that means no jokes about censorship, no mentioning the president's name, and no discussion of China's extraordinarily strict COVID lockdowns or social topics like domestic violence.

"It is a pity, if the environment were open, there would be somebody world-class coming up," Xi said.

Mandarin-language standup comedy is growing, and not just in China. The medium has taken off in the last decade, and China's expatriate population has established clubs in cities like New York, Tokyo and Madrid.

Comedians are known for bristling at limits, but most Mandarin-language comedians, and many fans, say some topics have no place in the comedy club.

In China there are censors who review jokes in advance, and punish performers who cross political red lines. Earlier this year, an entertainment company was fined about \$2 million when star comedian Li Haoshi made a joke that referenced a Chinese military slogan.

Overseas, comedians say they don't fear punishment, but most say political jokes aren't funny, or make people uncomfortable. Many are not very familiar with political humor, after growing up in a country that largely censors it.

"We make what the audience likes," said Guo Jia, a businessman who runs a comedy club in Tokyo. He said discomfort with politics is part of Chinese culture, comparing it to sensitivities about race in the United States.

"There are some areas where people won't go, but it's not typically because of government policies, but more social pressure or culture or religion," said Michel Hockx, a professor of Chinese Literature and director of the Liu

Institute for Asia and Asian Studies in University of Notre Dame.

Comedians do push on social boundaries.

For Lin Dongxiao, a 28-year-old comedian who began performing while living in Toronto, it was a chance to talk in public about a congenital disorder that causes him to limp, and to get crowds laughing with him about how Chinese society treats people with disabilities.

Lin, who performs under the stage name "Guazi," told an audience that women he met online complained that he didn't warn them he had a disability, so he added it to his dating profile.

"You're scrolling... oh gym trainer, nice body; business executive, million-dollar salary; and then...third-class certificate of disability without any allowance." People burst into laughter.

Standup fan Wenlai Cai, a Los Angeles-based software engineer in her early 30s, said that she enjoys hearing jokes about LGBTQ life and race relations, topics that are strictly off limits in the mainland.

Meaningful

But "there should be limits on (jokes about) high level politics," Cai said. "That is, political leaders, partisanship... I don't think it's meaningful to talk about."

There are also a few venues that defy Beijing's sensibilities. Women's Idea, a feminist group in New York City, hosts uncensored comedy shows that often hit on politics, encouraging women to express themselves on social and political issues.

But even roundabout references to politics make most Chinese-language audiences uncomfortable, Xi said. After he performed at a Chinese restaurant in Australia, the owner asked him to be careful; at a standup competition, he got zero audience votes. He wound up performing almost exclusively at English-language venues.

Zhu Jiesheng, who runs a standup comedy club in Madrid, reviews other performers' jokes before they go on stage, asking them to strike jokes that could cross political lines.

But when a comedian insisted on telling jokes about the Shanghai lockdown, Zhu didn't stop him. The audience didn't get the jokes, Zhu said, and it started arguments backstage, leaving

him more convinced that politics and comedy don't mix.

Comedians are very aware that people can get into trouble for what they say. Asked about Li Haoshi, comedians said he should have known better.

"Even if you do not make mistakes but someone else does, it affects the whole industry," said Zhong Di, a 30-year-old student in Milan who also performs standup.

Lin, who recently moved back to China to pursue a career in standup, said the industry is still recovering from the crackdown set off by his joke.

The Associated Press couldn't reach Li for comment, and the company that manages him didn't respond to an interview request.

China has a record of harassing its nationals abroad for activism. It has also threatened international stars from abroad with boycotts or bans on performing in China. Nigel Ng, a Malaysian comedian based in the UK who created the popular character "Uncle Roger," lost his Chinese social media accounts after a clip from a live show went viral in which he joked about China listening in through cell phones.

Vicky Xu, a Chinese-born journalist in Australia who also performs standup in English, said that Chinese people have a long history of cracking jokes about sensitive topics.

"If you look back at a lot of the movies or TV shows made in China like 20, 30 years ago, there are more political jokes than today. So how do you explain that?" she said.

Xu, whose work is critical of the Chinese government and who has received blistering blowback from China's official media and nationalist trolls, said that politics affects people's lives in China so much that not talking about it is "ignoring the elephant in the room."

When comedians go back to China, they face restrictions beyond what they impose on themselves overseas.

Lin said censorship is important to prevent "chaos," but submitting his material to censors weeks before performances is still a challenge.

"No one told me what I could say or not," said Lin, "which is pretty hard. I just hand in whatever I have, and change it if it doesn't get approved."

In Australia, Xi doesn't plan to stop kidding about his famous namesake.



In this photo provided by comedian Lin Dongxiao, who uses the stage name Guazi, Lin performs standup in Toronto, Saturday, June 10, 2023. Lin moved back to China to pursue a career in standup comedy. (AP)



Sunak



Majors

Variety

NEW YORK: Jonathan Majors' former girlfriend testified Tuesday that the actor was prone to fits of explosive rage, an escalating pattern that she said ultimately led to her assault in the backseat of a car and his career-halting arrest this past spring.

During hours of tearful testimony, **Grace Jabbari** traced the downfall of her relationship with Majors, who she described as a "kind and loving" partner increasingly unable to control his "violent temper." She said he hurled household objects at walls and often threatened to take his own life, at times referring to himself as a "monster."

"It felt like I was walking around on eggshells," said Jabbari, a 30-year-old professional dancer from the **United Kingdom**. "I had to be perfect."

The troubled romance came to a head on the evening of March 25th, as the couple were riding back to Manhattan from a dinner already marred by a heated argument over Majors' recent outbursts, she told the jury. During the drive, Jabbari was leaning on his shoulder when he received a "romantic" text message sent by a woman named **Cleopatra**.

After she snatched the phone out of his hands, she said Majors twisted her arm behind her back in a position that left her in "excruciating" pain. "Next I felt a really hard blow across my head," she said, pantomiming the motion of an open hand making contact with the back of her skull.

"He's very strong. I couldn't move," Jabbari continued. "It feels very loud when you're hit in the head and just shocking." Majors eventually pried the phone from her hands and took off through the streets of Lower Manhattan as Jabbari chased him, according to a video compilation taken from various surveillance cameras that was shown to jurors. (AP)

ATHENS, Greece: Greece's Acropolis Museum launched an exhibition Tuesday that includes a renowned ancient Greek water jug from 420 B.C. on loan from the British Museum.

