



Incoming government urged to prioritize citizens' needs

## No Assembly start without HH Amir, MPs-elect assert

### Opinion

### Is Kuwait's Constitution divine, and are MPs reformist companions?

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

CONSTITUTIONS are not divine texts. They shape the overall social behavior and govern relations between authorities, which is why it is necessary to research them from time to time.

This is a prevailing rule in various countries of the world. They respect their people and seek to develop their society.



Al-Jarallah

However, some of them are afflicted by a group of reformers who know how to take advantage of the loopholes in the text, and resist the progress of the nation. They are usually keen to aggravate the chaos that occurs when the state remains stagnant. This is why such people in Kuwait threaten woe and ruin whenever there is a call to amend the Kuwaiti Constitution for the better.

On the other hand, the parliaments of several countries, their governments, and their leaders conduct reviews of the constitutional texts from time to time. If any loophole is found that could lead to corruption or allows a specific group to benefit from it, it is amended for the better.

After 1945, Germany amended its constitution 62 times, the United States of America 27 times, and France, from which most Arab countries took their constitution and laws, amended its constitution 24 times.

All these countries did the necessary to ensure correct parliamentary and governmental practice is followed in order to develop society, and make sure no woe and ruin befell on them.

Even ancient Greece, from which the world adopted democracy, amended its constitution ten times over the past decades - both when it was a kingdom and when it became a republic. This is because the objective was to seek to develop society, and not work in favor of any individual interests.

Therefore, we beg to ask - Is the Kuwaiti Constitution perfect? Does it not contain any defects? Have the loopholes discovered in the constitution over the past 60 years necessitated consideration to amend it? Does the

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### NewsWatch

**KUWAIT CITY:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Wednesday a congratulatory cable to the newly elected Slovakian President Peter Pellegrini on winning the presidential elections.

In his cable, His Highness the Amir wished the Slovakian president success in assuming office, and everlasting health. (KUNA)

**DUBAI:** The desert nation of the United Arab Emirates attempted to dry out Wednesday from the heaviest rain ever recorded there after a deluge flooded out Dubai International Airport, disrupting flights through the world's busiest airfield for international travel.

The state-run WAM news agency called the rain Tuesday "a historic weather event" that surpassed "anything documented since the start of data collection in 1949." That's before the discovery of crude oil in this energy-rich nation then part of a British protectorate known as the Trucial States. (AP)

**TEHRAN:** Iran's president has warned that the "tiniest invasion" by Israel would bring a "massive and harsh" response, as the region braces for potential Israeli retaliation after Iran's attack over the weekend.

President Ebrahim Raisi spoke Wednesday at an annual army parade that was relocated to a barracks north of the capital, Tehran, from its usual venue on a highway in the city's southern outskirts. Iranian authorities gave no explanation for its relocation, and state television didn't broadcast it live, as it has in previous years. (AP)

**CAIRO:** Arab League Secretary-General, Ahmad Aboul Gheit, said that containing the security situation in the region begins with putting an end to the massacre that Israeli occupation continues to commit daily in Gaza.

In a statement Wednesday, the Arab League noted that this came during Aboul Gheit's meeting with the head of the UN Truce Supervision Organization mission concerned with follow-up and field monitoring of the implementation of the armistice agreements between Israeli occupation and its neighbors, Major General Patrick Gochat. (KUNA)

### Gov't denies Sahel app hack

**KUWAIT CITY, April 17, (KUNA):** The official spokesman of the unified government application of electronic services "Sahel." Yousef Kathem denied on Wednesday that "Sahel" has been hacked. He said that the notification received by users of the application is related to the addition of a new service from the Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha).

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By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, April 17:** MP-elect Abdullah Al-Anbaie was the lone National Assembly member present at the supposed inaugural session on Wednesday.

Al-Anbaie explained this is part of his constitutional commitment and a confirmation of his compliance with the rules.

On the other hand, MPs-elect Mohammad Hayef, Fahd Al-Masoud and Saad Al-Khanfour have announced that they will not attend the session scheduled for Sunday. They asserted that they have no intention to attend an opening session without His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

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# World Bank, IMF align on Kuwait's economic growth



Photo shows Boursa Kuwait on Wednesday. The World Bank and IMF lift Kuwait's growth forecasts for 2024 and 2025.

### Dual boost

**KUWAIT CITY, April 17:** The World Bank has upgraded its growth projections for Kuwait's economy in 2024 to 2.8%, surpassing its earlier forecast of 2.6% made in January, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Similarly, for 2025, the Bank now anticipates a growth rate of 3.1%, up from the previous estimate of 2.7%. These revisions are outlined in the report titled "Conflicts and Debts in the Middle East and North Africa."

The expected growth follows a contraction of Kuwait's GDP by 0.1% in 2023, which contrasts with the significant 7.9% growth experienced in 2022.

In terms of per capita GDP, Kuwait is projected to see an acceleration, with a growth of 1.9% in 2024, compared to a slight contraction of 0.1% in the previous year. This growth trend is expected to continue, reaching approximately 2.2% in 2025.

Regarding the current account balance, it is forecasted to decrease, representing 22.7% of GDP in 2024, down from 29.3% in the previous year, and further declining to 21.9% in 2025.

It's worth noting that Kuwait's public debt law expired in September 2017, with no new state debt law approved since then, despite the introduction of a draft law allowing the issuance of sukuk.

The World Bank anticipates faster growth for the economies of Gulf oil-exporting countries in 2024, around 2.8%, and a further increase to 4.7% in 2025. The report emphasizes the necessity of diversifying economic and financial revenues due to shifts in global oil markets and the growing demand for renewable energy sources.

For the Middle East and North Africa region, the World Bank expects GDP to rise to 2.7% in 2024, a slight improvement from 1.9% in 2023. Similarly, both oil-importing and oil-exporting countries are expected to experience more balanced growth rates compared to 2022, when higher oil prices favored growth in oil-exporting nations.

Meanwhile, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has revised its forecasts for the Kuwaiti economy for the current year, projecting a deficit of 1.4% in GDP for 2024, a significant improvement from the previously anticipated 3.6%. Additionally, the IMF expects Kuwait's GDP to grow by 3.8% in 2025, reports Al-Qabas daily.

According to the IMF's April 2024 forecast report titled "The Recovery of the Global Economy Is Steady but Slow and Varies

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### Former interior minister lauds strategic cooperation

## Kuwait-NATO vital for regional security: Sheikh Thamer

**ROME, April 17, (KUNA):** Kuwait's former Interior Minister Sheikh Thamer Al-Ali Al-Sabah lauded Tuesday the fruitful strategic cooperation between the State of Kuwait and NATO for its impact on regional security and stability.

Speaking at an international conference held in Rome to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the NATO foundation, Sheikh Thamer, also former chief of Kuwait's National Security Apparatus, highlighted the development of Kuwait-NATO relations and cooperation over the past two decades.

As he co-chaired a special session on "Security in the Southern Neighborhood: The Gulf Region," alongside the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Secretary-General of the Supreme Defense Council in Bahrain, Sheikh Abdullah bin Ahmad Al-Khalifa, Sheikh Thamer pointed out that Kuwait was the first country to join NATO's Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), which is a platform established by NATO to promote security cooperation on a bilateral basis between NATO and partner countries in the broader Middle East region, in June 2004.

He hailed the establishment of the



Kuwait's former Interior Minister Sheikh Thamer Al-Ali Al-Sabah during the international conference.

ICI Regional Center in Kuwait in 2017 as a culmination of the cooperation between Kuwait and the Alliance.

Sheikh Thamer shed lights on the center's activities and contributions in dealing with emerging challenges.

According to NATO, the NATO-ICI Regional Centre in Kuwait acts as a hub for the enhancement of practical cooperation between NATO and its Gulf partners.

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### Minister Al-Ghareeb highlights measures

## Kuwait pledges to combat human trafficking

**MUSCAT, April 17, (KUNA):** Kuwaiti Minister of Justice and Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Faisal Al-Ghareeb said Kuwait attaches great importance to combating human trafficking through laws and legislation that include deterrent penalties and protect victims' rights.

This came in his speech Wednesday during the launch of the Middle East forum to combat human trafficking in its fifth session, organized by the Oman Capital Muscat.

In its relentless efforts towards criminalizing all kinds of human trafficking, Kuwait issued Law No. 91 in 2013 regarding combating human trafficking and smuggling immigrants, Al-Ghareeb stated.

He explained that the Cabinet ap-

proved a decision to adopt the national strategy to prevent those crimes, which contains three main axes (prevention - protection - international cooperation) and the establishment a permanent national committee concerned with implementing that strategy with representation from all relevant national authorities.

This government committee approved the national referral system in December 2019, added Al-Ghareeb, and concluded partnerships with relevant international organizations and signed a declaration of intent with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime for the GCC region, and working on developing this cooperation into a memorandum of understanding.

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### Day by Day

IT seems we are embarking on a path where faces will glow with righteousness, and where the pursuit of noble aspirations will shine brightly. Our vision has become clear, illuminated by the guiding lights of wisdom and insight.

May God bless you with a radiant countenance, O patient and steadfast one. May He illuminate your face as you champion justice, starting with yourself and extending to your family.

May God grant you a pure and bright visage as you meticulously navigate every aspect of life, discerning between what brings benefit and what causes harm.

May God bless your life, extending its duration and elevating your status, as you solemnly pledge before your Creator to restore your country to its rightful path, free from the clutches of corruption.

May God bless your countenance wherever you may be, and in whatever position you hold. How beautiful it is to be adorned with the purity symbolized by a white garment, shining like the sun that cannot be obscured by any obstacle.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

## Collab to prevent deportee re-entry

— Details Page 3 —

## Deputy FM leads diplomatic meet

**KUWAIT CITY, April 17, (KUNA):** The Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Wednesday chaired a meeting of the council of the diplomatic and consular corps.

The meeting was held at the ministry headquarters, with the participation of the assistants foreign minister and members of the council.

They addressed issues set in the session agenda.

### Also:

**KUWAIT CITY:** Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received on Wednesday a phone call from UK's Minister of State for the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, Commonwealth and UN at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Lord Tareq Ahmad.

During the phone call, both sides discussed the two countries' bilateral relations, the latest regional and international issues, as well as topics of common interest.



MoFA photo

Deputy FM chairs meeting of diplomatic, consular corps.



## The difference between TV 'serial' and the parliament

"WHEN the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information announced the referral of the cast of the Ramadan series 'One Wife is Not Enough' to the Public Prosecution, under the pretext that 'the role of the Ministry of Information is to preserve the values and traditions of Kuwaiti society... and advance public taste,' I was drawn to a tweet that supported a question within its lines," columnist **Iqbal Al-Ahmad** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"The Ministry of Information also decided to 'stop anyone who participated in any artistic work that offends Kuwaiti society from participating in any artistic or theatrical works that are filmed or shown inside Kuwait.'"

"The Ministry's decision came against the backdrop of intense campaigns on social media criticizing the series, which deals with the story of polygamy, in addition to other social issues. Many demanded that this show be stopped."

