



## Prime Minister visits Nazaha, submits his financial records



Left: His Highness the PM receives a copy of Nazaha's midterm report. Right: HH the PM submits his financial records to the authority.



PM Diwan photos

### Role lauded

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah on Wednesday visited the Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha), where he received a copy of Nazaha's midterm report from its Chairman Abdulaziz Al-Ibrahim.

During his visit to Nazaha, His Highness the Prime Minister also presented his financial records to the authority according to Law No. 2 of 2016 on the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Authority.

In a press statement, His Highness the Prime Minister commended Nazaha's role in preserving the country's funds, combating corruption, and applying law to everyone.

### KRCS annual Ramadan aid mission spans 13 countries

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14, (KUNA): Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) announced on Wednesday that it will launch its annual campaign (Ramadan Al-Khair) on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan in 13 countries around the world.

In a statement to KUNA, Chairperson of Kuwait Red Crescent Society Dr. Hilal Al-Sayer affirmed that Kuwait's humanitarian principles stand firm in supporting brothers and friends with their different situations and helping the needy, especially in the holy month.

He said that the annual Iftar (breaking of fast) campaign aims to fulfill the needs of the fasting poor people by distributing meals, baskets and banquets.

He noted that these efforts reflect Kuwait's leading humanitarian role upon the directives of its political leadership to help aid poor families around the world.

He added that Ramadan projects this year include 13 different countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

He affirmed the importance of this campaign that lies in solidifying the meaning of giving and spreading the spirit of charity, especially in the holy month of Ramadan.

Al-Sayer also pointed out that KRCS seeks to provide the best services for all needy people around the world, and always aims to improve its methods and schemes to achieve success in its humanitarian endeavors.

### Opinion

#### Kuwait is being looted, no doubt

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

IT is good that the government refused to attend the session of the National Assembly yesterday in order to clarify the authorities of both arms of governance - the executive and the legislative - and not to accept encroachment on its authority.

People will also not accept the continuation of the bickerings that prevailed in the previous parliaments as if the parliamentarians are the rulers of this country.

This government has many issues that cannot be postponed. It cannot waste time on political skirmishes aimed at raising the electoral score of certain MPs.

Rather, it must be made clear that the parliament's mission is legislation and oversight, and not to infringe on the authority of any minister.

In this situation, it is not possible to find solutions to the country's many problems that were caused by the weakness of the previous councils of ministers, and led to an abnormal situation. In that situation, it was, to say the least, a rule of chaos, and not exercising all of its work authority in accordance with the Constitution.

One of the issues that must be addressed in the current government is the black hole called subsidies, which consumes more than one third of the state's general budget.

In this regard, it must be made clear that the tone of "do not touch the citizen's pocket" is an excuse for more wastage.

The large sums of money spent in this regard go to those who are seeking to accumulate their wealth, while the citizens benefit nothing from it.

In fact, about 20 percent of the subsidy budget is sufficient to raise the salaries of low-income earners, improve their lives, and get rid of the tone of "social justice" aimed at continuing physical coercion on citizens.

It is inconceivable that 120,000 Kuwaitis are banned from traveling as a result of civil debt rulings that are not criminalized in the entire world except in Kuwait, while the rest of that amount goes to investment spending on projects that the country needs.

Continued on Page 5

Email: ahmed@aljarallah.com

Follow me on:



ahmedaljarallah@gmail.com

### News watch

**KUWAIT CITY:** Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty organization (CTBT) Robert Floyd commended on Wednesday cooperation between CTBT and Kuwait regarding the ban on nuclear tests, and the organization's goals.

In a seminar held at Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute titled: (Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty) as a part of its cultural training season, he lauded Kuwait's full support to the organization. (KUNA)

**CAIRO:** Kuwait is taking part in the meeting of senior officials of the Economic and Social Council (ESC), of the Arab League which commenced Wednesday and chaired by Jordan.

Arab League Assistant Secretary General and Head of the Social Affairs Sector Dr. Haifa Abu Ghazaleh called, during the meeting, for a plan to respond to negative economic and social repercussions of the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip. (KUNA)

## Indians lead expat surge in Kuwait's labor market

Workforce hits 2.897 million

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14:** The latest Kuwaiti labor market data issued by the Central Statistics Bureau revealed that about 107,000 citizens and expatriates entered the labor market in the first nine months of 2023; bringing the total number of workers in the country to about 2.897 million citizens and expatriates at the end of September last year, compared to 2.79 million at the end of December 2022 — an in-

crease of 3.8 percent, reports Al-Anba daily.

The total workforce in the country includes 2.44 million expatriates in the private and government sectors at the end of September 2023, compared to 2.34 million at the end of December 2022 — an increase of 4.2 percent; while the number of citizens reached around 448,800 at the end of September 2023, compared to about 442,600 at the end of December 2022 — an increase of 1.4 percent.

Continued on Page 5



Kuwait's Health Minister Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi examines a new fleet of 79 fully equipped ambulances, including 10 for rough terrain, during the launch ceremony on Wednesday.

### Cutting-edge ambulance fleet launched in Kuwait

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

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14:** The Ministry of Health celebrated the inauguration of the new fleet of 79 ambulances that are fully equipped intensive care units, including ten that are designed for rugged and bumpy areas.

The Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi expressed his happiness with the fleet entering service and joining the emergency health system to serve patients.

Revealing that the paramedics have been trained to drive the ambulances, the minister announced the addition of 100 more vehicles this year, which are the most modern and sophisticated kind, and contain the latest electronic connectivity technology.

In this regard, the Assistant Undersecretary for Engineering Affairs Ibrahim Al-Naham said the inauguration is part of the ministry's plan to introduce ambulances in batches through cooperation between the departments of Transportation and Medical Emergency in terms of testing in the country of manufacture - the United States of America.

He revealed that the ambulances have the highest specifications. Meanwhile, Director of the Medical Emergency Department Dr. Ahmed Al-Shatti said the inauguration of these ambulances is a historic day for the Medical Emergency Department, as it increases the total number of ambulances to 281.

He said, "The average time for arrival to the reported location was ten minutes. However, we are aiming for seven minutes."

Dr. Al-Shatti expressed pride in the availability of the latest capabilities and equipment in ambulances to assist patients and injured people.

He praised the encouragement of the minister and the undersecretary, and the coordination that took place between the concerned departments to achieve this goal in a way that serves citizens in a very short time.

Continued on Page 5

### Other Voices

## What comes after the ICJ decision regarding Gaza?

By Tareq Yousef Alshumaimry

Two weeks after the decision of the International Court of Justice, will Israel adhere to the court's orders, and after the International Court of Justice ordered Israel to prevent acts of genocide whose attacks led to the deaths of hundreds more people in Gaza, and in the interim decision the court ordered Israel to adhere to six temporary measures:

These obligations included preventing acts of genocide, addressing direct and public incitement to genocide, and ensuring the provision of basic services and humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza. Furthermore, the court ordered Israel to protect evidence of genocide and to submit a report to the International Court of Justice within a month, detailing its compliance with these orders.

However, South Africa's Foreign Minister, Naledi Pandor, confirmed last week that Israel had not adhered to the ruling, claiming that hundreds more civilians in Gaza had been killed in the intervening days.

The question that arises is: What mea-

sures, if any, has Israel taken to implement the directives of the International Court of Justice up to this point?

Has Israel taken measures to prevent acts of genocide?

In the week following the ICJ ruling, there is evidence that Israeli forces did not take effective measures to prevent acts of genocide and continued their military offensive in Gaza, resulting in approximately 2,000 additional Palestinian casualties since the court's decision on January 26, 2024. (Source: Ministry of Health in Gaza.)

South African Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor expressed concern, saying last week that ongoing military operations indicate that Israel believes it has the freedom to act without restraint and despite specific orders issued by the International Court of Justice, hospitals in Gaza continue to be targeted by Israeli attacks. This exacerbates the pressure on the region's already collapsing healthcare system.

It is worth noting that the Nuseirat refugee camp and the areas surrounding Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis were subjected to attacks this week, and Al-Amal Hospital in Khan Yunis was under a 11-day siege, as the Palestinian Red Crescent Society reported that Israeli forces stormed the hospital for the third time last Thursday, and Israel denied these allegations.

Continued on Page 5

### Session moved to March 5-6

#### MP calls for stronger visa law enforcement

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14:** National Assembly Speaker Ahmed Al-Saadoun adjourned the supplementary session slated for Wednesday until March 5-6, 2024 due to the absence of the government.

Al-Saadoun disclosed that Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheriada Al-Meoshherji and HH the Deputy Amir and Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah called him earlier to inform him that the government would not attend the session.

Items in the agenda of the adjourned session include the fourth report of the Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee about the proposed amendment of the National Assembly Election Law and establishment of the Higher Commission for Elections, as well as the continuation of the MPs' response to the Amiri speech delivered at the inaugural session held on Oct 31, 2023.

In a related development, constitutional expert Professor Ibrahim Al-Homoud commented about the voting on removing the statement of MP Abdulkareem Al-Kandari regarding the Amiri speech from the minutes of the previous session. He said Al-Kandari convinced his colleagues to vote in his favor, while both the government and Al-Saadoun committed mistakes. He explained that Al-Saadoun should not have voted on the issue, and he should have adhered to Article 39 of the National Assembly Law and submitted the objection to the minutes of the previous session to the Assembly Office for the latter to take a decision. He added the government should have objected to the voting, since the subject for voting is unconstitutional. He cited Article 92 of the Constitution, stating that the Amiri entity is protected and sacred. He added the government must highlight the fact that a constitutional violation should not be a subject for voting.

Al-Homoud's comment is in line with the opinion about linking the absence of the government and approval of the MPs to keep the statement of Al-Kandari in the minutes of the session.

Meanwhile, MP Bader Sayyar Al-Shimmari disclosed that he met with a number of ministers; during which he confirmed the government is now aware that the Assembly's cooperation with the executive authority is connected to the latter's commitment to push for the ratification of popular bills and its response to the citizens' demands.

He urged HH the Prime Minister to monitor the statements of ministers. He said Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research Adel Al-Adwani did not apologize for issuing a statement against the teachers.

Continued on Page 5

### 'End aggression in Gaza'

## UK supports Kuwait's Khor accord position

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14, (KUNA):** British Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa Lord Tariq Ahmad urged the Israeli occupation to "stop this now" in reference to aggression on Gaza, and to build a sustainable ceasefire to end hostilities to ultimately reach a two-state solution.

Lord Ahmad, in an interview with Kuwait TV and KUNA, said Britain has a message to the Israeli occupation, "stop this now," and highlighted four key points to end the conflict in the occupied Palestinian territories.

He said the four points included building a sustainable ceasefire and an end to the hostilities, which killed more than 27,000 Palestinians, injured over 67,000 and displaced hundreds of thousands of Gazans others as well as causing massive destruction to public and private properties.

Continued on Page 5



KUNA photo  
British Minister of State for the Middle East Lord Tariq Ahmad during an interview with Kuwait TV and KUNA.



## Prayer Timings

Fajr ..... 05:08 Asr ..... 15:12  
Sunrise .. 06:28 Maghrib .. 17:36  
Zohr ..... 12:02 Isha ..... 18:54

# Local

## Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

**By Day:** Warm and partly cloudy with moderate to fresh southeasterly wind, with speeds of 20-55 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times and a chance for rising dust.  
**By Night:** Rather cold and

## Weather

cloudy to partly cloudy with moderate to fresh southeasterly wind, with speeds of 20-50 km/h with a chance for thunder rain that might be heavy and a chance for rising dust.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	23	16
Kuwait Airport	26	13
Abdaly	26	14
Jahra	26	14
Salmiyah	22	17
Nuwaisib	23	13
Wafra	26	14

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

## Bahrain, Kuwait have shared destiny: Bahraini Info minister

# Kuwait's Amir, PM congratulate Bahrain on 23rd charter anniversary

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to Bahrain King Hamad bin Issa Al-Khalifa on the 23rd anniversary of the National Action Charter.

His Highness the Amir praised Bahrain's achievements and wished the Bahraini King everlasting health and wellness and further progress and prosperity for his country.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah also sent a cable of congratulations to Bahrain King Hamad bin Issa Al-Khalifa on the 23rd anniversary of the National Action Charter.

Meanwhile, Bahrain's top lawmaker, Ahmad Al-Musallam, hailed the positive outcome of the visit by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to Bahrain's King Hamad Bin Issa Al-Khalifa.