The exhibit comes during a dispute between the countries over Greek demands for the return of sculptures from the Parthenon temple on the Acropolis that are housed in the British Museum.

UK Prime Minister **Rishi Sunak** canceled a planned meeting with Greek Prime Minister **Kyriakos Mitsotakis** in London a week ago, accusing him of seeking to "grandstand" by publicly campaigning for the return of the Parthenon Marbles while visiting **Britain**.

Sunak said his government had no intention of re-opening the issue or amending legislation that would block the artifacts' return.

Mitsotakis described the incident as "an unfortunate moment" but added that the campaign for their return had received a boost after Sunak's cancellation drew

international attention.

The British Museum said it was continuing talks with Greek authorities and the Acropolis Museum, raising hopes in Athens that an arrangement could be reached to display the sculptures in Greece. On Tuesday, Acropolis Museum director **Nikolaos Stampolidis** said his museum maintained "excellent relations" with the British Museum and expressed confidence that the Parthenon Marbles would eventually be returned. (AP)



Adam Brody, a cast member in 'American Fiction,' poses with his wife, actor Leighton Meester, at a screening of the film, Tuesday, Dec. 5, at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Beverly Hills, Calif. (AP)

LAS VEGAS: **Miranda Lambert** has announced the final dates for her critically acclaimed "Miranda Lambert: Velvet Rodeo The Las Vegas Residency" at Bakkt Theater at Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino. The final nine shows will take place in March and April of 2024.

Designed exclusively for Bakkt Theater and promoted by Live Nation and Caesars Entertainment, "Miranda Lambert: Velvet Rodeo The Las Vegas Residency" gives fans an up close and personal opportunity to experience live performances of Lambert's numerous chart-topping songs and beloved album cuts.

"As someone who's lived on a bus and toured from city-to-city for more than half my life, having a Vegas residency has been such a fun change of pace creatively," shares Lambert. "The band and I are excited to keep this party going!" (AP)

The Conversation

Reminiscence therapy improves connection with elderly loved ones

Talking about past holidays aids those with memory loss

By Michael R. Nadorff and Mary E. Dozier
Mississippi State University

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

Many people love the holidays because they are a time to make happy memories with loved ones. But what if you could do something that would help restore memories in some of the people you love?

Using a process called reminiscence therapy, that may be possible. In reminiscence therapy, elders are encouraged to discuss memories across their lifespan, particularly memories of positive experiences.

As researchers who specialize in geropsychology, and in preparation for the holidays, we wanted to explain this technique and encourage readers to use this evidence-based approach to connect with loved ones with impaired memory and dementia.

Nearly 9% of American adults aged 65 and older meet criteria for dementia. Family members often function as formal and informal caregivers for loved ones who develop dementia, and these caregivers can experience a range of physical and psychological outcomes.

It typically involves asking the person about different events from particular times in the person's life. Around the holidays, older adults may already be primed to discuss holiday-themed memories due to the influx of sensory cues, including the twinkling of holiday decorations, the smell of holiday cookies, and of course, seasonal music.

Dementia

An analysis of several studies on research on reminiscence therapy for dementia suggests that it can improve quality of life, communication and mood. Individuals who engage in reminiscence therapy with their loved ones report that the experience is generally positive for them, too, and can be an effective coping strategy when other communication becomes difficult.

Another study found that caregivers reported feeling more emotionally close with their loved ones with dementia when practicing reminiscence therapy. Also, they reported lower informal care costs than caregivers who felt more distant from their loved ones.

Here are some tips to implement reminiscence therapy. Most center on asking questions that may help prompt older adults to reminisce about holiday-themed memories. For example:

■ What were your family traditions around the holidays when you were growing up?

■ Did you have a Christmas tree? When and who would decorate it?

■ Were there particular foods you would make and eat around the holidays?

■ Did you ever travel for the holidays?

■ What was your first holiday season with your spouse like?

■ What were your holiday traditions when you were a parent?

■ What is your favorite New Year's Eve memory?

Be an attentive listener. Make eye contact with your loved one, and angle your body toward theirs so that they know they have your undivided attention. Ask follow-up questions when appropriate. This indicates to your loved one that you heard what they said and are interested to know more.

Engage your loved one in low-impact activities that engage multiple senses. For example, baking holiday-themed cookies can elicit memories through touch (rolling out dough, decorating), smell (of ingredients, while baking), and taste (of the finished product).

Encourage your loved ones to be mindful of their sensory experience at each stage of the activity and ask them about any memories that the sensation might bring to mind. Use visual aids to help with prompting retrieval of memories, such as pictures of past holiday events. Pictures can prompt older adults of specific past events.

Listening to holiday-themed music while baking will also engage the auditory part of the brain. A 2013 study of research on music therapy for dementia concluded that music therapy can be a useful intervention in its own right.

We hope you give reminiscence therapy a try this holiday season. It may just be the start of a new family tradition. (AP)

Study finds sex differences in immune response

Why women face higher Alzheimer's risk

CLEVELAND, Dec 6: Researchers from global health system Cleveland Clinic analyzed genes and brain tissue of patients with Alzheimer's and found that differences in brain immunometabolism – the interactions between the immune system and the ways cells create energy – may contribute to women's increased risk for the disease and its severity.

The findings, published in the journal *Alzheimer's and Dementia*, offer important insight into developing sex-specific treatment and prevention options for Alzheimer's disease. According to Alzheimer's Disease International, there were over 55 million people worldwide living with dementia in 2020, with the number expected to almost double every 20 years.

"Our immune systems depend on communication between different cell types in our bodies, which are fueled by energy created from unique metabolic processes," said Justin Lathia, Ph.D., vice chair of the Department of Cardiovascular and Metabolic Sciences and co-author on the paper. "As sex influences both the immune system and metabolic process, our study aimed to identify how all of

these individual factors influence one another to contribute to Alzheimer's disease."

A collaboration between researchers in the Lerner Research Institute and physicians at the Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health in Ohio and Nevada, the team analyzed brain samples and publicly available sequencing data obtained from 469 Alzheimer's patients. They looked for changes in gene expression between males and females in immune function, cellular metabolism and communication between brain cells.