"Many described the series as bold and offensive to Kuwaiti society and damaging its image, and because its content is not compatible with the principle of preserving the values and traditions of Kuwaiti society, and highlighting its true image and adherence to values and morals, because it, that is, the series, touches on sensitive issues in marital life and family relations."

"I very much liked the tweet, which I read on the 'X' platform, which says: 'If we convince the world that the declining Ramadan series do not represent us... how can we convince them that the decline in dialogue in the National Assembly does not represent us... and this honorable representative received the largest number of voters' votes.'"

"Certainly, the tweeter is referring in his words to some of what the candidates said during their seminars in the recent elections, which in their vocabulary exceeded respect and the principles of speech in our authentic Kuwaiti society."

"It is no secret to anyone that in many of the nation's previous assemblies, the dialogues of some representatives reached a lower level, whether through vocabulary or exchanges of words, reason, or cups of water."

"It would be great if there were keenness on the part of the concerned authorities, the first of which is the National Assembly, to stop those who set a bad example in the style of dialogue, discussion and expression of opinion under the dome of Abdullah Al-Salem Hall, which attracts attention and arouses more interest than soap operas."

"The matter of parliamentary immunity, which has been used as a shield against accountability and responsibility, should not hinder the efforts to uphold privacy and ethical standards within Kuwaiti society, particularly within the National Assembly. We have been closely monitoring recent media coverage surrounding the series 'One Wife is Not Enough,' and it is imperative that we address these issues without any hindrance from immunity provisions."

"Although I personally have a special opinion regarding these Ministry of Information procedures, what concerns me is that muscle flexing should not be only in a specific area and not in other areas in Kuwait, which may be much more important."

"Morals are morals, principles are principles. They cannot be mixed here or ignored there."

**Also:**

"Citizens are looking forward to the beginning of the new Parliament being the beginning of complete harmony between the two authorities, as everyone is keen for the two authorities to devote themselves to adopting development projects for the benefit of citizens," columnist **Abdul Mohsen Muhammad Al-Husseini** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

"Kuwait is everyone's country, and there is no doubt that everyone is keen for the relationship between the two authorities to prevail in complete understanding. The next stage is considered an important stage in progress towards building a bright future for Kuwait, a country for everyone."

"We are all for Kuwait and Kuwait is for us.' This is the slogan announced by His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad after the complete liberation of the pure soil of Kuwait from the treacherous occupier. We hope that the two authorities will circulate this slogan so that the members of the two authorities focus their deliberations in the council on the public interest of the Kuwaitis and Kuwait, and that everyone's loyalty is to Kuwait, ev-

eryone's homeland.

"Let us begin with the slogan of our late Amir, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad, 'We are all for Kuwait and Kuwait is for us,' so that the wheel of development and progress moves in our dear Kuwait."

"The people of Kuwait are still committed to the covenant and commitment to the 'Jeddah Conference,' in which Kuwait pledged with the ruling family to reconcile, fully cooperate, and prevent all attempts to spread discord."

"Let our slogan be the interest of Kuwait above all differences, and we are confident of the next government's keenness to fully cooperate with the National Assembly to adopt the most successful development projects to build a prosperous future for our homeland, Kuwait, which is considered the home of everyone."

"We also feel the members of the National Assembly are keen that their work during the next phase be aimed at achieving full cooperation with the government so that we can continue the achievements that were made during the eras of our honorable former rulers."

"From the sayings of the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad, may God have mercy on him, God willing 'The status and distinguished international reputation that Kuwait has achieved is due to the cohesion and solidarity of the people of this country, and today more than ever we must preserve these qualities.' The authenticity of our one Kuwaiti family, and that we nurture it and increase its trust over the days. God bless."

"The style of parliamentary elections and peoples of the world... The election of an individual among the people to represent them in the corridors of parliaments is an established right of the human being who lives in countries where solid democratic rules prevail. This has been in place since ancient times, as many nations tried it in their political life. This principle was applied in countries, peoples and civilizations of the previous world -- in Rome, Sparta, Greece, Britain and France, as well as America recently, and the rest of the countries of the modern world that follow the civilized democratic system," columnist **Mohammad Salem Al-Balhan** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"Most of these modern countries, whose peoples live in our current era, have adopted partisanship -- the basic rule for the voter and the elected. This is according to clear rules, evidence, regulations and principles that the elected and the voter follow in representing their party in Parliament. Naturally, the elected member provides the texts and an action plan that defines the aims of his party, which he can use in his mission. Based on what the senior leadership of his party deems appropriate, he works with all his energies to ensure the successful implementation and effectiveness of party instructions, which aim to do everything in the interest of the country."

"As for whoever wins parliamentary membership in those countries, other than the party that wins the majority of votes, he usually joins the so-called parliamentary opposition bloc, the task of which is to supervise the functioning of a system pledged by the ruling party and to oppose anything that is not in the interest of the country. In this case, the elected member will walk to his seat in the legislative hall armed with a road map to facilitate his task, as he will work according to the opinions and instructions he has been provided with."

"One of the provisions of this rule adopted by European countries and America is that whoever obtains the majority parliamentary votes from the political parties assumes the task of heading the State and forming the government, in which the majority consists of members of the ruling party, as is the practice under the American system or the system of some European countries."

"In the United States and elsewhere, they appoint the head of State from the elected party, and the government usually works according to the instructions of the ruling party. Some countries take this rule as the basis for political action. In Africa, for example, the party that wins the election brings the head of State, and the government is formed by its majority. This is also the case in Latin America including Brazil."

"However, some countries in the whole world and in our third world in particular, do not adhere to this rule. They rather work according to what they see as good for the country and the people. These countries are not satisfied with partisanship. They are satisfied with the general system that unites rather than divide."

"May Allah grant everyone goodness, security and peace."

— **Compiled by PFX Fernandes**



Iqbal Al-Ahmad



Kuwait, UAE pledge to bolster security cooperation. Above: Kuwait police verify the identity of an individual through biometrics process.

## Kuwait, UAE focus on prevention of deportees 'breaching borders'

'Law awaits people using fake license plates in two nations'

**KUWAIT CITY, April 17: Recent discussions between Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates have yielded significant outcomes aimed at bolstering bilateral cooperation in security matters. A key focus of these discussions was the prevention of deported individuals from reentering either country using forged documents, reports Al-Rai daily.**

High-level representatives, including Lieutenant General Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf from Kuwait's Ministry of Interior, engaged in fruitful talks with an UAE security delegation. The primary agenda included enhancing coordination in managing the deportation process and sharing crucial information electronically to prevent deportees from circumventing immigration controls.

Additionally, discussions addressed the longstanding traffic link between the two nations, which has been operational for over a year. Plans are underway to finalize pending matters and address any outstanding issues officially in the coming month.

Both Kuwait and the UAE expressed a mutual interest in expanding the scope of their cooperation beyond mere traffic violation data exchange. They aim to implement measures for security collaboration to identify and apprehend individuals using counterfeit license plates within their territories.

Emphasizing the importance of consolidating security cooperation, officials from both sides underscored the need to encompass various relevant aspects to ensure the safety and integrity of their borders.



A ministry inspector checks the weight of plate of kebab after cooking.

## Eateries involved in food fraud face law

**KUWAIT CITY, April 17: The Ministry of Trade and Industry has taken action against three restaurants found guilty of deliberately reducing the weight of grill pans after grilling. The Commercial Control Inspectors at the Salmiya Center uncovered these violations and the Ministry has completed legal proceedings against the offenders. This announcement was made through the official social media account of the Ministry on Tuesday, reports Al-Jarida daily.**

In a related move, the Ministry of Trade and Industry also cracked down on two food stores involved in commercial and retail fraud. Inspection teams seized these stores located in the "impossible" fruit and vegetable market for deceptive practices, which included altering the country of origin labels and repackaging large items into smaller packages.

The Ministry's efforts underscore its commitment to ensuring fair trade practices and protecting consumers from deceptive tactics in the marketplace.

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### Nepali maid commits suicide

## Grocery robbers to be deported

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

**KUWAIT CITY, April 17: The Ministry of Interior announced personnel from the Criminal Security Sector have arrested two Egyptians who were involved in criminal activities, reports Al-Qabas daily.**

These individuals were identified from a video clip circulating on social media, depicting incidents of grocery theft in the Salmiya area. Following the circulation of these clips, the Ministry intensified its search and investigation operations, leading to the identification of the culprits under the direct supervision of Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Acting Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef Al-Sabah.

The Security Media Department confirmed that all necessary legal measures are

being taken against the perpetrators. Cases have been registered against them, and they will be deported from the country.

This swift and decisive action underscores the Ministry's commitment to maintaining law and order, ensuring the safety and security of citizens and residents alike. Such measures serve as a deterrent to criminal activities and reinforce the importance of upholding the rule of law.

**Maid commits suicide:** A Nepalese domestic worker died by suicide inside her sponsor's house in Qasr, Jahra.

According to a security source, when the Ministry of Interior's operations room received information about the incident, security forces rushed to the location and found the domestic worker hanging from the ceiling using a cloth piece.

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# MoE receives 10 school buildings in Mutla'a as it preps for new school yr

Second phase of lectures at govt schools resumes: MEW

**KUWAIT CITY, April 17:** As the Ministry of Education gears up for the upcoming academic year 2024/2025, preparations are underway to equip schools and ensure they meet the latest standards.

Sources within the education sector disclosed to Al-Jarida that the ministry has received 10 school buildings in Al-Mutla'a City from the Public Authority for Housing Welfare. These buildings include facilities for kindergartens, primary, middle, and secondary schools.

The handover process was overseen by project engineers from both the PAHW and the educational facilities sector. The last building, designated for a kindergarten, was handed over last Sunday. These buildings come with a two-year warranty period, during which their compliance with standards is monitored and any issues are addressed with the PAHW.

The ministry has already commenced the process of equipping these schools, including providing necessary furniture for staff and students, as well as books and materials. The aim is to open several of these schools at the beginning of the next academic year. Educational districts near Al-Mutla'a have devel-



Al-Jarida photo

One of the school models received by the ministry.

oped plans to accommodate students wishing to transfer to these newly received schools, with preparations underway to ensure a smooth transition for students and staff.

Furthermore, the ministry expects to receive additional schools in Al-Mutla'a, as 11 more projects are nearing completion. This would bring the total number of schools received or expected to be received to 21.

The ministry is diligently preparing seven of these schools to be operational for the next academic year, including one kindergarten,

two primary schools, two middle schools, and two secondary schools (one for boys and one for girls) at each educational stage.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy has announced the resumption of the second phase of morning lectures at the Ministry of Education, aiming to cover 30 schools by the end of the academic year, reports Al-Jarida daily.

This initiative is part of the ministry's plan to promote the rationalization of electricity and water consumption, particularly as the winter

season comes to a close.

The ministry stated that this collaboration with the Ministry of Education is part of a renewed partnership plan to raise awareness about the importance of consumption rationalization. The awareness programs are delivered by a committee responsible for preparing the strategy for rationalizing electricity and water consumption in the ministry, along with teams derived from it.

The ministry's specialized team, comprising both male and female engineers, has organized several awareness lectures for middle and high school students. These lectures aim to educate the younger generation about the services provided by the ministry related to electricity and water.

