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H.H. SHEIKH MISHAL SWEARS IN AS 17th AMIR OF KUWAIT

'Task is heavy ... oath great'

■ Amir vows to defend liberties ■ Amir sounds battle cry against corruption ■ Amir calls for cooperation

Tribute to Sheikh Nawaf

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 20: The National Assembly held a special session on Wednesday for His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to take the constitutional oath as the 17th ruler of Kuwait in accordance with Article 60 of the Constitution.

Article 60 states: "At a special session of the National Assembly and before taking over his functions the Amir shall take the following Oath: 'I swear by God Almighty to respect the Constitution and the Laws of the State, to defend the people's liberties, their interests and their property, and to safeguard the Nation's independence and the safety of its territories.'

After the swearing in ceremony, HH the Amir delivered a speech; in which he promised to be loyal to his country and its citizens. He stressed the need for the executive and legislative authorities to fully cooperate in serving the best interest of the nation.

HH the Amir asserted: "Today, I have become the head of the State. Through you, I promise to the people of Kuwait that I will be a loyal citizen for this nation and its people. I am keen on working in the interest of the whole nation and strengthening national unity, as well as working towards national development, progress and prosperity. The task is heavy and the oath is great."

HH the Amir affirmed that he remains committed to complying with the Constitution, enforcing the law on everyone and combating corruption, in addition to "fulfilling Gulf and international obligations."

He pointed out that both the executive and legislative authorities are duty bound to serve the nation and its citizens and to refrain from taking any decision deemed harmful to the nation; such as unjust appointments, granting citizenship in a manner that "changes the Kuwaiti identity, amnesty file and its consequences, and the rehabilitation file that proved to be harmful to our nation." He admitted feeling sad due to the "silence of the two authorities over this systematic harm, which legitimized the aforementioned files, such that issues became like a deal on mutual interests and benefits for the two authorities at the expense of the nation." He confirmed that such a situation led to the issuance of a decision to suspend the appointment and transfer of employees in the public sector.

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Journey to prosperity

Kuwait on cusp of 'economic boom'

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 20: The current and former ministers and economists congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on His Highness assuming the reins of government, agreeing that the Kuwaiti economy during his reign will be one of the most important pillars, especially because of His Highness's clear vision and determination to move forward at a rapid pace towards completing development projects and enhancing non-oil revenues, pointing out to his Highness's firm role in fighting corruption, his focus on growth and development, and consolidating Kuwait's position at the Arab, regional and international levels, reports Al-Rai daily.

The Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Muhammad Al-Aiban, said: "We ask God for success for His Highness the Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and for commercial growth and economic prosperity to be the title of his journey in the next stage, as he is the best successor to the best predecessor, and we ask God Almighty to provide him with good health and wellness to carry the trust bestowed upon him." He added, "The Amir has a clear vision and determination to move forward at a rapid pace towards completing development projects with economic returns and a major motivation towards innovation in investment and enhancing non-oil revenues, which was evident through his follow-up of us as ministers to implement the partnerships that were signed with countries sister and friendly countries."

He added: "Also, interest in youth and sports has always been a top priority for His Highness in supporting and encouraging his children and sharing in their achievements, and I am optimistic that this sector and this segment will witness unprecedented support."

For his part, the former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, Muhammad Al-Faris, said: "At the beginning, we extend to His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, may God protect and preserve him, our warmest congratulations coupled with our best wishes, on the occasion of his assuming the reins of government of our nation, as a prince, a leader, and a good person; a successor to the best predecessor."

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Photo by Rezk Tawfik

His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah takes oath as the 17th Amir of Kuwait.

NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent Wednesday a cable of condolences to Chinese President Xi Jinping on ramifications of earthquake that left in its wake many dead, injured and property destroyed.

His Highness the Amir wished the wounded a speedy recovery, and for Chinese officials to contain and overcome this natural disaster. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a congratulatory cable to Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani on occasion of the anniversary of Qatar's founder, Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammad Al-Thani assumption of office.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal commended the notable achievements in Qatar, as well as the sturdy fraternal relations between both nations and affirmed keenness on bolstering and developing cooperation between the two. (KUNA)

Amir accepts gov't resignation, assigns it to act as 'care-taker'



Amiri Diwan photo

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives His Highness the PM who tendered the government's resignation.

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 20, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah accepted Wednesday the resignation of the government and assigned it to act as care-taker.

In an Amiri Order, His Highness the Amir accepted the resignation of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and the Ministers, who would act as care takers and run urgent matters.

Earlier, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace, Wednesday, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah who tendered a letter of government resignation during the meeting.

Congrats pour in

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 20: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Wednesday several cables from top Kuwaiti officials, congratulating him on taking the constitutional oath, becoming the 17th Amir of the State of Kuwait.

In his cable, Speaker of the National Assembly Ahmad Al-Saadoun congratulated His Highness the Amir on taking oath, saying that the parliament and people of Kuwait appreciated the leading role played by His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad in the previous period.

He commended His Highness Sheikh Mishal for his strong support to the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah who on his part fulfilled his duty in serving the Kuwaiti people and protecting the country's interest.

He asserted that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was up to the task of leading the State of Kuwait into a much prosperous and promising future.

Success

In a similar cable addressed to His Highness the Amir, His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah -- Chief of the Kuwait National Guard (KNG) -- congratulated Sheikh Mishal on taking the constitutional oath, expressing support and wishes of success and welfare to His Highness.

Meanwhile, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in his cable, congratulated His Highness the Amir on assuming post, commending His Highness for all the efforts and sacrifices he made to serve Kuwait and its people.

He expressed wishes of welfare and good health to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal, hoping that he would continue to succeed in his position as leader of the country and the Kuwaiti people.

On his part, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, congratulating him on taking oath during the special session of parliament earlier today.

He wished His Highness the Amir all the success in leading the Kuwaiti people and the country into a future prosperity and development.

In his reply cables to the top officials, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah thanked them for their sincere wishes and hopes, affirming that he would continue efforts to better serve Kuwait and meet the expectations of the Kuwaiti people.

Legacy

Parliament Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun said late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah left an immortal legacy and notable imprints in development and political reform, saying His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah will complete process of building the state in accordance with constitutional values.

"The heart grieves and the eyes shed tears, everyone is saddened by the parting of the late Amir, may Allah the Almighty have mercy on him and bless him," Al-Saadoun said in a speech in a special session of the National Assembly.

"The loss is painful, and the sorrow is deep in all hearts, to whom was known as a wise leader and a person who gave without limits," he pointed out.

The late Amir was a guide who was patient with generous pardons, a ruler who believed in the value of tolerance, responding to the needs of people, he mentioned.

The late Amir undertook national duties, leaving an immortal legacy through his well-known words rooted in the conscience, taking the responsibility of work in the areas of development, achievement and political reform, he said.

The people of Kuwait have followed with great pride what His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad has done, in managing the government in all that is in the interest of the country and its people, since the issuance of the Amiri decree on November 15, 2021, he explained.

Al-Saadoun pledges to His Highness the Amir today, with loyalty and sincerity, to be as trustworthy as His Highness the Amir and in cooperating with the executive authority to shape the new era, he indicated.

On behalf of MPs, Al-Saadoun congratulated His Highness the Amir for the leadership of the present and future of Kuwait, he pointed out.

He asked Allah the Almighty to direct His Highness the Amir's steps on the path of goodness and grant him success, he mentioned, to to complete the goals of sustainable development.

First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Wednesday congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on assuming office.

Continued on Page 5

Prayer Timings

Fajr 05:12 Asr 14:35
 Sunrise .. 06:37 Maghrib .. 16:53
 Zohr 11:45 Isha 18:16

Local

Expected weather for the next

24 hours:

By Day: Mild, and clouds will increase gradually with light variable wind to light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speed of 06-26 km/hr.

Weather

By Night: Rather cold to cold and partly cloudy to cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speed of 06-32 km/h with a chance for fog forming over some areas.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	23	15
Kuwait Airport	23	11
Abdaly	24	10
Jahra	23	12
Salmiyah	21	18
Nuwaisib	23	13
Wafra	23	13

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



The Embassy of Kuwait in Cyprus mourn late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad.



Kuwait Embassy in Canada receives mourners of late Amir. KUNA photos

Kuwaiti embassies in Cyprus, Canada mourn late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad

The Embassy of Kuwait in Cyprus issued a statement mourning the great loss of the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and opened a condolences book.

Kuwait's Ambassador to Cyprus Abdullah Al-Kharafi said they have received the President of Cyprus Nikos

Christodoulides where he offered sincere condolences and sentiments on behalf of the government and people of Cyprus. The embassy noted that the embassy received mourners for a three days period.

Canada

The Kuwaiti embassy in Canada held a function

to receive mourners of the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

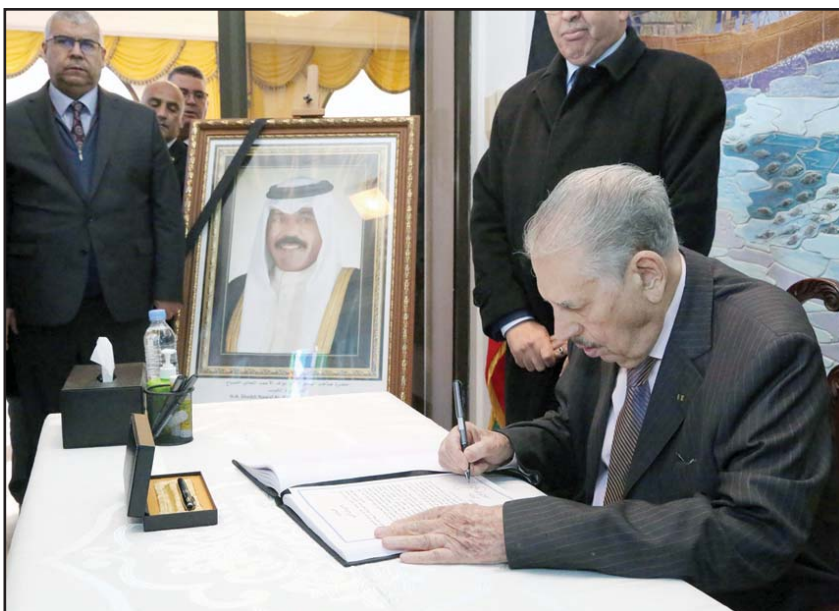
The function hosted by Ambassador Reem Al-Khaled saw many Arab and foreign diplomats as well as high profile individuals who paid a visit and offered their condolences to Kuwait, its government

and people.

In a statement, Ambassador Al-Khaled expressed her deepest sorrows on the passing of the late Amir, after a prosperous and successful career full of achievements and service to the people of Kuwait. (KUNA)

Kuwait Embassy in Washington lowers flag to half-mast ... receives mourners

Kuwait embassies abroad receive mourners



President of the Council of the Nation Salah Goudjil signing the condolence book at the Kuwaiti embassy in Algeria. KUNA photo

WASHINGTON, Dec 20, (KUNA): Flying its flag at half-mast, the Kuwaiti Embassy in Washington organized a three-day reception to receive mourners offering condolences over the passing away of the late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Among the key mourners were the Kuwaiti Ambassador in Washington Sheikh Al-Zain Al-Sabah, Arab and foreign ambassadors and senior US officials, who voiced heartfelt solace and sorrow over the demise of Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Speaking to KUNA, the Kuwaiti ambassador said she offered heartfelt condolences to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the government and people of Kuwait over the late Amir.

Paying tribute to the late Amir, she said his qualities of giving, moderation, balance and tolerance would remain etched in everyone's memories, praying to Almighty Allah to bestow mercy upon his soul and to rest him in the best place of Paradise.

For his part, US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Barbara Leaf, also speaking to KUNA, said he, on his behalf and behalf of the US Department of State, extended condolences to the State of Kuwait over the late Amir.

He added that the US stands side by side with the government and people of Kuwait at this sad moment.

US Special Envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking, after offering condolences at the embassy, told KUNA that he had stayed in Kuwait for a couple of years, when he met with the late Amir on several occasions in the context of strong friendly relations between Kuwait and the US.

Former US Ambassador in Kuwait Edward Ghoneim said it was a very sad moment to hear the news of the death of Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, noting that he had had a strong relationship with the late Amir for long years.

He extended sincere solace and commiserations to the government and people of Kuwait over the passing away of the late Amir.

Heritage

Tunisian Ambassador to the US Hanene Tajouri lamented that the Amir's death was a loss not only to Kuwait but to the entire Arab world as well, noting that his great heritage would be engraved in the memories of generations to come.

The French Embassy's Counselor Dora Cattuti expressed her country's heartfelt condolences to Al-Sabah Family and the people of Kuwait over the passing away of the Amir.

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti Embassy in Brazil, over the last three days, received mourners who had offered heartfelt condolences over the demise of the Amir of Kuwait.

The embassy said in a release that many Brazilian officials, deputies and representatives of foreign diplomatic missions in Brazil as well as civil society organizations signed the embassy's condolence book.

Furthermore, the Brazilian parliament observed a minute of silence as a sign of mourning following the passing away of the late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, Kuwait embassies in Algeria, Italy, Romania, Serbia and Singapore and the consulate in Kurdistan region, north Iraq, continued on Tuesday receiving mourners of the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Soon after the Kuwaiti government announced on Saturday a 40-day mourning for the late Amir, the diplomatic missions abroad opened their condolence books for three days from Sunday, December 17, until Tuesday, December 19.

In Algiers, President of the Council of the Nation Salah Goudjil visited the Kuwait embassy to offer condolences to the ruling family, the government and the people of Kuwait on behalf of President of the Republic Abdelmadjid Tebboune.

Goudjil expressed profound grief for the passing of the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf, saying his passing is "a big loss for Kuwait, and the Arab and Muslim nations."

He recalled the solidarity and patriotic stances of the late Amir towards the fair issues of the Arab and Muslim nations, notably the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people.

In Rome, Ambassador to Italy Nasser Al-Qahtani and the diplomatic staff of the embassy received representatives of the government and civil society, and heads of diplomatic missions based in Italy.

On behalf of the Italian people and government, the head of the Diplomatic Ceremonial of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed sincere condolences, saying that the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf was "an exceptional leader of Kuwait and friend of Italy."

Ambassadors of Oman and Palestine in Rome offered, on behalf of their respective governments, condolences to Kuwait, expressing their best wishes for the new Amir His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In Bucharest, Romanian Foreign Minister Luminita Odobescu offered condolences to Kuwait Ambassador Talal Mansour Al-Hajeri.

On behalf of her government, Odobescu offered a bouquet of bereavement flowers and registered her name in the condolence book of the Embassy.



The Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the United States, Sheikh Al-Zain Al-Sabah receives mourners. KUNA photo

Condolences

Bulgaria

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a cable of condolence from President of Bulgaria Rumen Radev over the demise of late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Amir sent a reply enclosed with the utmost appreciation for the heartfelt sentiments.

Eswatini

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a cable of condolence from the Prime Minister of Eswatini Russell Mmemo Dlamini.

In the cable, Dlamini conveyed the condolences of King of Eswatini Mswati III and Queen Mother of Eswatini, over the demise of late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Amir expressed appreciation for Dlamini for the heartfelt sentiments.

Norway

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Wednesday a message from Harald V, King of Norway, voicing heartfelt condolences over the passing away of Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

King Harald V Wished his highness the Amir and people of Kuwait solace over the demise of Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Amir sent the king message of appreciation for his sincere condolences and sympathies, wishing him good health.

Somalia

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Tuesday a cable from Somalia's President Dr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, voicing heartfelt condolences and sincere solace over the passing away of the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In reply, His Highness the Amir sent to the Somali President a cable of thanks and appreciation for his sincere sentiments of condolences and sympathies, wishing him good health and wellness.

North Korea

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Tuesday a cable of condolences from President of North Korea Kim Jong Un on demise of late Kuwait Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The President expressed his deep sorrow and sincere solace to the Amir and the people of Kuwait.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal sent a cable thanking the Korean President for his sentiments and wishing him good health.

Oman

Omani Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs Dr. Abdullah Al-Saeedi, and Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion Qais Al-Yousef paid tribute to the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, calling him a great leader who devoted his life for his country, people and the Arab and Muslim nations.

The Ministers spoke separately to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) after offering their condolences at the Kuwaiti embassy in Oman on Tuesday.

Minister Al-Saeedi described the late Amir as a wise leader who contributed significantly to betterment of his country, boosting its regional and international status.

As for Minister Al-Yousef, he recalled late Amir's long and inspiring journey and all that he has given to the Arab and Muslim Nations.

The Kuwaiti embassy in Oman had been receiving condolers on the demise of the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah since Sunday.

Netherlands

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a cable of condolence from the King of Netherlands Willem Alexander, expressing his sorrow over the demise of late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In the cable, the King expressed grief on behalf of his nation, extending his sentiments to the Kuwaiti people.

His Highness the Amir sent a reply enclosed with the utmost appreciation for the heartfelt sentiments.

South Africa

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a cable of condolence from the President of South Africa Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, expressing his sorrow over the demise of late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In the cable, the South African President expressed grief on behalf of his government and nation, extending his sentiments to the Kuwaiti government and people.

His Highness the Amir sent a reply enclosed with the utmost appreciation for the heartfelt sentiments.

South Sudan

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Tuesday a cable from President of South Sudan Salva Kiir Mayardit, voicing heartfelt condolences and sincere solace over the passing away of the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In reply, His Highness the Amir sent to the South Sudanese President a cable of thanks and appreciation for his sincere sentiments of condolences and sympathies, wishing him good health and wellness.

European Council

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Tuesday a cable of condolences from President of European Council Charles Michel on demise of late Kuwait Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The European President recalled the long legacy of the late Amir and his significant contributions to bolstering relations with the European Council.

His Highness the Amir sent a cable in response to President Charles' sincere sentiments, commending the continuous efforts aiming to boost cooperation with the European Council as he also wished the President good health.

India

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Tuesday a cable from the President of India Droupadi Murmu, where she expressed heartfelt condolences and sincere solace over the passing away of the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In her cable, she remembered the outstanding contributions of the late Amir to the renaissance and progress of Kuwait in various fields.

In turn, His Highness the Amir sent to the Indian leader a cable of thanks and appreciation for his sincere sentiments of condolences and sympathies, wishing her good health and wellness.



Lebanese Minister of Information Ziad Makary offers his condolences.



Deputy Head of the Higher Islamic Shia Council, Sheikh Ali Al-Khatib. KUNA photos

Top officials offer condolences

Kuwait embassy in Lebanon mourns late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad

BEIRUT, Dec 20, (KUNA): Kuwait's Embassy in Beirut continued on Tuesday receiving Lebanon's top officials offering condolences over the passing of the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

President of the Free Patriotic Movement Gebran Bassil offered condolences and expressed to KUNA his deep sorrow and sincere solace to the Amir and the people of Kuwait, praising Kuwait's continuous support to Lebanon.

In a similar statement to KUNA, Leba-

nese Minister of Information Ziad Makary offered his sincere condolences and praised the deep relation that ties the two countries.

Lebanese Druze religious leader Sheikh Sami Abi Al-Muna, Deputy Head of the Higher Islamic Shia Council, Sheikh Ali Al-Khatib, Lebanese Forces, Battalions, Amal and Future Movements all offered their condolences at Kuwait's Embassy in Beirut.

The Embassy also received diplomats from various embassies and other international top officials.

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

'Legacy of humility: Remembering late Amir's exceptional leadership'

"RARELY does one encounter a ruler renowned for extreme humility and an intimate connection with their people, be they citizens or expatriates, quite like the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad. It is a rarity to find a leader of such stature deeply invested in the well-being of all segments of society, including expatriate workers, with a genuine concern for the intricacies of people's comfort," columnist **Youssef Abdul Karim Al-Zankawi** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"Few Arab leaders have drawn wisdom from the wellsprings of politics as profoundly as the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, who navigated the political landscape with a wisdom that surpassed mere political maneuvering. As the rightful ruler, a son of rulers, he approached his role with a reverent fear of God, endearing himself to the hearts of his people from an early age in the realm of politics.

"His extreme humility and close rapport with citizens and expatriates alike set him apart. His care extended even to expatriate workers, showcasing the ruler's attention to the minutiae of people's comfort. A poignant story shared by Adel Al-Zawawi, Secretary-General of the G80, about the late Amir's last visit underscores his deep concern for workers, staying awake to ensure their well-being, a responsibility ingrained in him by his father, Sheikh Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

"Since 1998, stories have circulated about Sheikh Nawaf's regular visits to the coastal area of Abu Al-Hassaniya for Friday prayers at Haya Al-Ibrahim Mosque, a tranquil retreat away from the city's hustle. Here, he demonstrated a commitment to equality among all citizens and expatriates, a principle instilled during his youth at Ja'afari School.

"Despite the brevity of his rule, marked by calm and stability, Sheikh Nawaf laid the groundwork for future achievements. The strong bond between ruler and ruled made the presence of extensive security unusual, a testament to the ruler's peaceful nature. With the late Amir's passing, all that remains is for him to seek shade beneath an unguarded tree to demonstrate the safety Kuwait enjoys.

"In homage to this great leader, it is apt to say, 'I ruled with justice, and I departed shedding tears'. May God bless the late Amir with His vast mercy, granting him a place in spacious gardens, forgiveness, and satisfaction. May God inspire patience and solace among us. Prayers are lifted for the success of our current Amir and father, His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in leading the country towards prosperity for Kuwait and humanity."



Al-Zankawi

Also:

"After a hiatus lasting fifty-two years, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has activated Article 99 of the UN Charter, granting the highest-ranking UN official the authority to address the UN Security Council. Guterres cited the significant loss of life within a short period and the hostilities leading to urban destruction and severe human suffering from continuous Israeli bombings," columnist **Fakhri Hashem Al-Sayyid Rajab** wrote for **Qabas** daily.

"This message served as a form of diplomatic pressure directed at the entire international community. In response, Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen accused Guterres of posing a threat to world peace and supporting a terrorist organization.

"This verbal response from Israel is the least expected from an occupying state, particularly following General Yago Lev's statement to journalists on a channel loyal to the occupying state.

"The situation indicates a sense of defeat for Israel. Despite ongoing atrocities, the weight of international condemnation is taking a toll on the Zionists. Israel's actions, despite their horror, seem self-destructive, as the military moves lack a clear purpose. Instead of being in a defensive, offensive, or counter-attack situation, the Israeli army engaged in a tank incursion that did not align with street warfare objectives.

"Israel sought a decisive military achievement on the ground to conceal the major losses exposed by the resistance, including 180 vehicles in ten days and significant documented scenes.

"Reports from Yedioth Ahronoth suggest that Israel is concealing five thousand wounded and dozens of dead, indicating a lack of self-confidence and significant qualitative losses. Notably, the capture of the engineering division commander at the opening of a tunnel represents a substantial setback.

"Despite the ongoing confrontation, the resistance maintains combat readiness and missile capabilities, making it challenging for the occupation to reach prisoners.

"Messages from axis countries indicate temporal, field, and operational harmony in the increasing pace of confrontation on the southern front. The enemy's attacks on established rules of engagement and systematic targeting of Hezbollah positions inside Syria add complexity to the situation."



"Listen to and obey the good successor to the good predecessor. Praise Allah, who made life and death the signs of His creation. It is said in His Mighty Book: 'He created death and life that He may test who among you is the best in deeds. He is the Mighty, the Forgiving. Every soul will

taste death. You will be fully rewarded only on the Day of Resurrection, so whoever is saved from Hell and admitted to Paradise wins,'" columnist **Hamad Salem Al-Meri** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"After the death of His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, may Allah Almighty have mercy on him, we lost a humble, merciful and tolerant Amir who mingled with the people without guards, because he considered himself one of them. He died and disappeared from this world, leaving behind his place of prayer and his Qur'an in his mosque -- Bilal bin Rabah, and the people who loved and respected him in return.

"He, may Allah have mercy on him, was one of the founders of modern Kuwait. He began his political career in 1961 after HH the Amir at the time, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem -- may God have mercy on him, appointed him as governor of Hawally for about 17 years. Then, he was appointed minister in several ministries and deputy prime minister, until he was appointed Crown Prince during the reign of HH the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, may Allah have mercy on him. He left an indelible mark in political action and the country's renaissance.

"This is the mortal world. Death takes away people and others are born until the hour comes. Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah dismounted from his horse, moving from this mortal world to the eternal afterlife, leaving behind His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to continue the path of giving, love and mutual respect with the people, so the country continues to advance and develop in a way that achieves security, stability and prosperity.

"We say it loudly to deafen the ears of every hater. Listen to and obey Your Highness the Amir. We say it in obedience to Allah, in line with the Sunnah of His Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), out of love for our homeland -- Kuwait, and out of respect and appreciation for our ruling family.

"Some peoples envy us, because of the love, respect and mutual appreciation we experience between the ruler and the ruled. In this manner, security and comfortable living have been achieved. Praise Allah for these blessings, and others that He bestowed upon us.

"We ask Allah Almighty to guide the footsteps of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for the good of the country and the people, and to grant him a good family that will guide him towards goodness and help him bear the heavy responsibility entrusted to him... Oh Allah! Amen."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes



KUNA photo
British State Minister for Investments, Lord Johnson signs the book of condolences at the Kuwait Embassy in London.