Cognitive

They found sex-specific differences in all three areas with the notable difference in microglia – immune cells in the brain. Changes in microglia were greater in brains of female patients compared to males.

"Women are more likely to develop Alzheimer's dis-

ease, and experience faster cognitive decline compared to their male counterparts. These differences between the sexes should be accounted for when designing medications and conducting clinical trials," said Feixiong Cheng, Ph.D., Associate Staff, Genomic Medicine Institute and lead author of the paper. "These findings build on our knowledge of each part of the systems that play into Alzheimer's and are critical to determining appropriate treatments."

This study is part of an ongoing effort between Cleveland Clinic and the Women's Alzheimer's Movement (WAM) to further understand the link between sex and all neurodegenerative conditions.

"At its core, Alzheimer's disease is a woman's health issue. To address it, we must understand how biological sex contributes to the underpinnings of this disease," said Jessica Caldwell, Ph.D., director of the WAM Prevention Center at Cleveland Clinic and another co-author on the paper. "These findings confirm that we need to look at sex differences in the way the body and brain systems communicate to be able to truly offer women personalized care and we look forward to continuing this research."



Justin Lathia

Move aims to protect youth drawn to e-cigs flavors

France backs bill to ban disposable vapes

Concerns raised

Globally students suffered learning setbacks during pandemic – study

PARIS, Dec 6, (AP) — France's National Assembly unanimously approved a bill to ban single-use, disposable electronic cigarettes, in an attempt to protect young people drawn to their flavors and mitigate the environmental impacts of the disposable products known as "puffs."

Lawmakers adopted the bill in a late-night vote on Monday by 104 in favor, zero against.

The bill, supported by the government, will then move to the Senate where it is expected to be adopted as well. It could go into effect by September 2024.

Disposable e-cigarettes are small, battery-powered devices that are especially popular among teenagers for their sweet flavors. While they do not contain tobacco, many include nicotine, a dangerous chemical known for its addictive properties.

They differ from reusable vaping devices in that they are not designed to be refilled or recharged. Their small, non-rechargeable lithium batteries often end up in landfills.

This bill is part of a broader trend. The UK, Ireland, and Germany are considering similar measures. New Zealand and Australia have already implemented restrictions, with the former mandating lower nicotine levels and restrictions on vape shop locations near schools.

Three years ago, the US Food and Drug Administration cracked down on kid-friendly flavored reusable e-cigarettes like Juul. However, the ban - which didn't apply to single-use products - was unable to stop a surge in unauthorized disposable e-cigarettes, primarily from China, from flooding the market.

Impacts

The ban, supported Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne and Health Minister Aurelien Rousseau, aims to protect the health of youths and mitigate the environmental impacts of the increasingly popular disposable products known as "puffs."

The National Assembly was expected to vote on the measure Monday night. If passed, it would then move to the Senate and could go into effect by September 2024.

Disposable e-cigarettes are small, battery-powered devices that deliver vaporized nicotine with various flavorings. While they do not contain tobacco, many include nicotine, a dangerous chemical known for its addictive properties.

Marion Catellin, president of the Alliance Against Tobacco, told The Associated Press that "single-use e-cigarettes are made of plastic. They contain a lithium battery and other heavy metals including cobalt and bromine. And these pods contain nicotine which is a highly toxic product... On the basis of its environmental impact alone, these single-use e-cigarettes puffs warrant a ban."

Disposable e-cigarettes differ from reusable vaping devices in that they are not designed to be refilled or recharged. Their small, non-rechargeable lithium batteries often end up in landfills.

WASHINGTON, Dec 6, (AP) — Students around the world suffered historic setbacks in reading and math during the COVID-19 pandemic, with declines in test scores so widespread that the United States climbed in global rankings simply by falling behind less sharply, a new study finds.

The state of global education was given a bleak appraisal in the Program for International Student Assessment, the first study to examine the academic progress of students in dozens of countries during the pandemic. Released Tuesday, it finds the average international math score fell by the equivalent of three-quarters of a year of learning. Reading scores fell by the equivalent of half a year.

The setbacks spanned nations rich and poor, big and small, with few making progress. In the countries where students were tested, a quarter are now considered low performers in math, reading and science, meaning they struggle to perform basic math problems or interpret simple texts.

Performance

Usually given every three years, the latest test was delayed a year because of the pandemic. It was administered in 2022 to a sample of 15-year-olds in 37 countries that are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, plus 44 other partner countries. The OECD has been conducting the test since 2000.

The new results point to an "unprecedented drop in performance," the report says. It raises concerns about countries including Germany, Iceland and the Netherlands, which saw drops of 25 points or more in math scores. Twenty points is seen as equivalent to a year of learning.

Across all participating countries, the average math score fell by about 15 points since the 2018 tests. Reading scores fell by 10 points. Neither subject had seen a change of more than five points previously. The bright light was in science, where scores changed little since 2018.

In the U.S., which historically has lagged in math, the average math score fell by 13 points. Reading and science stayed mostly even. Overall, the country improved to No. 26 in math, up three spots from 2018. It ranked No. 6 in reading and 10th in science, up two and one spots, respectively.

America's math score was about even with the international average. Science and reading were slightly higher.

"The whole world is struggling with math, and we are not immune from that," said Peggy Carr, head of the National Center for Education Statistics, an office of the U.S. Education Department. "Everyone had struggles during the pandemic. What we're seeing here is we had less."

The new results line up with findings from individual countries reporting deep and persistent academic setbacks, especially in math. A national study in the U.S. last year found math scores fell by more than ever, with reading scores dropping to 1992 levels.

Disruption

There's no doubt the disruption of the pandemic was a major factor in the global setbacks. But the OECD cautions against blaming it all on COVID-19. Science and reading scores were falling before the pandemic, it says, and some countries were already trending downward in math, including Belgium, Finland, Canada and France.

It also finds the link between school closures and academic setbacks was "not so direct."

A survey of students found about half faced closures of more than three months, but it didn't always lead to lower scores. There was "no clear difference" in performance trends between countries that had limited closures, including Iceland and Sweden, and those with longer closures, including Brazil and Ireland, according to the report.

