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H.H. AMIR HEADS TO SAUDI FOR WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

'Stability' in focus

KUWAIT CITY, April 27, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is scheduled to depart, along with an official delegation, the homeland on Sunday heading to Saudi Arabia.

His Highness the Amir will head the State of Kuwait's delegation partaking in the World Economic Forum, themed "Global cooperation, growth and energy for development."

The forum is scheduled on April 28-29. The State of Kuwait Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Sheikh Sabah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said the participation of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in the World Economic Forum would mirror his keenness on partaking in summits, conventions and international forums hosted by the Kingdom.

In a statement to KUNA on the occasion of His Highness the Amir's visit to the kingdom due to begin on Sunday, the ambassador affirmed that His Highness the Amir's participation in the forum would affirm Kuwait's role and its keenness on supporting all initiatives designed



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

to enhance international cooperation to attain economic prosperity for the whole world.

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Kuwait's revised overseas hiring excludes domestics

New recruitment process June 1, under PAM review for a year

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: The Director of Public Relations and Media Department at the Public Authority for Manpower Aseel Al-Mazyed has said the recent decision to amend the recruitment process for workers hired from overseas is for private sector employees and does not include domestic workers, reports Al-Anba daily.

Al-Mazyed, who is also the spokeswoman for PAM, added the decision allows transfer of these private sector employees to another employer after three years or upon payment of 300 dinars transfer fee, contingent upon the original sponsor's approval.

Al-Mazyed clarified the new mechanism replaces the previous system of recruitment which was based on activity categories. This decision will take effect from June 1 and will be in force for one year, subject to evaluation by the PAM Board of Directors.

She further mentioned that business owners can submit the applications for work permits to the authority 'online'. Al-Mazyed also noted the Authority's endeavor to integrate all its services into the Sahel application.

She went on to say although there is no suspension of work permit issuance, there is ongoing consideration to regulate specific professions solely within the Kuwaiti labor market.

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Opinion

O government, we need a decision from above

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

A QUESTION that keeps coming up is - Why is it difficult to achieve development in Kuwait? Is money the obstacle? Or is the problem with the management and decision-making?

Money is available, but we have poor management. This is because the established rule is that as long as there is oil, we do not need to work or establish projects. The least that can be said in this regard is that this mentality is corrupt.

If the situation continues as it is, the bubble of luxury in which we live will burst. Yet, if we are committed to the belief that

the renaissance our country witnessed at the beginning of the emergence of oil must continue, we will enjoy real prosperity that is based on production and work. This entails fostering individual initiatives and optimizing the national output, which today resembles a poor country.

We therefore beg to ask - Why does the government not work on withdrawing about USD 200 billion or USD 300 billion from the future generations reserve and foreign investments, and invest that amount in real development projects inside the country? These projects can be related to developing the Kuwaiti islands, or implementing entertainment and tourism projects, or launching the long-awaited planned projects in the northern economic region, and working to wrap up the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project, which, if completed, will serve as a link between East Asia and Europe.

Also, why doesn't the government work on developing the infrastructure to be on par with other modern countries and benefit from it in full investment?

With this money, the economic movement in the country will be boosted, so that it will emerge from the vicious circle in which it has been stuck for nearly five decades. Throughout that period, the two authorities were busy bickering and signing personal deals, and Kuwait was lost in that absurd conflict that continues to this day.

It is known throughout the world that each authority has its own tasks in accordance with its powers, and one does not exceed the other in this aspect.

The legislative authority legislates and monitors the work of the Council of Ministers. However, in our case, the National Assembly appears to be the ruler, while the executive authority is nothing more than an implementer of the legislators' orders.

Parliamentarians, irrespective of their convictions, ultimately work for their electoral interests first because of the corrupt conviction that has taken root that their election was based on the personal services they provide to the voters of their constituency and their tribal and sectarian affiliation.

Therefore, the first concern of the parliamentarians has turned out to be to take advantage of their power to enhance their electoral balance, and increase their personal wealth.

The situation is the same when there are ministers, including their boss, who put their personal interests before the interests of the country and its people, and fear for their chairs.

Their first concern becomes maintaining their seats, irrespective of the price they pay in terms of positions, appointments, jobs, and public money. Consequently, they acquiesce to the demands of parliamentarians, knowing that interpellations

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Medicine shortage draws ire

MP slams 'shortfall'

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: MP-elect Jenan Bushehri criticized the Ministry of Health's announcement about the availability of medicines, stressing this is far from reality as the shortage of medicines has become the concern of patients.

Bushehri said the 2022 and 2023 parliaments raised this issue, but the

parliamentary Health Affairs Committee did not complete its report on the issue due to the health minister's lack of cooperation in providing the required documents. She pointed out the minister has been proven to be incapable of addressing the issue, claiming the minister is part of the problem.

She vowed to closely follow up the issue to guarantee the availability of medicines.



Photo shows fishmongers and buyers bustling at Sharq fish market as the prices of local fish surge amidst the fishing season and its associated restrictions. - See Page 2

US decries attack on Iraqi gas field

WASHINGTON, April 27. (Agencies): The United States has strongly condemned an attack on a gas field in the northern Iraqi province of Sulaimani where four people were killed.

Matthew Miller, the US State Department spokesperson, said in a statement late on Friday, "The United States strongly condemns today's attack on energy infrastructure in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.

"We offer condolences to the families of those who were killed, and we wish for the quick recovery of those who were injured. Attacks like this are an affront to Iraq's sovereignty. We encourage the authorities to investigate and bring to justice those who are responsible."

He has also affirmed that the United States will continue to work with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government in support of Iraqi security, stability, and sovereignty.

Four people were killed on Friday in a drone attack on a gas field in Iraq's Kurdistan region, prompting condemnation from both regional and federal authorities.

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'Focus on emissions'

OPEC warns against hasty 'end of oil' talk

VIENNA, April 27, (KUNA): The pace at which global energy demand is growing means that alternatives cannot replace oil at the necessary scale, OPEC Secretary General Haitham Al Ghais said, adding that rather than calling for an end to oil, the focus should be on reducing emissions.

A recent report on oil demand by "The Economist" exemplifies a worrying trend of narratives that increasingly use terminology like - the end of oil - while simultaneously underplaying or omitting key details regarding current and future oil demand, Al Ghais wrote in an article distributed Friday by the OPEC Secretariat.

"Such assertions, despite all evidence to the contrary, are all the more dangerous given their potential to foster energy policies that stoke energy chaos. What if investments in supply fall as a result, but demand for oil keeps increasing, as we are seeing today", he wondered.

Although the main goal of the Paris Agreement on climate change is to reduce emissions - not to choose energy sources - it feels like this has been forgotten, replaced by rigid narratives to reduce demand for hydrocarbons without thinking through the effects on energy security, socio-economic

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NewsWatch

ABU DHABI: Chief of Staff of the Kuwait Armed Forces Lt. Gen. Bandar Al-Muzain and his UAE's counterpart Issa Al-Mazrouei discussed Thursday means of developing and enhancing relations between the two sisterly countries, mainly military and defense domains.

Al-Muzain, accompanied by some senior officers, arrived in Abu Dhabi on an official visit Thursday, in response to an invitation from Al-Mazrouei, Kuwait's General Staff said in a statement.

The two sides held a meeting, in the presence of a number of senior officers and officials of the two countries, it added. (KUNA)

ANKARA: A team from Kuwait Red Crescent Society has begun distributing humanitarian aid to the needy in Armenia, the team chief Khaled Al-Mutairi said on Saturday.

In a telephone contact with KUNA, Al-Mutairi said the KRCS team handed over food, blankets, heaters and hygiene materials in various Armenian regions over five days.

Up to 1,500 individuals are scheduled to take a share of the supplies, he said, reaffirming the KRCS's policy of reaching those in need throughout the globe. (KUNA)

CAIRO: Arab Parliament President Adel Asoumi has affirmed that Arab states' embrace of artificial intelligence is inevitable and necessary to stay abreast of the global development in this sector.

Addressing the sixth Arab Parliament conference, Al-Asoumi called for the employment of the AI benefits in various life realms and daily life, however, he stressed that AI governance is one of the significant priorities that require pan-Arab strategies to apply the latest application in a manner that conforms with the Arab values and morals.

Aware of the necessity to draw up legislations to regulate the latest technological innovation, the Arab Parliament enacted a joint Arab guidance law for artificial intelligence employment, two months ago, he said. (KUNA)

BAGHDAD: Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Al-Soudani said on Saturday that pan-Arab integration could pave the way to create jobs and called for innovating new production methods and elevating labor skills.

Al-Soudani, speaking during inauguration of the 50th session of the Arab Labor Conference, said crises currently witnessed throughout the world negatively impact on labor and production. He called for overhauling performance of the labor institutions and the markets as well as creating "a qualitative relationship" between students' graduation and the market needs.

Moreover, the Iraqi Prime Minister urged for luring women into the work sector and tackling child labor. (KUNA)

JERUSALEM: Ballistic missiles fired by Yemen's Houthi rebels caused "minor damage" to a Panama-flagged oil tanker traveling through the Red Sea on Friday, authorities said.

The attack follows an uptick in assaults launched by the Houthis in recent days after a relative lull in their monthslong campaign over Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The rebels fired three missiles in the attack, one of which damaged the Panama-flagged, Seychelles-registered Andromeda Star, the U.S. military's Central Command said. (KUNA)

Call for Palestinian Statehood at UN

Kuwait MPs firm on Palestine support

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: Kuwait remains firm in its stand to support the Palestinian cause, says MP-elect Abdullah Al-Anbaie.

Al-Anbaie made the statement at the Fifth Conference of the Parliamentarians for Jerusalem in Istanbul, Turkey. He affirmed that he is proud to represent Kuwait's National Assembly at the three-day conference, which conveys a message to the whole world about the solidarity in supporting the Palestinian cause.

He is also honored to be a Kuwaiti citizen whose country considers Israel an enemy, indicating he believes that Kuwait is in a state of war with the Zionist entity.

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A student waves a Palestinian flag outside Sciences-Po university in Paris, Friday, April 26, 2024. Students in Paris inspired by Gaza solidarity encampments at campuses in the United States blocked access to a campus building at a prestigious French university Friday, prompting administrators to move all classes online. (AP)

Prayer Timings

Fajr 03:45 Asr 15:21
Sunrise .. 05:10 Maghrib .. 18:21
Zohr 11:46 Isha 19:44

Local

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

New center with latest equipment soon: Al-Awadhi

Cancer treatment heading for major facelift

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: The Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, has announced the forthcoming inauguration of the Kuwait Center for Cancer Control, which will introduce cutting-edge medical equipment, including a pioneering device unprecedented in the Middle East, reports Al-Jarida daily.



Al-Awadhi

This center will also offer the latest advancements in treatments, notably immunological therapies. Dr. Al-Awadhi emphasized the Ministry's commitment to mobilizing national expertise, underlining that lymphoma conditions account for a significant proportion of leukemia cases, affecting around 20% of men and 10% of women.

During the opening of the inaugural forum of the Kuwaiti Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, Dr. Al-Awadhi underscored the Ministry's focus on cancer treatment, prioritizing patient-centric care through the establishment of a dedicated cancer center equipped with state-of-the-art facilities and staffed by specialized professionals.

The forum serves as an educational platform

targeting healthcare professionals in hematology, leukemia patients, survivors, caregivers, and families, aimed at enhancing understanding of treatment options and methodologies.

The Minister highlighted the significance of collaboration with leading global experts to discuss the latest scientific developments and advancements in the field of blood diseases and leukemia treatment.

The forum features lectures and interactive discussions led by 21 experts from various countries, including the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, Canada, and Gulf nations. Key topics addressed include first-line treatments for lymphoma, molecular nuclear scanning, acute and chronic leukemia diagnosis and treatment, plasma cell disorders, and advancements in cell therapies.

Dr. Al-Awadhi reiterated the Ministry's commitment to supporting such scientific gatherings, recognizing their pivotal role in enhancing the competence of healthcare professionals and advancing healthcare services.

Efforts are directed towards providing the latest medications, medical devices, and training to medical teams to ensure the delivery of high-quality medical services.

Dr. Abdul Aziz Hamada, Head of the Hematology Department at the Kuwait Cancer Control Center and President of the Kuwait Leukemia and

Lymphoma Society, emphasized the forum's objective of convening a scientific community to exchange knowledge and insights on blood diseases. The forum includes workshops also for nursing staff and lab technicians.

Teacher jobs for Kuwaitis: The memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed by the Ministry of Education and the teacher preparation colleges -- College of Education at Kuwait University and College of Basic Education at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) -- mandates the ministry to decide on the employment of citizens registered in the central employment system of the Civil Service Commission (CSC), reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources clarified this is in educational specializations that are still waiting for nominations before the issuance of appointment decisions for the current academic year on May 2.

Asked about the role of the CSC, sources confirmed the continuous cooperation between the CSC and government agencies to appoint Kuwaiti graduates to jobs that are in line with their qualifications. Sources said the CSC is responsible for nominating educators registered in the central employment system.

Weather

be thundery later on.

By Day: Rather hot, relatively humid especially over coastal areas and cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-45 km/h with a chance for rain that might

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	33	26
Kuwait Airport	37	22
Abdaly	39	25
Jahra	39	25
Salmiyah	33	26
Nuwaisib	33	23
Wafra	37	20



KUNA photo

Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya welcomes his Bahraini counterpart Abdullah Al-Zayani in his office.

FM meets Bahrain counterpart

Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya welcomed his Bahraini counterpart Abdullah Al-Zayani and his accompanying delegation at Kuwait International Airport on Thursday evening.

The Bahraini minister was also welcomed by Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and several other senior officials of the Foreign Ministry. (KUNA)



KUNA photo

Kuwait Ambassador to Mexico Salah Suleiman Al-Haddad presents his credentials as non-resident ambassador to President Xiomara Castro.

Envoy takes charge in Mexico

Kuwait Ambassador to Mexico Salah Suleiman Al-Haddad submitted Thursday his credentials as Non-Resident, Ambassador Extraordinary, and Plenipotentiary of Kuwait to Honduras in a ceremony held at the Presidential Palace in Tegucigalpa.

During the ceremony, attended by the Honduran Foreign Minister Eduardo Enrique, the Kuwaiti diplomat conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to President Castro and her people, the Kuwaiti Embassy in Mexico said in a statement.

He added that His Highness the Amir

also wished President Castro everlasting well-being and further progress and prosperity to her people.

Ambassador Al-Haddad hailed the level of relations between both countries, hoping that they would be elevated to higher levels.

For her part, President Castro welcomed the Kuwaiti envoy and wished him success in his mission. She also expressed eagerness to upgrade relations with Kuwait.

Kuwait and Honduras established diplomatic relations in 1992. Kuwait does not have an embassy in the Central American country which has an embassy in Kuwait. (KUNA)

'8,000 apply for visa in '24 1st quarter; France Kuwaitis' favorite destination'

'Cascade' visa facilitates travel to Europe: Ambassador Le Flécher

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: The French Ambassador to Kuwait, Claire Le Flécher, expressed her appreciation about the fact that France continues to be one of the favorite tourist destinations for Kuwaitis.

In a press conference held to talk about the Schengen visa with the approaching summer season, Ambassador Le Flécher said, "In 2022, the Consular Section received approximately 41,000 visa applications. In 2023, the Consular Section received approximately 42,000 visa applications. During the first three months of 2024, nearly 8,000 visa applications were received.

In line with the historical friendship between our two countries, the large number of Kuwaitis who choose France to spend their holidays is evidence of the vitality of economic and cultural exchanges between us."

Ambassador Le Flécher highlighted the European Commission's decision in September 2023 to implement the "cascade" visa, which constitutes an important step towards facilitating the travel of Kuwaiti citizens to Europe.

She explained that, as of the first application, Kuwaiti citizens can obtain a five-year visa valid for all Schengen countries, provided that the passport has sufficient validity and the duration of each stay does not exceed 90 days out of every 180 days.

The applicant must apply for a visa at the embassy of the country in which he plans to spend most of his first visit, and subsequent visits can then be made in any other country in the Schengen area.

The "cascade" visa is only for Kuwaiti citizens, and citizens of other nationalities residing in Kuwait must apply for a new visa for each visit to France.

With France hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2024, coinciding with the peak of the tourist season, visa applications for France will witness a significant increase globally. Hence, the waiting period for visas is likely to increase significantly.

Procedures

In order to avoid any difficulty in obtaining a visa, the French Embassy strongly recommends that the visa processing procedures be carried out well before the travel date. The visa application can also be submitted up to six months before the travel date.

The applicant must first verify the validity of his application on the France visa website - <https://france-visas.gouv.fr> and then schedule an appointment on the website of the visa services company through <https://fr-kw.capago.eu>

Ambassador Le Flécher invited those wishing to attend the Olympic Games as spectators to purchase their tickets now on the official website of the Paris 2024 ticket office, and then apply for a tourist visa as soon as possible through the usual procedures on the France visa website.

She indicated that the embassy's consular team processes about 150 applications daily, and this number can reach 300 application files in the summer.

Ambassador Le Flécher explained that the period for a visa may take six weeks. Therefore those wishing to travel to France during the summer must submit their applications as soon as possible.

The visa file for Kuwaitis requires a valid passport, an airline ticket, and a health insurance certificate covering the duration of stay, as well as a hotel reservation.

To obtain a five-year visa, the passport must be valid for more than five years. If the validity of the passport is less than five years, the duration of the visa will be reduced to match the passport. A multiple-entry visa is then issued, ranging from six months to four years.

The duration of the visa is calculated so that it expires three months before the expiry date of the applicant's passport.

Ambassador Le Flécher said, "About 95 percent of visa applications for Kuwaiti citizens are approved every year. Most of the rejection cases are related to a problem in the application itself. Therefore, we invite applicants to check that their application file contains all the required documents and correct information."

She highlighted the mandatory presence of the applicant at the Capago office, as the applicant's photo and fingerprints must be taken in the building.

Ambassador Le Flécher said, "Since France will host the 2024 Olympic Games during the upcoming tourist season, visa applications for France will witness a sharp increase on a global scale, and the waiting time to secure visas may increase.

To avoid any difficulty in the visa application process, the applicant must take into account that about six weeks are needed to issue the visa, in addition to the waiting time before the appointment, which can reach 3 weeks, depending on the period.

In general, the applicant must begin the process at least nine weeks before the scheduled departure date. The sooner, the better, especially since the visa application can be submitted up to six months before the scheduled trip."



Photo by Mohammad Morsi

French Ambassador Claire Le Flécher.

11 items on session agenda

MC's Capital panel nods 5 items

By Enas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: The Capital Committee of the Municipal Council, during its eleventh meeting of the second session recently, headed by member Fahad Al-Abd Al-Jader, approved five items out of the 11 on its agenda.

The items approved by the committee are:-

1. The request from the Ministry of Interior to create surface parking lots in the front yard of the Rawda Police Station within Block 2.

2. The Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's request to add a commercial rate to the oil sector complex building in Shuwaik.

3. The request to add a state property to plots 12 and 14 of the cadastral plan No. M/39527 in Kuwait City, Qibla, Block 1, and

4. The request submitted by Salhia Real Estate Company regarding approval to develop their property in plot 72 of plan No. M/39544, described as the JW Marriott Hotel (formerly the Le Meridien), located in Kuwait City, Qibla, Block 13.

5. The request submitted by a citizen for the treatment of the entire investment property of plot No. 64 in Sharq Block 5, with an area of 867.75 square meters, from the cadastral plan No. M/39334, for use as commercial offices.

The committee kept on its agenda the letter of member Dr. Hassan Kamal regarding a question about the delay in the heritage village project in the capital, the

item related to developing the area of the intersection of the Liberation Tower and Safat Square and linking it to Mubarakiya, and the proposal to have an electrical TRAM surface sector inside Kuwait City. The committee referred to the executive body the proposal submitted by member Fahad Al-Abd Al-Jader regarding canceling the Municipal Council's decision to allow comprehensive and specialized sports clubs, sports federations, and the Olympic Committee to invest spaces within their sites.

It referred the letter of one of the engineering consulting houses regarding enhancing and reviving the spirit and historical heritage of Kuwait City (the Capital), highlighting the identity of Kuwait City (Old Town), and strengthening the national spirit (the capital embraces everyone) (Kuwait City is not only Souq Al-Mubarakiya).

The committee filed the complaint submitted by the Surra Residents' Committee regarding violating the Amiri decree Law No. 119/2010 and violating the Municipal Council's decision to stop sorting and zoning throughout the Surra area.

On a related level, the Committee for the People with Disabilities Affairs in the Municipal Council held its second meeting of the second session yesterday, headed by member Farah Al-Roumi.

It reserved the letter submitted by a citizen regarding the empowerment of women with disabilities, and took note of the same citizen's letter regarding holding a special session for people with disabilities.

7 submit nominations for MC by-poll

By Enas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: Yesterday marked the end of the second day of the nomination period for the upcoming Municipal Council by-elections in the sixth and ninth constituencies, scheduled from April 26 to May 5. Seven candidates have submitted their nominations so far.

These seven candidates are - Nasser Ghuwaizi Al-Awaid Al-Mutairi, Mujaheed Salf Mujahid Falah Al-Mutairi, Ishaq Ahmed Abdullah Al-Kandari, and Walid Khaled Muhammad Farhan Al-Rashidi for the Sixth Constituency, and Mashout Faleh Al-Ajmi, Marzouq Owaihan Al-Azmi, and Talal Muhammad Al-Hashan

for the Ninth Constituency.

Friday marked the opening of nominations for the Municipal Council, which concluded with three candidates submitting their nominations - Matar Mutlaq Al-Baghili Al-Rashidi for the Sixth Constituency, followed approximately two hours later by candidate Abdullah Nayef Al-Mutairi for the Sixth Constituency and then Khaled Wasmii Obaid Muhammad Al-Azmi for the Ninth Constituency.

Thus, the total number of candidates for the Municipal Council's by-elections in the first two days of the opening of nominations is ten, six of whom are for the Sixth Constituency and four for Ninth Constituency.

'Mead' ban ends June 1

Sharp increase in prices of fish

By Abdul Nasser Al-Aslami

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: The fish market in Kuwait is once again experiencing a surge in prices of local fish. This is compounded by the fishing season and its restrictions, as well as cautionary warnings urging fishermen to avoid territorial waters due to potential conflicts with fishermen from neighboring countries.

The prices of local fish in the Sharq fish market witnessed a noticeable increase, as the cost of Kuwaiti "Zubaidi" has increased to KD 20 per kilogram, and the cost of a basket of the large-grained Zubaidi is approximately KD 100. Most of the fish offered in baskets were purchased by restaurant companies.

Fish sellers and consumers unanimously agreed that the prices of their favorite fish would rise. They expressed their hope that prices would fall in the coming days, so that fish would become affordable for everyone. However, some believe that prices would rise with the onset of the real summer wave.

The market displayed all local, Iranian and Pakistani fish, but it was missing the "Kuwaiti shrimp", which is currently banned from being caught and sold. However, imported shrimp are available, costing up to KD 4 per kilogram.

The prices of local fish ranged. One kilogram of grouper costs KD 3, balol KD 6, bayfish KD 3.5, Nubee KD 3, oyster KD 6, kingfish KD 4.5, and seabream KD 5. As for mead fish, the ban on its fishing will end on June 1.

ing on committee formations.

Ma'arafi also shared updates on his ongoing tours to European countries and meetings with heads of European diplomatic missions, praising the fruitful discussions during his recent visit to Turkey.

In response, Dutch Ambassador Laurens Westhoff underscored the shared principles between Kuwait and the Netherlands, emphasizing their commitment to a rules-based international order.

He recalled instances of joint cooperation, including during the Gulf War when the Royal Dutch Navy participated in the coalition to liberate Kuwait.

Over the six decades of diplomatic relations, Kuwait and the Netherlands have collaborated across various sectors, holding ministerial meetings, engaging in political consultations, and supporting the international system for mutual growth and prosperity.

Westhoff emphasized the need for new partnerships to address contemporary challenges such as food security and climate change.

He expressed eagerness to forge collaborations with Kuwaiti research institutions like the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, and Kuwait University to tap into the untapped potential of their relationship.

Ma'arafi commended the strong Kuwaiti-Dutch relations, particularly in economic and commercial realms, highlighting the significance of energy cooperation. As Kuwait and the Netherlands mark 60 years of diplomatic ties, Maarafi emphasized the Netherlands' role as a vital economic partner, boasting over 200 Kuwaiti gas stations across Europe.

Regarding the issue of Kuwaiti exemption from the Schengen visa, Ma'arafi mentioned the upcoming European Parliament elections and the possibility of policy changes depend-

diwaniya

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Procedure to select members of govt uphill task, lacks credibility

"CHOOSING members of the government always constitutes a crisis project, because it is carried out on the basis of political appeasement in the absence of strict and scientific criteria for selection; so weak and sometimes dishonest people are preferred over competent people, and as a result the interests of the country and the people are compromised," columnist **Naji Al-Mullah** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"The Kuwaiti Constitution, in Article 98, serves as a pivotal tool for addressing crises by mandating that each ministry present its program to the National Assembly upon formation, allowing for scrutiny and feedback.

"However, this crucial provision has been largely overlooked, rendering it dormant within the constitutional framework. Article 98 demands immediate action from newly formed ministries, emphasizing clarity and urgency in their work programs. Notably, it implies that these programs should precede government formation, guiding the selection of its leadership.