British envoy to Kuwait recalls humanitarian role of late Amir

Minister Johnson offers condolences at Kuwait embassy in UK

By Yusuf Al-Tattan

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 20, (KUNA): British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis recalled the wise and humanitarian leadership of late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In an interview with KUNA, Ambassador Lewis said that such "wise leadership of the deceased leader, especially in the humanitarian field, was a beacon for charitable work around the world."

Ambassador Lewis offered her "condolences on behalf the embassy, the British government, and the various British communities to the people of Kuwait, leadership, government, over this great loss."

She added that the late Amir had a profound impact in alleviating the suffering of many communities around the world that faced natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods, also recalling his positions on granting amnesty to the convicts.

The ambassador stressed that the bilateral and historical relations between Kuwait and Britain continue to grow strongly at all levels, especially in trade exchange and mutual investment, explaining that the economic



KUNA photo
British Ambassador to Kuwait, Belinda Lewis.

exchange between the two countries has reached USD five billion and was climbing.

She stated that mutual investments between the two countries witnessed a jump last August when the two nations signed a strategic investment partnership.

She indicated that the visits of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, when he was the Crown Prince, confirm the closeness of the bilateral relations that bring together the leadership, government and people of Kuwait and

Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and that the pace of cooperation and mutual trust between the two countries will continue for many years to come.

Meanwhile, British State Minister for Investments, Lord Dominic Johnson said Tuesday that Kuwait had lost a great leader and an outstanding personality in the demise of late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Lord Johnson stated this to Kuwait TV and Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) after having offered his condolences at the Kuwaiti embassy in London.

The British minister had expressed his deep sorrow to the Kuwaiti government and people, affirming that the ties between the two nations, namely economic relations, are founded on humanitarian bonds.

These relations, he added, under the wise guidance of the late Amir had witnessed a significant leap across various fronts.

He further renewed, on behalf of the British government, sincere condolences to Kuwaiti people and Al-Sabah family.

A large number of British parliamentarians of both the House of Commons and the House of Lords came to the embassy to offer their condolences, receiving them as Ambassador Bader Al-Awadhi.

Condolences

Uzbekistan

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Monday a cable from President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, voicing heartfelt condolences and sincere solace over the passing away of the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In the cable, the president of Uzbekistan commended the late Amir's contributions to the promotion of bonds of friendship and cooperation between both friendly countries.

Tajikistan

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Monday a cable from President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon, voicing heartfelt condolences and sincere solace over the passing away of the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In the cable, the president of Tajikistan commended the late Amir's contributions to the promotion of bonds of friendship and cooperation between both friendly countries.

Bangladesh

President of Bangladesh Mohammad Shahabuddin offered his condolences on Monday over the demise of late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In his cable, President Shahabuddin expressed his sorrow over the demise of late Amir and praised Sheikh Nawaf efforts and support throughout the years.

Nicaragua

The President of the Republic of Nicaragua Daniel Ortega offered his condolences on Monday over the demise of late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In his cable, President Ortega expressed his sorrow over the demise of late Amir and praised Sheikh Nawaf efforts and support throughout the years.

Kyrgyzstan

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Monday a cable from Kyrgyzstan President Sadyr Zhaparov, voicing heartfelt condolences and sincere solace over the passing away of the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In the cable, the president of Kyrgyzstan commended the late Amir's contributions to the promotion of bonds of friendship and cooperation between both friendly countries.

Romania

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Tuesday a cable from the President of Romania Klaus Werner Johannis voicing heartfelt condolences and sincere solace over the passing away of the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In his cable, he remembered the outstanding contributions of the late Amir to the renaissance and progress of Kuwait in various fields.

New Zealand

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Tuesday a cable from New Zealand Governor-General Cindy Kiro voicing heartfelt condolences and sincere solace over the passing away of the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In his cable, the Governor-General praised the late Amir nobility, humanistic vision and solidarity, and his contribution in strengthening friendly relations between the two countries.

In reply, His Highness the Amir sent to all the leaders cables of thanks and appreciation for their sincere sentiments of condolences and sympathies, wishing them good health and wellness.

Maximov offers condolences

Russian official extols role of late Amir in regional stability

By Adib Al-Sayed

MOSCOW, Dec 20, (KUNA): The late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was a wise leader who dedicated himself to serving the socio-economic development of Kuwait and strengthening security and stability in the Arabian Gulf region, said a Russian official.

Deputy Director of the Department of the Middle East and North Africa Affairs at the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Maxim Maximov said the late Amir played an active role in cementing cooperation with Russia in all fields, notably the political and foreign policy areas.

Maximov made the comments to KUNA after offering condolences to Kuwait Embassy in Moscow on Tuesday.

"The passing of late Amir Sheikh Nawaf is a big loss for Kuwait and the region as he was an astute statesman who worked relentlessly to promote the status of his country on the regional and international scales," Maximov added.

On his part, Kuwait Ambassador to Russia Rashed Al-Adwani said the late Amir led the country during highly challenging and delicate conditions regionally and internationally.

"His wise leadership helped protect the national security and stability of Kuwait and the region," the Kuwaiti diplomat noted.

"Kuwait has played, under the late Amir's leadership, a prominent role in bridging the gaps among the Arab countries and combining the efforts in the face of numerous external threats," Al-Adwani added.



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Economists extend their heartfelt congratulations to HH Amir Sheikh Misha'al

'HH Amir a seasoned leader, safety valve for Kuwait's stability'

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 20: The members of the Economic Group, along with banking leaders and prominent figures from the finance and business sectors, extended their heartfelt congratulations to Kuwait and its people on the assumption of leadership by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Misha'al Al-Ahmad, reports Al-Anba daily. Emphasizing His Highness's sa-

gacity as a safeguard for the nation, they underscore the critical role he plays in maintaining the equilibrium of the country, both in its present and future dimensions, amid the rapidly evolving global challenges witnessed worldwide. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Misha'al Al-Ahmad's forward-thinking vision, as reflected in his

speeches, is hailed as the foremost and pivotal force supporting the realization of ambitious national economic goals. The leaders express confidence that under his guidance, Kuwait will progress towards achieving economic diversification, financial sustainability, and international partnerships aimed at propelling the Kuwaiti economy to unprecedented

developmental heights. The government officials affirm His Highness's clear vision and unwavering determination to expedite the completion of development projects with economic viability. They note his significant commitment to fostering innovation in investment and augmenting non-oil revenues, evident in his active oversight of

partnerships with sisterly and friendly nations. Leaders of economic entities highlight the financial and business community's trust in His Highness's commitment to economic reform, geared towards attaining sustainable development objectives and positioning Kuwait as a premier investment destination.

His Highness's call for fruitful cooperation between executive and legislative authorities to endorse legislation enhancing economic performance and citizens' lives is acknowledged. The leaders emphasize the need to ensure the ongoing flow of development initiatives in Kuwait, characterized by a more sustainable and diversified pace.

UNSC observes a minute of silence in honor of late Amir

Kuwait's Permanent Mission in UN receives officials



KUNA photo Ambassador Tariq Al-Bannai with members of the permanent delegation of the State of Kuwait to the United Nations observe a minute of silence over the demise of Kuwait Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

NEW YORK, Dec 20, (KUNA): Members of the United Nations Security Council observed Tuesday a minute of silence to mourn and honor Kuwait's late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The UN lowered its flag to half-mast at its New York headquarters in honor of the late Amir on Monday.

The UN has paid tribute to the late Amir describing him as a distinguished statesman, who contributed to the growth of understanding and cooperation in the Gulf and beyond, and pursued strengthened relations in support of peace and stability in the region and around the world.

Meanwhile, the Permanent Mission of the State of Kuwait to the United Nations in New York received, Tuesday, UN officials offering condolences on the passing of the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

UN Security General Antonio Guterres, his deputy Amina Mohammed, and the President of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) Dennis Francis of Trinidad and Tobago attended the function, which lasted three days.

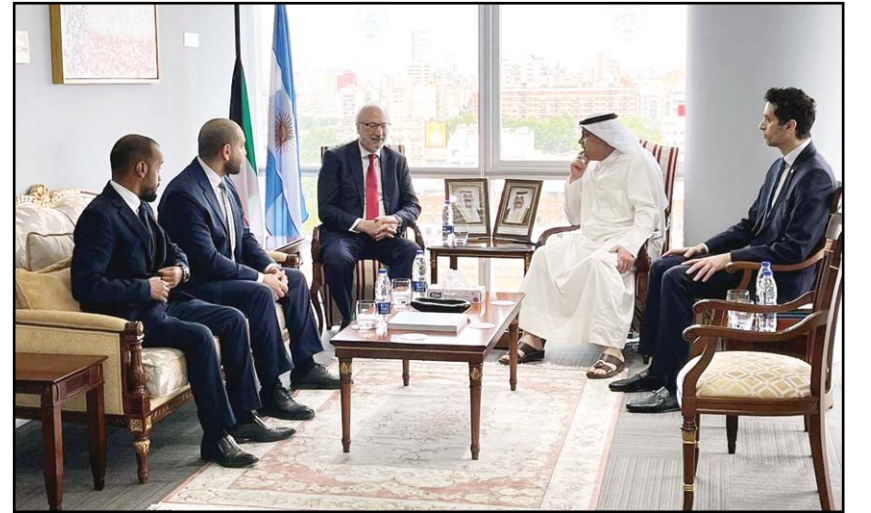
The UN officials expressed condolences to Kuwait's leaders and people, and opened a condolences book for mourners of the late Amir.

SRS board chief offers sincere condolences over 'demise' of Amir

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 20: Chairman of the Board of Directors of Social Reform Society Dr Khaled Al-Madhkoor offered his sincere condolences and sympathy to the honorable Al-Sabah Family, the Kuwaiti people, and the Arab and Islamic worlds, on the death of His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah; imploring Allah Almighty to cover him with His vast mercy and let him enter the highest place in Paradise, reports Al-Anba daily.

Al-Madhkoor stated: "His Highness the late Amir, may Allah have mercy on him, had a distinguished position in the hearts of the people of Kuwait, considering his numerous deeds and contributions. He was close to the people, their aspirations and hopes. He implanted in the souls of everyone the love for giving and for the homeland to be a symbol of his deeds. He was a model leader dedicated to working towards the advancement of Kuwait and to raise its status."

He pointed out that with the death of His Highness the late Amir, Kuwait and the whole world lost an international and humanitarian stature. "He continued the path of the rulers of Kuwait in supporting charitable and humanitarian works, and launching humanitarian initiatives, to relieve the afflicted and support the oppressed in various parts of the world, especially the Palestinians. He supported their just cause in international forums. May Allah Almighty cover him with His vast mercy and grant him the best reward on behalf of Kuwait, its people and the entire humanity."



KUNA photo The Kuwaiti mission to the United Nations receiving mourners over the death of Sheikh Nawaf.

Condolences

Singapore

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Tuesday a cable of condolences from President of Singapore, Tharman Shanmugaratnam, on demise of late Kuwait Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The President conveyed the deep sorrow and sincere solace of Singaporean people to the Amir, and hailed the late Amir's contributions to the developmental journey of his country.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal sent a cable in appreciation of the President's sincere sentiments thanking him and wishing him good health and wellbeing.

India

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Tuesday a message from Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, voicing heartfelt condolences and sincere solace over the passing away of the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In the message, the Indian prime minister hailed the late Amir's role in bolstering Kuwaiti-Indian relations, wishing His Highness the Amir and the people of Kuwait more patience over the demise of Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In reply, His Highness the Amir sent the Indian prime minister a message of thanks and appreciation for his sincere sentiments of condolences and sympathies, wishing him good health and wellbeing.

Turkiye

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Tuesday a telephone call from President of Turkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan, offering sincere condolences over the passing away of the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In the call, the President of Turkiye prayed to Almighty Allah to bestow mercy upon the late Amir's soul and rest him in the best place of Paradise, and to grant his family more patience.

His Highness the Amir voiced thanks and appreciation to the President of Turkiye for his sincere sentiments of condolences and sympathies, wishing him good health and wellbeing.

Luxembourg

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a cable of condolence from the Grand Duke of Luxembourg, expressing his sorrow over the demise of late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Amir sent a reply enclosed with the utmost appreciation for the heartfelt sentiments.

Swiss Confederation

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Tuesday a cable from the President of the Swiss Confederation Alain Berset, where he expressed heartfelt condolences and sincere solace over the passing away of the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In his cable, he remembered the humanitarian role and contributions of the late Amir and exerted efforts to bolster partnership.

In turn, His Highness the Amir sent to President Berset a cable of thanks and appreciation for his sincere sentiments of condolences and sympathies, wishing for a continued cooperation, and to him good health and wellbeing.

Italy

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Tuesday a cable from the Italian President Sergio Mattarella, where he expressed heartfelt condolences and sincere solace over the passing away of the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In his cable, he remembered the outstanding contributions of the late Amir to the renaissance and progress of Kuwait in various fields.

In turn, His Highness the Amir sent to the Italian leader a cable of thanks and appreciation for his sincere sentiments of condolences and sympathies, wishing him good health and wellbeing.

Tonga

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal

Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Tuesday a message from King of Tonga Tupou VI, voicing heartfelt condolences and sincere solace over the passing away of the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In reply, His Highness the Amir sent the king of Tonga a message of thanks and appreciation for his sincere sentiments of condolences and sympathies, wishing him good health and wellbeing.

Thailand

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a cable of condolence from the King of Thailand Maha Vajiralongkorn over the passing of the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In the cable, the King and his wife Queen Suthida expressed their deep sorrow and remembered Sheikh Nawaf's efforts in maintaining peace and stability regionally and internationally.

His Highness the Amir sent a reply enclosed with the utmost appreciation for the heartfelt sentiments.

Sweden

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a cable of condolence from the King of Sweden Carl Gustaf, expressing his sorrow over the demise of late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Amir sent a reply enclosed with the utmost appreciation for the heartfelt sentiments.

Lithuania

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Tuesday a cable of condolences from President of Lithuania, Gitanas Nauseda, on the demise of late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The President expressed his deep sorrow and sincere solace to the Amir and the people of Kuwait, while also commending the late Amir's humanitarian contributions and his efforts in bolstering relations between the two nations.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal sent a cable in response to the President's sincere sentiments thanking him and wishing him good health and wellbeing.

Seychelles

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Tuesday a message from President of Seychelles Wavel Ramkalawan, voicing heartfelt condolences and sincere solace over the passing away of the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In the message, he commended the late Amir's great role in bolstering friendly relations between both countries.

In reply, His Highness the Amir sent the president of Seychelles a message of thanks and appreciation for his sincere sentiments of condolences and sympathies, lauding close relations between both friendly countries and peoples and wishing him good health and wellbeing.

Tunisia

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received on Tuesday a phone call from the Tunisian Prime Minister Ahmad Hachani, expressing his sorrow over the demise of late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

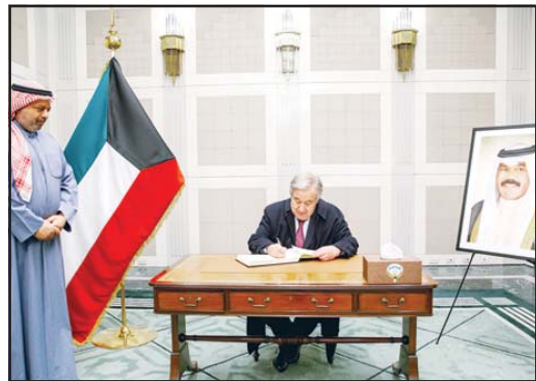
His Highness the Prime Minister thanked the Tunisian premier and expressed his appreciation for the heartfelt sentiments.

Malawi

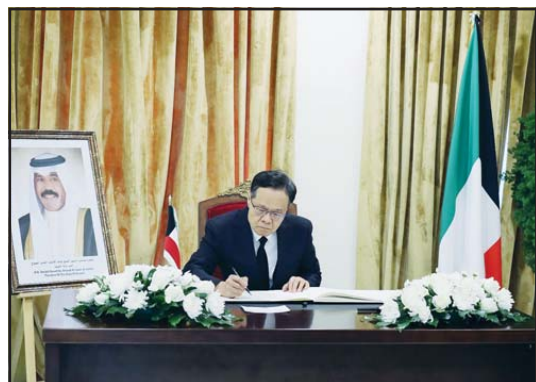
His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Tuesday a cable from the President of Malawi Lazarus Chakwera, where he expressed heartfelt condolences and sincere solace over the passing away of the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In his cable, the Malawian leader remembered contributions of the late Amir and achievements made throughout the years.

In turn, His Highness the Amir sent to President Chakwera a cable of thanks and appreciation for his sincere sentiments of condolences and sympathies, wishing him good health and wellbeing.



Kuwaiti mission to the UN receiving mourners.



Vice-Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and representative of the Government of China Dim Xinou signs the condolence book at the Kuwait embassy.



The Iranian Assistant Foreign Minister signs the condolence book on the death of HH the Amir of Kuwait.



KUNA photo 129,500 male and female students in the middle school, 10th and 11th grades begin the first semester exams.

129,500 students answer 1st semester final exams

By Faisal Al-Khumaili

The final exams for the 2023-24 first semester started on Wednesday for some 129,500 students in

both intermediate schools as well as the tenth and 11th grades of high school.

The Ministry of Education fulfilled all necessary requirements

in preparation for students' eager in performing their best to succeed in their studies to cultivate a bright future for Kuwait. (KUNA)

LOCAL



His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and other senior sheikhs at the special Parliament session.



Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Suleiman Al-Jarallah at the special Parliament session.



Officers and members of the diplomatic corps attend the special Parliament session.



'Task is

Continued from Page 1

"In the past, we warned about threats to our nation. We need to maintain our national unity and security, and work hard to boost our economy and improve the people's living conditions," HH the Amir stressed; while urging the two authorities to exert concerted efforts and spread positivism in order to preserve the national identity in the service of the nation.

He went on to say that the political leadership shall remain close to all parties and closely monitor developments in the local arena, calling on the lawmakers to be objective in questioning ministers within the purview of the Constitution and the law.

HH the Amir then paid tribute to HH the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah expressing his deep sadness and heartbreak over the death of the latter. He highlighted the remarkable achievements of HH the late Amir in serving his people and his nation; stressing that the late Amir greatly contributed to the development and prosperity of the country. He described the late Amir as "a model of humility and forgiveness."

HH the Amir affirmed that the memory of HH the late Amir will remain vivid forever. He then indicated that as he grieves, he cannot say anything more than a quote from the Holy Quran: "Surely, we belong to Allah and to Him we shall return."

HH the Amir expressed gratitude to the people of Kuwait, leaders of sisterly and friendly countries, whoever offered condolences, as well as those who could not, because of the huge crowd and those who sent cables of condolences and expressed condolences through the media. "To everyone I say: Thank you for your sentiments and for sharing our grief."

Meanwhile, Assembly Speaker Ahmed Al-Saadoun also expressed grief over the passing of HH the late Amir Sheikh, stating that "eyes are full of tears and hearts are deeply sad." He cited the Holy Quran, Sura Al-Baqarah, Verse 156: "Who, when afflicted with a calamity say, 'Truly, to Allah we belong and truly to Him we shall return.'"

He lauded HH the late Amir; stressing he was "a wise leader, a generous man who gave without limit, a tolerant guide and a righteous ruler committed to humility, closeness to all of his people, concerned about their demands and an excellent provider of their needs."

He said HH the late Amir passed away after a reign preceded by many years of bearing responsibility in different positions, leaving remarkable fingerprints in every place. He pointed out that the actions and statements of HH the late Amir will always be the beacon inspiring generations that seek guidance and correct advice in economic development and political reform.

He implored Allah Almighty to have mercy on HH the late Amir and put him in Paradise. He also prayed to Allah Almighty to support HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in completing the construction of the State of Kuwait on constitutional foundations.

Addressing HH the Amir, Al-Saadoun said: "The people of Kuwait have been following up the help and support that you provided to HH the late Amir during his reign; especially after the issuance of the Amir Decree on Nov 15, 2021 assigning to you some of the constitutional authorities granted to the Amir."

Congrats pour

Continued from Page 1

In a statement, the Ministry's relations and media department said that Sheikh Talal conveyed the greetings and congratulations on behalf of himself and all Interior Ministry personnel.

Sheikh Talal spoke of His Highness' the Amir prosperous journey calling it a source of pride for all, as he also beseeched Allah to support the Amir in his endeavors towards further progress, prosperity and growth.



MPs and ministers at the special Parliament session.

Photos by Rezk Tawfik

The interior ministry personnel shall remain a sturdy fort ahead of all who try to tamper with the nation's security, underscored Sheikh Talal.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah congratulated on Wednesday His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on taking the constitutional oath and becoming the 17th ruler of the State of Kuwait.

In a statement, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad wished His Highness the Amir, on behalf of the ministry, welfare and good health, hoping that he would continue to succeed in his position as leader of the country and the Kuwaiti people.

He expressed to His Highness the Amir the ministry's full loyalty in serving and protecting the country and its leadership, wishing him good health and further success in leading Kuwait into a much prosperous and promising future.

Minister of Information and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi Wednesday congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on ascending to office.

Al-Mutairi, in a statement to KUNA, said His Highness the Amir's career was full of achievements and his wisdom would contribute to the further development of the nation.

He said guidance of His Highness the Amir would contribute to bright future and prosperity.

Kuwait Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Adel Al-Manea congratulated, Wednesday, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on taking the constitutional oath, becoming the 17th Amir of Kuwait.

Dr. Al-Manea expressed his wishes of good health and welfare for the Amir and hoped for a continuous prosperity and developments for the country, and brighter future for people of Kuwait.

The President of Government Performance Follow-Up Agency Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mishal A-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent on Wednesday on behalf of his staff a cable of congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on taking the constitutional oath and becoming the 17th ruler of the State of Kuwait.

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mishal wished His Highness the Amir good health and further success in leading Kuwait into a much prosperous and promising future.

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, Issa Al-Kandari congratulated on Wednesday His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on assuming the office.

Al-Kandari said, in a statement to KUNA, that the history of His Highness the Amir and experience confirm

beyond any doubt the advancement of the country towards growth, prosperity, security and safety.

Acting Assistant Undersecretary for the Customer Affairs Sector at the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Eng Falah Al-Mutairi congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on assuming the reins of power; imploring Allah Almighty to grant success to His Highness the Amir, and guide his steps towards the good of the country and its people.

In a press statement, Al-Mutairi affirmed: "We promise, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, to listen and obey. With Allah's blessing, we are united behind your wise leadership until we achieve national development, progress and prosperity that all the people of Kuwait have always dreamed of."

He pointed out that His Highness assuming the reins of power is something that has brought peace to the hearts of the people of Kuwait, who exchange love and brotherhood with His Highness. He stressed that "His Highness has a great place in all of our hearts. We are fully confident that he is truly a man of this stage. His wisdom, sophistication and long experience make him qualified to lead the Kuwaiti ship towards the land of safety and ability."

He confirmed that the minds and hearts

of the people of Kuwait are longing for their country to return to its position as the 'Pearl of the Gulf' in all the meanings of the phrase. He believes this will not be achieved unless all the people stand united behind the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, who shouldered the responsibility for long periods during which he proved his skill, wisdom and knowledge.

He added HH the Amir's insightful vision, as well as his conscious and enlightened thought make him worthy of this position. "We say to His Highness, with Allah's blessing, we are united behind your wise leadership. We are ready to sacrifice ourselves, effort and time for the sake of Kuwait's progress and development," he asserted.

He pointed out that the people of Kuwait are filled with great hope and unlimited optimism in achieving the desired renaissance under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad.

Oman

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a congratulatory cable from the Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tariq, expressing his congratulations on ascending to office.

In his cable, the Sultan expressed

great wishes, good health, and prosperity to the State of Kuwait.

In return, His Highness the Amir sent a cable to the Sultan expressing his utmost appreciation for the kind words and heartfelt sentiments.

OPEC

Secretary General of The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Haitham Al-Ghais congratulated on Wednesday His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on taking the constitutional oath and becoming the 17th ruler of the State of Kuwait.

In a statement to KUNA, Al-Ghais praised the journey of His Highness the Amir in all positions he held and succeeded in, which contributed to the development of the country.

He also praised His Highness the Amir's vision in fields of economy, and the support he provides to oil and gas production, noting that Kuwait is one of the founding countries of OPEC, which helped overcome many difficulties in the organization's history.

He added that His Highness the Amir has a high sense of awareness and knowledge on international affairs and global oil markets, as well as the decision related to OPEC and OPEC+ which has a direct impact on Kuwait.

Kuwait on

Continued from Page 1

Al-Faris went on to say, "I was honored to work closely with His Highness, may God protect him, and I will not hesitate to say that we are indeed facing a new era and pattern in government management, governed by firmness and justice, eliminating corruption, appointing leadership positions to those who deserve them, and consolidating Kuwait's position among the countries of the world so that it remains a beacon for humanity and a station for diplomacy and a pioneer for development. We pray to God to grant success and guide the steps of His Highness, may God protect him, for what serves the country and the people."

