



KUWAIT MINISTERIAL DECISION AMENDS EXPAT RESIDENCY LAW

Two-month residency leeway for foreigners

Work permit fee exemptions laid out



KUWAIT CITY, April 20: Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah issued a ministerial decision amending some provisions of Ministerial Resolution No. 957/2019 on the executive regulations of the Foreigners' Residency Law and its amendments, reports Al-Anba daily.

Article One of the decision states that Article 12 of Ministerial Resolution No. 957/2019 is amended as follows: "A foreigner who entered the country in accordance with Clause Nos. 1-7 and 14 of Article Four of this decision may remain here without a residence permit for a period not ex-

ceeding two months from the date of his entry. Procedures must be initiated to obtain regular or temporary residency within this period.

"Regular residence data are recorded in the civil identification card issued by the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI), while data related to the temporary residency stipulated in Article 14 of this decision are recorded in accordance with the mechanism specified by the Residency Affairs General Department in the Interior Ministry."

Article Two mandates the concerned undersecretary to implement this decision, which shall take effect from the date of its publication in the Official Gazette.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, Acting Minister of Interior, and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef issued a ministerial decision regarding the mechanism for granting work permits and the transfer of migrant workers recruited with work permits and the prescribed fees, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The decision stipulates the following:

Article 1 -
The employer must obtain work permits according to an estimate of need after obtaining the approval of the concerned department of PAM. An additional fee of KD 150 will be collected for each work permit in accordance with the provisions of this decision.

Article 2 -
The following categories are exempted from paying the additional fee referred to in Article One of this decision:

- 1 - Companies wholly owned by the government.
- 2 - Hospitals, dispensaries, medical centers and medical clinics licensed by the Ministry of Health.
- 3 - Universities and private colleges.
- 4 - Private schools.
- 5 - Foreign investors approved by the Investment Promotion Authority.
- 6 - Sports clubs, federations, public benefit associations, cooperative societies, trade unions, foundations, and charitable endowments.
- 7 - Agricultural plots licensed by the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR).
- 8 - Fishing.
- 9 - Barns, grazing sheep and camels.
- 10 - Industrial establishments and small industries.

Article 3 -
In cases where it is permissible to transfer workers from one employer to another in accordance with the procedures in force at PAM, the transfer of a migrant worker who was brought in with a work permit to another employer is permitted in accordance with the provisions of this decision, which is before the lapse of three years and for a fee of KD 300.

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Opinion

O leadership, may Allah appease you, as you have realized our ills

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

YOUR Highness, the people acknowledge the immense pain they are enduring due to the deterioration of their country at all levels. This is because of the legacy of dysfunctional relationships between the past Cabinets and the previous National Assemblies.

Despite the fact that they spark unnecessary crises, the state cannot stand without those two organs, provided their options were peaceful and based on working for the benefit of Kuwait, nothing else.

Today, considering the ongoing consultations to form an executive authority that will help implement the plans that Your Highness announced in previous speeches, it is necessary for the ministers to have the necessary administrative and political capabilities that will serve the ultimate goal of achieving the interest of Kuwait. They should be up to the task, and not see the position as merely an honor.

Likewise, no one should take such a task based on the principle of "I scratch your back and you scratch mine", or "he is our son". Kuwait is not a laboratory for failed experiments. This is what the leadership had warned about in all the previous speeches.

Also, the legislative authority is not a "Friday market" for concluding personal deals between parliamentarians and ministers.

Your Highness the Amir, you pinpointed this problem in the lofty speech delivered during the oath-taking session, in which every word must be an agenda for the two authorities, if they want to work with a national conscience.

To achieve all of this, it is necessary to implement the plans and agreements that were drawn up for advancement, irrespective of whether it was Tony Blair's plan in 2009 including his emphasis on the relationship between governments and the national assemblies to be like it is in all countries of the world, or the agreements signed in 2018 with China for the sake of the Silk City and its path that other countries followed.

You renewed this agreement during your visit to Beijing last year. However, the wrangling between the Council of Ministers and the parliament obstructed it. This is because of the influence of extremist parliamentarians, or the interests of some influential people.

Therefore, freezing it was an effective action, either in submission to parliamentary desires, or through hesitation and fear on the part of ministers, or because the deep state had no benefit from it, which made the state institutions more like a group of farms instead of bodies that are seeking advancement.

Your Highness, we know that the commercial and industrial movement is the foundation of stability and prosperity. This cannot be achieved without partnerships with countries that have huge capabilities and seek mutual benefit. It cannot be pursued without governments that have the decision-making power and a close relationship with the legislative authority.

Therefore, the people understand that you are seeking a government that is not like the previous ones, but rather takes what you command and works

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Email: ahmed@aljarallah.com

Follow me on:



ahmedaljarallah@gmail.com

NewsWatch

BRUSSELS: Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah will chair a delegation attending the EU-Gulf High-Level Forum on Regional Security and Cooperation due in Luxembourg on Monday, said the Kuwaiti ambassador to Belgium Saturday.

The forum is an unprecedented event between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and EU member countries and comes in the context of their bilateral partnership that was agreed in 2022. Ambassador Nawaf Al-Enezi, who is also chief of Kuwait's diplomatic missions at the EU and NATO, told KUNA.

The gathering is also deemed a significant indication of mutual willingness to promote the strategic partnership between both sides, implement their political dialogue, and upgrade the level of coordination about issues of mutual interest, favorably reflecting on regional and global security and stability, he added. (KUNA)

PALU, Indonesia: Indonesia's elite counterterrorism police arrested eight suspected militants in recent days believed to be part of a new cell linked to Jemaah Islamiyah, an al-Qaida-linked group, authorities said Saturday.

Police conducted raids in Central Sulawesi province between Tuesday and Thursday, said Agus Nugroho, the provincial police chief, adding that five suspects were arrested in the city of Palu, two in Sigi, and one in Poso which is a known extremist hotbed. (AP)

WASHINGTON: State Dept. spokesperson Matthew Miller said Friday the United States is committed to strengthening the global nonproliferation regime by taking action to disrupt procurement networks supporting proliferation activities of concern.

"Today, we are designating four entities pursuant to Executive Order 13382, which targets proliferators of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery," he said in a press release. (AP)

PARIS: A man wearing a fake explosive vest and making threats was detained Friday outside the Iranian Consulate in Paris after police locked down the area, authorities said. His motive was unclear.

The incident came at a time of heightened tensions in the Middle East, and as Paris is on high security alert as it gears up to host the Summer Olympics in three months. (AP)

Kuwait unveils plans for ongoing happiness boost

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: A recent government report has recommended several measures to further enhance happiness in Kuwait in the coming years, despite the country's already impressive performance on the World Happiness Index, where it ranked first among Arab and Gulf countries in 2024, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Outlined by the National Observatory for Sustainable Development and Future Foresight, affiliated with Planning, these measures include:

- Supporting cultural, entertainment, sports, and tourism activities to stimulate job creation, diversify the economy, boost Kuwait's global standing, and improve citizens' standard of living.
- Promoting accountability and transparency across all sectors.
- Prioritizing government spending to reduce inequalities and create fair job opportunities.
- Ensuring universal access to public services.

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Kuwait-funded aid convoy reaches Northern Gaza. - See Page 5

KUNA photo

US vetoes Palestine's request for full UN membership

Kuwait renews call for Palestinian rights

Gulf Cup prep quizzed

MPs slam sports director suspension

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: A number of MPs-elect have denounced the decision of State Minister for Youth Affairs Dawoud Maarafi to suspend Public Authority for Sports Director Yousef Al-Baidan for the latter's alleged sluggishness in preparing for hosting the upcoming Gulf Cup.

MP-elect Mohammad Al-Mutair finds it funny that Al-Baidan is suspended for being slow in preparing for a football tournament, which will take place eight months later. He thinks Al-Baidan is being punished for getting Kuwaiti sports out of the control of some influential individuals. He said the decision exposed the truth that Maarafi is working for certain parties.

MP-elect Bader Al-Dahoum pointed out that Maarafi is making a sacrifice for his alliances through the issuance of such a decision, in addition to his previous decision to reinstate the suspended sports clubs even before the Public Prosecution completes investigation into these clubs. He said the higher committee headed by Maarafi is in charge of preparations for the upcoming Gulf Cup.

MP-elect Mubarak Al-Tasha asserted the decision is a manifestation of the confusion of the caretaker government, while revealing the unjustified desire to take revenge and instigate crises. He said Maarafi ignored the fact that he is the official in charge of preparations for the Gulf Cup since he chairs the concerned higher committee.

MP-elect Saad Al-Khanfour stressed that

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KUNA photo UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres reiterated on Friday that it is high time to stop 'the dangerous cycle of retaliation in the Middle East.'

'Downplay'

Iraq investigates Kalsu base blast

BAGHDAD, April 20, (AP): Iraqi authorities said Saturday that they were investigating an explosion that struck a base belonging to the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), a coalition of Iran-allied militias, killing one person and injuring eight.

Militia officials had initially described the explosion at the Kalsu military base north of Babylon - a former U.S. base that was handed over to the Iraqi military in 2011 - as an airstrike, blaming it on U.S. forces. The U.S. Central Command denied in a statement that it had carried out any airstrikes in Iraq.

The PMF in a statement Saturday afternoon described the blast as an "attack" but did not blame any specific party.

Iraq's Security Media Cell said the country's air defense command had not detected any drones or fighter plane in the airspace of Babylon before or during the explosion. It said one PMF member died and eight people were injured, including an Iraqi army soldier.

The PMF is a coalition of primarily Shiite, Iran-backed armed groups designated as an "independent military formation" within the Iraqi armed forces.

In recent months, some of the PMF member groups launched attacks on U.S. forces based in Iraq and Syria, which they said was in retaliation for Washington's support of Israel in its war against Hamas in Gaza. Those attacks halted at the end of January after three U.S. soldiers were killed in a strike on a base in Jordan, near the Syrian border, prompting U.S. retaliatory strikes in Iraq.

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A Palestinian youth seriously wounded in the Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip is brought to the Kuwait Hospital in Rafah refugee camp, southern Gaza Strip, late Friday, April 19, 2024. (AP)

Award aims to highlight distinguished media models in Arab world

Kuwait chairs Arab Media Excellence Award panel meeting

KU addresses social media concerns over alleged Holy Quran questioning

CSC advances central employment plan for Kuwaitis

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: Prof. Dr. Fayez Munshar Al-Dhafiri, the Acting Secretary General of Kuwait University and the university's official spokesman, has issued a statement addressing concerns raised on social media regarding a member of the academic body allegedly questioning the Holy Quran, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Al-Dhafiri emphasized that Kuwait University is closely monitor-

ing the situation and will take all necessary legal measures to investigate the matter thoroughly.

The university is committed to clarifying the facts and ensuring that appropriate actions are taken to uphold the institution's integrity and academic standards.

Furthermore, Al-Dhafiri stressed Kuwait University's unwavering commitment to respecting religious values and the sanctity of the Holy Quran, as well as the divine and prophetic figures associated with it. The university administration is dedicated to upholding the law and preserving the university's reputation and the reputation of its members.

The Kuwait University is determined to address this issue in a manner that upholds academic integrity, respects religious sensitivities, and ensures adherence to legal principles.

Central employment plan: The Civil Service Commission has reported significant progress in its efforts to implement the central employment plan for Kuwaiti citizens within ministries and government departments, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Since January 2023, a total of 25,624 Kuwaiti men and women have undergone nomination and appointment procedures.

Of this figure, 23,406 individuals have been appointed through the central employment system, while the appointment procedures for an additional 2,218 candidates are currently underway. The Commission has emphasized its ongoing coordination with government agencies to address their job requirements for the fiscal year 2024/2025. This collaborative effort ensures that new batches of nominees are selected in accordance with each agency's needs and within the available vacancies outlined in their budget allocations.



Al-Qabas photo

EU Ambassador to Kuwait Koistinen with promising young Kuwaiti women.

EU ambassador hosts promising Kuwaiti women

The European Union Ambassador to Kuwait Anne Koistinen expressed her pleasure at hosting eight promising and talented young Kuwaiti women at her residence, where she discussed with them how skilled and professional Kuwaiti women from all walks of life can contribute to building a better future for their country, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Ambassador Koistinen added, "I was pleased to meet inspiring and talented young Kuwaiti women,

who have professional experience in various fields, and invest their time and efforts to make their country a better place."

She added: "This meeting came based on a series of events that we organized last February in Kuwait. To support women's empowerment, it is a testimony to the European Union's commitment to supporting women's participation at all levels of society, in Europe, Kuwait and the world, including leadership positions."

CAIRO, April 20, (KUNA): Arab League General Secretariat announced Saturday that the Arab Media Excellence Award jury will hold a three-day meeting as of Monday headed by Kuwait with the participation of representatives of committee members.

Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the Media and Communication Sector of the League Ambassador Ahmed Khattabi said in a statement that the meeting comes within the framework of implementing the recommendations issued by the (18) regular session of the Executive Office of the Council of Arab Information Ministers, held in Libya on December 24, related to the item "Encouraging Quality" to enhance capabilities of Arab media professionals.

He added that the slogan of the committee is "Communicating Crises, Disasters

and Risks" comes in line with the crises and disasters that the Arab region has recently witnessed, including the Israeli aggression on Gaza and the deteriorating humanitarian conditions it has left behind.