"The responsibility for crafting these programs falls upon civil society organizations, political factions, and activists, who act as the incubators of policy initiatives.

"Their input forms the basis for governmental decision-making, ensuring alignment with societal needs and aspirations. Regrettably, the non-implementation of Article 98 has persisted since the inception of parliamentary governance.

"To rectify this oversight and initiate substantive change, it is proposed that esteemed figures such as former Minister of Housing Engineer **Badr Al-Hamidi**, Dr. **Adel Al-Sabeeh**, Dr. **Nasser Al-Masry**, distinguished economist Professor **Jassim Al-Saadoun**, former Minister of Commerce **Faisal Al-Medlej**, and former Speaker **Ahmad Al-Sa'adoun**, alongside promising youth leaders, convene.

"Their collective task would involve crafting a comprehensive government work program, incorporating specific, measurable, and time-bound objectives.

"This proposed program would address key areas including privatization of public sectors such as electricity, water, education, health, ports, transportation, communications, and select oil industries.

"Additionally, it would outline plans for implementing tax and health insurance systems, funding educational expenses, diversifying income sources through investment projects, and distributing a portion of investment profits to citizens annually.

"Other priorities include reforming subsidy distribution, promoting Kuwaiti employment in the private sector, resolving housing issues, and implementing effective traffic and crime reduction measures.

"Once developed, this action program would be presented to political leadership and the Prime Minister for consideration in selecting government members. By aligning political choices with rational principles and societal needs, Kuwait can navigate towards progress and achievement, free from the constraints of conflict and competing interests."

Also:

"Yes... Shabu is the most dangerous drug ever. What is Shabu? It is a drug made from chemicals found in local markets, such as neon bulb powder and battery acid, which are used in its manufacture. Its manufacture does not require a large factory, but rather a small workshop," columnist **Yaqoub Youssef Al-Omar** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"It is also called crystal, as it resembles finely ground crystals. It is the most dangerous drug of all. It is more dangerous than opium, heroin, cocaine, and other natural drugs, as well as those manufactured from them, because the danger of this drug is that the first dose introduces the user to the world of addiction.

"From here it becomes difficult to break away from this menace. To add insult to injury the effect of the drug lingers on for more than 12 hours and the user is thrust into a state of criminal activity, brings about personality change, as the user tends to believe that everyone around him is his enemy, even his family with whom he lives and this is the reason why some of them even carry weapons.

"We also find that most of the crimes that are committed are by those who use shabu; those who are addicted to shabu look much older than their actual age and this is because the shabu user looks like he is older than his age, because shabu is a kind of substance that stimulates the nervous system, and its property suppresses appetite, makes the person lean.

"This devastating scourge on youth is smuggled to all Arab coun-

tries through Arab and Asian countries, where there are gangs active in smuggling, and the strange thing is that neither drug dealers nor their family members use this drug.

"In Kuwait, the control agency in the Ministry of Interior is active in this matter, but our youth, unfortunately, obtain it through merchants and promoters, and many deaths among young people are caused by the use of shabu.

"There are four things that make a young man go for drugs -- boredom, bad friends, distance from religious teachings, and lack of parental supervision. Therefore, the media awareness is required from the state, and monitoring is also required from the family.

"Finally, we tell our youth to adhere to teachings of religion, because religion is the protective shield from the scourge of drugs. May God protect Kuwait and its youth from this scourge. Shabu is the most dangerous drug of all."

"Whom should we believe, the representatives or the government? Even though there is no government, it has resigned and its prime minister has apologized. The new government has yet to be born. The sheikhs 'know best' and the country is engulfed in pessimism. Once again, we repeat the two slogans: 'The sheikhs know best' and 'the horses are fair haired'. We shout with the enthusiasm about the unique popular representation in the rebellious Gulf and that the representatives in our new and old council know best," columnist **Hassan Al-Issa** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"But stop: Why do only the sheikhs and representatives know best? We are helpless. Why are we always accused of 'grumbling', even though the executive authority 'smashes' the elected assemblies according to its mood, complains about the 'disintegration' people, and asks them with an angry rebuke. 'Are you despicable?' All things are available to you. Say, 'Praise Allah' and thank Him for the blessing that you got... Are you young yet?!"

"Recently, emotions ran high among a number of representatives after the publication of the news on the signing of an agreement between Iraq, Turkey, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates on the 'Development Road' project -- transportation lines and railways that connect the East with the West, just as the State here is linked to changing ministries, dissolving the assemblies, assigning acting officials and appointing a tender committee that does not exist...While things are standing still, the ministers are standing, the representatives are standing, and the people are looking forward and wondering: What does tomorrow hold?"

"Even though our tomorrow is like our yesterday and our yesterday is like today... O Lord, do not change us... Are you still young?! Representatives blame the governments that are always formed by sheikhs after traditional consultations for the disruption of development projects -- from the 'Silk Hareer City' to Mubarak Port, power stations, etc... without a beginning or end. The government that is formed after traditional consultations blames the representatives and their objections and honest and unbiased interrogations. To be honest, they are the ones stopping the wheel of development. For example, but not exclusively, they stopped the 'Dow' project and we lost billions not long ago. They stopped many wheels more than stopping cars whose drivers committed traffic violations.

"The 'permanent' government likes to shout at the representatives: 'If it were not for you, we would be like Singapore and South Korea. We have thousands like Lee Kuan Yew and Mahathir Mohamad... Sometimes disagreements occur in our house. This is normal, as humans are naturally ambitious. We are humans. We have some aspirations for top private positions.' Calm down.

"The representatives are 'disgusted' every time a new government is formed. They respond to the government that changes according to the changing weather conditions, saying that this authority found its purpose and excuse in the Parliament. Hundreds of projects do not need laws that the government has not implemented. If there is disruption or cancellation due to the unfair interrogations, a lot of them are due to you and your constant disagreements, and the use of some representatives affiliated with Zaid and Obaid as cats' claws for your hidden 'whims'... If you had the ability to persuade, we would have finished with it... Long, broad words... and the country is completely lost... What is the job?!"

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— Compiled by PFX Fernandes



Kuwaiti relief aid is unloaded from the aircraft.

KUNA photo

Kuwaiti aircraft loaded with 10 tons aid arrives in Sudan

KHARTOUM, April 27. (KUNA): A Kuwaiti aircraft carrying 10 tons of relief and humanitarian aid arrived in Sudan.

Commenting on the move, Kuwait's Ambassador to Sudan Dr. Fahad Al-Dhufairi said this humanitarian aid came, as part of "Kuwait by Your Side" campaign, ordered by the Kuwaiti political leadership to support people of Sudan.

He added that the Kuwaiti aid flow continues through this air bridge to Sudan, launched a few days after the eruption of war in that Arab country.

Kuwait's charities also carry out humanitarian and charitable projects in Sudan, including medical centers, food aid, support-

ing orphans and helping poor families, he noted.

Al-Dhufairi thanked Kuwait's charities, the Kuwait Red Crescent Society and voluntary groups that backed and distributed this aid to Sudanese.

Some Sudanese officials, including undersecretary of Ministry of Health Esmat Mostafa and representative of Sudan Red Crescent Society Sadeq Adam, received the Kuwaiti aid aircraft at the airport.

Mostafa said that Kuwait has been supporting Sudan mainly in medical and humanitarian fields, indicating that this support is highly appreciated by Sudanese government and people.

Growing need for mental health support in schools

Rise in behavioral problems seen

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: The Ministry of Education (MoE) in Kuwait has recognized the growing need for mental health support among school students due to an increase in psychological disorders and behavioral problems. To address this, the Ministry has requested the Ministry of Health to provide psychiatrists from the Kuwait Center for Mental Health to work within the Department of Social and Psychological Services. This collaboration aims to ensure that students experiencing psychological issues can access professional diagnosis and treatment, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

Key aspects of this initiative include: *Providing Professional Support: Psychiatrists will work within the

Department's psychological clinic to diagnose and treat students with psychological conditions, especially those requiring specialized expertise.

*Addressing Sensitive Issues: The involvement of trained psychiatrists is crucial, as some cases may be sensitive or cause embarrassment during treatment. This sensitivity is particularly significant given the age group of the students, ranging from 14 to 18 years.

*Enhanced Collaboration: The Ministry of Education's request demonstrates a commitment to a collaborative approach with the Ministry of Health, ensuring that the mental health needs of students are met efficiently and professionally.

*Prioritizing Student Well-being: This initiative highlights the importance of preserving the safety and well-being of students by providing accessible and appropriate mental health care.

Overall, the involvement of psychiatrists in school settings is a positive step towards addressing the complex mental health needs of students and fostering a supportive educational environment.

Two young men survive gunshots

Maid's 'illicit' baby dies after birth

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff
KUWAIT CITY, April 27: An Ethiopian domestic worker became pregnant outside wedlock in her sponsor's house in Jahra, and gave birth to her baby, who later died in Jahra Hospital.

According to a security source, the domestic worker was taken to Jahra Hospital, but she went into labor upon entering the hospital, and delivered the baby, who later died. A case has been filed against her and referred for investigations.

Duo survive gunshots: An individual fired five gunshots at two young men in a livestock pen in Kabad. They did not sustain any injuries.

According to security sources, the two men reported at Kabad Police Station that a person they know had shot at them while they were in the livestock pen in Kabad, and fled away.

They provided the officers with information about the suspect. A case was filed and referred to the concerned authorities in preparation for his arrest.

Transparency stressed in 'borrowing' process

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, Dr. Anwar Al-Mudhaf, addressed the circulating information on social media regarding a letter purportedly sent from the Ministry of Finance to the Central Bank of Kuwait concerning recent developments in local borrowing, reports **Al-Jarida** daily.

To ensure transparency and dispel any misunderstandings, the Minister clarified the following points:

-- Firstly, he underscored that since the expiration of the law authorizing the government to undertake public loans and financing operations from local and international financial markets in October 2017, the state has been unable to borrow locally or globally without the issuance of a new law permitting such actions in accordance with the Kuwaiti Constitution.

-- Secondly, the Minister explained that the content of the letter mentioned in the public domain is merely a routine, annual inquiry sent by diligent finance ministers.

This inquiry serves as a means for the Ministry of Finance to receive updated data from the Central Bank of Kuwait on an annual basis. Such information aids in monitoring the conditions and health of the local financial market, aligning with the Ministry's role in safeguarding financial stability and ensuring sufficient liquidity for the state.

-- Thirdly, Dr. Al-Mudhaf emphasized that the annual financing strategy for local and global borrowing operations, formulated by the Public Debt Management Committee, is shared with the Audit Bureau.

This strategy is also included in the reports sent to the Audit Bureau as part of the National Assembly's mandate for the Bureau to compile biannual reports on government bond issuances. This process is intended to be transparent and is expected to be known to the esteemed National Assembly.

The Minister reaffirmed the Ministry of Finance's commitment to fulfilling its responsibilities with utmost diligence and prudence, prioritizing economic stability and financial sustainability for the state.

Financial support eyed for charitable societies

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: Following a recent directive from the Council of Ministers to Sheikh Firas Al-Malik, Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs, the ministry, in coordination with the Ministry of Finance and Kuwait Municipality, is tasked with proposing a concept allowing registered public benefit and charitable societies to utilize vacant spaces within their headquarters for investment purposes, reports **Al-Jarida** daily.

This initiative aims to provide financial support to these associations while aligning with their societal goals. A committee, chaired by the Assistant Undersecretary for Social Development Sector Affairs, has been formed to address this mandate.

The committee, comprising directors from various departments and representatives from the Ministry of Finance and Kuwait Municipality, convened its inaugural meeting to discuss the matter comprehensively, focusing particularly on legal aspects. One potential legal hurdle is the issue of financial profit, which conflicts with the primary purpose of these associations, as outlined in Law No. 24 of 1962.

The committee will reconvene to further study the matter and develop a solid legal foundation before presenting its vision to the Minister of Social Affairs for submission to the Council of Ministers.

Additionally, the legality of investment within the associations' basic regulations will be examined. The aim is to ensure that any investment activities are in accordance with legal requirements and contribute to the associations' societal objectives.

Moreover, Minister Al-Malik has initiated an investigation into technical issues that disrupted the elections for the Board of Directors of the Sulaibikhat and Doha Cooperative Society. The malfunction, attributed to a technical glitch in the automated voting systems, led to the cancellation of the elections. The Ministry is committed to identifying the root cause of the malfunction and apologizes for any inconvenience caused to candidates and shareholders. Ensuring transparency and integrity in serving the shareholders remains a top priority for the Ministry.



Sheikh Firas



The suspects with the contraband.

Suspects admit peddling

37 held for possessing 43 kg of various drugs

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: The Ministry of Defense announced that the Criminal Security Sector, through the General Administration for Combating Narcotics, has successfully apprehended 37 individuals of various nationalities in connection with 21 cases involving drug possession. Authorities seized approximately 43 kilograms of a variety of narcotic substances, including chemicals, marijuana, hashish, and cocaine. Additionally, they recovered a substantial number of psychotropic pills, along with other illegal substances, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

The suspects, when confronted with the seized items, confessed that they owned these materials for the purpose of drug trafficking and personal use. The authorities have referred both the suspects and the seized items to the relevant bodies for further legal action.

The Ministry of Interior reiterated its commitment to combating drug trafficking and emphasized the need for ongoing security efforts to apprehend those involved in illegal drug activities. It urged the public to support these efforts by reporting any suspicious activities to the authorities through the emergency phone line (112) or the General Administration for Drug Control's hotline (1884141).

The Ministry also called for a unified approach to eliminate drug trafficking and ensure the safety and well-being of the community. The arrests took place on Thursday, April 25, 2024, as part of a broader effort to combat drug-related crime.

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KCCC advocates for enhanced medical physics training in ME

'Radiation therapy expected to surge by over 19% in next decade'

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: The Kuwait Cancer Control Center (KCCC) has emphasized the critical importance of ongoing investment in education and training for medical physics cadres in the Middle East region, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Dr. Mishari Al-Nuaimi, head of the radiological nature department at the center, addressed this imperative during a speech delivered as the representative of the Middle East region in the International Union of Medical Physics.

Speaking at a scientific symposium organized by the union on the occasion of World Medical Physics Week, Dr. Al-Nuaimi highlighted the necessity of capacity building and the exchange of experiences to confront the increasing burden on healthcare systems in the region.

The symposium, attended by approximately 1,000 participants via the Internet, aimed to present the latest developments in medical physics and foster collaboration to strengthen preparedness in cancer care.

Dr. Al-Nuaimi underscored the rapid technological advancements and their impact on patient care, emphasizing the pivotal role of medical physicists in the healthcare system, particularly amidst the rising cancer rates in the Middle East.

According to the Global Cancer Observatory report, the region saw around 467,000 cancer cases and 255,000 deaths in 2020, with pro-



A photo from the event.

KIC engages with KU students at Career Fair 2024

Kuwait Insurance Company (KIC) actively participated in the Kuwait University Career Fair 2024 held at Sabah Al-Salem University City, engaging with graduate students and visitors over three days from the 21st to the 23rd of this month, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Operating from a dedicated pavilion, company representatives welcomed attendees, providing insights into the professional skills and experiences required in the local job market.

jections indicating a nearly two-fold increase in cancer incidence by 2030.

With the demand for radiation therapy expected to surge by over 19% in the next decade, Dr. Al-Nuaimi stressed the significance of leveraging advanced technologies such as image-guided radiotherapy

During the exhibition's inauguration, attendees were briefed on the company's commitment to nurturing national talent, aligning with the objectives of Kuwait Vision 2035.

Kuwait Insurance Company's presence at the fair aimed to acquaint young individuals with available job opportunities and support them in exploring avenues that align with their career aspirations and academic backgrounds. The company underscores the

significance of empowering local talent and facilitating access to rewarding career paths.

In closing, Kuwait Insurance Company expressed gratitude to the organizers and administrators of the Kuwait University Career Fair 2024, inviting qualified graduates and individuals seeking promising career prospects to explore available job opportunities across its departments by visiting the company's website at www.kic-kw.com

numbers to 2,550 to meet the growing demand for radiology services. These recommendations align with those of the International Union of Medical Physics and reflect the imperative of adequately resourcing medical physics expertise to effectively combat cancer and improve patient care in the region.

National Day greetings

HH Amir sends congratulations

KUWAIT CITY, April 27, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, on Friday, sent a congratulatory cable to President of Tanzania Samia Suluhu Hassan on her country's National Day.

His Highness the Amir wished the president life-long good health and her friendly nation optimal progress and prosperity.

Meanwhile, His Highness the caretaker Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah has sent a congratulatory cable to President Samia Suluhu Hassan on her country's National Day.



Hassan

The Netherlands

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad has sent, on Friday, a cable to King of the Netherlands Willem-Alexander expressing congratulations on his country's National Day.

His Highness the Amir wished the Dutch Monarch good health, optimal progress and prosperity for the friendly Dutch people.

Meanwhile, His Highness the caretaker Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah has addressed a cable of congratulations to King Willem-Alexander on his country's National Day.

Sierra Leone

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad has sent on Saturday, a cable to

the President of Sierra Leone Julius Maada Bio congratulating him on his country's National Day.

His Highness the Amir wished the president good health and his people optimal progress and prosperity.

Meanwhile, His Highness the caretaker Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah has sent a cable to President Julius Maada Bio congratulating him on his country's National Day.

South Africa

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad sent on Saturday a cable of congratulations to the President of South Africa Cyril Ramaphosa on his country's National Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir expressed sincere wishes of progress and development to the leadership and South African people.

Meanwhile, His Highness the caretaker Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to President Cyril Ramaphosa, on his country's National Day.

Togo

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad sent on Saturday a cable of congratulations to the President of Togo Faure Gnassingbe on his country's National Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir expressed sincere wishes of progress and development to the leadership and the people.

Meanwhile, His Highness the caretaker Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah sent on Saturday a cable of congratulations to President Faure Gnassingbe on his country's National Day.



Al-Anba photo

A photo from the honoring ceremony.

'We will continue to provide aid, assistance'

Teachers Assoc celebrates Kuwaiti medical team's efforts in Gaza Strip

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: The Teachers Association has organized a ceremony in honor of the medical delegation returning from the Gaza Strip, in cooperation with the 'Initiators for Palestine', reports Al-Anba daily.

Representatives of various public benefit institutions and associations and members of the Palestinian community attended the event, which was held at the headquarters of the Teachers Association.

In his speech at the ceremony, member of the Board of Directors of the Teachers Association and head of the Teachers Issues Office Dr. Fahd Al-Dhafiri said: "On behalf of the chairman, members of the Board of Directors of the Teachers Association, teachers and people involved in the educational field in Kuwait; I am happy to be among you to embody the unlimited support for our brothers in Palestine and Gaza in their fight against this brutal aggression and massacres carried out by Zionist gangs, as well as the continuous attempt to annihilate the Palestinian cause and prevention of medical and food aid. We, in the Teachers Association, praise with great pride the efforts and sacrifice of the Kuwaiti medical team returning from Gaza after performing their work with dedication and sincerity to treat the injured among our Palestinian brothers and raise

the name of Kuwait high in the field of humanitarian work. This indicates the steadfastness and firm position of Kuwait and its people in supporting the Palestinian cause until the Palestinian people gain their freedom from this usurping aggression."

He added that the Foreign Relations Office of the association fully understands its responsibility over the Palestinian cause by conveying a message to the whole world about the need to protect the Palestinian people from the Zionist aggression. "We will continue to provide all aid and assistance through the efforts of the office in the educational aspect, and to consolidate the demand for the legitimate rights of Palestinians in the hearts and minds of our students. We will remain committed to the covenant until we get rid of the brutal occupation and liberate the Palestinian land," he asserted.

Meanwhile, representative of the 'Initiators for Palestine' Yousef Al-Kandari stated: "This ceremony is in honor of a group of doctors and charitable organizations that went to Gaza to extend a helping hand and support people in the Strip. This gathering focuses on honoring any initiative presented by any person or institution. It tries to strengthen the role played by the initiators in supporting the Palestinian cause or opposing the normalization of relations with the Zionist entity."

KRCS focuses on environmental media to foster awareness during workshop

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: Anwar Al-Hassawi, Deputy Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, emphasized the pivotal role of environmental media in fostering awareness and understanding of environmental issues among citizens, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Speaking at the "Environmental Media Workshop: The Kuwait Experience," held in collaboration with the General Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, Al-Hassawi underscored the significance of disseminating concepts of sustainable development, especially amidst mounting social, economic, and political pressures on the environment.

Highlighting the increasing need for environmental news and knowledge, Al-Hassawi stressed the importance of addressing disasters, pollution incidents, and climate change and their impacts on societal and economic conditions. He outlined the Kuwait Red Crescent Society's commitment to environmental protection, employing a media plan grounded in scientific principles to target specific groups and evaluate the effectiveness of media efforts in achieving environmental goals.

The workshop, attended by representatives from the General Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, the Arab Red Crescent Organization, the Red Cross, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and Gulf national societies, also included participation from the Ministry of Interior, the Kuwaiti Society for Environmental Protection, and the Kuwaiti Society for Crisis and Emergency Management.

Kuwaiti 'entrepreneur' wins Akhlaquna award

DOHA, April 27, (KUNA): Yousef Al-Omran, a Kuwaiti entrepreneur, won 'Akhlaquna' (our ethics) Individual Initiative Award, offered by the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development.

Speaking to KUNA after the award ceremony, he dedicated the award, which came in recognition of his 'Bu-Jarrah changes' initiative for rehabilitation of infrastructure in Kuwait, to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the people of Kuwait.

Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Qatar Foundation Sheikhha Moza bint Nasser honored the winners of the various categories of the 2024 Akhlaquna award in the ceremony at the Qatar National Library on Wednesday.

Sheikha Moza launched the award in 2017 with a view to highlighting the interrelation between knowledge and ethics, and promoting awareness about the moral values of Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him).

In addition to the Individual Initiative, the categories of the award include Akhlaquna Juniors, the Youth, and the Ap-

Through collaboration and knowledge exchange, he said, participants aim to enhance environmental media strategies and contribute to broader environmental awareness and action.



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LOCAL

O government,

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and scrutiny come at a cost. This leads to a culture based on the corrupt notion of "you scratch my back, I scratch yours."

If there is a will and a decision, Kuwait, in consideration of its geographical location, can become an economically and commercially effective country in the region.

It must be highlighted here that the northern economic region will not only serve our country, but it also serves the population of southern Iraq that comprises about 30 percent of the total number of Iraqis, which is a total of 41 million.

There is an urgent need for more industries of all kinds to serve such a high number, which is expected to increase over the next twenty years. It also serves the approximately 15 million Iraqis who live in the Iranian region near Kuwait.

Also, developing the islands through a vision that commensurate with the developments taking place in neighboring countries will firstly limit Kuwaitis' spending on foreign tourism, which amounted to about KD 3.53 billion last year. Their spending in their country will then be similar to that in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, as their residents' spending abroad reduced to a few million dollars.

This requires a government that is determined to implement its decision, and not listen to the extremists, the deep state, and weak souls who were working as local agents for major companies and monopolizing projects.

However, canceling this law gave the state the assistance of international companies to implement it, as its value was exaggerated twofold.

Today, amidst global developments, international crises, and regional agreements like the recent Development Road project signed by Iraq, Turkey, the Emirates, and Qatar, there is an opportunity for Kuwait.

Instead of the elected parliamentarians' dissatisfaction with the exclusion of Kuwait from the aforementioned project, here is an opportunity for the two authorities to implement the agreements concluded with China in order to begin putting the Silk Road and its city into practice, instead of "murmuring."

Kuwait's revised

Continued from Page 1

Additionally, it was disclosed that PAM will observe World Occupational Safety Day on Sunday under the theme "Towards a Safe Work Environment".

The celebration will include a workshop covering seven topics, with the participation of seven government agencies, each addressing its respective area of expertise, particularly focusing on occupational safety measures and inspection mechanisms.

Kuwait MPs

Continued from Page 1

He said the laws of Kuwait criminalize any form of dealing with Israel; confirming that this is the position of Kuwait at all levels including the political leadership, ordinary citizens, government and Assembly.

He added Kuwait has been the main supporter of the Palestinian resistance movement; hence, the Palestinian cause is the concern of all Kuwaitis who forget about differences and adopt the same opinion regarding Palestine.

In a relevant development, MP-elect Mohammad Musaed Al-Dousari praised the statement of Kuwaiti Ambassador to the United States of America Sheikhha Al-Zain Al-Sabah who expressed support for the encampment of faculty members in the campuses of American universities to show their solidarity with the people of Palestine and to call for ceasefire in Gaza. She said these teachers are calling for the truth, justice, humanity, accountability, transparency and peace for Palestine as they continue their fight for sovereignty and freedom.

MP-elect Abdulhadi Al-Ajmi urged the faculty members in Kuwait and Arab countries to join the encampment of their counterparts in America to support the Palestinian cause and put an end to the genocide in Gaza.

Meanwhile, the State of Kuwait has renewed the call upon the international community to recognize the State of Palestine as a member of the United Nations citing in this respect the UN General Assembly's Resolution 2326 that acknowledges Palestine's right for independence and full sovereignty.

The renewed Kuwaiti stand was declared by the plenipotentiary minister and the deputy representative at the UN Faisal Al-Enezi, while addressing an open ministerial session of the Security Council, late on Friday, themed "the situation in the Middle East namely the Palestinian cause."