The Minister of Commerce and Industry and the former Minister of Social Affairs, Fahd Al-Sharayan, said: "I congratulate His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad for taking over the rule of the country, and I congratulate the Kuwaiti people for the presence of this serious leadership that always works calmly and with always effective decisions and the courage to make decisions," pointing out the presence of many

huge challenges in the coming period, whether internal or external, must be paid great attention to. He added: "We hope that there will be economic interest in the very many things that we need, to move a lot of stagnant waters in the economic field, especially with regard to the Silk City, the Economic City, Boubyan Port and the Mubarak Port."

Al-Shara'an pointed out that His Highness, in previous meetings, felt great interest from him, a sincere desire to make decisions, clear calculations, and an insightful vision, concluding, "We congratulate the Kuwaiti people and His Highness the Emir on the presence of this loyal and loving people, and we pledge allegiance to them for power, and we hope that there will be very important good things in the coming period."

The CEO of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Sabah, reiterated that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, may God protect and preserve him, was and still is a supporter of the oil sector and a follower of all its major projects, the most important of which is the process of developing refineries through the Clean Environmental Fuel Project and increasing local refining capacity after the full operation of Al-Zour Refinery during this month.

'Safety valve ... supporter of building Kuwait'

Kuwaiti lawyers congratulate HH Amir Sheikh Mishal

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 20: A number of lawyers affirmed that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah is the best successor to the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad, and he was the late Amir's right-hand and support, as well as the best loyal confidant.

The lawyers extended their best wishes to His Highness the Amir on the occasion of his assumption of the reins of the government.

They explained that His Highness the Amir is the safety valve, a supporter of building Kuwait, and a driver of the wheel of development. He is a successful leader in the various fields that he undertook throughout his professional career. His resume reveals a rich career spanning more than half a century that he spent in the service of Kuwait in various fields.

Leadership and excellence

Lawyer Jarrah Mubarak Al-Wawan extended his best wishes to His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah for assuming the reins of government in the country.

He explained that His Highness is one of the basic pillars in building modern Kuwait during his career with the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad. He was the right hand and confidant of the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad, and his career was full of achievements that made Kuwait one of the developed countries.

His Highness the Amir left a mark of success in all the positions he held, and is considered an example to be followed in his efforts, giving, and dedication in order to achieve the ambitions and aspirations of citizens in building a modern state.

Wise leadership

Lawyer Jassem Bandar said, "Today we congratulate ourselves and the people of Kuwait for the assumption of power by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad. We offer him best wishes and gratitude for this occasion, which is dear to the hearts of the Kuwaiti people and all who live on this land."

We live under a wise leadership represented by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad and we wish good health and prosperity for the wise leadership.

His Highness the Amir has an imprint in supporting development and human building. He has always been keen to support youth in all fields that would advance Kuwait and place it among the ranks of developed countries.

His career was full of achievements during his tenure in a number of state departments. Every department that His Highness occupied, he had developed those departments. He is an example to follow in giving, dedication, and commitment to work in order to achieve the aspirations of citizens in building the state.

The wise leadership continues to pursue the policy that focuses on building a state of institutions and

developing a sound economic and democratic life in order to raise the country's standing and achieve prosperity for the Kuwaiti people.

Experiences have proven the qualities of wise leadership possessed by His Highness the Amir in being capable of moving Kuwait to more advanced and civilized position at the internal and external levels. We hope he will continue the path that he was known for through him assuming previous political leadership positions. He is distinguished by wisdom and the ability to manage the helm of government capably.

Wisdom and power

Lawyer Fahad Al-Hadiya extended congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad for assuming the reins of government.

He said, "His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad was regarded as the support for his brothers who were the former Amirs of Kuwait throughout their political history filled with achievements that placed Kuwait among the ranks of developed countries."

His Highness has made, and continues to make, a lot of national contributions throughout his career. He held many important leadership positions, carried their responsibilities with merit, and succeeded in managing the positions he held. He was able to enhance security, safety and stability through his former leadership of the State Security Service, and had also developed security work. This comes from His Highness's experience from his successful career.

World News Roundup

Middle East

Pentagon announces new international mission to counter attacks on commercial vessels in Red Sea

Global coalition forms 'Operation Prosperity Guardian' to safeguard shipping routes

MANAMA, Bahrain, Dec 20, (AP): The U.S. and a host of other nations are creating a new force to protect ships transiting the Red Sea that have come under attack by drones and ballistic missiles fired from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced Tuesday in Bahrain.

The seriousness of the attacks, several of which have damaged vessels, has led multiple shipping companies to order their ships to hold in place and not enter the Bab el-Mandeb Strait until the security situation can be addressed.



Austin

The U.S. military's Central Command reported two more of the attacks on commercial vessels Monday. A strike by an attack drone and a ballistic missile hit a tanker off Yemen, at roughly the same time a cargo ship reported an explosive detonating in the water near them, the military said.

"This is an international challenge that demands collective action," Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said in a statement released just after midnight in Bahrain. "Therefore today I am announcing the establishment of Operation Prosperity Guardian, an important new multinational security initiative."

There are about 400 commercial vessels transiting the southern Red Sea, an area roughly the size of Washington D.C. to Boston, at any given time, a senior military official told reporters who are traveling with Austin in the region.

Under the new mission, the military ships will not necessarily escort a specific vessel, but will be positioned to

provide umbrella protection to as many as possible at a given time, the official said on the condition of anonymity to provide additional details not made public on how the new operation will work.

Mohammed Abdel-Salam, the Houthis' chief negotiator and spokesman, challenged the U.S.-created coalition on Tuesday, saying the Iranian-backed rebels would continue targeting Israel-linked vessels off Yemen.

"The American-formed coalition is to protect Israel and militarize the sea without any justification, and will not stop Yemen from continuing its legitimate operations in support of Gaza," he wrote on social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter.

He said the Houthis' attacks "are not a show of force nor a challenge to anyone," adding, "Whoever seeks to expand the conflict must bear the consequences of his actions."

International security effort

On Tuesday the shipping company Maersk announced that for now, it had decided to re-route its ships that have been paused for days outside the strait and Red Sea, and send them around Africa through the Cape of Good Hope instead - a much longer and less efficient passage. Maersk said it welcomed the international security effort, but at the present time, the much longer route would provide "more predictable outcomes" for its customers.

In the last four weeks, Houthi militants have attacked or seized commercial ships 12 times and still hold 25 members of the MV Galaxy Leader hostage in Yemen, Austin said in remarks Tuesday in a ministerial meeting on the new maritime mission. The U.S. is still actively seeking member countries to join the mission, and increase the number of navies present and participating.

The United Kingdom, Bahrain, Canada, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Seychelles and Spain have joined the new maritime security mission, Austin said. Some of those countries will conduct joint patrols while others provide intelligence support in the southern Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.



In this photo provided by the Ministry of Defence on Saturday, Dec. 16, 2023, a view of the HMS Diamond off the coast of Scotland, Oct. 4, 2020. A Royal Navy warship has shot down a suspected attack drone targeting commercial ships in the Red Sea, Britain's defense secretary said Saturday, Dec. 16, 2023. Grant Shapps said that HMS Diamond fired a Sea Viper missile and destroyed a drone that was 'targeting merchant shipping.' (AP)

One notably absent participant is China, which has warships in the region, but those ships have not responded to previous calls for assistance by commercial vessels, even though some of the ships attacked have had ties to Hong Kong, the military official said.

Several other countries have also agreed to be involved in the operation but prefer not to be publicly named, a de-

fense official said on the condition of anonymity to discuss additional details of the new mission that have not been publicly announced.

The new maritime security mission will be coordinated by the already existing Combined Task Force 153, which was set up in April 2022 to improve maritime security in the Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb and the Gulf of Aden.



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أعياد البدرين Celebrate Bahrain

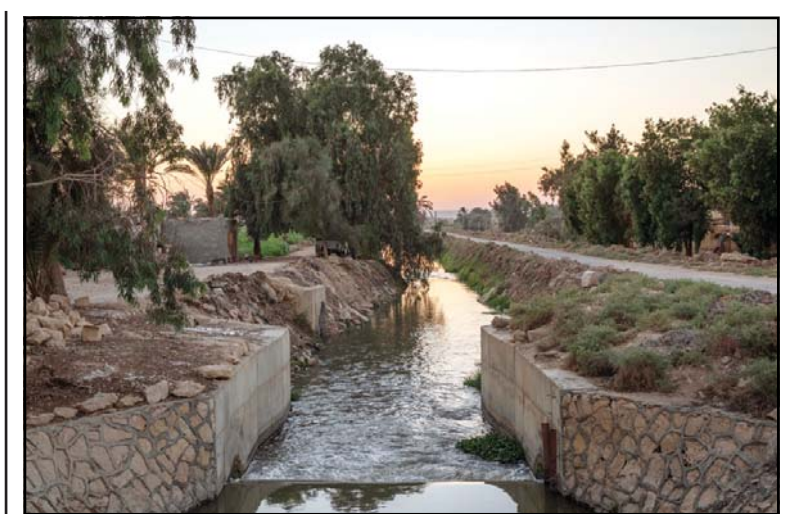
December

Room Promotion



Weekdays (Saturday - Wednesday)	
Queen Cabana (2 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.	2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.
NOW	NOW
BHD 57.173/-net	BHD 128.000/-net
Weekends (Thursday & Friday)	
Queen Cabana (2 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.	2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.
NOW	NOW
BHD 61.000/-net	BHD 136.198/-net

Promo period from 19th - 31st December 2023 Terms & conditions apply*



A source of water branching out of the Yusuf Canal, which flows from the Nile through Fayoum, in Qouta town, Egypt, Wednesday, Aug. 5, 2020. Egypt, which relies on the Nile for more than 90% of its water supplies, including drinking water, industrial use and irrigation, fears a devastating impact if The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam is operated without taking its needs into account. (AP)

Contentious Nile dam talks collapse

Ethiopia and Egypt reach no deal

NAIROBI, Kenya, Dec 20, (AP): Ethiopia and Egypt said the latest round of talks over a huge, highly contentious hydroelectric dam Ethiopia has built on the Nile's main tributary again ended with no deal.

The countries blamed each other after three days of discussions in Addis Ababa concluded on Tuesday.

Egypt's Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation said the talks were unsuccessful due to Ethiopia's "persistent refusal" to accept any compromise. The Ethiopian Foreign Ministry accused Egypt of putting up "roadblocks" in the discussions that prevented any consensus.

Sudan was also a part of the negotiations.

The countries have been trying to find an agreement for years over the \$4 billion Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, which Ethiopia began building in 2011. The dam is on the Blue Nile near the Sudan border and Egypt fears it will have a devastating effect on its water and irrigation supply downstream unless Ethiopia takes its needs into account.

The Blue Nile meets the White Nile in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, and then flows onwards through Egypt.

Existential threat

Egypt has referred to Ethiopia's dam as an existential threat as the Arab world's most populous country relies almost entirely on the Nile to supply water for agriculture and its more than 100 million people.

Egypt is deeply concerned over how much water Ethiopia will release downstream from the dam and wants a deal to regulate that. Ethiopia is using the dam to generate electricity.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi and Ethiopian President Abiy Ahmed resolved in July to come to an agreement on the dam within four months. Another round of talks between the three countries in September also ended acrimoniously.

The dam began producing power last year and Ethiopia said it had completed the final phase of filling the dam's reservoir in September.

The project is expected to ultimately produce over 6,000 megawatts of electricity, which is double Ethiopia's current output and enough to make the East African nation of 120 million a net

Dozens more killed

Israel carries out deadly airstrikes in south Gaza

RAFAH, Gaza Strip, Dec 20, (AP): The Israeli army has raided and detained staff at two of the last functioning hospitals in Gaza's north, where the defense minister said Tuesday that troops were working to completely clear out Hamas militants.

Israel bombarded towns across southern Gaza Tuesday with airstrikes, killing at least 45 Palestinians and pressing ahead with its offensive with renewed backing from the United States, despite rising international alarm. The Israeli defense minister, Yoav Gallant, warned the campaign in Gaza's south will persist for months.

In a hospital in the southern town of Rafah, Mahmoud Zoarab bid farewell to his two children - a 2-year-old boy, and a girl born two weeks ago - killed in a pre-dawn strike on their home.

Wounded in the strike, he winced as he peeled back the shrouds to look at their faces as his wife and mother stood by his bed.

"Just two weeks old. Her name hadn't even been registered," said the children's grandmother, Suzan Zoarab. Addressing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, she cried, "Does he think that by killing these children he will achieve something? Have they succeeded now? Has he achieved what he wants?"

Defense Minister Gallant said Israeli forces were entering Hamas' tunnel network in northern Gaza as part of a "final clearing" of militants from the region. The densely built urban north, including Gaza City, has seen ferocious fighting between troops and militants, with Palestinian health officials reporting dozens of people killed in bombardment in recent days.

Ethiopia has said it will continue to exploit the river with or without an agreement.

Asia

US flies bomber

China's quake toll 131; survivors mourn dead

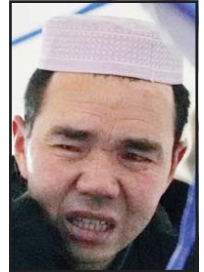
YANGWA, China, Dec. 20, (AP): Surrounded by destruction, survivors of an earthquake mourned the dead and endured a frigid cold in temporary shelters Wednesday, unsure how to rebuild their lives in the remote mountains of northwest China.

"Look at this," said Han Zhongmin, retrieving some belongings with his wife from the ruins of their house, built six years ago in Yangwa village. "My house turned into this overnight."

Houses caved in and crumbled in a Monday night earthquake that killed at least 131 people and injured more than 900 others. Most of the casualties were in Gansu province and the rest in the neighboring province of Qinghai.

In the predawn darkness, Ma Lianqiang stood next to the body of his deceased wife wrapped in blankets in a tent-like temporary shelter lit by a single overhead light. His wife was hit and buried by debris in her mother's house, where she had gone to stay because she was ill.

Ma and other members of his extended family survived despite extensive damage to their house in Yangwa, which is in Gansu province. His father pulled Ma's son, whose back was slightly injured, out of the rubble. His uncle said



Lianqiang

they heard the earthquake and then the house started collapsing.

"We crawled out in fear," the uncle, Ma Chengming, said.

Nearly 15,000 homes collapsed in Gansu and more than 87,000 people have been resettled, provincial officials said at a Wednesday news conference. Many spent the night in shelters set up in the area as temperatures plunged well below freezing.

To the north, searchers in Qinghai were looking for 16 people missing in an area where landslides inundated two villages, partially burying homes. Excavators dug at the sea of soil, and rescue workers tried to break into some buried houses from the rooftops.

The number missing was down from 20 on Tuesday. The death toll in the province ticked up by four to 18, but there was no immediate confirmation if the four no longer missing had been found dead.

Gansu officials said their search and rescue effort had basically been completed by mid-afternoon Tuesday. The province's death toll remained at 113 and the number of injured rose to 782. Together with 198 in Qinghai, that brought the total injured close to 1,000.

Villagers in Yangwa bundled up against the cold and ate instant noodle soup being served in a tent of translucent green plastic sheeting. Han Fujun said more immediate concerns were on his mind than what to do about his destroyed home.



US flies bomber for joint drills: The United States flew a long-range bomber for joint drills with South Korea and Japan on Wednesday in a show of force against North Korea, days after the North performed its first intercontinental ballistic missile test in five months.

The trilateral training off South Korea's southern island of Jeju was meant to strengthen the countries' joint response against North Korean nuclear threats, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

The exercise involved a B-1B bomber and South Korean and Japanese fighter jets, the statement said. It said the B-1B's flyover is the 13th time that a U.S. bomber has been temporarily deployed near and over the Korean Peninsula this year.

A B-1B is capable of carrying a large conventional weapons payload. North Korea has previously called the bomber's deployment a proof of U.S. hostility and had reacted with missile tests. North Korea on Monday launched a Hwasong-18 ICBM into the sea in a drill it said was meant as a warning over the U.S. and South Korea's confrontational steps. North Korea cited a recent U.S.-South Korean meeting to discuss their nuclear deterrence plans.

The U.S., South Korea and Japan slammed the launch as a provocation, noting it violated multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions that ban any ballistic activities by the North.

The Hwasong-18, a solid-fueled missile, is the North's newest and most advanced ICBM. Its built-in solid propellant makes launches harder to detect than liquid-fueled missiles, which must be fueled for liftoffs. Monday's launch is the Hwasong-18's third firing this year.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said the launch showed how North Korea could respond if the United States were to make "a wrong decision against it." But many foreign experts say the North still has technological obstacles to overcome to possess functioning nuclear-armed ICBM that can hit the continental U.S. (AP)



Okinawa ordered to OK plan: A Japanese court on Wednesday ordered the governor of Okinawa to approve the central government's modified plan for landfill work at the planned relocation site of a key U.S. military base on the southern island despite persistent opposition and protests by residents.

The decision will move forward the suspended construction at a time Okinawa's strategic importance is seen increasingly important for the Japan-U.S. military alliance in the face of growing tensions with China as Japan rapidly seeks to build up its military in the southwestern region.

The ruling by the Fukuoka High Court Naha branch allows the Land and Transport Ministry to order the modification work designed to reinforce extremely soft ground at the designated relocation site for U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, overriding Gov. Denny Tamaki's disapproval. The ruling ordered Tamaki to issue the approval within three working days.

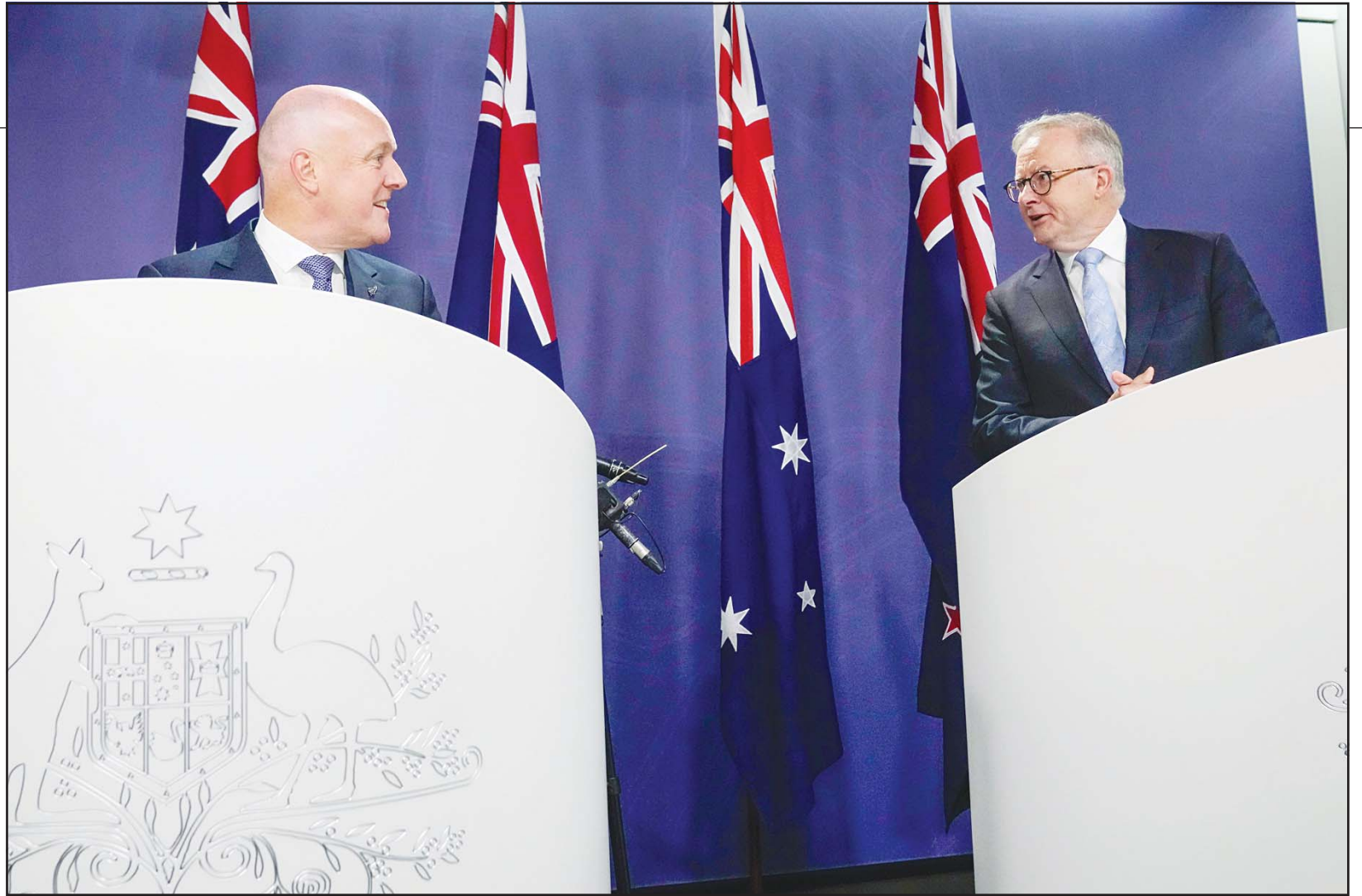
If completed, the new site will serve a key Marine Corps facility for the region and will be also home to MV-22 Ospreys that are currently deployed at Futenma.

Tamaki can still appeal to the Supreme Court, but the local government at this point has no power to stop the work unless the top court overturns the decision.

Okinawa and the central government have long tussled over the relocation of the Futenma base.

The Japanese and U.S. governments initially agreed in 1996 to close the Futenma air station a year after the rape of a schoolgirl by three U.S. military personnel led to a massive anti-base movement. But persistent protests and lawsuits between Okinawa and Tokyo have held up the plan for nearly 30 years.

Japan's central government began the reclamation work off Henoko Bay on the eastern coast of Okinawa in 2018 to pave the way for the relocation of the Futenma base from its crowded neighborhood on the island. (AP)



Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, right, and New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon hold a joint press conference at the Commonwealth Parliament Offices in Sydney, Australia, Wednesday, Dec. 20, 2023. (AP)

Australia and New Zealand leaders seek closer defense ties

Australia and New Zealand leaders agreed Wednesday to seek closer defense ties as the latter considers sharing advanced military technologies with the United States and Britain through the so-called AUKUS partnership.

New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon made Australia the destination of his first overseas visit since forming a coalition government following his election in October. Luxon said he and his Australian counterpart, Anthony Albanese, agreed at

their meeting in Sydney the two countries' defense and foreign ministers would meet in early 2024 to ensure their plans were "aligned and coordinated."

"We know we're facing a more challenging and complex world. Close security and defense relationships we have with our only ally, Australia, is very foundational for New Zealand," Luxon told reporters.

"New Zealand is committed to doing our share of the heavy lifting in the alliance and I'm determined

that New Zealand will continue to be alongside Australia as we seek to advance our shared interests and our common values," Luxon added.

The United States and Britain have agreed to provide Australia with a fleet of submarines powered by U.S. nuclear technology under the AUKUS agreement to counter a growing military threat to the region posed by China. AUKUS is an acronym for Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. (AP)

Congo

Logistical and transparency issues cast shadows

Congo votes amidst challenges

KINSHASA, Dec. 20, (AP): Congo headed to the polls Wednesday to vote for president as authorities scrambled to finalize preparations in an election facing steep logistical and security challenges, with voting starting nearly 2 1/2 hours late in the capital.

Some 44 million people - almost half the population - were expected to vote, but many, including several million who were displaced by conflict in the vast country's east, could struggle to cast their ballots. The fighting has prevented 1.5 million people from registering to vote.

Voter Raymond Yuma in the capital of Kinshasa said he's voting for hope. "When you wake up in the morning you're hoping for good things, good work, and I want security," said Yuma. He sat beside three other people on a bench waiting in line for the doors to open. None of their voting cards were legible.

In eastern Congo, people said they weren't finding their names on voting lists. "The voters displayed on lists at the polling station are fewer than those who are lining up. I can't find my name on the list and this could cause scuffles here because I also want to vote," said Jules Kambale at a polling station in Goma.

Waiting for polls to open during the more than two-hour delay, people grew agitated and began arguing, particularly in the capital.

Both outside observers and locals have warned of challenges that could affect the credibility of the vote in one of Africa's largest nations and one whose mineral resources are increasingly crucial to the global economy.

On the eve of the vote, some polling stations in Kinshasa told Associated Press journalists they were still waiting for materials. Thousands of stations, particularly in remote areas, might still not have what they need on Wednesday.

A major concern is that ink on voting cards has smudged, making many illegible. That means people could

be turned away from polling stations. In addition, the voter registration list hasn't been properly audited.

"The organization of the elections raises lots of doubt regarding the credibility, the transparency and the reliability of the results," said Bienvenu Matumu, a member of LUCHA, a local rights group.

A candidate needs a majority of votes in the first round to win.

President Felix Tshisekedi seeks his second and final five-year term, running against about 20 other candidates. His main rival appeared to be Moise Katumbi, the former governor of Katanga province and a millionaire businessman whose campaign in 2018 was thwarted by the previous regime of former President Joseph Kabila.

Opposition

But the opposition remains fractured, making Tshisekedi the likely favorite.