He pointed that the Technical Secretariat of the Council of Arab Information Ministers has so far received nearly 100 works in the various categories of the award, including television, radio, journalistic, and digital media works.

This award aims to highlight distinguished media models in the Arab world and support their appreciated efforts in the media field, especially highlight their constructive contributions that concern the Arab nation.

The jury includes representatives from Egypt, Bahrain, Djibouti, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Sudan, Iraq, Somalia and Morocco.



KUNA photo

Kuwait's Youth Authority team during the UN Youth Forum 2024.

Environ issues and youth role top agenda

Kuwait's Youth Authority stresses importance of UN Youth Forum '24

NEW YORK, April 20, (KUNA): Kuwait's Youth Public Authority affirmed on Thursday UN Youth Forum 2024 was an important event positively contributing to the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs).

Speaking to KUNA, Acting Director General of the Youth Public Authority Nasser Al-Sheikh told KUNA that Kuwait's participation in the event, held on April 16-18, reflected the state interest in sharing the world's youth inspirations and concerns.

He indicated that the Kuwaiti delegation to the event took part in sideline meetings such as the regional meeting for Arab countries, which focused on supporting youth in the region through numerous strategies and plans of action.

On the issues discussed during the forum, the Kuwaiti official indicated that environmental issues and the youth role in bolstering sustainable development took center of discussions in addition to other important matters. He noted that influence of AI on youth as well as preparations for the upcoming UN Future Summit in September were discussed during the course of the youth forum.

Al-Sheikh thanked the Kuwaiti mission at the UN headquarters in New York for facilitating the Youth Public Authority's participation in the forum.

The forum saw the participation of various officials, including UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, and organizations from across the globe.

أبريل عروض الغرف

APRIL

ROOM PROMOTION



Photo by Mohamed Morsi

Ibrahim Al-Baghli (center) with others during the press conference.

Winners' names announced

12th Al-Baghli Award recognizes virtue and excellence in students

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: The Ibrahim Taher Al-Baghli for the Righteous Son Foundation has announced the names of the winning students in the 12th edition of the Al-Baghli Award for the Righteous Son competitions that were held for the students of the Ministry of Education's schools for the current academic year. A total of 89 male and female students participated in these competitions.

The competitions were held under the patronage of the Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Adel Al-Adwani. The closing ceremony will be on May 8 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel's Al Baraka Hall.

The Chairman of the Board of Directors of the foundation Ibrahim Al-Baghli, the Chairman of the Kuwait Scouts Association Dr. Abdullah Al-Tarjii, the President of the Kuwait Girl Guides Association Hind Al-Houli, and the Director of the School Activities Department at the Ministry of Education Maryam Al-Enezi participated in the press conference to announce the winners Wednesday. A number of teachers and figures active in the field of educational and volunteer work, including individuals and civil society institutions, were also present.

Pleasure

Al-Baghli expressed his pleasure in bringing together the male and female students of the 12th academic year in a row through his sponsorship of the award competitions.

He affirmed the importance of translating the directions and aspirations of the Minister of Education in the necessity of activating the ministry's role in promoting and developing the virtue of righteousness within the student community. Al-Baghli highlighted the role of the competition and its contribution to strengthening and confirming the policy and philosophy of the Ministry of Education, and supporting the measures taken by the Minister of Education to implement the strategic plan related to

educational programs and activities directed to students for the public benefit.

He explained that it contributes to the formation of a balanced personality through the diversity of activities and programmes, including contributing to creating an appropriate educational environment to avoid learners' academic burden and psychological pressure.

The foundation's approach in implementing the Al-Baghli Award for the Righteous Son project for the students of the Ministry of Education is consistent with the ministry's philosophy in society regarding consolidating the basic values, goals and trends adopted by the student community, stemming from its faith and heritage, and the formula it accepted for its social and political system and which was expressed in its basic charters.

Strengthening

Al-Baghli expressed keenness to continue strengthening community partnership programs with the Ministry of Education, and to work on organizing many events under the Al-Baghli Award for the Righteous Son project.

He highlighted the organization of the short story competition and the volunteer work competition for middle school and high school students in coordination with the Educational Development, Activities and General Technical Guidance Sector for the Arabic Language and the School Activities Administration and General Technical Guidance for Scouting Education at the Ministry of Education for the current academic year. This aimed at consolidating the sublime Islamic morals and values of parents and grandparents among students, developing their spirit of cooperation and positive attitudes and behaviors, spreading the culture of volunteering and motivating students.

In addition, the Chairman of the award's Supreme Committee Ali Hassan extended his sincere appreciation and gratitude to the honorable Ibrahim Al-Baghli for his distinguished efforts in encouraging charity and volunteer work in Kuwaiti society especially among members of the student community.

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إقامة ليلة واحدة في شاليه لغرفتين مع الإفطار لأربعة أشخاص.	إقامة ليلة واحدة في كابانا كوين مع الإفطار لشخصين.
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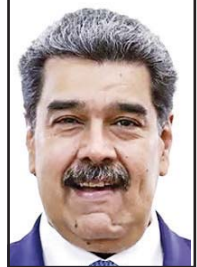
Candidates dead in Mexico

Oppn picks González to 'challenge' Maduro

CARACAS, Venezuela, April 20, (AP): Venezuela's main opposition coalition agreed Friday to unite behind former diplomat Edmundo González as its challenger to President Nicolás Maduro in this summer's election, acting one day before the deadline to formalize its candidate.

The decision was reached unanimously by the 10 parties in the Unitary Democratic Platform. Omar Barboza, the coalition's executive secretary, said after a five-hour meeting that included discussions of other possible candidates.

The bloc had been allowed to provisionally register González on March 26 after the government came under a wave of criticism when opposition leaders said they were blocked from registering their candidate of choice. Saturday was the deadline to make his candidacy final.



Maduro

The opposition group needed to replace its first candidate, María Corina Machado, who easily won a primary organized by the bloc in October but was barred by the government from running after the ruling party-controlled State Comptroller's Office disqualified her from holding public office for 15 years.

Maduro's administration has cracked down on the opposition before the July 28 presidential election despite promises to pave the way to fair elections in exchange for sanctions relief. The Biden administration on Wednesday reimposed crushing oil sanctions, criticizing Maduro's moves.

The governments of Colombia and Brazil also have expressed concern, and Guatemalan President Bernardo Arévalo accused Maduro's government of "consolidating an anti-democratic system." Venezuelan Foreign Minister Yvan Gil has called the criticism a "gross interference in matters that only concern Venezuelans."

Maduro, a self-proclaimed socialist leader, officially launched his candidacy last month for a third term that would last until 2031.

The election is likely to have more than 10 candidates, but except for the main opposition coalition, none are expected to pose a threat to Maduro's power base.

Also:

MEXICO CITY: Two mayoral candidates in Mexico were found dead Friday, bringing to 17 the number of contenders slain in the lead-up to the June 2 election.

One candidate was killed Friday in the northern Mexico border state of Tamaulipas. Noé Ramos Ferretiz was running for a coalition of the opposition National Action Party and Institutional Revolutionary Party, which had governed Mexico until 2000. He was running for reelection as mayor of the city of Ciudad Mante.

Another mayoral candidate in the southern state of Oaxaca was found dead a day after he was reported missing. Alberto García was running for mayor of the Oaxaca town of San José Independencia.

Oaxaca state prosecutors said García was found dead, apparently beaten to death, on an island in a reservoir near the town. In the past, drug gangs have been active in the area.

The June 2 national elections that are shaping up to be the country's most violent on record.

Prosecutors in Tamaulipas said Ramos Ferretiz was attacked on Friday, but did not give details beyond saying they're investigating.

Local media reported he had been stabbed and posted photos showing a bloodied body lying on a sidewalk. Tamaulipas has long been riven by drug cartel turf wars. Ciudad Mante is located in the southern part of the state, relatively far from border cities like Reynosa and Matamoros.

"We will not allow violence to decide these elections," PRI party leader Alejandro Moreno wrote on social media, where he confirmed the "cowardly assassination" of Ramos Ferretiz.

In Oaxaca, the state electoral board condemned the death of García, who went missing along with his wife - the current mayor of San José Independencia - earlier this week. The wife was found alive.

The electoral board called García's death a "killing," and said such crimes "should not occur during elections."

In early April, mayoral candidate Bertha Gaytán was gunned down, hours after she requested protection and started campaigning. Gaytán was fatally shot on a street in a town outside the city of Celaya, in the north-central state of Guanajuato. She had just launched her campaign for Celaya mayor.

Mexico's drug cartels have often focused assassination attempts on mayors and mayoral candidates, in a bid to control local police or extort money from municipal governments.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador acknowledged in early April that drug cartels often seek to determine who will serve as mayor - either by running their own candidate or eliminating potential rivals.



MEXICO CITY: Mexico City police said late Friday they are investigating a murder suspect as a possible serial killer after bones, a saw, blood and the ID cards of missing women were found at rooms he rented.

Mexico City prosecutors did not identify the suspect by name, but said that he was being held over for trial on charges of murder and attempted murder of two women.

Those charges stemmed from a brazen attack Tuesday in which the suspect apparently waited for a woman to briefly leave her apartment. He then rushed in and sexually abused and strangled her 17-year-old daughter.

The mother returned and saw him leaving, but he slashed her in the neck and fled. The mother survived but her daughter did not.

Because the suspect lived near the scene of the crime, he was quickly identified and caught. In keeping with Mexican law, police identified him only by his first name, Miguel.

When investigators carried out a search of an apartment he rented nearby, they found shocking evidence "that clearly indicate we are looking at a possible serial killer of women," according to city prosecutor Ulises Lara.

Lara said that during the search of the apartment, detectives found "biological material" - he did not specify whether that was flesh - blood stains, bones, a saw, cell phones and missing women's ID cards.

Most chilling, they found "a series of notebooks that may well be narrations of the acts that Miguel carried out against his victims," Lara said.



Members of an instrument orchestra of east China's Nanjing University perform during a UN Chinese Language Day event in Nairobi, Kenya on April 19. The United Nations Office in Nairobi (UNON) and the Chinese Embassy in Kenya celebrated UN Chinese Language Day on Friday with a vibrant event which included calligraphy, lectures and a musical performance. The ceremony featured traditional music from the instrument orchestra of east China's Nanjing University and was attended by senior UN officials, diplomats, students and faculty members from local universities. (Xinhua)

Asia

Japan, US confirm cooperation over Pyongyang

N.Korea tests cruise missile warhead

SEOUL, South Korea, April 20, (Agencies): North Korea said Saturday it tested a "super-large" cruise missile warhead and a new anti-aircraft missile in a western coastal area as it expands military capabilities in the face of deepening tensions with the United States and South Korea.

North Korean state media said the country's missile administration on Friday conducted a "power test" for the warhead designed for the Hwasal-1 Ra-3 strategic cruise missile and a test-launch of the Pyolji-1-2 anti-aircraft missile. It said the tests attained an unspecified "certain goal."

Photos released by the North's official Korean Central News Agency showed at least two missiles being fired off launcher trucks at a runway.

North Korea conducted a similar set of tests Feb 2, but at the time did not specify the names of the cruise missile or the anti-aircraft missile, indicating it was possibly seeing technological progress after testing the same system over weeks.

KCNA insisted Friday's tests were part of the North's regular military development activities and had nothing to do with the "surrounding situation."

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula are at their highest in years, with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un dialing up his weapons demonstrations, which have included more powerful missiles aimed at the U.S. mainland and US targets in the Pacific. The United States, South Korea and Japan have responded by expanding their combined military training and sharpening their deterrence strategies built around strategic US assets.

Cruise missiles are among a growing collection of North Korean weapons designed to overwhelm regional missile defenses. They supplement the North's vast lineup of ballistic missiles, including intercontinental ballistic missiles aimed at the continental United States.

Also:

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield on Friday confirmed their continued cooperation in dealing with North Korea, including the nuclear and missile issues, and towards the full implementation of relevant UN Security Council resolutions, Japan's Foreign Ministry said.



granted clemency to more than 4,000 prisoners, including some who were on death row, in an independence day amnesty. Zimbabwe marked 44 years of inde-

pendence from white minority rule, which ended in 1980 after a bloody bush war. The country's name was changed from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe.

The presidential amnesty, the second in less than a year, benefits female, older and juvenile inmates, the terminally ill and some who were originally sentenced to death. (AP)



Burkina Faso expels 3 diplomats: The military Junta ruling Burkina Faso have expelled three French diplomats for alleged subversive activities, according to a government document posted on social media.

The Junta named the three diplomats, two of whom are political advisors, and declared they were persona non grata in Burkina Faso, according to the document signed by the ministry of foreign affairs Tuesday. They have 48 hours to leave Burkina Faso.

The document did not give details about the alleged subversive activities. The French foreign ministry said in a statement that it regretted the decision to expel its diplomats and rejected the accusations, stating its activities in Burkina Faso were within the United Nations framework for diplomatic and consular relations.

The expulsion comes amid deteriorating relations between Burkina Faso and its former colonial ruler, France. The military junta severed military ties with France in 2023, ordering hundreds of French troops to depart the West African country within a month, following in the path of neighboring Mali, also headed by a coup leader. (AP)



People walk inside the Westfield shopping mall at Bondi Junction in Sydney on April 19. The Sydney shopping mall reopened for business on Friday for the first time since it became the scene of a mass stabbing in which six people died on April 13. (AP)



Mnangagwa



Ruto

Africa

US attempts deal with Niger: The United States is attempting to create a new military agreement with Niger that would allow it to remain in the country, weeks after the junta said its presence was no longer justified, two Western officials told The Associated Press Friday.