Al-Enezi said the UNGA resolution has affirmed again that the rights of the Palestinian people cannot be compromised, particularly the right to self-determination without external intervention, in addition to the national rights for independence and sovereignty.

The occupation Israeli entity had been recognized as a member of the UN four years after establishing the international organization. However, Palestine has been demanding its rights since five decades ago.

Regrettably, the entity that occupied the Palestinian territories demands that the international community abstain from recognizing Palestine's membership, the Kuwaiti diplomat said.

On UNRWA, Al-Enezi said that while the Palestinian people have been experiencing mounting hardships, "some parties call for limiting the UNRWA activities and shift its tasks to other regions without sensing ramifications of such radical thoughts on the future generations and people in need for health care."

Commenting on some States' suspension of financial contributions to the relief agency, he indicated that these countries took the decision in response to allegations made by the Israeli occupation, but they backed down from the decision after determining that such allegations were devoid of substance.

He affirmed that the State of Kuwait's offering of a voluntary contribution to the UNRWA, valued at USD 30 million is a step emanating from its moral and hu-

manitarian responsibilities.

He has alluded to Kuwait's dispatch of two plane-loads of relief supplies to Gaza per day. He called for a cease-fire in Gaza, facilitating the dispatch of humanitarian supplies, halting the compulsory relocation of the Gazans, and stopping the ethnic cleansing.

H.H. AMIR

Continued from Page 1

Sheikh Sabah Nasser affirmed significance of the forum which would draw more than 1,000 participants including heads of state and economic experts from various corners of the world to study challenges facing the global economy and find solutions to the economic issues.

He stressed the necessity of coordinating global efforts to attain economic stability in the Middle East, currently witnessing conflicts.

He lauded the Kingdom's great role and noticeable efforts for hosting international meetings, along with the approach to attain peace prosperity and security for the region and the world.

As global economy grapples with increasing challenges, specifically in the Middle East region, Saudi Arabia gears up to host World Economic Forum (WEF) on April 28-29 as part of efforts to address challenges and achieve economic stability.

Saudi Shura Council member, Fadel Alboenain, told KUNA that this fuels international cooperation efforts and creates sustainable solutions.

Alboenain affirmed Saudi's keenness on such initiatives to boost international efforts, joint work, suitable solutions, to arrive at global growth and prosperity.

This high and expansive participation allows the chance to handle a host of issues and developments, as it creates a joint platform for world countries.

The WEF is a great opportunity to exchange experience and skills, discuss important geopolitical and economic issues to formulate a shared vision that aids economic reform and growth, and establish global cooperation.

On his part, the CEO of Saudi's Razeen Capital and analyst, Mohammad Al-Suwayed, affirmed in his remarks to KUNA the significance of the forum in establishing global economic stability and growth.

These conventions handle important topics of policy making and agreement supporting regions still recovering from economic halt during coronavirus pandemic, stated Al-Suwayed.

Saudi Arabia hosting the Forum is part of their responsibility in contributing and seeking economic stability in the region and the world, he affirmed.

Member of Saudi Economic Association, Abdulhameed Al-Amri, spoke to KUNA of the conditions affecting global economy, saying that the escalating pace of geopolitical challenges has intensified the size and volume of participation in the much anticipated forum.

He added that this amplified participation is a testament to Saudi Arabia's economic significance, especially considering the positive outlooks proposed by the International Monetary Fund and Bank as well as other international banks regarding the gulf region.

Al-Amri forecasts that the Gulf region, in the next decades, will become an economic and investments hub due to expansive financial reserves and sufficient resources, underlining the forum as an opportunity to attract further international investments and partnerships to the region.

The WEF's agenda includes comprehensive growth agreements, A.I developments, industrial policies, economic policies, as well as addressing the shortage in long-term investment in human development.

OPEC warns

Continued from Page 1

development, or reducing energy poverty, he elaborated.

These kinds of narratives forget that oil continues to be irreplaceable in fostering global prosperity and maintaining energy security.

In this respect, Ed Conway, a writer, was not exaggerating in 'Material World' - one of The Economist's best books of 2023 - when stating that the Oil Age - delivered humankind from much of the drudgery of manual labor - lifted incomes around the world - helped us live longer - and provides the chemicals from which we make the fertilizers that keep half the planet alive, the OPEC chief pointed out.

He went to say "it is sometimes easy to forget just how critical oil is to our everyday lives, but without it we would not have gasoline, heating oil, jet fuel, syringes, soap, computers, car tires, contact lenses, artificial limbs, many types of medicine and much more. The fiberglass, resin and plastic needed to construct most wind turbines and the ethylene for solar panels would not exist either".

"The reality is that the end of oil is not in sight. Oil continues to make up almost a third of the global energy mix today and global oil demand continues to rise. Last year, we saw global demand growth of around 2.5mn b/d, and OPEC and many other forecasting agencies see significant growth in the coming years too," Al Ghais said.

US decries

Continued from Page 1

Peshawa Hawramani, the spokesperson for the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), said in a statement that the strike killed four Yemeni nationals working at the field and inflicted significant damage upon the infrastructure.

He denounced the attack as a "terrorist act" committed by "saboteurs and evil people."

The targeted Khor Mor gas field, which is located in Sulaimani province, is operated by Dana Gas, a United Arab Emirates-based energy company. Hawramani underscored the severe disruption caused to electricity generation by the assault and urged the Iraqi federal government to apprehend those responsible for the attack.

A separate statement issued by the region's electricity authorities highlighted impact of the assault on gas supplies for power plants, which led to a significant decrease of approximately 2,500 megawatts in electricity generation.

MEW delays retirement for 96 employees over annual bonus

CSC okays annual bonus for legal staff at Kuwait Municipality

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: The Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Engineer Maha Al-Asousi issued an administrative decision to postpone the referral of employees, who were recently referred to retirement, from August 2, 2024 to January 2, 2025.

According to informed sources in the ministry, the decision to refer to retirement, which covers 96 employees whose service period exceeded 30 years, was postponed so that these employees benefit from the annual bonus granted to those who obtain a degree of distinction in the annual performance evaluation.

Tender

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy signed with the winning contractor a tender contract worth KD 137 million to update the boilers of the Zour South Station.

The ministry also signed a contract worth KD 104 million for the maintenance of gas turbines and the combined cycle in the same station.



Kuwaitization urged: The Kuwaitization of the administration of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) must be expedited, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources revealed that the Administrative Affairs Department in the CSC has 14 employees and eight of whom are non-Kuwaitis. They explained that the urgency of this step is within the context of CSC's decision to obligate all ministries, government agencies and institutions on the hundred percent Kuwaitization of their workforce.

"This is in addition to appointing the right people to carry out tasks based on their competence and experience in the required field; because such move greatly contributes to achieving the desired level of efficiency, boosts confidence in performing the work, enhances discipline and responsibility, and reduces corruption and wastage.

Bonus

Meanwhile, the CSC has approved the annual bonus for the Legal Department staff at Kuwait Municipality like their counterparts in the Legal Advice and Legislation Department for fiscal 2023/2024.

The daily obtained a copy of



A photo from the event.

KUNA photo

Sheikha stresses on importance of safeguarding traditional crafts and preserving cultural heritage

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: Sheikha Altaf Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Honorary President of the Sadu Crafts Association, emphasized the vital importance of safeguarding traditional crafts and preserving cultural heritage and national identity, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Speaking to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) during the third (Number Inscription) exhibition, Sheikha Altaf underscored the necessity of enhancing educational and training programs for knitting, ensuring the transmission of associated skills to present and future generations and advocated for the integration of such programs into the technical and educational curricula of Ministry of Education schools.

She also highlighted traditional arts and crafts as integral components of cultural legacy, serving as repositories of collective memory and historical narratives.

The Sadu Crafts Association, under Sheikha Altaf's leadership, prioritizes the cultural and developmental significance of crafts, aiming to preserve and promote Kuwait's knitting and weaving traditions within contemporary frameworks.

Sheikha Bibi Duajj Al-Sabah, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Sadu Crafts Asso-

ciation, echoed similar sentiments, emphasizing the collaborative efforts between the association and the Ministry of Education. She highlighted the inclusion of the (Number Inscription) exhibition in the art education curriculum since 2017, showcasing the creative endeavors of eighth-grade students.

The joint program focuses on "training the trainer," empowering mentors and teachers to impart experiences and skills to students. Sheikha Bibi commended the success of the program, noting its recognition by UNESCO as a best practice for heritage preservation. Additionally, she highlighted Kuwait's pioneering role in including traditional crafts in art education programs since 2017.

Manal Al-Ghadban, the first director of art education from the Ahmadi educational district, emphasized the significance of the (Number Inscription) exhibition as an annual event that reflects the ongoing partnership between the Ministry of Education and the Sadu Crafts Association.

She emphasized the commitment to nurturing students' skills in crafts and artistic fields while preserving Kuwait's heritage and national identity.

the approval, stating that the director and deputy director will receive KD18,000 -- equivalent to the excellent rating in the general salary scale; KD12,000 for the interview advisor -- equivalent to the undersecretary position in the general salary scale; and KD8,000 for the assistant advisor -- equivalent to the assistant undersecretary position in the general salary scale

In the meantime, in a breakthrough for public sector job applicants whose appointment

procedures are being completed and are waiting for a decision on the start of their employment; the Civil Service Commission (CSC) has resolved the issue of employing 2,218 citizens nominated for some ministries and government agencies, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources explained that the proposed budget circular for fiscal 2024/2025 is clear and it has been circulated to the ministries and government agencies. Sources said each agency and ministry

has the authority to continue issuing appointment decisions and to start the employment of these candidates according to each entity's allocation and system.

Sources denied the allegation that new grades were approved for some ministries and the entities that already exhausted the grades approved for them in last year's budget. Sources added the CSC was not asked to determine the job titles and grades of candidates in some government agencies.

News in Brief

'Nature of work' allowance: The Ministry of Health has amended the "nature of work" allowance for the Kuwaiti and expatriate nursing staff in public hospitals and health centers in order to motivate the nurses to improve their performance at work and to make the profession 'attractive', reports Al-Anba daily.

The "nature of work" allowance amendment includes abolishing category C and those under it are transferred to category B, in addition to transferring some from category B to category A. The allowance increment ranges from KD30 to KD50, depending on the category and job title.

The ministry is currently finalizing the amendment of the allowance in its financial and administrative systems to pave the way for disbursement.

PAHW receives 8 buildings: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) has announced that it received eight public buildings in Al-Mutlaa Housing City, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a press statement, the authority revealed that it received two primary schools for boys and girls in the second and third plots of N10 suburb from the representatives of the Ministry of Education.

The authority also received three mosques and accommodation for imams and muezzins in plots 2-3-4 in N8 suburb from the representatives of the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs. It added it previously received four mosques and accommodation for imams and muezzins in plots 1-2-3-4 in N7 suburb, as well as a mosque and accommodation for the imam and muezzin in Plot One in N8 suburb.

Aid delivered to schools: The Student of Knowledge Committee at Al-Najat Charitable Society has expressed appreciation for the support of the Secretariat General of Endowments for the 'Student of Knowledge to Educate Communities' project, and its contribution to paying the tuition fees of 300 students from various communities and the children of non-Arabic-speaking new converts, reports Al-Anba daily.

Committee Chairman Khaled Al-Kandari confirmed the aid was delivered directly to the schools where the beneficiaries are enrolled after scrutinizing the assistance applications and selecting the cases that meet the conditions. Al-Kandari stressed that the role of the committee is to address a humanitarian and social problem -- poor students being deprived of their right to education due to inability to pay tuition fees.

وزارة التجارة والصناعة

RECALL INFORMATION




Mercedes-Benz Cars
MODEL: 232
Model year: 2022-2024
Total vehicles: 14

Mercedes-Benz AG has determined in certain vehicles of the SL model series (model series 232) with M177 that the routing of the 12 V starter/alternator wiring harness may not correspond to the specifications. In this case, the wiring harness may be in contact with the drive shaft and chafe over time.

RECALL REASON

As a precautionary measure, the routing of the wiring harness will be reworked in the affected vehicles. The required work certainly be carried out free.

REMEDY

Please contact Al Mulla Automobiles Co.
Phone 1-887-888
Mercedes-Benz Service Centre - Al Shuwaikh Industrial Area - 9 Street
Mercedes-Benz Service Centre - Al Shuwaikh Industrial Area - 13 Street
Mercedes-Benz Service Centre for Passenger Cars - Al Ahmadi - 29 Street

CONTACT

This Recall is run pursuant to articles (42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48) of no. 27/2015 issuing the executive by laws of law no. 39/2014 on Consumer Protection

World News Roundup

Europe

Russia renews attacks on Ukraine: Russia launched a barrage of missiles against Ukraine overnight, in attacks that appeared to target the country's energy infrastructure. Meanwhile, Russia said its air defense systems had intercepted more than 60 Ukrainian drones over the southern Krasnodar region.



Halushchenko

Ukraine's air force said Saturday that Russia had launched 34 missiles against Ukraine overnight, of which 21 had been shot down by Ukrainian air defenses.

In a post on Telegram, Minister of Energy **Herman Halushchenko** said energy facilities in Dnipropetrovsk in the south of the country and Ivano-Frankivsk and Lviv in the west had been attacked and that an engineer was injured.

Private energy operator DTEK said four of its thermal power plants were damaged and that there were "casualties," without going into detail.

Earlier this month Russia destroyed one of Ukraine's largest power plants and damaged others in a massive missile and drone attack as it renewed its push to target Ukraine's energy facilities.

Further east, a psychiatric hospital was damaged and one person was wounded after Russia launched a missile attack overnight on Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv. Photos from the scene showed a huge crater on the grounds of the facility and patients taking shelter in corridors. (AP)

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Putin announces plans to visit China: Russian President Vladimir Putin said he plans to visit China in May, in what could become the first foreign trip for the Russian leader after he extended his rule by six more years in an election that offered voters little real choice.

Putin announced the plans for the visit at a congress of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs in Moscow. He didn't say when exactly it would take place and didn't offer any other details.

Putin's inauguration is scheduled for May 7, Russian lawmakers said earlier this week. Last month, the 71-year-old Russian leader secured his fifth term in office in a vote with no real opposition, extending his 24-year rule.

Russia's growing economic and diplomatic isolation because of its war against Ukraine has made it increasingly reliant on China, its former rival for leadership of the Communist bloc during the Cold War.

According to a recent US assessment, China has surged sales to Russia of machine tools, microelectronics and other technology that Moscow in turn is using to produce missiles, tanks, aircraft and other weaponry for use in the conflict. (AP)

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Zelensky presses US, allies for Patriots: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Kyiv needs Patriot missiles to create an air shield against further Russian missile attacks, and it's likely he'll get them in an additional \$6 billion aid package expected to be announced by the U.S. as soon as Friday.

Zelenskyy discussed the need for Patriots early Friday at the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, a coalition of about 50 countries gathering virtually in a Pentagon-led meeting. His address marked the second anniversary of the group, which has "moved heaven and earth" since April 2022 to source millions of rounds of ammunition, rocket systems, armored vehicles and even jets to help Ukraine rebuff Russia's invasion, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said at the meeting.

The meeting was expected to focus largely on air defense systems, Austin said. (AP)

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Ukraine farm min latest corruption suspect: A Ukrainian court on Friday ordered the detention of the country's farm minister in the latest high-profile corruption investigation, while Kyiv security officials were assessing how they can recover battlefield momentum in the war against Russia.

Ukraine's High Anti-Corruption Court ruled that Agriculture Minister Oleksandr Solskyi should be held in custody for 60 days. However, he was released after paying 75 million hryvnias (\$1.77 million) in bail, a statement said.

Ukraine's National Anti-Corruption Bureau suspects Solskyi headed an organized crime group that between 2017 and 2021 unlawfully obtained land worth 291 million hryvnias (\$6.85 million) and attempted to obtain other land worth 190 million hryvnias (\$4.47 million). (AP)

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Charles to resume public duties next week: The 75-year-old monarch will resume some public duties next week following a three-month break to focus on his treatment and recuperation after he was diagnosed with an undisclosed type of cancer, Buckingham Palace said Friday.

Charles will mark the milestone by visiting a cancer treatment center on Tuesday, the first of several public appearances he will make in the coming weeks, the palace said. One of his first major engagements will be to host a state visit by the emperor and empress of Japan in June.

The palace said the king's doctors are "very encouraged" by his progress, though it is too early to say how long his treatment will last. It didn't provide details about what type of treatment he is receiving.

Charles will continue to perform all of his state duties, including reviewing government documents and meeting with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, as he has done since his diagnosis was disclosed on Feb. 5, the palace said. (AP)

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Orbán challenger leads protest: An aspiring challenger to Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán renewed his calls for change Friday as he led a protest of several thousand people demanding a more robust child protection system and the resignation of Orbán's government.

The demonstrators gathered outside Hungary's Interior Ministry in Budapest and called for its head, Sándor Pintér, to step down over what they see as his failure to prevent the abuse of children in state-run institutions, a crime which has led to political upheaval in Hungary in recent months.

Peter Magyar, a 43-year-old lawyer who has emerged as a new voice of opposition to Hungary's right-wing government, took aim at Orbán's portrayal of himself as a defender of families and traditional values, and called for genuine reforms to address child welfare. (AP)

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Scotland leader insists he won't resign: Scotland's leader insisted Friday that he won't be resigning as he fights for his political survival amid the fallout of his decision to pull the plug on a three-year power-sharing agreement that has made his Scottish National Party a minority government.

The pressure on First Minister Humza Yousaf has ratcheted up sharply since he abandoned the power-sharing deal with the much smaller Greens on Thursday following a clash over climate change policies. He is set to face a no-confidence vote in the Scottish Parliament next week.

Following his decision to ditch the deal with the Greens, the Scottish Conservatives put forward a motion of no confidence in Yousaf as first minister.

The Greens, furious at their ejection from government, have already said they will vote against Yousaf himself, along with the other main opposition parties, including the Conservatives and Labour. (AP)

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Journos sign manifesto in defense of PM: Thousands of Spanish journalists came out Friday in support of Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez and his wife following Sánchez's announcement that he was considering his future as premier after a court opened preliminary proceedings against his wife on corruption allegations.

Sánchez, who is to announce his future Monday, blamed the judicial probe on "spurious" attacks by right and far-right opponents in the media and political parties.

In online, several thousand journalists and writers signed an support manifesto saying, "the attack by the media and judicial extreme right against the wife of the President of the Government is a new attempt to subvert the popular will expressed at the polls through illicit means." (AP)

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Families sift through the destruction from a tornado on April 26 near Omaha, Neb. (AP)

Tornadoes collapse buildings, level homes in Nebraska & Iowa

Tornadoes wreaked havoc Friday in the Midwest, causing a building to collapse with dozens of people inside and destroying and damaging hundreds of homes, many around Omaha, Nebraska.

As of Friday night, there were several reports of injuries but no immediate deaths reported. Tornado warnings continued to be issued into the night in Iowa. Three people were hurt in Nebraska's Lancaster

County when a tornado hit an industrial building, causing it to collapse with 70 people inside. Several were trapped, but everyone was evacuated and the injuries were not life-threatening, authorities said.

One of the most destructive tornadoes moved for miles Friday through mostly rural farmland before chewing up homes and other structures in the suburbs of Omaha, a city of 485,000 people with a

metropolitan area population of about 1 million.

Photos on social media showed the small city of Minden, Iowa, about 30 miles (48.3 kilometers) northeast of Omaha also sustained heavy damage.

Hundreds of houses sustained damage in Omaha on Friday, mostly in the Elkhorn area in the western part of the city, Omaha police Lt Neal Bonacci said. (AP)

Politics

Biden says he's 'happy to debate' Donald

Trump promises big plans to flip voters

NEW YORK, April 27, (AP) — Donald Trump says he wants to hold a major campaign event at New York's Madison Square Garden featuring Black hip-hop artists and athletes. His aides speak of making appearances in Chicago, Detroit and Atlanta with leaders of color and realigning American politics by flipping Democratic constituencies.

But five months before the first general election votes are cast, the former president's campaign has little apparent organization to show for its ambitious plans.

The Trump campaign removed its point person for coalitions and hasn't announced a replacement. The Republican Party's minority outreach offices across the country have been shuttered and replaced by businesses that include a check-cashing store, an ice cream shop and a sex-toy store. And campaign officials concede they are weeks away from rolling out any targeted programs.

Issues

The presumptive Republican presidential nominee has struggled to navigate a messy transition into the general election plagued by staffing issues, his personal legal troubles and the "Make America Great Again" movement's disdain for so-called "identity politics." There are signs of frustration on the ground, where Republicans believe Trump has a real opportunity to shift the election by cutting into President Joe Biden's advantage with voters of color.

"To be quite honest, the Republican Party does not have a cohesive engagement plan for Black communities," said Darrell Scott, a Black pastor who served as a senior advisor on Trump's 2016 and 2020 campaigns. "What it has are conservatives in communities of

color that have taken it upon themselves to head our own initiatives."

In Michigan, a critical battleground that flipped from Trump to Biden four years ago, several party officials confirmed that the Republican National Committee, overhauled by Trump allies after he clinched the nomination in March, has yet to set up any community centers for minority outreach. Office spaces to house the centers have been offered up by community members, but staffing has been an issue, said Oakland County GOP Chair Vance Patrick.

"We've got all these carts but we have no horses yet," said Patrick. "So, it's all about making sure we have staffing when we open up these offices."

Critical

On-the-ground political organizing has long been a hallmark of successful presidential campaigns, which typically invest tremendous resources into identifying would-be supporters and ensuring they vote. The task may be even more critical this fall given how few voters are excited about the Biden-Trump rematch.

The Trump campaign hired a national coalitions director in October 2023, almost a year after he launched his campaign. But the staffer, Derek Silver, departed in March without explanation, according to two people familiar with the matter who spoke on the condition of anonymity to share internal discussions. Silver did not return multiple requests for comment and no replacement has been announced.

Trump's advisors reject criticism that they're not doing enough organizing or spending to reach minorities. James Blair, the campaign's political director, said the campaign would not "broad-

cast" its spending or staffing levels, "but I assure you, it's enough to ensure President Trump's historic surge in support amongst Black and Hispanic voters sticks in November and beyond."

Also:

NEW YORK: US President Joe Biden said Friday that he is willing to debate his presumptive Republican opponent, Donald Trump, later this fall - his most definitive comment yet on the issue.

Trump said he was ready, though he questioned Biden's willingness.

Biden's comment came during an interview with the Sirius XM radio host Howard Stern, who asked him whether he would participate in debates against Trump.

"I am, somewhere. I don't know when," Biden said. "But I'm happy to debate him."

Until now, Biden's reelection campaign had declined to commit to participating in the debates, a hallmark of every general election presidential campaign since 1976.

Biden himself had also been vague, saying in March that whether he debated Trump "depends on his behavior." The two men debated twice during the 2020 general election - a campaign year constrained significantly by COVID-19 restrictions - and Biden was notably irritated by Trump's antics in the chaotic first debate that year.

"Will you shut up?" Biden told Trump at one point during the first debate.

Trump campaign officials have said for some time that the former president is prepared to debate Biden anytime, and Chris LaCivita, Trump campaign senior adviser, quickly responded to Biden's remarks on the social media site X: "OK let's set it up!"



Britain's Prince William walks with CEO Sue Hawkeswood, during a visit to Woodgate Valley Urban Farm, in Birmingham, England on April 25. (AP)



Bonner



Mills

America

Mills signs off on new laws: Democratic Gov. Janet Mills on Friday signed into law a suite of gun safety legislation approved by lawmakers after the deadliest mass shooting in state history, expanding background checks for private sales of weapons, bolstering the state's "yellow flag" law, criminalizing the transfer of guns to prohibited people and expanding mental health crisis care.

The governor told lawmakers during her State of the State address that doing nothing was not an option after an Army reservist with an assault rifle killed 18 people and injured 13 others in Lewiston on Oct. 25.

The bills drew opposition from Republicans who accused Democrats, who control both legislative chambers, of using the tragedy to advance proposals, some of which had been previously defeated. Mills said Friday the proposals would improve public safety while respecting the state's long traditions of gun ownership and outdoor heritage. (AP)

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Paramedic avoids prison: A former paramedic who injected Elijah McClain with a powerful sedative avoided prison Friday and was sentenced to 14 months in jail with work release and probation in the killing of the Black man that helped fuel the 2020 racial justice protests.

Jeremy Cooper had faced up to three years in prison after being found guilty in a jury trial last year of criminally negligent homicide. He administered a dose of ketamine to McClain, 23, who had been forcibly restrained after police stopped him as the massage therapist was walking home in a Denver suburb in 2019.

The sentencing caps a series of trials that stretched over seven months and resulted in the convictions of a police officer and two paramedics. Criminal charges against paramedics and emergency medical technicians involved in police custody cases are rare. (AP)

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1 climber dead after fall: A climber is dead and another seriously injured after falling about 1,000 feet (305 meters) while on a steep, technical route on Mount

Johnson in Alaska's Denali National Park and Preserve, authorities said Friday.

The fall Thursday night was witnessed by another climbing party, who reported

it around 10:45 p.m. and descended to where the climbers had fallen. They confirmed one of the climbers had died and dug a snow cave and tended to the hurt climber, according to a statement from the park.