The son of a late, popular opposition figure, he has spent much of his presidency trying to consolidate power over state institutions and working to overcome a crisis of legitimacy after a contested election five years ago.

Some voters didn't want to disclose who they were backing, but Kinshasa is a Tshisekedi stronghold.

"He's someone who's done a lot of things for the country ... he's fought for democracy," said business owner Joseph Tshibadi. Even though Tshisekedi hasn't succeeded in quelling violence in the east, Tshibadi is willing to give him more time. "The beginning is always hard," he said.

After waiting for nearly three and a half hours, Tshibadi was the first person to vote at a school in the capital. He said voting was easy, and he voted for Tshisekedi because he wants to give him another five years to try and improve the security situation.

"I feel very happy, because I voted for my candidate, and I think he's go-

ing to win with 90%," he said.

In the eastern city of Bunia, displaced people vandalized a voting center over a dispute between the electoral commission and voters, said Jean-Marcus Loika, a local journalist who saw the attack.

The voting machines and the ballots were vandalized and the police stepped in, he said. Gunshots were heard in the area, which have prevented people from voting, he said.

Locals and analysts said the vote is likely to be extended past Wednesday.

Nicolas Teindas, the director for the international observation mission for the Carter Center, said the sooner the voting is finished the better because it becomes challenging to manage people's expectations. "In the end people want to know who is their president," he said.

The election commission says it has made changes in the process to make it more credible, spending more than \$1 billion on the vote since planning began two years ago. A key change from 2018 is that results from each of the 75,000 voting stations will be released one at a time, rather than being announced in bulk.

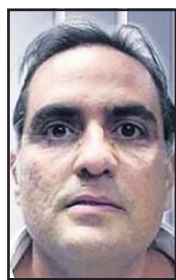
The results should be the manual ones rather than the electronic count, said Rev. Eric Nsenga, a coordinator for the joint electoral observation mission between the Church of Christ for Congo and the Congolese National Episcopal Conference. He also warned against publicly releasing partial results as they are compiled in case it inflames tensions.

Already, some observers have alleged that the process has been far from transparent.

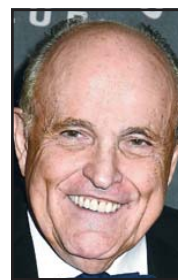
On Monday, the East African Community said its election observer mission was not granted access to Congo by authorities. Last month, the European Union canceled its observation mission after Congolese authorities did not authorize the use of satellite equipment for its deployment.



An election official assists an elderly man to cast his vote at a polling station in Goma, eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, Wednesday, Dec. 20, 2023. (AP)



Saab



Giuliani

America

US releases Maduro's close ally: The Biden administration has released a close ally of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro in a swap for jailed Americans, The Associated Press has learned.

Alex Saab, who was arrested on a U.S. warrant for money laundering in 2020, was released from custody Wednesday. In exchange, Maduro will free some, if not all, of the at least 10 U.S. citizens who remain imprisoned in Venezuela, according to a person familiar with the situation who was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The White House declined to comment. On Friday and again on Monday, two docket entries were filed under seal in the long-dormant criminal case out of federal court in Miami, an indication that a behind-the-scenes deal was in the works.

The U.S. has long accused Saab of being a bag man for Maduro. Saab's release would be seen as a major concession to Maduro, an authoritarian leader who is himself the target of a \$15 million U.S. reward for anyone bringing him to New York to face drug trafficking charges. (AP)



Giuliani's home and office raided: A 2021 federal raid on Rudy Giuliani's home and office was spurred by suspicions that the former New York City mayor had sought the removal of the U.S. ambassador to Ukraine partly because of the prospect of a financial reward from a Ukrainian official, according to documents made public Tuesday.

The documents provide new detail on the since-concluded investigation into Giuliani's involvement with Ukrainian figures in the run up to the 2020 presidential election. Giuliani, a longtime ally of former President Donald Trump, was not charged with a crime as a result of the inquiry.

In a search warrant application, federal agents seeking to seize Giuliani's cell phones, laptop and other electronic devices raised the possibility that he and three other people could be charged with acting as unregistered foreign agents.

The documents, unsealed at the request of The New York Times and dating to the weeks before the raids, confirmed past news reports that federal prosecutors in Manhattan were examining whether Giuliani had gotten anything of value from Ukrainian

figures in return for lobbying the Trump administration to fire then-U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch.

The search warrant application said that Giuliani had been "incentivized" to lobby for the ambassador's removal in two ways. (AP)



Trump defends comments: Former President Donald Trump on Tuesday defended his comments about migrants crossing the southern border "poisoning the blood" of America, and he reinforced the message while

denying any similarities to fascist writings others had noted. "I never read 'Mein Kampf,'" Trump said at a campaign rally in Waterloo, Iowa, referencing Adolf Hitler's fascist manifesto. Immigrants in the U.S. illegally, Trump said Tuesday, are "destroying the blood of our country, they're destroying the fabric of our country."

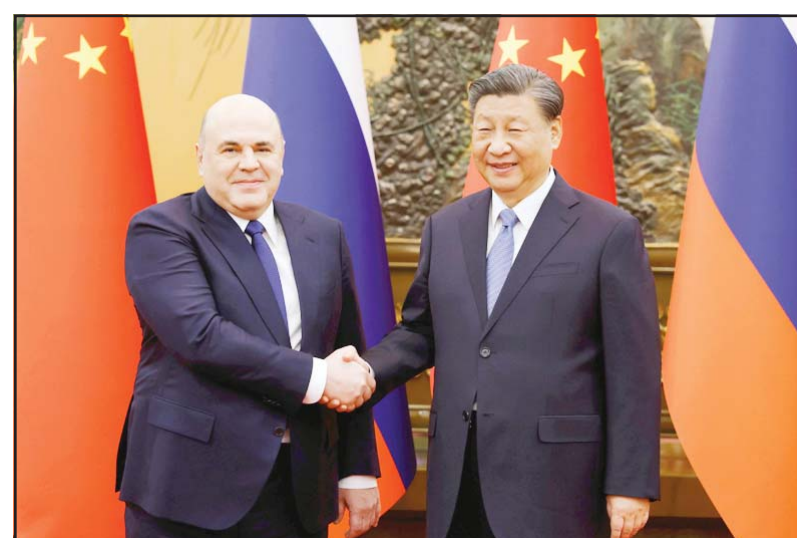
In the speech to more than 1,000 supporters from a podium flanked by Christmas trees in red MAGA hats, Trump responded to mounting criticism about his anti-immigrant "blood" purity rhetoric over the weekend. Several politicians and extremism experts have noted his language echoed writings from Hitler about the "purity" of Aryan blood, which underpinned Nazi Germany's systematic murder of millions of Jews and other "undesirables" before and during World War II. (AP)



News helicopter crashes: A news helicopter has crashed in New Jersey, killing both the pilot and photographer on board, the television station said.

"A pilot and a photographer from our news team were in the helicopter when it went down while returning from an assignment at the Jersey Shore" on Tuesday night, WPVI-TV in Philadelphia reported. "Both crew members were killed."

The crash happened sometime after 8 p.m. in woods in Burlington County's Washington Township, the station said. It's unclear what caused the crash, the station said. (AP)



Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, left, and Chinese President Xi Jinping shake hands before their talks in Beijing, China, Wednesday, Dec. 20, 2023. (AP)

USD stable

The exchange rate of US Dollar stabilized on Wednesday against the Kuwaiti Dinar at KD 0.307, while Euro went up by 0.58 percent to KD 0.337 comparing to rates last Thursday, said the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK).

The CBK indicated in its daily bulletin that the Pound Sterling went up by 0.64 percent to KD 0.391 as well as Swiss Franc by 0.73 percent to KD 0.356, while Japanese Yen went down at 1.35 percent to KD 0.0021. (KUNA)

AUB - Bahrain announces its conversion to Islamic Bank

Ahli United Bank - Bahrain has announced the completion of converting its conventional banking services to be compliant with Shariah principles. On 10 December 2023, the bank has officially received the approval from the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB) as a licensed Islamic Bank.

The conversion is the result of Kuwait Finance House's acquisition of AUB Group in October 2022, making KFH the second largest bank in the word in terms of assets. The conversion is also

a milestone and a testament to AUB's commitment in offering an array of comprehensive products and services that are compliant with the Shariah principles.

KFH Group Chairman, Hamad Al Marzouq said: "We are very proud of completing the conversion of AUB - Bahrain from a conventional to an Islamic bank. Bahrain's Ahli United Bank will offer an integrated range of products and services that are compliant with the provisions and principles of Shariah, including retail and corporate

services, saving and investment products, in addition to trade finance and wealth management solutions."

Al Marzouq revealed that the conversion was completed smoothly and in record time, reflecting the bank's belief in improving its customer's experience. He added that Bank made sure that the conversion was being executed in an efficient manner through communicating with customers to assist them with transferring their accounts and products into Shariah-compliant alternatives.



KFH
Chairman
Hamad
AlMarzouq

Market Movements

20-12-2023

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts
UAE			SAUDI	-10.56	11,702.90
JAPAN	+16.70	4,014.28	EGYPT	-238.86	24,837.56
DFM			PHILIPPINES	-0.52	6,520.75
Nikkei	+456.55	33,675.94	PAKISTAN	-146.62	62,575.77
			Tadawul		
			EGX 30		
			PSEI		
			KSE 100		

Business

Central Bank of Kuwait reports 15.1% decline in bank derivative investments

Kuwait derivatives oversight limited to domestic trading

By Ahmad Fathi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 20: Investments in financial derivatives by local banks experienced a decline over the initial 10 months of 2023, decreasing by 15.1% to 1.965 billion dinars. This contrasts with December 2022's 12.951 billion dinars, marking a decline according to data from the Central Bank of Kuwait in October. On an annual basis, these investments increased by 10.3%, reaching 1.03 billion dinars, compared to 9.956 billion dinars in October 2022. However, a monthly increase of 7.8%, approximately 796.9 million dinars, was observed from the end of September, when the total was 10.1 billion dinars.

The trajectory of bank investments in financial derivatives fluctuated throughout 2023. Decreasing from 12.951 billion dinars in December 2022 to 10.654 billion dinars in January, it rose in February to 10.934 billion dinars. Yet, it declined to 10.176 billion in March, reaching 10 billion in April, 9.836 billion in May, and

'15 years of positive balance'

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 20, (KUNA): Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan in November narrowed 18.2 percent from a year earlier to JPY 82.5 billion (USD 574 million), down for the second month, due to slow exports, government data showed Wednesday.

However, Kuwait stayed in black ink with Japan for 15 years as exports still outpaced imports in value, the Finance Ministry said in a preliminary report.

Overall exports from Kuwait to Japan shrank 10.3 percent year-on-year to JPY 109.7 billion (USD 763 million) for the second straight month of decline. Imports from Japan jumped 26.8 percent to JPY 27.2 billion (USD 189 million), up for the 19th month in a row.

Middle East's trade surplus with Japan also narrowed 20.5 percent to JPY 882.3 billion (USD 6.1 billion) last month, with Japan-bound exports from the region sliding 10.9 percent from a year earlier. Crude oil, refined products, lique-

fied natural gas (LNG) and other natural resources, which accounted for 95.4 percent of the region's total exports to Japan, went down 11.4 percent.

The region's imports from Japan soared 25.6 percent on robust demand for automobiles, machinery and manufactured goods.

The third-largest economy in the world recorded a worldwide trade deficit in November for the second month, amounting to JPY 776.9 billion (USD 5.4 billion), but it shrank in size by 62.2 percent from the previous year.

Exports edged down 0.2 percent from the year before, due to sluggish shipments of steel, semiconductor production and vessels. Imports dropped 11.9 percent on lower energy prices. LNG and crude oil. China remained Japan's biggest trade partner, followed by the US.

The trade data are measured on a customs-cleared basis before adjustment for seasonal factors.

9.725 billion in June. Subsequently, it increased to 10.304 billion dinars in July, only to decrease again in August to 10 billion dinars and reach 10.1 billion in September.

Financial derivatives encompass diverse investment instruments derived from the value of financial or other assets (such as stocks, bonds, real estate, currencies, and commodities). These instruments include futures contracts, options contracts, and more. Futures contracts involve agreements to buy or sell assets at an agreed-upon price on a future date. Options contracts, on the other hand, grant one party the right (but not the obligation) to buy or sell

an asset at a predetermined price on a future date, with payment of a premium.

Several Kuwaiti banks have previously obtained approval from the Central Bank of Kuwait to establish special purpose companies in the Cayman Islands, specifically for dealing in financial derivatives contracts. Regulatory authorities, including the Central Bank of Kuwait, the Capital Markets Authority, and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, have collaborated to create a regulatory framework for derivatives trading. Notably, a Capital Markets Authority decision in October 2021 mandated companies involved in financial derivatives to regularize their status, with oversight limited to deriva-

tives traded in Kuwait.

As part of Kuwait's efforts to upgrade its market from "emerging" to "advanced emerging" in the "FTSE Russell" index, the Capital Markets Authority is implementing a strategy to develop and enhance the market's appeal to investors. This involves expanding the offering of financial products and services, including listing and trading platforms for bonds, instruments, exchange-traded funds, financial derivatives, and repurchase contracts. These initiatives align with Kuwait's ambition to become a regional financial and commercial center, competing with other Gulf markets, and attract both foreign and local investors.

'Focus on continuous improvement'

Warba obtains 'ISO certificate' for quality management system

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 20: Warba Bank obtained the prestigious ISO certificate for quality management system QMS Global Group ISO 9001:2015 after successfully passing all stages of evaluation. This certificate is considered the first and best standard in the world for improving the performance of operations and levels of customer satisfaction. This certificate helps organizations monitor and manage quality in all operations, and sets a reference standard to measure operations in an objective manner.

The Chief Operations Officer at Warba Bank, Layali Mustafa Al-Fahad, expressed her pride in reaching this achievement, which confirms Warba's commitment to implementing its vision aimed at achieving the best global practices for the quality management system in accordance with international standards, which raised the ceiling of the challenges, to provide distinguished levels of service that exceed customers' expectations. Pointing out that it is a new addition to the Bank's achievements, as this certificate is the culmination of the Bank's efforts over the past years and its major role in improving the level of its operations. She stated that Warba's obtaining

the ISO certification comes in conjunction with the growing competitiveness in the banking sector. This increased Warba's competitive capabilities and encouraged it to continue achieving excellence in all its products and services to meet the needs of its clients and the Bank's constant keenness to follow the latest methods and applications in work methodology and meet the requirements of clients and the development and success partners.

She pointed out that the Bank is constantly improving the quality management systems and operations, which is reflected on the Bank's level, explaining that this new certificate is considered an important developmental step for the Bank's administrative quality system by obtaining international recognition, which is an evidence of the Bank's implementation of the quality policy, which is represented by continuous development, improving customer satisfaction, and applying the best international practices, which are in line with the Bank's aspirations to enhance Warba Bank's leadership position in the Kuwaiti banking sector, and adopting the digital transformation methodology in its various operations.



Operations Group Certification Ceremony.

Asia, led by India expected to drive global oil demand growth

Oil prices rebound as talks of rate cuts and ship attacks impact market

By Kamco Invest

Rate cut talks and ship attacks rescue oil from 5-month lows...

Crude oil prices reached the lowest level in 5 months last week led by concerns on the demand front coupled with oversupply in the market. Brent crude oil future traded below the USD 80/b mark to reach USD 73.2 on 12-December-2023, the lowest since end of June-

2023. A small m-o-m increase in inflation in the US during November-2023 also dampened sentiments in the market as interest rates were expected to remain higher for longer, that would affect oil demand. However, a surprise draw in US crude stocks last week as well as tanker attacks in the Red Sea pushed prices up by 4.6% over the next two trading sessions. Additional gains were recorded when the US Fed left rates unchanged in its latest meeting and signaled that rates have peaked, and cuts are in discussion for next year. A sharp fall in USD against a basket of currencies reaching the lowest in four months led by news of peak rates also supported the gain in oil prices this week. On the other hand, the additional voluntary oil output cuts of 2.2 mb/d announced by OPEC+ producers had only a minimal impact on prices. These cuts would be implemented during Q1-2024 and would gradually unwind depending on market conditions.

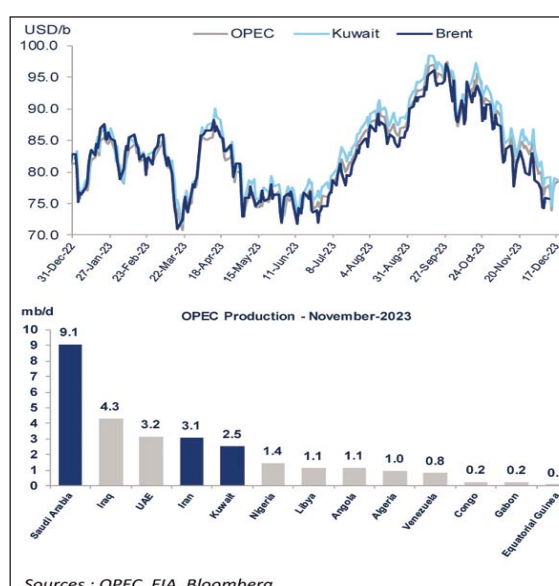
Latest economic surveys have forecasted rate cuts starting from mid-next year and a lower chance of a recession resulting from a soft landing in economic growth. Inflation is also forecasted to trend lower, and gradually approach the 2% target, although core inflation continues to remain adamant. The latest Fed dot plot showed 17 of 19 Fed policymakers seeing rates lower by the end of 2024 and none seeing higher rates.

On the demand front, OPEC remained bullish on oil demand expectations for next year as it maintained its previous forecast in its December-2023 report. On the other hand, the latest monthly report from the IEA showed a sharply decelerating demand during Q4-2023 and 2024. The agency said that this was led by a slowdown in economic activity in key countries. A Bloomberg report showed that demand growth in China is expected to slow down next year as pent-up demand post the pandemic begins to fade away. A similar trend is expected to be seen in oil demand trend in India where consumption is expected to see a much smaller growth than 2022 and 2023. Nevertheless, Asia is expected to account for the bulk of the growth in global oil demand next year with India expected to play a crucial role in offsetting the economically challenged slowdown in China. In terms of product category, jet fuel still has significant untapped opportunity followed by gasoline in some markets.

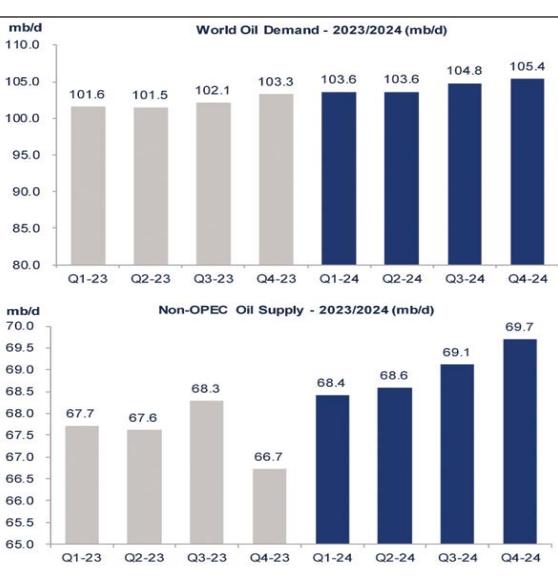
On the supply front, OPEC production declined for the first time in four months during November-2023. Average daily production reached 28.1 mb/d, according to data from Bloomberg, after ten out of thirteen countries in the group reported a m-o-m declines. On the other hand, oil production in the US remained at near record highs at 13.1 mb/d as of the week ended 8-December-2023.

Oil Prices

Oil traded below the USD 80/b mark during the first two weeks of December-2023 led by concerns on the demand front, while production in the US was at record highs. Prices declined for seven consecutive weeks until the week ended 8-December- 2023 followed by a marginal gain of 0.9% seen last week. The weakness reflected subdued demand expectations from China coupled with a slowdown in demand expected in India in 2024. The two countries were the pri-



Sources : OPEC, EIA, Bloomberg



mary reason for demand growth last year but with the pent up demand since the pandemic related to travel and consumption now fading, all eyes were on economic activity in these countries. In China, the recently announced economic stimulus with record cash infusion may have only a minimal impact on economic growth but its immediate impact on the property sector was positive. In terms of product categories, demand for heating oil is expected to surge in China given the cold spell, although consumption in the transportation may offset the expected spike.

Oil futures also showed signs of weakness with bearish pressure seen in all key global pricing hubs. A Bloomberg report showed several crude grade timespreads now trading in contango indicating an oversupplied market especially led by supplies from the US that are offsetting OPEC+ supply cuts. Traders added that the physical oil market has remained well supplied. Prices of almost all crude grades reported declines for the second consecutive month during November-2023. Average Brent crude prices dropped by 8.9% to reach USD 83.1/b. The decline in average OPEC reference basket price and Kuwait export grade prices were slightly smaller at 7.5% and 7.1% to reach USD 84.9/b and USD 86.3/b, respectively. Meanwhile, the consensus estimate for Brent crude underwent a downgrade from last month's forecast. Prices are now expected to reach USD 87.0/b at the end of Q4-2023 as compared to USD 90.0/b expected last month for the quarter. Expectations for the next two quarters were also downgraded, as per the consensus estimates from Bloomberg. The US EIA also lowered its forecast for oil in its latest outlook report. The agency expects Brent spot to average at USD 82.4/b its previous forecast of USD 83.99/b. For 2024, the EIA expects Brent to average at USD 82.57/b vs. its previous forecast of USD 93.24/b.

World Oil Demand

World oil demand growth forecast for 2023 was kept unchanged by the OPEC in its latest monthly report at 2.5 mb/d to reach 102.11 mb/d. However, estimates were updated at the country level with downward revisions to demand data for the OECD Europe and Asia Pacific region for Q2-2023 and Q4-2023 were offset by upward revision to demand data

for the OECD Americas. The upgrade reflected better-than-expected growth mainly in Canada. The non-OECD region also underwent revisions with demand data for the Middle East and Africa region seeing downward revisions during Q3-2023 and Q4-2023 that was offset by upward revision to data for China, Other Asia and Latin America regions. On the product front, demand for jet fuel and gasoline is expected to go up in the US as seen from forecasts of record air passengers set for the last week of December-2023. Road travel is also forecasted to see a record number of drivers due to the holidays as well as led by cheapest gasoline price in 2.5 years. Jet fuel demand in India and China is also expected to see strong growth with China's jet fuel demand is expected to rise to around 0.86 mb/d by the end of January-2024, the highest since 2020 as per BloombergNEF. That said, crude oil imports crude oil imports dropped to the lowest level in four months during November-2024. Jet fuel demand in India also reached pre-pandemic levels during the festive season but fizzled out during November-2023. According to oil ministry's data, aggregate consumption dropped by 2.8% to reach 18.72 million tonnes in November-2023 from 19.26 million tonnes in October-2023 as sale of all end products were down as compared to the previous month.

Estimates for 2024 was also kept unchanged with demand expected to grow by 2.2 mb/d to reach 104.4 mb/d. Meanwhile, forecasts from IEA were much more muted vs. OPEC with the agency expected demand to decelerate sharply next year after.

The IEA expects macroeconomic headwinds to affect demand growth in 2024 that is expected to reach 930 tb/d vs. 2.4 mb/d growth this year. The agency said that this year's growth reflected pent up demand post the pandemic while a slowdown in GDP growth will weigh on consumption for most products in 2024.

World Oil Supply

Global liquids production dropped during November-2023 after seeing an increase last month. According to preliminary data, global oil supply averaged at 101.74 mb/d following a m-o-m decline of 0.43 mb/d. According to OPEC, the decline was led by lower production by non-

OPEC producers. Non-OPEC suppliers showed a decline of 0.4 mb/d during the month with production averaging at 73.9 mb/d led by a drop in production in Russia and Kazakhstan that was partially offset by higher output from Other Asia, Canada and Other Eurasia.

In terms of forecast for the full year, OPEC kept non-OPEC supply growth estimates for 2023 unchanged at 1.8 mb/d with production expected to average at 67.6 mb/d. However, there were revisions at the country level during the month. Supply estimates for Latin America, mainly Brazil (+30 tb/d) witnessed an upward revision that was fully offset by downward revision to supplies from the UK (-10 tb/d) and Azerbaijan (-13 tb/d). Oil production in the US hovered around record levels over the last few weeks backed by increasing drilling efficiency from shale producers, although budgets are expected to be curtailed for the coming year. This was also reflected in the subdued levels of oil rigs at around 500 in recent months.

Supply growth forecast for 2024 was also kept unchanged at 1.4 mb/d with non-OPEC supply averaging at 69.0 mb/d.

However, revisions were made to supply data for Azerbaijan that is expected to recover its 2023 loss in output next year whereas Oman and Kazakhstan underwent downward revisions of -10 tb/d and -20 tb/d, respectively.