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the situation, said Washington was actively working on options for a revised deal aimed at retaining its foothold in the West African nation.

Niger plays a central role in the US military's operations in Africa's Sahel region. Washington is concerned about the spread of jihadist violence where local groups have pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State groups. Niger is home to a major US airbase, in the city of Agadez, some 920 kilometers (550 miles) from the capital Niamey, using it for manned and unmanned surveillance flights and other operations. The US has also invested hundreds of millions of dollars in training Niger's military since it began operations there in 2013. (AP)



Kenya's general dies in crash: Kenya's military chief Gen Francis Ogolla died in a helicopter crash west of the country, President William Ruto announced and declared three days of national mourning.

The helicopter was carrying 11 people, including Gen Ogolla, when it crashed Thursday and caught fire in a remote area near the border with Uganda, killing nine people onboard, the president said.

It is unclear what caused the crash. Gen Ogolla, 61, was on a tour of the country's troubled western region that has seen frequent attacks by local bandits.

He was appointed Kenya's Chief of Defense Forces in April last year after Gen. Robert Kibochi retired.

Political controversy surrounded Ogolla even before his appointment, when he was accused by the country's electoral commission chairperson as being part of a national security council delegation that tried to influence the outcome of the 2022 general election against President Ruto.

Ruto later explained that he called Gen Ogolla before his appointment and said that, despite the election controversy, he was the most qualified for the job. (AP)



Zimbabwe frees prisoners: Zimbabwe President Emmerson Mnangagwa



A Thai military armored vehicle takes a position with sounds of explosions and gunshots along the Moei river, under the 2nd Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge in Mae Sot in Thailand's Tak province on April 20. About 1,300 people have fled from eastern Myanmar into Thailand, officials said Saturday, as fresh fighting erupted near a border town that has recently been captured by ethnic guerillas. (AP)

China's e-commerce trade up 9.6 pct in Q1

China's cross-border e-commerce trade rose 9.6 percent year on year to 577.6 billion yuan (about 81.3 billion U.S. dollars) in the first quarter of this year, data from the Ministry of Commerce (MOC) showed.

During the period, the country's e-commerce imports and exports with Silk Road e-commerce partner countries such as Hungary, the United Arab Emirates, Cambodia and Brazil, saw rapid growth, the ministry said.

The pace of international cooperation

in e-commerce has accelerated, the MOC said, noting that for the first time, it organized Chinese e-commerce platforms to conduct roadshows in foreign countries. Through such an initiative, Chinese e-commerce firms connected with more than 60 small and medium-sized enterprises in Italy, according to the ministry.

In the first quarter, the national online retail sales reached 3.3 trillion yuan, an increase of 12.4 percent year on year, with service consumption continuing to lead the growth, the MOC said. (Xinhua)

foreign holdings of Chinese bonds see net increase

Foreign investors saw a net increase of 41.6 billion U.S. dollars in their holdings of China's domestic bonds in the first quarter of 2024, official data showed on Thursday.

This figure is notably higher than the total net increase of 23 billion U.S. dollars registered in 2023.

"Recently, overseas institutions' investment in domestic bonds have increased significantly," Wang Chunying, deputy director and spokesperson of the State Administration of Foreign

Exchange, told a press conference.

By the end of March, more than 1,100 overseas institutions from over 70 countries and regions entered the domestic bond market. Their bond holdings have exceeded 570 billion U.S. dollars, accounting for around 2.6 percent of the total domestic bonds in custody, up 0.2 percentage points from the end of last year.

Overseas investment in domestic bond market sustains reasonable structure and stable returns, Wang

said. Overseas central banks and financial institutions have increased their investments in treasury bonds, policy financial bonds, and other medium- to long-term bonds.

Looking forward, Wang expects overseas institutions' investment in domestic bonds to sustain a steady growth momentum backed by a sound macroeconomic environment, a stable renminbi exchange rate, and an increase in the use of renminbi in global cross-border transactions. (Xinhua)

Research suggests that 6G will boast features such as ultra-high speed

Next-gen telecom to turbocharge China's new productivity

BEIJING, April 20, (Xinhua): China is pushing for the convergence of next-generation communication with technologies such as big data, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence (AI), aiming to empower various industries and development of new quality productive forces.

With innovation playing the leading role, new quality productive forces means advanced productivity that is freed from traditional economic growth mode and productivity development paths, features high-tech, high efficiency and high quality.

The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) has reported that 5G applications have been successfully integrated into 74 of the 97 major sectors of the national economy.

This includes significant advancements in key areas such as industry, mining, power, and healthcare, where 5G is being promoted on a large scale.

Zhao Zhiguo, chief engineer of the MIIT, stated that 5G is currently progressing towards 5G-Advanced (5GA) or 5.5G, and there is an increased focus on the research and development of 6G and terabit optical networks.

According to a research by Zhongtai Securities, 5G-A is poised to become a cornerstone for the low-altitude economy, offering comprehensive information services that include lifecycle management, intelligent decision support, security, and AI-assisted drone supervision.

These capabilities are essential for the safe and efficient operation of low-altitude flights, a burgeoning sector within the economy and an example of developing new quality productive forces.

New quality productive forces are driven by revolutionary technological breakthroughs, innovative allocation of production factors, and deep industrial transformation and upgrading. A prime example is the emergence of futuristic industries.

The MIIT and several other departments have issued a guideline on the innovation and development of humanoid robots as part of efforts to encourage development of new quality productive forces, said Shan Zhongde, vice minister of industry and information technology.

A research note from Guosheng Securities said the humanoid robot market is expected to surpass the trillion-yuan mark in market scale in the future, with 6G playing a significant role in this growth. It will be capable of supporting intelligent dialogue and training for robots by gradually enhancing their level of intelligence.

The research suggests that 6G will boast features such as ultra-high speed, ultra-low latency, global coverage, massive connectivity, ultra-high reliability, and ultra-low energy consumption. It is expected to fuel development of game-changing technologies like quantum communication.

Smart manufacturing is the core technology and main focus that will enable the transformation of China's manufacturing industry from being large in scale to becoming stronger in capability and competitiveness, said Shan.

To this end, China is improving infrastructure including moderately and proactively planning for the deployment of information infrastructure such as 5G, computing power, and mobile Internet of Things (IoT).

In March, the world's first 400G all-optical interprovincial backbone network officially became commercially available in China.

Compared to the previous generation of backbone networks, its transmission bandwidth has increased by four times, and the energy consumption per bit has been reduced by 65 percent. Data volumes that would previously take ten minutes to transmit can now be completed in just over two minutes thanks to the new network developed by China Mobile.

It is expected that by mid-2024, the company will fully realize high-speed interconnection between the eight hubs of an initiative channeling computing resources from the country's east to the west, establishing the world's largest 400G all-optical interprovincial backbone network.

Zhao emphasized that the commercial operation of the 400G network will better support the efficient interconnection of computing power and data elements across entities, types, and regions.

An industry report from a broadband development alliance indicates that China has built the world's largest and technologically leading "dual-gigabit" network infrastructure, achieving gigabit access in every city, 5G access in every county, and broadband access in every village.

The telecom industry in China has developed rapidly in recent years. As of the end of March, the cumulative number of 5G base stations built nationwide has reached 3.647 million, with a 5G user penetration rate exceeding 60 percent, according to MIIT data.

As China continues to lift market access restrictions in the manufacturing sector, it will also promote the opening up of sectors including telecommunications to create more trade and investment opportunities for foreign investors.

EU wants to boost competitiveness to close the 'gap' with US and China

'There is no time to waste'

BRUSSELS, April 20, (AP): European Union leaders on Thursday debated a new "European Competitiveness Deal" aimed at helping the 27-nation bloc close the gap with Chinese and American rivals amid fears the region's industries will otherwise be left behind for good.

In a volatile geopolitical landscape redefined by the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine and increasing tensions in the Middle East that create new economic challenges, EU leaders believe there is an urgent need for action.

China, the U.S. and the European Union are the three largest economies in the world, but the EU's share has diminished over the past 30 years. Europe is now feeling pressure amid U.S. and Chinese efforts to support investment in domestic production through subsidies and tax breaks, particularly in renewable energy and green technology.

Before the summit in Brussels, the former president of the European Central Bank, Mario Draghi, said the EU did not pay enough attention to "external competitiveness as a serious policy question" and insisted Europe's biggest economic rivals "are no longer playing by the rules."

"In the face of a new geopolitical reality and increasingly complex challenges, the European Union is committed to strengthening its strategic sovereignty and acting decisively to ensure its long-term competitiveness, prosperity and leadership on the global stage," leaders were expected to agree at their summit in Brussels, according to a draft of conclusions seen by The Associated Press.

Leaders will hear a proposal for an EU-wide effort to subsidize industrial companies in response to the Biden administration's support for investment in environmentally friendly technology through the Inflation Reduction Act, and to China's subsidies for electric cars and solar panels.

The proposals, contained in a report from former Italian Prime Minister Enrico Letta, are in response to widespread concern that U.S. subsidies, which favor domestic production in the U.S., are drawing investment from Europe and threatening the loss of industrial jobs on the continent.

"Competitiveness means prosperity for our citizens," Letta said. "We're in danger of falling out of touch. There is no time to waste. The gap between the European Union and the U.S. in terms of economic performances is becoming bigger and bigger."

According to his report, GDP per capita in the U.S. increased by almost 60% from 1993 to 2022, while in Europe the increase was less than 30%.

Draghi said the EU lacks a clear strategy to answer the challenges proposed by Chinese and American rivals in key industries.

"Today we invest less in digital and advanced technologies than the U.S. and China, including for defense, and we only have four global European tech players among the top 50 worldwide," he said. "We are lacking a strategy for how to shield our traditional industries from an uneven global playing field caused by asymmetries in regulations, subsidies and trade policies."

Home-grown brands have also become a hit among Chinese consumers. Sales of horse-face skirts and neo-Chinese jewelry rose 6.3 times and 1.7 times from a year earlier during the first two months of 2024.

The rise of a new "Made in China" is just the start of a revolution, fueled



From left: Estonia's Prime Minister Kaja Kallas, Belgium's Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, European Council President Charles Michel, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Greece's Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, author of the High-Level Report on the future of the Single Market Enrico Letta and Finland's Prime Minister Petteri Orpo speak during a round table meeting at an EU summit in Brussels, Thursday, April 18, 2024. (AP)

Home-grown brands have become a hit among consumers

Roaring consumption powers China's economy ahead

BEIJING, April 20, (Xinhua): China's consumption played a vital role in bolstering economic growth in the first quarter of the year, underscoring the country's steady transformation toward a domestic consumption-driven economy.

China's GDP expanded 5.3 percent year on year in the first quarter (Q1), with domestic consumption contributing 73.7 percent to economic growth, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed earlier this week.

Booming service consumption, especially festival-related consumption, and the continuing structural upgrading of household consumption were among the major highlights of the consumption sector.

New Forms Of Consumption
China has witnessed a rapid development of new consumption patterns across a wide range of sectors from entertainment and tourism to the digital industry.

For instance, city walks have become a trending pastime for Chinese. The walks involve immersive exploration of the city on foot to discover historic landmarks, cultural sites and unique spots.

"City walks allow me to deeply experience local culture. It's really a good choice," said a traveler surnamed Chen from Anhui Province.

Home-grown brands have also become a hit among Chinese consumers. Sales of horse-face skirts and neo-Chinese jewelry rose 6.3 times and 1.7 times from a year earlier during the first two months of 2024.

The rise of a new "Made in China" is just the start of a revolution, fueled

Apple pulls WhatsApp and Threads from App Store on Beijing's orders

HONG KONG, April 20, (AP): Apple said it had removed Meta's WhatsApp messaging app and its Threads social media app from the App Store in China to comply with orders from Chinese authorities.

The apps were removed from the store on Friday after Chinese officials cited unspecified national security concerns.

Their removal comes amid elevated tensions between the U.S. and China over trade, technology and national security.

The U.S. has threatened to ban TikTok over national security concerns. But while TikTok, owned by Chinese technology firm ByteDance, is used by millions in the

U.S., apps like WhatsApp and Threads are not commonly used in China.

Instead, the messaging app WeChat, owned by Chinese company Tencent, reigns supreme.

Other Meta apps, including Facebook, Instagram and Messenger remained available for download, although use of such foreign apps is blocked in China due to its "Great Firewall" network of filters that restrict use of foreign websites such as Google and Facebook.

"The Cyberspace Administration of China ordered the removal of these apps from the China storefront based

France asks retailers to alert customers to cases of 'shrinkflation'

PARIS, April 20, (AP): The French government announced a new rule on Friday that will require stores to tell customers when a product becomes smaller but its price stays the same or increases, a practice known as "shrinkflation."

Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire announced the measure to tackle the common but often criticized method, which has become an international buzzword. He said that from July 1, such cases will need to be clearly communicated to shoppers.

Le Maire called shrinkflation a "scam" and stressed the importance of

transparency. "Consumers must understand the real price evolution of products when their sizes change," he said in a statement.

Retailers at medium to large supermarkets will have to display specific information about the price per unit and any changes in quantity next to the affected products. It must be visible as signs on store shelves for two months following any changes to a product. This requirement applies to a wide range of goods, including food and household items. The Finance Ministry said there would be exceptions for unpackaged food items and

bulk goods.