Early Friday, a rescue helicopter and two mountaineering rangers left Talkeetna, where the park's mountaineering operations are based. They were able to rescue the injured climber, who was later medevacked for additional care. The helicopter and rangers returned to the mountain later to recover the body of the climber who died but were forced back by deteriorating weather, the statement said. Rangers plan to return when conditions allow, the park said. (AP)

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Deputies fatally shoot driver: Sheriff's deputies fatally shot a man who sped toward them in a vehicle as they were serving a search warrant in a neighborhood on Friday in Memphis, officials said.

Shelby County Sheriff Floyd Bonner said deputies were serving the high-risk drug warrant at about 3:30 p.m. when a man who was waiting in a vehicle drove toward a SWAT team at high speed in the Orange Mound neighborhood.

Deputies opened fire, killing the driver, Bonner said. The driver was not immediately identified. (AP)



Prince Albert II of Monaco, (right), his wife Charlene Lynette Grimaldi, (left), Princess of Monaco, together with their children, the twins Gabriella, (second from right), and Jacques, open the new Monaco World in Miniatur Wunderland, in Hamburg, Germany on April 25. (AP)

Africa

Tanzania floods kill 155

SAfrica remembers 'poll' every April 27

CAPE TOWN, South Africa, April 27, (Agencies): South Africans celebrate their "Freedom Day" every April 27, when they remember their country's pivotal first democratic election in 1994 that announced the official end of the racial segregation and oppression of apartheid.

Saturday is the 30th anniversary of that momentous vote, when millions of Black South Africans, young and old, decided their own futures for the first time, a fundamental right they had been denied by a white minority government.

The first all-race election saw the previously banned African National Congress party win overwhelmingly and made its leader, Nelson Mandela, the country's first Black president four years after he was released from prison.

The 1994 election was the culmination of a process that began four years earlier when F.W. de Klerk, the last apartheid-era president, shocked the world and his country by announcing that the ANC and other anti-apartheid parties would be unbanned.

Mandela, the face of the anti-apartheid movement, was released from prison nine days later, setting him on the road to becoming South Africa's first Black leader.



Mandela

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Violence

South Africa needed years to prepare and was still on a knife-edge in the months and weeks before the election because of ongoing political violence, but the vote - held over four days between April 26 and April 29 to accommodate the large numbers who turned out - went ahead successfully.

A country that had been shunned and sanctioned by the international community for decades because of apartheid emerged as a fully-fledged democracy.

Nearly 20 million South Africans of all races voted, compared with just 3 million white people in the last general election under apartheid in 1989.

Associated Press photographer Denis Farrell's iconic aerial photograph of people waiting patiently for hours in long, snaking queues in fields next to a school in the famed Johannesburg township of Soweto captured the determination of millions of Black South Africans to finally be counted. It was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize.

Tanzania flooding kills 155: Flooding in Tanzania caused by weeks of heavy rain has killed 155 people and affected more than 200,000 others, the prime minister said.

That is more than double the number of deaths reported two weeks ago as the amount of rainfall increases, especially in the coastal region and the capital, Dar es Salaam.

Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa told parliament that the El Niño climate pattern has worsened the ongoing rainy season, causing the flooding and destroying roads, bridges and railways. Flooded schools have been closed and emergency services have rescued people marooned by the flood waters.

Majaliwa warned those living in low-lying areas to move to higher ground and urged district officials to ensure that provisions meant for those whose homes were washed away go to those in need of the supplies. He said more than 51,000 households have been affected by the rains.

70 killed by flooding in Kenya: Flooding and heavy rains in Kenya have killed at least 70 people since mid-March, a government spokesperson said Friday, twice as many as were reported earlier this week.

The East African country has seen weeks of heavy rains and severe flooding in Kenya's capital, Nairobi, as well as in the country's western and central regions.

Kenya's government spokesperson Isaac Mwaurea on Friday refuted claims that hundreds of people have died in the ongoing flooding and said the official tally now stands at 70.

Five bodies were retrieved Friday from a river in Makueni county, east of the country, after a lorry they were traveling in was swept off a submerged bridge, local station Citizen TV reported. Another 11 were rescued.

Nigeria orders manhunt for 109 inmates: The Nigerian government on Thursday ordered a manhunt for 109 inmates who escaped from a custodial center following a heavy downpour that damaged part of the facility late Wednesday.

After assessing the Suleja Custodial Center in the north-central state, Interior Minister Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo told media that all security agencies had been alerted to apprehend the fleeing inmates and ensure their immediate return to the facility.

Tunji-Ojo added that the biometric information of the fleeing inmates would soon be released to the public, urging the inmates to return to the correctional facility of their own volition.

At least 119 inmates escaped Wednesday night from the custodial center, out of which 10 were recaptured and taken back into custody, according to Samson Duza, a spokesman for the Nigerian Correctional Service in the central region.

Burkina suspends BBC, Voice of America: Burkina Faso suspended the BBC and Voice of America radio stations for their coverage of a report by Human Rights Watch on a mass killing of civilians carried out by the country's armed forces.

Burkina Faso's communication spokesperson, Tonssira Myrian Corine Sanou, said late Thursday that both radio stations would be suspended for two weeks, and warned other media networks to avoid reporting on the story.

According to the report published by Human Rights Watch on Thursday, the army killed 223 civilians, including 56 children, in villages accused of cooperating with militants. The report was widely covered by the international media, including the Associated Press.

UN Human Rights Office concerned: Spokesperson for the UN Human Rights Office Marta Hurtado expressed concern on Friday over reports of the killing of large numbers of civilians including children in several villages in Burkina Faso.

In a statement issued from Geneva, Hurtado also noted that at least two international media outlets had been temporarily suspended after reporting on some of these incidents.



Chinese President Xi Jinping, (centre), holds a meeting with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, (third left), and officials at the Great Hall of the People on April 26 in Beijing, China. (AP)

Asia

Head of Vietnam's parliament resigns

Blinken meets with China's President Xi

BEIJING, April 27, (Agencies): US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met Friday with Chinese President Xi Jinping and senior Chinese officials, stressing the importance of "responsibly managing" the differences between the United States and China as the two sides butted heads over a number of contentious bilateral, regional and global issues.

Talks between the two sides have increased in recent months, even as differences have grown. Blinken said he raised concerns with Xi about China's support for Russia and its invasion of Ukraine, as well as other issues including Taiwan and the South China Sea, human rights and the production and export of synthetic opioid precursors.

Progress

Blinken sounded a positive note on recent progress made in bilateral cooperation, including in military communications, counternarcotics and artificial intelligence, on which the two sides agreed to start a dialogue on how to reduce risks from the rapidly emerging technology.

"We are committed to maintaining and strengthening lines of communication to advance that agenda, and again deal responsibly with our differences so we avoid any miscommunications, any miscalculations," he said.

But he stressed that "even as we seek to deepen cooperation, where our interests align, the United States is very clear-eyed about the challenges posed by (China) and about our competing visions for the future. America will always defend our core interests and values."

Notably, he said he raised ongoing concerns about Beijing's supply of materials, including machine tools and micro electronics, to Moscow that President Vladimir Putin is using to boost Russia's defenses and its war on Ukraine.

"Russia would struggle to sustain its assault on Ukraine without China's support," Blinken told reporters after his meeting with Xi.

He said he urged China to use its influence "to discourage Iran and its proxies from expanding the conflict in the Middle East" and convince North Korea "to end its dangerous behavior and engage in dialogue."

Blinken also discussed with Xi China's maritime maneuvers in the disputed South China Sea, and reiterated "iron-clad" American support for the Philippines, its oldest treaty ally in Asia.

Xi Jinping said Friday China and the US should be partners rather than

France, Philippines to start talks on visiting forces agreement: Fontanel

MANILA, Philippines, April 27, (Agencies): France and the Philippines will begin talks next month on a defense pact that would allow troops from each country to hold exercises in the other's territory, the French ambassador said.

French and Philippine officials will meet in Paris next month for talks on a visiting forces agreement, French Ambassador to the Philippines Marie Fontanel said.

She said the defense chiefs of both countries agreed in Manila last December to pursue such an accord.

"We will have an opportunity in May to maybe start officially the negotiations or, at least, discuss the modalities," Fontanel said at a news conference with French Ambassador to the Indo-Pacific Marc Abensour.

The Philippines currently has status-of-forces agreements with the United States and Australia. The agreements provide a legal framework for the entry of foreign forces into a country.

Manila has pursued similar

agreements with other countries, including Japan and France, amid escalating disputes with China in the South China Sea. Since last year, Chinese and Philippine coast guard ships and accompanying vessels have been involved in high seas skirmishes which included minor collisions and injuries to Philippine navy personnel near disputed shoals in the contested waters.

In addition to China and the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan are also involved in the long-running territorial disputes, a potential Asian flashpoint that could bring the U.S. and China into a collision course if disputes escalate into a major conflict.

France has been boosting its security engagements with the Philippines. A French navy ship is joining US and Philippine navy ships in and near the disputed South China Sea as part of largescale combat-readiness exercises by longtime treaty allies Manila and Washington that started Monday.

rivals and seek common ground and reserve differences rather than engage in vicious competition, state-run Xinhua News Agency reported.

Also:

HANOI, Vietnam: The head of Vietnam's parliament has resigned, according to state media, making him the latest senior member of government to leave office amid an ongoing anti-corruption campaign that's shaken the country's political and business elites.

The resignation of National Assembly Chair **Vuong Dinh Hue** adds to growing instability in the country. President **Vo Van Thuong** resigned in March - just over a year after the previous president, **Nguyen Xuan Phuc**, resigned to take political responsibility for corruption scandals during the pandemic.

"It also highlights the extreme uncertainty in a political environment that's often boasted of its stability, as three top leaders have been axed in just a year," said **Nguyen Khac Giang**, an analyst at Singapore's ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

Hue's resignation came days after his assistant **Pham Thai Ha** was ar-

rested on charges of abusing his position and power for personal gain on April 21, according to state media outlet VN Express.

NEWCASTLE, Australia: Muslim groups in Australia on Friday criticized the disparity in the police response to two stabbing attacks in Sydney this month, saying it had created a perception of a double standard and further alienated the country's minority Muslim community.

The Australian National Imams Council said an attack at a Bondi Junction shopping center was "quickly deemed a mental health issue" while the stabbing of a Christian bishop at a Sydney church two days later was "classified as a terrorist act almost immediately."

"The differing treatments of two recent violent incidents are stark," the council's spokesperson, Ramia Abdo Sultan, said in a statement with the Alliance of Australian Muslims and the Australian Muslim Advocacy Network.

"Such disparities in response create a perception of a double standard in law enforcement and judicial processes," she said.

and run. My sister, who lived on the third floor, ended up being burned to death," 56-year-old Marcelo Wagner Schelech told daily newspaper Zero Hora.

Known as Garoa Floresta, the hotel is part of the Garoa group, a chain that has 22 other small hotels in Porto Alegre. In 2022, a fire broke out in another one of the

hotels, killing one person and injuring 11. Porto Alegre Mayor **Sebastião Melo** said in a press conference his administration had signed an agreement with the company in 2020 for the use of 400 of its rooms to shelter homeless people. (AP)

Mexican family protests: The family and supporters of a missing woman who may have been the first victim of a Mexico City serial killer protested Friday at the site where the bones and possessions of a half-dozen women were found last week.

Protesters covered the facade of the apartment building with placards after investigators found the bones, cell phones and ID cards of several women at rented rooms there, apparent mementos of the killer's 12-year trail of victims.

Most of the placards taped to the nondescript apartment building on the city's east side Friday asked variants of a single question: Why did it take prosecutors 12 years to investigate the disappearance of Amairany Roblero, then 18.

The high school student vanished in 2012 and her parents never heard from her - or investigators - until last week, a pattern all too familiar in missing persons cases in Mexico, where prosecutors often leave it up to relatives to investigate. (AP)



Kenyan Red Cross personnel and volunteers conduct search and rescue missions, around houses submerged by flood water in Machakos county, Kenya on April 22. Flooding and heavy rains in Kenya have killed at least 70 people since mid-March, a government spokesperson said Friday, twice as many as were reported earlier this week. (AP)



Melo



Fatton

Lat/Am

Leaders take on Haiti chaos: It has been only a day since the transitional presidential council was installed in Haiti, and the list of demands on the Caribbean nation's new leaders is rapidly growing. Haitians want security, food, jobs - and they want them now.

The members of the council, tasked with bringing political stability to Haiti, are under immense pressure to produce quick results, despite a deep-seated crisis that has been years in the making.

Making Haiti safer is a priority. More than 2,500 people were killed or injured from January to March alone, and more than 90,000 have fled the capital of Port-au-Prince so far this year amid relentless gang violence.

"The task is really monumental," said **Robert Fatton**, a Haitian politics expert at the University of Virginia. (AP)

Save the Children disputes claims: The aid group Save the Children said there is nothing to support accusations of misconduct, speaking after Guatemalan prosecutors raided its offices in the Central American country looking for evidence of alleged abuse of migrant children.

"We have been shocked and puzzled by the unprecedented search of our offices by the Public Prosecutor's Office in Guatemala," the organization said in a press release Thursday night hours after the raid.

The group said it was not aware of any specific accusations against it. "We defend the rights of children and adolescents and ensure that they survive, learn and are protected from harm in more than 100 countries around the world," said the group, which has worked in Guatemala since 1976. (AP)

Brazil hotel fire kills 10: A fire tore through a small hotel in the southern Brazilian city of Porto Alegre early Friday, killing at least 10 people and injuring 11, authorities said.

The fire broke out in the early hours in the three-story building, which provided affordable housing in single rooms and had a contract with the municipal government to shelter homeless people.

The establishment didn't have proper licensing and lacked an emergency fire plan, the fire brigade of the Rio Grande do Sul state said.

A witness told local media that he managed to leave his room at around 2 a.m. after the fire broke out, dashing through smoke as flames approached.

"I only had time to put on my flip-flops



Children pose for photos with flower-decorated installations during the Flowers and Gardens Festival in Mexico City, Mexico on April 26. (Xinhua)

	Change	Closing pts
JAPAN	- Nikkei 225	+306.28 37,934.76
PHILIPPINES	- PSEI	+53.87 6,628.75
PAKISTAN	- KSE 100	+704.81 72,744.94
BRITAIN	- FTSE 100	+60.97 8,139.83
EUROPE	- Euro Stoxx 50	+67.84 5,006.85

	Change	Closing pts
DUBAI	- DFMGI	-21.64 4,148.23

Business

Commitment to delivering value and building trust

'NBK Wealth' emerges as largest local & regional wealth management group

KUWAIT CITY, APRIL 27: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) held a press conference at its headquarters to unveil the NBK Wealth brand identity. During the event, Mr. Faisal Al-Hamad, Chief Executive Officer, NBK Wealth, presented the strategic vision behind the launch of the NBK Wealth brand, positioning it as the leading wealth management group in the local market and one of the largest in the region.

During the press conference, Al-Hamad emphasized that NBK Wealth, as a new brand, represents a strategic milestone, deriving its strength from the esteemed legacy of NBK Group, a leader in both the regional and global financial landscape.

Al-Hamad emphasized that NBK Wealth represents a significant advancement in distinguishing itself from competitors by offering distinctive services such as asset management, brokerage, lending, deposits, and a range of customized and innovative solutions

tailored for high-net-worth individuals and institutional clients. This initiative contributes to strengthening the Group's diversification endeavors.

He explained that NBK Wealth encompasses a comprehensive range of services and products, including, Watani Investment Company, Watani Wealth Management Company (Saudi Arabia), NBK Banque Privée (Suisse), along with National Bank of Kuwait (International) PLC and Watani Financial Brokerage Company (WFBC).

Al-Hamad also pointed out that by the end of 2023, NBK Wealth's Assets Under Management (AUM) exceeded US\$ 20 billion.

"Our brand has strengthened its global footprint with an extensive network of comprehensive operations spanning 9 cities across 5 countries worldwide. Additionally, our valuable partnerships with JPMorgan Asset Management and Interset further leverage multiple dimensions, including



Mr. Faisal Al-Hamad, Chief Executive Officer of NBK Wealth, presents the strategic vision behind the launch of the NBK Wealth brand.

advisory services and the development of new investment solutions", Al-Hamad said. "We do not offer pre-packaged so-

lutions. We value the significance of comprehending the unique requirements and financial objectives of each client to craft a tailored wealth management plan. Our core principle is to prioritize clients' needs and build long-lasting, strong relationships with them," Al Hamad added.

Al-Hamad also expressed NBK Wealth's commitment to becoming the premier partner for its clients, striving to be the leading and trusted option in wealth management. This is achieved through delivering specialized, comprehensive solutions that generate additional value, foster positive outcomes, and establish a legacy spanning generations for our clients.

He emphasized that NBK Wealth firmly believes in its ability to assist clients in addressing these challenges through implementing robust investment strategies, diversifying their financial portfolios, and offering investment guidance based on thorough

analysis of prevailing economic conditions.

When asked about NBK Wealth's plans for the future, Al-Hamad responded, "We recognize the perpetual flux of market dynamics and the ever-evolving nature of client needs. Hence, we emphasize the necessity of adaptability in response to these changes and the provision of innovative investment strategies that align with our clients' objectives".

In his speech during the press conference, Al-Hamad highlighted the extensive expertise of NBK Wealth's team, stating, "We provide our clients with numerous unique advantages, ensuring them an unmatched experience. This encompasses personalized services customized to meet their specific needs and financial objectives, delivered by a dedicated team of over 125 investment professionals and traders, in addition to 75 relationship managers."

World Bank warns of conflict-driven inflation risk in Mideast

Geopolitical tensions keep oil prices elevated

WASHINGTON, April 27, (KUNA): A major outbreak of conflict in the Middle East could halt the inflationary decline that has occurred over the past two years, warned the World Bank Thursday.

"An escalation of the conflict in the Middle East could also drive up prices of natural gas, fertilizers, and food, the report notes," reads the World Bank's latest Commodity Markets Outlook report.

"The region is a crucial gas supplier-20 percent of global liquefied natural gas (LNG) trade transits the Strait of Hormuz. If the LNG supply were interrupted, fertilizer prices would also rise substantially, likely driving up food prices."

The Bank's baseline forecast, however, is for overall food prices to decline somewhat-by 6 percent in 2024 and 4 percent in 2025. Fertilizer prices are expected to fall by 22 percent in 2024 and 6 percent in 2025.

The report found that global commodity prices are leveling off after a steep descent that played a decisive role in whittling down overall inflation last year, which could make it harder for central banks to cut interest rates quickly.

It pointed out that between mid-2022 and mid-2023, global commodity prices plummeted by nearly 40 percent. This helped to drive most of the roughly 2-percentage-point reduction in global inflation between 2022 and 2023.

Annual profit rate of 6.625%

KIB issues \$300 million additional tier 1 Sukuk

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: The Chairman of KIB, Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah stated that "As a result of Kuwait International Bank's ("KIB") outstanding achievements during the last few years, the solid financial position, its strong credit rating, in line with its well-planned expansionary strategy and its sustainability; and to maintain an appropriate capital adequacy ratio (CAR) level, the Bank decided on issuing an Additional Tier 1 ("AT1") Sukuk, which was approved by its Annual General Assembly and all competent regulatory bodies.

On Wednesday, 24 April 2024, KIB successfully priced a USD 300 Million AT1 perpetual Sukuk that is classified under Tier 1 capital as per Basel III and CBK guidelines at an annual profit rate of 6.625%. KIB received high demand from investors, as evidenced an oversubscription of over Two times. The final pricing represents the tightest spread ever achieved on an AT1 Sukuk globally with 195 bps spread over US Treasuries. This issuance of perpetual Non-Call 5.5 years Sukuk, is based on "Mudarabah" structure and complied with the Islamic Sharia'a principles.

This issuance has been arranged with efforts made by a group of participating parties including Citi Group and Standard Chartered who acted as Joint Global Coordinators. Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank PJSC, Al Dawli Invest Investment Company K.S.C.C ("KIB Invest"), Bank of Sharjah PJSC, Citigroup Global Markets Limited, Dubai Islamic Bank PJSC, Emirates NBD Bank PJSC, First Abu Dhabi Bank PJSC, KAMCO Invest Company K.S.C.P., Mashreqbank PJSC (acting through its Islamic Banking Division), SMBC Nikko Capital Markets Limited and Standard Chartered Bank acted as Joint Lead Managers and Bookrunners. The roadshow launched

by KIB attracted investors from the international and regional investors.

On this occasion, Mr. Raed Jawad Bukhameen, Vice Chairman and CEO of KIB, stated: "This Sukuk transaction is clear evidence that Kuwait possesses the components required to attract international investors to enter the Kuwaiti market. We are very pleased with the outcome of this Sukuk transaction, which is the third issuance by KIB, the first AT1 sukuk issuance was in 2019 and the second Tier 2 sukuk issuance was in 2020." He also added: "I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to the regulatory authorities represented by the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Capital Markets Authority for their continued support to the issuance of Sukuk by our bank, including extending their regulatory approvals and guidance in this regard. I would also like to appreciate the relentless efforts of the global coordinators, lead managers and book runners. My gratitude is also extended to all local and international investors, and to the bank's management team, who participated in realizing this achievement."

Bukhameen added: "This AT1 Sukuk has been issued as capital instrument under Basel III Capital Adequacy compliance and in line with the rules and regulations of the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Capital Markets Authority, to be made available for trading in the secondary market, and will be listed on London Stock Exchange's Market. He also added: "The demand for Sukuk issued by our bank reflects the confidence shown in the strength and solidity of the Kuwaiti banking sector, in general, and the Islamic banking and KIB in particular."

He also commented: "The issuance of perpetual Non-Call 5.5 years Sukuk, which is in accordance with Islamic Sharia'a, is an important step in fostering the significant role of Sukuk as one of the main products of Islamic banking transactions.

The issuance is based on "Mudarabah" structure by which banks may extend financing facilities to governments and companies, and thus, Sukuk has become a vital component of the global financial market."

Finally, he mentioned that this exceptional demand for KIB's Sukuk is a clear indication of the confidence shown by both local and international investors in our strategy, as well as our consistent financial performance.

Since mid-2023, however, the World Bank's index of commodity prices has remained essentially unchanged.

Assuming no further flare-up in geopolitical tensions, the Bank's forecasts call for a decline of 3 percent in global commodity prices in 2024 and 4 percent in 2025.

It added that that pace will do little to subdue inflation that remains above central bank targets in most countries. It will keep commodity prices about 38 percent higher than they were on average in the five years before the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Global inflation remains undefeated," said Indermit Gill, the World Bank Group's Chief Economist and Senior Vice President.

"A key force for disinflation-falling commodity prices-has essentially hit a wall. That means interest rates could remain higher than currently expected this year and next. The world is at a vulnerable moment; a major energy shock could undermine much of the progress in reducing inflation over the past two years."

The Bank said that persistently high geopolitical tensions over the past two years have propped up the price of oil and many other critical commodities even as global growth has slowed.

The price of Brent crude oil, for example, surged to USD 91 per barrel earlier this month-nearly USD 34 per barrel above the 2015-2019 average.

The Bank's forecasts indicate that Brent prices will average USD 84 per barrel in 2024 before declining to an average of USD 79 in 2025, assuming no conflict-related supply disruptions.

If the conflict in the Middle East were to escalate further, however, oil-supply disruptions could push up global inflation.

A moderate conflict-related supply disruption could raise the average Brent price this year to USD 92 per barrel. A more severe disruption could see oil prices surpass USD 100 per barrel, raising global inflation in 2024 by nearly one percentage point.

"A striking divergence is emerging between global growth and commodity prices: despite relatively weaker global growth, commodity prices will most likely remain higher in 2024-25 than in the half-decade before the COVID-19 pandemic," said Ayan Kose, the World Bank Group's Deputy Chief Economist and Director of the Prospects Group.

"One critical factor behind this divergence relates to heightened geopolitical tensions that are keeping upward pressure on prices of major commodities and stoking risks of sharp price movements. Central banks must remain alert about the inflationary implications of commodity-price spikes amid elevated geopolitical tensions."

The average price of gold-a popular choice for investors seeking "safe haven"-is expected to hit a record in 2024 before moderating slightly in 2025. Gold holds a special status among assets, often rising in price during periods of geopolitical and policy uncertainty, including conflicts. Strong demand from several developing-country central banks, along with heightened geopolitical challenges, is expected to bolster gold prices throughout 2024.

Other Voices

Oil prices stabilize amid global economic growth

By Kamel Al-Harami
Independent Oil Analyst

THE three biggest economic powers and the three largest oil consumers - the USA, China, and India - are set for stable economic growth, thereby pushing for increased demand for oil. This has helped in stabilizing oil prices after two weeks of losses and concerns about further decline in the oil prices. Currently, the prices seem to be back on track, hovering around \$90 per barrel. This is the level that is acceptable to all oil producers. It could potentially offer a buffer and reassurance if OPEC+ finds it necessary to adjust its production quota due to any tightening in the oil market.



Al-Harami

The decrease in inventories in the USA, coupled with escalating tensions in the Middle East, has propelled the rise in barrel prices. Additionally, optimism surrounding economic growth and expected inflation last month has fueled increased investment in oil exploration. This effort aims to maintain their status as the leading oil producers, further widening the gap between the top OPEC+ members.