The visit represents major milestone in the ongoing collaboration between Bahrain and Kuwait, speaker Al-Musallam said in a press release.

He expressed deep pride and appreciation for the strong historical ties and enduring fraternal relations between the leaderships and peoples of both countries.

Al-Musallam appreciated the consistent commitment to strengthening the strategic partnership,

especially in economic and investment sectors.

He highlighted a key high-level directive, emphasizing the formation of executive teams between the interior ministries of both nations to foster bilateral relationships and ensure security and stability in the region.

He confirmed the alignment of supportive stances on Gulf, Arab, Islamic, and international issues, emphasizing a shared commitment to supporting global efforts for security and stability.

Moreover, Al-Musallam affirmed the parliamentary endorsement of the points highlighted in the joint statement and the official discussions, which covered recent developments at both regional and international levels. His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah undertook the state visit earlier today to Bahrain.

### Shared destiny

Bahraini Minister of Information Dr. Ramzan bin Abdullah Al-Noaimi said the visit of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah mirrored the depth of amity and the historical bonds between both nations.

Bahrain and Kuwait believe deeply that they have a shared destiny and therefore they work to strengthen the mutually-beneficial cooperation, the minister said in statements to KUNA on Tuesday.

"The partnership between both nations keeps strengthening thanks to care by King Hamad bin Isa and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal," Dr. Al-Noaimi said, noting that both leaders are keen on opening new horizons for cooperation to

realize the common aspirations and objectives.

The summit talks held by both leaders reflected a shared long-standing desire expand cooperation and integration, he pointed out.

"The visit of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait falls in the framework of top-level visit exchanges by the leaderships of both countries aiming to enhance cooperation in all areas and coordinate stances vis-a-vis regional and international issues.

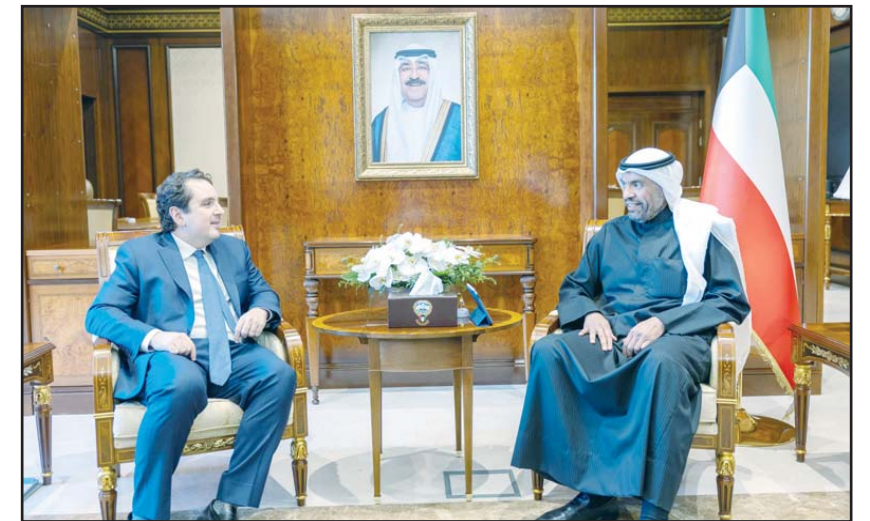
"It will give momentum to cooperation in addressing the regional challenges Dr. Al-Noaimi said, affirming that both countries follow identical foreign policies that are supportive of peace, security, stability and development on global scale.

He renewed the commitment of the government of Bahraini Crown Prince and Prime Minister Amir Salman bin Hamad to pushing to a new height the relationship with the government of His Highness the Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and realizing the common aspirations

The two countries signed several documents on joint ventures and cooperation in the political, economic, social and cultural fields which open new horizon for the bilateral relations, he went on.

Dr. Al-Noaimi spoke highly of "the wise diplomacy" adopted by Kuwait's leadership which focuses on strengthening the GCC joint action, empowering the GCC to realize the aspirations of the peoples of its member countries, and promoting the humanitarian action across the world.

He expressed hope that Kuwait will continue enjoying welfare, prosperity and progress under its wise leadership.



The Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya meets with the US Deputy Secretary of State for Arabian Peninsula Affairs Daniel Benyam. KUNA photo

## FM, US envoy discuss bilateral ties

Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya received Tuesday US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Arabian Peninsula Affairs, Daniel Benyam. Both sides touched on the historical bilateral ties between the US and Kuwait as well as the latest

regional and global developments. The US official renewed the commitment of the United States to maintaining the security and safety of Kuwait and its people, which is a solid pillar of the close relations between the two friendly countries. (KUNA)

# Questions remain although AI can shape science & education future

## Other Voices

### Seeking help to pave roads!

By Ahmad alsarraf

The Minister of Public Works has faced significant challenges in addressing the road repair issues inherited from previous administrations.

Despite her good character and true intentions, the Ministry's depleted resources and lack of oversight have made the task daunting.

The need for a clean, honest, and qualified government technical body to monitor road paving processes is crucial to ensure compliance with international standards.

On the other hand, almost everyone praises your good character and true intentions, and the absence of anything that raises suspicion in your previous work history. There is no doubt that these are important matters in our time. There is also no doubt that you have discovered that solving the road problem is not that deep, and perhaps if you knew the depth of the ministry's "tragedy."

We have repeatedly written, and others have done so, that resolving the road situation requires the presence of a clean, honest, and qualified government technical body, possessing the integrity and knowledge to monitor the entire paving process, starting with the validity of the asphalt plant, its method of operation, and the materials used, and their compliance with all specifications, and ending with the paving process, according to international standards.

Approved, including the correct transfer of materials to the site, ensuring that all necessary technical requirements are compliant, while ensuring the Interior Ministry's cooperation with the Ministry in the paving process!

In short, and as everyone testifies, there is no such team capable of carrying out this task in the ministry, with great respect for the few, and in the absence of this team it is not possible

to convince any party that what will be implemented in the coming months will be in accordance with international standards. The ministry, my dear lady, is infiltrated and penetrating deeply.

I do not think that you were not surprised that those who were supposed to be your senior assistants, especially on the purely technical side, included graduates of the Faculty of Sharia. What calamity has afflicted the Ministry, and who is this body that approved this appointment, even if it was by assignment and honor?

You, Madam, based on my humble experience, have one way to end the disastrous state of the roads, and I am not talking here about the ministry's disastrous situation, as there is no solution for it soon. You must urgently issue road repair tenders as quickly as possible, and invite local, and even foreign, contracting companies to participate in them. It is necessary,

I repeat necessary, to bring in an external supervisory team to supervise all stages of paving, and this requires breaking the routine and departing from the norm, and if necessary, seeking the support and backing of the highest authorities to implement this matter, as the entire ministry staff is "incapable, unqualified, and not competent" at all.

To do a task that has been proven, thousands of times, to fail! I also suggest placing large signs in front of each road project, showing the name of the implementing company, so that everyone knows who implemented it, and to be evidence of it in the future, for good or ill! With the award contracts including new conditions related to performance and maintenance guarantees, so that their duration is slightly longer than the current one, and can be implemented immediately without returning to the contractor, if he is lax in implementing the maintenance clause in the future.

There is no doubt that the matter is not that easy, but as long as there is good intention and strong will, nothing is difficult to implement.

□ □ □

e-mail: a.alsarraf@alqabas.com.kw

## 'Don't ignore dynamic world'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: Under the patronage of acting Director of Kuwait University Dr Mishari Al-Harbi and in the presence of acting Secretary General of the university Dr Fayez Al-Dhafiri and a number of faculty members and students, the Educational Technology Division in the Department of Curriculum and Teaching Methods at the College of Education organized an awareness lecture entitled, "Cybersecurity and Artificial Intelligence", reports Al-Anba daily.

During the lecture, acting Secretary General of the university Dr Fayez Al-Dhafiri said: "We are in a rapidly changing society, so we seek not just globalization today. The culture, interests and interaction of young people through electronic games and the available means of communication have become common. The world has become dynamic and we must not ignore this as educators, scholars, researchers and Science students, especially those in the College of Education."

### Preparing

Al-Dhafiri stressed the importance of preparing the global teacher, just as it is preparing the global student who has common values and concepts that depend on mutual respect for differences. He pointed out that artificial intelligence and cybersecurity have become a burden on some and not a common understanding among the parties, as everyone who disagreed with the other was cyber-attacked or used social media negatively; hence, the need to hold a symposium on the proper use of cybersecurity and artificial intelligence.

"If we seek positive change, we must take the initiative to bring about this change through awareness of the concepts of cybersecurity and artificial intelligence. We have to focus on the digital transformation model relying on four basic pillars: awareness, acceptance, readiness and alignment," he explained. On the other hand, Dr Walid Al-Anazi stated that cybersecurity and artificial intelligence will shape the future of scientific research and education in general, especially in the College of Education, which must be invested in pedagogically.

He added: "There are many fears surrounding cybersecurity and artificial intelligence like any new development. Does it threaten the presence of teachers in schools and universities, as well as the administrative work in State institutions? Can a student resort to such technological practices as a negative investment that leads to unfairness in terms of competition between him and his classmates? All these questions must be discussed."

## State institutions must do more for kids rights

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: Vice President of the National Bureau for Human Rights and Chairperson of the Permanent Committee on the Rights of the Child Dr Stham Al-Fraih recently met with President of Amana Social Welfare Association Zeina Bin Issa, along with Zahraa Al-Sultan and Hanan Al-Anazi, to discuss ways of strengthening cooperation between the two sides regarding children's issues and rights, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The meeting focused on the need to communicate with State institutions and to coordinate their efforts to implement Children's Law number 21/2015 and raise public awareness on its provisions. They also talked about the shelters for abused children, as well as the most important factors in ensuring that they play their roles efficiently. Al-Fraih explained that the National Bureau for Human Rights and public benefit associations are not executive bodies; as their role lies in shedding light and providing psychological, scientific, social and technical support and submitting recommendations to government agencies, led by the Supreme Family Council.

□ □ □

'Lines project on track': Oil sources said the oil well production lines project in the northern regions of Kuwait is on track for completion by March, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The construction cost has exceeded 6.761 million dinars, with a local private company spearheading the implementation since March 2022.

The northern fields currently yield between 500 to 600 thousand barrels of oil daily, with Kuwait Oil aiming to increase production to 750 to 800 thousand barrels per day by 2026 or mid-2027.

In 2023, the Kuwait Oil Company had successfully drilled and completed about 30 wells in the northern region and plans to drill at least 40 more wells in 2024.



Kuwait was engulfed in a cold fog since early morning Wednesday, Feb 14. Visibility was affected on 7th Ring Road and other open areas in the desert. Things improved gradually as the day passed by. Photo by Rizk Taufiq

## Commiserations from Brazil head

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Wednesday a letter of condolences from President Luiz Inacio Lula Da Silva of Brazil.

The Brazilian president expressed his deepest sorrows and grief over the passing of the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

He also conveyed his congratulations to the Amir on assuming office, wishing him success and good health.

His Highness the Amir sent a reply letter to the President of Brazil, expressing his sincere thanks and gratitude for his kind sentiments and wishes, wishing him good health and further progress and development for his country.

## HH Amir congratulated on assuming power

# Martyr's Office to hold multiple activities marking national days

By Abdul Nasser Al-Aslami  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: Undersecretary at the Amiri Diwan and Director General of the Office of Honoring Martyrs and their Families Salah Hamad Al-Aufan sent a cable of congratulations to the office of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the occasion of His Highness assuming the reins of power, which is a national holiday for Kuwait.

Al-Aufan said, "His Highness pays great attention to enhancing communication with various segments of society and supporting national unity. This is based on the belief that Kuwait's strength lies in the cohesion of its social fabric and achieving the aspirations and ambitions of the Kuwaiti people for a better future. It is also based on the belief in the great value of martyrdom for the sake of Allah, and for the sake of the homeland and in honor of our righteous martyrs and in memory of their heroism and pride in our national occasions and the holidays of our beloved Kuwait, National Day and Liberation Day."

He indicated that the Martyr's Office will hold a number of events and activities from February 15 to February 17 at the Shaheed Park in the first and second phases.