"Many other factors impacted learning during this period, such as the quality of remote teaching and levels of support granted to struggling students," it said.

Scores (cross head)
Singapore, long seen as an education powerhouse, had the highest scores by far in every subject. It was joined in the upper echelons by other East Asian countries including Japan and China. Also among the higher performers were Estonia, Canada and Ireland.

Albania saw the biggest decrease in math scores, with a staggering 69-point decrease, followed by Jordan, with 39 points, and Iceland, with 36. Iceland's drop knocked it below the U.S. and the OECD average. Norway fell 33 points, dropping to the global average.

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Lakers secure tourney semis spot with a win over Phoenix

Bucks breeze past Knicks 146-122

LOS ANGELES, Dec 6, (AP): LeBron James scored 15 of his 31 points in the fourth quarter, and the Los Angeles Lakers secured the last semifinal spot in the inaugural NBA In-Season Tournament with a 106-103 victory over the Phoenix Suns on Tuesday night.

Anthony Davis had 27 points and 15 rebounds and Austin Reaves scored 20 points for the top-seeded Lakers, who will face New Orleans on Thursday in Las Vegas.

James put on a masterful shooting performance down the stretch while also racking up 11 assists, eight rebounds and five steals. The 21-year veteran scored 15 of the Lakers' first 19 points in the final period and got the assists on his teammates' other two baskets while Los Angeles pulled ahead.

Kevin Durant scored 31 points, but he badly missed a 3-point attempt at the buzzer for the Suns. Phoenix had won eight of 10 before losing to Los Angeles for the third time already this season.

Devin Booker cut the Lakers' lead to 102-101 on a layup with 29 seconds to play, but Reaves drilled his third 3-pointer with 15 seconds left.

Bucks 146, Knicks 122

In Milwaukee, Giannis Antetokounmpo had 35 points and 10 assists, Damian Lillard added 28 points, and the Milwaukee Bucks beat the New York Knicks 146-122 to reach the semifinals of the NBA's inaugural In-Season Tournament.

BASKETBALL

The Bucks posted a season high in scoring, shooting 60.5% (23 of 38) from 3-point range and 60.4% overall to set up a matchup with Indiana in Las Vegas on Thursday.

Milwaukee is 5-0 in tournament play and extended its home winning streak to nine games. The Bucks (15-6) have won 10 of 12 overall.

Julius Randle scored a season-high 41 points for the Knicks, whose three-game winning streak was snapped. Jalen Brunson added 24 points and R.J. Barrett scored 23 for New York, which earned a wildcard berth in the knockout round through a point-differential tiebreaker.

After a tightly contested first half, the Bucks pulled ahead by as many as 18 points in the third quarter. Milwaukee led by as many as 27 in the fourth and coach Adrian Griffin emptied his bench, giving rare playing time to Antetokounmpo's brother, Thanasis, and Robin Lopez, the twin brother of starting center Brook Lopez.



New York Knicks' Julius Randle is fouled by Milwaukee Bucks' Giannis Antetokounmpo during the first half of an NBA basketball game Tuesday, Dec. 5, 2023, in Milwaukee. (AP)

Ohio State women extend run

Formann ties school record as Colorado topples UT Arlington

BOULDER, Colorado, Dec 6, (AP): Frida Formann scored 23 points, matching a school record for 3-pointers in a game with seven, and No. 8 Colorado never trailed in beating UT Arlington 95-74 on Tuesday.

Quay Miller had 21 points and 11 rebounds, and Aaronette Vonleh added 14 points for Colorado (9-1), which has won three in a row. Jaylyn Sherrod scored 11 points to go with a career-high 13 assists that fueled the inside scoring of Miller and Vonleh. Formann also had seven 3-pointers in a game earlier this season in Colorado's victory over then-No. 1 LSU on Nov. 6.

Keiori Lee had 18 points to lead UT Arlington, which lost its third straight since its lone win of the season.

The Buffaloes did have a down note, losing guard Tameiya Sadler to lower right leg injury with 3:11 remaining in the third quarter. She and a teammate were both scrambling for a rebound when they became entangled and Sadler fell to the floor, losing one of her shoes in the process. She was tended to by team trainers and assisted off the court.

BASKETBALL

Texas Arlington lost forward Jamaya Perry in the first half to a leg injury after she made a diving attempt underneath the basket to stop a loose ball from rolling out of bounds.

The Buffaloes outscored the Mavericks 22-13 in the second quarter to take a 51-36 lead at halftime. Formann punctuated the quarter by hitting her sixth 3-pointer with 11 seconds remaining in the period, celebrating the shot by dropping her hands and stretching out three fingers on each side.

Colorado seized control with a 10-0 third-quarter run that put the Buffaloes up 72-41 late in the period. Sara Rose-Smith capped the flurry with a fastbreak layup and Maddie Nolan hit successive 3-pointers in the run.

Ohio State 85, Ohio 45

In Columbus, Ohio, Emma Shumate hit six 3-pointers and scored 22 points, both career highs, and No. 12 Ohio State coasted to an 85-45 win over Ohio, the Buckeye's



Colorado guard Frida Formann (3) celebrates after sinking a 3-point shot against LSU during the second half of an NCAA college basketball game Monday, Nov. 6, 2023, in Las Vegas. (AP)

seventh-straight victory.

Taylor Thierry added 15 points, Cotie McMahon added 14 and Rebeka Mikulasikova 13 for Ohio State (7-1).

Thierry and Celeste Taylor had five steals each and Taylor also had seven assists. Three players had seven rebounds.

Jaya McClure led Ohio (2-4) with nine points.

The Buckeyes had no letdown, coming off their first win over a ranked team. They posted an impressive 78-58 win at Tennessee on Sunday, making them just the third nonconference opponent in 50 years to beat the Lady Vols by 20 or more in Knoxville.

Washington St 69, S.D. State 64

In Brookings, S.D., Astera Tuhi-na scored 18 points, Bella Murekatete added 15 and Washington State ended South Dakota State's home winning streak at 16 games.

Eleonora Villa finished with 13 points for Washington State (10-1), which is off to its best start since the 1978-79 season.

Paige Meyer scored 12 of her 23 points in the fourth quarter for South Dakota State (4-3), which entered with the seventh-longest active home winning streak in the nation. Brooklyn Meyer added 16 points and Madison Mathiowetz had 12.