The French government is highlighting the new rule's consumer protection aspect. Consumers who notice pricing discrepancies are now encouraged to report them through France's SignalConso website or app.

Consumer watchdogs welcomed the new rule.

"This is great news, as shrinkflation is shifty and misleading because it is done behind the customer's back. It's high time to act, as we have less money and prices are rising," said Camille Dorioz, campaign director at Foodwatch France.

"It's perhaps very French that the government is stepping in to help the consumer. It's a French way not to let the markets rule on this problem," he added, saying that France is simply reinforcing a European law that forbids misleading packaging and products.

Dorioz said that most shoppers don't notice when a product they buy is 2 grams less, but "over time, it soon adds up, and when people are alerted to it, they understandably get angry."

Retailers are less excited about the new rules, saying they'll be hard to

implement and that the burden should be placed on manufacturers instead.

Dominique Schelcher, head of supermarket chain Systeme U, said in a post on X that shrinkflation should be tackled, but added: "Why ask retailers to do this and not demand it of manufacturers, who ... have all the necessary data?"

The issue has also come up in the U.S. presidential campaign. President Joe Biden called out "shrinkflation" during his State of the Union speech as part of a broader strategy to reframe how voters think about the economy before the November election.

What's On



Photos from the event

Photos by Leah Kurtal

Four ASEAN nations celebrate New Year festival

The embassies of Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand in Kuwait organized a joint celebration of the traditional New Year festival with the aim of enhancing friendly co-operation among the members of the ASEAN Committee in Kuwait.

A press release issued on the occasion said Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand share a common religious, cultural and

linguistic heritage.

They also share the traditional New Year festival celebrated in mid-April as it marks the beginning of a new solar year in the traditional calendars of those countries.

This means the beginning of the traditional new year in 4 countries -- Maha Songkran in Cambodia, Pi Mai in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thingyan in Myanmar, and Songkran in Thailand.

This festival is an occasion to celebrate happily and joyfully with family, friends and community members, as people from all walks of life come together to enjoy the fun atmosphere.

The New Year Festival represents a period of joy and celebration characterized by exciting colours, lively music, beautiful cultural performances, traditional games, delicious food and drinks and water splashes.

This traditional New Year celebration is the result of

collective efforts of the four embassies to share their exciting and vibrant cultures and express our best wishes to everyone.

This celebration in Kuwait not only reflects the harmony, unity and friendship between the four countries, but also reflects the spirit of ASEAN 10 and ASEAN Plus 3 including China, Japan and Korea and cooperation with the State of Kuwait as a partner of ASEAN countries.

'Up to 80% financing'

Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait unveils UAE 'mortgage' loan program

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: In an endeavor to continue to enhance its portfolio of innovative banking solutions, ABK-UAE has unveiled a mortgage loan program tailored to facilitate home purchases for customers wishing to have a real estate in the UAE.



Omar Wahby

This initiative aims to streamline home-buying by offering swift approval processes without the need for customers to travel. The mortgage loan, available through Al Shaab branch in Kuwait, serves as an installment loan secured against residential properties in the UAE.

Key highlights of the newly introduced mortgage loan program include up to 80% financing of the property value; and flexibility in repayment terms, allowing for periods of up to 25 years.

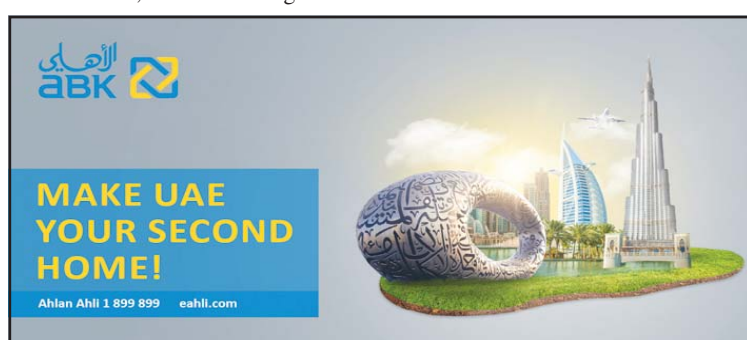
Omar Wahby, CEO of ABK-UAE, expressed his enthusiasm for the dynamic evolution of the UAE real estate market, which has surged for-

ward at an unprecedented pace. He said, "ABK UAE's mortgage offering is a pivotal milestone for the Bank, symbolizing our unwavering dedication to excellence. Real estate activity continues to gather formidable strength, and this exceptional product shall serve as a catalyst, propelling the Bank's growth to new heights." Wahby further emphasized that this unparalleled offering will elevate ABK's repertoire of services.

Johair Marafi, General Manager of Retail Banking at ABK, highlighted the Bank's commitment to fulfilling customers' dreams. She said, "Owning a second home is a dream for every individual. With the launch of the new mortgage loan program in the UAE, we aim to make this dream come true." Marafi underscored ABK's dedication to staying at the forefront of the banking sector through continuous improvement of its product offerings. She emphasized, "This program reflects the Bank's unwavering commitment to evolving in tandem with customer demands and delivering top-tier services."

Marafi concluded with an invitation to follow the Bank's social media accounts to remain up to date with the latest marketing initiatives and to benefit from the current promotional campaigns and offers throughout the year.

For more information, interested applicants are encouraged to contact Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 or visit the UAE desk at AlShaabbranch.



ABK unveils UAE mortgage loan program

Al-Othman unveils exclusive rewards for banking customers

NBK announces first winner of Al Jawhara Grand Prize draw worth KD 1 mln for 2024

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: Amidst festive atmospheres and remarkable audience, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) held a special event I Friday at the 360 Mall, which extended for more than 3 hours and featured a variety of highly engaging activities, marking the announcement of the first draws of AlJawhara and Al-Jawhara Junior grand prizes for 2024.

The event was attended by a number of NBK executive leaders and officials where the draw, which was conducted in the presence and oversight of a representative of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as well as a representative of Deloitte, revealed Al Jawhara Account holder Abdullahif Saad Abdullahif Al Dosaryas the lucky winner of the KD 1 million prize, making him the first millionaire in Al Jawhara Account for this year.

In addition, Al Jawhara Junior Account holder Fatima Mohammed Abdulwahab Al Zalzalah was announced as the winner of the grand prize worth KD 10,000. The grand prize draws for both Al Jawhara and Al Jawhara Junior Accounts is conducted 3 times a year.

The event of announcing the winners featured many engaging entertainment activities and games for children and adults, in addition to the Gergasha comedy show for children. It also included a number of competitions and



Photos from the event

draws on valuable prizes for the audience, including complimentary one night stay at the Waldorf with spa & restaurant vouchers, in addition to McLaren driving experience for a full weekend, and a free yacht trip for 6 hours to enjoy wonderful moments with friends and family.

The event also hosted many booths showcasing NBK's premium offerings for Private and Privilege Banking Customers.

Savings culture and financial inclusion

Commenting on this occasion, Mr. Mohammed Al-Othman, CEO-Consumer and Digital Banking at National Bank of Kuwait said, "Today, we are pleased to celebrate the announcement of the first millionaire in Al Jawhara grand prize draws for this year, as well as the winner of Al Jawhara Junior grand prize. These prizes come

within our customer rewarding strategy, while Al Jawhara Account serves as a key tool for promoting a culture of savings and financial inclusion."

"NBK always seeks to deliver a top-notch banking experience for its customers, integrating the best products and services with a package of exclusive, unmatched benefits and rewards. To this end, the bank has increased the total amount of the AlJawhara Account prizes to KD 5 million starting this year," he added.

"Seeking to elevate the benefits and rewards provided to Al Jawhara Account holders, NBK always strives to introduced valuable offerings including Al Jawhara Junior Draws for Al Jawhara Account holders below the age of 21 with 7 winners of monthly draws (KD 1,000 for 3 winners and KD

500 for 4 winners) in addition to 1 winner of KD10,000 prize with each grand prize draw," he mentioned.

"Furthermore, NBK provides the new exclusive Al Jawhara Saver Account, offering customers a bonus interest rate up to 1.5% for the first year, in addition to the chance to enter the monthly and grand draws if savings reach KD5,000 and above. The bank is also offering customers who have been banking with it for more than 2 years double chances in case they were not eligible to earn the existing double chances," he explained.

NBK has already increased Al Jawhara prizes by more than the double in early 2023, making it the biggest in Kuwait, with KD 20,000 prize weekly, KD 125,000 monthly, and grand prizes worth KD 1,000,000 each, three times a year.

KFH's secure & swift money transfer with Western Union gains strong momentum

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announced that the number of transactions on Money Transfer with Western Union service available on KFHOnline app has risen significantly.

KFH has recently launched this service in partnership with Western Union for convenient cross-border transactions.

The partnership between KFH and Western Union offers a convenient money transfer service. Customers can easily send money via cash or bank account to recipients worldwide through Western Union's vast network. KFHOnline allows secure access to bank accounts and facilitates swift international money transfers. With a presence in over 200 countries and territories, Western Union is a global leader in money transfer, enabling payments to bank accounts, digital wallets, and cards in over 110 countries. Bank transfers are instant in 100 countries.

KFH launched the service earlier this year with the goal of offering its customers top advantages. This includes secure, reliable, and fast transfers that meet customer expectations. The service allows customers to access the full Western Union network when sending remittances and expands digital application capabilities to ensure financial services are accessible to all.



The campaign poster

It is worth noting that KFH provides a range of digital banking solutions via the KFHOnline app. These include a set of new services such as submitting a personal finance application online through KFHOnline, opening a gold account with options for selling and buying, gold delivery service, cheque book request, instant cheque printing, instant debit card issuance via QR code, and cheque deposit. Customers can also view investment plans, make local and international transfers, and create investment deposits.

Al-Sarhan thanks stakeholders for support of KIB's initiatives

KIB honored as 'Best Bank in Financial Literacy Program MENA 2023' by CFI.co

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) is pleased to announce that it has been recognized as the "Best Bank in Financial Literacy Program - MENA 2023" by the prestigious Capital Finance International (CFI.co) magazine awards. This win highlights KIB's unwavering commitment to promoting financial literacy and empowering individuals to make informed financial decisions.

KIB was selected as the award recipient following a decision by the CFI.co judging panel. The evaluation decision was based on the Bank's multiple initiatives and efforts to spread financial literacy, including organizing information sessions at high-traffic venues to engage directly with the public, advocating for the benefits of conscientious savings and investment practices, promoting cyber safety and fraud prevention, presenting products to suit personal circumstances and aspirations, highlighting customers' financial rights and responsibilities, and participating in major industry conferences. The judges stated that while KIB remained on an impressive growth trajectory, its educational outreach activities deserved special attention at the annual awards.

Expressing gratitude for the recognition, Fahad Al-Sarhan, Senior Manager - External Communication, Marketing and Corporate Communica-

tion, said: "We are honored to be chosen for CFI.co's Best Bank in Financial Literacy Program in the Middle East and North Africa region. Winning this award is a testament to KIB's dedication to providing educational resources and initiatives that empower its customers and the wider community. Motivated by the belief that financial literacy is a key factor in a country's economic stability and growth potential, over the years, the Bank has been launching a series of initiatives and programs that strive to equip individuals with the knowledge and tools necessary to make informed financial decisions."

Al-Sarhan extended his appreciation to the Central Bank of Kuwait and all regulatory authorities for their ongoing support and distinct regulatory role in the banking sector. He also thanked the Chairman, members of the Board of Directors, the Executive Management, and all of KIB's employees for their efforts and contributions to the success of the Bank. Furthermore, he highlighted KIB's constant support of the "Let's Be



Al-Sarhan

Aware" (Diraya) financial awareness campaign, which was launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) in cooperation with local banks.

Concluding his remarks, Al-Sarhan asserted: "KIB continues its unwavering dedication to making a meaningful and lasting impact on the financial well-being of individuals and families throughout the MENA region. The Bank remains committed to furthering financial education and empowerment to help its customers achieve their financial goals."



Legendary guitarist and Southern rock icon

Dickey Betts, Allman Brothers legend, passes away at 80

LOS ANGELES, April 20, (AP): **Dickey Betts**, who died Thursday at age 80, really was born a ramblin' man.

He left home at 16 to join the circus and became a renowned guitarist touring the world with the Allman Brothers Band. He wrote the group's biggest hit, "Ramblin' Man," and remained on the road until he reached the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

Betts died at his home in Osprey, Florida, his manager of 20 years, David Spero, said by phone. He had been battling cancer for more than a year and had chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, Spero said.

"He was surrounded by his whole family and he passed peacefully. They didn't think he was in any pain," he said.

Betts shared lead guitar duties with Duane Allman in the original Allman Brothers Band to help give the group its unique sound and create a new genre, Southern rock. The band blended blues, country, R&B and jazz with '60s rock to produce a distinct sound that influenced a host of major acts, including Lynyrd Skynyrd, ZZ Top, Phish, Jason Isbell and Chris Stapleton, among many others.

"My first concert was Dickey Betts at Coleman's in Rome, New York in 1983," blues-rock guitarist Joe Bonamassa said in an Instagram post Thursday, crediting Betts with inspiring his favorite electric guitar model. "Blew my mind and made me want a Les Paul."

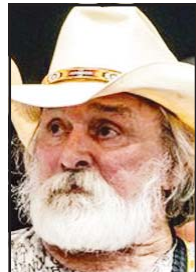
Other tributes came from members of the Allman Brothers Band's extended family.