In the first phase of the campaign, the ministry's team covered 11 schools across various governorates, delivering lectures on various topics related to consumption rationalization.

The Electricity Company expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Education, particularly the Educational Development and Activities Sector, for their cooperation and warm welcome extended to the ministry's team.

The lectures provided aim to enhance students' awareness and encourage responsible consumption habits in the targeted schools, ultimately serving the ministry's objectives.



Al-Jarida photo

MEW official giving a lecture at one of the government schools.



Photo by Rizk Taufiq

Ambassador Miguel Moro Aguilar with Suhailah Al Salem and Mercedes Vazquez.

## PAHW inks \$42 mln deals to build public buildings in Mutla'a

**KUWAIT CITY, April 17, (KUNA):** The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) has signed two contracts to construct public buildings in the new Al-Mutla'a residential district worth KD 42.468 million (USD 140 million).

The authority said in a state-

ment on Wednesday that the new buildings would be constructed with high-quality materials, affirming the keenness to secure all needs for the citizens while moving to their newly built houses in the region.

The facilities will include nurser-

ies, stores, two schools in addition to various other shops.

Currently, the authority is executing several projects including a medical center, a supermarket, a police station, a municipal building, a postal office and others.

Electric power has been connect-

ed to 109 buildings in the district, it said, indicating that the ongoing work to build all necessary facilities for the new residential district, one of the latest mega housing projects in Kuwait.

Mutla'a, with some hilly sites, is located to the north of Kuwait City.



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## Reception hosted by Kingdom of Spain Plenipotentiary Ambassador to State of Kuwait focuses on women's leadership

**KUWAIT CITY, April 17:** The Kingdom of Spain's Ambassador to the State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Bahrain His Excellency Mr. Miguel Moro Aguilar, hosted a reception in the State of Kuwait to meet with Mrs. Suhailah Al Salem, Supervisor of Planning Department at Kuwait's Ministry of Defense and Ms. Mercedes Vazquez, General Manager at ESK Holding, a Spanish business and technology executive who has demonstrated extensive innovative impact in the State of Kuwait for the past eight years.

Considering Spain's foreign policy to-

wards the support of the role of women in all dimensions of the economic fabric, Spain's maximum envoy to the State of Kuwait addressed with Mrs. Al Salem and Mrs. Vazquez, their journey, impact, challenges and future prospects as women in the defense and technology, innovation and business fields respectively.

During the reception held on April 14, Mrs. Al Salem also addressed her experience running for the latest 2024 Kuwait National Assembly elections, as part of her desire to encourage female representation in leadership in the State of Kuwait for sustainable prosperity.

### Kuwait to host Chief IT CEO Summit

## Municipal Council member submits questions about repair of Darwaza

**By Inass Awadh**  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, April 17:** The Municipal Council member Alia Al-Farsi submitted a question to the executive body regarding the repair work of the lower part of Al-Abdul Razzaq Gate (Darwaza) in Kuwait City and the Mubarakiya Markets Development Project.

In the preamble to the letter with her questions, Al-Farsi emphasized the significance of the donation approved by the Municipal Council from the Commercial Bank of Kuwait.

This donation aims to support the restoration work of the tunnel and Darwaz at Al-Abdul Razzaq Street. The intersection holds great importance as it connects four main roads in the heart of the capital and has a significant impact on development and urban plans, particularly in Kuwait City and the Mubarakiya markets, areas of concern for the Kuwait Municipality.

Al-Farsi asked a number of questions, such as:-

1. What is the expected time to reopen the surface intersection (car intersection), according to the schedule?
2. What is the expected time to reopen the underground tunnel (for pedestrian traffic) according to the schedule?
3. Are there structural safety measures for the site?
4. To what extent will the Mubarakiya Markets Development Project be affected if the Kuwait Metro is not implemented?

She also asked for an explanation of the impact on the surrounding roads in coordination with the relevant authorities as well as a feasibility study for the project components.

**Chief IT CEO Summit in May:** The Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) announced the forthcoming Chief Information Technology CEO Summit 2024

will be held in Kuwait on May 13, reports Al-Jarida daily.

This summit will host speakers in digital transformation to delve into various topics concerning artificial intelligence and its broader impact on technology.

Dr. Ammar Al-Husseini, the agency's acting director, highlighted their strategic role as a partner in the summit, demonstrating their commitment to spearheading digital transformation in the country and shaping the future of information technology.

Al-Husseini emphasized Kuwait's rapid digital advancement, citing numerous government-led initiatives supporting citizens and companies, with artificial intelligence playing a pivotal role across sectors like education, healthcare, and government.

The summit aims to facilitate constructive dialogues between regional technology firms and influential decision-makers in information and communications technology. Al-Husseini underscored the Kuwaiti government's dedication to advancing its digital agenda in alignment with Kuwait Vision 2035 and Kuwait Strategy 2040, emphasizing the adoption of emerging technologies and fostering innovation in both public and private sectors.

Furthermore, Al-Husseini noted the growing investment in Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) use cases by Kuwaiti institutions, highlighting the summit as an ideal platform to explore the evolving role of artificial intelligence in shaping the future of information technology.

Jyoti Lalchandani, Vice President of IDC Group and Regional Director for the Middle East, Turkey, and Africa region, emphasized the summit's objective to empower technology leaders with knowledge and strategies essential for embracing artificial intelligence as a fundamental component of their organizations' technology agendas.

The summit's agenda includes expert-led sessions and panel discussions covering various aspects of digital transformation, including modernizing applications, fortifying organizations in the digital economy, and harnessing artificial intelligence and analytics for transformative outcomes.



## World News Roundup

## Europe

## Ukraine prez signs law

## Russia missiles hit Chernihiv; 14 killed

KYIV, Ukraine, April 17, (Agencies): Three Russian missiles slammed into a downtown area of the northern Ukrainian city of Chernihiv on Wednesday, hitting an eight-floor apartment building and killing at least 14 people, authorities said.

At least 61 people, including two children, were wounded in the morning attack, Ukrainian emergency services said. Chernihiv lies about 150 kilometers (90 miles) north of the capital, Kyiv, near the border with Russia and Belarus, and has a population of around 250,000 people.

The latest Russian bombardment came as the war stretched into its third year and approached what could be a critical juncture as a lack of further military support from Ukraine's Western partners increasingly leaves it at the mercy of the Kremlin's bigger forces.

Through the winter months, Russia under the government of Vladimir Putin made no dramatic advance along the 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line, focusing instead on attritional warfare. However, Ukraine's shortage of artillery ammunition, troops and armored vehicles has allowed the Russians to gradually push forward, military analysts say.

A crucial element for Ukraine is the holdup in Washington of approval for an aid package that includes roughly \$60 billion for Ukraine. House Speaker Mike Johnson said Sunday that he would try to move the package forward this week.

**Ukrainian president signs law:** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed a controversial law Tuesday, days after it was passed by parliament, potentially helping Kyiv to boost conscription to replenish depleted forces to fend off Russia's continued aggression.

The mobilization law, published on Ukraine's Parliamentary website, is expected to take effect in a month and make it easier to identify every draft-eligible man in the country. Many have dodged conscription by avoiding contact with authorities.

The law also provides soldiers with incentives, such as cash bonuses or money toward buying a house or car, which according to analysts Ukraine can't afford.

Ukraine has been struggling to fend off the Russian advance.

**'Defense key issue ahead of polls':** Russia's invasion of Ukraine is at the forefront of European Union citizens' minds, with defense and security seen as key campaign issues ahead of the June elections, according to a study published Wednesday.

At national level, the EU's defense and security is mentioned first in nine countries, in contrast with sentiments five years ago when the last EU Parliament elections were held.

"The EU's defense and security was far from a prominent topic in 2019, before Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022," the latest edition of the EU Parliament's Eurobarometer said.

**Ex-UK premier Truss backs Trump:** During her 49 days as Britain's shortest-serving prime minister, Liz Truss sparked mayhem on the financial markets and turmoil within her Conservative Party.

Now she is speaking up, and her message is: It wasn't me.

In interviews and a new book, Truss robustly defends her economic record, blaming the "deep state," "technocrats," "the establishment," civil servants and the Bank of England for her downfall.

Her ideas include abolishing the United Nations and backing Donald Trump for reelection - a departure from the convention that senior British politicians stay out of US elections.

**Croatia votes in parliamentary election:** Croatia is voting Wednesday in a parliamentary election after a campaign that centered on a bitter rivalry between the president and prime minister of the country.

The ballot pits the ruling conservative Croatian Democratic Union, or HDZ, led by Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic, against an alliance of centrist and left-wing parties informally led by populist President Zoran Milanovic and his Social Democratic Party, or SDP.

The election is being held as Croatia, a European Union and NATO member, struggles with the highest inflation rate in the eurozone, a labor shortage, illegal migration and reports of widespread corruption.

At stake in the race for Croatia's 151-seat parliament isn't just the Adriatic Sea country's future domestic policies, but also the EU's unity as it grapples with the instability from Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

**10 held in large-scale raid in Germany:** German authorities conducted a large-scale raid against an international human smuggling gang early Wednesday, police said in a statement.

More than 1,000 police officers searched dozens of homes, stores and offices across western and southern Germany and detained 10 suspects, including two lawyers.

A total of 38 suspected gang members, as well as 147 other people who allegedly paid to be smuggled by it, are being investigated, German news agency dpa reported. The two lawyers, 42 and 46 years old and from the Cologne area, are the main suspects, federal police in nearby Sankt Augustin said. The names of the suspects were not given, in line with German privacy rules.

The suspects are accused of having illegally taken advantage of special German immigration rules reserved for skilled foreign workers to obtain residency permits for around 350 mostly Chinese nationals - who don't meet the needed criteria - in exchange for hundreds of thousands of euros (dollars).

**PACE recommends Kosovo:** The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) recommended Kosovo's Council of Europe (CoE) membership, deciding to monitor its fulfillment of commitments and obligations as during its accession, stated CoE.

Dora Bakoyannis, CoE member from Greece, reported the statutory opinion of Kosovo's passing by 131 votes in favor, 29 against, and 11 abstentions.

PACE stated that Kosovo's membership would lead to "the strengthening of human rights standards by ensuring access to the European Court of Human Rights for all those who are under Kosovo's jurisdiction."



Spain's King Felipe VI, (centre left), and Queen Letizia, (centre right), arrive for a wreath laying ceremony at the National Monument opposite the Royal Palace in Amsterdam, Netherlands on April 17. (AP)



US Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, R-La., pauses as he and the House Republican leadership meet with reporters following a closed-door Republican strategy session as Johnson pushes towards separate votes on aid for Israel and Ukraine, at the Capitol in Washington on April 16. (AP)



Gurley



Graham

**Ex-sen, gov Graham dies:** Former US sen and two-term Florida gov Bob Graham, who gained national prominence as chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee in the aftermath of the 2001 terrorist attacks and as an early critic of the Iraq war, has died. He was 87.

Graham's family announced the death Tuesday in a statement posted on X by his daughter Gwen Graham.

"We are deeply saddened to report the passing of a visionary leader, dedicated public servant, and even more importantly, a loving husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather," the family said.