During a press conference held yesterday at the Martyr's Office, Al-Aufan explained that "The Most Precious Homeland is Survival and Existence" event this year includes many diverse programs and activities for all age groups. The Martyr's Murals will be reopened in a new look at the Shaheed's Park in memory of the honorable martyrs. The Martyrdom Events mural is the work of female students of the College of Basic Education's Department of Art Education.

There will also be an exhibition in which 22 governmental and private entities, including the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Interior, the National Guard, and

Kuwait Fire Service Directorate, will participate in order to commemorate the honorable martyrs. This year, the focus will be on many diverse activities and exciting performances, including popular bands, army and police bands, and competitions for adults and children.

There will also be a special wing for children that includes many paragraphs related to them in order to achieve the desired goals of national values and positive messages, the aim of which is to make all citizens happy during celebration of the National holidays.

There will also be a special corner in the office where the pictures and names of the 1,329 honorable martyrs of Kuwait will be displayed. Gifts and publications of the office will be distributed to instill the concept of national loyalty to all segments of society.

The Shaheed Park will be decorated in the best possible manner in preparation to receive its guests and visitors to participate in the festival of "The Most Precious Homeland is Survival and Existence". Preparations are continuing for the opening of the festival on Thursday, February 15, and it will continue for three days.

The Martyr's Museum in the office will also be opened with a new look after its complete renovation, along with the Martyr's Office in Beit Al-Othman on Sunday, February 18, 2024, coinciding with the celebration of National Day and Liberation Day.

Al-Aufan also stressed the Martyr's Office's keenness to ensure the children of the martyrs will participate in all of the office's activities by organizing or participating in their own activities and projects.

In conclusion, the Undersecretary of the Amiri Diwan and Director General of the Office for Honoring Martyrs and Caring for Their Families Salah Hamad Al-Aufan called on all citizens and residents of this good land to attend the activities held by the office during that period to participate and enjoy.

He said, "There is no doubt that attendance in the event represents the true success of our desired goal of these events, and we hope that they will have a positive impact on everyone."

## 'Illegal load cause of road damage'

# 'Install weighing stations for trucks'

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: The Deputy Chairman of the Municipal Council Khaled Mufleh Al-Mutairi presented a proposal yesterday to install weighing stations for trucks to ensure that their loads conform to the required specifications.

He indicated the possibility of starting the implementation of the proposal in parallel with the current efforts of the Minister of Public Works to repair some highways.

In the preamble to his proposal, Al-Mutairi highlighted the numerous damages caused on the roads because of the exces-

sive and illegal loads of trucks, in terms of either weight or height.

He stressed the destruction of roads as a result of these heavy loads, which leads to their collapse before their expected lifespan, and thus the state has to bear huge costs to repair and rehabilitate these roads.

In parallel, the Municipal Council member Alia Al-Farsi also submitted a proposal to prevent delivery bikes from being parked and driven on sidewalks, and to identify other alternatives to their parking locations, for example, public parking lots, or dirt squares, in order to preserve the safety of pedestrians, ensure cleanliness of the sidewalks, reduce their wear and tear, and improve the general view of the country. This is done in coordination with the Kuwait Municipality, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Ministry of Interior, the General Traffic Department, and all relevant authorities.



Al-Mutairi



# diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

## 'Time to dream is over, must wake up and work for nation'

"As a citizen, I share the sentiments of many in my country who appreciate having a Prime Minister who is an academic, well-educated, conscientious, and skilled in diplomacy. This is something we've missed for years, and there's unanimous agreement that His Highness Sheikh Dr. Muhammad Sabah Al-Salem, the Prime Minister, is a distinguished figure for Kuwait both locally and globally," columnist **Asrar Jawhar Hayat** wrote for *Al-Qabas* daily.

"However, my disappointment arose when I followed His Highness's dialogue with the editors of local newspapers. Despite his positive remarks, I found his discourse lacking substance. It mostly consisted of flowery diplomatic language that sounded pleasant but didn't address the pressing issues at hand.

"His Highness the Prime Minister said that he dreams for Kuwait, dreams for its growth and development, and we all dream for Kuwait, for it to prosper, but His Highness forgot that we have passed the stage of dreaming, so there is no longer enough time for dreams, and we must wake up and rise quickly, not to develop, but at least to try to catch up with the region, which is rapidly moving toward in terms of economic growth, openness, urban, development and tourism.

"There is no longer enough time, Your Highness, to dream. We dreamed a lot about the development of Kuwait, and years passed and we did not see any dreams come true, so our dreams became less humble, until we reached a stage where we dreamed of bringing back the Kuwait of the 1980s, and also our dreams became more humble after we gave up on achieving them -- any development, until we reached the point of only dreaming of preserving the margin of freedom and openness that distinguished us.

"To tell you the truth, Your Highness, it is no longer possible for us to dream. Rather, Kuwait needs us to wake up to achieve previous dreams that have passed for many years without being realized. We have regressed on many indicators, perhaps the most important of which are educational indicators, and we are on the verge of losing the upbringing and education of an entire generation, not to mention regarding health, the streets, etc., we must wake up to work, achieve and achieve.

"We have dreamed a lot and we have had many prime ministers and ministers pass by, who filled the pages of our daily newspapers and our communication networks with beautiful phrases, without any actual achievement.

"I know fully well that you and your new government need time to prove your intention to reform and achieve, but the bottom line, quite frankly, is that Kuwait no longer has the luxury of waiting to give opportunities to ministers, without showing achievement on the ground. However, I am in favor of being given time, three months at least, provided that the citizen sees development in these months. The tax of assuming the prime ministership after years of stalled development necessitates that you work with your government team with double effort.

"And a final word, to Your Highness, whom we know are good, was your response to the family conflict, in the same meeting, that you are a Kuwaiti family like any other family, and you have your differences, and allow me here to disagree with you, for you are not like any other Kuwaiti family, you are the ruling family, and the differences in it may affect on the stability of Kuwait.

"With all my respect for your person and my admiration for you and your achievements on the personal level, diplomacy is the answer here. In conclusion, I say that honesty is the language of those who want you to succeed and succeed, and we all wish that for you."

### Also:

"In line with Article (98) of the Kuwaiti Constitution, each ministry is mandated to present its program to the National Assembly for review. The recent unveiling of the government's program, titled "A Just, Safe, and Sustainable Nation" by His Highness Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah, underscores a strategic roadmap for the nation's progress," columnist **Dr. Nada Suleiman Al-Mutawa** wrote for *Al-Jarida* daily.

"The program outlines key achievements to be realized within the first 100 days, placing a deliberate emphasis on tangible outcomes over rhetoric. Notable points include initiatives to regulate the media, streamline tender processes, implement corporate profit taxes, and

reassess subsidy eligibility criteria.

"Beyond surface observations, the program strategically aligns with legislative responsibilities outlined in Article (98), alongside budgetary considerations (Article 140) and development planning laws. It emphasizes economic and financial reforms aimed at rebalancing the national economy, fostering collaboration between the public and private sectors, and promoting sustainable job creation.

"Accompanied by graphical representations illustrating economic trends and the perils of over-reliance on oil revenues, the program underscores the urgent need for economic diversification. It highlights potential consequences, including unemployment and rising living costs, should reform measures not be promptly implemented.

"The program's realism and precision serve as a stark warning against complacency, urging proactive engagement with critical issues. As the government moves forward with implementation, careful consideration must be given to selecting competent and experienced leaders to execute the plan effectively.

"In light of past scrutiny faced by government initiatives, epitomized by titles such as "Sustaining Prosperity Despite Challenges in 2021" and "Adjusting the Course of a Productive Economy and Sustainable Prosperity in 2022," the success of the "Bou Sabah" plan remains to be seen.

"However, with a proactive approach and concerted efforts, there is optimism for achieving sustainable development and prosperity."



"How does money laundering happen? Suppose that one day, let us say on Sunday, a person carries with him KD5,000 and enters the bank he deals with to deposit the money into his account, then he returns on Wednesday to deposit KD4,000, and after the weekend, he enters the bank on Monday of the following week to deposit the same amount, this behavior raises the bank's suspicions and makes it wonder: What is this customer doing while he is a government employee or retiree with a monthly pension or salary of KD700? Does this person sell drugs and deposit the proceeds in the bank? At this point, the bank might inform the Public Prosecution about such scenario," Media Consultant **Ahmad Al Dawaas** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"This person could avoid being monitored by the authorities, so he opens accounts in several banks and deposits a smaller amount in each of them, say KD1,000 in each bank in order to remove suspicions about him.

"If he is dealing in drugs, then without a doubt, it is a crime punishable by law. The State never allows the destruction of people's health, and the matter is not limited to drugs. A person may trade in alcohol or sell counterfeit medicines that do not meet health conditions or enter an exchange center in order to transfer the money to accounts abroad, that is, it is possible to distribute the amount KD5,000 from the illegal gains to external accounts. This is an action that violates the instructions of the Central Bank of Kuwait and it has a corresponding penalty.

"A government employee may receive bribe from time to time and deposit the money in the bank. This person may carry drug or other money on a trip abroad. If he is able to smuggle the money through the airports, he will put it into external accounts.

"Others are into counterfeiting money. If one counterfeits large quantities of money, he then takes the money from his home and put it in the bank. If this trick works at the bank, he leaves the bank and withdraws the money from the ATMs, so the money becomes clean and legal money. Or he could buy a counterfeit KD20 banknote for KD7, then he receives KD13 - which is clean money.

"This person, while distributing money from illicit trade to different banks, can withdraw money through ATMs. This is money laundering, that is, he initially deposited the contaminated money, then took it out clean with the bank's consent, so to speak. All countries throughout the world reject this behavior and the person is punished for it.

"In February 2020, Kuwaiti newspapers published news stating that KD800 million were laundered in 2019, the details of which were obtained the judiciary. Perhaps, it is now more than this amount due to the corruption of morals. What does this mean?"

"Undoubtedly, there are dangerous gangs destroying society and its people with drugs, alcohol and counterfeit medicines. There are dead consciences that feed on corruption by accepting bribes. It is necessary to have good education at the home and school, as well as to confront these dangerous matters by strictly applying the law."

— **Compiled by PFX Fernandes**



Asrar J. Hayat



Amateurs and astronomy lovers can watch the conjunction phenomenon immediately after sunset until midnight.

## Kuwait braces for astronomical phenomena

In the next three days, the sky of Kuwait will witness two astronomical phenomena that can be seen with the naked eye or with a small telescope.

Al-Ujairi Scientific Center said in a statement that the first of these two phenomena is the conjunction of the moon with the planet Jupiter (the giant of the solar system) after sunset until midnight today and the following night, which coincides with the fourth and fifth days of Shaban 1445 AH.

The center explained that Jupiter, the giant of the solar system, has

four moons called (Galileo) that can be seen using a small telescope.

He stated that amateurs and astronomy lovers can watch the conjunction phenomenon immediately after sunset until midnight, in the south-west direction of the sky. He explained that the second phenomenon is the current conjunction of the 16th moon with the star cluster (the Pleiades), and they can be seen side by side in the sky immediately after sunset, indicating that the Arabs in ancient times linked the phenomenon of the moon's conjunction with the Pleiades with the arrival of the seasons.

# Broken roads repair has begun on 'war footing', says minister

'We are fully aware of citizens, residents predicament'

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Dr Noura Al-Mashaan has stressed "the need for rapid development in the documentary and institutional cycle to keep pace with the requirements for project implementation with the required quality and efficient operation and maintenance, in addition to providing qualified national manpower capable of managing our facilities and implementing our projects," reports Al-Rai daily.**

The minister made the statement at the opening of the ninth international workshop on the health and safety of structures, organized by the Kuwait Society of Engineers in partnership with the Society for Monitoring the Health and Safety of Civilian Structures at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center recently.

Al-Mashaan hopes that "the road repair process will be completed as quickly as possible, because damaged roads are the most detrimental to the daily life of the citizen. We are fully confident that community awareness will contribute to the efforts of the Ministry of Public Works in accomplishing this mission."

### Workshop

She pointed out that "the ministry's sponsorship of the workshop reflects an official interest in scientific activities and professional partnerships with non-profit civil society organizations aimed at implementing the government's work program, which reflects the vision of the new era to achieve development and sustainability in our projects." She also called for cooperation in implementing recommendations to gain more efficiency in monitoring civilian facilities in particular.

She added that "infrastructure projects constitute 32.36 percent of the projects included in the government work program. This is a major challenge that we are working with full force to accomplish in accordance with the latest engineering and technical standards and the use of modern technology in various fields."