Guitarist Derek Trucks and his wife and bandmate, Susan Tedeschi, posted on their Instagram account that Betts was "one of best to ever do it."

Trucks joined the Allman Brothers Band in 1999. His uncle Butch

Trucks was one of the band's two founding drummers.

Bassist Berry Duane Oakley, son of Allman Brothers founding bassist Berry Oakley, honored his "Uncle Dickey" on Facebook, saying: "If not for him, I don't think I would be a touring musician. The cat in the hat will never be forgotten, and will always be honored not only for the wonderful life he lived, but the wonderful music he left behind for all of us to share and remember."



Betts

Founded in 1969, the Allmans were a pioneering jam band, trampling the traditional formula of three-minute pop songs by performing lengthy compositions in concert and on record. The band was also notable as a biracial group from the Deep South.

Duane Allman died in a motorcycle accident in 1971, and Berry Oakley was killed in a motorcycle crash the following year. That left Betts and Allman's younger brother, Gregg, as the band's leaders, but they frequently clashed, and substance abuse caused further dysfunction. The band broke up at least twice before reforming, and has had more than a dozen lineups.

The Allman Brothers Band was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 1995 and earned a Lifetime Achievement Grammy Award in 2012. Betts left the group for good in 2000. He also played solo and with his own band Great Southern, which included his son, guitarist Duane Betts.

Forrest Richard Betts was born Dec. 12, 1943, and raised in the

Bradenton, Florida, area, near the highway 41 he sang about in "Ramblin' Man." His family had lived in area since the mid-19th century.

A descendant of Canadian fiddlers, Betts was listening to string bands before he even started school. He developed a fondness for country, bluegrass and Western swing, and played the ukulele and banjo before focusing on the electric guitar because it impressed girls. But he usually did his songwriting on an acoustic guitar.

Betts changed schools often because his father worked construction, and those memories later inspired him to write "Ramblin' Man." His first big road trip came when he joined the circus to play in a band.

He returned home, and with Oakley joined a group that became the Jacksonville, Florida-based band Second Coming. One night in 1969, Betts and Oakley jammed with Duane Allman, already a successful session musician, and his younger brother. Together they formed the Allman Brothers Band.

Betts "excelled at anything that caught his attention," according to a statement posted Thursday on the Allman Brothers Band's official website. "He was passionate in life, be it music, songwriting, fishing, hunting, boating, golf, karate or boxing."

The group moved to Macon, Georgia, and released a self-titled debut album in 1969. A year later came the album "Idlewild South," highlighted by Betts' instrumental composition "In Memory of Elizabeth Reed," which soon became a concert favorite.

The 1971 double album "At Fillmore East," now considered among the greatest live albums of the classic rock era, was the Allmans' commercial breakthrough and cemented their performing reputation by showcasing the unique guitar interplay between Allman and Betts.

Variety



This image released by Universal Pictures shows Alisha Weir in a scene from the film 'Abigail.' (AP)

Film

A gleeful genre-smashing romp

Heists and monsters collide in 'Abigail'

By Mark Kennedy

If you always thought your garden-variety heist movies could do with a bit more blood-sucking vampire, have we got a flick for you.

"Abigail," featuring a 12-year-old tutu-wearing member of the undead, is way better than it should be, a gleeful genre-smashing romp through puddles of gore.

Directors Matt Bettinelli-Olpin and Tyler Gillett and producer Chad Villella - part of Radio Silence Productions - have cracked the modern horror code with such hits as "Ready or Not," "Scream" and "Scream VI." They do not disappoint with "Abigail," even perhaps opening a new, bloody revenue stream. (And wait for the phone call scene, a nod to "Scream.")

"Abigail" starts with an odd assortment of mercenaries - played by "Scream" veteran Melissa Barrera, "Downton Abbey" star Dan Stevens, Kathryn Newton, Kevin Durand, William Catlett and the late Angus Cloud.

The six - representing the muscle, sniper, computer expert, getaway driver, medic etc - are hired to kidnap a rich preteen (nicknamed "Tiny Dancer") and hold her for ransom. The rules are: No names. No backstory. No grabass, which is a weird request, if we're being honest. All this group needs to do is detain the target for 24 hours until rich dad pays \$50 million in ransom.

Why are six professional underworld characters needed to snatch and detain a sweet preteen, still wearing her tutu? That's easy: Not all of them are going to survive to claim their share of \$7 million. That's because Abigail (Alisha Weir, awesome, stay away from me, no seriously) is really into, well, neckwork.

"I'm sorry about what's going to happen to you," Abigail sweetly tells the kidnappers. We have some idea - and it's going to be great. Suddenly, the rambling estate they're holding her becomes a prison. The tables are turned.

The script written by Stephen Shields ("The Hole in the Ground") and regular Radio Silence collaborator Guy Busick ("Ready or Not" and the "Scream" movies) - gleefully mines humor in the horror. Laughing a moment after a body fully explodes is normal here.

"This whole thing is a trip," says one of the gang. Believe them. "Something doesn't add up," says another.

Believe that guy, too.

Garlic, sunlight, spears and crucifixes are employed to try to stop Abigail, who has hijacked the heist movie and turned it into a run-for-your-life thriller. She's a very smart 12-year-old who turns hardened mercenaries against each other.

Barrera, who had been so central to the life of the "Scream" franchise, shows why she's so good at horror - funny, sarcastic, vulnerable, athletic, soulful and very convincing with a stake in her hand.

Stevens, who famously left the aristocratic "Downton Abbey" for better roles, may wonder what he's doing here now, bathed in blood fighting a preteen vampire, but does an admirable job, definitely in on the camp.

But it's Weir in the titular role who carries it, doing piroettes and leaps as she chases the bad-guys-now-good guys to the theme of "Swan Lake" with blood dripping down her throat, rotten teeth and feathers in her hair. "I like to play with my food," she says.

Run faster! "Abigail," a Universal Pictures release that hit theaters Friday, is rated R for "strong bloody violence and gore throughout, pervasive language and brief drug use." Running time: 110 minutes. Three stars out of four.

Also:

DALLAS: The first model of the USS Enterprise - used in the opening credits of the original "Star Trek" television series - has boldly gone back home, returning to creator **Gene Roddenberry's** son decades after it went missing.

The model's disappearance sometime in the 1970s had become the subject of lore, so it caused a stir when it popped up on eBay last fall. The sellers quickly took it down, and then contacted Dallas-based Heritage Auctions to authenticate it. Last weekend, the auction house facilitated the model's return.

Eugene "Rod" Roddenberry, CEO of Roddenberry Entertainment, said he's thrilled to have the model that had graced the desk of his father, who died in 1991 at age 70.

"This is not going home to adorn my shelves," Rod-

denberry said. "This is going to get restored and we're working on ways to get it out so the public can see it and my hope is that it will land in a museum somewhere."

Heritage's executive vice president, **Joe Maddalena**, said the auction house was contacted by people who said they'd discovered it a storage unit, and when it was brought into their Beverly Hills office, he and a colleague "instantly knew that it was the real thing."

They reached out to Roddenberry, who said he appreciates that everyone involved agreed returning the model was the right thing to do. He wouldn't go into details on the agreement reached but said "I felt it important to reward that and show appreciation for that."

Maddalena said the model vanished in the 1970s after Gene Roddenberry loaned it to makers of "Star Trek: The Motion Picture," which was released in 1979.

"No one knew what happened to it," Rod Roddenberry said.

The 3-foot (0.91-meter) model of the USS Enterprise was used in the show's original pilot episode as well as the opening credits of the resulting TV series, and was the prototype for the 11-foot (3-meter) version featured in the series' episodes. The larger model is on display at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum.

The original "Star Trek" television series, which aired in the late 1960s, kicked off an ever-expanding multiverse of cultural phenomena, with TV and movie spinoffs and conventions where a fanbase of zealous and devoted Trekkies can't get enough of memorabilia.

This USS Enterprise model would easily sell for more than \$1 million at auction, but really "it's priceless," Maddalena said.

"It could sell for any amount and I wouldn't be surprised because of what it is," he said. "It is truly a cultural icon."

Roddenberry, who was just a young boy when the model went missing, said he has spotty memories of it, "almost a deja vu." He said it wasn't something he'd thought much about until people began contacting him after it appeared on eBay.

"I don't think I really, fully comprehended at first that this was the first Enterprise ever created," he said. (AP)

NEW YORK: Fady Joudah, a Palestinian American poet who has said he writes for the future because "the present is demolished," has received a \$100,000 award from Poets & Writers.

Joudah is this year's winner of the Jackson Poetry Prize, given to an American writer of "exceptional talent. He was chosen by a panel of three poets: **Natalie Diaz**, **Gregory Pardlo** and **Diane Seuss**.

The judges' citation, released Thursday, noted Joudah's "significant and evolving body of work, distinguished by his courage to speak in the face of the unspeakable, in poems of lyric concision and intensity."



Harry



Joudah

Joudah's books include "The Earth in the Attic" and "Tethered to the Stars," along with English-language translations of the Palestinian poet **Mahmoud Darwish**. His other honors include winning the Yale Series of Younger Poets competition, in 2007, and receiving a PEN USA Literary Award. (AP)

NASHVILLE, Tenn.: **Mandisa**, a contemporary Christian singer who appeared on "American Idol" and won a Grammy for her 2013 album "Overcomer," has died. She was 47.

A representative for the singer told The Associated Press that the singer was found dead in her home in Nashville, Tennessee, on

Thursday. The representative said the cause of Mandisa's death was not yet known.

Mandisa, whose full name was **Mandisa Lynn Hundley**, was born near **Sacramento, California**, and grew up singing in church. She gained stardom after finishing ninth on "American Idol" in 2006. (AP)

People & Places

Art

Gibson confronts history

Artwork highlights dialogue, empathy

VENICE, Italy, April 20, (AP): A pair of nude feet - dirty, wounded and vulnerable - are painted on the façade of the Venice women's prison chapel. It's the work of Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan and part of the Vatican's pavilion at the Venice Biennale contemporary art show in an innovative collaboration between inmates and artists.

That Cattelan is the lead artist is striking, given that his provocative life-size wax statue of Pope John Paul II lying on his side, crushed by a massive meteorite, shocked Catholics when it was displayed at the 2001 Biennale. The new work, titled "Father," is considered a thematic counterpoint to a performance piece he produced for the 1999 Biennale titled "Mother," during which a religious ascetic was buried under sand, with only his hands clasped in prayer showing.

The Vatican's culture minister, Cardinal Jose Tolentino de Mendonca, praised the work, which he said recalled the naked, dirty feet of Caravaggio's saints, while also being highly symbolic of the journey behind the Holy See's pavilion, showing "the desire to dirty one's feet, to show that whoever has feet has a carnality."

Tolentino de Mendonca, prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education, said the Vatican did not want to shy away from artists or works that might be considered iconoclastic, or critical of institutions like the Catholic church.

"Pope Francis calls us to dialogue. Dialogue is not just with the people who are mirrors of ourselves," he told The Associated Press. "We did not seek out easy artists. We sought real artists. Cattelan's work is very interesting under a religious point of view, because there is something iconoclastic in his work, but also in the mystic there is something that can be called iconoclastic, in the sense of deconstructing the religious representation."

Pavilion

Pope Francis, who met with over 200 artists in the Sistine Chapel last year, will see for himself when he visits the pavilion April 28, meeting inmates and artists, and according to the prefect not just the ones participating in the pavilion.

Cattelan, who wandered by the work as preview tours continued this week, declined to discuss his contribution but said the feet would be reproduced on a church in Rome in the future.

Cattelan's artwork can be viewed by anyone who makes the trek to the Giudecca island prison. Those who want to see the other works will be guided through the prison on four daily tours by inmates, leaving bags and mobile phones in lockup.

Closed Wednesdays, a maximum 600 people will view the pavilion each week during the Biennale's run from April 20-Nov. 26. The 60th International Art Exhibition comprises 88 national pavilions along with a main show curated this year by Brazilian Adriano Pedrosa.

On a recent tour, three inmates wearing elegant black and white smocks made by prison seamstresses guided journalists through an installation by Simone Fattal who transformed inmates' poems into small ceramic plaques hung along a brick alleyway.

The tour continued to a prison coffee bar decorated with posters by onetime Catholic nun Corita Kent and into a gallery where Claire Tabouret has painted images from photographs provided by inmates of themselves and loved ones.

The conceptual artistic duo known as Claire Fontaine provided a neon eye with a slash through it for an outdoor corridor, and another neon sign that reads: "Siamo con voi nella notte." ("We are with all of you in the night").

That sign, in a courtyard where the inmates can gather during the day, provides a reassuring blue glow into the overlooking cells where they sleep.

"When we read this writing, it gives us encouragement, because there is someone with us day and night," said one inmate named Manuela, who like the others declined to give their full names. "At night, we see the blue light, so we know it is there."

The tour ended with a 15-minute film by Italian director Marco Perego starring his wife, actor **Zoe Saldana**, both of whom tagged along. Saldana plays an inmate in her final hours before release, and she took inspiration from the inmates who appeared in the film. To protect their privacy, the film can only be seen within the prison walls.

"What we wanted to provide for them was just a little bit of visibility, and to add a little bit of levity through art, which is exactly what we accomplished," Saldana said.

Their desire for visibility was expressed in letters that the women gave the couple each night after filming, and through requests to pose with the couple for photos, which Saldana said they printed as keepsakes for the women.