On the other hand, China's growth exceeded expectations last month, reaching 5.3%, signaling a steady rate of 5% for the current year. Its oil demand is projected to surpass 500,000 barrels per day, accounting for nearly 50% of global growth projections. With a daily oil consumption reaching around 14.5 million barrels, China is poised to become a key cus-

tommer for Arabian Gulf producers. Saudi Aramco has taken the lead in directly selling crude oil and petroleum products, as well as building and investing in grassroots refineries, recognizing China's energy significance. The rest of the producers have to play "Catch me if you can".

The third country to watch and invest in is India, with its oil consumption hovering around 5 million barrels. It is projected to surpass China by 2027 and become the fastest-growing major economy. India is poised to be a focal point for Gulf producers, necessitating further upstream investments. It's imperative for us to focus on investing in India, particularly in its oil sectors, especially in refining.

The two crucial oil-importing nations that we need to observe and follow are India and China. Kuwait has been exporting petroleum products to India since 1971 and to China in more recent years, primarily with Kuwaiti crude oils. It is essential to maintain strong ties with these countries and secure long-term partnerships for Kuwaiti hydrocarbons, considering it is our core business focus.

Meanwhile, the USA markets should be viewed as occasional spot buyers and a last resort, with the intention to keep it that way.

Today the oil market is stable with balance in both supply and demand. It appears that there is currently more oil available in the markets compared to the past, despite the adherence to OPEC+ quotas.

As a result, oil prices are expected to remain firm and may even rise further in the upcoming months, particularly during the winter season. This could prompt OPEC+ to increase oil production, especially if prices exceed \$90 per barrel. email: nafkuwaiti@yahoo.com

Resilient lending and higher oil prices drive growth

Elevated interest rates boost GCC banks despite tight liquidity

By KAMCO Invest

Elevated interest rates globally and in the GCC as well as a steep downgrade to the number of cuts expected this year is expected to be largely positive for GCC banks.

This comes as sector benefits from resilient lending in almost all markets as well as higher oil prices offset tight liquidity conditions in specific high-growth markets like Saudi Arabia.

Moreover, any rate cut expected this year would also be beneficial for the banks as it eases pressure on cost of funding front and further supports lending activity.

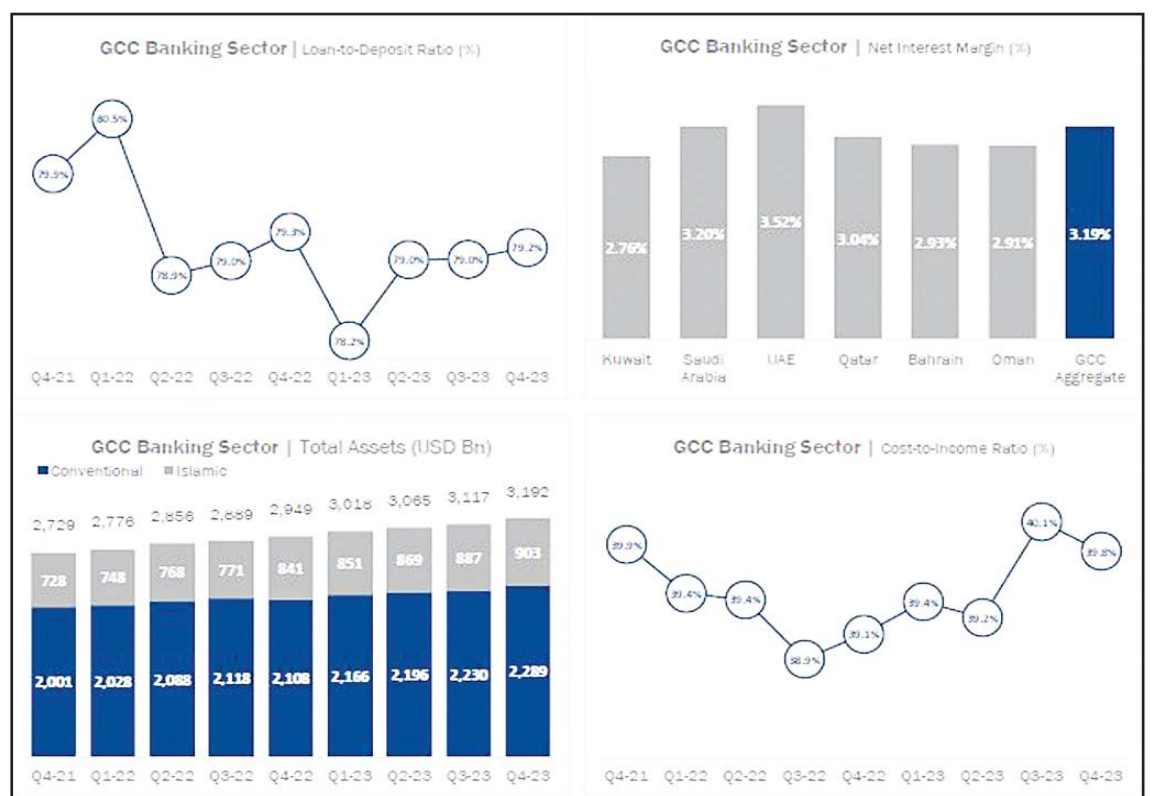
Meanwhile, the latest comments from the US Fed and forecasts on rate cuts point to much bleak picture in terms of rate cuts, especially in the US and indicates a divergent monetary policy vs. EU and other major economies.

In terms of lending activity in the GCC, outstanding credit facilities witnessed a healthy q-o-q growth of 2.1% during Q4-2023 with aggregate gross loans reaching USD 2.0 Trillion.

The y-o-y growth was even stronger at 7.0% during the quarter.

All country aggregates in the GCC showed growth in lending during the quarter that came after mixed trends during the previous quarter.

The growth once again reflected a robust projects market pipeline in the region with recent reports



showing governments now looking at funding support in the form of debt issuances to support the ongoing activity.

On the liquidity front, customer deposits increased at an equivalent pace of 2.1% q-o-q to reach USD 2.39 Trillion at the end of Q4-2023, once again led by growth in deposits in all markets in the GCC.

The net impact of an almost equivalent growth in lending and

deposits was a marginal improvement in the aggregate loan-to-deposit ratio for the aggregate GCC banking sector that reached 79.2% at the end of Q4-2023.

Meanwhile, total net income was up for the fourth consecutive quarter to reach USD 14.2 Bn in Q4-2023 registering a q-o-q increase of 2.4% supported by both higher net interest income and non-interest income during the quarter. Higher interest rates supported

net interest income during the quarter while elevated financial markets with double digit growth in the MSCI World index and high single digit growth in emerging market equity indices supported non-interest income.

In addition, almost all key asset classes globally witnessed growth during the quarter, including double-digit growth in gold and bond benchmarks.

Japan's cbank maintains monetary policy

Japan's central bank on Friday kept its policy rate unchanged, while downgrading its assessment of the country's economy. At a two-day policy meeting, Bank of Japan's (BOJ) Governor Kazuo Ueda and his eight board colleagues decided to guide short-term interest rates in a range of zero to 0.1 percent, holding the policy the BOJ made in March, when it raised interest rates for the first time in 17

years, according to a statement released by the BOJ. The central bank will also continue purchasing 10-year Japanese government bonds in line with the March decision. Meanwhile, in its outlook report published after the meeting, the BOJ revised down growth forecast for the world's third-largest economy, saying it is expected to grow 0.8 percent in the current fiscal year that be-

gan in April, compared with the 1.2 percent growth estimated in January. "Japan's economy is likely to keep growing at a pace above its potential growth rate, with overseas economies growing moderately and as a virtuous cycle from income to spending gradually intensifies against the background of factors such as accommodative financial conditions," the central bank said. The BOJ raised its outlook for

mining giant rejects BHP's \$39b takeover offer

U.K.-based mining giant Anglo American has rejected a 31 billion pound (\$39 billion) takeover offer from BHP Group, saying it significantly undervalues the company and its growth potential. Anglo said Friday that its board unanimously rejected the "unsolicited" and "highly conditional" bid from BHP, which was announced a day earlier. The deal would create the world's largest

copper miner, with around 10% of global output - a hugely lucrative market as the world transitions to clean energy. Anglo said in a statement to the London Stock Exchange that the BHP proposal is "opportunistic" and "fails to value" the company's prospects. "Anglo American is well positioned to create significant value from its portfolio of high quality assets that are well aligned with

the energy transition and other major demand trends," said chairman Stuart Chambers. "Anglo American has defined clear strategic priorities, of operational excellence, portfolio, and growth, to deliver full value potential and is entirely focused on that delivery," he added. Anglo American's shares were steady Friday, having risen 16% to 25.60 pounds the day before. (AP)

Recognized as Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait and Türkiye, and for Best Hybrid Deal of the Year

KFH Group wins 3 awards from Islamic Finance News

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: Kuwait Finance House Group (KFH) triumphed at the 2023 Islamic Finance News Awards, receiving three prestigious recognitions from IFN magazine. KFH Group was named Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait, and its subsidiary KFH-Türkiye secured the Best Islamic Bank in Türkiye award. Additionally, KFH Capital, KFH's investment arm, clinched the Hybrid Deal of the Year 2023 award for its role in Energy Development of Oman's US\$1 billion hybrid Ijarah-Tawarruq Sukuk. This recognition further strengthens KFH's impressive track record of winning major international awards from prestigious institutions. Last year alone, KFH secured a remarkable 26 awards spanning both Kuwaiti and Islamic banking categories. Winning these awards confirms KFH Group's high standing, diversified capabilities, and commitment to quality. They also highlight the Group's strong operational performance and the distinction it brings to the Islamic banking industry. The awards were based on a referendum conducted by IFN magazine, with the participation of Islamic and conventional financial institutions, investors and government representatives

from all over the world. During a ceremony held in Dubai, KFH Deputy General Manager Public Relations and Media, Youssef Abdullah Al-Ruwaiheh, Assistant Vice President of Debt Capital Markets Department at KFH Capital, Khalid Alshami, KFH-Türkiye Human Resources Director, Semih Sel, and KFH-Türkiye Vice President Corporate Communications, Fatih Kamasoglu received the awards on behalf of KFH Group. These awards confirm the systematic and integrated work that governs the Group's performance. They also express the extent of coordination and cooperation between its subsidiaries, as well as its capabilities to achieve growth, expansion, and deliver important qualitative additions to its work in the markets where it operates. Additionally, these awards serve as an incentive for KFH to pursue further achievement and success, commensurate with the interest it has received from various international bodies and institutions. KFH places great importance on achieving quality, strong management of its capabilities, and maximizing the benefit it derives from its human and material resources through integrated work. These efforts have made KFH a respected institution, followed by



Semih Sel, receiving the Baytak Award - Türkiye.



Khalid Alshami receiving the KFH Capital Award.



Youssef Abdullah Al-Ruwaiheh receiving the Baytak Award.

organizations that oversee the performance of banks in general, and Islamic banks specifically. KFH recognizes that its diversified presence across multiple fields and markets offers a significant advantage. This is why the bank is prioritizing improvements in service levels, performance indicators, and quality across the entire group. By adopting global standards in all aspects of its work, KFH strives to join the ranks of major international banks.

Recognizing human capital as a key driver of success, KFH fosters a culture of excellence by attracting and developing top talent. The bank achieves this through comprehensive training programs that equip employees with the latest skills and knowledge to stay ahead of the curve. KFH succeeded in providing an integrated system of technical, financing, and banking services compatible with Sharia principles, meeting the ambitions and expectations of its cus-

tomers. This harmony between Sharia compliance and cutting-edge banking technology established KFH as a pioneer in the industry, laying the foundation for the sustainable growth of Islamic finance in Kuwait and around the world. KFH has extensive experience in Islamic banking and arranging major deals, as well as leading the financing of giant development projects in the field of infrastructure, covering many vital sectors and contributing to ad-

vancing the economy in the countries in which it operates. He pointed out that KFH will continue to work according to the plans set in all markets, with a focus on the Kuwaiti market. It is worth noting that the Islamic Finance News (IFN) group recognized KFH for its achievements in the Islamic banking sector. Special committees comprised of international experts and analysts evaluated institutions and transactions based on a set of financial criteria throughout 2023.

Retreat or...?

Decoding of foreign investment in China

BEIJING, April 27, (Xinhua): For those who just sit in offices and focus solely on numbers, it will remain an open question whether China is losing its allure to multinational corporations and becoming "un-investable." Foreign direct investment (FDI) in China experienced a year-on-year decrease in the first quarter of this year, while the number of newly established foreign-invested companies saw a significant growth of 20.7 percent. Moreover, FDI in high-tech manufacturing occupied a larger proportion of the total. Behind these figures are global investors exiting the China market en masse or increasing their bets instead? Xinhua reporters travelled to the country's eastern and southern regions, where most foreign-funded firms are located, to learn about their take on investing in China and what they are doing and planning to do. "Risky" To Decouple

U.S. food giant Kraft Heinz's Asia headquarters, which was relocated from Singapore to Shanghai due to "the growing importance of China business," was officially certified recently by the Shanghai government. "China has a large population and vast market space, and the demand for diversified and high-end consumption is increasing day by day," said Frederico Freire Jardim, Asia President of Kraft Heinz, which will invest 320 million yuan (45 million U.S. dollars) in China this year after investing 670 million yuan over the past three years. German chemical giant BASF's Verbund site in Zhanjiang city, south China's Guangdong Province, months ago started production of TPU, a material widely used in new energy vehicles (NEVs), biological medicine and other sectors. "China is now the world's largest chemical market and it has great strategic importance for BASF," said Haryono Lim, President of Mega Projects Asia, BASF (China) Company Ltd., Shanghai. The Verbund site in Zhanjiang with a total investment of some 10 billion euros (10.7 billion U.S. dollars), which is BASF's largest ever overseas investment, will become an important platform for the company to achieve profitability and sustainable growth in China in the future, Lim added.

Many other multinationals are also striking gold in the gigantic market of the world's second largest economy that grew 5.2 percent last year despite the lukewarm global recovery. In fiscal year 2022/23, ZEISS in Greater China generated annual revenue totaling 13.5 billion yuan, up 22 percent compared to the prior year. Bosch Group's sales in China increased 5.2 percent last year to 139.1 billion yuan, which accounted for about one fifth of its global total. The dynamism of the China market has long been seen by many European businesses as an important contributor to their global competitiveness, according to a report by the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China. "Many members view detaching from the Chinese market as being the main risk to their global operations," the report read. "Critical" Supply Chain, Innovation In Rugao city of east China's Jiangsu Province, workshops of Swedish truck maker Scania are being built in full swing. The new factory is expected to launch production in 2025 and effectively raise the company's global production capacity with an annual Mats Harborn, President of Scania China Group, hailed China's leading position in innovation, particularly in areas such as electrification, autonomous driving and intelligent connected vehicles.

Fed's 'inflation gauge' shows price pressures stayed elevated last mth

Gas prices jumped again

WASHINGTON, April 27, (AP): A measure of inflation closely tracked by the Federal Reserve remained uncomfortably high in March, likely reinforcing the Fed's reluctance to cut interest rates anytime soon and underscoring a burden for President Joe Biden's re-election bid. Friday's report from the government showed that prices rose 0.3% from February to March, the same as in the previous month. It was the third straight month that the index has run at a pace faster than is consistent with the Fed's 2% inflation target. Measured from a year earlier, prices were up 2.7% in March, up from a 2.5% annual rise in February. After peaking at 7.1% in 2022, the Fed's favored inflation index steadily cooled for most of 2023. Yet so far this year, the index has remained stuck above the central bank's target rate. More expensive gas and higher prices for restaurant meals, health care and auto repairs and insurance, among other items, have kept the overall pace of price increases elevated.

With new-car prices up sharply in the past few years, auto repair and replacement costs have risen especially fast. Auto insurance, a major driver of inflation in recent months, was up 8% in March from a year earlier. Gas prices jumped again last month, the government said - up 1.6% just from February to March. So far in April, gas prices are up still further, to a national average of \$3.66 a gallon, from \$3.53 a month ago. Grocery prices, though, were unchanged last month and are up only 1.5% from a year earlier. "This isn't going to sit overly well with the Fed," said Ryan Sweet, chief U.S. economist at Oxford Economics. "I think it's clear that they're going to keep rates higher for longer." Like many economists, Sweet envisions no rate cuts before September. Friday's inflation data showed that excluding volatile food and energy costs, "core" prices rose by an elevated 0.3% from February to March, unchanged from the previous month. Compared with a year earlier, core prices rose 2.8% for a second straight month. The Fed closely tracks core prices, which tend to provide a particularly good read of where inflation is headed. The chronically elevated measures of inflation have become a source of frustra-



A clearance sign is displayed at a retail clothing store in Downers Grove, Ill., Monday, April 1, 2024. On Friday, April 26, 2024, the Commerce Department issued its March report on consumer spending. (AP)

Development fuels US inflation

Surging auto insurance rates squeeze drivers

NEW YORK, April 27, (AP): Relentlessly rising auto insurance rates are squeezing car owners and stoking inflation. Auto insurance rates rose 2.6% in March and are up 22% from a year ago. Premium costs have been marching steadily higher since 2022, even as inflation at the consumer level steadily cooled. The Fed, whose policymakers had projected as recently as last month that they expected to cut their benchmark rate three times this year. Most economists expected the cuts to begin in June. More recently, though, several Fed officials, including Chair Jerome Powell, have sug-

gested that they have no immediate plans to cut their key rate, a move that would eventually lead to lower rates for mortgages, auto loans, credit cards and many business loans. "Recent data have clearly not given us greater confidence" that inflation

is coming fully under control, Powell said last week, and "instead indicate that it's likely to take longer than expected to achieve that confidence." "If higher inflation does persist," he added, "we can maintain the current level of (interest rates) for as long as

needed." Many economists say they think the Fed may end up cutting its key rate only once or twice this year, perhaps beginning in September. Others say they think the central bank may not cut its benchmark rate at all in 2024.

The Philippines hones skills of its workforce in digital technology

MANILA, April 27, (Xinhua): The Philippine government is honing the skills of the Filipino workforce in digital technology as the country aims to create 45 million "green and high-quality jobs," according to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) statement released Friday night. During Friday's meeting with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and the DTI, Trade and Industry Secretary Alfredo Pascual highlighted the crucial role of digital capabilities in elevating the Philippine workforce. "We are steering our workforce

towards high-value tasks that enable them to climb the ladder of value creation," said Pascual, adding that the move "is especially crucial in the field of digital technology, which does not require extensive machinery but focuses on intellectual and creative skills." He said the DTI and DOLE collabo-

ration aims "to establish a robust employment framework focused on job creation, quality, and sustainability." Pascual also announced the government's initiative to create digital learning hubs, which will equip Filipinos with the skills needed to thrive in the global market.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, the digital economy amounted to 2.05 trillion pesos (35.396 billion U.S. dollars) in 2023, contributing 8.4 percent to the country's gross domestic product, while employing 9.68 million people nationwide.



Sheikha Dana Naser Al Sabah with Enbat graduates, trainers and partners.



Sheikha Dana Naser Al Sabah with KIPCO's Corporate Communications team.



Sheikha Dana Naser Al Sabah



Abdulrahman Al Khaldi speaking on behalf of the graduates.



Eman Al Awadhi giving KIPCO's speech.



Noor Al Khateeb speaking on behalf of en.v

Group SVP advocates youth empowerment for positive change

KIPCO celebrates graduates of its first 'Enbat' program

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: KIPCO – Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) – celebrated the graduation of the first class enrolled in the 'Enbat' program. Running for eight weeks from January to March, the KIPCO program offered new college graduates a space to foster skills that they may not have been exposed to during their education, and that employers feel are key competencies that new hires need to have.

The graduation was hosted by KIPCO's Group Chief Executive Officer, Sheikha Dana Naser Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah. The event celebrated the success of the Enbat graduates and their trainers, and also recognized the efforts of KIPCO's partners: en.v for designing the program curriculum and Blue Hat for contributing to the modules; Sharaf Studio for creating the brand identity; and the American University of Kuwait (AUK) and the American United School (AUS) for hosting the training sessions.

Speaking at the event, Ms Eman Al Awadhi, KIPCO's Group Senior Vice President – Corporate Communications and Investor Relations, said:

"Enbat, to germinate, is a word that holds so much meaning to us here at KIPCO, where we believe that it is through helping our people grow that we, as an organization, can achieve success. And this extends to our community. This program embodies KIPCO's commitment to nurturing talent, fostering innovation and investing in the future leaders of our community. We created Enbat because we believe in empowering individuals to drive positive change in society. We believe in equipping our youth with the skills, knowledge and mindset needed to thrive in an ever-changing world."

Addressing the graduates, she added:

"Today marks the culmination of your hard work, dedication and determination. As you embark on the next chapter of your journey, remember the lessons you have learnt, the friendships you have forged, and the experiences that have shaped you. Know that you carry within you the potential to make a difference, to lead with integrity, and to inspire others."

The Enbat program will be held on an annual basis, and the ceremony witnessed the launch of the 'Enbat Alumni Network', a platform that will enable the graduates, trainers and partners to stay connected, share experiences and continue the journey of growth and development.

Reflecting on his experiences during the program, Abdulrahman Al Khaldi spoke on behalf of the graduates and said:

"Enbat has allowed us to sharpen essential skills such as empathy, critical thinking, and teamwork – vital tools for navigating today's complexities. The program provided us with a platform to cultivate our talents and foster inclusivity in society. Equipped with newfound confidence, we are ready to tackle the challenges ahead and make meaningful contributions in our future endeavors. Let's carry forward the lessons learnt, and the connections made."

The program was designed in collaboration with en.v which has worked on a number of successful

programs, all of which focus on bringing together people representing different parts of the community and facilitate the process of building bridges, collaboration and connections.

Speaking on behalf of en.v, Ms Noor Al Khateeb said:

"When KIPCO approached en.v to design Enbat, we specifically looked at the gaps and challenges faced by young people as they enter the workplace. These skills, identified by many managers as essential for the success of new graduates in the workplace, include thinking critically and creatively, communicating effectively with others, and self-regulating in order to engage in healthy interpersonal relationships and adapt to changing work demands."

She added:

"Working to address these gaps, we specifically focused on building critical thinking, intercultural communication, leadership and design thinking skills. We encouraged participants to challenge assumptions, take risks and cultivate inquiry skills for creative problem-solving. Enbat sets graduates on a path of lifelong learning and asks them to take responsibility for themselves and be accountable to those around them."

Twenty participants took part in the first Enbat program. The eight facilitators of the program all have private sector experience and have been trained by en.v to help the participants build the core skills needed to become effective leaders and collaborators. The program includes four modules: Self, Systems, and Critical Thinking; Cross Cultural Communication; Design Thinking; and Work Culture & Applying Skills.

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: Continuing its commitment to supporting youth initiatives, Gulf Bank wrapped up its strategic sponsorship of the "Kilmitain" forum, organized by "Khaleejesque", a lifestyle magazine dedicated to exploring the continuously evolving cultural, artistic and design scenes in the Arab region. The forum aimed to empower creative industries in Kuwait by bringing together numerous experts and innovators for a series of seminars and panel discussions, attracting over 700 attendees from various professional backgrounds.

While serving as a keynote speaker in a panel discussion at the forum, Ms. Najla Al-Eisa, the Chief Marketing Officer at Gulf Bank, stated, "Gulf Bank is committed to fostering the talents and innovations of the youth across diverse sectors. This commitment stems from our strategic emphasis on youth as a core pillar of our organization."

She highlighted that participating in these events offers a distinctive platform for dialogue and the exchange of ideas among creative professionals – particularly in the marketing industry, where creativity and innovation are crucial for effectively communicating an institution's messages and objectives to its customers.

Al-Eisa stressed the bank's commitment to providing equal opportunities for everyone, from advertising agencies to individuals, to

Zain, SACGC host digital innovation and entrepreneurship workshop for students

Students learn startup essentials and pitching techniques

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: Zain and Sabah Al Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC) – a center of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), have jointly hosted a workshop for students from Kuwait University's College of Life Sciences, Department of Information Science. The insightful session covered the essentials of digital innovation and entrepreneurship.

This workshop came under the strategic partnership between Zain and SACGC, part of the Innovation Nation initiative that strives to foster creativity, innovation, digital upskilling, and entrepreneurship in the community. The initiative strives to share private sector expertise with students and graduates from schools and universities across Kuwait and has contributed to empowering thousands of aspiring young people through tens of interactive programs.

The workshop was attended by students and faculty members from the College of Life Sciences. It featured essential topics like establishing startups, building effective teams, creating an impactful brand, attracting potential investors, and developing strategies, services, and products. The session also gave the students exercises to make their own startups and pitch them



The students with Zain and SACGC officials.

to investors to achieve sustainable growth.

This step is a continuation of the fruitful collaboration between Zain and the Department of Information Science, College of Life Sciences. Last year, Zain hosted a special tour of its Subahiya data center for a

group of graduate students from the department. The visit provided the students with a firsthand understanding of Zain's cutting-edge infrastructure and its role in supporting Kuwait's digital transformation journey.

This initiative adds to the long list of programs co-presented by

Zain and Sabah Al Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity under their joint vision to achieve a number of strategic pillars, like fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, upskilling young people, empowering startup owners, investing in youth's digital skills, and more.