OPEC Oil Production & Spare Capacity

Oil production by the OPEC witnessed its first decline in four months during November-2023. Aggregate production reached 28.1 mb/d during the month registering a decline of 140 tb/d, as per Bloomberg data, mainly led by higher lower production in 10 out of 13 producers. Almost all top producers in the group, barring Saudi Arabia, witnessed marginal decline in production. Production data from OPEC secondary sources also showed a relatively small decline in production during the month by 57 tb/d with aggregate production reaching 27.9 mb/d during the month. The decline, as per OPEC, was led by a steep decline in production in Iraq (-77 tb/d) and Angola (-37 tb/d) while the rest of the members saw either marginal increase or flatish production during the month. Both OPEC and Bloomberg reports showed a small growth in production in Saudi Arabia that reached around 9.0 mb/d.

In the latest meeting, the OPEC+ producers agreed to extend cuts into next year and added an additional 0.9 mb/d of additional cuts, over and above the 1.3mb/d of voluntary cuts by Saudi Arabia and Russia. The additional cuts would be implemented during Q1-2024 and would be unwound thereafter depending on market forces or would be extended if needed. This comes over and above the 3.66 million of pledged cuts by the group that would be in force until the end of next year. The meeting also saw Brazil becoming a member of the OPEC group starting next year, although the production quotas would not apply to Brazil, according to a statement.

As a result of the recent OPEC+ meeting, Saudi Arabia is expected to produce at around the current level of 9.0 mb/d mark, one of the lowest by the Kingdom. Recent data from JODI showed crude exports from Saudi Arabia reaching the highest level in four months during October- 2023, rising by 9.6% m-o-m to 6.3 mb/d.

Meanwhile, oil production in Iraq remained subdued over the last several months led by the deadlock with Turkey over exports of oil from the Kurdish region through a Turkish pipeline. The most recent data on oil production showed a steep decline this month to reach 4.3 mb/d. A recent deal with China and Iraq aims to double the exports to the country by 50% aimed at funding infrastructure projects under an oil for project agreement.

Alibaba appoints Eddie Wu as e-commerce chief

China's Alibaba Group says its CEO Eddie Wu will head its core e-commerce business, as the company seeks to drive growth and fend off fast-growing online shopping rivals like Pinduoduo. Wu is replacing Trudy Dai, a longtime Alibaba executive who was one of the founding employees of the company. Alibaba's chairman Joe Tsai said in an internal letter dated Wednesday that Dai will help set

up an asset management company aimed at improving returns on capital and "enhance shareholder value." The reshuffle came after PDD Holdings Inc., which operates online shopping platform Pinduoduo and U.S.-focused e-commerce site Temu, surpassed Alibaba in market value in the past month. As of Tuesday, PDD's market capitalization of its U.S.-listed stock was \$199.41 billion. Ali-

baba's was \$191.75 billion. Alibaba founder Jack Ma earlier this month praised PDD for having managed to grow bigger than his Hangzhou-based company, which had for years been China's biggest e-commerce player. Alibaba needs a "brand-new strategy" and a change in the firm's organizational principles and systems to a "brand new environment," Tsai said in his letter. (AP)

Airbnb admits to misleading Aussies with USD charges

An Australian court on Wednesday ordered Airbnb to pay a 15 million Australian dollar (\$10 million) fine, and the accommodation rental company could pay as much again in compensating customers who had been unaware they were being charged in U.S. rather than Australian dollars. Airbnb admitted making false or misleading representations to

Australian users between January 2018 and August 2021 that prices shown on its platform for Australian accommodations were in Australian dollars, which are worth less than the greenback. For about 63,000 customers, the prices were in U.S. dollars. Federal Court Justice Brendan McElwaine ordered Airbnb to pay a AU\$15 million fine within 30 days for breaching Australian

consumer law, plus AU\$400,000 in prosecution costs. Airbnb had earlier provided the court with an undertaking that it would pay as much as AU\$15 million in compensation to eligible customers. Airbnb amended its platform on Aug. 31, 2021, so that prices in U.S. dollars were clearly denoted through the use of the abbreviation "USD." (AP)

Investors eye positive signs for 2024

Resilient US economy defies recession fears, navigates inflation concerns

NEW YORK, Dec 20, (AP): In a year full of big numbers, with strong gains for stocks and even more fantastic flights for crypto, it was one shrinking number that superseded all.

Inflation, the scourge of the global economy, moderated this year. It's still relatively high, particularly after the many years of low inflation that everyone enjoyed before U.S. inflation topped 9% two summers ago. But it's cooled enough to get investors looking ahead to a 2024 where interest rates may be on the way down instead of up. Globally, inflation is estimated to have come down to 6.9% from 8.7% last year.

Surprisingly, the U.S. economy also held up through the year despite worries at the start of it that a recession may be inevitable. For a while, the worry was even that the economy may be too strong, which could have fed into upward pressure on inflation and forced the Federal Reserve to keep interest rates higher for longer.

That led to counter-intuitive moments where Wall Street actually cheered weaker reports on the economy, as long as they weren't too weak, because they kept alive the possibility of a perfect landing for the economy engineered by the Federal Reserve. The goal was for the economy to slow just enough to snuff out high inflation, but not so much that it falls into a recession.

Now, with the economy still growing and expectations rising for cuts to rates coming in 2024, investors have rushed to get ahead of the moves, which can act like steroids for all kinds of markets. U.S. stocks bounced back from their dismal 2022, which was Wall Street's worst year since the dot-com bubble was deflating two decades earlier.

Much of Wall Street's run was due to just a small group of stocks, but breadth was better around the world. Stock markets across the Americas, Europe and Asia all rose.

Higher interest rates left their mark, however, notably in the U.S. housing market. Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes slumped in October to their slowest pace in more than 13 years.

Here's a look at some of the striking numbers that shaped global financial markets in 2023.

The headline inflation rate at the consumer level in November in the U.S. Inflation peaked at 9.1% in June 2022. The Federal Reserve's target level is 2%.

Overall inflation in the European Union in November, a far cry from a peak of 10.6% in October 2022. Energy prices plunged 11.5% from the same month a year earlier. But food inflation remains stubbornly high at 6.9%.

The price increase for U.S. used cars from February 2020 through the peak in January 2022. From January 2022 through this November, prices for used cars declined 11.5%.

Price

National average price per gallon of milk in November, up 25% from \$3.20 just before the pandemic in February 2020.

The rate of inflation in Argentina. The government has responded by slashing the country's currency value in half, suspending public works and cutting subsidies for gas and electricity among a number of drastic measures.

Consecutive months that the U.S. unemployment rate has come in below 4%, the longest streak since a 27-month run from November 1967 through January 1970. The job market held up even as the Federal Reserve tried to slow the economy to fight inflation.

The percentage of Americans that disapproved of President Biden's handling of the economy in an October poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. That sentiment, if it persists, could hamper Biden in his expected election rematch with former president Trump.

The estimated decline in investment in China's property sector from January through October, according to the World Bank. Weakness in the property sector and in global demand for China's exports, as well as high debt levels and wavering consumer confidence have weighed on the country's economy.

The contraction in Germany's economy in the third quarter. Europe's biggest economy should shrink again slightly in the current quarter, the Bundesbank estimates. Expected growth in world trade



Shoppers rest with their purchases outside Macy's in Herald Square, on Monday, Dec. 11, 2023, in New York. Confidence is growing among Federal Reserve officials and many economists that high interest rates and healed supply chains will soon defeat inflation. (AP)

in 2023, down from 5.2% in 2022 and sixth weakest in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development records going back to 1980. The slump reflects a slowing global economy, growing protectionism and geopolitical tensions between the U.S. and China.

This small number of stocks was alone responsible for roughly two-thirds of the S&P 500's return in 2023 through mid-December. Apple, Microsoft, Alphabet, Amazon, Nvidia, Tesla and Meta Platforms are also Wall Street's biggest stocks.

The year-to-date gain for Japan's Nikkei 225 index, as of Dec. 19. It was the Nikkei's best performance since 2013. In July, the index rose to 33,753.33, its highest level since 1990.

Bitcoin surged past this level in December after starting the year below \$16,300. It and other cryptocurrencies had tumbled last year as rising rates hit investments seen as particularly risky.

The return for the largest U.S. bond mutual fund, as of Dec. 14. As recently as November, it had been on track for a third straight yearly loss. But excitement about potential cuts to rates sent bond prices soaring.

The combined number of days the S&P 500 rose or fell by at least 2% in 2023. The index rose 24.2% through the year, as of Dec. 19. In 2022, a down year for stocks, there were more than 40 such days.

The peak for the yield on the 10-year U.S. Treasury, a level not seen since 2007. Bond yields marched higher for much of the year, then reversed sharply over the last two months. The 10-year yield stood at 3.92% on Dec. 19.

The average rate on a 60-month auto loan in August 2023, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. The rate was 5.27% in August 2019.

The average credit card interest rate as of August, according to the Federal Reserve. That's up from 16.3% in 2022 and 14.6% in 2021.

The number of times Federal Reserve officials expect to cut interest rates in 2024, according to recently released projections. The Fed raised rates 11 times between March 2022 and July of this year before pausing.

The European Central Bank's benchmark interest rate. Like the Fed, the ECB kept rates steady at its latest meeting. Unlike the Fed, the ECB did not signal the possibility of rates cuts next year.

The average rate on a 30-year mortgage on Oct. 26, according to Freddie Mac. It was the highest average rate since Nov. 11, 2000.

The median monthly payment listed by prospective homebuyers on mortgage applications in October, a 9.3% increase from a year earlier.

The share of U.S. homeowners who had a home loan with a fixed rate of 5% or less as of September.

The number of existing U.S. homes on the market at the end of October. That was down 5.7% from October 2022 and is roughly half the historical average going back to 1999. Sales of existing homes fell 20.2% in the first 10 months of the year.

The median sales price of a previously occupied U.S. home in October. It was up 3.4% from the same month in 2022.

UK inflation slumps to 3.9%, hits 2-year low in November

LONDON, Dec 20, (AP): Inflation in the U.K. as measured by the consumer prices index eased back to its lowest level in more than two years, official figures showed Wednesday, in a development that stoked speculation that the Bank of England may start cutting interest rates sooner than expected.

The Office for National Statistics said inflation dropped to 3.9% in the year to November, its lowest level since September 2021, from 4.6% the previous month. That decline was bigger than anticipated in financial markets.

The agency said the biggest driver for the fall was a decrease in fuel prices after an increase at the same time last year. Food price inflation also contributed to the decline.

The sharp drop has fueled expectations that the Bank of England, which sets interest rates in order to hit a 2% target, may move to reduce borrowing rates possibly in the first half of 2024.

The pound dropped 0.6% to \$1.2650, a sign that traders think the central bank may look to cut rates soon, which would reduce relative returns for holders of the currency.

"The Bank has been loath to put a timetable on rate cuts in 2024 but this clearly raises the prospect of the Bank being a position to ease policy in the first half of the year, rather than later," said Neil Wilson, chief markets analyst at Finalto. "At least it will prompt the market to buy into this idea."

Change

That's a marked change from last week when the Bank of England left its main interest rate at a 15-year high of 5.25%, where it has stood since August following the end of nearly two years of hikes. Bank Gov. Andrew Bailey said interest rate policy would likely have to remain "restrictive for an extended period of time."

The Bank of England has managed to get inflation down from a four-decade high of over 11% but still has a way to go to get to its target of 2%.

Higher interest rates targeted a surge in inflation, first stoked by supply chain issues during the coronavirus pandemic and then Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which pushed up food and energy costs.

While the interest rate increases have helped in the battle against inflation, the squeeze on consumer spending, primarily through higher mortgage rates, has weighed on growth in the British economy. There are growing worries that rates will stay high for too long, unnecessarily damaging the economy.

However soon the Bank of England decides to cut rates, it's very likely that relatively high borrowing rates and low economic growth will be the backdrop for next year's general election. That's also a concern for the governing Conservative Party, which opinion polls say is way behind the main opposition Labour Party.

Fuels rate cut speculation

Tesla recalls 2 million vehicles

Elon Musk's anti-union stance sparks labor dispute in Sweden

STOCKHOLM, Dec 20, (AP): Tesla has found itself locked in an increasingly bitter dispute with union workers in Sweden and neighboring countries. The showdown pits the electric car maker's CEO Elon Musk, who's staunchly anti-union, against the strongly held labor ideals of Scandinavian countries.

None of Tesla's workers anywhere in the world are unionized, raising questions about whether strikes could spread to other parts of Europe where employees commonly have collective bargaining rights - notably in Germany, Tesla's most important market.

Here are key things to know about the union fight:

About 130 mechanics at 10 Tesla garages across Sweden walked off the job on Oct. 27 over the company's refusal to sign a collective bargaining agreement. Tesla doesn't have a factory in Sweden, but does have a network of service centers.

Since the mechanics with the powerful Swedish metalworkers' union IF Metall went on strike, other workers around the country have joined in sympathy, withholding their services to pressure the company.

Members of the country's transport union say they'll stop collecting waste from Tesla service centers starting Sunday. Employees with supplier Hydro Extrusions, which makes aluminum profiles, are refusing to make a component for Tesla cars.

Other unions say their members won't paint Tesla cars, clean the company's offices or service electrical systems at its workshops or any of its 70 charging stations in Sweden.

Postal workers have stopped delivering license plates for new Tesla vehicles, prompting Tesla to sue the Swedish Transport Agency, demanding that it be allowed to retrieve the plates, and PostNord, the company that delivers the registration numbers. Tesla lost an early battle in the case, which is still working through the courts.

The boycott has escalated by spreading to neighboring Nordic countries. Like in Sweden, dockworkers in Denmark won't unload Tesla vehicles arriving at ports. Unions in Finland and those in Norway have warned that workers at ports and workshops will join the strike, if the dispute isn't resolved by Wednesday.

A group of 16 institutional investors including KLP, Norway's biggest pension fund, and PensionDanmark, have written to Tesla board chair

Robyn Denholm. They have urged the company to reconsider its approach to unions and asked for a meeting to discuss it further.

PensionDanmark has sold its 476 million kroner (\$70 million) stake in the carmaker, saying it's putting Tesla on its blacklist "in the light of the conflict spreading to Denmark and Tesla's latest and very categorical denial to reach collective agreements in any country."

Paedagoernes Pension, Denmark's teachers' pension fund, sold its 242 million kroner (\$35 million) stake in Tesla because it "cannot compromise" on its core values, CEO Sune Schackenfjeldt said in a statement.

The fund discussed workers' rights with Tesla in March, but Musk's "hard course against the Nordic trade union movement" makes continued investment unsustainable, it said.

Also:

DETROIT: Tesla's recall of more than 2 million of its electric vehicles - an effort to have drivers who use its Autopilot system pay closer attention to the road - relies on technology that research shows may not work as intended.

Tesla, the leading manufacturer of EVs, reluctantly agreed to the recall last week after a two-year investigation by the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration found that Tesla's system to monitor drivers was defective and required a fix.

The system sends alerts to drivers if it fails to detect torque from hands on the steering wheel, a system that experts describe as ineffective.

Government documents filed by Tesla say the online software change will increase warnings and alerts to drivers to keep their hands on the steering wheel. It also may limit the areas where the most commonly used versions of Autopilot can be used, though that isn't entirely clear in Tesla's documents.

NHTSA began its investigation in 2021, after receiving 11 reports that Teslas that were using the partially automated system crashed into parked emergency vehicles. Since 2016, the agency has sent investigators to at least 35 crashes in which Teslas that were suspected of operating on a partially automated driving system hit parked emergency vehicles, motorcyclists or tractor trailers that crossed in the vehicles' paths, causing a total of 17 deaths.

Germany seeks forfeiture of \$789 mln frozen Russian funds

BERLIN, Dec 20, (AP): Germany's federal prosecutor has filed a motion for asset forfeiture concerning more than 720 million euros (\$789 million) of frozen Russian money.

The prosecutor's office said Wednesday that the aim of the motion, which was filed on July 7, is to seize the money deposited by a Russian financial institution in a Frankfurt bank account because of a suspected attempt to violate embargo regulations, which is criminalized under the German Foreign Trade and Payments Act.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022, the European Union has imposed various sanctions and restrictions on Russia. The

measures have targeted the energy sector, banks, companies and markets, and made more than 1,000 Russian officials subject to asset freezes and travel bans.

According to a report on news site Spiegel Online, the federal prosecutor's office wants the frozen funds to go into state coffers.

In June 2022, the Council of the European Union listed the Russian financial institution, which wasn't explicitly named in the prosecutor's statement, in the so-called Russia Embargo Order. As a consequence, any assets of the entity deposited with European financial institutions could no longer be subject to transactions, but were "frozen."

What's On



Winners honored at Kala (Art) Kuwait's NIRAM 2023 ceremony.

Indian Embassy Second Secretary inaugurates prize distribution ceremony

Kala (Art) Kuwait recognizes young artists at NIRAM 2023

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 20: Kala (Art) Kuwait "NIRAM 2023" Children's Day painting competition has concluded with the grand prize distribution to all winners at a colorful ceremonial function held at Aspire Indian International School, Abbasiya on Friday, 15th December 2023. The program was witnessed by community leaders, business personalities, school principals, art teachers, parents and media representatives. The painting competition was held on 10th November 2023 the occasion of the birthday of late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Independent India.

Mr. Harit Ketan Shelat, Second Secretary, Indian Embassy Kuwait, has inaugurated the function. During the inaugural speech, Mr. Harit appreciated all winners for their fabulous painting works, which were displayed at the entrance and appreciated the organizers for conducting such a big programs.

The spectacular evening started with the National Anthem of Kuwait followed by India. The welcome speech was addressed by Mr. Rakesh P. D. General Secretary, Kala (Art) Kuwait. Organization President Mr. Jaisson Joseph. Chaired the function. NIRAM-2023 program reporting done by Niram Coordinator Mr. Mukesh V.P. and Judging Assessment was briefed by Niram-2023 Judge Mr. Sasi Krishnan. The 19th

Anniversary souvenir of "NIRAM" was released by Ms. Kumuda Rajendra, handing over the first copy to Ambili Rakegsh, Niram 2023 General Convener.

The program was enriched by the presence of the chief dignitaries on the dais, Mr. Noufal, General Manager, American Tourister, Ms. Kumuda Rajendra, Goscore Learning, Mr. Vishnu, Jazeera Airways, Mr. Toby Mathew, Aspire, Mr. Sivi Paul, United Logistic, Mr. Varghese, GAT, Mr. Suhail, Faber Castle, Mr. Chesil Ramapuram, Kala (Art) Kuwait office bearers Mr. Sadik, Mrs. Ambily Ragesh, Mrs. Jyothi Sivakumar, Mr. Sunil Kumar, Mr. Siva Kumar, Mr. Ajith Kumar, Mr. Aneesh Varghese and Niram-2023 Judges Artist Sasi Krishnan, Artist Sunil Kulanada, Artist Hari Chengannur and Artist Rajive Kumar.

Panel of Judges were honored by Kala (Art) Kuwait in recognition of their laudable contributions in the field of Arts. Kala (Art) Kuwait Treasurer Ashraf Vithura thanked the guests and audience. Then the prizes to all the group winners were presented by the dignitaries

It is noteworthy that a total of 2300 students from 28 Indian schools in Kuwait have participated in the competition classified into 5 groups and the prizes were distributed among, Five 1st Prizes in to each group, Six 2nd Prizes, Nine 3rd prizes, 86 Merit Prizes and 230 consolation prizes (total 335 prizes).

The first place winners of each group received a Gold coin & Gold medal. Second place winner with silver medal and Third place winner with bronze medal apart from memento and certificate. Merit Prize & Consolation Prize winners received Trophy, Certificate. All winners have received American Tourister sponsored bag, Jazeera Airways Gift Pack, Goscore Gift Voucher and On-coast refreshments.

Kala (Art) Kuwait thanked all the participants as well as School Managements, Sponsors, All Indian Associations, Kuwait's English dailies, Web Portals and Malayalam Media for their wholehearted support to make the event a grand success. Also thanked the Parents and Art Teachers for their cooperation and support and to the management of Aspire Indian International School, Abbasiya.

The Prize Winners are as follows:
Overall Championship: 1st Position- IES-Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan, Abbasiya, 2nd Position - Learners Own Academy, Abbasiya 3rd Position-Fahaheel Al-Watanieh Indian private School, Ahmadi
Bhaskaran Memorial Trophy as a tribute to Late. Mr. C Bhaskaran, one of the founder and advisory board member of Kala (Art) Kuwait, won by IES-Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan, the school from which maximum numbers of students were participated in this event.

Group-A: 1st Prize-Reyna Eliza-

Indian businessman expresses condolence and sympathy for Sheikh Nawaf's demise

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 20: Yusuf Ali MA, prominent Indian businessman and Chairman of Lulu Group International today offered his condolences and sympathy to His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, Prime Minister Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and other royal family members on the passing of late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Mohamed Haris, Lulu Kuwait Director also accompanied Yusuf Ali.



Photo from the event.

Group-B: 1st Prize-Parthiv Kailas, 4th Std., Learners Own Academy, IInd Prize-Dhyana Krishna, 2nd Std., Smart Indian School, Kuwait, IInd

Prize-Saraswata Roy, 4th Std., Fahaheel Al-Watanieh Indian private School, Ahmadi.
Group-C: 1st Prize-Samantha Smith Sunil, 7th Std., Learners Own Academy, IInd Prize-Rithul Mathew Jerry, 6th Std., United Indian School, Abbasiya, IInd Prize-Soha Khanum, 6th Std., IES-Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan and Rosann P Binoy, 7th Std., Indian Community School, Amman.
Group-D: 1st Prize-Eunice Dinjen, 12th Std., Indian Community

School, Sr. Salmiya, IInd Prize-Ann Niya Jose, 9th Std., Indian Community School, Sr. Salmiya, IInd Prize-Khansa Ifrath, 8th Std., India International School, Mangaf and Ananyaa Rajesh, 12th Std., Indian Community School, Khaitan.
Clay Sculpture: 1st Prize-Sanjay Suresh, 12th Std., Learners Own Academy, IInd Prize-Onega William, 11th Std., Indian Community School, Sr. Salmiya, IInd Prize-Aryananda Ravi, 8th Std., United Indian School.



Solemn ceremony in Kuwait where Pravasandhra Reddies Association pays tribute to late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Indian community leaders unite in grief

Pravasandhra Reddies Association Kuwait pays heartfelt tributes to the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 20: Pravasandhra Reddies Association Kuwait extends its deepest condolences and pays heartfelt tributes to the late Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who peacefully passed away on December 18, 2023. The association, under the leadership of President Nayani Maheswar Reddy, organized a solemn gathering at Shaab Park, Kuwait, to honor the memory of the late Amir.

During the ceremony, the leaders of our community, including Honorary President Mummidi Venkata Subbar Reddy and Past Presidents Munnuru Chandra Shekhara Reddy, VP Rama Chandra Reddy, VA Madhusudan Reddy, and others, adorned images of the late Amir with garlands, paid their respects, and observed a two-minute condolence meeting.

Reflecting on the immense contribution of Indians and expatriates to Kuwait's prosperity, the community leaders expressed their hope that the legacy of the late Amir would continue to inspire and guide us.

The event witnessed the participation of numerous dignitaries, including Arava Subba Reddy, Pulapathuru Suresh Reddy, Pulapathuru Vasudeva Reddy, Chinnapolu Sivashankar Reddy, MV Narasa Reddy, Poli Gangi Reddy, Mannuru Rajasekhara Reddy, Basireddy Maheswara Reddy, Poli Subramaniam Reddy, Panjam Sudarshan Reddy, Suthrapu Tharun Kumar Reddy, Reddaiah Reddy, Hanumanth Reddy, Manohar Reddy, Nukareddy Srinivasulu, Tarupu Srinivasulu Reddy, Changanal Reddy, and other Committee Members.

We kindly request you to consider publishing this tribute in your esteemed newspaper and online portal as a mark of



Indian Community in Kuwait mourns the passing of Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

respect to the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Large number of people visited the camp

Pakistan Sports Association Kuwait organizes 'Blood Donation Camp'

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 20: Pakistan Sports Association Kuwait, a well known sports organization in Kuwait, organized Blood Donation Camp on Friday, 8th December, 2023 from 1:00 pm to 6:00 pm at Kuwait Central Blood Bank Jabriya.

This remarkable blood donation drive was dedicated to the people of Gaza and Palestine to express solidarity with them.

A Noble Cause to Serve the Humanity, Pakistan Sports Association and its members, dedicated themselves volunteering for the different activities of organizing the camp and most notably, a large turnout of its members & associates turned up with enthusiasm honoring the occasion.

Well known personalities from different communities, visited the camp and appreciated the well-disciplined and successful drive.

Sheikh Daej Jaber Al Ali Al Sabah, DHM Mr. Faisal Majeed from Pakistan Embassy and Consul Mr. Firas Balawi from Palestine Embassy graced the event.

The delegates were briefed on different stages the donated blood goes through, how it is preserved and how a bottle of donated blood can save up to 3 lives.

They also commended and appreciated the efforts of reaching to masses with a great message and achieving a large turnout for such a great cause of blood donation.

They stated "We are delighted to see such a well-organized, disciplined and successful blood donation camp by Pakistani community organized by Pakistan Sports Association Kuwait."

They congratulates and appreciated the efforts made by Pakistan Sports Association in this noble cause of blood donation and assured



Blood Donation Camp photo.

all support in future as well. Founder/Director General of Pakistan Sports Association Kuwait, Mr. Muhammad Irfan Adil, President Maqbool Ahmed, Vice President Muhammad Younas Shahid, Thanked Blood Bank Management, Sponsors, Media partners, community supporters, Donors, Volunteers, Team Members & all the community heads including all media representatives for visiting the blood donation camp.