Kansas slogs way to victory over Kansas City

UConn takes down North Carolina

NEW YORK, Dec 6, (AP): Cam Spencer had 23 points, seven rebounds and six assists as fifth-ranked UConn pulled away down the stretch for an 87-76 victory over No. 9 North Carolina in the Jimmy V Classic on Tuesday night.

Playing their third game at Madison Square Garden this season, the Huskies (8-1) rebounded from a four-point loss at then-No. 5 Kansas last Friday. The defending NCAA champions won a game in this event for the first time in five tries.

Spencer shot 8 of 14 overall and scored 16 points in the first half, when the Huskies took the lead for good. Alex Karaban added 14 of his 18 points in the second period and finished with nine rebounds and five assists.

BASKETBALL

RJ Davis led the Tar Heels (7-2) with 26 points and Harrison Ingram added 20. Armando Bacot finished with 13 points and 13 rebounds but North Carolina couldn't keep pace with the Huskies, shooting 39% in the final 20 minutes and 44% overall.

Illinois 98, Florida Atlantic 89
In New York, Marcus Domask and Terrence Shannon Jr. each scored 33 points, a career high for both, as Illinois shot 63% and surged ahead in the second half to beat Florida Atlantic in the Jimmy V Classic.

Playing in this event for the second consecutive year, the Fighting Illini (7-1) won their fifth straight game thanks



Kansas guard Elmarko Jackson comes up with control of the ball below Kansas City guard Cameron Faas (30) during the first half of an NCAA college basketball game in Lawrence, Kan., Tuesday, Dec. 5, 2023. (AP)

to Domask and Shannon, who combined for 49 points after halftime and were a combined 25 of 35 from the field.

Domask shot 15 of 21 and surpassed his previous career high of 32 points set last season when he played for Southern Illinois. Shannon went 10 for 14 and hit 11 of 13 free throws.

Vladislav Goldin scored a career-best 23 points before fouling out in the final minute for Florida Atlantic (7-2), which made its first appearance at Madison Square Garden since beating Tennessee and Kansas State in the

East Regional of the NCAA Tournament in March to reach its first Final Four.

Grand Canyon 79, SDSU 73

In Phoenix, Ray Harrison scored 23 points, Gabe McGlothlin had 15 points and 13 rebounds, and Grand Canyon beat San Diego State for its first win over a ranked opponent.

The Antelopes (7-1) got hot and didn't stop until late, using a 17-4 run to take a 13-point lead with 4 1/2 minutes left. Grand Canyon kept the Aztecs at bay from there despite not hitting a field goal over the final 4:27 to win its first game in 10 tries against ranked opponents.

Tyon Grant-Foster added 18 points for the Antelopes, off to their best start since joining Division I in 2013-14.

Kansas 88, Kansas City 69

In Lawrence, Kansas, Kevin McCullar Jr. had a career-high 25 points, KJ Adams scored 16 of his 18 points in the second half. Kansas struggled to hold off scrappy Kansas City.

Hunter Dickinson added 14 and 11 rebounds for the Jayhawks (8-1), who appeared to be caught looking ahead - or behind - in between their win over No. 5 UConn last week and their game against rival Missouri on Saturday.

Baylor 78, Seton Hall 60

In Waco, Texas, RayJ Dennis had 17 points and seven assists, true freshman Ja'Kobe Walter made four 3-pointers and scored 15 points, and Baylor beat Seton Hall in the Big East-Big 12 Battle.

Dennis and Walter hit consecutive 3s for the Bears (9-0) after Seton Hall got within three points after halftime.

FIA opens conflict investigation into Mercedes head Toto Wolff and wife

PARIS, Dec 6, (AP): The governing body of Formula One racing is investigating Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff and his wife Susie, who heads the F1 Academy, following allegations of a conflict of interest and whether they have shared confidential information with the commercial rights arm of the global series.

In a short statement issued Tuesday, the FIA said it is

"aware of media speculation" whether confidential information was exchanged, and that its compliance department is "looking into the matter."

The probe comes after a report in BusinessF1 maga-

zine that rival team executives raised concerns about whether Toto and Susie Wolff passed on information discussed in private meetings.

Susie Wolff is managing director of the all-female series F1 Academy, and reports to F1 chief executive Stefano Domenicali.

The BusinessF1 report said team officials were alarmed when Toto Wolff made comments in a recent meeting that included details they felt could only have come from F1. The report did not detail what was discussed.

The Mercedes team and Formula One Management, which runs the commercial side of F1, denied any allegations of improper sharing of information or conflict of interest.

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Bhavans walk away with championship trophy



Participants of the IBAK Inter-school Badminton Tournament display their certificates and trophies at the end of the closing ceremony.



Top and above: excelled players congratulated by an official.

IBAK holds 10th inter-school tourney

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: In line with its vision to promote and develop badminton in Kuwait, The Indian Badminton Association – Kuwait; IBAK conducted its 10th Inter-school Badminton Tournament recently which attracted over 260 badminton players from 32 prime schools of Kuwait, participated in the tourney with great enthusiasm and spirit.

Many children were allowed to participate as "OPEN" category participants since there was no official representation from their respective schools.

Bhavans proved their supremacy with deft touches and powerful smashes across the court much to the surprise of their opponents. They grabbed U-17 girls' singles, U-13 boys' singles, U-11 girls' singles & U17 boys' doubles, FAIPS DPS-A clinched the U-17 girls' doubles, U-17 boys' singles, U-15 girls' singles & doubles, U-15 boys' singles titles.

The overall championship rolling trophy was presented to the proud Bhavans boys and girls in the presence of ardent followers of badminton in Kuwait. The runner up was FAIPS DPS-A and second runners up were ILOA.

The students showed their real talents and skills in singles & doubles of different age groups.

BADMINTON

IBAK thanked its untiring committee members who worked hard to mark the completion of yet another successful tournament - as it has become the habit in recent times. The efforts were much appreciated by the crowd, players and school management.

The chief guest of the day was the Proprietor of Oriental Restaurant group, Sathish Chandra Shetty who gave away the trophies and medals to all the winners.