Gulf Bank's strategic sponsorship fuels creativity at 'Kilmitain' forum organized by 'Khaleejesque'



Najla Al-Eisa with the marketing team of Gulf Bank.

showcase their ideas. The bank prioritizes selecting ideas that are not only highly creative, but also align with its marketing goals; with an emphasis on modernity and innovation as key criteria for selection.

She noted that Gulf Bank aims to inspire and support the emerging generation of young creators, by highlighting their innovations and encouraging their development. The bank is dedicated to helping them overcome the chal-

lenges they encounter in implementing their innovative ideas and unleashing their creative potential.

Al-Eisa also mentioned that Gulf Bank's successful marketing campaigns in recent years, promoting its unique products and services, are the outcome of various factors. Creative ideas have consistently taken the lead, aligning with the aspirations and needs of customers.

Additionally, during the forum, Gulf Bank introduced a competition designed to draw in the creative ideas of young people in the field of advertising. Winners of this competition will have the chance to collaborate closely with Gulf Bank through all phases of idea implementation, from inception to completion. This opportunity allows them to fully develop their ideas and break into the advertising market through Gulf Bank, one of the most prominent financial institutions in Kuwait.

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

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

Chung's journey from 'Twister' fan to director of 'Twisters'

LOS ANGELES, April 27, (AP): Growing up in the Midwest, filmmaker Lee Isaac Chung developed both a healthy fear of tornadoes and a reverence for Jan de Bont's 1996 disaster film "Twister." He saw the movie in the theater with his family when he was a teenager.

"I remember thinking, 'I didn't know you could chase after these things,'" Chung said. "That, to me, was very mind-blowing."

These were forces of nature he and his schoolmates in rural Arkansas, near the Oklahoma border, were being taught how to safely hide from. And here's Helen Hunt, Bill Paxton, Philip Seymour Hoffman and Alan Ruck driving towards them. Intentionally.

When he was hired to direct "Twisters," storming theaters on July 19, he knew one thing was non-negotiable: They needed to shoot in Oklahoma, not on soundstages.

"I told everyone this is something that we have to do. We can't just have blue screens," Chung said. "We've got to be out there on the roads with our pickup trucks and in the green environments where this story actually takes place."

There would be sacrifices that would have to be made, cutting the number of shooting days to make the budget work, but it was important. "Twister" might have been a major blockbuster, the second-highest grossing film of 1996 behind "Independence Day," but for Chung it always seemed like a local film done in his backyard. He'd also filmed "Minari" there, his autobiographical family film that got six Oscar nominations, including best picture and director.

While most might remember "Minari" as a quiet, contemplative film, it was actually the one that got him thinking about doing something with more spectacle. At the end, there's a dramatic fire.

"We actually lit this barn on fire and just took the risk of filming it in one take," Chung said. "I remember being so filled with adrenaline after that that I was like 'I want to make a disaster film.'"

The first place he went to location scout for "Twisters" was a farmhouse. The owner came out and greeted Chung with a hug and the tidbit that he was actually an extra in "Minari."

"I felt like I was coming back home. It was a confirmation that we made the right call," Chung said. "'Minari' and 'Twisters,' even though they're very different, I kind of think of them as my Oklahoma movies."

There had been talk of a "Twister" follow-up for a few years, with Universal Pictures and Amblin Entertainment working with "The Revenant" screenwriter Mark L. Smith to develop a new story and figure out the best director for the job. Separately, Hunt was even reportedly at work on a next chapter, and there were several directors under consideration.

Passion

But Chung proved his passion to Steven Spielberg, Universal and Warner Bros., which is overseeing international distribution.

"It's like I could see it," he said. "I was firing off in my mind all the emotions that I want the audience to feel."

The movie, considered a standalone and not a direct sequel to the 1996 film, stars Daisy Edgar-Jones, Anthony Ramos and Glen Powell as a new bunch of storm chasers. None of the characters from the original are returning, but the legacy of their work is there - the Dorothy sensors are back and so are references to the fictional Muskogee State University.

"We do highlight the idea and the fact that, environmentally speaking, storms have become more unpredictable. Tornadoes have become

more unpredictable as well. That's just hard science," Chung said. "We also address the fact that the technology around what we can understand about tornadoes is growing as well."

They hit the ground running with production starting in spring 2023, to capitalize on the area's actual tornado season. One day, they were filming a scene of Edgar-Jones and her friends running from a giant tornado, trying to find safety. The crew was also getting warnings of a giant storm coming in and were cautioned to film what they needed as quickly as possible. Soon after they'd made their day and sent everyone home, they got a report that a tornado had touched down about 40 miles away.

Chung and his associate producer decided to celebrate with some of El Reno's famous fried onion burgers.

"We got the shots we needed. The skies were perfect because it looked like a tornado. We got everyone out of there safely. And a tornado actually touched the ground after we filmed it," Chung said. "It felt like a strange, 'only when you're making a movie' sort of day."

Everyone had gotten so used to shutting down for weather, tornadoes, storms, lightning, that when it became obvious that the actors were heading for a walkout there were plenty of jokes about "what's another strike?" Similar to Shawn Levy's experience with "Deadpool & Wolverine," it gave them time to take a breath and reassess.

"It felt good to go back in with renewed energy," Chung said.

Spielberg executive produced the original, but his fascination with tornadoes goes back further than that. Remember the scene in "The Fabelmans" when his mother takes the kids out to try to chase one themselves?

Film

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This image released by 20th Century Studios/Marvel Studios shows Ryan Reynolds as Deadpool/Wade Wilson and Hugh Jackman as Wolverine/Logan in a scene from 'Deadpool & Wolverine.' (AP)

Film

A Marvel mashup brings chaos to the cinematic universe

'Deadpool & Wolverine' set to rattle MCU

LOS ANGELES, April 27, (AP): Shawn Levy is no novice when it comes to rumors around his projects. Years on "Stranger Things" taught him how to tune out the noise. Yet even he's found himself astonished by the sheer volume of speculation around "Deadpool & Wolverine."

"The rumors around this movie are overwhelming," Levy said in a recent interview with The Associated Press. "But so is the anticipation, which is a nice situation."

Anticipation might be an understatement for a movie that is poised to be the theatrical event of the summer, when it opens on July 26. The first trailer, which aired during the Super Bowl, was viewed a record 365 million times online in its first 24 hours. The second, which dropped this week, broke another record - for the most "F-bombs" in the MCU (six in less than three minutes).

Much of that excitement is because this film marks the first time Ryan Reynolds' foul-mouthed Deadpool/Wade Wilson and Hugh Jackman's Wolverine are being folded into Kevin Feige's Marvel Cinematic Universe. Both properties existed previously under the 21st Century Fox banner.

When Disney acquired the studio's film and TV assets in early 2019, Wolverine had already died in "Logan," a third "Deadpool" was in development and Marvel was still firmly in the PG-13 business, a rating that allows for only one F-bomb.

On a call with investors as the deal was going through, Walt Disney Company CEO Bob Iger was already reassuring people that a Disney Deadpool would remain R-rated. Soon after, Reynolds also posted a photo on social media showing his character with Mickey Mouse ears on a yellow school bus labeled "Disney." The meta humor, it seemed, was also firmly intact.

But what would the story be? Levy was announced as the film's director in early 2022, coming in as a fan of Reynolds' snarky tone and fourth wall breaking.

"There was no way I was going to reinvent a wheel, a tonal wheel, that works so beautifully," Levy said. "Both Disney and Marvel, up and down the food chain, empowered Ryan and I to make this movie exactly as we dreamed."

Things really started to really take shape when Jack-

man signed on that fall, however. It would mark the first time that the characters would be together in a movie since 2009's "X-Men Origins: Wolverine." In the years since, Reynolds and Jackman have staged a very tongue in cheek, very funny "feud" with one another on social media, dancing around the idea of sharing the big screen again.

The dream seemed to have died after "Logan" and Jackman's retirement as Wolverine. But death is never exactly final in the multiverse, and, they promised, this film would not interfere with "Logan."

"It's a really interesting duo," Levy said. "They're built for huge conflict with each other because they're so different individually. But that makes for a very interesting story, because the best two hander stories, whether it's 'Midnight Run' or '48 Hours' or 'Planes, Trains and Automobiles,' yes, it's littered with conflict. But it's ultimately about something more as well and that's what audiences will see."

Dynamic

The dynamic was also fueled by the real-life friendship between Levy, Jackman and Reynolds that goes back a decade off screen and includes films like "Free Guy" and "Real Steel."

"The real benefit of being friends off set is that you can try crazy stuff without fear of falling. Because some of it won't work and that will be momentarily embarrassing, but if you're among friends, it's okay to make a fool of yourself in the pursuit of something surprising and something unexpected," Levy said. "This movie is filled with moments, both comedic and character based, that we didn't expect and were the result of a freedom that came from being friends."

The Marvel multiverse has gotten a bit overwhelming in recent years for the more casual fans who may have seen most of the films but only dabbled in the Disney+ offerings that regularly introduce new concepts and characters that eventually find their way into the films. "Deadpool & Wolverine," for instance, uses the Time Variance Authority (TVA) - a major part of "Loki" but new to the movies - to help get Deadpool to the MCU. But Levy promises that enjoyment of "Deadpool & Wolverine" requires no bingeing or studying beforehand.

"I was a good student in school. I'll do my homework as an adult. But I am definitely not looking to do homework when I go to the movies," Levy said.

"I very much made this film with certainly a healthy respect and gratitude towards the rabid fan base that has peak fluency in the mythology and lore of these characters and this world. But I didn't want to presume that. This movie is built for entertainment, with no obligation to come prepared with prior research."

Like many productions, "Deadpool & Wolverine" was affected by the strikes. It was "pencils down" when the writers walked out, including for Reynolds who is credited on the script, and a complete shutdown when the actors went to the picket lines.

"The impact was real," Levy said. "For me as the director, and the producer, the multi-month pause happened right in the middle of filming. All I could do was edit and review the footage. But it taught me about my movie, and it really revealed what was working and what the movie wanted to be."

When they resumed shooting post-strike, Levy wasn't panicked about rushing to the finish. Instead, he felt like he'd come back with a deeper knowledge of what they needed to do.

"It really focused our work and I think improved our work in the second half," Levy said. "That's not a luxury we ever get in live-action filmmaking."

So, what about what's IN the film? Well, that's something that Levy can't really talk about. For one, he's busy finishing the movie ("it's coming together nicely," he said). Also, "Deadpool & Wolverine" doesn't need to tease out plotlines to stoke enthusiasm, what when there are near daily articles speculating about a Taylor Swift cameo (and a Wikipedia page that's nearly 5,000 words). It's unclear what the Venn Diagram overlap is for Swifties and Marvel fans but one thing is apparent: United, they're a powerful bunch.

Marvel has had some Phase 5 bumps, with films like "The Marvels" underperforming financially and others underwhelming critics. And outside of the MCU, the industry is feeling the pains of so-called "superhero fatigue" that has sent DC back to the drawing boards to start anew. But "Deadpool & Wolverine" is not to be underestimated.

LOS ANGELES: Lawyers for Sean "Diddy" Combs pushed back against a woman's lawsuit that accused him of sexual assault, filing a motion on Friday to dismiss some claims that were not under law when the alleged incident occurred.

The motion filed in a New York court claims Combs cannot be sued because certain laws didn't exist when **Joi Dickerson-Deal** made the allegations against him in 1991.

The music mogul's lawyers want certain statutes from Dickerson-Deal's claims such as revenge porn and human trafficking to be dismissed with prejudice.

In a filing last year, she said Combs "intentionally drugged" her then brought her home and sexually assaulted her after a date in **Harlem** when she was a 19-year-old college student.

Without her knowledge, Combs videotaped the assault and later shared it with several friends in the music industry, the suit alleges. He denied the allegations, accusing her of seeking to exploit the New York law that temporarily extended the statute of limitations.

Dickerson-Deal's claim came nearly three decades after his alleged misconduct and the New York State Revenge Porn Law was not codified until 2019, Combs' lawyers said. (AP)

NEW YORK: The retrial in New York of **Harvey Weinstein** - whose moviemaking prowess once wowed Hollywood - won't be coming to a courtroom anytime soon, if ever, legal experts said on a day when one of two women considered crucial to the case said she wasn't sure she would testify again.

A ruling Thursday by the New York Court of Appeals voided the 2020 conviction of the onetime movie powerbroker who prosecutors say forced young actors to submit to his prurient desires by dangling his ability to make or break their careers. He remains jailed in New York state after he was also convicted in a similar case in **California**.

The appeals court in a 4-3 decision vacated a 23-year jail sentence and ordered a retrial of Weinstein, saying the trial judge erred by letting three women testify about allegations that were

not part of the charges and by permitting questions about Weinstein's history of "bad behavior" if he testified. He did not. He was convicted of forcibly performing oral sex on a TV and film production assistant and of third-degree rape for an attack on an aspiring actor in 2013.

Several lawyers said in inter-



Combs



Weinstein

views Friday that it would be a long road to reach a new trial for the 72-year-old ailing movie mogul and magnet for the #MeToo movement who remains behind bars, and it was doubtful that one could start before next year, if at all. (AP)

CHICAGO: The singer **R. Kelly** was correctly sentenced to 20 years in prison on child sex convictions in Chicago, a federal appeals court ruled Friday. Jurors in 2022 convicted the Grammy Award-winning R&B singer, born Robert Sylvester Kelly, on three charges of producing child sexual abuse images and

three charges of enticement of minors for sex.

In his appeal, Kelly argued that **Illinois'** former and shorter statute of limitations on child sex crime prosecutions should have applied to his Chicago case rather than current law permitting charges while an accuser is still alive. (AP)

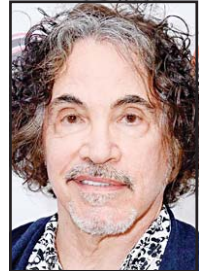
People & Places

Music

'A true irony'

In Reunion, Oates finds solace amidst band rift

NEW YORK, April 27, (AP): For many music fans, **John Oates** is most recognizable as one-half of the Grammy-nominated Hall & Oates, the multiplatinum soul-pop duo behind hits like "Rich Girl" and "Maneater" now riven by litigation. But he's also had a full career as a soloist.



Oates

- what he recognizes as "a true irony."

In November, Hall sued Oates, arguing that his plan to sell off his share of a joint venture would violate the terms of a business agreement the duo had forged. He accused Oates of committing the "ultimate partnership betrayal" by planning to sell his share without the other's permission. A few days later, a judge sided with Hall in his request to keep Oates temporarily blocked from selling his potentially lucrative share. The litigation is ongoing.

Transition

"There's been no communication," Oates says when asked if he's in touch with Hall. "And it's unfortunate that certain legal proceedings work in certain ways, which, of course, you know, I can't discuss. But let's put it this way. It's working itself out. It's going to be resolved, and it will be over. It wasn't a fun two years, but you know what? I can see the light at the end of the tunnel."

"Reunion" was actually inspired by Oates' 100-year-old father.

"He's not doing well, and he's going to be making the transition - a euphemism for, you know," he told The Associated Press from Nashville. "He told me he's going to reunite with mom, who's passed away a number of years ago. And that really struck me because I thought of the true meaning of the word reunion, reuniting, in a more emotional and metaphysical way."

He began applying the definition to different facets of his own life. "The fact that I'm moving on from my Hall & Oates experience, I'm

basically reuniting with myself," he says. "I'm trying to reunite with the essential part of who I am, not only as a man but a musician."

But not a Hall & Oates reunion. "I personally don't see it happening. It's not in my plans at all. You can ask Daryl Hall what he thinks. But for me personally, no," he says.

"I think we accomplished so much, published more than so many people could ever have dreamed of. Having a 50-year partnership and a 50-year legacy of creating music together is, you know, it's more than anyone could ever hope for," he says. "I'm done. And I want to move on. I want to spend the last creative years of my life exploring things that I find interesting and things that give me personal satisfaction."

And so, he's focusing on the 12 tracks of "Reunion," what he says make up his "most personal" album to date.

"I Found Love" and "All I Ask of You" were originally written in the '90s. Many of the songs double as musical history lessons, a passion of Oates - like in the ode to Piedmont blues-and-folk duo "Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee," or in covers of John Prine's "Long Monday" and Canadian folk duo Fraser & DeBolt's "Dance Hall Girls."

With this album, Oates hopes "that people can finally see the man and musician outside of the ubiquitous fame and legacy of the Hall and Oates music."

"Because I've always felt that I'm an individual and I've always felt that I was not the same as that music, he says."

Also:

LOS ANGELES: Maybe the UK-pop firebrand **Rachel Chinouriri** first hit your timeline when the music video for her song "Never Need Me" featured an unlikely star, the actor **Florence Pugh**. Or maybe it is from one of her many viral moments on TikTok ("So My Darling," anyone?), or from her malleable EPs, 2019's "Mama's Boy," 2021's "Four In Winter," and 2022's "Better Off Without," whatever the case, it is time to prepare for her alternative pop in the form of a debut album, "what a Devastating Turns of Events," out May 3. Begin with the whistled-hook and talk-sung lyrics of single "It Is what It Is."



British band The Pet Shop Boys, Neil Tennant, (left), and Chris Lowe perform after receiving The Outstanding Contribution To Music award at the Brit Awards 2009 at Earls Court exhibition centre in London, England, Wednesday, Feb. 18, 2009. Forty years and 50 million record sales after the Pet Shop Boys rose to fame with 'West End Girls,' the iconic British duo is releasing a new album. 'Nonetheless' is their 15th studio album. It arrived Friday, April 26. (AP)

Music

Iconic duo releases 'Nonetheless'

The Pet Shop Boys know the secret to staying cool

LONDON, April 27, (AP): Chicken Kiev, AI-generated press releases and the annoyance of fan selfies while performing - there was a lot on the minds of the Pet Shop Boys as the iconic British duo prepared to release a new album.

Their 15th studio album, "Nonetheless," comes Friday - 40 years (and 50 million record sales) after Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe rose to fame with the single "West End Girls." Bands of any longevity - especially such a long one - are often asked the cliché: "How do you stay relevant?" For them, it's about never trying to be cool.

"That's something a lot of people try and do, to be somehow cool, which is therefore completely uncool, because it's trying too hard," Tennant told The Associated Press recently. "So we have just followed our own instincts."

"We'll always be relevant in our world," Lowe added, laughing. A testament of that relevance? Classic Pet Shop Boys hits were used as plot points in two cult movies last year: a karaoke scene in "Saltburn" featuring "Rent" and a key Christmas scene in "All of Us Strangers" soundtracked by "Always on My Mind."

This is worlds away from Hollywood past, where, Tennant says, "It's a Sin" was always overused for the young guy walking into a gay club "reducing us to this sort of cliché of gay disco."

Upbeat

"Nonetheless" remains upbeat despite being written in the UK during the coronavirus pandemic, when most people were locked down at home.

"Well, the weather was nice, wasn't it?" Lowe jokes.

"It was a very productive time," Tennant adds, noting that the cancellation of their tour eased the pressure.

"I think that's why it sounds in a way quite optimistic, because life was different. It was a different sort of life with no pressure, apart from not trying to catch the virus," he says.

The first single, "Loneliness," addresses the social isolation of the pandemic but was written as a positive message. Another lockdown-themed track, "Why Am I Dancing?" was Tennant asking himself: "Why are you enjoying this situation of being by yourself so much so that you can actually dance?"

"And I'm probably cooking at the same time," he is quick to add.

"Cooking and dancing, now that's a little podcast idea, isn't it?" Lowe jokes. And while Lowe says he'd be popping a ready-made pie in the oven, Tennant would be making dal, brown rice and vegetables or a chicken Kiev.

"You've got a good story for that," Tennant says, looking to his bandmate.

"I wrote to (U.K. supermarket) Marks & Spencer... asking them to change the spelling of chicken Kiev to chicken Kyiv



The Beach Boys with John Stamos perform during the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival on Thursday, April 25, at the Fair Grounds Race Course in New Orleans. (AP)

Variety

MOSCOW: A Mexican film has won the top prize Friday at the Moscow International Film Festival, which took place as major Western studios boycott the Russian market and as Russia's war in Ukraine grinds into its third year.

"Shame," a film by director **Miguel Salgado** and co-produced by **Mexico** and **Qatar**, was the most highly awarded film at the festival, which began in 1935 and which has been held annually since 1999. This year's edition included more than 240 films from 56 countries.

In his victory speech, Salgado hailed the festival as one of the most important in the world, adding that he was pleased to see his film, a thriller, being shown so widely and that it was a "great gift" to see so many people moved by it.

Festival program director **Ivan Kudryavtsev** told state news agency ITAR-Tass that more than half the entries this year came from countries whose governments are considered unfriendly to Russia.

After Russia sent troops into **Ukraine** in February 2022, major studios in the **United States** and many European countries halted distribution of their films to Russia. The cutoff was a significant blow to Russian movie theaters. Before the conflict started, the country's cinemas received about 70% of their revenue from Hollywood films, according to news reports. (AP)

NEW YORK: PEN America has canceled its annual World Voices Festival, as the literary and free expression organization continues to face widespread unhappiness with its response to the **Israel-Hamas** war. Earlier this week, PEN called off its awards ceremony after nearly half of the finalists withdrew from contention.

The festival, which brings in writers from around the world, was to have taken place next month in **New York** and **Los Angeles**. PEN CEO **Suzanne Nossel** expressed regret over the cancellation, saying it contrasted with why **Salman Rushdie** among others established the festival 20 years ago.

Naomi Klein, **Michelle Alexander**, **Hisham Matar** and dozens of other writers endorsed an open letter in March saying they would not participate in the festival.

"PEN America exists to unite writers in defense of free expression. The premise of World Voices is to engage across wide chasms of worldview and belief, including fostering direct conversation between and among those who disagree profoundly," Nossel said in a statement Friday.

"A central feature of the planned festival was to have featured multiple Palestinian writers, enabling them to speak not just about the war but about their own books and works. We regret that this is not possible. We are grateful and express our deep sadness to the dozens of writers who voiced their commitment to remain in events, traveling from around the country and the globe." (AP)

BUCHAREST, Romania: A court in Romania's capital on Friday ruled that a trial can start in the case of influencer **Andrew Tate**, who is charged with human trafficking, rape and forming a criminal gang to sexually exploit women.

The Bucharest Tribunal ruled that prosecutors' case file against Tate met the legal criteria but did not set a date for the trial to begin. Tate's spokesperson, **Mateea Petrescu**, said the ruling has been appealed.

Tate, 37, was arrested in December 2022 near Bucharest along with his brother, **Tristan Tate**, and two Romanian women. Romanian prosecutors



Salgado



Tate

formally indicted all four in June last year. They have denied the allegations.

"The ruling issued by the preliminary chamber judge lacks legal basis and reasoning," Eugen Vidineac, one of the brothers' lawyers, said after the decision. "We have filed a strong appeal as we believe the ruling to be unlawful."

Ahead of the court's decision Friday, the legal case had been discussed for months in the preliminary chamber stages, a process in which the defendants can challenge prosecutors' evidence and case file. (AP)

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HEALTH/SCIENCE

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Malaria vaccine 'shows' 77 percent efficacy in trial

By Dr. Ali Sher

R21/MM vaccine
The vaccine developed by scientists at Jenner Institute, Oxford, shows up to 77% efficacy in a trial of 450 children in Burkina Faso over 12 months. A vaccine against malaria has been shown to be highly effective in trials in Africa, holding out the real possibility of slashing the death toll of a disease that kills 400,000 mostly small children every year. The Mosquirix vaccine developed by GlaxoSmithKline, has been through lengthy clinical trials but is only partially effective, preventing 39% of malaria cases and 29% of severe malaria cases among small children in Africa over four years. It is being piloted by the World Health Organization in parts of Kenya, Ghana and Malawi.



Dr. Ali Sher

Research continues with other malaria vaccines. The most effective malaria vaccine is R21/Matrix-M, with a 77% efficacy rate shown in initial trials and significantly higher antibody levels than with the RTS,S vaccine. It is the first vaccine that meets the World Health Organization's (WHO) goal of a malaria vaccine with at least 75% efficacy. Ghana's Food and Drugs Authority approved the use of the R21 vaccine in April 2023, for use in children aged between five months to three years old.

The Oxford vaccine is the first to meet the WHO goal of 77% efficacy against the mosquito-borne parasite disease. Larger trials are now beginning, involving 4,800 children in four countries. Prof Adrian Hill, director of the Jenner Institute, where the Oxford/AstraZeneca Covid vaccine was invented, said he believed the vaccine had the potential to cut the death toll dramatically.

Other control measures, such as impregnated bednets and malarial drugs, have reduced the death toll from a million a year and this must continue. But, if the vaccine could cut deaths to the tens of thousands, they might be able to look towards "a greater goal - eventually eradicating malaria".

PfSPZ vaccine - whole sporozoite
The whole sporozoites, extracted from the mosquito salivary glands, which have been made non-infectious through irradiation. Recent trials have shown that the irradiated whole sporozoite PfSPZ Vaccine made by Sanaria® is safe and well tolerated and had promising protection against malaria when administered intravenously. A collaborative CDC and KEMRI trial in western Kenya has shown that the PfSPZ Vaccine is safe and well tolerated in infants and young children. Unfortunately, the vaccine did not provide significant protection against P. falciparum infection after 6 months. It requires further evaluation to know the efficacy. Other studies are currently evaluating the efficacy of the PfSPZ Vaccine in different populations in Mali, Gabon, Tanzania, and Equatorial Guinea. The present study, however, provides the important information on the immune response to the vaccine.