She stressed that "the achievement has begun. We have become very close and in continuous communication with all citizens. Without any delay, we started the process of repairing roads."

Meanwhile, President of Kuwait Society of Engineers Eng Faisal Al-Ati confirmed there is a state of estrangement between civil society and a number of government agencies. He said "the ambitious government program aspires for a new economic reality that requires community solidarity, filling all gaps, and cooperation between the executive and legislative authorities as well as the oversight authorities."

He added: "It is necessary to close the hotbeds of corruption, combat it forcefully, hold the negligent accountable, and reward the hardworking. When the government program affects the standard of living of citizens, the need to raise public awareness on the expected return on society and the State is heightened on the part of the citizen, his children and grandchildren. Who is responsible for such an imminent task?"

He disclosed that "Kuwait Society of Engineers takes the initiative and constantly raises the pace of the initiative, but most of the time we are faced with estrangement and obstacles. Therefore, flexibility that adheres to the regulations in dealing with these initiatives is required, especially when they are far from any financial cost to the State."

He affirmed that the workshop meets the urgent need to develop building control systems and a code that addresses the technological requirements of the age and confronts disasters, especially earthquakes. "This requires intensified academic efforts and cooperation with international experts. The workshop aims to achieve this goal; considering it includes the presentation of 14 scientific papers out of 36 with five key speakers among the international specialists, distinctive local experience and visual presentations of cases that we are proud to have in the homeland of love and peace," he added.

On the other hand, Dr Werner Lenhart, President of the Civil Structural Health Monitoring Association of Canada, disclosed "we signed an agreement to strengthen cooperation in developing the engineering profession. The agreement allows members of both sides to participate in scientific and research activities, encourage, organize and sponsor seminars, conferences and meetings, and transfer and localize technical knowledge and expertise."

He affirmed: "We are about to open a headquarters for the association in Kuwait in cooperation with Kuwait Society of Engineers. It will be the first office in the region. We aim for stronger cooperation and the transfer of technical expertise to engineering professionals capable of addressing local conditions in their communities."

Moreover, Municipal Council member Dr Hassan Kamal revealed that "during the workshop, we will review the designs and applications of structural health monitoring that support the flexibility of infrastructure systems and applications of the seismic code in areas with low exposure to earthquakes."



Broken roads with potholes can cause serious accidents.

## School teacher ordered to pay damages for slapping student

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14:** The Civil Chamber of the Court of Appeals has obliged a primary school teacher to pay KD5,001 as temporary compensation to a student's guardian, for the moral and material damages he suffered when the teacher slapped, insulted and threatened the student, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

Attorney Mustafa Mulla Youssef, lawyer of the guardian, told the daily that his client obtained a final Criminal Court ruling on abstaining from punishing the defendant. He then argued that the criminal ruling proved that the defendant assaulted the student, causing emotional and physical damages to the child. He pointed out the elements of error, as well as responsibility for the unlawful act against his client. He stressed that this means the defendant is liable for the incident, so his client is entitled to the compensation for material and moral damages.



**Prosecution statistics:** The Public Prosecution has confirmed receiving

46,566 cases in 2023 and that 94.7 percent of which were completed, including 100 murder and attempted murder cases, 154 suicide and suicide attempt cases, 1,593 theft cases, 11 bribery and abuse of power cases, 923 cases of failure to submit the statement of assets and liabilities, 386 cases of officials refraining from implementing judicial rulings, and 618 cases of forging official documents, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

The prosecution also dealt with 212 money laundering cases last year, compared to 92 in 2017; 211 public funds embezzlement cases; and 2,666 drug-related cases, compared to 2,687 in 2022 and 1,506 in 2017.

It also handled 3,747 journalism, media, and information technology cases; 4,987 juvenile crime cases; 2,532 banknotes forgery cases; 2,868 dud check cases; 2,498 domestic violence cases; 461 medical professions and patients' rights cases; four human trafficking cases and five election-related cases, in addition to 212 complaints from lawyers.

## Own bullet to head kills soldier

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14:** A soldier tragically lost his life in the Interior Ministry due to a gunshot wound to the head.

According to information obtained by *Al-Rai* from a security insider, the soldier was fatally shot with his own weapon while stationed at one of the Ministry of Interior's facilities in the Al-Rawdatain area.

Security and forensic teams promptly responded to the scene, and the Public Prosecution was notified to initiate the required procedures.

Meanwhile, an unidentified person died today morning on Al-Artal Road after his vehicle overturned, reports *Al-Rai* daily.

The Public Relations and Media Department of the Directorate-General of Fire Department (DGFD) said the accident was dealt with by firemen from the Wafra Center.

The cause of the accident is being investigated.

And, within 24 hours, another Egyptian fell to his death from a height in a suburb of Mutla'a this morning, reports *Al-Rai* daily.

The daily added, according to the security sources the man lost his balance. The corpse has been referred to Forensics.

It is noteworthy that an Egyptian died yesterday in the same area.

*Don't look Elsewhere*

**ORDER WITH US DIRECTLY**



**ORDER NOW**

**FREE ITEMS WITH POINTS**



**BADSHAH CHICKEN BIRYANI**

**SUPER OFFERS**

1800 188

www.mughalmahal.com

@mughalmahalkuwait



Promoting SMEs and businesses, while raising awareness on environmental and sustainable practices

# stc sponsors Bloom market in its 2024 sustainability program

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced its sponsorship of the Bloom market, the first sustainability lifestyle and entertainment boutique market in Kuwait. The sponsorship comes under the various initiatives to be launched under stc's 2024-sustainability program titled "small move, Big Impact", with a focus on environmental preservation and adopting long-term sustainable practices.

stc held a signing ceremony on Tuesday, February 13th, at its headquarters to make its main sponsorship official with SEEDs Co. for the upcoming Bloom market to be held at Dhai Complex in Al Bidaa in Feb 17th 2024 under the "Weyak" umbrella that focuses on supporting local SMEs and start-ups as well as youth initiatives. The ceremony was attended by Danah AlJasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc, and Yasmeen Al Kandari, CEO at SEEDs Co, alongside Youssr A Mutawa, Ahmad Salmeen, Bedoor Al Mutawa and Orjon Ozhalfaji from SEED CO. and Ahmad Al Nowaibet and Mariam Al Kandari from the corporate communications team at stc. Based on its sponsorship role, stc will have a dedicated booth at the market where activities will be organized for visitors to participate in following the main theme of sustainability.

The partnership between stc and SEEDs Co. serves as a significant step towards achieving stc's sustainability goals outlined in its 2024 program titled "small move, Big Impact", to create a positive lasting impact in the community.

By investing in community-centric initiatives like Bloom, stc not only reinforces its role as a leading digital pioneer but also as a responsible corporate citizen committed to sustainable development in Kuwait. stc's sponsorship role also aligns with the various initiatives in several fields that the Company organizes, participates throughout its annual CSR framework.

Commenting on the sponsorship, AlJasem said, "In line with our social responsibility at stc, we are always looking forward to actively contributing with our strategic partners to empower the community and we are keen to promote the concepts and culture of sustainable development through our various community activities in several key areas. Our sponsorship of the Bloom market is a testament to our unwavering dedication to promoting sustainable practices within our community. By supporting initiatives like Bloom, we aim to spread awareness and inspire action towards a more sustainable future. It is imperative that we engage the younger generation in these efforts, as they are crucial to the long-term success of sustainable development. In this regard, SEEDs Co. has managed to create an appealing platform for all ages with, making sustainability an inclusive and engaging topic for discussion and action."

AlJasem further added, "I would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to SEEDs Co. for coming up with this initiative. Together, we are setting a benchmark for sustainability in Kuwait, while contributing to a greener and more conscious society. We are proud to be part of this unique initiative and look forward to continuing our collaboration with both the

government and private sectors from various fields to create meaningful and sustainable change. Our commitment to sustainable development is a key pillar of our corporate values and is in line with Kuwait's New Vision 2035, and we believe that through collective efforts, we can achieve a significant impact for our community and stimulate lasting change for the future generations."

Yasmeen Al Kandari, CEO at SEEDs CO. said, "We are thrilled to have stc as the main sponsor for the Bloom market. Their commitment to sustainability and community engagement perfectly aligns with our mission to promote a lifestyle that prioritizes environmental consciousness. This partnership exemplifies the power of collaboration between the corporate sector and community initiatives to make a real difference. We are grateful for stc's support, which not only amplifies our message but also broadens the reach and impact of our efforts. Through this partnership, we are paving the way for a sustainable future, while inspiring others to join us in this vital journey. On behalf of the team at SEEDs CO., I would like to thank stc for being an exemplary leader in sustainability and for becoming part of the Bloom family."

The Bloom market is set to offer a unique blend of activities and workshops designed to educate and entertain all ages, fostering a deeper understanding of sustainable living practices. From engaging workshops for adults and children to a curated selection of sustainable products and services, the event promises to be a comprehensive platform for both established and emerging sustainable businesses to connect with a broader audience.



KUNA photo  
Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with the Governor of Riyadh region.

## Kuwait envoy to Saudi, Riyadh Governor discuss bilateral ties

RIYADH, Feb 14, (KUNA): Kuwait Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Sheikh Sabah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Riyadh region Governor Prince Faisal bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz

discussed Tuesday bilateral ties. In remarks to KUNA, Sheikh Sabah said that the two sides touched on the bilateral ties between the two countries and ways of boosting it in various fields.



Yasmeen Al Kandari and Danah AlJasem are in the middle of the public relations team and the sustainability team at stc.

# Education Ministry keeping track of fingerprint system implementation

## Teachers' bonus delayed

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: The Ministry of Education continued its efforts to follow up the implementation of the fingerprint attendance system in public schools, which started on experimental basis last Sunday, reports Al-Anba daily.

Educational sector sources revealed to the daily that on the first day; the concerned authorities in the ministry monitored 400,000 fingerprinting operations for teachers, indicating was observed that a teacher made the fingerprint attendance more than once as the system does not accept it.

Sources confirmed that the Technical Committee at the Information Systems Center is working hard to address all problems, explaining that the signing of timesheets for entry and departure continues to protect the rights of teachers. Sources said fingerprinting will not be applied permanently without ensuring that all procedures are correct. "We are currently in a trial period to find out the negatives, if any, and address them," sources added.

In another context, the ministry granted the periodic bonus to its employees, including teachers and administrators, which was scheduled for January but it was postponed.

Sources said the Administrative Sector has completed the review and verification procedures for the names eligible for the bonus, which reached approximately 20,000 teachers and administrators, indicating that the bonus will be paid retroactively to the ministry's employees in public and assistant positions.

Sources that some employees will be paid this month and others in March, noting that there are employees whose salaries have been approved for the current month so there was no time to add the bonus.

## UAE chairs meet

### Kuwait partakes at 8th Public Finance Forum

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: The Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, Dr. Anwar Ali Al-Mudhaf, headed the Kuwaiti delegation participating in the Eighth Public Finance Forum in the Arab Countries, which was held in the United Arab Emirates, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The event was chaired by the Minister of State for Financial Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, Mohamed bin Hadi Al-Husseini in the presence of the Director General of the Arab Countries; the Board of Directors of the Arab Monetary Fund, Dr. Fahd Muhammad Al-Turki, and the Director General of the International Monetary Fund, Kristalina Georgieva. Also attending were the ministers and central bank governors in



Dr Al-Mudhaf

Arab countries.

The Minister also chaired the third session of the Eighth Arab Finance Forum, for comparison based on the balance sheet to create value from public assets.

He also reviewed the experience of the State of Kuwait in this regard, with the participation of concerned parties from the International Monetary Fund.

On the sidelines of the forum meetings, Dr. Al-Mudhaf, met with his counterpart, the Minister of Finance of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Dr. Mohamed Maait, and with the Director of the Center for Tax Policy and Management at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Manal Korin, within the framework of discussing strengthening relations between the State of Kuwait and friendly countries and international organizations.




# KUWAIT NATIONAL DAY

## Room Promotion





# 35%

DISCOUNT OFF ON ROOM RATES

Promo period from 20<sup>th</sup> February – 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2024  
Terms & conditions apply

Tel: +973 17701201 - Ext. 351 | Email: reservation@albander.com | www.albander.com | @albanderhotelandresort



KUNA photo  
Members of the Federation of Arab News Agencies.