Chiara Parisi, the director of the Centre Pompidou-Metz and one of the curators, said the project created a unique synergy between artists and inmates that opened lines of empathy. After the pavilion closes at the end of the Biennale, she said a coat of paint would likely cover Cattelan's work, while the other pieces will find other venues; she said she hoped its larger legacy would be other similar initiatives.

Also:

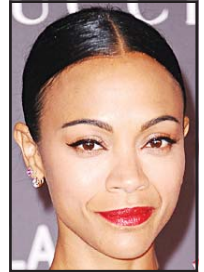
VENICE, Italy: Jeffrey Gibson's takeover of the US pavilion for this year's Venice Biennale contemporary art show is a celebration of color, pattern and craft, which is immediately evident on approaching the bright red facade decorated by a colorful clash of geometry and a foreground dominated by a riot of gigantic red podiums.

Gibson, a Mississippi Choctaw with Cherokee descent, is the first Native American to represent the United States solo at the Venice Biennale, the world's oldest contemporary art show. For context, the last time Native American artists were included was in 1932.

Gibson, 52, accepts the weight of the honor, but he prefers to focus on how his participation can forge greater inclusion going forward.

"The first is not the most important story," Gibson told The Associated Press this week before the pavilion's inauguration on Thursday. "The first is hopefully the beginning of many, many, many more stories to come."

The commission, his first major show in Europe, comes at a pivotal moment for Gibson. His 2023 book "An Indigenous Present" features more than 60 Indigenous artists, and he has two major new projects, a facade commission for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and an exhibition at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art.



Saldana



This cover image released by Republic Records show 'The Tortured Poets Department' by Taylor Swift. (AP)

Music

Experts weigh in on 'The Tortured Poets Department'

Is Taylor Swift's latest album poetic?

NEW YORK, April 20, (AP): Taylor Swift has released her 11th studio album, "The Tortured Poets Department."

But just how poetic is it? Is it even possible to close read lyrics like poems, divorced from their source material?

The Associated Press spoke to four experts to assess how Swift's latest album stacks up to poetry.

Allison Adair, a professor who teaches poetry and other literary forms at Boston College, says yes.

"My personal opinion is that if someone writes poems and considers themselves a poet, then they're a poet," she says. "And Swift has demonstrated that she takes it pretty seriously. She's mentioned (Pablo) Neruda in her work before, she has an allusion to (William) Wordsworth, she cites Emily Dickinson as one of her influences."

She also said her students told her Swift's B-sides - not her radio singles - tend to be her most poetic, which is true of poets, too. "Their most well-known poems are the ones that people look into the most, that are the clearest, and in a way, don't always have the mystery of poetry."

Professor Elizabeth Scala, who teaches a course on Swift's songbook at the University of Texas at Austin, says "there is something poetical about the way she writes," adding that her work on "The Tortured Poets Department" references a time before print technology when people sang poems. "In the earliest stages of English poetry, they were inseparable," she says. "Not absolutely identical, but they

have a long and rich history together that is re-energized by Taylor Swift."

"It's proper to talk about every songwriter as a poet," says Michael Chasar, a poetry and popular culture professor at Willamette University.

"There are many things musicians and singer-songwriters can do that poetry cannot," Adair says, citing melisma, or the ability to hold out a single syllable over many notes, as an example. Or the nature of a song with uplifting production and morose lyricism, which can create a confusing and rich texture. "That's something music can do viscerally and poetry has to do in different ways."

"She might say her works are poetry," adds Scala. "But I also think the music is so important - kind of poetry-plus."

Literary

As for current US poet laureate Ada Limón? "Poetry and song lyrics aren't exactly the same (we poets have to make all our music with only words and breath)," she wrote to the AP. "But having an icon like Taylor bring more attention to poetry as a genre is exciting."

Scala sees Swift's influences on "The Tortured Poets Department" as including Sylvia Plath, a confessional poet she previously drew inspiration from on songs like "Mad Woman" and "Tolerate It."

"Fortnight" uses enjambed lines (there's no end stop, or punctuation at the end of each line) and Scala points out the dissonance between the music's smoothness and its lyrics, like in

the line "My mornings are Mondays stuck in an endless February." "It kind of encapsulates boredom with the ordinary and then she unleashes a kind of tension and anger in the ordinary in those verses," she says. In the verses, she says Swift "explodes the domestic," and that fights up against the music, which is "literary."

Swift's lyrics, too, allow for multi-dimensional readings: "I touched you" could be physicality and infidelity in the song, Scala says, or it could mean it emotionally - as in, I moved you.

Swift has long played with rhyme and unexpected rhythm. "She'll often establish a pattern and won't satisfy it - and that often comes in a moment of emotional ache," says Adair.

On "Fortnight," it appears in a few ways. Adair points out that the chorus is more syncopated than the rest of the song - which means Swift uses many more syllables for the same beat. "It gives this rushed quality," she says.

"Rhyming 'alcoholic' and 'aesthetic,' she plays a lot with assonance. It is technically a vowel-driven repetition of sounds," she adds. There's a tension, too, in the title "Fortnight," an archaic term used for a song with contemporary devices. "There's an allusion to treason, and some of the stuff is hyper romantic, but a lot of it is very much a kind of unapologetic, plain speech. And there's something poetic about that."

"From the perspective of harnessing particular poetic devices, this kind of trucks in familiar metaphors for one's emotional state," Chasar says of "Fortnight."



Uma Thurman, a cast member in 'Pulp Fiction,' poses at a 30th anniversary screening of the film on the opening night of the TCM Classic Film Festival at the TCL Chinese Theatre, Thursday, April 18, in Los Angeles. (AP)



Hutchins



Baldwin

Variety

ALGIERS: The Kasbah of Algiers, known as the House of the Sultan, is located in the center of Algiers, where it was built in 1516 by the Turkish leaders and was completed in 1591.

It was considered one of the largest palaces built by the Ottomans during their rule in Algeria, where it was the official place to receive guests of Algerian rulers in that period. The castle was originally a military fortress until the ruler of Algiers Ali Khoja decided to move his residence and the province headquarters from Janina Palace in 1817, due to the violence and disturbance by the Ottoman army.

In 1992, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proclaimed Kasbah of Algiers a World Cultural Heritage Site, as there are the remains of the citadel, old mosques and Ottoman-style palaces, as well as the remains of a traditional urban structure associated with a deep-rooted sense of community. (KUNA)

SANTA FE, N.M.: An attorney has been added to the special prosecution team that is pursuing an involuntary manslaughter charge against actor **Alec Baldwin** in the fatal shooting of a cinematographer on the set of the Western movie "Rust," court officials confirmed Thursday.

The district attorney for Santa Fe has appointed **Erlinda Johnson** as special prosecutor to the case, which is scheduled for trial in July. She was sworn in Tuesday. Baldwin has pleaded not guilty to an involuntary manslaughter charge in the shooting of **Halyna Hutchins** during an October 2021 rehearsal at a movie-set ranch on the outskirts of Santa Fe.

Baldwin, the lead actor and co-producer for "Rust," was pointing a gun at Hutchins during rehearsal when the revolver went off, killing Hutchins and wounding director **Joel Souza**.

Johnson's experience as a criminal defense and personal injury attorney include representing former **New Mexico** Secretary of State **Dianna Duran**, who resigned in 2015 amid revelations she used campaign

funds to fuel a gambling addiction. Duran received a 30-day jail sentence after pleading guilty to embezzlement and money laundering charges.

Johnson previously worked as a federal prosecutor on drug enforcement and organized crime investigations after serving as assistant district attorney in the **Albuquerque** area. (AP)



Visitors look at the installation 'Topak Ev,' by artist Nil Yalter at the 60th Biennale of Arts exhibition in Venice, Italy, Tuesday, April 16. The Venice Biennale contemporary art exhibition opened Saturday for its six-month run through Nov. 26. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Netflix gained another 9.3 million subscribers to start the year while its profit soared with the help of a still-emerging expansion into advertising, but caught investors off guard with a change that will make it more difficult to track the video streaming service's future growth.

The performance announced Thursday demonstrated that Netflix is still building on its momentum of last year, when a crackdown on free-loading viewers relying on shared passwords and the rollout of a low-priced option including commercials revived its growth following a post-pandemic lull.

The strategy resulted in Netflix adding 30 million subscribers last year - the second largest annual increase the service's history. Netflix's gains during the January-March period more than quadrupled the 1.8 million subscribers that the video streaming service added at the same time last year, and was nearly three times more than analysts had projected. (AP)

Natural alternative to controversial experiments

Scientists use gut bacteria to prevent mosquito-borne diseases

BEIJING, April 20, (Xinhua): Chinese scientists have developed a more natural strategy to prevent mosquito-borne diseases by changing insects' gut microbes, which might be used as an alternative to controversial experiments that see genetically-modified mosquitoes released in Florida.

Mosquito-borne viruses, such as dengue and Zika, cause several potentially fatal human viral infections. Dengue viruses infect approximately 390 million each year globally.

An epidemic survey over the past decade documented frequent dengue outbreaks in Xishuangbanna and Lincang, both in southwest China's Yunnan Province. But few have been reported in neighboring cities of Wenshan and Pu'er.

The very different prevalence stimulated the curiosity of researchers from Tsinghua University and Yunnan Academy of Animal Science and Veterinary Sciences.

Microbes

The team's field investigation on thousands of blood-sucking female mosquitoes revealed that mosquitoes from two different habitats carry different symbiotic bacteria in their guts, the first tissue organ usually infected by viruses.

Among the 55 strains isolated, a kind of bacterium called *Rosenbergiella* YN46 was abundant in mosquito guts in Wenshan and Pu'er, but not in Xishuangbanna and Lincang, according to the study published on Friday in the journal *Science*.

Then, the researchers colonized the strain in the intestines of two common disease-transmitting mosquitoes -- *Aedes albopictus* and *Aedes aegypti*.

Those mosquitoes did become less likely to be infected with dengue and Zika via blood bites, according to the study.

The further analysis suggested that an enzyme secreted by the bacteria can convert glucose into gluconic acid and rapidly acidify the intestines of blood-sucking mosquitoes. The mosquito-borne viruses will be neutralized in acid environment.

The team made an experiment in the wild to breed "good mosquitoes" that do not transmit viruses. They added *Rosenbergiella* YN46 bacteria to the water where mosquitoes eggs were laid and hatched.

Encouragingly, the intestinal colonization proved a success at a site in Mengla County of Xishuangbanna and the colony persistently resided in the guts of *Aedes* mosquitoes.

The researchers also proposed another potential intervention strategy -- the use of plants. Mosquito's gut microbes in the wild are either derived from microbes in breeding waters, or in the sap and nectar of plants.

"We are collecting a large number of plant samples in Wenshan, where the bacterium was isolated, in order to find plants that are enriched with this bacterium," said Cheng Gong from Tsinghua, the corresponding author of the paper. "Transplanting and cultivating this plant to the infected area may intervene in the ability of mosquitoes to carry and transmit the virus."

"If those plants are shrub or herbaceous plants, they can be grown in your backyard or residential compound," added Cheng.

"*Rosenbergiella* YN46 is derived from the natural environment and its potential environmental risk is relatively low, and will not make mosquitoes resistant to the drug, nor affect their survival in nature," commented Xu Jianguo from the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, who did not participate in the study.

Meanwhile, the team is conducting a study in Leizhou Peninsula in south China's Guangdong Province, where the mosquito population is large but there is no dengue, to discover more bacteria that could inhibit the spread of mosquito-borne viruses.

Affordable care

World Bank plan: Health coverage to 1.5bn by '30

WASHINGTON, April 20, (KUNA): The World Bank Group Thursday announced an ambitious plan to support countries in delivering quality, affordable health services to 1.5 billion people worldwide by 2030.

This is part of a larger global effort to provide a basic standard of care through every stage of a person's life: infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, the bank said in a statement.

For decades, the World Bank Group has helped provide health services for women and children in more than 100 countries.

A focused effort to become faster, work better with partners, and bring in the private sector has enabled the 80-year-old institution to pursue greater scale and impact.

The strategy to reach 1.5 billion people is focused on three core elements: Expanding focus from maternal and child health to include coverage throughout a person's lifetime, including non-communicable diseases, it noted.

Expanding operations to hard-to-reach areas, including remote villages, cities, and countries.

Working with governments to cut unnecessary fees and other financial barriers to health care. To be counted toward this goal, a person must be seen and treated by a health-care worker via an in-person visit or telehealth.

Standard

"Providing a basic standard of care for people throughout their lives is critical for development," said Ajay Banga, World Bank Group President.

"This ambition won't be realized with a solo effort. It will require partners, a coalition of public and private sector, working together to expand access to health care services."

Today, around two billion people face severe financial hardship when paying for health services. Intertwined challenges, such as climate change, pandemics, conflicts, societal aging, and a projected shortfall of 10 million health-care workers by 2030, exacerbate the cycle of poverty and inequality.

The World Bank Group will combine financing, knowledge, and partnerships to address this challenge.

All elements of the Bank's financing capabilities are positioned to be called upon depending on a country's unique need and stage of development to reach 1.5 billion people.

For countries most in need, the International Development Association (IDA) financing will make it possible to bring health-care workers into communities where people may otherwise have no access to services.

In middle-income countries, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) will deploy financing to incentivize government investments in health and regulations that move a country forward, it stated.