Transmission-blocking vaccines
The transmission blocking malaria vaccines are designed to block the development and maturity of gametocytes of parasite within mosquitoes. The vaccine candidate antigens (Pfs25, Pfs48/45, Pfs230) that have shown transmission blocking immunity in model systems are in different stages of development. These antigens are immunogenic with limited genetic diversity. Pfs25 is a leading candidate

and currently in phase I clinical trial. Transmission-blocking vaccines (TBV) would break the life cycle of the parasite by preventing mosquitoes from becoming infected by malaria-causing parasites when they feed on infected people. The vaccine would do this by inducing antibodies that prevent the parasite from maturing in the mosquito after it takes a blood meal from a vaccinated person.

The clinical trials with Pfs25 formulations have been found immunogenic but shown some safety outcome issues like local and systemic adverse events. Human clinical trials are further required in malaria endemic regions to assess the risk factors and to evaluate the vaccine efficacy. The TBV approach will not necessarily prevent malaria infection in the immunized person. This vaccine will reduce the number of mosquitoes carrying the parasite and thus the number of people in a community who are infected. The role of the TBV is to use widely among those responsible for maintaining local parasite transmission to reduce the deaths and illness related to malaria in at-risk communities.

Blocking transmission of malaria parasites is viewed as particularly important to malaria elimination and eradication efforts, including prevention of reintroduction of the parasite into communities. When used in combination with other malaria control tools, a vaccine able to protect the individual, and the mosquito from parasite transmission could help in control and elimination and ultimately, accelerate in eradication.

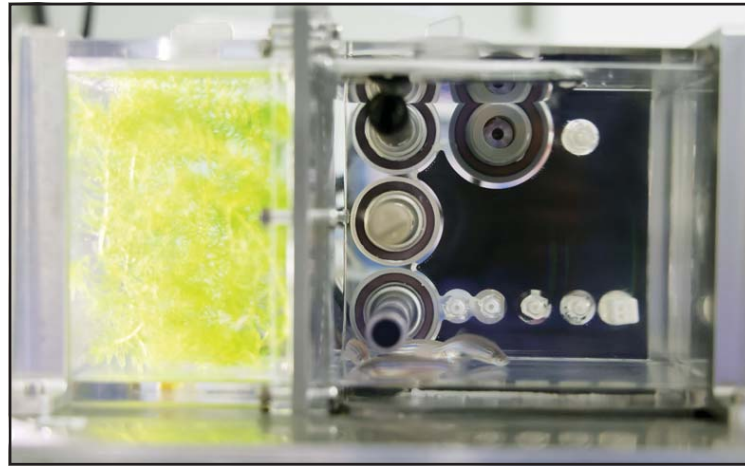
mRNA vaccines against malaria
mRNA vaccine is a type of vaccine that uses a copy of a molecule called messenger RNA (mRNA) to produce an immune response. The vaccine delivers molecules of antigen-encoding mRNA into immune cells, which use the designed mRNA as a blueprint to build foreign protein that would normally be produced by a pathogen (such as a virus) or by a cancer cell. These protein molecules stimulate an adaptive immune response that teaches the body to identify and destroy the corresponding pathogen or cancer cells. The mRNA is delivered by a co-formulation of the RNA encapsulated in lipid nanoparticles that protect the RNA strands and help their absorption into the cells.

The advantages of mRNA vaccines over traditional vaccines are ease of design, speed and lower cost of production, the induction of both cellular and humoral immunity, and lack of interaction with the genomic DNA.

SPf66 - synthetic peptide
SPf66 is a synthetic peptide based vaccine developed by the Manuel Elkin Patarroyo team in Colombia, and was tested extensively in endemic areas in the 1990s. Clinical trials showed 28% efficacy in South America and minimal or no efficacy in Africa. This vaccine had no protective effect in the largest placebo controlled randomized trial in South East Asia and was abandoned.

NYVAC-Pf7 multi-stage vaccine
The NYVAC-Pf7 multi-stage vaccine attempted to use different technology, incorporating seven P. falciparum antigenic genes. These came from a variety of stages during the life cycle. CSP and sporozoite surface protein 2 (called PfSSP2) were derived from the sporozoite phase. The liver stage antigen 1 (LSA1), three from the erythrocytic stage (merozoite surface protein 1, serine repeat antigen, and AMA-1), and one sexual stage antigen (the 25-kDa Pfs25) were included. This was first investigated using rhesus monkeys and produced encouraging results: 4 out of the 7 antigens produced specific antibody responses (CSP, PfSSP2, MSP1 and Pfs25).

To be continued



This photo taken on April 25, 2024 shows a backup version of the aquatic ecosystem. The three taikonauts aboard China's Shenzhou-18 spaceship have entered the country's space station and met with another taikonaut trio on Friday, starting a new round of in-orbit crew handover. A unique task for the taikonauts of Shenzhou-18 is to create an 'aquarium' and raise fish in zero gravity. They will create a simplified version of an aquatic ecosystem using zebrafish and algae to study how the space environment affects their growth and system balance. (Xinhua)

Wearable batteries

China develops clothing that charges cellphone

SHANGHAI, April 27, (Xinhua): A team of Chinese scientists has developed a soft and breathable piece of clothing that can not only store energy but also power personal electronic devices such as smartphones and watches.

Replacing conventional liquid electrolytes with polymer gel electrolytes is a highly effective strategy for enhancing the flexibility of wearable batteries.

However, the inadequate wetting at the interface between the polymer gel electrolyte and the electrode degrades the electrochemical performance, particularly when the battery undergoes deformation.

The researchers from Fudan University have crafted channel structures within electrode designs, an innovative approach that creates intimate and stable interfaces, thereby enhancing the performance and reliability of wearable batteries.

They have drawn inspiration from the natural phenomenon where ivy and plant vines are tightly

entwined to form multiple electrode fibers rotated together to form aligned channels. The surface of each electrode fiber was designed with networked channels.

According to the study published this week in the journal Nature, the monomer solution was then infiltrated along the aligned channels and then into the networked channels to form a gel electrolyte.

The team managed to fabricate fiber lithium-ion batteries with lengths of several kilometers and a high energy density that can effectively provide power for electrical devices like drones.

They have established a pilot production line and achieved a production capacity of 300 watt-hours per hour, which is equivalent to the battery produced per hour capable of charging 20 mobile phones simultaneously, said Peng Huiheng, the paper's corresponding author.

This fiber battery shows promise for applications in firefighting, disaster relief, polar expeditions, and aerospace, added Peng.

Chinese experts create safe, high-energy aqueous battery

BEIJING, April 27, (Xinhua): A Chinese research team has developed a high-energy-density aqueous battery based on halogen multielectron transfer, according to the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS).

Traditional non-aqueous lithium-ion batteries have a high energy density, but their safety is compromised due to the flammable organic electrolytes they utilize.

Aqueous batteries use water as the solvent for electrolytes, significantly enhancing battery safety. However, due to the limited solubility of the electrolyte and low battery voltage, aqueous batteries usually have a lower energy density. This means that the amount of electricity stored per unit volume of an aqueous battery is relatively low.

In a new study published in the journal Nature Energy, a research team led by Li Xianfeng from the Dalian Institute of Chemical Physics (DICP) of the CAS, in collaboration with Fu Qiang's team, also from the DICP, developed a multielectron

transfer cathode based on bromine and iodine, realizing a specific capacity of more than 840 ampere-hour per liter.

To improve the energy density of aqueous batteries, researchers used a mixed halogen solution of iodide ions and bromide ions as the electrolyte. They developed a multielectron transfer reaction, which transfers electrons from iodide ions to elemental iodine and then to iodate.

Combining the cathode with metallic cadmium to form a full battery, the researchers achieved an energy density of up to 1,200 watt hour per liter based on the catholyte.

In the study, the bromide intermediate formed during the charging and discharging process optimized the reaction, effectively improving the kinetics and reversibility of the electrochemical reaction.

This study provides a new direction for the design of high-energy-density aqueous batteries, and may expand aqueous battery applications in the power battery field, Li said.

Boeing's 1st human spaceflight

China prepares for the historic Chang'e-6 lunar probe launch

WENCHANG, Hainan, April 27, (Xinhua): The Chang'e-6 lunar probe is scheduled for launch at an appropriate time at the beginning of May, according to the China National Space Administration (CNSA).

The combination of the Chang'e-6 lunar probe and the Long March-5 Y8 carrier rocket was transferred vertically on Saturday to the launching area at the Wenchang Space Launch Center in south China's Hainan Province, the CNSA said.

The combination on a removable launch pad was moved out of the vertical test building, and then safely transported to its launching area.

The functional checks, the joint test work and the propellant filling will be carried out before the launch.

After Chang'e 6 lunar probe and the Long March-5 Y8 carrier rocket arrived at the launch site in January and March, respectively, the assembly, testing and other preparations were successively completed.

The probe is set to collect samples from the far side of the moon, marking a mission that will be the first of its kind in human history.

Also:

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla.: The two NASA astronauts assigned to Boeing's first human spaceflight arrived at their launch site Thursday, just over a week before their scheduled liftoff.

Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams will serve as test pilots for Boeing's Starliner capsule, which is making its debut with crew after years of delay. They flew from Houston into Kennedy Space Center on Thursday.

Due to blast off May 6 atop an Atlas rocket, the Starliner will fly to the International Space Station for a week-long shakedown cruise. Boeing is trying to catch up to SpaceX, which has been launching astronauts for NASA since 2020.

No one was aboard Boeing's two previous Starliner test flights. The first, in 2019, didn't make it to the space station because of software and other problems. Boeing repeated the demo in 2022. More recently, the capsule was plagued by parachute issues



This photo taken on April 27, 2024 shows the combination of the Chang'e-6 lunar probe and the Long March-5 Y8 carrier rocket being transferred vertically to the launching area at the Wenchang Space Launch Center in south China's Hainan Province. The Chang'e-6 lunar probe is scheduled for launch at an appropriate time at the beginning of May, according to the China National Space Administration (CNSA). (Xinhua)

and flammable tape that had to be removed.

Wilmore stressed this is a test flight meant to uncover anything amiss.

"Do we expect it to go perfectly? This is the first human flight of the spacecraft," he told reporters. "I'm sure we'll find things out. That's why we do this."

NASA hired SpaceX and Boeing a decade ago, paying billions of dollars for the companies to ferry astronauts to and from the space station. The space agency is still keen on having capsules from two competing companies for its astronauts, even with the space station winding down by 2030.

"That's vitally important," Wilmore noted.

Wilmore and Williams will be the first astronauts to ride an Atlas rocket since NASA's Project Mercury in the early 1960s.

Election-year pushback

US indefinitely postpones ban on menthol cigarettes

WASHINGTON, April 27, (AP): President Joe Biden's administration is indefinitely delaying a long-awaited menthol cigarette ban, a decision that infuriated anti-smoking advocates but could avoid a political backlash from Black voters in November.

In a statement Friday, Biden's top health official gave no timeline for issuing the rule, saying only that the administration would take more time to consider feedback, including from civil rights groups.

"It's clear that there are still more conversations to have, and that will take significantly more time," Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra said in a statement.

The White House has held dozens of meetings in recent months with groups opposing the ban, including civil rights organizers, law enforcement officials and small business owners. Most of groups have financial ties to tobacco companies.

The announcement is another setback for Food and Drug Administration officials, who drafted the ban and predicted it would prevent hundreds of thousands of smoking-related deaths over 40 years. The agency has worked toward banning menthol across multiple administrations without ever final-

izing a rule.

"This decision prioritizes politics over lives, especially Black lives," said Yolonda Richardson of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, in an emailed statement. "It is especially disturbing to see the administration parrot the false claims of the tobacco industry about support from the civil rights community."

Richardson noted that the ban is supported by groups including the NAACP and the Congressional Black Caucus.

Previous FDA efforts on menthol have been derailed by tobacco industry pushback or competing political priorities. With both Biden and former President Donald Trump vying for the support of Black voters, the ban's potential impact has been scrutinized by Republicans and Democrats heading into the fall election.

Anti-smoking advocates have been pushing the FDA to eliminate the flavor since the agency gained authority to regulate certain tobacco ingredients in 2009. Menthol is the only cigarette flavor that wasn't banned under that law, a carveout negotiated by industry allies in Congress. But the law instructed the FDA to continue studying the issue.

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SPORTS

Brumbies end Hurricanes' unbeaten run



Rob Valetini of the Brumbies is tackled by Peter Umaga-Jensen of the Hurricanes during the Super Rugby in Canberra, Australia, Saturday. (AP)

Highlanders beat the Western Force 7-6

CANBERRA, Australia, April 27, (AP): The Wellington-based Hurricanes' unbeaten start in Super Rugby Pacific ended Saturday when they lost 27-19 to the ACT Brumbies in round 10.

A week after losing 46-7 to the second-place Blues, the Brumbies pulled off one of the upsets of the season in beating the first-place Hurricanes.

The Brumbies have dominated the Hurricanes in Canberra, with the New Zealand side having lost its last six matches in the Australian capital. The Hurricanes last won in Canberra in 2017.

Two tries in the middle of the first half allowed the Brumbies to build a 21-5 lead after 19 minutes which became 24-5 after a penalty



Ryan Louwrens of the Melbourne Rebels kicks the ball as Scott Barrett of the Crusaders attempts to charge it down during their Super Rugby match in Christchurch, New Zealand. (AP)

RUGBY

to flyhalf Noah Lolesio.

The Hurricanes cut the lead to 24-12 at halftime and and out-scored the Brumbies 7-3 in a tight second half but never held the lead.

The Brumbies were physical and were able to bring their strong ball runners into the game Saturday, which they weren't able to do against the Blues. Center and player of the match Tamati Tua was especially effective, scoring a try and making several line breaks.

The Brumbies took the lead in the fifth minute with a try to Lolesio after a lineout drive. Ryan Loneragan whipped to the flyhalf on the left flank and he was able to beat the defense in the corner.

Prop Xavier Numia scored the first of his two tries in the 12th minute to reduce the Brumbies' lead. But tries to Tua and winger Ollie Sapsford gave the Brumbies a comfortable lead which the Hurricanes couldn't bridge.

Numia scored his second try before halftime and center Jordie Barrett scored in the second half but the Brumbies held on for a win which will keep them inside the top four for another week.

In Dunedin, scrumhalf Folau Fakatava scored the only try in the

47th minute as the Highlanders beat the Western Force 7-6 in an error-strewn match.

Force flyhalf Ben Donaldson kicked a penalty in the 38th minute for the only points of the first half. Fakatava's try put the Highlanders ahead and they held on as the only other points of the match came from a second Donaldson penalty.

The win lifts the Highlanders into eighth, keeping them in the playoffs race while the Perth-based Force are last, their playoffs chances fading.

Earlier Saturday, winger Taniela Rakuro scored two tries as the Fijian Drua held on to beat Moana Pasifika 24-17 in Lautoka, Fiji after leading 17-0 at halftime.

The win solidifies the Drua's place in the top-eight playoff zone while Moana Pasifika are now just outside the top eight. The Drua also remain unbeaten in Lautoka this season.

The home team book-ended the first half with tries to Rakuro after two minutes and Sestino Ravutaumada in the 36th minute.

Moana Pasifika got on the board with a try to Henry Taefu but Rakuro's second try in the 69th minute extended the Drua's lead. They were able to hang on, though Moana Pasifika finished strongly with tries to Sione Havili-Talituli and Sama Malolo.

Eden Gardens sprayed with 24 sixes by Kings

Bairstow unbeaten ton leads Punjab to highest run chase in history of IPL

KOLKATA, India, April 27, (AP): Jonny Bairstow's unbeaten century off 45 balls spearheaded Punjab Kings to the highest successful run chase in Indian Premier League history.

Punjab scaled Kolkata Knight Riders' impressive 261-6 with a stunning 262-2 to win by eight wickets with eight balls to spare.

Opener Bairstow finished 108 not out off 48 balls, Shashank Singh was 68 not out off 28, and the other opener Prabhshimran Singh posted 54 off 20 as Punjab ended a four-match run.

Eden Gardens was sprayed with 24 sixes by Punjab after 18 by the home side.

Prabhshimran Singh set the pace early on, hitting four fours and five sixes as he and Bairstow produced Punjab's best ever power play score. Prabhshimran Singh was run out at the end of the sixth over at 93-1.

Bairstow reached his half-century off 23 balls and accelerated to 100 off the next 22. His second IPL hundred included nine sixes and eight boundaries.

CRICKET

Bairstow and Riley Rossouw put on 85 off 39 balls for the second wicket.

Punjab had 150 in only 11 overs, and when Rossouw was caught at 178-2 in the 13th over, it still needed 84 off the remaining 45 balls.

Shashank Singh helped cross that finish line off only 37 balls by smacking eight sixes and reducing Bairstow to a spectator.

Shashank Singh's fifty came off only 23 balls, and he and Bairstow added an unbeaten 84 off 37 balls.

Only off-spin allrounder Sunil Narine kept Punjab in checking by taking 1-24.

In the first innings, Kolkata openers Narine and Phil Salt combined for 138 runs.

Salt scored 75 off 37 balls, including six fours and six sixes, and Narine kept up his purple patch with 71 off 32 balls, hitting four sixes. They were back in the hut with 45 balls to go, leaving the rest of Kolkata's batters to play catchup. Left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh took 2-45 to peg back Kolkata in the middle overs.

But Venkatesh Iyer added 40 off 18 balls with Andre Russell (24) and another 43 off 18 balls with skipper Shreyas Iyer (28).

Kolkata finished with its second highest total in this IPL but suffered a third loss in eight games to remain second on the table.

Punjab jumped over Mumbai Indians to eighth on net run rate.

Defending champs Alcaraz, Sabalenka win opening matches at Madrid Open

MADRID, April 27, (AP): Carlos Alcaraz didn't need to put his tender right arm to the test while easing to victory in his opening match at the Madrid Open.

The two-time defending champion was playing for the first time in nearly a month after his injured arm ruled him out of Monte Carlo and Barcelona. And after doubting this week he would be good to go in Spain's capital, Alcaraz admitted he could afford to hold back a little in a 6-2, 6-1 win over Alexander Shevchenko.

"I didn't hit my forehand 100%. I hit it softer than I used to hit it, but I think it helped me, you know, to, let's say, stay relaxed," Alcaraz said. "But the first thing that I was thinking about when I was stepping on the court is to stay healthy."

"I was really happy to not feel anything in the forearm, and after that I could increase my intensity a bit. It was great for me this match."

Defending women's champion Aryna Sabalenka faced tougher resistance in her opening match while beating Magda Linette 6-3, 4-6, 6-3 on the Caja Magica clay.

This was Alcaraz's first match since the Miami Open quarterfinals nearly one month ago. Madrid is the Spaniard's first appearance on the European clay court swing - he struggled in Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro in February - as he aims to win his first French Open title next month.

"Right now I'm thinking to be better or get better every day, and I'm thinking to be closer to my 100% here in Madrid," the two-time major champion said. "Let's see how it's going to be the next few weeks. But the main thing is to be ready for next tournament and obviously to Roland Garros."

In Madrid, the third-ranked Alcaraz is seeded second behind Janik Sinner and both enjoyed first-round byes.

Alcaraz played with a compression sleeve on his right arm from his wrist up past his elbow. But he looked pretty much like the same aggressive player who has dominated here for the past two years and given Spanish tennis fans hope



Carlos Alcaraz, of Spain, returns the ball to Alexander Shevchenko, of Kazakhstan, during the Mutua Madrid Open tennis tournament in Madrid. (AP)

there is life after Rafael Nadal.

Alcaraz broke Shevchenko's serve four times and will next face Thiago Seyboth Wild of Brazil.

Seyboth Wild upset Daniil Medvedev at last year's French Open and should offer a stiffer challenge to Alcaraz in the round of 32.

Fourth-seeded Alexander Zverev, another two-time Madrid champion, saw off Borna Coric 6-3, 6-2 and will face Denis Shapovalov next.

Seventh-seeded Andrey Rublev snapped a four-game losing streak by defeating Facundo Bagnis 6-1,

up 5-3 in the third set when Linette was unable to reach a shot by the Belarusian that clipped the top of the tape.

Sabalenka has either won it all in Madrid as she did in 2021 and last year, or gone out in the first round as she did in 2018, 2019 and 2022.

"Hopefully it's going to be a good sign and I will keep it like that," she said. "I either lose in the first or I win (the title)."

Fourth-seeded Elena Rybakina beat Lucia Bronzetti 4-6, 6-3 to take her season-leading win haul to 27 as she seeks her fourth title of 2024.

Rybakina will next face Egypt's Mayar Sherif after she upset Marta Kostyuk 6-2, 7-5 to reach the third round.

Danielle Collins extended her career-best win streak to 14 matches after beating Serb qualifier Olga Danilovic 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (8) from 6-4, 3-1 down.

Fifth-seeded Zheng Qinwen, who lost the Australian Open final to Sabalenka, withdrew with a right thigh injury while trailing Yulia Putintseva 7-5, 2-0.

Sixteen-year-old Mirra Andreceva, who made her breakthrough at Madrid last year, bettered 19-year-old Linda Noskova 4-3, 6-3, 6-3.

Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, Carolina Garcia, and Jasmine Paolini also advanced.

TENNIS

6-4. Rublev's last win came at Indian Wells in March.

Holger Rune was just two points from defeat against Mariano Navone before he rallied to force a second-set tiebreaker and finally prevailed 5-7, 7-6 (2), 6-4.

Eighth-seeded Hubert Hurkacz beat Jack Draper 6-1, 7-5. Last year's finalist Jan Lennard Struff, Taylor Fritz, Tommy Paul, Alejandro Davidovich, and Sebastian Baez also moved on.

The second-ranked Sabalenka struggled with her serve at times against Linette, but the two-time Australian Open winner struck her 10th ace on match point.

Sabalenka got some help from the net to get a key break and go

Steele leads 'LIV Adelaide' by a stroke after the second round at The Grange

ADELAIDE, Australia, April 27, (AP): Three-time PGA Tour winner Brendan Steele shot an 8-under 64 Saturday to take a one-stroke lead after two rounds of the LIV Tour's Adelaide tournament at The Grange Golf Club.

The 41-year-old Steele's last PGA Tour victory came in 2017 when he won his second Safeway Open. He lost in a playoff to Australian Cameron Smith at the 2020 Sony Open in Hawaii.

GOLF

Steele had a 36-hole total of 14-under 130. He had a streak of four birdies, a bogey and two birdies in the middle of his round.

Danny Lee was a stroke behind after a 67, followed by Carlos Ortiz (68) and Mito Pereira (67) in a tie for third.

First-round leader Jimichiro Kozuma shot 71 and was tied for ninth, four strokes behind Steele. The Japanese player had an eagle, three birdies and four bogeys.

Jon Rahm, who has yet to win since joining LIV in December, shot 69 and was tied for 15th, six strokes off the lead.

Steele predicted a 20-under total would be needed to win after Sunday's final round.

"There's good scores out there for sure," he said. "If you're in the fairway, then you can take on a lot of the pins."

Smith shot 65 and was among those three behind in a four-way tie for fifth.

Enjoying the home crowd's support, Smith said he was grateful for the lady his errant shot hit on the 17th hole. The shot



Brendan Steele of HyFlyers GC waves to the crowd during the second round of LIV Golf Adelaide at the Grange Golf Club in Adelaide, Australia. (AP)

rebounded kindly off the woman and Smith ended up with a birdie on the hole.

"I hit her in the back," Smith said. "It probably wasn't going to be in the trees, but it was going to be in the rough and a different lie, so it could have been a different outcome. But (I) made her proud and made a birdie there, and she helped me out - hopefully that eased the pain a little bit for her."

A new friendship ensued. "She was nice," Smith said. "I went over there and I signed a ball, and she said 'just give me a hug', so I gave her a hug as well. She was sweet."

The LIV tour remains in the Asia region next week for the May 3-5 Singapore event at the Sentosa Golf Club. Then there's a month-long break before resuming in Houston from June 7-9.

**Required
a female
Indian cook
with experience
Full-time
to work for Kuwaiti family
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Simbine upstages Coleman and Kerley to win 100-meter title in China

SUZHOU, China, April 27, (AP): Akani Simbine surged late to win the 100 meters in 10.01 seconds at the Diamond League meet in China on Saturday, upstaging American former world champions Christian Coleman and Fred Kerley.

Coleman was fastest out of the blocks - he's the world record holder in the 60 meters - and was leading most of the way but had to settle for second place in his season-best 10.04, holding off Kerley who was third in 10.11.

The race had been billed as a showdown between the two Americans going head-to-head on back-to-back weekends in China - Coleman got the better of Kerley in the series-opener last week in Xiamen. But South Africa's Simbine overhauled them over the last 20 meters of the race.

"This has built a lot of confidence leading into the Olympic year," the two-time Olympic finalist said. "This helps build momentum, which I hope to build

on further as the season progresses."

Coleman said he expected a better performance "but I am fine with today's result" as part of his preparation for the Paris Olympics which start in late July in Paris.

Armand Duplantis had a bid at pole vault world records in back-to-back meets but missed all three attempts at 6.25 meters as he won the title in Suzhou, near Shanghai. Last weekend in Xiamen, Duplantis, the two-time world

champion known as Mondo, improved his world record by one centimeter with a winning mark of 6.24 meters.