Graham, who served three terms in the Senate, made an unsuccessful bid for the 2004 Democratic presidential nomination, emphasizing his opposition to the Iraq invasion. (AP)

**4 people shot in Bronx:** Four people were shot - one fatally - on a street corner in the Bronx Tuesday evening by shooters riding on scooters, police said.

About 10 shots were fired after two scooters pulled up to the intersection after 6 pm and passengers on the back of each pulled out guns, Assistant Police Chief Benjamin Gurley said.

Three victims standing on the street corner, ranging in age from 23 to 37, suffered gunshot wounds to their legs. The fourth, a 29-year-old man, was hit in the legs and chest and later died, Gurley said.

"The perpetrators wore masks and hoodies to block their identities and then they fled on the scooters northbound," Gurley said.

One person was taken into custody for questioning Tuesday night. But Gurley said police were unsure if that person was involved in the shooting. (AP)

**Man fatally shot Uber driver:** An Ohio man who authorities say fatally shot an Uber driver who he thought was trying to rob him after scam phone calls deceived them both has been indicted on a murder charge.

William Brock, 81, also faces counts of kidnapping and felonious assault in the indictment handed up Monday by a Clark County grand jury.

## Politics

## Figures, Dobson win nominations for Alabama

## Trump makes campaign stop at NY bodega

NEW YORK, April 17, (AP): Fresh from a Manhattan courtroom, Donald Trump visited a New York bodega where a man was stabbed to death, a stark pivot for the former president as he juggles being a criminal defendant and the Republican challenger intent on blaming President Joe Biden for crime.

Trump stopped by Sanaa Convenient Store, a tiny bodega that sells chips, sodas and other snacks. Trump aides said the former president and presumptive GOP nominee chose the store because it has been the site of a violent attack on an employee.

## Presumptive

The visit was Trump's first campaign appearance since his criminal hush money trial began, making the presumptive GOP nominee the first former president in US history to stand criminal trial.

Trump will be confined to the courtroom on most days, dramatically limiting his movements and his ability to campaign, fundraise and make calls. Aides have been planning rallies and other political events on weekends and Wednesdays, the one weekday when court is not supposed to be in session. Plans also include local appearances Trump can make after court recesses each day.

For months, Trump has assailed Democratic-run cities as crime-ridden and overrun with migrants who have crossed the U.S.-Mexico border. His local campaign stop in Harlem allows him to blend that familiar, if often exaggerated, message with his promise to make a serious play at winning his native state despite its heavily Democratic lean.

"They want law and order ... every week they're being robbed," Trump said of businesses in New York, as he tried to compare his prosecution with the state of New York streets. "You know where the crime is? It's in the bodegas."

Despite Trump's rhetoric, FBI statistics show overall violent crime in the U.S. dropped considerably in 2023 after pandemic-era spikes that began in 2020, when Trump was president. Crime also has fallen in New York City.

Still, in July 2022, Jose Alba, a

## Facing GOP revolt, Johnson's plan for US aid to Ukraine and allies uncertain

WASHINGTON, April 17, (AP): Defiant and determined, House Speaker Mike Johnson pushed back Tuesday against mounting Republican anger over his proposed US aid package for Ukraine, Israel and other allies, and rejected a call to step aside or risk a vote to oust him from office.

"I am not resigning," Johnson said after a testy morning meeting of fellow House Republicans at the Capitol.

Johnson referred to himself as a "wartime speaker" of the House and indicated in his strongest self-defense yet he would press forward with a US national security aid package, a situation that would force him to rely on Democrats to help pass it, over objections from his weakened majority.

"We are simply here trying to do our jobs," Johnson said, calling the motion to oust him "absurd ... not

helpful."

But as night fell, the speaker's resolve collided with Republican opposition to his plan.

For hours, Johnson holed up at the Capitol with lawmakers sorting through their alternative strategies, particularly ways to attach US-Mexico border security measures to the package. No bill text was released, putting passage of any aid this week in serious doubt.

"We'll see," Johnson said about the legislation, ducking into a meeting that dragged toward midnight.

Tuesday had initially brought a definitive shift in tone from both the House Republicans and the speaker himself at a pivotal moment as the embattled leader tries, against the wishes of his majority, to marshal the votes needed to send the stalled national security aid for Israel, Ukraine and other overseas allies to passage.

clerk at the store Trump visited in Hamilton Heights, a heavily Hispanic section of Harlem, was attacked by 35-year-old Austin Simon. The resulting altercation, captured on surveillance video, ended with Alba fatally stabbing Simon. Alba, an immigrant from the Dominican Republic, was arrested and charged with murder by the Manhattan district attorney dropped the charges within weeks, saying they could not prove Alba had not acted in self-defense.

## Also:

**MONTGOMERY, Ala.:** Alabama voters decided primary runoff on Tuesday for the state's newly redrawn 2nd Congressional District, setting up a potentially historic November race that could play a part in the battle for control of the US House of Representatives.

Shomari Figures, a former top aide to US Attorney General Merrick Garland, defeated state House Minority Leader Anthony Daniels to win the

Democratic nomination. Attorney and political newcomer Caroleene Dobson defeated former state Sen. Dick Brewbaker to win the Republican nomination. Dobson and Figures will face off in November in the closely watched general election.

Democrats are aiming to flip the seat after the district was redrawn by a federal court to boost the voting power of Black residents. If Figures is elected, it will be the first time in history that Alabama, which is about 27% Black, has two Black members in its congressional delegation.

"I'm enormously grateful for the confidence and the trust and the faith that the voters of this newly drawn district have placed in me to represent the Democratic Party in November," Figures said as he addressed supporters Tuesday night. "That is something that I do not take lightly."

Figures, an attorney, also served as an aide to former President Barack Obama, serving as domestic director of the Presidential Personnel Office.

Court documents did not list an attorney for him and a telephone number for Brock could not be located. He has pleaded not guilty and could face a life sen-

tence if convicted on the murder charge.

The shooting occurred March 25 at Brock's home in South Charleston. Officers from the county sheriff's office re-



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Service, blood is seen next to a car damaged by Russian missile strike in Chernihiv, Ukraine on April 17. Three Russian missiles slammed into a downtown area of the northern Ukrainian city of Chernihiv on Wednesday, hitting an eight-floor apartment building and killing at least 13 people, authorities said. (AP)

sponded there after Brock called 911 and said he had shot someone who was trying to rob him. (AP)

**Central US hit by storms:** Strong storms caused damage in parts of the middle U.S. Tuesday and spawned tornadoes in Kansas and Iowa, including one that left two people hurt.

An EF-1 tornado touched down shortly after 6 a.m. near the northeastern Kansas town of Richland, the National Weather Service said. The twister reached speeds of up to 100 mph (161 kph) and was on the ground for about 20 minutes, the service said.

Two people were injured when their RV flipped over during the tornado. Details about the injuries were not immediately available. Buildings and trees also were damaged in the neighboring town of Overbrook.

In central Iowa, a barn was demolished and other buildings were damaged after a tornado touched down in a rural area of Dallas County. The weather service also reported ping pong ball-sized hail in Bloomfield, just north of the Missouri line. There were no immediate reports of injuries.

The weather service said the central U.S. was under threat of severe weather through Tuesday. (AP)

## Lat/Am

## 'El Chapo' can't get calls

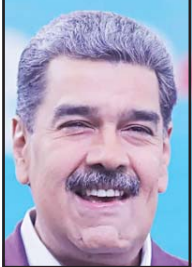
## Venezuela closes its embassy in Ecuador

MEXICO CITY, April 17, (AP): Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro ordered the closure of his country's embassy and consulates in Ecuador on Tuesday in solidarity with Mexico in its protest over a raid by Ecuadorian authorities on the Mexican Embassy in Quito.

Maduro and other presidents participating in a virtual meeting of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States expressed their support for Mexico's request to the United Nations suspend Ecuador from the world body over the April 5 raid. But Maduro was the only one to announce the closure of diplomatic outposts and recall of personnel.

"The condemnation has been unanimous, total, absolute," Maduro said, referring to the exorcism Ecuador's move has drawn. "No one today in this world comes out to defend this barbaric act."

Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa ordered authorities to raid the Mexican Embassy to arrest the country's former Vice President Jorge Glas, a convicted criminal and fugitive who had been living there since December. Mexico granted him asylum hours before police found Glas in a bedroom and dragged him out.



Maduro

The extraordinarily unusual use of force drew immediate condemnation from governments around the world because diplomatic premises are considered foreign soil and "inviolable" under the Vienna treaties.

Noboa, who did not participate in Tuesday's meeting, said last week that he authorized the raid "to protect national security." His government has argued that Glas was wanted for his criminal convictions for corruption and not political reasons and has accused Mexico of violating the Vienna treaties by granting him asylum.

## Relations

Mexico severed diplomatic relations with Ecuador immediately after the raid and recalled its diplomatic mission. It hoped to use the CELAC meeting to rally a unified front for its case both at the U.N. and before the International Court of Justice.

Honduras President Xiomara Castro, who currently leads CELAC, opened Tuesday's meeting by reading a proposed statement condemning Ecuador's actions. She then presented a video of Ecuadorian authorities breaking into Mexico's Embassy, along with dramatic music.

Mexico President Andrés Manuel López Obrador followed, repeating his demand that Ecuador be suspended from the United Nations until it apologizes and promises to never do it again.

"If we don't do this, we are not going to be able to live in a world ruled by norms, by laws," López Obrador said. "We would be living in the world of the gorillas."

The Mexican president cited Augusto Pinochet, who ruled Chile from 1973 to 1990, and said even Pinochet did not raid Mexico's embassy when Chilean dissidents sought refuge there. "Pinochet didn't dare to invade our embassy, that fearsome dictator," López Obrador said.

Maduro said he has ordered all diplomatic personnel back to Venezuela "until international law is expressly restored in Ecuador."

Maduro said Glas, who is now being held at a maximum-security prison in the port city of Guayaquil, "must be returned to the Mexican embassy and have his political asylum recognized."

Noboa drew additional criticism for not appearing at CELAC's virtual gathering.

## Also:

**MEXICO CITY:** Mexico's once most powerful drug lord, Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán is claiming he cannot get phone calls or visits in the maximum security U.S. prison where he is serving a life sentence.

Guzmán, who in the past was able to break out of Mexican prisons seemingly at will, wrote a letter to District Court Judge Brian M. Cogan in the Eastern District of New York in late March, complaining that he hadn't been able to speak with his twin daughters.

He was convicted for running an industrial-scale drug smuggling operation and is serving his sentence at a maximum security prison in Florence, Colorado.

In May 2023, "the facility stopped giving me calls with my daughters. And I haven't had calls with them for seven months," Guzmán wrote. "I have asked when they are going to give me a call with my daughters and the staff here told me that the FBI agent who monitors the calls does not answer. That's all they've told me."

"It is unprecedented discrimination against me," Guzmán complained. "They have decided to punish me by not letting me talk to my daughters."

Guzmán also asked the judge to authorize a visit by his wife, Emma Coronel, but did not say when he was last allowed to see her. Coronel also pleaded guilty to drug charges in 2021 but was later released.