IBAK chairman Dr Manimara Chozhan congratulated all the participants of the Inter school tournament. IBAK has concluded yet another calendar year 2023 by conducting various tournaments. Dr. Chozhan conveyed his seasonal greetings and New Year Wishes to all badminton enthusiasts.

Under 17 Girls Doubles — Winner: Avanika Vishwajeet Dubal/ Faith Ida Dolton

Runner-up: Asma Fahim/Han-shika Sam

Under 17 Boys Doubles — Winner: Edwin Bobby Varghese+ Avaneeshwar Veeraprabhan

Runner-up: Addison Sumesh/ Varun Siva Sajith

Under 17 Girls Singles — Winner: Neha Susan Biju, Runner-up: Faith Ida Dolton

Under 17 Boys Singles — Winner: Varun Siva Sajith, Runner-up: Edwin Bobby Varghese

Under 15 Girls Doubles — Winner: Avanika Vishwajeet Dubal/ Sanjana Ramalingam

Runner-up: Aamina Qiyas Palekar/Nivedita Vinod Sharma

Under 15 Boys Doubles — Winner: Aadiya Kuttymalayil/Alan Shawn; Runner-up: Abijith P Sajeev/Abinav P Sajeev

Under 15 Girls Singles Winner: Arudhati Nityanand, Runner-up:



Left to right: Outstanding players receive their awards.

Nivedita Vinod Sharma

Under 15 Boys Singles — Winner: Addison Sumesh, Runner-up: Harsh Sujit Wankhade

Under 13 Girls Doubles — Winner: Angela Tony/Avneet Kaur; Runner-up: Angel Subin Varghese/Catherine Vinoy Mathew

Under 13 Boys Doubles — Winner: Hariharan Jayaraj/Sanjeev Muniyasamy; Runner-up: Liyan Fen Titto/Sujith Murugaiyan

Under 13 Girls Singles — Winner: Avneet Kaur, Runner-up: Angela Tony

Under 13 Boys Singles — Winner: Liyan Fen Titto, Runner-up: Sanjeev Muniyasamy

Under 11 Girls Doubles — Winner: Christy Maria Anil/Gianna Kunnel Jose; Runner-up: Kaavya Rahul Zade/Olivia James

Under 11 Boys Doubles — Winner: Arel Varghese/Ranston Antony Lobo, Runner-up: Dhyaan Visakh Nair/Vivaan Sachin Kangralkar

Under 11 Girls Singles — Winner: Olivia James, Runner-up: Gianna Kunnel Jose

Under 11 Boys Singles — Winner: Ranston Antony Lobo, Runner-up: Chris Vinoy Mathew

IBAK can be reached on www.ibakwt.org or ibakcommittee@gmail.com



Top and above some of the winners celebrate.



Players display their trophies.



Officials receive a trophy on behalf of winning school.

Al-Nasr aim for a third consecutive victory

Title race intensifies as Al-Kuwait, Al-Arabi battle for Zain Premier League supremacy

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: Today marks the conclusion of the ninth round of the Zain Premier League with two exciting matches. The first clash is set between Kuwait Club and Al-Nasr at the Friendship and Peace Stadium at 5:00 pm. Following that, the Thamer Stadium will host the face-off between Al-Arabi and Kazma at 10:08 pm.

Both Kuwait and Al-Arabi enter these encounters with multiple aspirations. The two teams are eager to secure a fresh victory and reclaim the top spot, which Al-Qadisiyah currently holds with 19 points. Al-Qadsia secured this lead after Al-Arayedh's clean 4-point victory over Al-Shabab, creating a two-point gap between them and both Kuwait and Al-Arabi.

Kuwait has faced challenges in recent matches, both domestically and in the AFC Cup, leading to the immediate dismissal of Serbian coach Boris Bunjak after a 3-0 defeat by Al-Arabi in the eighth round. The team will now be led by Tunisian assistant coach Karim Bouzagha until the arrival of Nabil Maaloul. The objective for "Al-Abyad" is to regain the winning momentum and reclaim the top spot from "Yellow," while restoring confidence to players who have experienced recent setbacks.

On the other side, Al-Nasr, led by coach Zaher Al-Adwani, aims for a third consecutive victory after defeating Al-Arabi and Al-Jahra 3-1 and 3-0 in the last two rounds. However, they acknowledge the challenge ahead against a formidable opponent.

SOCCER

In the second encounter, Al-Arabi, under Bosnian coach Darko Nestorovic, seeks to build on the morale boost from their last-round victory over former leaders Kuwait. Despite the absence of key players due to suspension or injury in recent times, Darko effectively utilized his squad in the last round, with the team displaying an impressive performance and returning to the path of victories in the title race.

Conversely, Kazma, with 13 points, faces a period of instability with four victories, three defeats, and one draw. Their performance in the preliminary round of the Crown Prince Cup was less convincing, narrowly defeating Al-Fahaheel 4-3. Today, they aim to achieve multiple goals by halting their Arab competitor and positioning themselves as contenders for the league title.

Al-Shamlan 'eyes' Paris Olympics qualification at Saber Fencing WC

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: Kuwaiti fencing champion Youssef Al-Shamlan is set to compete in the Saber Fencing World Cup, commencing today in the French city of Ourenses and concluding on December 9.

Hamad Al-Awadhi, Secretary of the Kuwaiti Fencing Federation, highlighted the significance of the tournament for Al-Shamlan, currently ranked 29th globally. This competition serves as a crucial opportunity for him to secure qualification for the 2024 Paris Olympics, with Al-Shamlan aiming to accrue valuable points and advance to the final rounds in the event, as recognized by the International Federation of Fencing.

FENCING

Expressing gratitude, Al-Awadhi acknowledged the steadfast support provided by the General Sports Authority, led by Director General Youssef Al-Baidan, Deputy Director-General Faisal Al-Yateem, and Deputy Director-General Bashar Abdullah. This support, he noted, has been instrumental in overcoming challenges and bolstering Kuwait's fencing champions as they represent the nation in international and continental competitions.

Al-Awadhi also announced that the Fencing Federation is actively preparing to host and organize the



A file photo of Youssef Al-Shamlan congratulated by an opponent.