On Saturday, the Swede was the only competitor to clear 5.92 meters, then he cleared 6 meters at his first attempt before raising the bar to 6.25 for three shots at the record. "To jump six meters today and complete a very successful tour, I have a lot of good takeaways," Duplantis said. "I just feel that conditions have to be perfect for me to jump a world record

and I wasn't quite feeling it off the runway tonight."

Women's 100-meter world champion Sha'Carri Richardson faded toward the end of a 200 for the second time in her two-week trip to China. After finishing second to Australian teenager Torrie Lewis last week, Richardson placed third on Saturday in 23.11 seconds - behind Daryll Neita, who won in 22.62 seconds, and Anavia Battle, who took second in 22.99.

Burgan pay a visit to Al-Tadamon

Yarmouk on the verge of qualification

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: The Zain League first division competition faces a pivotal moment as Yarmouk clashes with Sulaibikhat at Abdullah Al-Khalifa Al-Sabah Stadium, while Burgan pays a visit to Al-Tadamon. Both matches are scheduled at 6:55pm.

SOCCER

Currently, Yarmouk leads the standings with 27 points, followed by Al-Tadamon in second place with 25 points, and Al-Sahel in third with 21 points. Burgan sits in fourth with 10 points, while Sulaibikhat holds the fifth and final spot with six points.

The clubs Yarmouk, Al-Tadamon, and Al-Sahel are vying for the two qualification spots in the Premier League. Yarmouk needs just one point to secure their qualification officially, while Al-Tadamon requires three points to solidify their spot. Al-Sahel, though absent from this round, holds onto a slim hope for qualification. They rely on the leaders to falter, especially Yarmouk, who trails by a significant



A file photo of players challenging for the ball.

margin and has also played one less match.

Yarmouk aims for a third victory over Sulaibikhat, having previously won 2-0 and 1-0, with a draw (1-1) in the last three encounters. This task seems relatively straightforward given the lack of motivation for Sulaibikhat, who are struggling at the bottom of the

standings.

In the second match, Al-Tadamon seeks a second victory over Burgan after a 3-2 win in the initial encounter, with two subsequent draws at 1-1. A victory here would secure their qualification.

Meanwhile, Burgan endeavors to make a lasting impression before concluding their campaign in the league.

Sheikh Khaled Al-Bader re-elected as president of AASF

BANGKOK, April 27: Asia has reaffirmed its trust in Sheikh Khaled Al-Bader Al-Sabah to lead the Asian Swimming Sports Federations (AASF) for a second term. This decision was made during the Asia Swimming Federation's General Assembly meeting held in Bangkok, Thailand.

With 42 countries in attendance, Sheikh Al-Bader received an overwhelming 40 votes, with one rejection and one abstention.

Attendees unanimously agreed on the necessity of Sheikh Khaled Al-Bader Al-Sabah continuing as President of the Federation, recognizing his significant contributions to the promotion and advancement of water sports across Asia.

In response, Sheikh Khaled Al-Bader Al-Sabah expressed gratitude to the political leadership, including His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and the Kuwaiti people for their support in securing Kuwait's victory in this position.

He conveyed his happiness at the vote of confidence from the General Assembly, emphasizing that it signifies not just an honor but a duty to serve. He emphasized Kuwait's prominent position in Asian sports



Sheikh Khaled Al-Bader Al-Sabah receives a congratulatory handshake from an official.

and highlighted the Kuwaiti people's ability to set an exemplary standard through hard work and dedication.

Sheikh Al-Bader extended his appreciation to those who entrusted him

with this responsibility and pledged to work tirelessly to meet their expectations, pledging to contribute to the advancement of water sports throughout Asia in the coming term.

Mavs, Pacers have slim leads

T-wolves push Phoenix to brink of 'elimination'

PHOENIX, April 27, (AP) — Anthony Edwards scored 36 points, Rudy Gobert added 19 points and 14 rebounds and the Minnesota Timberwolves used a hot-shooting third quarter to beat the Phoenix Suns 126-109 on Friday night and take a 3-0 lead in the first-round series.

Minnesota goes for the sweep in Game 4 on Sunday in Phoenix.

It was the third straight game the Wolves used a big third to turn a tight game into a comfortable victory. Minnesota hit 7 of 11 3-pointers during the surge, including four from Nickeil Alexander-Walker, to take a 22-point lead into the fourth.

Bradley Beal led the Suns with 28 points while Kevin Durant had 25 and Devin Booker 23.

Minnesota had a six-point halftime lead and stretched its advantage to 69-58 early in the third after back-to-back 3-pointers from Mike Conley and Karl-Anthony Towns. Late in the third, Alexander-Walker hit his fourth 3-pointer of the quarter for a 95-73 lead.

The Wolves were also dominant on the glass, finishing with a 50-28 rebounding advantage.

Six Minnesota players scored in double figures. Towns finished with 18 points and 13 rebounds while Alexander-Walker scored 16.

The listless Suns could never cut the deficit to single digits in the fourth. Now they're one loss away from what would be a bitterly disappointing season after entering the year with championship aspirations.

BASKETBALL

Phoenix's Josh Okogie was ejected late in the fourth after a hard foul on Gobert.

The Timberwolves led 59-53 at the halftime break following a competitive first half. Edwards led the Wolves with 16 points while Durant had 14 for the Suns. Eric Gordon gave Phoenix a spark with 10 points in the first quarter, but it was short lived.

The Suns played without starting guard Grayson Allen, who led the NBA in 3-point shooting percentage this season. Allen's dealing with a sprained ankle from Game 1 that he aggravated in Game 2.

Mavericks 101, Clippers 90
In Dallas, Luka Doncic had 22 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists, and the suddenly defensive-minded Dallas Mavericks took a chippy victory over the Los Angeles Clippers for a 2-1 lead in the first-round series.

The Mavs rode the same defense that gave them home-court advantage with a Game 2 victory in LA, and won in Dallas three years after losing all three first-round games on their floor in a seven-game loss to the Clippers. Game 4 is Sunday in Dallas.

Rookie Dereck Lively II scored all 13 of his points in the first half and Daniel Gafford, his tag-team partner as a dunker and rim protector, had an emphatic block of a dunk attempt by Paul George early in the fourth quarter while Dallas was taking control for good in a game with five technical fouls, a flagrant foul and two ejections.

James Harden scored 21 points for the Clippers, but just seven after halftime, while fellow stars George and Kawhi Leonard had little impact. Normal Powell also had 21.

George dealt with foul trouble and finished with seven points, five rebounds, five assists - and five fouls. Leonard never looked comfortable in his second game back after missing nine games with right knee inflammation and had nine points and nine rebounds. Ivica Zubac had 19 points and eight rebounds.

Kyrie Irving scored 19 of his 21 points in the final 13-plus minutes, including eight in the final 1:18 of the third quarter, and was instrumental in Dallas rebuilding an 18-point lead that had been cut to six.

An already testy game reached a boiling point midway through the fourth quarter when Russell Westbrook slung Doncic around after fouling him. Westbrook was called for a technical for that contact and for showing P.J. Washington after Washington confronted him. Washington also was called for a tech during the sequence, and already had one from an earlier showing match with Terance Mann.

Westbrook, who in the first half got a flagrant 1 foul for excessive contact when fouling Josh Green on a breakaway, and Washington were ejected.

Westbrook, who missed all seven shots and scored one point, drew the ire



Dallas Mavericks' Kyrie Irving (11) shoots over Los Angeles Clippers' Paul George (13) and Kawhi Leonard (2) during the second half of Game 2 of an NBA basketball first-round playoff series in Dallas. (AP)



Milwaukee Bucks center Brook Lopez (11) shoots under Indiana Pacers center Myles Turner (33) during the second half in Game 2 in an NBA basketball first-round playoff series in Indianapolis. (AP)

of the crowd one other time when he bowled over Doncic after Zubac was called for a foul as Doncic went up for a shot. Officials reviewed the play but ruled Westbrook's contact incidental.

Doncic, who briefly left the court after limping off while grabbing his right knee in the first quarter, was just 7 of 25 from the field and 3 of 13 from 3-point range.

But Dallas held George and Westbrook to a combined 1 of 10 from deep, while Leonard didn't even have a 3 attempt among just seven shots.

Pacers 121, Bucks 118 OT
In Indianapolis, Tyrese Haliburton completed a three-point play with 1.6 seconds left, capping his first post-season triple-double in his first home playoff game to give the Indiana Pacers a 121-118 overtime victory over the Milwaukee Bucks.

Indiana leads the best-of-seven series 2-1, with Game 4 on Sunday in Indianapolis. Two-time league MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo again sat out for Milwaukee because of a strained left calf.

Haliburton had 18 points, 16 assists and 10 rebounds. Myles Turner added 29 points and nine rebounds, both playoff career highs, to help give Indiana its first back-to-back postseason wins since taking three straight in the 2014 Eastern Conference semifinals.

The Pacers also have their first lead in the playoffs since Game 3 of a first-round matchup against Cleveland in 2018. Indiana hasn't won a series since reaching the 2014 Eastern Conference finals.

Milwaukee's Khris Middleton banked in a 3-pointer with 1.4 seconds to force overtime and had a chance to force a second overtime, but his 3 bounced off the side of the rim as the buzzer sounded.

Middleton finished with a playoff-career high 42 points and had 10 rebounds and five assists after missing practice Thursday because of a sprained right ankle. Damian Lillard added 28 points and eight assists, most coming after he hurt his left Achilles late in the first quarter.

It was a wild finish in front of a festive crowd decked out in gold T-shirts for Indiana's first home playoff game since since April 21, 2019 - and with many local favorites in attendance. The crowd included former Indiana Fever newcomer Caitlin Clark, former Colts coach Tony Dungy, former Pacers forward Derrick McKey and current Colts players Anthony Richardson, Kenny Moore II and E.J. Speed.

Liverpool's draw at West Ham further damages Premier League title hopes



West Ham United's Michail Antonio (left), and Liverpool's Virgil van Dijk battle for the ball during the English Premier League soccer match at the London Stadium, London. (AP)

Leicester return to EPL at first attempt after Leeds lose to QPR

LONDON, April 27, (AP) — Liverpool conceded Michail Antonio's late equalizer in a 2-2 draw with West Ham on Saturday that further dented the Premier League title hopes of Jurgen Klopp's team.

Liverpool is limping to the finish line in Klopp's final season in charge, recording just one win in its past five league games.

Antonio's header in the 77th minute at London Stadium tied the game after Andy Robertson's goal made it 1-1 early in the second half and Tomas Soucek's own-goal put Liverpool ahead.

The draw kept Liverpool in third place, two points behind leader Arsenal, which has a game in hand. Second-place Manchester City is one point ahead of Liverpool and has two games in hand over Klopp's team.

Liverpool controlled the first half, dominating possession but getting only two of its 11 shots on target, as West Ham went into halftime with a 1-0 lead following Jarrod Bowen's header in the 43rd minute.

Meanwhile, Arne Slot took a big step closer to becoming Liverpool's manager after the Premier League club reportedly agreed to pay Feyenoord about 11 million euros (\$11.7 million) in compensation.

SOCCER

British and Dutch media reported that the clubs reached a verbal agreement on the compensation package, clearing the way for the 45-year-old Slot to succeed Jurgen Klopp after this season.

While British media pegged the compensation around 11 million euros, Dutch newspaper De Telegraaf said the figure could surpass 13 million euros. Slot has two years left on his contract with the Rotterdam club.

Klopp is leaving Liverpool after a

Uzbekistan knock out Saudi Arabia at U-23 Asian Cup

DOHA, Qatar, April 27, (AP) — Defending champion Saudi Arabia lost to Uzbekistan 2-0 in the Under-23 Asian Cup quarterfinals and also saw its chance of a second successive appearance at the Olympics end on Friday.

Only the top three teams from the 16-team competition qualify automatically for men's Olympic soccer in Paris. Fourth place earns a playoff against Guinea in May.

In a reverse of the 2022 final, Uzbekistan was a comfortable winner. Khusain Norchaev scored on halftime and the Saudis' task became much harder after 70 minutes when Ayman Yahya received a second yellow card. Umarali Rakhmonaliev headed home to secure the win for the 2018 champion.

The Central Asian team will take on Indonesia in Monday's semifinal.

Iraq defeated Vietnam 1-0 to earn a last-four clash

with Japan.

Ali Jasim scored in the second half from the penalty spot after goalkeeper Quan Van Chuan fouled Mohammad Nihad in the area.

Vietnam's Nguyen Manh Hung was red-carded for stamping on Jasim in stoppage time.

Earlier, the Korea Football Association apologized to fans for failing to qualify for the Olympics for the first time since 1984. The team lost to Indonesia on Thursday after a shootout.

"The coaching staff and players all did their best to try to qualify for our 10th consecutive Olympic Games, but unfortunately, we didn't accomplish our goal," the statement said. "We fully understand that the responsibility lies with us at the KFA, as we are in charge of developing and supporting national teams. We'd like to offer our sincere apology to all football fans for our failure to qualify."

spell of more than eight years in which he has won a full set of trophies including the Premier League and Champions League.

Neither club has commented. With the compensation package agreed, Liverpool can now negotiate contract terms with Slot.

On Friday, Klopp described the

Anfield post as the "best job in the world." He said he liked Slot's style of soccer but has not been involved in the search process.

"If he's the solution I'm more than happy," Klopp said. "It's not up to me to judge these things, but it all sounds really good to me."

At Feyenoord, Slot delivered the

Dutch league title last season and the Dutch Cup this year.

Leicester City were promoted back to the Premier League from the Championship (second division) at the first attempt without needing to kick a ball, after Queens Park Rangers beat Leeds United 4-0.

The result means that Leicester with 74 points are four points ahead of Leeds, who are currently second in the classification with just a game to play, with Ipswich Town on 69 points and fourth place Southampton on 64 points, with two games left this season.

Leicester City were relegated from the end of last season from the Premier League, before appointing Enzo Maresca as first team coach.

Maresca has led them to a successful campaign, with 30 wins from 44 matches and with 86 goals in their favor.

The 2016 Premier League winners will be accompanied into the top flight by either Leeds or Ipswich Town, who have the chance to move above Leeds on Saturday if they win away to seventh place, Hull City, who also need a win to maintain their hopes of finishing in the top-six and getting into the end of season play-offs. Enditem



Leicester City's Abdul Fatawu scores their side's third goal of the game during a Sky Bet Championship soccer match against Southampton at the King Power Stadium in Leicester, England. (AP)



Tony Estanguet, President of Paris 2024, holds the Olympic flame next to French Sports Minister Amelie Oudea-Castera, second right, and Chairman of the Management Board of BPCE Nicolas Namias, right, during a ceremony before the departure of the Flame to France at the port of Piraeus, in Greece, for the 2024 Paris Games. (AP)

Sports

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

Kuwait handball team 'takes' home silver at inaugural Gulf Youth Games

Kuwait make a dazzling start in karate

ABU DHABI, April 27: Kuwait clinched its fourth victory by defeating UAE 33-20 to win silver at the conclusion of handball's competitions in the inaugural Gulf Youth Games, hosted by the UAE and ongoing until the second of next May. Saudi Arabia won gold with 10 points, while Bahrain secured third place with six points.

Shabib Al-Hajri, Vice President of the Handball Federation, lauded

the players' performance throughout the tournament, commending their second-place finish and silver medal. He noted that the team showcased abundant young talent with promising futures ahead.

GCC YOUTH GAMES

Al-Hajri emphasized the players' determination to elevate their performance in upcoming stages, eyeing significant competitions such as the Asian Cup and the World Cup qualifiers.

In the triathlon event, where athletes compete in swimming, cycling, and running, Kuwait's national team

member Fahd Al-Enezi secured fourth place. Competitions continued on the final day, featuring Salman Al-Sharhan and Omar Al-Shaibani in the duathlon.

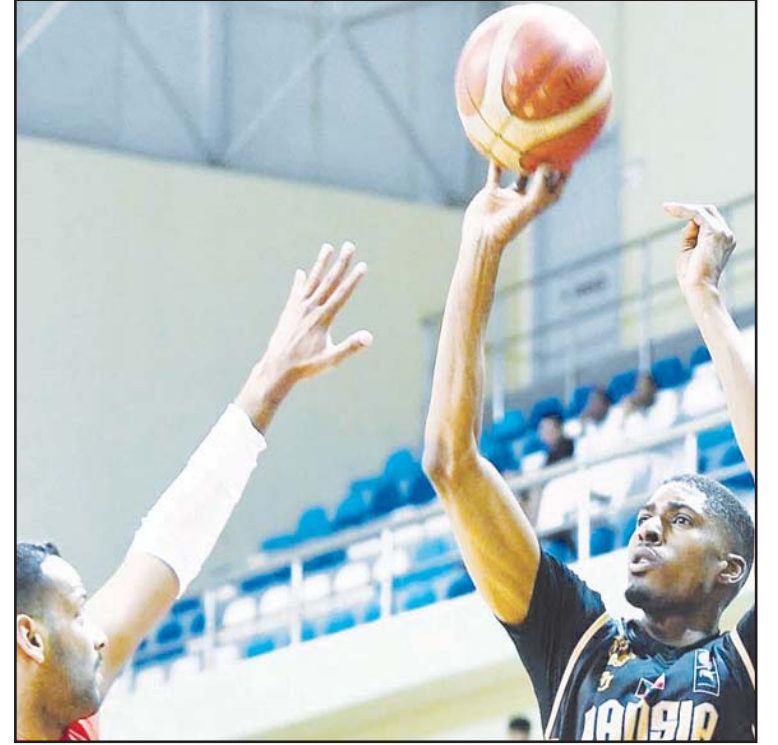
Additionally, Salem Al-Abakal and Badr Al-Ansari competed in the initial round of golf events, which commenced two days ago and will span three consecutive days.

In karate, Kuwait's national team made a dazzling start at the Gulf Youth Games, securing ten medals on the opening day's competitions at Sharjah Al-Hazzana Club hall. The medals included three golds, one silver, and six bronzes.

Gold medals were secured by Ali Al-Ajmi (under-55 kg), Musa Al-Mutairi (under-55), and Tulay Ahmed (over-66), while Malak Al-Shammari earned the

silver (under-53 weight). Bronze medals were claimed by Turki Al-Ibrahim (over-76), Mona Al-Qattan (under-53), Salman Al-Harbi (under 76), Zainab Al-Kandari (under 66), Fahd Al-Azmi (under 61), and Haneen Fakher (under 59).

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti swimming team began their medal tally at the Abu Dhabi Marine Sports Club complex, securing three medals (one gold and two bronze). Hamad Al-Ghaith claimed gold in the 800-meter freestyle race (14-15 years) with a time of 08:54.81. Swimmer Saba Sultan earned bronze in the 800-meter freestyle race (17-18 years) with a time of 10:42:59, while Hassan Ashkanani secured bronze in the 800-meter freestyle race (16-17 years) with a time of 09:07:44.



Al-Qadisiya player shoots over Kazma defender during the deciding Game 3.

Kuwait Club loom

Al-Qadisiya book 'spot' in the final

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: Al-Qadisiya secured its spot in the basketball league final by defeating Kazma 93-87 in the decisive third match of the play-off semi-finals. This sets up a showdown with Kuwait Club in the culmination of the tournament.

In a series where Al-Qadisiya and Kazma each won one match, the tournament regulations mandated a decisive match, which the yellow team clinched after a hard-fought battle.

BASKETBALL

The final will follow the play-off system, spanning five matches instead of three, with the victor of three matches claiming the championship title.

Kazma initially took the lead with a strong performance from their American player, Chapman, leading 17-9. However, Al-Qadisiya quickly closed the gap by the end of the first quarter, with the score at 23-22 in favor of Kazma.

The game remained tight in the second quarter, with Kazma maintaining their lead through the efforts of Chapman and Abdulaziz Al-Hamidi.

Yet, Al-Qadisiya managed to narrow the margin with solid plays from their American player, Lowry, scoring three-pointers. The third quarter concluded with Kazma holding a narrow 46-44 lead.



Players display Kuwait national flags as they celebrate their silver win on the podium.

Qatar seeks to host 2036 Olympics

DOHA, April 27: The Qatar Olympic Committee is gearing up to submit its bid to host the 2036 Olympics to the International Olympic Committee soon. According to reports from the Qatari newspaper Al-Watan, the decision to compile the bid has been made, with expectations for a comprehensive proposal encompassing all aspects of hosting, involving various relevant government bodies.

OLYMPICS

The move follows Qatar's notable success in hosting numerous international events and championships. Meanwhile, South Korea, India, Egypt, and Germany have expressed their intentions to compete in the bidding process, while Mexico has opted out.

Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, President of the Qatar Olympic Committee, emphasized in earlier statements to the press, "The Middle East has never had the opportunity to host the Olympic Games before. The Olympic rings stand as symbols of peace, unity, and hope for all peoples worldwide, including those in our region."

The Olympic flame for Paris 2024 began its journey from Greece's Piraeus port to France on Saturday on board the French ship Belem.

The three-masted ship set sail from Greece's largest port 90 days before the opening ceremony of the Games on July 26.

It was the first time in the history of the Games that the Olympic Flame has been transported by sea.

Belem, launched in 1896, the same year the first modern Olympics was hosted in Athens, carries the



Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, President of the Qatar Olympic Committee.

flame in a lantern.

After crossing the Mediterranean, it is scheduled to reach the port of Marseille on May 8 to kickstart the second leg of the torch relay.

The Greek leg of the torch relay started on April 16 from Ancient Olympia, the birthplace of the Olympics 2,800 years ago, where the flame was ignited next to the stadium where ancient athletes competed.

In an official handover ceremony held on Friday at Panathenaic stadium, the venue of the 1896 Games, Tony Estanguet, president of the organizing committee of the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, received the flame.

"We are looking forward to welcoming the world," Estanguet said on Saturday shortly before carrying the flame on board Belem.

The 2024 Olympic Games, hosted by France a century after the first time the country hosted the Olympics, will place an emphasis on sustainability and gender equality, he said.

SAN SEBASTIAN, Spain, April 27, (AP): Real Madrid moved another step closer to a 36th Spanish league title after beating Real Sociedad 1-0 and extending its lead in the standings to 14 points.

Carlo Ancelotti's men need just five points from their last five games to ensure the title will return to the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

"We are very close to winning La Liga," the coach acknowledged after a hard-fought win in the Basque country.

On a rainy night in San Sebastian, Madrid put out a second-string team to rest Jude Bellingham, Vinicius Junior and other regulars.

The new faces struggled for large parts of the game, with Sociedad having much of the play and plenty of scoring chances.

But one of Madrid's new faces proved the difference between the sides.

Arda Güler, the young Turkish attacker, made his first start in the league, and when the Sociedad defense failed to clear Dani Carvajal's low cross, Güler drifted in at the back post to slot the ball home with 29 minutes gone.

Ancelotti paid tribute to the 19-year-old Güler, calling him "a very important player for our future."

"Güler has extraordinary quality, he has great talent. Little by little he will take center stage."

Takakura Kubo equalized three minutes later for Sociedad only to see his goal disallowed after a

video review.

Ancelotti introduced Vinicius, Antonio Rudiger and Eduardo Camavinga in a busy second half as Madrid held on to extend its unbeaten run in La Liga to 27 games.

SOCCER

Another satisfying note for the champion-elect was the return of Eder Militao. The Brazilian defender made his first start since tearing his cruciate ligament eight months ago, and played the entire game.

"I am very happy, after eight

months out," Militao said. "Very happy to return and play 90 minutes and feel like a player again."

In Frosinone, Italy, Salernitana was relegated from Serie A after going down at Frosinone 3-0.

The Salerno club has only two wins in 35 league games and was bottom of the table.

The win was vital for Frosinone, one of at least seven teams fighting not to be one of the two other clubs that joins Salernitana in the second tier next season.

Frosinone was three points above third-to-last Udinese and five ahead of second-to-last Sassuolo. Both teams have a game in

hand.

Frosinone went ahead in the 10th minute, Matias Soule converting from the penalty spot for the home side. Marco Bresciniani doubled its lead 15 minutes later, and Nadir Zortea completed the scoring five minutes from time with a low shot from 25 yards out.

In Bochum, Germany, Kevin Stöger scored twice as Bochum won for the first time in nine Bundesliga games by a nervy 3-2 over a leaky Hoffenheim.

Hoffenheim has not kept a clean sheet for 26 games, a record run for the Bundesliga side.

Hoffenheim remained in ninth place after missing a chance to leapfrog Augsburg and Freiburg and move into seventh.

Hoffenheim had a penalty award rescinded after a video review midway through the first half and then fell behind to a superb Stöger free kick after 34 minutes.

Bochum made it 2-0 in first-half stoppage time when a defensive howler gave Felix Passlack a free shot on goal from six yards out.

Stöger added a third with a simple tap in after Oliver Baumann parried Moritz Broschinski's effort.

Andrej Kramarić then ensured a jittery finale for the home side by scoring twice.

Bochum was still not out of relegation danger. The win lifted it into 14th place, eight points clear of the two automatic relegation spots with five matches remaining



Real Madrid's Brahim Diaz (left), and Real Sociedad's Martin Zubimendi challenge for the ball during the Spanish La Liga soccer match between Real Sociedad and Real Madrid in San Sebastian, Spain. (AP)