People from all walk of life and nationalities visited the camp and donated blood for the noble cause.

PSA Management Thanks all the sponsors, Al Muzaini Exchange Company and Al Hafiz company Kuwait, Organizing partners Pakistan Employment Forum Kuwait, Pakistan Women Association Kuwait, Markaz Irfan ul Quran Kuwait and Green Hands Environmental Team, Media representatives were

also highly appreciated by PSA management, including Mr. Tariq Iqbal, Mr. Shahzad Iqbal from VPOP Media, Mr. Shareef Hadeesvi from Duniya News and Dharti News, Mr. Muhammad Riaz from Supreme Media, Mr. Imran Zafar, Pak Media, Aghaz News, PTV and other media Volunteers. PSA organizing team including Muhammad Irfan Adil, Maqbool Ahmed, Muhammad Younas Shahid, Khalil Ahmed, Muhammad Arslan, Shahbaz Ali, Muhammad Ali Hassan, Adil Qayyum, Awas Bajwa, Junaid Ahmed, Syed Fahim, Sayed Kashif, Shahbaz Ali, Horain Fatima, Hiba Ali, Nosheen, Ghous Ahmed, Feroz Ahmed, Muhammad Ayyan Khan, Muhammad Ali Zaheer, Muhammad bin Shahbaz, Ansar Ali, Sayed Fazil, Sayeda Dureen, Hassan Ali, Hamza Latif and Muteeb Butt who contributed towards Blood Donation Camp to make it a successful Event.

'Loaded' dives into the Velvet Underground's defiant story

LOS ANGELES, Dec 20, (AP) — Before they became synonymous with downtown cool, the Velvet Underground played a multi-band bill at a suburban New Jersey high school in 1965. Parents and kids in the crowd were repelled by the "screaming urge of sound" from Lou Reed and his bandmates, a local reviewer wrote, and retreated in horror after their second song, "Heroin."

The Velvet Underground soon found a more appreciative audience when artist Andy Warhol spotted them and set them up at the Factory, his Manhattan studio-and-happening space. But wide success and fame eluded the Velvet Underground during their fractious run. They became lionized as edgy musical groundbreakers later on — reversing the stereotypical rock band success story by breaking up and then conquering the world.

Veteran journalist and author Dylan Jones tells that unusual story in "Loaded: The Life (and Afterlife) of the Velvet Underground." Or more precisely, Jones weaves together an oral history that relies on the voices of friends, Warhol "superstars," fellow musicians and members of the band. Jones interviewed a bunch of people who were in the orbit of Reed, John Cale and the other band members. The author also relies on past interviews from Reed and others who have died.

The staying power of the Velvet Underground stems from their songs, which could be beautiful, dissonant or hypnotic. But it also revolves around their style, which has been widely copied by rockers ever since. They wore sunglasses inside. They didn't care what you thought. They could barely stand each other. "We hated everybody and everything," said Cale.

This is largely a story about Reed, who was a restless artist, a canny songwriter and — quite often — a surly jerk. But some of the book's most compelling passages describe Reed's difficult and all-too-brief partnership with the equally intense Cale, a classically trained musician from Wales.

Opinion

The book also tracks the post-Velvet work of Reed, Cale and the singer/songwriter Nico, who was featured on the band's debut album. Reed finally began getting his due in 1972 with the release of the "Transformer" album, which included the signature song "Walk On the Wild Side."

Good oral histories hit the right mix of insight, opinion and dish. And Jones mostly delivers. The off-the-wall stuff is in there too, like tales of Cale chopping the head off a chicken on stage and Reed slapping around David Bowie at a restaurant.

Jones falls a bit short in his mission of softening the image of Reed, who was notorious for being difficult, especially with journalists. But he convincingly makes the case for the band's historical importance.

"Unpack the last 50 years of pop," Jones writes, "and the broken fragments of the Velvet Underground are everywhere."

Also:

NEW YORK: Former New Jersey Gov. **Chris Christie**, a candidate for the Republican nomination for president, has a book coming out next year on the legacy of a GOP hero - former President **Ronald Reagan**.

Threshold Editions, a conservative imprint at Simon & Schuster, announced Tuesday that it will publish "What Would Reagan Do?: Life Lessons from the Last Great President" on Feb. 6.

"It's amazing what how much Reagan was able to achieve by sticking to his principles and connecting on a human level with those around him," Christie writes in the introduction. "Each chapter of this book is not only great history, it also contains a blueprint for bringing our country back to achieving big things at home and around the world."

Christie's previous books include "Let Me Finish" and "Republican Rescue."

NEW YORK: **Bill Maher** has had a few second thoughts, or at least some variations on the first ones.

Next June, Simon & Schuster will publish "What This Comedian Said Will Shock You," in which the outspoken host of HBO's "Real Time With Bill Maher" revisits some of his on-air commentary. According to the publisher's announcement Friday, Maher "reviewed more than a decade of his editorials, rewriting, reimagining, and updating them, and adding new material to speak exactly to the moment we're in."

Subjects range from free speech and drugs to religion and show business.

"We're not investigative journalists - we don't break stories, we break new ways of looking at stories," Maher said in a statement.

Maher's previous books include "The New New Rules" and the novel "True Story."

Books

Variety

Features

ARABIC TIMES

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2023



This image released by Neon shows Patrick Dempsey as Piero Taruffi in a scene from 'Ferrari.' (AP)

Film

A stylish biopic that leaves audiences lukewarm

'Ferrari' hits road, but misses the heart

By Mark Kennedy

Napoleon Bonaparte. Leonard Bernstein. Willy Wonka. Aquaman - there are a ton of Guy Movie Heroes out there as 2023 ends. And yet it zooms another - in "Ferrari."

Director Michael Mann has put his stylish spotlight on yet one more stoic, brilliant and broken uber-masculine dudes, Enzo Ferrari. The movie is set during a turbulent few months in 1957 when the Italian automaker's private and professional lives threatened to careen out of control.

It's a solid vehicle but it will leave you, well, unmoved.

"Ferrari" has excellent work by Adam Driver as Ferrari, aged up two decades with grey at his temple, sunglasses clamped to his head at all times and a frosty demeanor.

When we meet him, Ferrari is at a crossroads. He needs to ramp up production and sell hundreds of cars a year or risk bankrupting the company that he and his wife, Laura, have built from the ashes of world war.

Enzo and Laura are still recovering from losing a son to muscular dystrophy but she doesn't know that Mr. Ferrari has another family - a girlfriend (Shailene Woodley, great but wrong here) who has given birth to a secret son.

Laura is played by Penélope Cruz, whose grief is profound, her eyes heavy and her gait plodding, possibly overacting. Laura knows her husband is a cad but the rule is he must be home before the maid arrives with the morning coffee. It's a signal that the surfaces of things matter.

The private and public lives of Ferrari will ultimately come to a head with the results of the treacherous 1,000-mile race across Italy, the Mille Miglia. If Ferrari has a good showing - and embarrasses competitor Maserati - he can fill orders and everything is buono. If not, disaster.

Most of Mann's toolkit is here - slick and moody camerawork, a poetic surrounding and heightened use of music, even the car porn of "Miami Vice." But "Ferrari" - despite Mann's leaning on Italian opera - fails to ignite. One scene split between high Mass while simultaneously drivers zip through a track doesn't work no matter how high the volume is pushed.

Part of the problem is Troy Kennedy Martin's script, which tries to have it both ways, a domestic drama and also some kinetic, superb race scenes, with thick metal gears scraping, engines roaring and brave goggle-wearing drivers risking their necks at 130 mph.

Ferrari himself is on the sidelines, barking orders, and so he's lost in the second half, while we're never really invested in the five drivers he has sent out to represent the brand. Distance is a strange part of the movie and viewers will fight to find a heart in the cool elegance.

Passion

Driver does the best an actor can to reveal the warmth inside Ferrari, who seems most vulnerable alone in the crypt of his son. Outside, he screams things like "I must have total control" and demands his drivers have "deadly passion."

The movie tends to lose itself - maybe fetishize - Italian artistry: tailored shirts, fountain pens, curving exhaust manifolds, cappuccino cups and the gloriousness of Italy's cobble-street cities.

Over it all hangs loss - sons, brothers and drivers die - so that fresh deaths are almost run-of-the-mill. Ferrari doesn't miss a beat when he loses a key employee; he hires another even before the body is cold. "We all know that death is nearby," he says.

But the viewer is not so callous and a horrific event during the big race unmoores the movie. The end drifts off unresolved and tragically rerouted, it's engine broken. Failure has been snatched from

the jaws of victory.

The fact that we know the future of Ferrari - it will produce graceful, expensive roadsters lusted after and insulted in equal turns - takes away some of the jeopardy. It's also hard to root for a rich CEO with a mistress. If anything, this is a movie that will make you hit the gas a little harder coming home.

"Ferrari," a Neon release that drives into theaters on Christmas Day, is rated R for "for some violent content/graphic images, sexual content and language." Running time: 130 minutes. Two stars out of four.

Also:

Artificial intelligence is at the heart of "The Creator," **Gareth Edwards'** visually dazzling sci-fi epic which begins streaming on Hulu on Wednesday. **John David Washington** plays a retired special forces operative enlisted to help find the creator of advanced AIs after a nuclear bomb destroys downtown **Los Angeles**. In my review, I wrote that "even if it is a somewhat convoluted and silly mishmash of familiar tropes and sci-fi cliches, it still evokes the feeling of something fresh, something novel, something exciting to experience and behold - which is so much more than you can say about the vast majority of big budget movies these days."

If "The Creator" didn't have enough "Star Wars" vibes for you, Netflix has another ode to that ever-influential film from **Zack Snyder** with his long-in-the-works "Rebel Moon - Part 1: A Child of Fire." **Sofia Boutella** leads a starry cast (including **Djimon Hounsou**, **Charlie Hunnam** and the voice of **Anthony Hopkins**) in this space opera about a small colony that must rise up against a tyrannical threat to the galaxy. It begins streaming on Friday, Dec. 22 and the second part will follow in April. (AP)

LAS VEGAS: The Nevada Supreme Court has denied **Nathan Chasing Horse's** request to toss a sprawling indictment that accuses the former "Dances With Wolves" actor of leading a cult, taking underage wives and sexually abusing Indigenous women and girls for decades.

The court's decision means prosecutors can proceed with their 18-count criminal case after months of delayed proceedings while Chasing Horse challenged it. The 47-year-old has been in custody since his arrest in January near the North Las Vegas home he is said to have shared with five wives.

Chasing Horse pleaded not guilty to the charges, which include sexual assault of a minor, kidnapping and child abuse.

His lawyers argued that the case should be dismissed because, the former actor said, the sexual encounters were consensual. One of his accusers was younger than 16, the age of consent in Nevada, when the alleged abuse began, authorities said.

Public defender **Kristy Holston** also argued that the indictment was an overreach by the **Clark County** district attorney's office.

She said some of the evidence presented to the grand jury, including a definition of grooming, had tainted the state's case.

Holston didn't immediately respond to a Tuesday request for comment on the state Supreme Court's decision.

Chasing Horse is known for his portrayal of Smiles a Lot in the 1990 film "Dances with Wolves."

Law enforcement authorities say in the decades since starring in the Oscar-winning movie, Chasing Horse built a name for himself among tribes as a self-proclaimed medicine man while traveling around **North America** to perform healing ceremonies. They say he used his position to gain access to vulnerable girls and women starting in the early 2000s.

The abuse allegations cross multiple **US** states, including Nevada, where he was living at the time of his arrest, as well as **Montana** and **South Dakota**, according to the indictment. (AP)

NEW YORK: This year's winners of the I Love My Librarian Award,

\$5,000 honors presented by the American Library Association, took on a lot more than selecting books and fighting bans.

Diana Haneski, at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in **Parkland, Florida**, is a survivor of the 2018 shootings, who is committed to emotional support for others. **Fred Gitner**, of



Haneski



Nathan

New York City's Queens Public Library, develops resources for immigrants and asylum-seekers. At the University of **Puerto Rico**, **Gladys López-Soto** draws upon her expertise in copyright law to aid aspiring entrepreneurs and inventors.

"While much of the national conversation surrounding librarians

has fixated on book censorship, and as library workers across the **US** continue to face historic levels of intimidation and harassment, librarians' efforts to empower their patrons and provide vital services for their communities shines a spotlight on the enduring value of libraries in our society," library association

president **Emily Drabinski** said in a statement Monday.

The 10 recipients were selected from around 1,400 nominations, submitted by local patrons. Established in 2008, the award is sponsored by Carnegie Corporation of New York and also administered in partnership with the New York Public Library. (AP)

People & Places



Ballet Arizona musicians, bottom, and dancers rehearse for the 'Nutcracker', Thursday, Dec. 7, in Phoenix prior to an upcoming performance. (AP)

Art

Artistic serendipity

A \$3.99 thrift store find sells for \$107K

NEW YORK, Dec 20, (AP): Jessica Vincent had just started surveying the shelves of a Virginia thrift store when a vase caught her eye. It was shaped like a bottle and had ribbons of color, aqua green and amethyst purple, that spiraled up its glass surface like stripes of paint.

The piece looked old amongst the clutter of measuring cups, candles and other tchotchkes. After adjusting her eyes, Vincent made out the words "Murano" and "Italia" on its base.

"I bought it thinking it would look beautiful in my house somewhere," said Vincent, 43, a horse trainer who paid \$3.99 at a Goodwill outside of Richmond. "I definitely didn't buy it thinking, 'Oh, I'm going to sell this.'"

Her thinking changed after some research. And on Dec. 13, the vase sold through the Wright Auction House for \$107,100. The buyer, a top collector from Europe, wished to remain private.

Vincent's purchase came after years of perusing yard sales and thrift stores with her mother. She loves PBS' "Antiques Roadshow" and has daydreamed many times of this kind of lottery ticket-level transaction.

"I always felt like I had a good eye," said Vincent, who visits thrift stores a few times a week with her partner. "But I'm really surprised that nobody picked it up before I did."

The vase was likely on the shelf for only a couple days given its quality and the quick rate at which products are sold, said Laura Faison, a spokeswoman for Goodwill of Central and Coastal Virginia. Each store averages about 2,000 new pieces a day, and they often come in from a car's trunk.

Basement

"It could have been someone cleaning out grandma's basement," Faison said of the vase's backstory. "We'll probably never know."

Vincent arrived at the Goodwill on a June afternoon with her partner, Naza Acosta, after a day of training horses. The vase felt heavy in her hands. And while Vincent had seen painted glass before, the vase's swirling colors were different. They came from the glass itself, she said, "and it was just so delicately done."

Back home, Vincent posted photos in Facebook groups for glass art and soon joined a private one for Murano glass.

The "Murano" on the vase's bottom referred to the island in Venice that has been famous for its glasswork since the 13th century. Its highly prized creations have included ornate crystal chandeliers and mirror frames, many of which adorn the palaces of Europe's aristocracy.

The vase was produced by the renowned glass company Venini and designed by Italian architect Carlo Scarpa, who died in 1978. One response on Facebook gave her chills: "Those are very rare. Every collector would love to have that. But most people cannot afford them."

Vincent was referred to Richard Wright, president of the Wright Auction House in Chicago.

"The minute I saw her email," Wright said, "I knew what it was and how rare it was."

Scarpa was the top Italian glass designer in the mid-20th century, while the vase was part of a series he created in 1942. The collection was called Pennellate, which means brushstroke, and was made by adding colored opaque glass to the vase as it was blown.

"It was basically a duet between Carlo Scarpa and a master blower who had to physically translate (Scarpa's) drawings," Wright said. "You have to keep rotating this vase the entire time or it'll slump off the pipe. While at the same time you're applying these delicate brushes of color that have this absolute lightness to them."

Few were made because they were so difficult to create. The auction house knows of only one other in this form and color combination. It is in a private collection.

Wright dispatched two Italian glass specialists to Virginia to confirm the vase's authenticity. Vincent pulled it from a cardboard box encased in bubble wrap and swaddled in a tablecloth.

"Just the look on their faces," Vincent recalled. "It was incredible to have experts who handle very important pieces of glass who were very excited for my little thrift-store vase."



Vincent



This image provided by Jessica Vincent shows Jessica Vincent holding a vase by Italian architect and designer Carlo Scarpa which was part of his Pennellate series in the 1940s at her home in Henrico County, Virginia. Vincent purchased it at a Goodwill store outside Richmond, Va., in June for \$3.99. It was sold through the Wright Auction House in Chicago on Wednesday Dec. 13, 2023, to a private European collector for \$107,100. (AP)

Variety

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates: Filmmakers and movie festival organizers from around the world have called on Iranian authorities to drop all charges against two Iranian film directors and lift their travel ban.

Maryam Moghadam and Behshad Sanaecheha had planned to travel to Paris in September for post-production on their new film, "My Favorite Cake," but authorities confiscated their passports and informed them that they were banned from leaving Iran, said an open letter by PEN America on Tuesday that was signed by 30 filmmakers and artists.

The two were among some 70 Iranian filmmakers and movie industry workers who had joined the hashtag #put_your_gun_down, which was a reference to a violent crackdown during an unrest following the Metropolis building collapse in the southwestern city of Abadan that killed at least 41 people in May 2022.

Moghadam and Sanaecheha gained international recognition for their 2020 film "Ballad of a White Cow," which won several prizes, including an Audience Award at the Berlinale, Best Film at the 2022 Der Neue Heimatfilm Festival, and a Special Mention at the Zurich Film Festival. (AP)

PARIS: A pivotal moment in the restoration of Paris' Notre Dame Cathedral is set for Saturday, with the installation of a golden rooster atop its spire.

It marks a key step in the monument's revival after the devastating April 2019 fire. Designed by chief architect **Philippe Villeneuve**, this new rooster will replace the original that was damaged beyond repair in the blaze.

The rooster, a French emblem of vigilance and Christ's resurrection, will house sacred relics inside it. These include fragments of Christ's Crown of Thorns and remains of St. Denis and St. Genevieve, infusing the sculpture with religious importance. The Crown of Thorns, regarded as Notre Dame's most sacred relic, was among the treasures quickly removed after the fire broke out. Brought to Paris by **King Louis IX** in the 13th century, it is purported to have been pressed onto Christ's head during the crucifixion.

Before ascending to its perch, the rooster will be blessed by Paris Archbishop **Laurent Ulrich**. A sealed tube within the sculpture will list the names of nearly 2,000 individuals who contributed to the cathedral's reconstruction, underscoring the collective effort behind the works.

French President **Emmanuel Macron**, who last week visited the site to mark a one-year countdown to its re-opening, announced that the original rooster will be displayed in a new museum at the Hôtel-Dieu. This move, along with plans to invite **Pope Francis** for the cathedral's reopening next year, highlights Notre Dame's significance in French history and culture. (AP)

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia: Cambodia has welcomed the announcement that New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art will

Stage

Musicians weave an unseen musical tale of joy

'Nutcracker' soars with live music

PHOENIX, Dec 20, (AP): Musicians in a cramped space under a Phoenix stage send up the familiar tones of "The Nutcracker." Overhead, satin-and-glue pointed toes pitter-patter across stage in a performance of the holiday favorite.

For Ballet Arizona and many other productions around the world, a pit full of musicians is as much part of the tradition as the dancers above.

Shows can turn to recordings as they weather costs and crises, and in recent years, productions across the country have been working to recover after the pandemic forced them to go silent during public health closures. But fans, musicians and union leaders say live music brings an unseen signature to each show - even if the path is sometimes fraught.

In New York, a production some consider the quintessential American "Nutcracker" opened minutes after musicians agreed to a contract. In Los Angeles, a company gives audiences both options. And in the Phoenix show, the pit was put on hiatus during the Great Recession tied to the 2008 housing crisis.

It wasn't until joining Ballet Arizona five years ago that Demitra Bereveskos performed "The Nutcracker" to live music. Her "Nutcracker" debut was when she was 7, likely as an angel and little mouse, she said; by her first year in the Phoenix production, she was dancing in "Waltz of the Flowers."

Dance

"I remember being on stage and hearing the opening harp, and I'd never heard a harp like that before and it just set the entire dance for me," Bereveskos said. "I was probably soaring the entire time just from hearing the notes plucked on that harp."

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's 1892 score follows the story of a young girl who falls into a fantastical dream after being gifted a nutcracker doll. Her adventure, featuring the Nutcracker Prince, Mouse King's army and Sugar Plum Fairy, draws audiences of all ages to shows that can be as raucous and funny as they are elegant and elaborately choreographed.

Audiences and dancers alike can feel when the score is performed live, said Phoenix Symphony violinist **Dian D'Avanzo**, who has played the Ballet Arizona show for over 30 years - in the past, with her daughter dancing onstage at the same time.

"I don't think it feels like Christmas until my first Nutcracker when at the end of the first act, I get to look up and see the snow falling onstage," said D'Avanzo, who sits at the front of the pit as the "Nutcracker" concertmaster. "We don't get snow fall-

ing here in Phoenix, so when I get to see that snowfall coming down at the end of the first act for the snowflake dance, it's Christmas."

If something is missed in the pit, it can profoundly affect the show's timing, said Phoenix Symphony's principal horn, **Gabe Kovach**, who has played over 500 "Nutcracker" shows. The musicians can hear the flutter of the dancers' feet and the leaps on the stage above many of their heads, which can actually help keep the timing together, he said.

"Things can happen so quickly with staging and the dancers," said Kovach. Pit performances are arduous, he said, but "when you see the faces of the kids coming down and hanging over the pit, you know it's their first experience, it definitely rejuvenates you time after time."

Compensation

A pit orchestra performs with the New York City Ballet, which debuted "George Balanchine's The Nutcracker" in 1954. Sara Cutler, who retired earlier this year as principal harpist, has performed "The Nutcracker" about 2,000 times in over four decades, only taking a year off during the pandemic shutdowns. Even though it came with unexpected challenges - like when blocking had to be changed so that Cutler's harp would no longer be hit by a ballerina's falling shoe, thrown each performance to defeat the Mouse King - it was like a "comfortable slipper that we settle into every Christmastime," Cutler said.

This year, though, the show opened about 10 minutes after voting ended to ratify the musicians' contract, said Cutler, president of Associated Musicians of Greater New York, an American Federation of Musicians union.

The union's largest local started negotiating with the ballet in May - a long, hard process, she said. The ballet's musicians took a pay cut across the board after pandemic closures were lifted and were still far behind 2019 compensation rates when negotiations started, she said.

"All of that literally got resolved the weekend before 'Nutcracker' opened," she said. "And so yes, there were questions leading up to it. Was there going to be a 'Nutcracker'? Was the orchestra going to participate in 'Nutcracker'? We never said we wouldn't, but it was definitely a hanging question."

It was a relief when both sides shook hands, said Cutler, who believes live music enhances the experience for everyone from dancers to audience members. The ballet, too, was pleased about reaching an agreement.

"The marriage of music and dance is a hallmark of NYCB,"

its statement said, calling the New York City Ballet Orchestra's performance of the "magnificent" score "a tremendous enhancement to the production."

But it's not uncommon for smaller or midsize companies to use recordings, with the cost of music sometimes eclipsing dancers' pay, said **Julia Rivera**, director of audience development for the Los Angeles Ballet. The company features an orchestra in some of its "Nutcracker" shows. For the recorded shows, a music supervisor manually times and keys each piece of the performance.

"I think that when the music is treated carefully, that it doesn't necessarily take away from the experience to have recorded music," Rivera said. Some see the musicians as part of the performance, "and although I don't disagree with that, it is out of reach for some ballet companies."

Direction

When live music is possible, she said, dancers can learn to take direction from artistic directors and conductors alike.

"If they're dancing with a company that is capable of doing classical story ballets and contemporary and new or avant-garde works, for them to be versatile, to be able to perform in both environments, is very important," she said.

The Phoenix Symphony and the union that represents its musicians agreed to a new contract over the summer, said **Cindy Baker**, president of Professional Musicians of Arizona, an American Federation of Musicians union. But around 2008, during the economic downturn, shows did turn to recorded music, said Baker, who plays violin, viola and harp.

"It just wasn't the same at all," said Baker.

The pit can be chaotic: Dry ice smoke from the stage might obscure music, and fake snow, sometimes made of plastic, can fall and stick to the musicians, Baker said. Some performers know the music so well they practically have the whole book memorized, and find ways to prank each other as they play the familiar notes. One year, Baker hid tea, coffee and chocolate between the music pages, revealing them one by one as they played on and forcing a fellow musician to contain his laughter.

But like other hallmarks of the iconic ballet, including the Christmas tree that magically becomes taller as the main character dreams, the music doesn't get old, Baker said.

"It's still great music so you play it and you know there are kids there with just excitement when they see the tree grow," Baker said. "It's always fun."

return more than a dozen pieces of ancient artwork to Cambodia and Thailand that were tied to an art dealer and collector accused of running a huge antiquities trafficking network out of Southeast Asia.