**QUITO, Ecuador:** Ecuador on Tuesday began to ration electricity in the country's main cities as a drought linked to the El Niño weather pattern depletes reservoirs and limits output at hydroelectric plants that produce about 75% of the nation's power.

The power cuts were announced on Monday night by the ministry of energy, which said in a statement that it would review its decision on Wednesday night.

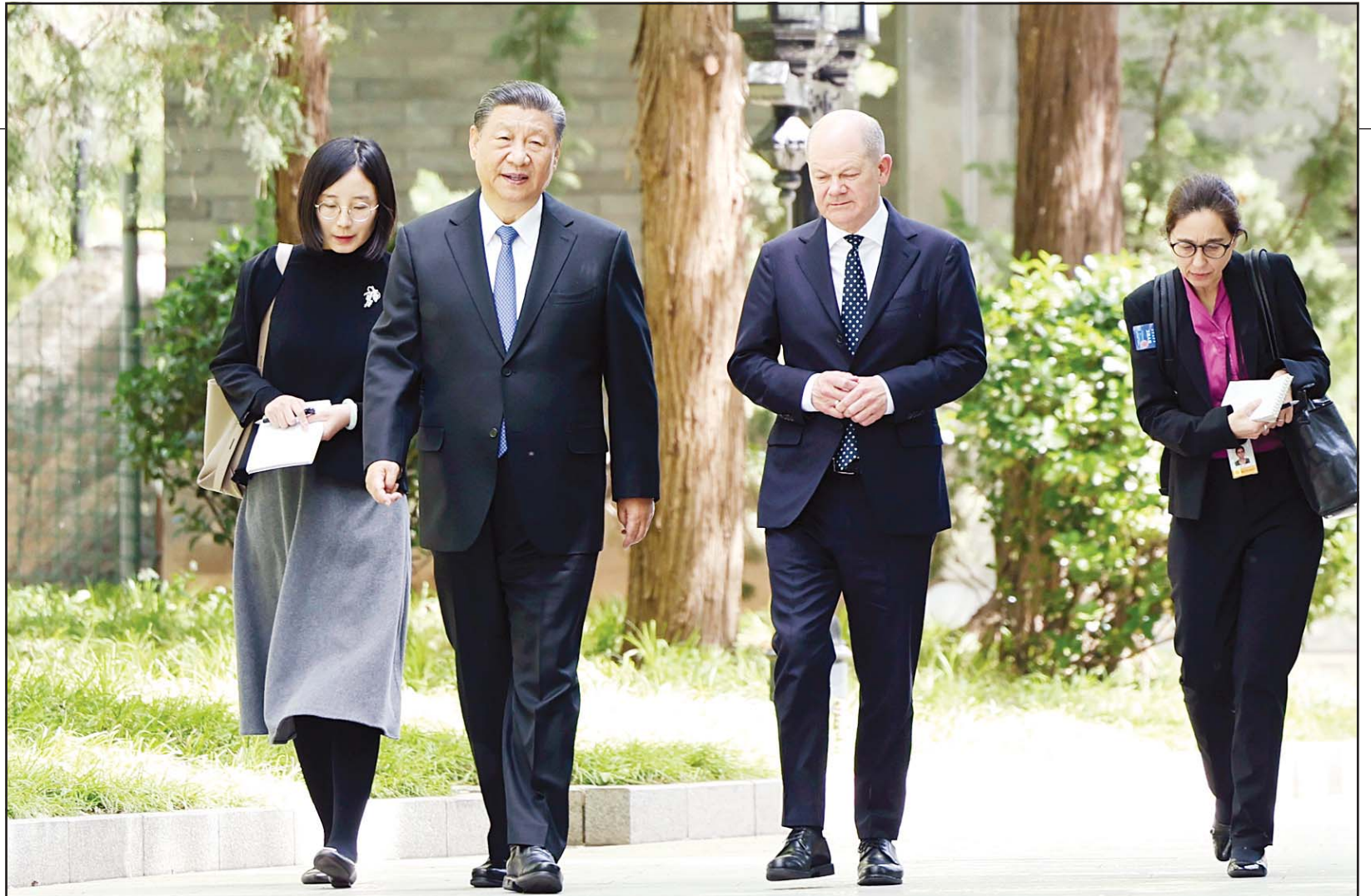
"We urge Ecuadorians to cut their electricity consumption in this critical week," the statement read. "And consider that each kilowatt and each drop of water that are not consumed will help us face this reality."

The power cuts in Ecuador come days after dry weather forced Colombia's capital city of Bogotá to ration water as its reservoirs reached record lows, threatening local supplies of tap water.

In the town of La Calera, on the outskirts of Bogotá, water trucks visited neighborhoods where water has been scarce recently because a local stream that supplies the town with water is drying up. Local residents lined up outside the water trucks with buckets to collect as much as they could carry.

"I'm worried about what's happening," said Carlos Arturo Rueda, a 72-year-old who was gathering water from the truck. "We need to do more to preserve this precious liquid."

Precipitation has diminished in Ecuador and Colombia this year due to warming temperatures in the south Pacific Ocean, which can cause floods along South America's west coast but can also generate intense droughts in the Andean valleys, where many of Ecuador's and Colombia's main cities are located.



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, Chinese President Xi Jinping, (second from left), and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, (second from right), walk together in Beijing, China, on April 16. (AP)

## German chancellor presses China on Russia's invasion of Ukraine

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said he asked Chinese leader Xi Jinping on Tuesday to pressure Russia to end its "insane campaign" in Ukraine, the latest in a parade of European leaders and senior officials to make such an appeal.

The Chinese side gave no sign of any change in its position, which has been to blame Europe and the US

for prolonging the fighting by supplying Ukraine with weapons and calling for peace negotiations that recognize Russian as well as Ukrainian concerns.

"China is not a party to the Ukraine crisis but has consistently promoted talks for peace in its own way," read a Chinese statement following talks between Xi and Scholz in the Chinese capital.

Scholz, winding up a three-day visit to China, told journalists that he believes "a building block has been put in place" that will contribute to discussions on diplomatic efforts to end the war.

Earlier, he said in a post on the social media platform X that he had asked Xi to use his influence with Russia. (AP)



People stand outside the Venezuelan embassy in Quito, Ecuador on April 16. Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro ordered the closure of his country's embassy and consulates in Ecuador on Tuesday in solidarity with Mexico in its protest over a raid by Ecuadorian authorities on the Mexican embassy in Quito. (AP)



Nyusi



Aillat

## Africa

**Boat capsizing kills 8:** At least eight people from one family have died after their homemade boat sank in central Mozambique, state media reported Tuesday.

Monday's sinking on a tributary of the Zambezi River in Sofala province came days after nearly 100 people, many of them children, died in one of the country's worst shipwrecks.

State-run Radio Mozambique said two people survived Tuesday and two were missing, citing Nобре dos Santos, administrator of the district where the latest sinking occurred.

The southern African country's public broadcaster attributed the accident to "excess weight and bad weather."

President Filipe Nyusi last week declared three days of mourning after the April 8 disaster, when a ferry overcrowded with residents reportedly fleeing a feared cholera outbreak capsized off Mozambique's northern coast, killing at least 98 people. (AP)

**EU OKs support for SNA:** The Political and Security Committee of the Council of the EU has approved 70 million euros to the resources to support the Somali National Army (SNA) and the military component of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS).

Both actions aim to contribute to the handover of security responsibilities from ATMIS to SNA, by allowing the former to fulfil its mandate while strengthening the capacities of the latter, said the EU council in a press statement.

For ATMIS, the agreed support would mostly contribute to the troop allowances of the African soldiers deployed in Somalia, over the period July 1, 2021 - Dec 31, 2023, previous support under the EPF amounted to 270 million euros. (KUNA)

**'\$630 million for Ethiopia':** A United Nations-backed gathering raised pledges of almost \$630 million for Ethiopia's humanitarian crisis on Tuesday but fell short of the \$1 billion sought to help feed and support millions of people facing conflict and climate change in

## Asia

## Beijing, Washington discuss military relations

## 'US determined to monitor NKorean nukes'

SEOUL, South Korea, April 17, (Agencies): The United States and its allies are discussing options "both inside and outside the UN system" to create a new mechanism for monitoring North Korea over its nuclear weapons program, the American ambassador to the United Nations said Wednesday.

Russia last month vetoed a UN resolution in a move that effectively abolished monitoring by UN experts of Security Council sanctions against North Korea, which prompted Western accusations that Moscow was acting to shield its arms purchases from North Korea to fuel its war in Ukraine.

"I look forward to engaging with both the Republic of Korea and Japan, but like-minded (countries) as well, on trying to develop options both inside the U.N. as well as outside the U.N. The point here is that we cannot allow the work that the panel of experts were doing to lapse." US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield told a news conference in Seoul, using the formal name for South Korea.

Thomas-Greenfield didn't provide specific details about US discussions with allies and other partners, including whether an alternative monitoring regime would more likely be established through the U.N. General Assembly or with an independent entity outside of the UN.

**NKorea buys China cams:** North Korea is putting surveillance cameras in schools and workplaces and collecting fingerprints, photographs and other biometric information from its citizens in a technology-driven push to monitor its population even more closely, a report said Tuesday.

The state's growing use of digital surveillance tools, which combine equipment imported from China with domestically developed software, threatens to erase many of the small spaces North Koreans have left to engage in private business activities, access foreign media and secretly criticize their government, the researchers wrote.

But the isolated country's digital ambitions have to contend with poor electricity supplies and low network connectivity.

**US, China discuss army ties:** Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun stated on Wednesday that China and the US are committed to stabilizing and improving bilateral relations, emphasizing the importance of their militaries as a cornerstone for maintaining stability.

Dong made the remarks during a video call with US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Tuesday. He underscored that the Taiwan question was at the core of China's core interests, which brook no compromise, said State-run Xinhua News Agency.

"The Chinese People's Liberation Army stands firm against any activities seeking "Taiwan independence" or external support for such separatist actions," the minister said, noting the overall stability in the South China Sea

situation. □ □ □

## Suu Kyi moved from prison to house arrest due to heat: Myanmar military

BANGKOK, April 17, (AP): Myanmar's jailed former leader Aung San Suu Kyi has been moved from prison to house arrest as a health measure due to a heat wave, the military government said as it freed more than 3,000 prisoners under an amnesty to mark this week's traditional New Year holiday.

Suu Kyi, 78, and Win Myint, the 72-year-old former president of her ousted government, were among the elderly and infirm prisoners moved to house arrest because of the severe heat, military spokesperson Maj. Gen. General Zaw Min Tun told foreign media representatives late Tuesday. The move has not yet been publicly announced in Myanmar.

Suu Kyi's transfer comes as the army has been suffering a string of

major defeats at the hands of pro-democracy resistance fighters and their allies in ethnic minority guerrilla forces. The nationwide conflict began after the army ousted the elected government in February 2021, imprisoning Suu Kyi and began suppressing nonviolent protests that sought a return to democracy.