## WAM assumes rotating presidency

### FANA strategizes for media advancements

DUBAI, Feb 14, (KUNA): The Federation of Arab News Agencies (FANA) held Tuesday a development meeting led by Director-General of UAE's News Agency (WAM) and head of federation Mohammad Al Rayssi, in the presence of Fatima Al-Salem, FANA vice president and Director General of KUNA.

Speaking to KUNA in a statement, Al Rayssi said the gathering, featured also head of Bahrain News Agency (BNA) Abdullah Buheiji and FANA Secretary General Fraid Ayar, discussed means of enhancing cooperation and coordination among FANA member states and sharing expertise, knowledge as well as developing technical abilities.

Al Rayssi noted that the meeting also covered a mechanism of developing FANA action in order to provide the best practices among Arab and regional news agencies.

It is the first meeting after holding the FANA General Assembly in November

2023, during the activities of Global Media Congress 2023 in Abu Dhabi, he stated.

The federation seeks to improve services provided by Arab news agencies to the public, in light of rapid developments in media and technology, in addition to determining new strategies to help the agencies keep pace with happenings around them, he elaborated. Al Rayssi affirmed FANA commitment to making joint efforts with its members as a teamwork, with the aim of achieving "our goals and boosting our status" as well as making a prominent position on world media arena.

The FANA, which includes 18 Arab countries, aims to foster professional bonds among member states and transmit Arab news inside and outside as well as encourage holding periodical meetings.

WAM was handed over the rotating presidency from Saudi Press Agency (SPA) during the 50th FANA General Assembly conference in Abu Dhabi.



## LOCAL

## Kuwait is

Continued from Page 1

Administrative work must also be organized, especially after the past few days. The implementation of the fingerprint attendance system on teachers revealed that the majority of them are not in Kuwait. Some of them even came from overseas trip to attend the protest. There is no doubt that the parliamentarians who supported them knew that these people were a burden on public finances, and that they were one of the reasons for the deterioration of education. What applies to teachers applies to the rest of the public sector employees.

All of this also indicates that the country is undoubtedly being plundered and looted. Hence, reform measures have become a crucial necessity. This can be done by imposing taxes like other Gulf countries where the money collected is used to improve the income of employees and citizens, and reduce the burden on the budgets of those countries.

Another reform measure is to work on eliminating decisions that increase the complexity of opening the country, especially where unfair conditions were set to allow visitors to enter.

It is as if the intention is to continue with more closures. For this reason, the government must seek to solve the problem of visit visas in a way that is proportional to moving the economic wheel, not obstructing it.

Therefore, cooperation between the two authorities must be based on a correct constitutional standard, which is working to revise the laws, eliminate the radical ones, approve modern legislation, and not make them a reason for more parliamentary control over the government, or for the ministers to become employees of the MPs.

It is time for Kuwait to have authorities that are capable of exercising their authority without one overstepping the other, because the continuation of this will only serve those who do not care if the country gets ruined.

This is why the government did well in emphasizing on the limits of each of the two authorities. From this standpoint, the National Assembly must either fulfill its national responsibilities or leave.

## What comes

Continued from Page 1

A military spokesman stated that there was no break-in, entry, or orders for people to leave the hospital at gunpoint.

Conflicting reports indicate Israel's potential compliance with ICJ directives and the ongoing impact on civilian lives and healthcare facilities in Gaza.

Has Israel taken controversial steps since the ICJ ruling?

Last week, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant made it clear that Israel does not intend to stop its military operation in Gaza anytime soon. Gallant was one of three Israeli officials personally criticized by the International Court of Justice for comments they made that could be considered incitement to genocide against Palestinians.

Gallant said in a press conference that the Israeli military operation in Khan Yunis, which it began last week, was successful, paving the way for its forces to now advance towards Rafah on the side's southern border with Egypt.

Gallant said: "We are achieving our mission in Khan Yunis, and we will also reach Rafah and eliminate the terrorist elements that threaten us."

Rafah is filled with internally displaced Palestinians, who have no places to go inside the Gaza Strip.

"Thousands of Palestinians have continued to flee to the south, which already hosts more than half of the population of about 2.3 million people," Janis Lerka, spokesman for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, said on Friday, February 9, 2024. It is not clear where Israel intends for Gazans to move if Rafah becomes the new center of its attacks.

Has Israel punished anyone for their genocide statements?

To date there is no public information to indicate that Israel has taken punitive measures against ministers or officials who made statements inciting genocide. The genocidal rhetoric highlighted in the South Africa v. Israel case includes statements by various figures including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Deputy Speaker of the Knesset Nissim Faturi, and Heritage Minister Amichai Eliyahu, among others.

These statements, which have been criticized for dehumanizing Palestinians and incitement to violence, remain unaddressed by the Israeli authorities. Moreover, some Israeli government ministers, such as National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, attended events calling for the rebuilding of settlements in Gaza, and creating more in the occupied West Bank, a position that has been criticized as endorsing the

ethnic cleansing of Palestinians.

Article IV of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide states that persons who commit the crime of genocide or any of the other acts mentioned in Article III shall be punished, whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals.

Has Israel taken steps to ensure humanitarian access to Gaza?

Available information does not indicate that Israel has taken effective steps to ensure the unhindered flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza. Since December 2023, aid and fuel trucks have faced obstacles due to the Israeli blockade and continuous bombing of the Strip. The International Court of Justice ordered Israel to implement temporary measures to provide basic services and humanitarian aid, but the challenges remain. It still stands.

Furthermore, Israel accused 12 UNRWA employees of direct involvement in the Hamas attack on 7 October 2023, and later major donors including the United States and the Kingdom

The United Nations and Germany have suspended their funding to UNRWA. This development has raised concerns about UNRWA's ability to continue providing basic services in Gaza, which could lead to a humanitarian crisis.

Is it possible to impose sanctions on Israel for not complying with the orders of the International Court of Justice?

ICJ decisions are legally binding on Israel, and in the event of non-compliance any member of the UN Security Council can bring the case to the Council, which may then vote to force Israel to adhere to the interim measures.

Potential consequences of non-compliance include UN sanctions, such as economic/trade measures, arms embargoes and travel bans. The Security Council even has the authority to intervene forcefully although any sanctions could be subject to a UN veto due to its close alliance with Israel, notes law professor Nev Gordon. The International Committee noted that the Security Council's decision may carry a different weight than the decision of the International Court of Justice.

Israel insists that its actions are in self-defense against Hamas, while casualty reports issued by the Gaza Ministry of Health indicate that the majority of the victims are women and children.

Article 27 of the UN Charter on the veto states that the framers of the UN Charter envisaged that five countries – China, France, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) [succeeded by the Russian Federation in 1990], the United Kingdom and the United States – because their key roles in establishing the United Nations will continue to play important roles in the maintenance of international peace and security. They are granted the special status of permanent member states of the Security Council, along with a special voting power known as the "veto." The drafters agreed that if any of the five permanent members cast a negative vote in the 15-member Security Council, the resolution or decision would not be approved.

Tareq Yousef Alshumaimry served as advisor and head of the Finance Committee and head of the General Budget Committee at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague (PCA), an observer in the Administrative Council and the International Court of Justice, and an advisor at the Embassy of the State of Kuwait in the Netherlands during this period from 2013 to 2020.  
E-mail: tareq@alshumaimry.com

## Indians lead

Continued from Page 1

The data showed that the new recruits in the labor market include 6,181 citizens; while the expatriates, including domestic workers, reached 100,780 foreign workers.

Indians topped the list of expatriate communities in the Kuwaiti labor market with about 879,500 at the end of September, as they increased by 44,900 from January to September; compared to 834,670 at the end of December 2022.

Egyptians came in second place with 479,880 at the end of September 2023, although their number decreased by about 4,372; compared to 484,259 at the end of December 2022.

Kuwaitis are in third place, and their number reached 448,800 at the end of September 2023 -- 6,181 higher compared to 442,647 at the end of December 2022.

Filipinos ranked fourth, but their number declined from 266,900 at the end of December 2022 to 260,380 at the end of September 2023.

Bangladeshis are in fifth place with 256,670 at the end of September 2023, compared to 241,300 at the end of December 2022.

On the other hand, the distribution of workers according to nationalities showed that the number of workers in the government and private sectors;

that is, excluding domestic workers, increased by about 70,500 -- 2.107 million at the end of September 2023, compared to 2.036 million at the end of December 2022.

Indians topped the list of expatriate communities working in the two sectors with about 526,800 at the end of September 2023 -- about 29,700 higher than 497,000 at the end of December 2022.

Egyptians are in second place with 478,800 at the end of September 2023, although their number decreased by 4,351; compared to 483,180 at the end of December 2022.

Kuwaitis are in third place after their number rose from 442,647 at the end of December 2022 to 448,828 at the end of September 2023.

## MP calls

Continued from Page 1

He added the minister insists on applying the fingerprint attendance system on teachers, warning that the minister could cause a catastrophe in the educational sector if he continues in this position.

He also clarified the viral video of himself while he was on a telephone call with a senior official at the Ministry of Interior, asking the latter to facilitate the entry and exit of laborers in under construction residential areas. He stressed that he is proud of this video; adding he will meet with Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah to ask him to intensify the crackdown on Residency Law violators, as well as facilitate the entry and exit of legal construction laborers to the under construction residential areas. He pointed out the residents in these areas have been deprived of their basic needs like drinking water and electricity. He revealed that they use their own money for these basic needs, because of the failure of the government to cover such needs. He argued that toughening security procedures should be done in other areas like Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh. He then asked the government to suspend the collection of payment for loans that the citizens obtained from Kuwait Credit Bank (KCB) for the construction of their houses until the basic services like water, electricity and security are provided.

On the other hand, Disabled Affairs Committee Chairman MP Saud Al-Asfour confirmed that the committee received the joint reply of the Public Authority for Disabled Affairs (PADA) and the Ministry of Finance about the decree to return the ratified bill on amending Disabled Affairs Law No. 8/2010 to the Assembly. He revealed the reply includes the cost of implementing the bill in the budgets of PADA and the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS).

According to Finance Ministry, the cost is estimated at KD111,775,000; while the actual cost for PIFSS has not been specified. Al-Asfour pointed out errors in the figures, because the ministry based such figures on the copy of a draft law that is different from the ratified bill. He added the cost according to PIFSS is also based on the wrong interpretation of Article 42 of the ratified bill, since PIFSS considered the case of the second individual assigned to take care of the same disabled person a retiree. He clarified that as per Article 42, the second caregiver deserves full vacation with full salary in case the disabled person needs a second caregiver and his disability requires full-time care.

He added the committee discussed the report and comments of the concerned public institutions, as well as the joint report of the ministry and PADA; disclosing the committee decided to make some changes on some articles to address these comments. He said Article One was amended to clearly define the word 'disabled'; while Article Two stating that the beneficiaries include Kuwaiti women taking care of a disabled non-Kuwaiti first degree relative remained the same. He also affirmed that there were no changes to Article 41 on the right of the disabled worker to retire after 10 years in service for both men and women, and Article 42 on the right of an individual with severe and permanent disability to have two caregivers as per the decision of the concerned medical committee. He added the committee maintained the right of a caregiver to retire after spending 15 years in service for both men and women, affirming that the committee will finalize its report soon for inclusion in the agenda of the next session.

Moreover, the Secretariat General of the Assembly issued a statement denying the rumor that it terminated a number of Bedoun employees, clarifying it just decided not to renew the employment contracts of those who refused to renew their security cards. It pointed out that this step is aimed at addressing the comments of the State Audit Bureau (SAB) and in line with Amiri decree number 467/2010 on the establishment of the Central System for Remediating the Status of Illegal Residents (CSR-SIR). It then cited the regulation of CSR-SIR, stating that Bedouns are allowed to sign employment contracts only if they hold a valid security card.

## Cutting-edge

Continued from Page 1

Dr. Al-Shatti said the new addition is represented by digitization and the application of the camera system to communicate, follow up and intervene with emergency incidents in hospitals, the operating room in the crisis center, and the operating room in the Medical Emergency Department.

He expressed appreciation for the ministry's efforts and its keenness to improve health services and scientific conferences.

Dr. Al-Shatti highlighted Minister Al-Awadhi's sponsorship and attendance at the conference titled "Emergency Medical Services ... Current Reality and Future Aspirations", which will be held from February 18 to February 20.