2024 Asian Fencing Championship in June of the coming year, under the auspices of the International Federation of Fencing. The decision to host was made by the General Assembly of the Asian Fencing Federation during its recent meeting in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on October 8. He emphasized the pivotal role played by the General Authority for Sports in elevating athlete performance through hosting significant tournaments and facilitating foreign participations, thereby contributing to the elevation of the Kuwaiti flag and the attainment of desired achievements and results.



Al Arabi and Kuwait players show sportsmanship after Zain Premier League game.

Best of the Rest

Bayern to sign Zaragoza: Bayern Munich is signing Spain winger Bryan Zaragoza from struggling La Liga team Granada, with the deal set to go through in July.

The German champion said Wednesday that the 22-year-old Zaragoza would sign a five-year contract running through to 2029 when he joins Bayern at the end of the season.

No fee was disclosed but German magazine Kicker reported the deal involved an initial fee of 13 million euros (\$14 million) plus possible add-on fees.

Bayern sporting director Christoph Freund praised Zaragoza as an "explosive, very quick and extremely nimble winger" and highlighted his potential to improve and his ability to play on either side of the field. (AP)

Pope set to miss around 4 months: Newcastle goalkeeper Nick Pope will be out for "around four months" after dislocating his left shoulder, manager Eddie Howe said Wednesday, in the latest injury to hit the Premier League team.

It leaves Pope in a race against time to make England's squad for the European Championship, which starts in June. The 31-year-old Pope sustained the injury as he dived to his left in an attempt to save a shot by Manchester United defender Sergio Reguilon that was blocked in front of the Newcastle keeper.

Howe said Pope will require surgery. "The operation hasn't happened yet," Howe said, "but we're thinking roughly around four months so it's a big blow to us but one that we expected after the game. (AP)



Canada's Christine Sinclair (left), gets her head on the ball next to Australia's Clare Hunt during the first half of an international friendly soccer match in Vancouver, British Columbia. Christine Sinclair, the world's top international goal scorer among both women and men, played her final match with the Canadian national team. Sinclair, 40, ended her 23-year national team career with a 1-0 victory against Australia at Vancouver's BC Place - renamed Christine Sinclair Place for the occasion. (AP)

Sports

Latest sports scores at — <http://sports.arabtimesonline.com>

Last-gasp Arsenal maintain EPL lead

Rice scores late winner

LUTON, England, Dec 6, (AP): As soon as the ball hit the back of the net, Arsenal goalkeeper David Raya sprinted the length of the field to celebrate the last-gasp winner with his jubilant teammates.

No player will have been more relieved than Raya to see Declan Rice's glancing header creep into the corner and seal a chaotic 4-3 victory over Luton in the Premier League. The Gunners stayed top of the league.

While Rice is proving value for money after his club-record signing in July, Raya - another off-season recruit - remains an issue for Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta as the team bids to win the league title after last season's near miss.

Arsenal overcame errors from Raya that led to two goals for Luton by netting in the seventh minute of stoppage time through Rice at Kenilworth Road.

"The spirit of the team - how we fought, showed our quality in the right moments and never gave up," Arteta said. "We went for it and got our rewards."

Arteta chose not to talk about the mistakes by Raya, which looked like they'd be costly for Arsenal.

The team was leading 2-1 in the 49th minute when the Spanish goalkeeper was beaten in the air at a corner by Elijah Adebayo, who powered in a header for an equalizer.

Eight minutes later, Raya allowed a shot by Ross Barkley to go under

his body as he dived to his left.

Luton, a promoted team likely to be battling relegation this season, was suddenly 3-2 ahead and Raya didn't know where to look.

Kai Havertz scored an equalizer almost immediately, though, and incessant pressure in the final minutes ended with Martin Odegaard whipping in a cross and Rice rising to flick a header into the bottom corner, sparking wild celebrations in the away end and jeers from Luton fans. The goal came after the six allotted minutes of stoppage time had expired.

Arsenal has won nine points from goals in the last five minutes of games this season, a good sign for a club looking to win the league for

SOCCER

the first time since 2004.

Arteta now has to decide what to do with Raya, who has taken the place of Aaron Ramsdale since arriving from Brentford. He is better with his feet than Ramsdale but has produced errors in other parts of his game, like being caught completely out of position to let in a cross from Mykhailo Mudryk in a match at Chelsea in October.

Gabriel Martinelli and Gabriel Jesus scored first-half goals for Arsenal, either side of Gabriel Osho's equalizer for Luton.

South Korea striker Hwang Heechan extended his career-best scoring streak in the Premier League with the winning goal for Wolverhampton in a 1-0 victory over Burnley.

Hwang moved onto eight goals for the campaign, with only compatriot Son Heung-min (nine), Mohamed Salah (10) and Erling Haaland (14) having scored more. He has as many goals in 15 league games this season as he scored in his first two Premier League campaigns combined.

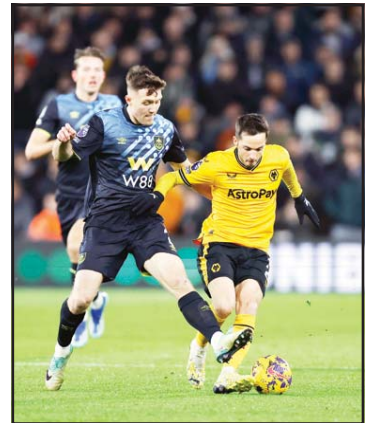
His latest goal was an opportunistic strike in the 42nd minute after Burnley midfielder Sander Berge lost possession with a heavy touch on edge of his own area as the visitors tried to play out from the back. Pablo Sarabia regained the ball, passed inside to Matheus Cunha and the striker teed up Hwang, who slotted a low finish past goalkeeper James Trafford.

Coming off a 5-0 rout of Sheffield United over the weekend, next-to-last Burnley held its own at Molineux to suggest relegation is far from a certainty this season.

Wolves' Daniel Bentley, starting in place of the injured Jose Sa, was the busier of the two goalkeepers and his best saves came back-to-back off Jay Rodriguez then Josh Brownhill when the score was 0-0.



Arteta



Burnley's Dara O'Shea and Wolverhampton Wanderers' Pablo Sarabia battle for the ball on during the English Premier League soccer match between Wolverhampton Wanderers and Burnley at Molineux Stadium, Wolverhampton, England. (AP)

Koné sends Gladbach into quarters

Lazio set up potential Cup match against rivals Roma

ROME, Dec 6, (AP): Matteo Guendouzi's first goal for Lazio helped the capital team to a 1-0 win over Genoa and into the Italian Cup quarterfinals and a potential derby against city rivals Roma.