Suu Kyi has been serving a 27-year prison term on a variety of criminal convictions in a specially built annex of the main prison in the capital Naypyitaw, where Myanmar's meteorological department said temperatures reached 39 degrees Celsius (102.2 degrees Fahrenheit) on Tuesday afternoon. Win Myint was serving an eight-year prison sentence in Taungong in Myanmar's Bago region.

situation. □ □ □

**Plane flies thru Taiwan Strait:** The US 7th Fleet said a Navy P-8A Poseidon flew through the Taiwan Strait on Wednesday, a day after US and Chinese defense chiefs held their first talks since Nov. 2022 in an effort to reduce regional tensions.

The patrol and reconnaissance plane "transited the Taiwan Strait in international airspace," the 7th Fleet said in a news release.

"By operating within the Taiwan Strait in accordance with international law, the United States upholds the navigational rights and freedoms of all nations," the release said.

Although the critical 160 kilometer (100 mile-) wide strait that divides China from the self-governing island democracy is international waters, China considers the passage of foreign military aircraft and ships through it a challenge to its sovereignty.

The UK, the second-largest donor, said Ethiopia risks being "overshadowed" by other humanitarian crises globally. (AP)

**Journo expelled from Algeria:** An Algerian journalist was expelled from the country after flying in from France and not being allowed to leave the airport as journalists continue to face challenges reporting in Algeria.

Farid Aillat, a writer for the French-language magazine Jeune Afrique, wrote on Facebook that he spent 11 hours in police custody on Saturday at the airport before being boarded onto a plane and sent to France, where he has a residency permit.

Aillat said he regularly takes flights from Paris to Algiers to report on Algeria, where he has for years been a well-known journalist due to his work for French-language daily newspapers including Libération, which was shuttered in 2022 amid financial problems and scuffles with the government and Algeria's state-owned oil company, both of which are major advertisers for the country's newspapers.

In a lengthy post in which he wrote of his deportation as if he were reporting on it, Aillat alleged that police officers on the tarmac in Algiers told him that they were acting on orders "from above." (AP)



Voters check the list of electors at a polling station in the capital Honiara on April 17. Voting began across the Solomon Islands on Wednesday in the South Pacific nation's first general election since the government switched diplomatic allegiances from Taiwan to Beijing and struck a secret security pact that has raised fears of the Chinese navy gaining a foothold in the region. (AP)







# What's On



Photos from the event

Photos by Mahmoud Jadeed

## Celebrating 60 years of diplomatic ties

# Greek ambassador hosts event to showcase Crete's beauty

By Paul Francis X. Fernandes  
Arab Times/Al-Seyassah Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: The Embassy of the Hellenic Republic in Kuwait organized a Greek Luxury Tourism Workshop at the St Regis Hotel to promote tourism in the region of Crete.

Speaking on the occasion, the Ambassador of Greece to Kuwait HE Ioannis Plotas said it is with great pleasure and gratitude that he welcomes the Greek Luxury Tourism Workshop, dedicated to showcasing the beauty and allure of his country to friends from the Middle East, particularly from Kuwait.

He extended a warm welcome to the representatives of Greece's premier luxury resorts who graced the gathering. "Their presence here is not only a testament to their commitment to excellence in the tourism industry but also an opportunity to share their wealth of experiences and forge meaningful partnerships with our Kuwaiti counterparts, thereby enriching our bilateral relations," he said.

He added, "Moreover it fills me with immense pride to note that tonight's event coincides with the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Greece and Kuwait. This milestone serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring friendship and mutual respect that characterize our nations' ties."

He went on to say, "It is indeed an honor to have with us tonight HE Hussain Zanki, the Chief of the Protocol Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait. Your presence underscores the significance of our gathering and further strengthens the bonds of friendship between our nations'."

During his address the Greek envoy highlighted a significant event that transpired earlier - the breathtaking ceremony of the Olympic Flame lighting in Olympia. This momentous occasion not only holds profound significance for Greece, the birthplace of the Olympic Games but also extends its significance to France, particularly to Paris. I extend my heartfelt thanks to our French colleague who is among us tonight. May this event symbolize the spirit of the Olympic truce and serve as a beacon of peace across the globe."

Dr Kyriakos G. Kotsoglou, Crete Vice-Governor Tourism and e-Governor and member of Economic Committee gave a detailed account of what the region of Crete has to offer holiday makers.

Nestled in the embrace of the azure Aegean Sea, he said, Crete emerges as a jewel of the Mediterranean, captivating travelers with its rich tapestry of history, culture, and natural beauty. As the largest and most populous of the Greek islands, Crete boasts a landscape that ranges from rugged mountains to sun-kissed beaches, offering an unparalleled diversity of experiences to its visitors.

Kotsoglou said Crete is not merely a destination for history enthusiasts. Its pristine beaches, framed by crystal-clear waters and framed by rugged cliffs, are a haven for sun-seekers and water sports enthusiasts alike.

Whether basking in the sun on the iconic pink sands of Elafonissi or exploring the hidden coves of the south coast, visitors are spoiled for choice when it comes to coastal delights, he added.

Moreover, Crete's culinary heritage is as rich and varied as its landscape, with traditional dishes showcasing the island's bounty of fresh produce, olive oil, and aromatic herbs. From hearty stews flavored with wild herbs to delicate pastries filled with local cheeses and honey, every meal is a celebration of the island's gastronomic prowess.

As tourism continues to flourish on the island, Crete remains committed to sustainable practices, preserving its natural and cultural heritage for generations to come, he said.

Whether embarking on a hiking adventure through the rugged gorges of the White Mountains or indulging in a rejuvenating spa retreat overlooking the Libyan Sea, visitors are invited to immerse themselves in the timeless allure of Crete, where every moment is a journey of discovery.

The region of Crete has much to offer in terms of natural attractions, popular beaches, coastline, beach resorts mountains and gorges in addition to cultural and historical attractions.

Firm's ongoing partnership with UNHCR advances SDGs

## Markaz underscores corporate social responsibility and continues support for refugee humanitarian aid

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: Reaffirming its keenness to give back to the community, Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" has recently participated at a roundtable discussion and event under the title "Islamic Philanthropy Humanitarian Response to Forced Displacement Crises," organized by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in partnership with Zakat House, and held under the auspices and with the attendance of H.E Ambassador Hamad AlMeshan, Assistant Foreign Minister for Development and International Cooperation, in addition to the participation of renowned Kuwaiti NGOs and UNHCR supporters.

Speaking at the event, Mr. Abdullahif Al-Nusif, MD - Wealth Management and Wealth Development at Markaz, said: "Markaz remains dedicated to positively serving the community and building a strong and sustainable economy in Kuwait. This is where the role of corporate social responsibility stems, to contribute to the development of society and the national economy. Our key participations, sponsorships and donation activities in the humanitarian field falls under one of our CSR pillars, which is: Building Human Capacity, reflecting our relentless role in collaborating with several non-profit organizations to contribute to providing and maintaining sustainable progress through the development of individual skills and capabilities, in addition to providing the support for humanitarian initiatives and activities aimed at raising the quality of life and achieving long-term positive change."

Markaz continues to extend its support to UNHCR in line with its CSR strategy and responsibility towards contributing to providing vital support to refugee families and communities in need.

Markaz has actively supported UNHCR since 2019, providing aid to approximately 3,565 individuals across 713 families, including humanitarian programs aimed at improving the living conditions of refugees and fulfilling their basic needs such as access to water, food, and shelter.

This continued partnership with UNHCR dem-

onstrates an unwavering responsibility to UNHCR's comprehensive and impactful initiatives aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically goals 1, 2, 3, 6, and 16. These goals encompass eradicating poverty, eliminating hunger, promoting good health and well-being, ensuring clean water and sanitation, and fostering peace, justice, and strong institutions.

Markaz has continuously played an active role in supporting refugees, contributing to dignified living conditions, alleviating their hardships, and preventing them from resorting to desperate survival strategies. With a vibrant Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) founded on three key pillars: building human capac-



Markaz-UNHCR

ity, aligning the business environment with the principles of sustainable development, and promoting good governance in the business environment, the company has been at the forefront of helping communities in need and contributing to the economic growth of Kuwait and beyond.

Markaz staunchly advocates for the pivotal role of the private sector in contributing to societal well-being. In addition to its own programs, it consistently partners with globally renowned entities such as UNHCR as well as leading non-profit organizations, renowned institutions, and individuals to support humanitarian initiatives and activities that transform lives and leave a lasting positive social change.

Tourism Dept. Lassithi Regional Unit Region of Crete; Mrs. Sani Ikkos Irina Shorakhmedova GCC Representative; Hyatt Regency, Thessaloniki, Mrs Elena Binari General Manager; Omikron Hotels, George Baradakis Sales & Reservations Manager; Milos Hotel, Giorgos Savvidis General Manager; Kalamaki Tours, Miltiadis Despotakis; Aegean Airlines, Mrs. Marina Spyridaki Corporate Affairs Manager; Al Kazemi Group & Travel Agencies WLL (Kwt) GSA of Aegean Airlines and Meri Kareem, Tours Manager.

## Bank spreads joy with Gergean celebrations

# Warba concludes its Ramadan campaign full of social initiatives and contributions

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: Warba Bank concluded its program of initiatives that was launched during the holy month of Ramadan 2024, which included many social activities and contributions aimed at daily communication with various segments of society through volunteer and charitable work, to benefit and help them.

This year's program was filled with many activities and events, whether targeting clients or the public in general, including citizens and residents, in an effort to provide a role model in the field of social responsibility and sustainable development, and to consolidate volunteer work among its employees and spread the culture of volunteering in society.

Warba Bank formed its volunteer team consisting of a group of its employees from various departments to participate in its initiatives during the holy month. Expressing the readiness and enthusiasm of the team to carry out its duties towards society and implement various daily initiatives according to the set plan during the holy month.

Warba Bank prepared more than 6,500 Iftar meals to distribute daily and throughout the month in cooperation with the Tarahum Volunteer Team, as part of its social and humanitarian role towards the needy in Kuwait, in addition to establishing the concept of volunteering and giving among the youth participating in this initiative. In continuation of its volunteer role, the team visited more than 7 mosques in various governorates of Kuwait to provide hospitality services to worshippers during Tarawah and Qiyam prayers.

Warba Bank celebrated Gergean with children at the Avenues Mall and the orphanage, and Gergean gifts were distributed to bring happiness and joy to their hearts in celebration of this popular Ramadan occasion, which is one of the most important traditions that Kuwaiti society is proud of in all age groups. Warba volunteer team distributed the Gergean and the children shared their joy with the Team. The Bank distributed more than 5,000 gifts, which reflects the Bank's keenness to interact with various segments of society to enhance the culture of volunteer work and social responsibility.

Warba Bank pays attention to electronic sports, so it launched two tournaments in cooperation with Rush Arena. During the holy month, a partnership was concluded with Flare Club through several sporting activities. The Bank also held two tournaments for the Warba Bank leagues (the Turf Football League) and (the Futsal Football League), which ended with an enthusiastic



Warba Bank completes Ramadan 2024 initiative with volunteer work.

atmosphere and effective organization, and concluded with a brilliant success that was praised by all.

To spread awareness through social media platforms, the Bank launched a

Ramadan podcast entitled: (Why Ramadan?) through cooperation with Dr. Ali Al-Rashed, and continued disseminating medical advice to Warba Bank clients in cooperation with Warah Hospital.