He called on all doctors and workers in the medical sector to take advantage of this distinguished scientific platform to exchange knowledge, skills and experiences, explore developments in the ambulance and emergency medicine, and create a space for dialogue between emergency service providers from various relevant sectors, including the private sector.

Dr. Al-Shatti highlighted that by entering these vehicles into service, a jump in the level of service will be achieved, along with the addition of another 100 vehicles before the end of the current year, in line with the development plan and the directives of the wise government and the members the Ministry of Health.

## UK supports

Continued from Page 1

He, on the other hand, confirmed that the UK was aligned with Kuwait regarding the Iraqi Federal Court's ruling which annulled Khor Abdullah agreement.

"The United Kingdom is aligned with Kuwait's way of thinking and the ruling should not apply on something that was decided upon long time ago," he emphasized, he hoped it would come to resolution, as he recounted that the UK is proud to stand with Kuwait, as well as proud of such deep rooted friendship.

Kuwait and Iraq signed an agreement in 2012 to regulate navigation in Khor Abdullah waterway. The agreement entered force on December 5, 2013 and the two countries deposited it with the UN on December 18, 2013. On bilateral relations which spanned over 125 years, Lord Ahmad stated that the over-century ties between the two countries were deep as the UK is proud of such celebration and recognized the history with Kuwait, "not just partners but friendships."

Lord Ahmad and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah co-chaired the 20th UK-Kuwait Joint Steering Group meeting yesterday, and admired the strong collaboration between the United Kingdom and Kuwait.

## Ministry stresses independent budgets for development plan

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: The Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs Abdulaziz Sari says the budget for development projects is different from the ministry's budget, and each project has an independent budget approved by the General Secretariat of Planning. It also has a documentary cycle based on an approved plan.

He said this to reporters during the closing ceremony of the 2023 Al-Baghli Award for the Righteous Son, which was held the day before yesterday under the patronage of the Minister of Social Affairs Sheikh Firas Al-Sabah at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Farwaniya.

The undersecretary indicated that the ministry's completion rate is excellent as it exceeded 60 percent, and based on the achievement, disbursements are made, but what is most important for the ministry is that the completion was according to the approved plan.

Recently, a decision was issued by the Minister of Social Affairs for allocating inspection teams to work on cooperative societies during the year without exception. It was approved that the team would conduct inspections, through assignment by the director of administration, of a specific society only on which there are observations.

Regarding filling vacancies, Sari said, "When appointments are opened, supervisory positions will be filled".



Photos during the launch of 'Najafi 100 Million Learners' program.

## Significant step towards democratizing education

## AIU and ASU Thunderbird launch Najafi 100 Million Learners program

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: In a landmark move to revolutionize access to premium American education in Kuwait, American International University (AIU) and Thunderbird School of Management at Arizona State University (ASU) have proudly announced the launch of the "Najafi 100 Million Learners" program in Kuwait. This initiative stands as a testament to both institutions' commitment to providing accessible world-class global education to all.

AIU is honored to be the exclusive partner of the "Najafi 100 million Learners" program in Kuwait, marking a significant step towards democratizing education across the region. This program is designed to cater to learners at all stages of their educational journey, offering courses at foundation, intermediate, and advanced levels and is offered in Arabic and English, among other languages. Such a structure ensures that individuals from various educational and vocational backgrounds can find a path that suits their needs and aspirations.

The "Najafi 100 million Learners" program was launched on January 20, 2022, by Thunderbird School of Global Management (Thunderbird), home of the world's No. 1 ranked master's in management, and Arizona State University (ASU), ranked No. 1 for innovation in the U.S. The arrival of this program in Kuwait is a proud moment for American International University (AIU) and the rest of the country, and a step towards enhancing the education of the future leaders of Kuwait and the region.

One of the program's most innovative features is its flexibility, allowing students to learn at their own pace and time. This approach not only accommodates different learning styles but also enables learners to

balance their studies with personal and professional commitments. Students can register for any of the courses at no cost. By removing the barriers of time and cost, the "100 million Learners" program opens the doors of international education to people across Kuwait and the rest of the world.

Upon completion of the courses, students will be awarded a certificate and a transcript, which can serve as a steppingstone to further education, including applying for master's programs at Arizona State University and other universities worldwide. This credentialing is a key aspect of the program, providing learners with tangible evidence of their achievements and the opportunity to advance their careers.

The "Najafi 100 million Learners" program is accessible to everyone, regardless of age, offering a unique opportunity for lifelong learning, and all at no cost to the learner. This inclusivity underscores the program's mission to empower individuals with knowledge and skills, building a global community of educated, capable citizens.

Registration is open at <https://www.100millionlearners.org/register-info/?partner=AIU>

For more information about the "Najafi 100 Million Learners" program, please visit <https://thunderbird.asu.edu/lifelong-learning/100-million-learners>.

This partnership between AIU and ASU Thunderbird is more than an educational initiative; it's a movement towards creating a world where everyone has the opportunity to pursue their learning ambitions without barriers. Join us in this journey to transform lives and communities through the power of education.

## Bankruptcy Department's Decision in Application No. 7/2023 for a preventive settlement ADAM Capital Holding Co.

Opening preventive settlement procedures regarding the request submitted by the debtor (ADAM Capital Holding Co.) with stopping all judicial claims and implementation procedures taken against it, including the procedure for executing the sale of shares owned by the requesting company shown in the case proof minutes dated 16/1/2024 issued by the General Department of Execution and in implementation of the seizure signed by it in File No. [191576860] and setting a date for their sale on Sunday, corresponding to 18/2/2024, referred to in the reasons, for a period of three months from the date of this decision. The Bankruptcy Department must notify the Central Bank, the General Department of Execution, Kuwait Clearing Company, Boursa Kuwait Securities Company, the Capital Markets Authority, the applicant company, the bank against which it is submitted, as well as the Bankruptcy Committee, of this decision in accordance with Article (55) of the Bankruptcy Law, and publish it in the Official Gazette and register it within ten days, with the requesting company being assigned to disclose this decision on its website, and announce it in two local daily newspapers, one of which is published in English language, at its expense, and provide evidence to that effect, and assign it to prepare a preventive settlement proposal including the data required by Article (73) of the Bankruptcy Law, while exercising the necessary diligence to convince the bank against whom it is submitted (the creditor) to agree to the preventive settlement proposal. A copy of the preventive settlement proposal must be submitted within a period not exceeding three months from the date of issuance of this decision in accordance with the provisions of Article (74) of the Bankruptcy Law.

## Bankruptcy Department's Decision in Application No. 5/2023 for a preventive settlement Excellent Opportunities for General Trading and Contracting Co.

Opening preventive settlement procedures regarding the request submitted by the debtor (Excellent Opportunities for General Trading and Contracting Co., W.L.L) with stopping all judicial claims and implementation procedures taken against it for a period of three months from the date of this decision. The Bankruptcy Department must notify the Central Bank, the General Department of Execution, Kuwait Clearing Company, Boursa Kuwait Securities Company, the Capital Markets Authority, the applicant company, the bank against which it is submitted, as well as the Bankruptcy Committee, of this decision in accordance with Article (55) of the Bankruptcy Law, and publish it in the Official Gazette and register it within ten days, with the requesting company being assigned to disclose this decision on its website, and announce it in two local daily newspapers, one of which is published in English language, at its expense, and provide evidence to that effect, and assign it to prepare a preventive settlement proposal including the data required by Article (73) of the Bankruptcy Law, while exercising the necessary diligence to convince the bank against whom it is submitted (the creditor) to agree to the preventive settlement proposal. A copy of the preventive settlement proposal must be submitted within a period not exceeding three months from the date of issuance of this decision in accordance with the provisions of Article (74) of the Bankruptcy Law.



## World News Roundup

## Europe

**Cameron visits Eastern Europe:** British Foreign Secretary David Cameron said Wednesday that nothing is more important now than strong support for Ukraine as it fights off Russian President Vladimir Putin's aggression.

Cameron, speaking to reporters in Sofia, said support is not just a matter for European, but also for global security.



Cameron

"Putin thinks that he can outweigh us and outlast us, but we are going to prove him wrong," Cameron said after talks with Bulgarian Prime Minister Nikolay Denkov and Foreign Minister Mariya Gabriel.

After Bulgaria, Cameron will visit Poland before attending the Munich Security Conference, where he is expected to urge allies to boost defense production for Ukraine.

Discussions during Cameron's visits will include how to strengthen Ukraine in the war now, ensure it wins if Putin prolongs hostilities, and lay the foundation for Ukraine's long-term future, his office said.

Cameron also urged members of the U.S. Congress to approve more aid for Ukraine, noting that Britain has announced its support package for the next year, as has the European Union.

"If you add up the countries that support Ukraine, we outmatch Russia economically 25 to 1. All we have to do is to make that economic strength pay, and I hope that happens in Washington in the coming hours," Cameron said. (AP)

□ □ □

**'Ukraine military sank Russia landing ship':** Ukraine's military said Wednesday it used naval drones to sink a Russian landing ship in the Black Sea, a report that has not been confirmed by Russian authorities.

The Caesar Kunikov amphibious ship sank near Alupka, a city on the southern edge of the Crimean Peninsula that Moscow annexed in 2014, Ukraine's General Staff said. It said the ship can carry 87 crew members.

Sinking the vessel would be another embarrassing blow for the Russian Black Sea fleet and a significant success for Ukraine 10 days before the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, 2022.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov refused to comment on the claim during a conference call with reporters Wednesday. He said questions should be addressed to the Russian military.

Ukraine has moved onto the defensive in the war, hindered by low ammunition supplies and a shortage of personnel, but has kept up its strikes behind the largely static 1,500-kilometer (930-mile) front line.

It is the second time in two weeks that Ukrainian forces have said they sank a Russian vessel in the Black Sea. Last week, they published a video that they said showed naval drones assaulting the Russian missile-armed corvette Ivanovets. Ukraine's Military Intelligence, known by its Ukrainian acronym GUR, said its special operations unit "Group 13" sank the Caesar Kunikov using Magura V5 sea drones on Wednesday. (AP)

□ □ □

**'Ukraine needs nearly \$9b to rebuild sites':** Ukraine will need nearly \$9 billion over the next decade to rebuild its cultural sites and tourism industry following Russia's invasion and war, the United Nations' cultural agency said Tuesday.

UNESCO estimated that the country's interlinked culture and tourism sector have lost over \$19 billion in revenue during the war that started two years ago this month. The agency said the fighting has damaged 341 cultural sites across Ukraine, including in Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, and the cities of Lviv in the west and Odesa in the south.

The agency estimated that the total cost of destruction to those cultural sites, and thousands of other "cultural assets" around the country, comes to nearly \$3.5 billion.

"The cathedral of Odesa is one example of a site that was gravely damaged," Chiara Dezzi Badeschi, who heads the UNESCO office in Ukraine, said. "It's a symbol of all the community ... with deep spiritual and historical meaning."

In July 2023, UNESCO strongly condemned a "brazen attack carried out by the Russian forces" against historic buildings in the center of Odesa, an area the agency designated last year as an endangered world heritage site. The attack claimed at least two lives and damaged several sites, including the Transfiguration Cathedral. (AP)

□ □ □

**'Authorities in previous govt used spyware':** Poland's new prime minister said Tuesday he has documentation proving that state authorities under the previous government used the powerful Pegasus spyware illegally and targeted a "very long" list of hacking victims.

Donald Tusk made the announcement during a news briefing alongside President Andrzej Duda, a political opponent aligned with the previous ruling party. The use of Pegasus was alleged to have occurred under the government led by the right-wing Law and Justice party.

Pegasus gives operators complete access to a mobile device, allowing them to extract passwords, photos, messages, contacts and browsing histories, and to activate the microphone and camera for real-time eavesdropping.

Tusk said he was sharing information with Duda that showed wide use of the spyware in Poland.

"This is only a sample of the documents that are at your disposal, Mr President," he said at the start of a meeting of the Cabinet Council, a consultation format between the president and the government. (AP)

□ □ □

**Armenia, Azerbaijan trade accusations:** Armenia and Azerbaijan on Tuesday traded accusations over a border skirmish that left at least four Armenian soldiers dead and escalated tensions between the two Caucasus neighbors.

Armenia's Foreign Ministry denounced what it described as a "provocation" by Azerbaijani troops who fired on Armenian forces across the border in the eastern Syunik region early Tuesday. Four Armenian soldiers were killed and one was wounded, the ministry said. It urged Azerbaijan to refrain from "destabilizing" actions.