This most recent repatriation of artwork comes as many museums in the **United States and Europe** reckon with collections that contain objects looted from **Asia, Africa** and other places during centuries of colonialism or in times of upheaval. Fourteen **Khmer** sculptures will be re-



Moghadam



Sanaecheha

turned to Cambodia and two will be returned to Thailand, the Manhattan museum announced Friday, though no specific timeline was given.

"We appreciate this first step in the right direction," said a statement issued by Cambodia's Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts. "We look forward to further returns and acknowledgements of the truth regarding our lost national treasures, taken from Cambodia in the time of war and genocide." (AP)

The Conversation

Which diseases get prioritized?

CRISPR, other new techs open doors for drug development

By C. Michael White
University of Connecticut

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

Prescription drugs and vaccines revolutionized health care, dramatically decreasing death from disease and improving quality of life across the globe. But how do researchers, universities and hospitals, and the pharmaceutical industry decide which diseases to pursue developing drugs for?

In my work as director of the Health Outcomes, Policy, and Evidence Synthesis group at the University of Connecticut School of Pharmacy, I assess the effectiveness and safety of different treatment options to help clinicians and patients make informed decisions. My colleagues and I study ways to create new drug molecules, deliver them into the body and improve their effectiveness while reducing their potential harms. Several factors determine which avenues of drug discovery that people in research and pharmaceutical companies focus on.

Research funding amplifies the pace of scientific discovery needed to create new treatments. Historically, major supporters of research like the National Institutes of Health, pharmaceutical industry and private foundations funded studies on the most common conditions, like heart disease, diabetes and mental health disorders. A breakthrough therapy would help millions of people, and a small markup per dose would generate hefty profits.

Therapy

As a consequence, research on rare diseases was not well-funded for decades because it would help fewer people and the costs of each dose had to be very high to turn a profit. Of the more than 7,000 known rare diseases, defined as fewer than 200,000 people affected in the US, only 34 had a therapy approved by the Food and Drug Administration before 1983.

The passage of the Orphan Drug Act changed this trend by offering tax credits, research incentives and prolonged patent lives for companies actively developing drugs for rare diseases. From 1983 to 2019, 724 drugs were approved for rare diseases.

Emerging social issues or opportunities can significantly affect funding available to develop drugs for certain diseases. When COVID-19 raged across the world, funding from Operation Warp Speed led to vaccine development in record time. Public awareness campaigns such as the ALS ice bucket challenge can also directly raise money for research. This viral social media campaign provided 237 scientists nearly US\$90 million in research funding from 2014 to 2018, which led to the discovery of five genes connected amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, commonly called Lou Gehrig's disease, and new clinical trials.

To create breakthrough treatments, researchers need a basic understanding of what disease processes they need to enhance or block. This requires developing cell and animal models that can simulate human biology.

It can take many years to vet potential treatments and develop the finished drug product ready for testing in people. Once scientists identify a potential biological target for a drug, they use high-throughput screening to rapidly assess hundreds of chemical compounds that may have a desired effect on the target. They then modify the most promising compounds to enhance their effects or reduce their toxicity.

When these compounds have lack-

luster results in the lab, companies are likely to halt development if the estimated potential revenue from the drug is less than the estimated cost to improve the treatments. Companies can charge more money for drugs that dramatically reduce deaths or disability than for those that only reduce symptoms. And researchers are more likely to continue working on drugs that have a greater potential to help patients. In order to obtain FDA approval, companies ultimately need to show that the drug causes more benefits for patients than harms.

Sometimes, researchers know a lot about a disease, but available technology is insufficient to produce a successful drug. For a long time, scientists knew that sickle cell disease results from a defective gene that leads cells in the bone marrow to produce poorly formed red blood cells, causing severe pain and blood clots. Scientists lacked a way to fix the issue or to work around it with existing methods.

However, in the early 1990s, basic scientists discovered that bacterial cells have a mechanism to identify and edit DNA. With that model, researchers began painstaking work developing a technology called CRISPR (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats) to identify and edit genetic sequences in human DNA.

The technology finally progressed to the point where scientists were able to successfully target the problematic gene in patients with sickle cell and edit it to produce normally functioning red blood cells. In December 2023, Casgevy became the first CRISPR-based drug approved by the FDA.

Sickle cell disease made a great target for this technology because it was caused by a single genetic issue. It was also an attractive disease to focus on because it affects around 100,000 people in the US and is costly to society, causing many hospitalizations and lost days of work. It also disproportionately affects Black Americans, a population that has been underrepresented in medical research.

To put all these pieces of drug development into perspective, consider the leading cause of death in the US: cardiovascular disease. Even though there are several drug options available for this condition, there is an ongoing need for more effective and less toxic drugs that reduce the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

Cholesterol

In 1989, epidemiologists found that patients with higher levels of bad, or LDL, cholesterol had more heart attacks and strokes than those with lower levels. Currently, 86 million American adults have elevated cholesterol levels that can be treated with drugs, like the popular statins Lipitor (atorvastatin) or Crestor (rosuvastatin). However, statins alone cannot get everyone to their cholesterol goals, and many patients develop unwanted symptoms limiting the dose they can receive.

So scientists developed models to understand how LDL cholesterol is created in and removed from the body. They found that LDL receptors in the liver removed bad cholesterol from the blood, but a protein called PCSK9 prematurely destroys them, boosting bad cholesterol levels in the blood. This led to the development of the drugs Repatha (evolocumab) and Praluent (alirocumab) that bind to PCSK9 and stop it from working. Another drug, Leqvio (inclisiran), blocks the genetic material coding for PCSK9.

Researchers are also developing a CRISPR-based method to more effectively treat the disease. (AP)

Tech empowers, yet hurdles remain

Visually impaired face digital challenges

By Michele McDonnell
Mississippi State University



Cantaloupe pieces are displayed for sale at a supermarket in New York on Tuesday, Dec. 12. In 2023, hundreds of people in the US and Canada have been sickened in a growing outbreak of salmonella poisoning linked to contaminated whole and pre-cut cantaloupe. (AP)

Cantaloupe warning

Deadly salmonella outbreak killed 10, sickened hundreds

NEW YORK, Dec. 20. (AP) — Hundreds of people in the US and Canada have been sickened and at least 10 people have died in a growing outbreak of salmonella poisoning linked to contaminated whole and pre-cut cantaloupe.

Health officials are warning consumers, retailers and restaurants not to buy, eat or serve cantaloupe if they don't know the source.

That's especially important for individuals who are vulnerable to serious illness from salmonella infection and those who care for them. High-risk groups include young children, people older than 65 and those with weakened immune systems.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is especially concerned because many of the illnesses have been severe and because victims include people who ate cantaloupe served in childcare centers and long-term care facilities.

Here's what we know about this outbreak:

Overall, at least 302 people in the US and 153 in Canada have been sickened in this outbreak. That includes four killed and 129 hospitalized in the US and six killed and 53 hospitalized in Canada.

The first US case was a person who fell ill on Oct. 16, according to the CDC. The latest illness detected occurred on Nov. 28. Canadian health officials said people fell ill between mid-October and mid-November.

The first recalls were issued Nov. 6 in the US, according to the Food and Drug Administration. Multiple recalls of whole and cut fruit have followed.

The cantaloupes implicated in this outbreak include two brands, Malichita and Rudy, that are grown in the Sonora area of Mexico. The fruit was imported by Sofia Produce LLC, of Nogales, Arizona, which does business as TruFresh, and Pacific Trellis Fruit LLC, of Los Angeles. So far, more than 36,000 boxes or cases of

cantaloupe have been recalled.

On Dec. 15, Mexican health officials temporarily closed a melon-packing plant implicated in the outbreak.

Roughly one-third of FDA-regulated human food imported into the US comes from Mexico, including about 60% of fresh produce imports. The average American eats about 6 pounds of cantaloupe a year, according to the US Department of Agriculture.

Health officials in the US and Canada are still investigating, but cantaloupes generally are prone to contamination because they are "netted" melons with rough, bumpy rinds that make bacteria difficult to remove.

Contamination

Salmonella bacteria are found in animals' intestines and can spread if their waste comes in contact with fruit in the field. Contamination can come from tainted water used in irrigation, or in cleaning and cooling the melons.

Poor hygienic practices of workers, pests in packing facilities and equipment that's not cleaned and sanitized properly can also lead to contamination, the FDA says.

The Mexico growing area saw powerful storms and hurricanes in late summer and early fall that resulted in flooding that could be a factor, said Trevor Suslow, a produce safety consultant and retired professor at the University of California, Davis.

Once the melons are contaminated, the bumpy rinds harbor nutrients that can help the salmonella bacteria grow, Suslow said.

If the cantaloupe become moldy or damaged, the bacteria can move from the outside of the rind to the inner layer or into the flesh. Also, when the fruit is sliced - in a home kitchen, grocery store or processing plant - the bacteria can spread to the flesh.

Cut fruit in a tray or clamshell package can harbor the bacteria. If the fruit isn't kept very cool, the germs can grow.

Imagine that you have low vision and you're completing an online job application using screen reader software.

You get through half the form and then come to a question with dropdown options the screen reader cannot access because the online form doesn't conform to accessibility standards. You're stuck. You can't submit the application, and your time has been wasted.

Assistive technologies like screen readers go a long way toward closing the gap between people who are blind or have low vision and their sighted peers. But the technologies often hit roadblocks because the information they are designed to work with - documents, websites and software programs - don't work with them, leaving the information inaccessible.

There are 8 million people with blindness or low vision in the US. More than 4.23 million of them are working age, but only about half of that working-age population are employed. Employment rates for people with blindness or low vision have historically been much lower than for the general population.

Features

An overwhelming majority of jobs across all industries require digital skills. Assistive technologies such as screen readers, screen magnifiers and braille notetakers provide people who are blind or have low vision a chance to succeed in school and the workplace.

Assistive technology has improved, and new technology for people with blindness or low vision is being developed all the time. The technology developed today by big tech companies for the general population often incorporates built-in accessibility features like VoiceOver in the iPhone and Narrator in Windows, both text-to-speech functions. These assistive technology advances have expanded job opportunities, and the percentage of people who are blind or have low vision in the labor force has increased over the past decade.

But despite the abundance of assistive technology, people who don't rely on it are typically unaware of how it's being used at work and the challenges users experience with it. My colleagues and I are conducting a five-year longitudinal study to increase knowledge in this area that, we hope, can help prepare unemployed people who are blind or have low vision to enter the workforce. The study is slated to continue through 2025, with the last survey starting in late 2024.

While most of the people we surveyed reported being satisfied with the assistive technology they use at work, almost all also reported challenges with it. The most significant challenges related to assistive technology centered on the inaccessible digital environment: documents, software, websites, graphics and photos.

Digital content is sometimes technically accessible but unusable by people who use assistive technology. For instance, online job application systems often generate accessibility and usability challenges. Inaccessible and unusable company software means

those who are blind or have low vision are often left out of jobs they could easily perform simply because the employers' software doesn't work with screen readers.

People who are blind or have low vision have been harder to place in jobs than people with other types of disabilities due to inaccessible company software, Ross Barchacky, vice president of business development and strategic partnerships at Inclusive.ly, told me. The organization supports companies who want to hire people with disabilities, including matching them with qualified job seekers with disabilities.

Although the Americans with Disabilities Act does not mention the digital environment explicitly, the Justice Department has taken the position that Title III of the ADA, which covers public accommodation for people with disabilities, applies to websites and mobile apps. Thousands of digital accessibility lawsuits are filed under the ADA each year, and the number has increased substantially in the past five years.

Digital standard-setters have begun paying attention. The World Wide Web Consortium developed standards for accessible web content: the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, just revised in a 2.2 version. The guidelines provide free guidance to help developers make their digital content accessible. Two related standards are the U.S. government's Section 508 and the European Telecommunications Standards Institute's EN 301 549. Global Accessibility Awareness Day was established in 2012 to encourage people to learn and think about digital inclusion for people with disabilities.

eg: In the following chart, homepages and websites should be one word. Also, we generally use 1 million rather than 1,000,000.

Environment

Despite laws requiring and guidelines supporting an accessible digital environment, much if not most digital content is still not fully accessible. In its latest annual review of the accessibility of the top 1 million websites, the nonprofit WebAIM found an average of 50 accessibility errors per page. Worse, almost all home pages - 96.3% - had Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2 failures.

Accessibility can be built in from the beginning more easily than retrofitting after the fact.

For accessibility to be built in from the ground up, accessibility would have to be part of the curriculum for digital developers, but it typically is not.

Companies could require developers to create accessible software and refuse to buy software that isn't accessible. Individuals can help by producing their own accessible digital documents - inaccessible digital documents were the most commonly experienced challenge at work. Microsoft has been working to make producing accessible digital documents easier with its accessibility checker and now with its new accessibility assistant.

An accessible digital environment is possible, and it would result in greater employment opportunities for people who are blind or have low vision. (AP)

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Morant's 34 pts lift Grizzlies over Pelicans



Golden State Warriors forward Trayce Jackson-Davis (32) and Boston Celtics guard Jrue Holiday (4) compete for a rebound during the second half of an NBA basketball game Tuesday, Dec. 19, 2023, in San Francisco. (AP)

North Carolina beats Oklahoma

S. Carolina women rout Bowling Green

BOWLING GREEN, Ohio, Dec. 20, (AP) — Chloe Kitts scored a career-best 21 points, Bree Hall added 18 and No. 1 South Carolina quickly ended any thoughts Bowling Green may have had of pulling off an historic upset, rolling to a 93-62 win Tuesday night.

Hall made three 3-pointers and the Gamecocks (11-0) hit their first 10 shots while opening an 18-point lead in the first quarter against the Falcons (6-3), who were facing the nation's top-ranked team for the first time in school history.

It was more than an average non-conference game for South Carolina as the matchup was also a reunion with

first-year Bowling Green coach Fred Chmiel, an assistant with the Gamecocks for eight seasons under Dawn Staley.

While Chmiel was at South Carolina, the Gamecocks went 247-32, developed numerous All-Americans and won national championships in 2017

and 2022. His relationship with Staley stretches back nearly 20 years to when he was an assistant for the WNBA's Charlotte Sting and she was their best player.

of the season, he said Tuesday. His absence could last even longer, though, amid ongoing tensions between Courtois and national team coach Domenico Tedesco.

The Belgian federation said in a short statement it regrets that Courtois will miss the tournament but respects his decision.

North Carolina 61, Oklahoma 52

In Charlotte, Deja Kelly scored 21 points, Alyssa Ustby added 15 points and 13 rebounds, and North Carolina started slow before beating cold-shooting Oklahoma at the Women's Jumpman Invitational.

Ustby also blocked three shots and Lexi Donarski had 10 points for North Carolina (8-4), which committed a season-high 21 turnovers but limited the Sooners to 16 second-half points - four in the third quarter.

Payton Verhulst led Oklahoma (6-4) with 15 points. Skylar Vann added 10 points and 12 rebounds but shot just 3 of 17 from the field.

Courtois says he won't play at Euro 2024 due to injury

BRUSSELS, Dec. 20, (AP) — Belgium goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois won't be able to play at the European Championship next

SOCCER

summer because of the long-term knee injury that has sidelined him since the start

of the season, he said Tuesday.

His absence could last even longer, though, amid ongoing tensions between Courtois and national team coach Domenico Tedesco.

The Belgian federation said in a short statement it regrets that Courtois will miss the tournament but respects his decision.

"We wish him a speedy recovery and hope to see him back on the pitch soon," it said.

Courtois said in an interview with Belgian broadcaster Sporza that he will not recover in time from ACL surgery on his left knee to play at the tournament. Euro 2024 will be hosted by Germany from June 14-July 14.

Warriors see off Celtics 132-126 in OT

NEW ORLEANS, Dec. 20, (AP) — Ja Morant capped a stirring, 34-point season debut with a spinning dribble in the lane to set up a game-winning floater as time expired in the Memphis Grizzlies' 115-113 victory over the New Orleans Pelicans on Tuesday night.

The Grizzlies, who entered on a five-game skid and were 6-19 during Morant's 25-game suspension for his social media antics with guns, trailed by 24 in the first half but took a 113-111 lead on Morant's inside basket with 1:22 to go.

The Pelicans tied it and the teams exchanged missed 3-pointers before Morant's winner.

Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 24 points and Desmond Bane had 21 for Memphis, which also snapped the Pelicans' four-game winning streak.

Brandon Ingram scored 34 points for New Orleans, but Zion Williamson's time on the court was limited by foul trouble and he finished with just 13 points.

Warriors 132, Celtics 126, OT
In San Francisco, Stephen Curry swished a 3-pointer with 12 seconds left in overtime on the way to scoring 33, and the Golden State Warriors rallied past the Celtics to snap Boston's five-game winning streak.

BASKETBALL

Jonathan Kuminga made a steal and uncontested dunk to put the Warriors ahead in overtime then grabbed a key rebound on the other end that led to another scoring play, and Boston missed key chance after chance when it mattered most.

Jaylen Brown finished with 28 points for Boston, while Derrick White scored 30 in Boston's second loss in the last 10.

Jayson Tatum added 15 points, eight rebounds and seven assists as the Celtics began a four-game trip in California.

Trail Blazers 109, Suns 104

In Portland, DeAndre Ayton had a double-double of 16 points and 15 rebounds, Anfernee Simons had 23 points and seven rebounds, and Portland erased a 22-point deficit to beat Phoenix and snap a seven-game losing streak.

The Suns lost for the fifth time in their last seven games. Phoenix's Kevin Durant led all scorers with 40 points in the loss while Devin Booker had 26 points and seven assists.

Jerami Grant also had 22 points for Portland, while Malcolm Brogdon had 14 points and four assists off the bench.

Portland was hot from the 3-point line all night, making 14 of 28 3-pointers to just five for Phoenix.



Portland Trail Blazers forward Jerami Grant, center, hits a shot over Phoenix Suns forward Drew Eubanks, left, and forward Kevin Durant, right, during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Portland, Ore., Tuesday, Dec. 19, 2023. The Blazers won 109-104. (AP)

Bucks 132, Spurs 119

In Milwaukee, Damian Lillard scored a season-high 40 points to push his career total over 20,000. Giannis Antetokounmpo had a career-high 16 assists, 14 rebounds and a season-low 11 points and Milwaukee trounced San Antonio.

The Spurs played without Victor Wembanyama, who sat out the game with a sore right ankle.

Lillard increased his career point total to 20,034 and became the 51st person in NBA history to reach 20,000 points.

Bobby Portis added 23 points and 10 rebounds, Khris Middleton scored 17 points and Brook Lopez had 14 points and six blocks for the Bucks.

Matadors end 11-year Pac-12 drought

Cal State Northridge smacks UCLA 76-72

LOS ANGELES, Dec. 20, (AP) — Dionte Bostick scored 18 points and De'Sean Allen-Eikens scored 17 points and Cal State Northridge ended an 11-year losing streak against the Pac-12 Conference stunning UCLA 76-72 on Tuesday night.

Prior to Tuesday, the last time the Matadors beat a Pac-12 school occurred Dec. 21, 2012. CSUN hadn't won in Pauley Pavilion since the 2000-01 season, a year that resulted in a trip to the NCAA Tournament.

The loss ended UCLA's 29-game home winning streak. Reserves Mahmoud Fofana scored 13 points and grabbed 11 rebounds and Gianni Hunt - a transfer from Sacramento State making his Matadors debut - scored 12. Keonte Jones added 12 points before leaving late due to injury.

UCLA freshman Sebastian Mack came off the bench and scored a career-high 27 points, Dylan Andrews scored 22 points and Lazar Stefanovic 11. Adem Boma secured 10 rebounds for the Bruins.

Providence 72, Marquette 57

In Providence, R.I., Kim English, like Ed Cooley before him, sent Shaka Smart and No. 6 Marquette home from Providence with a loss.

Devin Carter had 22 points and eight rebounds to lead the Friars to a 72-57 victory - the third time in five seasons the unranked Friars have beaten a Golden Eagles team in The Associated Press Top 25.

"There's a humility that you have to have coming into a place like this, and an environment like this," Smart said after falling to 0-3 in Providence since taking over as coach at Marquette. "I don't care what number's next to your name, or what you've done in the past, or what anyone says you are individually as a player. If you don't have that, then you're not going to be as connected as you need to be. And we didn't have that tonight."

BASKETBALL

Carter made a career-high five 3-pointers and Ticket Gaines also hit five from beyond the arc to score 18 for Providence (10-2, 1-0 Big East), which hasn't lost at home to Marquette since 2019. Bryce Hopkins had 11 points and nine rebounds.

Maryland 73, Nicholls 67

In College Park, Md., Jahmir Young scored 23 points and made all 10 of his free throws and Donta Scott scored 15 points and Maryland rallied and then eventually held off Nicholls in a 73-67 win.

Julian Reese grabbed 13 rebounds and blocked six shots for Maryland (7-4). Reserve Diante Smith scored 18 points and grabbed 12 rebounds, Jalen White scored 15 and Jamal West Jr. 14 for the Colonels (4-7).

Neither team did itself a favor as the Terrapins went 19 for 29 from the foul line and Nicholls 12 for 22.

Jahiri Long made two foul shots following a 3-pointer and the Terrapins (7-4) had their largest margin of the game at 67-59 with 47 seconds to go. Nicholls came back with consecutive 3s from Smith and Michael Gray Jr. to reduce its deficit to 71-67 with 14 seconds to go. Young saved the Terps sinking six foul-shot attempts in a 24-second span.

Northwestern State 99, Southern-New Orleans 75

In Natchitoches, La., Cliff Davis scored 30 points and made a school-record 10 3-pointers to lead Northwestern State over Southern-New Orleans 99-75.

Davis' record night helped the Demons (2-10) snap a 10-game losing streak. His barrage of seven first-half 3-pointers, on just 10 attempts, equaled his previous career high for 3s in a game.

Duane Posey and Braeion Bush each had a double-double for Northwestern State. Posey had 13 points and 15 rebounds, and Bush had 12 points and 10 assists. Anthony Thomas and Justin Wilson also scored 12 points apiece.

Memphis 77, Virginia 54

In Memphis, Tenn., David Jones scored 26 points, Caleb Mills added 11 and No. 23 Memphis built a second-half lead to pull away from No. 22 Virginia 77-54.

Jones was 8 of 15 from the floor, including 2 of 3 from outside the arc as Memphis (9-2) won its fourth straight.

Reece Beekman led the Cavaliers (9-2) with 13 points, while Jake Groves added 12 points. Ryan Dunn finished with 11 points, 11 rebounds and a pair of blocks as Virginia saw its five-game winning streak snapped.

Florida St. 91, N. Florida 75

Darin Green Jr. hit six 3-pointers and scored 24 points on 9-of-12 shooting to help Florida State beat North Florida 91-75 for the Seminoles' first win in nearly a month.

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Paarl to host the decider

De Zorzi hundred helps South Africa level ODI series against India

GQEBERHA, South Africa, Dec 20, (AP): Tony de Zorzi scored his maiden ODI hundred as South Africa beat India by eight wickets to level the three-match series.

De Zorzi scored 119 runs off 122 balls, including nine fours and six sixes, as South Africa finished with 215-2 in 42.3 overs.

CRICKET

That was after India were restricted to 211 runs in 46.2 overs with Sai Sudharsan and skipper Lokesh Rahul scoring half-centuries.

Left-arm pacers Nandre Burger and Buan Hendricks shared five wickets for 64 runs in 19.2 overs. Left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj finished with 2-51.

Paarl will host the final and deciding ODI on Thursday. India won the first ODI in Johannesburg by eight wickets.

Opener Reeza Hendricks scored 52 off 81 balls, putting on 130 runs off 167 balls for the first wicket with de Zorzi.

It was a calm start by the South Af-



South Africa's Tony de Zorzi celebrates after scoring a 100 runs during the second One Day International cricket match between South Africa and India, at the St George's Park in Gqeberha, South Africa. (AP)

rican openers in face of a lowly target - 39 for no loss in the first 10 overs. The Proteas had failed to score 120 runs in their recent two ODIs against India, thus underlining the cautious ap-

proach. De Zorzi reached 50 off 55 balls, with five fours and a six. He hit another three sixes and four fours to reach the century landmark in his fourth ODI.

Salt's second T20 hundred levels series for England in Caribbean

SAN FERNANDO, Trinidad, Dec 20, (AP): World champions England set up a Twenty20 series-deciding match with the West Indies after crushing the fourth game by 75 runs.

A second consecutive century by opener Phil Salt from a flying start with captain Jos Buttler set up England's highest T20 score of 267-3.

The West Indies stayed with the run rate required but couldn't stop leaking wickets and was all out for 192 in the 16th over.

"A fantastic win," Buttler said. "You don't play in too many of those games. It was like being at the Hong Kong Sixes. Great to be going into the last game of the tour at 2-2."

The fifth and final match is on Thursday at the same Brian Lara Stadium.

Salt and Buttler racked up 117 runs in 9.5 overs. Buttler was caught on the boundary for a 29-ball 55.

Salt was on 61 and accelerated even more, reaching a 48-ball hundred, and

becoming the first Englishman to score two T20 centuries.