"The spread of Zika and epidemic encephalitis B might be contained if more bacteria can be found," said Cheng.

This study has shown that the use of bacteria-colonized field mosquitoes could offer a feasible biocontrol strategy for reducing virus transmission and prevalence in nature, said the researchers.

Eligible for Superfund cleanup

EPA labels 2 forever chemicals as hazardous

WASHINGTON, April 20, (AP): The Environmental Protection Agency on Friday designated two forever chemicals that have been used in cookware, carpets and firefighting foams as hazardous substances, an action intended to ensure quicker cleanup of the toxic compounds and require industries and others responsible for contamination to pay for its removal.

Designation as a hazardous substance under the Superfund law doesn't ban the chemicals, known as PFOA and PFOS. But it requires that releases of the chemicals into soil or water be reported to federal, state or tribal officials if they meet or exceed certain levels. The EPA then may require cleanups to protect public health and recover costs that can reach tens of millions of dollars.

PFOA and PFOS have been voluntarily phased out by US manufacturers but are still in limited use and remain in the environment because they do not degrade over time. The compounds are part of a larger cluster of forever chemicals known as PFAS that have been used since the 1940s in industry and consumer products including nonstick frying pans, water-repellent sports gear, stain-resistant rugs and cosmetics.

The term PFAS is short for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances. The chemicals can accumulate and persist in the human body for long periods. Evidence from animal and human studies indicates that exposure to PFOA or PFOS may lead to cancer or other health problems, including liver and heart damage and developmental problems in infants and children.

The final rule issued Friday follows strict limits set by the EPA on certain PFAS in drinking water that will require utilities to reduce them to the lowest level they can be reliably measured. Officials say the drinking water rule, announced April 10, will reduce exposure for 100 million people and help prevent thousands of illnesses, including cancers.

Last year, three chemical companies announced they had reached a \$1.18 billion deal to resolve complaints of polluting many U.S. drinking water systems with PFAS. DuPont de Nemours Inc., The Chemours Co. and Corvea Inc. said they would establish a fund to compensate water providers for contamination.

And earlier this month, chemical manufacturer 3M Co. announced it will begin payments to many U.S. public drinking water systems as part of a multibillion-dollar settlement over contamination with forever chemicals. President Joe Biden's administration "understands the threat that forever chemicals pose to the health of families across the country," EPA Administrator Michael Regan said. "Designating these chemicals under our Superfund authority will allow EPA to address more contaminated sites, take earlier action and expedite cleanups - all while ensuring polluters pay for the costs to clean up pollution threatening the health of communities."



A Long March-8 rocket, carrying the relay satellite Queqiao-2 for Earth-Moon communications, blasts off at the Wenchang Space Launch Center in south China's Hainan Province, March 20, 2024. (Xinhua)

Queqiao-2 enters orbit to facilitate lunar mission

'Bridge' in place, China ready to sample on moon's far side

BEIJING, April 20, (Xinhua): As China is determined to drive economic growth via sci-tech innovations, it also casts its wisdom and courage in exploring Earth's closest neighbor -- the moon. This year, it plans to retrieve lunar samples from the far side of the moon for the first time in human history.

To carry out this unprecedented mission, it first launched Queqiao-2, a new relay satellite, on March 20 to provide Earth-Moon communications services. The satellite has recently entered its target elliptical orbit around the moon and completed in-orbit communication tests, according to the China National Space Administration (CNSA).

Queqiao, meaning magpie bridge, derives its name from a Chinese folktale, in which magpies formed a bridge across the Milky Way with their wings to help a separated couple reunite. In reality, Queqiao-2 is expected to serve as a vital communication link between Earth-based controllers and the Chang'e-6 probe, which will be launched in the first half of this year to collect samples from the mysterious far side of the moon.

As the moon's revolution cycle is the same as its rotation cycle, the same side always faces Earth. The other face, most of which cannot be seen from Earth, is called the far side or "dark side" of the moon. This term doesn't refer to darkness but rather to the mystery shrouding the moon's largely unexplored terrain.

In order to unravel the mystery, China launched the Chang'e-4 probe, which realized the first-ever soft landing and roving on the far side of the moon at the beginning of 2019. Before that, all relevant knowledge came from speculation based on remote-sensing images.

Communications

China launched its first Queqiao satellite in 2018 to support communications and data transmission between Chang'e-4 and Earth. But the first relay satellite has exceeded its designed lifespan. Now, the more powerful Queqiao-2 satellite will take over its communications relay services.

As a backup of the Chang'e-5 probe, Chang'e-6 is set to collect approximately 2 kilograms of lunar samples by shoveling and drilling. The probe will also conduct scientific investigations within the designated landing zone situated in the South Pole-Aitken Basin.

The mission will demand a series of breakthroughs in key technologies, such as automatic sample collection, take-off and ascent from the far side of the moon.

Scientists believe that samples from the far side of the moon have greater research value. Unlike the relatively low-lying and flat terrains found on the near side, the far side has higher elevations and is more densely covered with craters. It suggests that the far side has been subjected to a longer history of impacts, indicating an older geological age for in-depth exploration.

Li Ting and her research team from the Beijing Re-

search Institute of Uranium Geology, a subsidiary of the China National Nuclear Corporation, discovered from the Chang'e-5 samples a new mineral, Changsite-(Y). She is much looking forward to samples from the moon's "fresh and unfamiliar" far side.

"If Chang'e-6 can get some older lunar samples exposed after impacts or residues of meteorites and asteroids, it may bring us more deep space information," said Li.

Humans have been curious and imaginative about the moon since ancient times. Li Bai, a renowned poet from the Tang Dynasty (618-907), once wrote a poem to ask when the moon appeared in the blue sky. In fact, the origin of the moon has not only inspired romantic sentiments among literati and scholars throughout history, but also remained a focus of research in the field of lunar science.

Exploration

In the 16th century, people started using telescopes to observe the moon. In January 1959, the Soviet Union launched the Luna 1 probe, the world's first lunar exploration satellite. In October 2007, China achieved a milestone with the successful launch of the Chang'e-1 satellite, marking the country's inaugural lunar exploration mission.

From the United States' Apollo 11 mission in 1969 to China's Chang'e-5 mission in 2020, humans have accomplished a total of 10 lunar sampling missions. The initial nine samplings all took place during the 1960s and 1970s. Following a 44-year hiatus, Chang'e-5 retrieved 1.731 kilograms of lunar samples, opening a new chapter in cutting-edge lunar research.

The lunar rocks and soil encapsulate the key to decoding the mysteries of billions of years of transformations on the moon. Nearly all our understanding of the moon's inception and development stems from the study of lunar samples, said Yang Wei, researcher with the Institute of Geology and Geophysics, Chinese Academy of Sciences.

A widely accepted theory in the scientific community believes that approximately 4.5 billion years ago, a Mars-sized celestial body known as Theia collided with nascent Earth. The collision caused debris to be ejected into space, which eventually coalesced around Earth to form the moon. This hypothesis owes much to the analysis of lunar samples collected during the United States and Soviet Union lunar missions, Yang said.

Different from previous nine missions which focus on low-latitude areas, Chang'e-5 targeted mid-latitude regions of the moon. With advanced microanalysis technologies, scientists have made groundbreaking discoveries from the study of lunar soil retrieved by Chang'e-5.

According to the CNSA, one of the most notable research results dated the youngest rock on the moon at around 2 billion years in age, extending the "life" of lunar volcanism 800-900 million years longer than previously known.

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A new global chess record

A Nigerian chess champion plays the royal game for 60 hours

Sotutu powers Blues to win over Brumbies in Super Rugby Pacific



Connor Garden-Bachop (center), of the Highlanders is tackled by Jordan Petaia (left), and Jock Campbell of the Queensland Reds during their Super Rugby Pacific game at Suncorp Stadium in Brisbane, Australia. (AP)

Blues scrumhalf Funaki sin-binned

AUCKLAND, New Zealand, April 20, (AP): Hoskins Sotutu scored two tries to help the Auckland-based Blues rout the ACT Brumbies 46-7 on Saturday, highlighting a gulf between top New Zealand and Australian teams in Super Rugby Pacific.

The Blues and Brumbies came into the match jointly in second place behind the unbeaten Hurricanes. But after an indecisive first 10 minutes, the Blues simply overwhelmed their opponents in wet and slippery conditions and posted their largest-ever win over the Canberra-based Brumbies.

In the final match of the ninth round on Saturday, the Perth, Australia-based Western Force beat the Christchurch, New Zealand-based Crusaders 37-15 - the first win by the Force over the Crusaders in 11 years.

After a day of torrential rain in Auckland, the match seemed likely to become a kicking contest. Instead, the Blues kept the ball in hand and the Brumbies, who are the best of Australia's teams, couldn't compete against the Blues' big ball runners, among them Sotutu and Caleb Clarke.

By halftime, the Blues had scored three tries including Sotutu's double and the Brumbies had been forced to make four times as many tackles as their opponents. Sotutu is the top try-scorer after nine rounds of the tournament with eight tries.

The second half didn't get any easier. The Blues scored within five minutes of the restart, then twice more

FIFA's Infantino seeks to curb player agent fees

ZURICH, April 20, (AP): FIFA has called on lawmakers to help control payments to player agents in the multi-billion dollar soccer transfer market, and targeted the world's richest league in England.

English clubs paid 500 million euros (\$530 million) in fees to agents in the year to February, FIFA president Gianni Infantino said on Friday, while paying just 6% of that amount - 30 million euros (\$32 million) - to foreign clubs "that trained and developed the players signed."

"Most of this money is leaving football," Infantino said of the agent fees in a statement on his Instagram account.

FIFA has faced multiple legal cases in Europe brought by agents trying to block the soccer body's plan for tighter regulations in the transfer market. FIFA wants to cap agent commissions

inside the third quarter as the Brumbies frittered away their poor share of possession through poor handling.

"I think from the beginning of the season we've been building a lot, and coming out of the bye week we had to pick up where we left off," Sotutu said. "We know that we can play the carry, clean game really well and we knew with the weather it was going to be a strong point."

The Brumbies should have scored in the sixth minute when winger Ollie Sapsford was given space in a one-on-one with his Blues marker but was tackled.

The Blues scrumhalf Taufua Funaki was sin-binned in the course of the movement but, in a turning point in the

at 10% of transfer fees when they acted for the selling club, and from 3% to 10% of salaries of players they represent.

Rules intended to take effect last October stalled after agents won a key legal ruling in England - by far the most lucrative market where agencies have earned tens of millions of dollars from transfers of elite players to Premier League clubs.

The tribunal in London ruled that if the English Football Association implemented the FIFA rules it would be an abuse of dominant position in breach of competition law.

FIFA knows the value of transfer and agent fees from deals between clubs in different countries which must be processed through its financial clearing house in Paris. The FIFA system also directs money from those deals toward clubs which train and

nurture players earlier in their career and are entitled to a share.

"The compensation and solidarity payments are imposed by FIFA regulations and are vital for thousands of less privileged clubs who struggle to generate sufficient revenue," Infantino said, citing the need for "transparency, accountability and better redistribution" in the transfer market.

"Because of that we were sued by some agents but FIFA will continue to defend its position in court."

"I call on governments and lawmakers to join us and play an active role in ensuring the funds generated in transfers are kept within football and are shared with clubs from all around the world."

The FIFA leader added the less wealthy clubs "are absolutely key for current and future generations of footballers."

The Blues led 24-0 at halftime and kept up the pressure in the second half, helped by a yellow card in the 50th minute to veteran Brumbies prop James Slipper.

Backrower Dalton Papali'i and hooker Ricky Riccitelli scored from line-out drives after penalties as the Blues lead expanded to 41-0. The Brumbies finally got on the board with Luke Reimer's 64th minute try.

Replacement hooker Kurt Eklund scored the last of the Blues' tries just before fulltime.

On Friday, the Hurricanes stretched their winning start to the season to eight games with a 38-15 win over the Fijian Drua and the Queensland Reds beat the Dunedin-based Highlanders 31-0.

RUGBY

match, Sotutu scored his first try while the Blues were down a man.

Clarke ran off his left wing to score as first receiver from a five meter scrum in the 32nd minute, then Sotutu completed his double just before halftime and after a period of chaos for the Brumbies.

Sapsford knocked on a kick from Cole Forbes in front of his own goal-line. The Brumbies defended the scrum but after winning a goalline dropout, flyhalf Noah Lolesio put the ball out on the full, giving the Blues another scrum from which Sotutu scored.

NEW YORK, April 20, (AP): A Nigerian chess champion and child education advocate played chess non-stop for 60 hours in New York City's Times Square to break the Guinness World Record for the longest chess marathon.

Tunde Onakoya, 29, hopes to raise \$1 million for children's education across Africa through the record attempt that began on Wednesday.

He had set out to play the royal game for 58 hours but continued until he reached 60 hours at about 12:40 a.m. Saturday, surpassing the current chess marathon record of 56 hours, 9

minutes and 37 seconds, achieved in 2018 by Norwegians Hallvard Haug Flatø and Sjur Ferkingstad.

The Guinness World Record organization has yet to publicly comment about Onakoya's attempt. It sometimes takes weeks for the organization to confirm any new record. Onakoya played against Shawn Martinez, an American chess champion, in line with Guinness World Record guidelines that any attempt to break the record must be made by two players who would play continuously for the entire duration.