Azerbaijan's State Border Service said it had fired on an Armenian post in retaliation for Armenian shelling of Azerbaijani positions that wounded one Azerbaijani service member the previous day.

"Any provocations by the Armenian side aimed at escalating tensions along the Azerbaijan-Armenia border will now be met with even more serious and decisive measures," the State Border Service said in a statement. "The military-political leadership of Armenia bears full responsibility for these developments." (AP)

□ □ □

**Paris' riverside bookstalls in place:** French President Emmanuel Macron canceled plans Tuesday to move Paris' famed second-hand booksellers' boxes from the banks of the Seine River in preparation for the opening ceremony of the Olympics in July.

A statement from the Elysee presidential palace said Macron asked France's interior minister and Paris police "to ensure that all booksellers are preserved and that none of them be forced to move." Macron, it said, considered "les bouquinistes" of the Seine an example of the "living heritage of the capital."

Police told the booksellers last summer that, for security reasons, several hundred of their stalls would be temporarily relocated a few days before the July 26 opening ceremony of the Summer Games taking place in the heart of Paris and along the Seine. (AP)

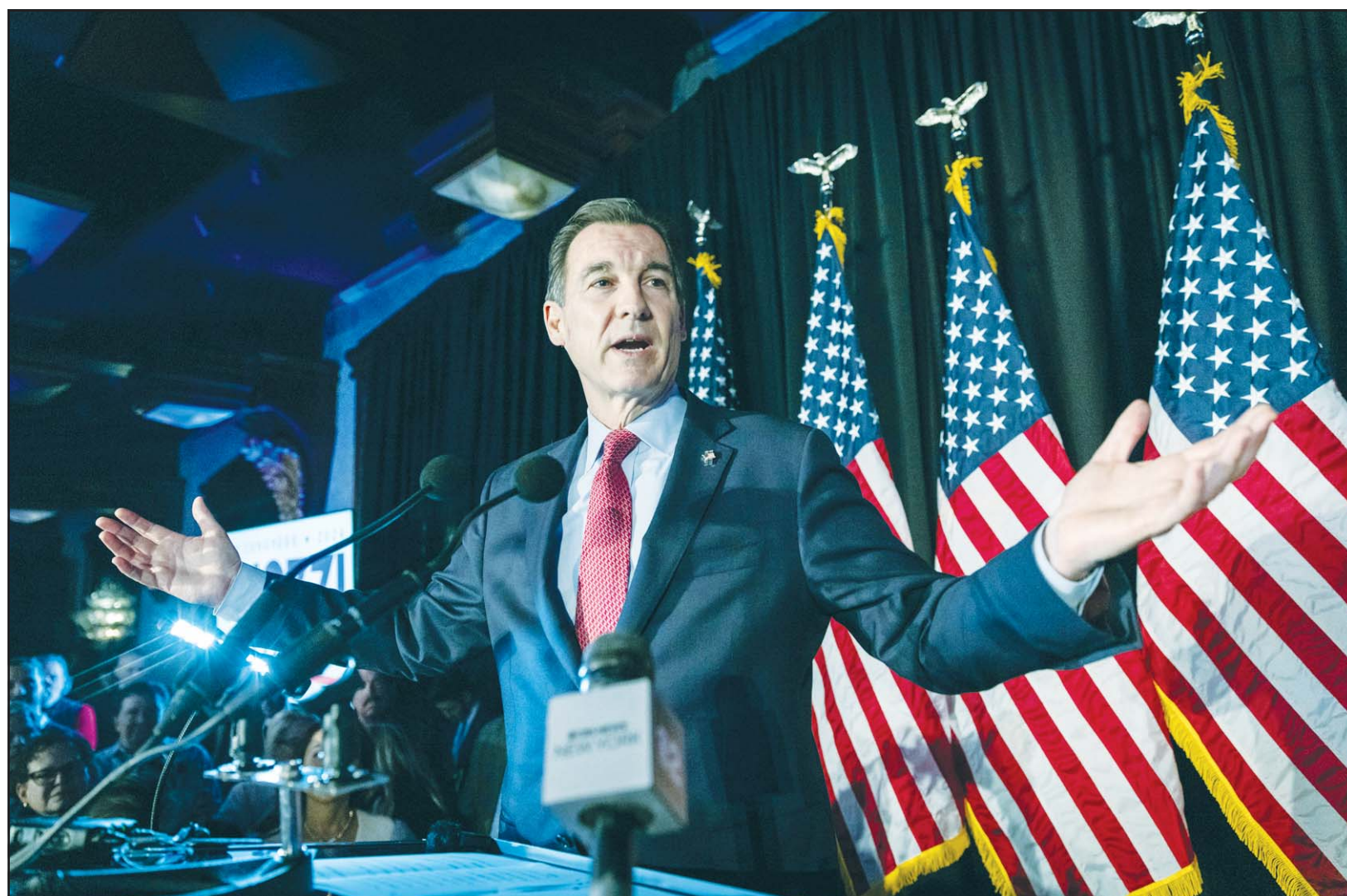
□ □ □

**Notre Dame cathedral's spire revealed in Paris:** Scaffolding that shrouded the top of Notre Dame cathedral following a devastating fire in April 2019 is being removed, marking a milestone in its reconstruction.

As the shell at the summit has been taken down in recent days, it has revealed the cathedral's new spire for the first time, adorned with a golden rooster and cross, offering a glimpse of the building's expected appearance upon completion.

A resident near the cathedral, Frederico Benani, who witnessed the 2019 blaze, felt emotional Tuesday at seeing the spire once more.

"I can open the window in the morning. I see Notre Dame. I see the spire - it's for me, beautiful and it's much better (than) before," Benani said. "It gives us hope." (AP)



Former US Rep Tom Suozzi, Democratic candidate for New York's 3rd congressional district, speaks at his election night party on Feb 13, in Woodbury, NY. Suozzi won a special election for the House seat formerly held by George Santos. (AP)

## Politics

## Suozzi wins NY race to succeed Santos

## GOP-led House impeaches Mayorkas

WASHINGTON, Feb 14, (AP): The US House voted Tuesday to impeach Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, with the Republican majority determined to punish the Biden administration over its handling of the US-Mexico border after failing last week in a politically embarrassing setback.

The evening roll call proved tight, with Speaker Mike Johnson's threadbare GOP majority unable to handle many defectors or absences in the face of staunch Democratic opposition to impeaching Mayorkas, the first Cabinet secretary charged in nearly 150 years.

## Bolster

In a historic rebuke, the House impeached Mayorkas 214-213. With the return of Majority Leader Steve Scalise to bolster the GOP's numbers after being away from Washington for cancer care and a Northeastern storm impacting some others, Republicans recouped - despite dissent from their own ranks.

US President Joe Biden called it a "blatant act of unconstitutional partisanship that has targeted an honorable public servant in order to play petty political games."

The charges against Mayorkas next go to the Senate for a trial, but neither Democratic nor even some Republican senators have shown interest in the matter and it may be indefinitely shelved to a committee. The Senate is expected to receive the articles of impeachment from the House after returning to session Feb. 26.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., called the case against Mayorkas a "sham impeachment" and a "new low for House Republicans."

In a frantic scene of vote-tallying on the House floor, the GOP effort to impeach Mayorkas over his handling of the southern border took on an air of political desperation as Republicans struggle to make good on their priorities.

Mayorkas faced two articles of impeachment filed by the Homeland Security Committee arguing that he "willfully and systematically" refused to enforce existing immigration laws

## Biden blasts Trump for dangerous and 'un-American' NATO comments

WASHINGTON, Feb 14, (AP): US President Joe Biden on Tuesday said Donald Trump's comments calling into question the US commitment to defend its NATO allies from attack were "dangerous" and "un-American," seizing on the former president's comments that sowed fresh fears among US partners about its dependability on the global stage.

Trump, the front-runner in the US for the Republican Party's nomination this year, said Saturday that he once warned that he would allow Russia to do whatever it wants to NATO member nations that are "delinquent" in devoting 2% of their gross domestic product to defense. It was the latest instance in which the former president seemed to side with an authoritarian state over America's democratic allies.

Speaking from the White House as he encouraged the House to take up a Senate-passed aid bill to fund Ukraine's efforts to hold off a two-year Russian invasion, Biden said Trump's comments about the mutual defense pact were "dangerous and shocking."

"The whole world heard it and the worst thing is he means it," Biden added.

Biden said that "when America gives its word, it means something," and called Trump's comments sowing doubt about its commitments "un-American."

and that he breached the public trust by lying to Congress and saying the border was secure.

## Also:

**WASHINGTON:** Democrat Tom Suozzi won a special election for a US House seat in New York on Tuesday, coming out on top in a politically mixed suburban district in a victory that could lift his party's hopes heading into a fiercely contested presidential election later this year. Suozzi defeated Republican Mazi

Biden said of Trump: "He doesn't understand that the sacred commitment that we've given works for us as well."

NATO's Article 5 mutual defense clause states that an armed attack against one or more of its members shall be considered an attack against all members. But Trump has often depicted NATO allies as leeches on the US military and openly questioned the value of the military alliance that has defined American foreign policy for more than 70 years.

Since the full scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Biden has ushered Finland into the alliance and is clearing the way for Sweden to do the same.

## Also:

**BRUSSELS:** NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Wednesday that European allies and Canada have ramped up defense spending to record levels, as he warned that former US President Donald Trump was undermining their security by calling into question the US commitment to its allies.

Stoltenberg said that US partners in NATO have spent \$600 billion more on their military budgets since 2014, when Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in Ukraine prompted the allies to reverse the spending cuts they had made after the Cold War ended.

Pilip to take the seat that was left vacant when George Santos, also a Republican, was expelled from Congress. The victory marks a return to Washington for Suozzi, who represented the district for three terms before giving it up to run, unsuccessfully, for governor.

It's unclear how long his next stint on Capitol Hill will last, as a redistricting process unfolds that could reshape the district. But for now the result narrows the already slim Republican majority in the House.



Britain's Queen Camilla is installed as Honorary Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Fan Makers during a ceremony at Clarence House, central London on Feb 13. (AP)



Krinkee



Stedman

## America

**ER car crash kills 1, injures 5:** A car crashed into a Texas hospital's emergency room Tuesday, killing the driver and injuring five other people, including a child with life-threatening injuries, authorities said.

The car smashed into the lobby of the ER at St David's North Austin Medical Center shortly after 5:30 p.m., fire officials said at a nighttime news briefing. The driver was pulled from the car and received CPR but died in the ER, authorities said.

Photos showed a silver sedan with a mangled front end sitting entirely inside the lobby. The crash was under investigation and there was no immediate word on the cause, but the Austin Police Department said it appeared to be unintentional.

Five people in the ER lobby were injured. One was treated at the hospital while two adults and two children were taken to other hospitals, authorities said.

Of those transported, one child had critical life-threatening injuries and an adult had "serious, potentially life-threatening injuries" while the other two victims had non-life threatening injuries, said Capt Christa Stedman of Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services. (AP)

□ □ □

**2 gang members arrested:** Two suspected gang members were arrested in connection with a series of shootings in the Los Angeles area that killed four people, including a 14-year-old boy, authorities said Tuesday.

The shootings occurred over a span of a few hours late Sunday and early Monday in the cities of Huntington Park, Bell, Cudahy and Los Angeles, according to the LA County Sheriff's Department.

Investigators don't have a motive, but they believe all the victims were randomly targeted and did not know the suspects, sheriff's homicide Capt Andrew Meyer told reporters Tuesday afternoon.

"It appears this was a random murder spree. However, homicide investigators have not ruled anything out," Meyer said.