He was out for 119, the highest T20 score by an Englishman, when he was



England's Will Jacks plays a shot against West Indies during the fourth T20 cricket match at Brian Lara Stadium in Tarouba, Trinidad and Tobago. (AP)

bowed by an Andre Russell yorker. Salt's second ton in three days featured 10 sixes and seven boundaries.

But England were still shredding the West Indies bowlers; Will Jacks made 24 off nine deliveries and Liam Livingstone blasted an unbeaten 54 off 21, including four sixes and four boundaries.

Their 267-3 was the fifth highest score in men's T20 history.

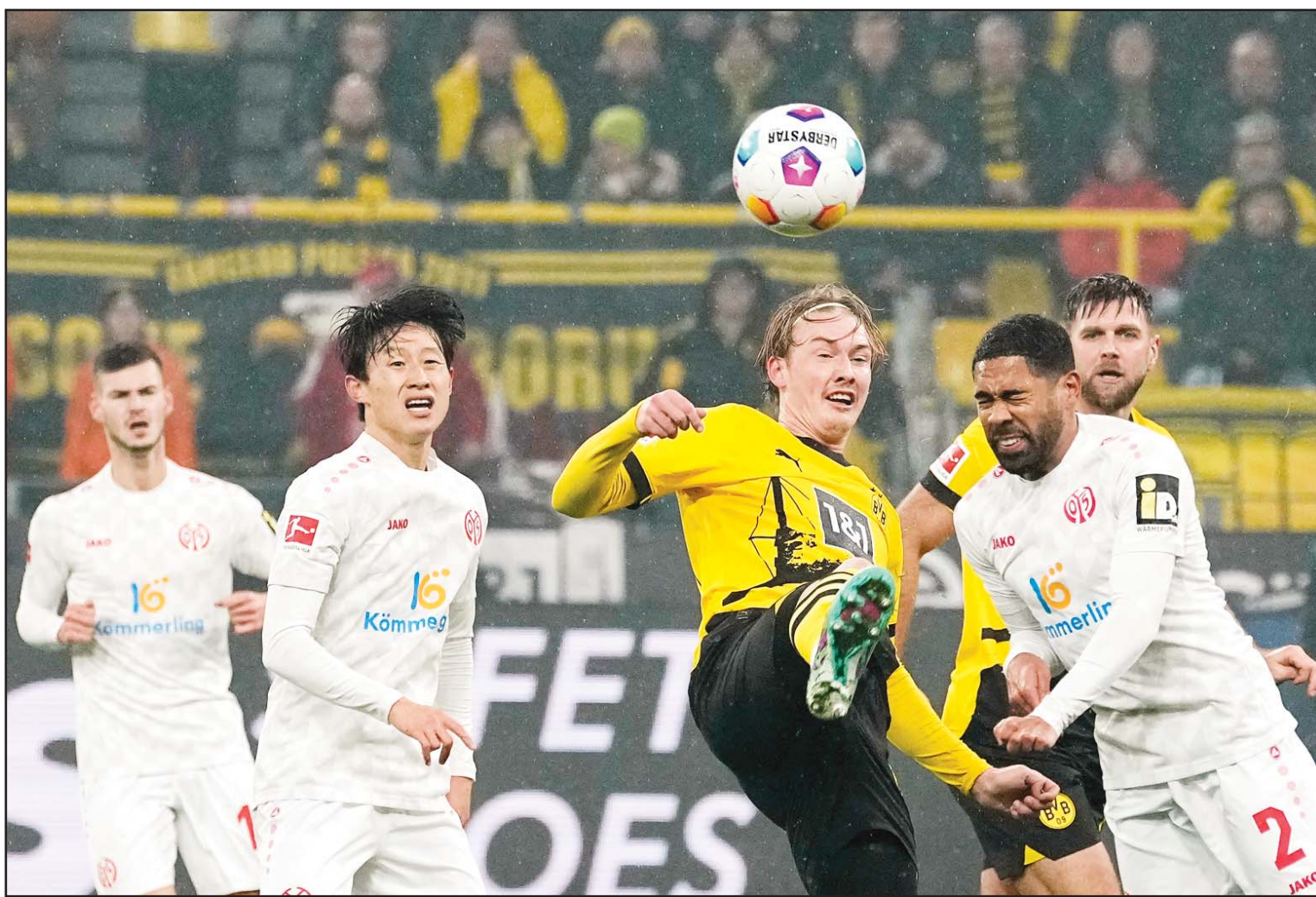
CRICKET

Kyle Mayers was the only bowler to concede less than nine per over, and he bowled only one over.

The West Indies started with a golden duck for Brandon King, who top-edged Moeen Ali straight to Reece Topley.

Nicholas Pooran scored 20 by the end of the first over and Ali didn't bowl again as the West Indies were forced to go hard.

Dortmund whistled into the winter break after failing to snap winless run in league



Dortmund's Julian Brandt (left), fights for the ball with Mainz's Philipp Mwene during the German Bundesliga soccer match between Borussia Dortmund and 1. FSV Mainz 05 at the Signal-Iduna Park in Dortmund, Germany. (AP)

Leipzig held 1-1 at Bremen in Forsberg's farewell

BERLIN, Dec 20, (AP): Borussia Dortmund was whistled into the winter break by their own fans after struggling Mainz fought back to earn a 1-1 draw, stretching the home team's winless run in the Bundesliga to four games.

Dortmund coach Edin Terzić and the players did receive some applause and encouragement after approaching supporters after the match, but there was little festive cheer for the team as it finished the year without a win in any of its last six games across all competitions.

"It's just not happening, these decisive moments are not on our side," said Dortmund captain Emre Can, whose team has only one win from its last eight Bundesliga games. "I can't fault the guys because they're trying. We want to win, we want to

be successful, but then it doesn't work out."

Dortmund had started well against Mainz, the team that thwarted their title hopes on the final day last season.

Julian Brandt rewarded the home team's positive start with a brilliant free kick inside the top right corner in the 29th minute.

Mainz only threatened before the break, when Dortmund goalkeeper Gregor Kobel deflected Marco Richter's effort to the right.

But Sepp van den Berg equalized after Dortmund's defense failed to properly clear the resultant corner - Philipp Mwene was left in plenty of space to find van den Berg at the far post with his cross.

Dortmund struggled to reassert their dominance in the second half.

Terzić sent on Sébastien Haller and the 19-year-old Samuel Bamba to reinvigorate his attack, then U.S. forward Gio Reyna for defender Nico Schlotterbeck.

Dortmund had more of the ball but looked incapable of breaking through. Mainz created better opportunities to win. Jonathan Burkardt should have scored when he only had Kobel to beat but somehow the Mainz substitute scuffed his shot.

SOCCER

Reyna thought he'd scored in the last minute but his celebrations were cut short by the linesman's flag. A VAR check confirmed the offside call.

Donyell Malen had a shot saved in stoppage time as Dortmund finally began to threaten, albeit too late.

Terzić is due to meet with sporting director Sebastian Kehl and chief executive Hans-Joachim Watzke during the winter break to discuss Dortmund's troubles.

"These are issues that unfortunately keep repeating," Terzić said. "They're issues we talked about in summer, issues we talked about last winter, and issues that have been with us for a very long time now. And that's what we always do - we meet after the season or during breaks, we discuss things openly and honestly, we look each other in the eye and try to tackle things and think about solutions."

Third-place Leipzig was held 1-1 at Werder Bremen in Emil Forsberg's last game before his switch to New York Red Bulls.

Leipzig were leading when Forsberg went off to applause from teammates and best wishes from opponents in the 62nd. Forsberg had played Loïs Openda through and the Belgian forward scored at the third attempt in the 47th after Bremen goalkeeper Michael Zetterer blocked his first two efforts.

But Justin Njinnmah grabbed a point for Bremen when he fired into the far corner for the equalizer in the 75th.

Also, Hoffenheim drew with Darmstadt 3-3.

Sevilla's Flores makes winning debut

Griezmann ties Aragonés as Atletico's all-time top scorer

MADRID, Dec 20, (AP): Atletico Madrid failed to make history of their own on a night Antoine Griezmann tied Luis Aragonés as the club's all-time top scorer.

Griezmann scored twice to tie Aragonés on 173 goals, but Atletico conceded a stoppage-time equalizer in a 3-3 draw with Getafe that ended the club's record-tying 20-game home winning streak.

Borja Mayoral converted a late penalty kick to help Getafe rally from two goals down against 10-man Atletico, which were trying to win 21 in a row at home in all competitions for the first time ever. It had last won 20 consecutive matches as a host in 2013.

Getafe had handed Diego Simeone's team its last setback at home in a 1-1 league draw in February.

"In the end I wanted the three points, it's a shame," Griezmann said.

Griezmann scored his 172nd goal with Atletico in the 44th minute and then tied Aragonés' record by converting a 69th-minute penalty kick.

Atletico's fans chanted Griezmann's and Aragonés' names after the France forward hit the top corner with a right-footed shot from the penalty spot at the Wanda Metropolitan stadium.

"Incredibly happy for a player who is part of the club's history," Simeone said. "He has always given everything for the club and is a very important player for us."

SOCCER

Aragonés reached his mark in 370 matches, while Griezmann needed 364 games with the club.

The draw lifted Atletico to third place in the league standings after 17 matches. It has the same 35 points as defending champion Barcelona. Girona remains the surprise leader with 44 points, two more than second-place Real Madrid.

Mayoral had evened the match for Getafe with a goal in the 53rd before Álvaro Morata put the hosts ahead again with a header in the 63rd. Oscar Rodríguez scored Getafe's second goal in 87th and Mayoral netted the equal-

izer by converting the penalty three minutes into stoppage time to keep Atletico from earning the milestone victory.

Atletico played a man down from the 38th after Stefan Savic was sent off with consecutive yellow cards.

Atletico were coming off a 2-0 loss at Athletic Bilbao on Saturday. Getafe won 3-0 at Sevilla on the same day for its third straight win in all competitions. The club from southern Madrid sit in eighth place with 26 points.

Sevilla routed Andalusia rivals Granada 3-0 in the debut of coach Quique Sánchez Flores.

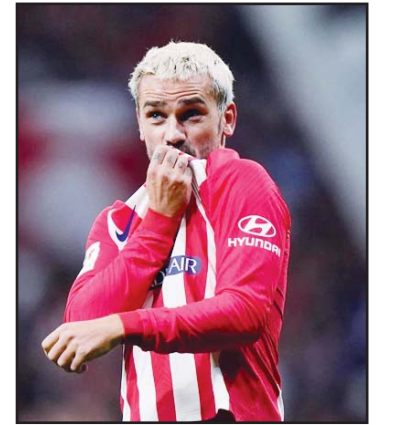
Adrià Pedrosa, Lucas Ocampos and Sergio Ramos scored a goal each for Sevilla, which hadn't won in 10 consecutive league matches.

Flores was signed on Monday, two days after the club fired Uruguayan coach Diego Alonso following the team's poor run in the league and the Champions League.

Valencia ended a five-game winless run in the Spanish league with a 1-0 victory at Rayo Vallecano.

Sergi Canós scored a 61st-minute winner for Valencia, which hadn't won in the league since beating Granada last month.

Valencia moved to 10th place, while Rayo - winless in eight straight league matches - dropped to 11th.



Atletico Madrid forward Antoine Griezmann celebrates after scoring.

Best of the Rest

Alves trial to start in Feb: Brazilian soccer star Dani Alves' trial for alleged assault will start Feb. 5, a Barcelona-based court said Wednesday.

Alves is accused of assaulting a woman in a Barcelona night club in December 2022. The former Barcelona right back has been in pre-trial jail since January. His requests to be released on bail have been rejected because the court considered him a flight risk.

Alves has denied any wrongdoing. He was indicted by an investigative judge in August and the court said there was enough evidence to open a trial.

State prosecutors are seeking a nine-year prison sentence. The lawyers representing the alleged victim want him to spend 12 years behind bars. (AP)

Forest hire Nuno: Nottingham Forest hired Nuno Espírito Santo as their manager on Wednesday with the Premier League club moving quickly to replace Steve Cooper.

Nuno, who previously managed Wolverhampton and Tottenham in England's top division, has signed a 2 1/2-year contract.

Most recently the Portuguese coached Saudi Arabian club Al-Ittihad and won a league and cup double last season.

Forest fired Cooper on Tuesday after a run of one win in 13 league games saw the club drop to fourth-to-last place in the table.

The 49-year-old Nuno's first game in charge will be in the league against Bournemouth at The City Ground on Saturday.

He has had mixed fortunes in England, where he led Wolves to promotion in 2018 to the top flight - where he secured back-to-back seventh-place finishes - and his team advanced to the quarterfinals of the Europa League in 2020. Having kept the club in the Premier League for

three years, he was then hired by Tottenham, but only lasted 17 games in charge before being fired in 2021. (AP)

Spicer taken by Toronto: Tyrese Spicer, a high-scoring winger from Lipscomb University, was selected by Toronto with the top pick in the Major League Soccer draft on Tuesday.

The 23-year-old junior from Trinidad and Tobago had 14 goals this season, scoring in his first 10 matches, to give him 29 goals in 57 career college games. He was among 15 semifinalists this year for the Hermann Trophy, awarded to the top college soccer player. He was not among the three finalists for the award, to be announced Jan. 5.

Colorado selected Duke midfielder Wayne Frederick second, Dallas took Oregon State forward Logan Farrington third and Colorado went for Maryland forward Kimani Stewart-Baynes fourth. (AP)

League game suspended: The president of a Turkish soccer team ordered his players to leave the field in protest of an officiating decision during a game Tuesday, just over a week after a referee was punched in the face.

Hali Umut Meler had been attacked on the pitch last Monday after a 1-1 draw in a Super Lig game between Caykur Rizespor and MKE Ankaragucu. Faruk Koca, who was president of Ankaragucu, resigned and was banned by the Turkish Football Federation for punching Meler.

The top-flight returned to action Tuesday and this time was in the spotlight for a match between Istanbulspor and Trabzonspor.

The state-run Anadolu Agency reported that Istanbulspor president Emel Faik Saralioglu came to the field and ordered his players off in the 73rd minute. (AP)

Frosinone stun Napoli to reach Italian Cup quarters

NAPLES, Italy, Dec 20 (AP): Frosinone's best cup run continued as they stunned defending Serie A champions Napoli by winning 4-0 at the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona to reach the Italian Cup quarterfinals.

Frosinone, which had never even reached the round of 16 previously, will next face either Juventus or Salernitana.

Napoli rested a number of its key players, including Victor Osimhen and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, although they brought on the key duo in the 63rd minute, with the score 0-0.

Frosinone took the lead just two minutes later when Enzo Barrenechea was left relatively unmarked to head Luca Garritano's corner into the far top side of the net.

It was Barrenechea's first goal for Frosinone after joining on loan from Juventus - the team the 22-year-old Argentine could now face in the quarterfinals.

An even worse defensive error saw the visitors double their advantage five minutes later as a woeful pass from Napoli defender Giovanni Di Lorenzo saw Giuseppe Caso race through one-on-one with home goalkeeper Pierluigi

Gollini and he deposited into the bottom right corner.

Di Lorenzo made another mistake in the final minute when he fouled Matías Soule in the penalty area and Walid Cheddira - who is on loan

from Napoli - converted the resulting spotkick.

Substitute Abdou Harroui also scored in stoppage time to cap a wonderful night for Frosinone, which celebrated joyfully in front of the visiting



Frosinone's Matteo Lusuardi (left), and Napoli's Jesper Lindstrom battle for the ball during the Italian Cup soccer match between Napoli and Frosinone at the Diego Armando Maradona stadium in Naples, Italy. (AP)



Fulham's Joao Palhinha scores a goal in a penalty shoot-out with Everton, following the end of normal time in the English League Cup quarter final soccer match at Goodison Park, in Liverpool, England. (AP)

Sports

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City set up showdown with Fluminense

Citizens dominate Urawa

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia, Dec 20, (AP): Manchester City set aside struggles at home to ease past Urawa Red Diamonds 3-0 in the Club World Cup semifinals and are one game away from a fifth title in 2023.

The champions of Europe have never lost to the champions of Asia at a Club World Cup and it never looked likely on a balmy evening in the Red Sea port city Jeddah.

After it took Man City until first-half stoppage time to score from an own goal by defender Marius Hoibraten, Mateo Kovacic and Bernardo Silva struck with shots in a seven-minute spell early in the second half against the Japanese team.

Man City now will be favored to beat Fluminense of Brazil in the final on Friday.

"It's the only title that the club don't have," City manager Pep Guardiola said. "The players know how important this game is for all of us at the club."

Guardiola's team keeps finding respite in international games during an untypical run in the Premier League where the defending champion has won just one of its last six games while leaking late goals.

A winning Club World Cup debut followed City closing out a perfect six-win streak in their Champions League group this month. City also added a UEFA Super Cup title in Au-

gust to their storied trophy treble last season of Champions League, Premier League and English FA Cup.

City needed some help to score first when Hoibraten diverted goalward a pass across the goalmouth by Matheus Nunes that was unlikely to find another of the six midfield players in the starting lineup.

With Erling Haaland still ruled out by a foot injury, Guardiola also opted to leave Argentina forward Julián Álvarez on the bench.

The biggest cheers during a lackluster first half came when the faces of City stars Haaland and Kevin De Bruyne sitting in the main stand were broadcast on the screens placed high at each end of the King Abdullah Sports

SOCCER

City Stadium. Neither will play in the final.

De Bruyne was not risked despite taking part in a light training session Monday more than four months after having surgery on a hamstring injury sustained early in City's Premier League season opener.

Otherwise the noise from a 40,127 crowd inside a far-from-full stadium was raised by about 400 red-and-black clad Urawa fans packed behind one goal.

The clapping, singing, jumping group kept time to relentless drumming by one in their ranks and continued after the goals arrived either side of halftime.

In the 52nd, deep-lying midfielder Kovačić exploited the space left vacant where Haaland would be to surge forward and shoot after collecting Kyle Walker's long pass.

It was shooting practice for City seven minutes later when Bernardo Silva scored with the help of a slight



Manchester City's John Stones (left), vies for the ball with Urawa Reds' Jose Kante during the Soccer Club World Cup semifinal soccer match between Urawa Reds and Manchester City FC at King Abdullah Sports City Stadium in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. (AP)

deflection after goalkeeper Shusaku Nishikawa pushed away Nunes' first effort.

City cruised through the last half-hour and Guardiola detailed an approach in Jeddah for his squad that is on a constant two-games-per-week program this season.

"The plan is to sleep and to sleep

and to sleep," the coach said, praising Walker as an "incredible captain" who organizes social time for teammates.

A game between the fourth-place team in England and the fourth-place finisher in the Japanese league that ended this month exposed a much wider gulf.

Urawa coach Maciej Skorza ac-

knowledge his players could not handle the Premier League champion's "huge offensive power. They know what the gap is."

On Friday, another Europe vs South America final - the 13th in 19 editions - will decide the last Club World Cup title in the current format that began in 2005.

Urawa also will be in the 32-team lineup when FIFA relaunches the competition in June 2025 in the United States when Europe will have 12 entries and Asia just four.

"I think this experience will be very important for our club," said Skorza, who will leave Urawa after the season.

Middlesbrough big underdogs in last four

Chelsea, Fulham win penalty shootouts to reach Cup semis

LONDON, Dec 20, (AP): Chelsea's faltering first season under Mauricio Pochettino could yet be saved by the English League Cup.

The London club reached the semifinals by beating Newcastle 4-2 in a penalty shootout, with the game only getting that far thanks to a goal by Chelsea winger Mykhailo Mudryk in the second minute of stoppage time that made it 1-1 at Stamford Bridge.

Newcastle right back Kieran Trippier was at fault for that goal and he was one of two visiting players to fail to score his penalty. Matt Ritchie was the other, as stand-in goalkeeper Đorđe Petrović made the save to end the shootout.

Chelsea are languishing in 10th place in the Premier League despite having spent more than \$1 billion on players in the last three

for Everton but had his attempt saved at 4-3.

The game finished 1-1 in regulation at Goodison Park, with Everton substitute Beto scoring in the 82nd to cancel out an own-goal by Michael Keane.

Middlesbrough will be the big underdogs in the semifinals as the only non-Premier League team remaining.

The second-tier club beat Port Vale, which play in the third division, 3-0 thanks to goals by Jonny Howson, Morgan Rogers and Matt Crooks.

Middlesbrough, the 2004 champions now managed by former Manchester United and England midfielder Michael Carrick, haven't had to play a Premier League team in the competition yet. The final is at Wembley Stadium on Feb. 25.



Chelsea's Enzo Fernandez (left), tackles Newcastle's Bruno Guimaraes during the English League Cup quarterfinal soccer match between Chelsea and Newcastle United at Stamford Bridge in London. (AP)

SOCCER

transfer windows and having no European competitions to disrupt their schedule.

Pochettino is starting to come under some pressure for failing to get a group of talented players to gel so this cup run could be huge in gaining some momentum. The explosion of joy inside the stadium after the final penalty made it the best moment so far in his reign of less than six months.

Newcastle had been looking to get to the semifinals of the League Cup for the second straight season. Fulham have reached that stage for the first time in its 144-year history.

Fulham, another team from west London, also needed a penalty shootout to advance and this one lasted longer, with defender Tosin Adarabioyo eventually netting the clinching kick for a 7-6 win. Amadou Onana had a chance to win the shootout

Hosts hold a winning 2-0 lead in the three-match series

Sarkar's 169 not enough as New Zealand rout Bangladesh

NELSON, New Zealand, Dec 20, (AP): Henry Nicholls made 95 and Will Young 89, trouncing Soumya Sarkar's career-best 169 and leading New Zealand to a seven-wicket win over Bangladesh on Wednesday in the second one-day international.

New Zealand hold a winning 2-0 lead in the three-match series which ends Saturday in Napier.

Nicholls returned to form but fell just short of his second ODI century while Young narrowly missed his

CRICKET

second straight ODI century as New Zealand made 296-3 in reply to Bangladesh's 291. Young made 105 as New Zealand won the rain-affected first match of the series by 44 runs.

Young put on 76 for the first wicket with Rachin Ravindra who made 45 from 33 balls after making a first-ball duck in the first match on Sunday.

Young then added 128, effectively in a match-winning partnership, for the second wicket with Nicholls who also



New Zealand player Will Young bats during the first One Day cricket international between New Zealand and Bangladesh at University Oval in Dunedin, New Zealand. (AP)

bounced back after a second-ball duck in the opening ODI.

New Zealand were 204-2 in the 33rd over when Young was out, having made his 89 runs from 94 balls with

eight fours and two sixes. It was 260-3 when Nicholls fell in the 41st over, close to scoring another ODI hundred on Saxton Oval, the ground on which he scored his first in 2019.

Tom Latham and Tom Blundell saw New Zealand home with 22 balls to spare, Blundell finishing the chase with a six in the 47th over. Earlier, Sarkar made his 169 from 151 balls as it batted first after losing the toss.

Sarkar's score was the second-highest by a Bangladesh batsman in one-day internationals behind Litton Das's 174 against Zimbabwe and the second highest by a visiting batsman in a one-day international in New Zealand.

"I'm happy but I'm concerned we're not winning," Sarkar said. "If we were winning it would be special. I wasn't really thinking, just watching the ball and playing my shots."

The left-hander had a reprieve on 92 when he offered a catching chance to Young at point which Young put down as the ball swirled in a steady breeze. Sarkar went on to reach his third one-day international century from 116 balls as the mainstay of the Bangladesh innings.

Bangladesh struggled to generate momentum early in their innings against tight bowling and also were impeded by losing their first four wickets for 80 runs in just over 20 overs.

The run rate crept up to 4.6 at the midpoint of the innings when Bangladesh were 115-4 and to exactly 5.0 after 30 overs when they were 150-4.

Then Sarkar took charge. He reached his century at the start of the 40th over with the run rate lagging again at around 4.8 and he immediately began to search for the boundaries, sharing a half century partnership from 47 balls with Mehidy Hasan Miraz (19).

FIFA defends its 'expanded' CWC

MANCHESTER, England, Dec 20, (AP): FIFA has defended its newly expanded Club World Cup from criticism that players are being overworked by pointing to the longevity of aging stars like Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo.

Concerns were raised about players' physical and mental health after world soccer's governing body introduced a 32-team tournament to an increasingly congested calendar.

Arsene Wenger, FIFA's chief of global football development, said there have been "huge improvements on the welfare side" in areas such as nutrition, injury prevention and medical technology, and that players are performing at the highest level for longer.

"We see players receiving world awards, the likes of Messi, Ronaldo, (Karim) Benzema, all over the age of 35. And it is not unusual to see international careers lasting over 20 years. Not so long ago, that was not possible," said Wenger, the former Arsenal manager.

The first edition of the re-

SOCCER

vamped Club World Cup will be held in the United States from June 15 to July 13, 2025.

"The positive impact that this will have on clubs is going to be huge, because it will increase resources for clubs all over the world to develop and to compete," Wenger said. "There is demand for big competitions in football, and there has been a good support for this one."

While the European Club Association described the tournament as "fantastic news for club football," world players' union FIFPRO hit out at the plans.

It said that without initiating "further player workload safeguards" the scheduling of the event showed a "lack of consideration for the mental and physical health of participating players, as well as a disregard for their personal and family lives."