For the second year in a row, Warba organized for its clients the annual competition for recitation and memorization of the Holy Qur'an through the "Sad Application" for all segments of the Bank's clients and their children, which witnessed a number of strong participations from both genders, indicating the increase and extent of attachment to the Holy Qur'an among the various segments of Warba Bank's clients, and ultimately representing a milestone among the Holy Quran competitions in Kuwait.

Warbahonored the winners of its clients and their children in the competition, and as part of its Ramadan activities and events, Warba Bank participated in part of the Iftar Cannon program, which was broadcasted on Kuwait TV daily.

The Bank also contributed by offering many prizes through the Mukhallat program on 360 FM, in addition to motivating Warba Bank clients to exercise to maintain health in this holy month, by organizing many events in cooperation with Flare Sports Club, the most notable of which was a special weight-loss competition for the employees.

The Bank also launched the "Mus'hafi" application for the Holy Qur'an, and this initiative reflects Warba Bank's commitment to providing comprehensive services with the latest technologies that keep pace with the needs of everyone who wishes to recite the Holy Qur'an via smart phone applications.

The Bank concluded its activities by organizing Zakat al-Fiter for employees in cooperation with the Insan Charitable Society, where the employees paid their zakat in cooperation with the Insan Charitable Society, the leading humanitarian organization.

In this regard, Director Marketing and Corporate Communications, Ayman Salem Al-Mutairi, said: "The Bank's activity in 2024 is a continuation of its annual approach in terms of social responsibility, especially in the holy month of Ramadan, and that these activities contribute to building a conscious and cooperative society in all sports, cultural and social fields." Concluding his statement that the same approach will continue even after the end of the holy month of Ramadan and throughout the year.

Warba Bank is one of the banks that has achieved great successes in a short period, as it occupied a leading position in the field of Islamic digital banking services for individuals, and it is one of the largest local banks in the number of shareholders, and these are among the most prominent components that make the Bank close to all members of society.

# 32 million views for Gulf Bank ads starring Nabil Shuail

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: Gulf Bank has wrapped up its advertising campaign in collaboration with the renowned star, Nabil Shuail. The campaign, featuring three comedic commercials, accumulated approximately 32 million views across various social media platforms.

The third advertisement, centering on the semi-annual draw of the Al-Danah account featuring a prize of KD 1 million, accumulated approximately 11 million views in just two weeks during the holy month of Ramadan. This campaign comprised four prize competitions, with each offering KD 1,000. It is noteworthy that the semi-annual draw for the Al-Danah account, revealing the winner of the KD 1 million prize, is set for July 18, 2024, with representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and Ernst & Young in attendance.

The second commercial, which celebrated Kuwait's National Day and featured the song "Free Kuwait" by artist Nabil Shuail, received around 13 million views in a short timeframe. It also highlighted the prepaid card adorned with Kuwait's flag, resonating deeply with citizens.

Regarding the "Ya Shams" commercial, which concluded with Nabil Shuail stating, "Switch to Gulf Bank today and experience

continuous benefits," featured participating stars expressing their enthusiasm and appreciation for the bank's digital advancements and the comprehensive features of its mobile application. This commercial amassed approximately 8 million views across different social media platforms.



Al-Eisa

### Appreciation

Ms. Najla Al-Eisa, Deputy General Manager and Chief Marketing Officer of Gulf Bank, extended her appreciation to the esteemed star Nabil Shuail, the actors, the filming crew, and the director, for their substantial contributions towards accomplishing the social and promotional goals of the three commercials.

Al-Eisa highlighted that the significant engagement on social media attained through the bank's promotional campaign underscores their success in reaching diverse segments within society. She also emphasized the level of customer satisfaction with the notable enhancements observed in the customer experience, espe-

cially through the bank's mobile application.

She also noted that Gulf Bank's digital transformation journey, which includes branch and ATM developments, customer service center updates, and enhancements to the interactive voice response system. These efforts align with the bank's 2025 strategy to reinforce its prominent role in Kuwait's banking industry, and deliver exceptional services and solutions to its customers.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience.

Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.

Television

### Variety



The star Nabil Shuail features in the Gulf Bank's Millionaire Al-Danah advertisement.

### Music

## Diversity in music faces Nashville's test

# Beyoncé leads fans of color to country

**LONDON:** A portrait of Winston Churchill by an artist whose work the British leader loathed went on display Tuesday at Churchill's birthplace ahead of an auction in June.

The painting by modern artist **Graham Sutherland** was made in preparation for a larger portrait that Churchill hated and which was later destroyed - an episode recounted in the TV series "The Crown."

The surviving oil-on-canvas study shows Churchill's head in profile against a dark background. It is expected to sell for between 500,000 pounds and 800,000 pounds (\$622,000 and \$995,000) at Sotheby's in London on June 6.

Sutherland was commissioned by the Houses of Parliament to paint Churchill to mark his 80th birthday in 1954. The full-length portrait was unveiled in Parliament that year, with Churchill calling it, with a smirk, "a remarkable example of modern art."

Churchill is said to have complained that the painting "makes me look half-witted, which I ain't." It was delivered to his home and never seen again. The Churchill family disclosed years later that it had been destroyed.

Its fate was recreated with poetic license in an episode of "The Crown" in which Churchill's wife, Clementine, watches the painting go up in flames.

**Andre Zlattinger**, Sotheby's head of modern British and Irish art, said that in the surviving study, "Churchill is caught in a moment of absent-minded thoughtfulness, and together with the backstory of its creation, it gives the impression of a man truly concerned with his image." (AP)



**NEW YORK:** Participant, the activist film and television studio that has financed Oscar winners like "Spotlight" and socially conscious documentaries like "Food, Inc.," and "Waiting For Superman" is closing its doors after 20 years.

Billionaire **Jeff Skoll** told his staff of 100 in a memo shared with The Associated Press Tuesday that they were winding down company operations.

"This is not a step I am taking lightly," Skoll wrote in the memo. "But after 20 years of ground-

**NEW YORK, April 17, (AP)** - Dusty, worn boots. Horses lapping up water. Sweat dripping from the foreheads of every shade of Black skin as country classics blare through giant speakers. These moments are frequently recreated during Taylhor Coleman's family gatherings at their central Texas ranch. For her, Beyoncé's country album, "Act II: Cowboy Carter," was the granting of an unlikely wish.

"There is something to be said about the biggest artist in the world coming home to the genre that... we all kind of love but never really felt welcome into - it's really hard to put that to words," said the 35-year-old native of Houston's Third Ward, the same area Beyoncé lived in as a child. Loving artists like Miranda Lambert and Shania Twain, Coleman hoped this moment would come. "I was praying then that one day she would make a country album... Beyoncé is more country than a lot of people making country music today."

Beyoncé's latest project is not only No. 1 on the Billboard 200 for the second consecutive week, but she became the first Black woman to top Billboard's country album chart.

"There's nothing that that girl can't do... that's inspiring to me," said country superstar Lainey Wilson, who took home the country album Grammy in February. "I'm excited to see the fans that didn't know they liked country music find out that maybe they like it a little bit."

Beyoncé's steamrolling into country music - and her motivation behind it - has reignited discussions about the genre's origins and its diversity. But with increased interest from Beyoncé's fans at a fever pitch, is Nashville prepared and willing to welcome them in? And will these new listeners of color and others curious about the hoopa stay or will their interest in the genre wane?

"I will be honest with you: I think that it's a Beyoncé thing. I don't know that it's a country music happening because that would mean the industry would have to do something... I think it's one of those cultural moments for Black people, specifically Black women," said country artist Rissi Palmer, host of the Apple Music radio show Color Me Country which has created a centralized community where fans of color can enjoy the genre.

"It's really funny to me to see a lot of country radio programmers trying to take credit for what just happened with Beyoncé. That wasn't country radio... that

was her power, her money and... the acknowledgment of her brand. The fandom did that," Palmer said.

Tanner Davenport, co-director of Black Opry - and proud BeyHive member - worries the massive achievements of "Cowboy Carter" could have unintended consequences, such as country music executives not feeling an urgency to platform existing and future Black artists. Black Opry was founded by Holly G in April 2021, as she examined her relationship with the genre during the social justice movement sparked by the murder of George Floyd. The organization aims to amplify Black voices in country, Americana, blues and folk music.

### Progress

"Once 'Act II' has ran its course and gone away, there are going to be programmers... looking back at this moment and saying, 'We've already done this. We've given a Black woman a No. 1,'" said Davenport. "If they can really start to dial into the audience a bit more, I think they can start to see progress within this and capitalize on this moment because I think there's a huge undermining of the Black dollar and how far it can go."

Reyna Roberts' parents filled their house with music. Roberts, a rising country artist featured on "Cowboy Carter" with vocal credits on "Blackbird" and "Tyrant," said some questioned her musical aspirations.

"People are always so surprised. But I'm like my parents played country, they played trap, they played rock, they played classical, they played blues... Anything that I'm creating is all truly authentic," said Roberts, who hit a career breakthrough in 2020 after shout-outs from superstar Carrie Underwood and Mickey Guyton, who in 2021 became the first Black woman to co-host the Academy of Country Music Awards. (Charley Pride, who died in 2020, was the first Black co-host of the CMA Awards in 1975.)

Roberts is part of a new generation of artists, like Shaboozey, Tanner Adell and Willie Jones, who are fusing country with other genres like hip-hop.

While Wilson, one of the biggest artists in the genre, hopes some Queen Bey fans will explore country, a significant percentage of Black listeners already exists. A 2021 Country Music Association self-commissioned study, "Country Music's Multicultural Opportunity," examining potential audience expansion opportunities, revealed that 26% of Black respondents said they listen

weekly.

"I don't think they have gotten to the point where they feel as safe to be at country shows... the broad listenership in country music is going to be reflected in the streaming world," said Davenport. He says the Black Opry is strategizing ways to capitalize on Beyoncé's momentum so curious fans can find spaces "where they can exist and not feel threatened."

Safety and feeling comfortable in a country music environment is often on the minds of Black country musicgoers. Davenport was in the audience during Beyoncé's 2016 CMA performance with The Chicks which sparked a much-documented racist online backlash, and is widely believed to be the genesis for "Cowboy Carter" with the superstar expressing in an Instagram post, "I did not feel welcomed."

During the performance, Davenport says a woman near him yelled, "They need to get that Black b--- off stage," adding, "I started to realize, OK, this is truly a space in which I don't feel comfortable in, and I don't feel safe in."

That same CMA multicultural study found that 20% of concert attendees of color experienced racial profiling or harassment. The polling also included non-country music listeners, and up to 31% of that segment noted that they don't listen because they "wouldn't be safe/comfortable at live events."

Monica Wisdom understands. In the early '90s, the St. Louis native attended a concert by one of her favorite artists, Reba McEntire. Wisdom, 55, says McEntire's performance was on fire, but the atmosphere and crowd were ice cold.

"They were very unwelcoming... You saw the eye rolls and you heard the comments and the whispers, like, 'What are you doing here?'" recalled Wisdom, the founder of Black Women Amplified, a women's empowerment group. "I said if this is what country music is, I don't want any parts of it. So, I stopped listening to it."