Support had been growing online and at the scene, where a blend of African music kept onlookers and supporters entertained amid cheers and applause. Among the dozens who cheered Onakoya on at the scene was Nigerian music star Davido.

The record attempt is "for the dreams of millions of children across Africa without access to education," said Onakoya, who founded Chess in Slums Africa in 2018. The organization wants to support the education of at least 1 million children in slums across the continent.

"My energy is at 100% right now because my people are here supporting me with music," Onakoya said Thursday evening after the players crossed the 24-hour mark.

On Onakoya's menu: Lots of water and jollof rice, one of West Africa's best-known dishes.

For every hour of game played, Onakoya and his opponent got only five minutes' break. The breaks were sometimes grouped together, and Onakoya used them to catch up with Nigerians and New Yorkers cheering him on. He even joined in with their dancing sometimes.

A total of \$22,000 was raised within the first 20 hours of the attempt, said Taiwo Adeyemi, Onakoya's manager.

"The support has been overwhelming from Nigerians in the U.S., global leaders, celebrities and hundreds of passersby," he said. Onakoya's attempt was closely followed in Nigeria, where he regularly organizes chess competitions for young people living on the streets. More than 10 million school-age children are not in school in the West African country - one of the world's highest rates.

Among those who have publicly supported him are celebrities and public office holders, including Nigeria's former Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, who wrote to Onakoya on the social media platform X, "Remember your own powerful words: 'It is possible to do great things from a small place.'"

CHESS

minutes and 37 seconds, achieved in 2018 by Norwegians Hallvard Haug Flatø and Sjur Ferkingstad.

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Rahul, De Kock pace team chase

Super Giants beat Super Kings in IPL

LUCKNOW, India, April 20, (AP): Lokesh Rahul and Quinton de Kock brilliantly paced Lucknow Super Giants' chase to beat Chennai Super Kings with an over to spare in the Indian Premier League.

Rahul's and De Kock's opening partnership of 134 runs set up Lucknow to reach 180-2 in reply to Chennai's 176-6 and win by eight wickets.

Both teams have four wins from seven games, but Chennai was third and Lucknow fifth on net run rate.

Skipper Rahul scored 82 off 53 balls with nine fours and three sixes. He was out with only 16 runs needed. De Kock scored 54 off 43 balls and fell in the 15th over.

They made full use of the power play, plundering 54 runs in the first six overs. Their partnership reached 100 off only 65 balls.

De Kock reached 50 off 41 balls, hitting five fours and a six, before he was caught behind off Mustafizur Rahman.

It was a poor bowling display from Chennai, however. The spinners weren't able to exploit a slow-paced track, partly owing to the dewy conditions.

Rahul stroked his way to a 31-ball half-century. Rahul fell before the finish line but the promoted Nicholas Pooran finished off Lucknow's first

win in three games. He was 23 not out off 12 balls.

Put into bat, Chennai lost opener Rachin Ravindra for a golden duck.

Ajinkya Rahane ran 36 off 24 balls, while skipper Rituraj Gaikwad scored 17.

The Lucknow pacers were on top at the beginning. Mohsin Khan dismissed Ravindra and Yash Thakur got rid of captain Rituraj Gaikwad. Ajinkya Rahane (36) fell to spin.

Ravindra Jadeja was promoted to No. 3 to counter Lucknow's spin bowling and the move worked as he

CRICKET

batted to his first half-century this season off 34 balls.

Jadeja didn't get support until Moeen Ali arrived at 90-5. The left-handed pairing rescued Chennai with a combined 51 off 33 balls for the sixth wicket. Ali was out caught with 13 deliveries left.

Veteran Mahendra Singh Dhoni walked in to a loud cheer and smacked 28 not out off nine deliveries, including three fours and two sixes.

Jadeja finished 57 not out off 40 balls. Krunal Pandya took 2-16 and Marcus Stoinis 1-7.



Lucknow Super Giants' Quinton de Kock plays a shot during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Chennai Super Kings and Lucknow Super Giants in Lucknow, India. (AP)

WADA and World Aquatics were notified of the positive samples

23 Chinese swimmers were allowed to compete at Tokyo Olympics despite positive doping tests

SYDNEY, April 20, (AP): An Australian newspaper says 23 Chinese swimmers were cleared to compete at the Tokyo Olympics despite testing positive to doping because world governing bodies agreed with Chinese authorities and ruled that the tests had been contaminated.

The Daily Telegraph in Sydney said Saturday that the swimmers tested positive for trimetazidine, a heart medication, at a training camp held months

The newspaper said that the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and World Aquatics - then called FINA - were both notified of the positive sam-

ples but that both groups agreed the results of the tests were caused by contamination and did not sanction any of the athletes who tested positive.

"World Aquatics is confident that these AAFs were handled diligently and professionally, and in accordance with all applicable anti-doping regulations, including the World Anti-Doping Code," the newspaper quoted World Aquatics as saying.

It also quoted WADA's senior director of science and medicine, Professor Olivier Rabin, as saying that WADA's science department reviewed the case in the months leading up to the Tokyo Games.

"We even sought pharmacokinetic and metabolism information from the manufacturer of (trimetazidine) in assessing the plausibility of the contamination scenario that was presented to WADA," Rabin said.

"Ultimately, we concluded that there was no concrete basis to challenge the asserted contamination. Indeed, the contamination scenario was further supported by the combination of the consistently low concentrations of (trimetazidine) as well as no doping pattern with several athletes presenting multiple samples collected over the course of several days which fluctuated between negative and positive (and vice versa)."



In this file photo, a Chinese flag is unfurled on the podium of a swimming event final at the 2020 Summer Olympics, on July 29, 2021, in Tokyo, Japan. (AP)

OLYMPICS

before the start of the 2020 Tokyo Games, which were delayed until 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chinese anti-doping authorities found the results of the tests were Adverse Analytical Findings (AAF) but cleared the swimmers without any penalties after finding that the samples were flagged as positive as a result of contamination.

The 30-member Chinese swim won six medals in Tokyo, including three golds.



Celtic's Luis Palma (center), battles with Aberdeen's Jack Milne (left), and Shayden Morris during the Scottish Cup semifinal match between Celtic and Aberdeen at Hampden Park, Glasgow, Scotland. Celtic won 6-5 on penalties after a 3-3 draw. (AP)

Sports

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Kuwait Youth Team celebrates after beating Oman.

KUNA photo

Kuwait continue winning run in the First GCC Youth Games

DUBAI, April 20 (KUNA): Kuwaiti youth team secured a 1-0 victory against Oman in its second match of

wood netted the sole goal in the 65th minute mark, sealing the win for Kuwait. Oman now holds the second position with three points, closely followed by the UAE hosts, who also have three points but fewer goals scored. The Kuwaiti team had previously triumphed over Bahrain with a 1-0.

SOCCER

the First Youth GCC Games to maintain its unbeaten streak. Fawaz Al-Da-

Heat headed to Boston after ousting Bulls in play-in finale

Ingram, Valanciunas lift Pelicans past Kings and into playoffs

Five medals won

Kuwait dominate fourth day of GCC Youth Games

DUBAI, April 20, (KUNA): On the fourth day of the First Youth GCC Games held in the UAE, the Kuwaiti national team added five more medals to their tally. Yasmine Walid clinched gold with a remarkable 1.60-meter high jump performance. Abdullah Al-Yalous secured gold in the 110-meter hurdles event, while Fahid Hamada dominated the 3000-meter race to claim gold for Kuwait.

The Kuwaiti delegation, comprising 210 talented athletes competing in 19 different sports, has been actively participating since the tournament commenced on April 16.

The event is scheduled to run until May 2, featuring a total of 3,500 male and female athletes representing all GCC countries.

YOUTH GAMES



Kuwait's Abdul Rahman Al-Taweel tries to dribble pass an Afghan player.

Kuwait and Afghanistan share points

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff BANGKOK, April 20: Kuwaiti futsal team drew 3-3 with Afghanistan, a crucial match for qualification to the World Cup in Uzbekistan in the second round of the Asian Cup finals' Group D competitions held in Bangkok.

Ranked 41st globally, Kuwait earned 4 points with this draw, while Afghanistan secured its first point of the tournament.

Afghanistan took the lead from Farzad Mahmoudi, but Kuwait swiftly responded with two goals from Nasser Al-Alaban and Omar Al-Mansour, ending the first half with a 2-1 lead. In the second half, Afghanistan,

boasting professional players from the Iranian league, equalized through Reza Hosseinpour. Kuwait briefly regained the lead with a goal from Saleh Al-Fadil, but an error by Badr Al-Mansour resulted in a direct free kick, allowing Afghanistan's Bor to score the equalizer.

FUTSAL

Coach David Marin deployed goalkeeper Mohamed Al-Hazeem in the "Power Play" tactic, but despite efforts, the match ended in a 3-3 draw.

Kuwait faces Iran in their final group stage match, aiming to secure a spot in the quarter-finals.

MIAMI, April 20, (AP): Tyler Herro scored 24 points and was an assist shy of a triple-double, rookie Jaime Jaquez Jr. added 21 points and the Miami Heat grabbed the last spot in the Eastern Conference playoffs, running away from the Chicago Bulls 112-91 in a play-in tournament elimination game.

Kevin Love scored 16 and Bam Adebayo added 13 for Miami, which gets this as a reward: a rematch of the last two East finals against the Boston Celtics. It's Round 1 this time, the Heat set to be huge underdogs against the runaway favorite to win the NBA title.

BASKETBALL

The Heat won't have Jimmy Butler against Boston because of his injured right knee and played again without point guard Terry Rozier, still out with a neck injury.

No matter. They took control over the Bulls with a 19-0 run in the first quarter, and a 14-0 run midway through the second half ended all doubt. Herro finished with 10 rebounds and nine assists, and the Heat eliminated the Bulls in the last East play-in game for the second straight year.

DeMar DeRozan scored 22 points for the Bulls, who got 16 points, 14 rebounds and five assists from Nikola Vucevic. Coby White scored 13 for Chicago, which was trying to become the fifth team in the last 35 years to make the playoffs after not spending a single day all season over the .500 mark.

The 19-0 run - which matched Miami's longest run of consecutive points all season, done two other times - put the Heat on top, turning an 11-6 deficit into an early 25-11 lead. Jaquez and Nikola Jovic combined for 11 points in the burst, which fueled Miami taking a 17-point lead after one quarter and pushing it to 20 in the second quarter.

It was a rare stretch of decent offense on a gritty, gutty, win-or-go-home night.

The Heat managed only 13 points in the second and still went into the half with a 47-37 lead, because the Bulls were even colder from the field. Chicago started 4 for 5, then went 8 for 39 over the rest of the half. The Heat started 8 for 9, then finished the half by going 9 for 35.

This is how bad it was: Chicago missed 14 of 15 shots in one stretch, while Miami had spans of 0 for 8 and 0 for 6. But the Heat had the two big runs - and now are back as the No. 8



One of the Kuwaiti medalists celebrates with the national flag.

KUNA photo

seed, the one they rode all the way to the NBA Finals last season.

It'll be far more difficult this time against a Boston team that won an NBA-best 64 games this season and is likely still smarting from losing a Game 7 of last year's East finals to the Heat at home.

Brandon Ingram scored 24 points, Jonas Valanciunas added 19 points and 12 rebounds, and the New Orleans Pelicans booked a spot in the NBA playoffs with a 105-98 victory over the Sacramento Kings in a play-in tournament elimination game.

The Pelicans won without leading scorer Zion Williamson, who strained his left hamstring right as he reached the 40-point mark in a play-in loss to the Los Angeles Lakers on Tuesday night.

Undaunted, New Orleans used a balanced approach to improve to 8-5 this season without Williamson in the lineup. Six players scored 10 or more points, including reserves Larry Nance Jr. (13), Naji Marshall (11) and Jose Alvarado (10).

Trey Murphy III, starting because of Williamson's absence, added 16 points for New Orleans.

De'Aaron Fox scored 35 points for

Sacramento, and Domantas Sabonis had 23 points and 14 rebounds.

The game was a test of the Pelicans' ability to handle the pressure of a do-

or-die game after squandering two previous chances to lock up a playoff berth at home.

New Orleans lost to the Lakers in their regular-season finale on Sunday, missing a chance to lock up the sixth seed, before losing again to the Lakers on Tuesday. They entered their matchup with the Kings facing the possibility of becoming the first 49-win team in more than 50 years (Phoenix in 1972) to miss the NBA playoffs.

Instead, New Orleans improved to 6-0 against Sacramento this season, becoming the first team to go 6-0 in a season (without a playoff series) against an opponent since Denver against Minnesota in 1994-95.

The Pelicans also prolonged a streak of No. 7 seeds never missing the playoffs since the play-in tournament was adopted by the NBA in 2020. Because of their loss to the Lakers on Tuesday, the Pelicans will open the playoffs as an eighth seed on Sunday at top-seeded Oklahoma City.

The Pelicans were sloppy early, committing six first-quarter turnovers that led to 11 Kings points. Sacramento led 24-17 after a turnover by Herb Jones led to a layup by Fox, who scored 18 points in the first half.



Chicago Bulls guard Dalen Terry (rear), attempts to steal the ball from Miami Heat guard Tyler Herro during the first half of an NBA basketball play-in tournament game in Miami. (AP)



New Orleans Pelicans guard Trey Murphy III (25) misses his slam dunk in the first half of an NBA basketball play-in tournament game against the Sacramento Kings in New Orleans. (AP)