Guendouzi netted in the fifth minute on Tuesday after Luca Pellegrini won back possession and raced down the left before putting in a low cross for the France midfielder to fire into the far bottom corner.

The 24-year-old Guendouzi joined

SOCCER

Lazio on loan from Marseille at the end of August, on transfer deadline day.

Mateo Retegui came close to leveling for Genoa including with one opportunity that had the Italy forward applauding Lazio defender Mario Gila for his block at point-blank range.

However, Lazio held on for the victory and could next face Roma if Jose Mourinho's team beat Cremonese next month.

Manu Koné headed the winning goal in the 120th minute as Borussia Moenchengladbach won 1-0 against Wolfsburg after extra time

for a place in the German Cup quarterfinals. With a penalty shootout looming, Florian Neuhaus found space out wide to lob a cross over the goalkeeper for French midfielder Koné to head in.

Wolfsburg could have won the game inside 90 minutes but missed a series of late chances. Tiago Tomas put the ball in the net only for it to be called back for offside before Jonas Wind had one shot stopped by goalkeeper Moritz Nicolas' spectacular dive and sent another narrowly wide of the post.

St. Pauli eased to a 4-1 win over Homburg to dispose of the lowest-ranked team still in the competition. Homburg play in the fourth-tier South-West Regional League.

An inspired substitution sent promotion-chasing Fortuna Dueseldorf into the quarterfinals with a 2-1 win over fellow second-tier team Magdeburg. Fortuna coach Daniel Thioune brought forward Jona Niemiec off the bench in the 85th minute with Magdeburg leading 1-0. Niemiec scored in the 87th minute and then again in stoppage time to win the game.

Twice a winners of the German Cup, second-tier Kaiserslautern are back in the quarterfinals for the first time in 10 years after beating Nuremberg 2-0.



Arsenal's Declan Rice celebrates after scoring his side's fourth goal during the English Premier League soccer match between Luton and Arsenal at Kenilworth Road, Luton, England. (AP)

New Zealand reduced to 55-5

Bangladesh take control of second Test

MIRPUR, Bangladesh, Dec 6, (AP): Bangladesh took full control of the final test against New Zealand after 15 wickets fell on an eventful day one Wednesday as the hosts pursue a first ever test series win against the Kiwis.

The home side was all out for 172 but hit back strongly to reduce New Zealand to 55-5 in 12.4 overs before bad light forced stumps.

Both teams' batters struggled on a wicket where most of the balls kept low and the bounce was uneven. The New Zealand bowling attack maintained a tight line and length to create pressure by conceding just eight runs in the first seven overs after Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto opted to bat first.

Left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner (3-31) and offspinner Glenn Phillips (3-

CRICKET

65) shared six wickets to wreak havoc on the Bangladesh batting lineup. Ajaz Patel, another left-arm spinner, claimed 2-54 while skipper Tim Southee took one wicket without conceding a single run in 5.2 overs.

Mushfiqur Rahim made a team-high 35 before becoming the first Bangladeshi batter to be dismissed for handling the ball.

While defending a delivery from fast bowler Kyle Jamieson, the team's most experienced batter used his right hand to push the ball away even though it wasn't close to the off-stump.

After New Zealand appealed for the out, the third umpire checked and then gave him out for obstructing the field.

"It's probably not a great option

Al-Ain, Sepahan secure places in knockout stage

All four Saudi Arabian teams advance in Asian CL



Bangladesh's Mushfiqur Rahim, bats during the first day of the second test cricket match between Bangladesh and New Zealand in Dhaka, Bangladesh. (AP)

(Mushfiqur's dismissal), because he was looking so good," Santner said. "I mean it was handy for us in terms of the time him and Dipu (Shahadat Hossain) applied themselves and that was a very good partnership for them. And I think, going into tomorrow, if we can kind of get even some little partnerships like that, it's going to be a scrap, this whole test match."

Bangladesh's first boundary came in the eighth over when Zakir Hasan drove

Patel through cover for four. The pressure eventually got the better of Zakir (8) when he played a rash shot against Santner and chipped it straight to mid-on.

In the next over, Patel dismissed Mahmudul Hasan (14) after he was beaten by the drift to give a catch at short-leg.

Mominul Haque (5) was the next to go when he was caught behind off Patel's bowling.

DUSHANBE, Tajikistan, Dec 6, (AP): Without Cristiano Ronaldo, Al-Nassr was held to a 1-1 draw at Istiklol of Tajikistan but still topped its group in the Asian Champions League as all four Saudi Arabian teams advanced to the round of 16.

Big-spending Al-Nassr, which has never won the continental competition, had already secured a place in the knockout stage. Ronaldo was rested as coach Luis Castro fielded a starting lineup comprised of domestic players.

Alisher Dzhalilov gave Istiklol the lead in Dushanbe after 32 minutes. Abdulrahman Ghareeb scored after the break to earn the Saudi Arabians a point.

Al-Nassr's Riyadh rival Al-Hilal advanced as one of the 10 group winners - the six teams in second with the most points also progress - after a 2-1 win over Iran's Nasajji Mazandaran. The four-time champions earned 16 points from six games despite the absence of injured star Neymar.

SOCCER

Al-Ittihad was also without striker Karim Benzema and midfielder N'Golo Kante but still finished first in its group, defeating Sepahan of Iran 2-1 in Jeddah.

Newly appointed Al-Ittihad coach Marcelo Gallardo is looking forward to welcoming his stars back to action.

"Kante is a great and influential player but, unfortunately, I have not yet been able to work with him in training and we hope that he will participate in the coming days," the Argentine coach said. "Benzema is also a great and influential player and I hope to have him back as well."

Al-Fahya ensured a perfect four from four for Saudi Arabia, finishing second in its group after defeating Pakhtakor of Uzbekistan 4-1.

Also advancing was Al-Ain of the United Arab Emirates, Nasaf and Navbahor of Uzbekistan as well as Iran's Sepahan.

The tournament is divided into two geographic zones until the final. The eastern zone will complete its group stage next week.