And Wisdom hasn't attended a country music concert since.

While popular artists like Wilson, the legendary Dolly Parton, Maren Morris, Jason Isbell and more have publicly voiced the need for inclusion, their allyship can sometimes be overshadowed. In 2021, Morgan Wallen, then already a huge star, was caught on camera

Continued on Page 12

breaking content and world-changing impact campaigns, it is the right time for me to evaluate my next chapter and approach to tackling the pressing issues of our time."

Since Skoll founded the company in 2004, Participant has released 135 films, 50 of which were documentaries and many of



Skoll



Churchill

which were tied to awareness-raising impact campaigns. Their films have won 21 Academy Awards including best picture for "Spotlight" and "Green Book," best documentary for "An Inconvenient Truth" and "American Factory" and best international feature for "Roma." (AP)



**NEW YORK:** Fiction writer **Aaliyah Bilal**, a National Book Award finalist last fall for her story collection "Temple Folk," is among 10 winners of the Whiting Award for emerging authors. Bilal and the other recipients, who include fellow fiction writers **Yoon Choi**, **Gothaone Moeng** and **Ada Zhang**, will each be given \$50,000.

On Wednesday, the Whiting Foundation announced that Whiting prizes also were awarded to dramatists **Shayok Misha Chowdhury** and **Frances Ya-Chu Chohng**; as well as poets **Taylor Johnson**, **Charif Shanahan** and **Elisa Gonzalez**; and to poet and nonfiction writer **Javier Zamora**. (AP)

Features

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Kuwaiti players prepare for their opening match against Malaysia.

# Sports

Latest sports scores at — <http://sports.arabtimesonline.com>

Mongolia rout Indonesia

## Kuwait kickstart World Ice Hockey Championship with resounding victory

KUWAIT CITY, April 17, (KUNA): Kuwait hammered Malaysia 15-1 in the opening match of the World Ice Hockey Championship. The event, organized by the Kuwait Winter Games Club, witnessed the Kuwait scoring five goals in the opening period, six in the second, and four in the final period. Malaysia managed to secure their lone goal during the second period.

On the same day, Mongolia secured a convincing 9-3 win over Indonesia. After the match, Kuwaiti player Mohammad Al-Duaij expressed confidence that the team's impressive performance would boost their morale and readiness for their crucial upcoming match against Mongolia scheduled for Thursday. He extended his gratitude to the Kuwait Winter Games Club and the dedicated Ku-

waiti fans for their unwavering support, recognizing their pivotal role in the team's success.

The championship was officially inaugurated by Dawood Marafi, Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, Minister of State for Youth Affairs, and Minister of State for Communications Affairs, who conveyed his best wishes

### ICE HOCKEY

to all participating teams.

In his remarks to reporters following the opening, Minister Marafi emphasized the commitment to providing comprehensive support to young athletes, particularly in hosting significant international, continental, and regional championships. Similarly,

## Mbappé stars, PSG oust Barcelona to reach Champions League semis

Dortmund dig deep to beat Atlético

Sheikh Fahad Al-Nasser Al-Sabah, Chairman of the Kuwaiti Olympic Committee, affirmed the committee's steadfast dedication to supporting all sports federations and specialized

clubs in organizing major tournaments. The tournament, spanning from April 16 to 19, is taking place at the ice skating rink of the Kuwait Winter Games Club in the Bayan area.

BARCELONA, Spain, April 17, (AP): Playing with an extra man for more than an hour, Paris Saint-Germain rallied against Barcelona to reach the Champions League semifinals.

Kylian Mbappé scored twice as PSG reversed its first-leg loss at home with a 4-1 win at Barcelona to advance 6-4 on aggregate and keep alive its hopes of a first European title in what is the France star's final season with the club.

Former Barcelona forward Ousmane Dembélé and Vitinha also scored for PSG, which took advantage of a 29th-minute red card to Barcelona defender Ronald Araujo after he fouled Bradley Barcola while trying to stop a breakaway.

"When it was 11 against 11 we were well organized. The sending off changes everything. The match changed completely," said Barcelona coach Xavi Hernández, who was later sent off himself for complaining. "We would have liked to play PSG 11 against 11. That should not have been a red card."

### SOCCER

Barcelona had gotten off to a good start and opened the scoring with a goal by Raphinha in the 12th, but the visitors took control with the man advantage and didn't let Barcelona get back into the game. Xavi had to replace young forward Lamine Yamal with defender Iñigo Martínez after the red card to Araujo, who was deemed by the referee to be the last defender when he fouled Barcola.

PSG is back in the semifinals after two consecutive eliminations in the round of 16.

The Catalan side, which won the first leg 3-2 in Paris last week, made it to the knockout stage of Europe's top club competition after back-to-back eliminations in the group stage.

Mbappé scored his goals in the 61st and 89th minutes. The France star is hoping to win what would be a first Champions League title for himself and for PSG before he leaves the club.

Barcelona opened the scoring in its first attack with a fortuitous goal by Raphinha after Lamine Yamal's low cross from the right side bounced off the shin of the Brazil forward and went into the net.

PSG equalized about 10 minutes after Araujo was sent off, with Dembélé finding the net by the far post after a cross by Barcola. Dembélé, named the man of the match, was loudly jeered by the Barcelona crowd when he was substituted in the final minutes. He had also scored in the first leg in Paris.

PSG took the lead when Vitinha fired a low shot from outside the area in the 54th. The visitors increased their lead when Mbappé converted a penalty kick after Dembélé was brought down by João Cancelo inside the area.

Barcelona had chances to get back into the game, with İlkay Gündogan hitting the post in the 56th and both Robert Lewandowski and Raphinha squandering chances toward the end of the match.

Mbappé's second goal came from close range in a breakaway in the final minutes. He has now scored at least 40 club goals in all competitions for the third time in four seasons with PSG. He has scored 13 goals in his last 13 Champions League matches.

Xavi was sent off after kicking a cushion protecting a sideline camera in the 56th.

Marcel Sabitzer scored late and set up two goals to send Borussia Dortmund into the Champions League semifinals with a helter-skelter 4-2 win over Atlético Madrid.

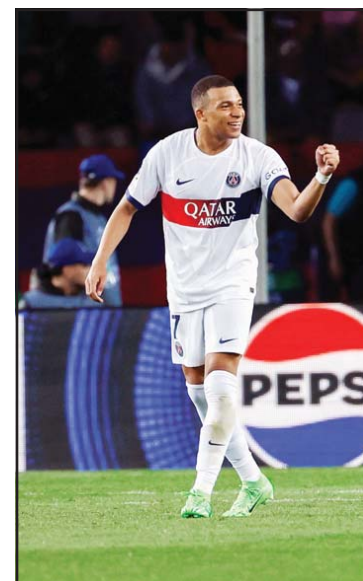
After losing the first leg of their quarterfinal 2-1 in Madrid, Dortmund had to come from behind twice over two legs to advance 5-4 on aggregate.

Julian Brandt opened the scoring to level the tie before Sabitzer set up Ian Maatsen to give Dortmund a 2-0 lead on the night.

Atlético coach Diego Simeone responded with three changes at the break and they all paid off. A Mats Hummels own goal and goal from sub-



Dortmund's Julian Brandt, (left), and Atletico Madrid's Jose Gimenez challenge for the ball during the Champions League quarterfinal second leg soccer match between Borussia Dortmund and Atletico Madrid at the Signal-Iduna Park in Dortmund, Germany. (AP)



PSG's Kylian Mbappe celebrates after scoring his side's 4th goal during the Champions League quarterfinal second leg soccer match between Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain at the Olimpik Lluís Companys stadium in Barcelona, Spain. (AP)



Dawood Marafi poses with some of the players after the opening ceremony.

KUNA photo

### Thailand defeat Iraq

## Saudi Arabia make a winning start at AFC U-23 Championship

DOHA, April 17: In the opening round of the AFC U-23 Championship held in Qatar, Japan, Thailand, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia emerged victorious against their respective opponents — China, Iraq, the Emirates, and Tajikistan.

At Khalifa International Stadium,

### SOCCER

Saudi Arabia beat Tajikistan 4-2 in the Group C. Rayan Muhammad netted in the 17th minute, and Haitham Asiri scored in stoppage time of the first half. In the second half, Ayman Yahya struck twice in the 55th and 61st minutes. Tajikistan's Ruslan Kailov and Rustam Surov found the

net in the 23rd and 64th minutes.

In the second group at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium, Japan secured a 1-0 victory over China, with Kru Matsuki scoring in the eighth minute of the first half. The Thai national team secured its first three points in the tournament by defeating Iraq 2-0 at Al Janoub Stadium. Waris Choltung scored in the 26th minute, and Terasak Poipiamay added another goal in the 65th minute.

In another match South Korea secured a 1-0 win over the Emirates, with Lee Young Joon scoring in stoppage time of the second half.

Today's fixtures include Indonesia facing Australia at Abdullah bin Khalifa Stadium at 4:00 PM, and the Jordanian and Qatari teams meeting at 6:30 PM at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium.

## Nadal returns to action with easy victory over Cobolli in Barcelona

BARCELONA, Spain, April 17, (AP): Rafael Nadal looked good in a comfortable 6-2, 6-3 win over Flavio Cobolli at the Barcelona Open in his first competitive match in more than three months.

The victory at the center court named after him allowed Nadal to advance to the second round at the clay-court tournament that the Spaniard has won a record 12 times. He will next face Alex de Minaur, who had a first-round bye.

Nadal converted on his second

match point to seal the victory over the 21-year-old Italian ranked 62nd in the world.

Nadal was returning from yet another injury layoff and hadn't played since an exhibition match against Carlos Alcaraz in March. The 22-time Grand Slam champion had last played a tournament in Brisbane in January, when he played only three matches before skipping the Australian Open.

Nadal said it will likely be his last time playing the Barcelona Open. The 37-year-old Spaniard had hip surgery last summer and said 2024 will probably be his last year playing on tour.

World No. 8 Andrey Rublev smashed his racket to the ground several times after a 6-4, 7-6 (6) loss to American Brandon Nakashima.

It was the third consecutive first-round defeat for the second-seeded Rublev, who also lost in straight sets in Monte Carlo and Miami. He also lost in straight sets in the second round in Indian Wells.

### TENNIS

It was only the second win over a top-10 opponent for the 22-year-old Nakashima, and the first on clay. The world No. 87 had beaten Holger Rune in Shanghai last October.

Facundo Diaz Acosta defeated 15th-seeded Borna Coric 6-2, 7-5. Tomas Machac beat Shang Juncheng 6-4, 6-4 to set up a meeting with 11th-seeded Alejandro Davidovich Fokina.

Roberto Carballes Baena defeated Hugo Grenier 6-2, 6-4, while Jaume Munar cruised past Yoshihito Nishioka 6-3, 6-1.

Zheng Qinwen eased past Sorana Cirstea 6-2, 6-3 in the first round of the Porsche Grand Prix despite a long journey from China to reach the clay-court tournament.



Players challenge for the ball during the Saudi Arabia and Tajikistan match.