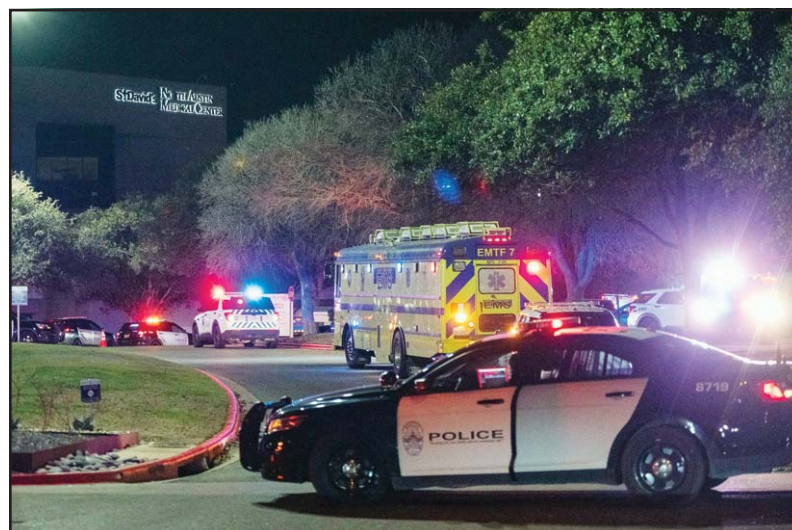
Detectives were searching for a possible third male suspect, but officials didn't provide details. There was no ongoing threat to the public, authorities said. (AP)

□ □ □

**Wyoming police officer killed:** A po-

lice officer serving a trespass warning has been fatally shot in northern Wyoming. Sgt Nevada Krinkee died at a hospi-

tal after being shot Tuesday in downtown Sheridan. The male shooter barricaded himself in a home a few blocks away after



First responders work the scene after a car crashed into an emergency room at St. David's North Austin Medical Center on Feb 13 in Austin. A car crashed into a Texas hospital's emergency room Tuesday, killing the driver and injuring five other people, including a child with life-threatening injuries, authorities said. (AP)

the shooting, Police Chief Travis Koltiska said in a release.

A standoff between the suspect, whose identity was not released, and state and local police agencies continued into Tuesday evening. (AP)

□ □ □

**Austin discharged from hospital:** US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin was released from Walter Reed National Military Medical Center on Tuesday, ending his second stay since surgery to treat prostate cancer, and he has resumed his full duties, the Pentagon said.

Austin, 70, has had ongoing health issues since undergoing surgery in December. He was taken back to Walter Reed on Sunday for a bladder issue and admitted to intensive care for a second time. He underwent a non-surgical procedure under general anesthesia on Monday.

Austin's doctors said Tuesday that his bladder issue was related to the surgery.

"The bladder issue was not related to his cancer diagnosis and will have no effect on his excellent cancer prognosis," Dr. John Maddox, trauma medical director, and Dr. Gregory Chesnut, director of the Center for Prostate Disease Research at the Murtha Cancer Center, said in a statement. (AP)



## Africa

## Somali army executes op

## Dozens feared dead in Congo 'boat accident'

KINSHASA, Congo, Feb 14, (Agencies): The majority of the 50 passengers aboard a wooden boat that capsized on a lake in eastern Congo are presumed to be dead, a local official said.

The boat crossing Lake Kivu was also carrying 20 bags of cement and likely sank Sunday due to being overloaded, said Mustafa Mamboleo, an official with South Kivu province.

Mamboleo said 10 people survived and three bodies had been found, and the search continued for about 37 people.

Deadly boating accidents occur frequently in Congo, where crews often overload small wooden vessels. Earlier in January, 22 people died on Lake Maï-Ndombe. Last April, six were killed and 64 went missing on Lake Kivu.



Guterres

Maritime regulations often are not adhered to, Daniel Lwaboshi, director of Congo's Public Riverways Authority, said Monday on state television, adding that another primary driver of such accidents is overloading.

Meanwhile, a group of rebels bombed a displacement camp in eastern Congo's North Kivu province killing three civilians and injuring eight others, a local civil society group said Tuesday, as violence in the conflict-hit region sparked protests and a humanitarian group warned that thousands are facing limited access to aid.

A rebel group with alleged links to neighboring Rwanda, bombed the Zaina camp on Monday, which is 16 miles from the city of Goma, civil society leader Wete Mwami Yenga, said. The bombing followed days of attacks not far away from the city.

## Attack

The M23 rebels did not claim responsibility for the attack but appeared to confirm Tuesday that they were heading to the town of Sake which is near Goma. Congo's government and United Nations experts have said the M23 group receives military support from Rwanda, although the country denies it. United Nations secretary general is António Guterres.

"The M23 is coming to liberate them and protect them from those heavy artillery," the group's spokesperson Lawrence Kanyuka said in a statement, referring to their ongoing fighting with Congolese security forces.

Thousands have fled their homes into Goma in recent days as the fighting intensifies and hospitals in the city are filled with injured civilians, many of them with limited medical care.

"That I'm lying on this hospital bed does me a disservice," said Ushindi Soleil, an injured father of ten receiving treatment in one of the hospitals. "I have ten kids, they are suffering," said Soleil.

More than one million people have been displaced by the conflict since November, the Mercy Corps aid group said Tuesday. That adds to the 6.9 million who already fled their homes in one of the world's biggest humanitarian crises.



**Somali army executes military op:** Somalia's National Army units executed a planned military operation on Wednesday, according to local media.

The operation spanned multiple areas between Jandarshi and Arbao towns in the Lower Shabelle region, reported the Somali National News Agency (SONNA).

The main objective of the military operation was to destroy Kharijite militia's strongholds and locations, where they took shelter in from the air raids of the army and its international partners, SONNA added.

The Somali army has been intensifying its offensive operations against Al-Shabaab militants who are connected to Al-Qaeda organization in central and south Somalia.



**'Senegal's security forces killed 3':** Security forces in Senegal have killed at least three people, including a 16-year-old boy, during protests in recent days denouncing the president's decision to delay elections, Amnesty International said Tuesday.

The rights group in a statement said protesters were killed during a crackdown in the capital, Dakar, and in Saint-Louis and Ziguinchor cities on Feb. 9 and 10, with 16-year-old Landing Camara shot in the head.

Another large protest by civil society, opposition and trade unions was expected Tuesday evening, but organizers said authorities hadn't authorized it. "This is everything we are fighting against," one organizer, Amadou Samb, told The Associated Press.

Senegal's government cut access to mobile internet services on Tuesday. The communications ministry said "hateful and subversive" messages were circulating online.

Senegal has seen more than a week of protests after President Macky Sall delayed elections scheduled for late February, citing time needed to resolve controversies over the disqualification of some candidates and a conflict between the government's legislative and judicial branches.



**Polish doc has been released:** A Polish doctor kidnapped in Chad has been freed and is "safe and sound," Poland's foreign minister said Tuesday.

The woman had been volunteering at the Saint-Michel Hospital in the Central African nation's Tandjile region, where kidnappings for ransom are common. Attackers pretending to be patients abducted her and a Mexican doctor, private Polish broadcaster Polsat News reported.

The other doctor escaped during an altercation between the abductors and Chad's security forces, while the Polish woman was taken away, a fellow doctor told The Associated Press. Chadian and French forces launched a search for her.

"I would like to thank the local forces and our French allies for their actions," the minister added.



**Man wanted for murder rearrested:** A man wanted in Massachusetts to face murder charges was rearrested, a week after he dramatically escaped from police custody, Kenyan police said Wednesday.

Kevin Adam Kinyanjui Kangethe escaped while awaiting extradition on a Massachusetts warrant alleging he killed his girlfriend and left her body in a car at a Boston airport. Last week he slipped out of a police station and jumped into a privately owned minivan.

Kangethe was arrested in Embulbul, Kajiado County on the outskirts of Kenya's capital city on Tuesday evening as he sought refuge at one of his relatives' homes, Nairobi police boss Adamson Bungei said.



This aerial view shows the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Fukushima, northern Japan on Aug 24, 2023, after its operator Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings began releasing its first batch of treated radioactive water into the Pacific Ocean. (AP)

## Safety panel urges Fukushima N-plant operator to better communicate with public

A panel of safety experts on Tuesday urged the operator of the tsunami-wrecked Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Japan to communicate more quickly with the public over incidents such as last week's leak of contaminated water.

Thirteen years after the Fukushima disaster in which the plant suffered triple meltdowns following the 2011 earthquake, safety culture at the Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings company has improved but there is still work to do, said Dale Klein, a former U. Nuclear Regulatory Commission chairperson who now serves as an advisor to TEPCO's

reform committee.

The panel's news briefing on its periodic assessment came a week after highly radioactive water leaked from a treatment machine during maintenance work at the Fukushima Daiichi plant. TEPCO said no one was injured, and radiation monitoring shows no leakage escaped the compound.

But the leak triggered criticism in and outside Japan. Any leak of radioactive water is a sensitive topic.

In another accidental leak in October, four workers were sprayed with radioactive liquid waste while

cleaning a treatment facility. Two were briefly hospitalized for skin contamination, though none showed symptoms of poisoning.

Klein said both incidents could have been prevented, and TEPCO needs to quickly analyze what happened in such mishaps and "very quickly communicate to the public what happened and why."

For risk control, many companies, including TEPCO, often try to know everything before they say anything publicly, Klein said. But in the age of social media, speculation spreads quickly, he said. (AP)

## Asia

## 'We are grateful for the quick count results'

## Subianto claims victory in Indonesia poll

JAKARTA, Indonesia, Feb 14, (AP): Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto claimed victory in Indonesia's presidential election on Wednesday based on unofficial tallies, proclaiming it a victory for all Indonesian people.

There was no declaration by electoral officials and his opponents have not conceded.

Subianto has held a commanding lead in early, unofficial tallies of the three-way race to lead the world's third-largest democracy.

## Conducted

According to early, unofficial "quick count" tallies conducted by Indonesian polling agencies, Subianto had between 57% and 59% of votes, with more than 80% of the vote counted in polling places sampled.

"We are grateful for the quick count results," he said in a speech to supporters. "We should not be arrogant, we should not be proud, we should not be euphoric, we still have to be humble, this victory must be a victory for all Indonesian people."

The 72-year-old candidate is a link to the brutal period of dictatorship that ended just over 25 years ago, when he served as a special forces commander in a unit linked to torture and disappearances, allegations that Subianto denies.

He has presented himself as an heir to immensely popular sitting President Joko Widodo, whose son he chose as his running mate.

Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto held a commanding lead in early, unofficial tallies of Indonesia's presidential race Wednesday, potentially putting the former general on a path to claim victory in a three-way race to lead the world's third-largest democracy.

To avoid a runoff against his rivals - two former provincial governors, Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo - Subianto will need more than 50% of all votes cast and at least 20% in each of the country's provinces.

Subianto was expected to appear

## North Korea has fired multiple cruise missiles into sea, says South Korea

SEOUL, South Korea, Feb 14, (AP): North Korea on Wednesday fired multiple cruise missiles into the sea in its fifth test of such weapons since January, South Korea's military said, extending a streak in weapons demonstrations that's elevating tensions in the region.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the South Korean and US militaries were analyzing the launches that were detected in waters north-east of the eastern coastal city of Wonsan. The South Korean military didn't immediately provide the exact numbers of missiles fired or how far they flew. It wasn't immediately clear either whether the missiles were fired from land or from sea assets. "Our military has increased surveillance and vigilance and is working closely with our US partners and is closely monitoring signs for further activity from North Korea," the Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

Experts say North Korea is ramping up pressure on its rivals in an election year in South Korea and the United States with a long-term focus of forcing Washington to accept the idea of the North as a nuclear power and extract security and economic concessions from a position of strength.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has also been issuing belligerent statements toward South Korea, including a declaration that he would abandon the North's long-term objective of reconciliation with its war-divided rival and threatening to annihilate the South with nukes if provoked. There's concern in the South that Kim may up the ante with a direct military provocation, possibly around the disputed western sea boundary between the Koreas that has been the site of deadly naval skirmishes in past years.

## Also:

**SEOUL, South Korea:** South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's office said Wednesday that presumed North Korean hackers breached the personal emails of one of his staff members ahead of Yoon's trip to Europe in November.

Yoon's office said the cyberattack only affected the personal account of the unidentified employee, who violated security protocols by partially using commercial email services to handle official duties. Officials did not specify what type of information was stolen from the staff member's personal emails but stressed that the office's overall security system was not affected.

before enthusiastic supporters at a packed Jakarta sports hall later in the evening.

Widodo's successor will inherit an economy with impressive growth and ambitious infrastructure projects, including the ongoing transfer of the nation's capital from congested Jakarta to the frontier island of Borneo at a staggering cost exceeding \$30 billion.

The election also has high stakes for the United States and China, since

Indonesia has a huge domestic market, natural resources like nickel and palm oil, and diplomatic influence with its Southeast Asian neighbors.

Widodo's rise from a riverside slum to the presidency has shown the vibrancy of Indonesia's democracy in a region rife with authoritarian regimes.

But with a leading candidate linked to a former dictator, and Widodo's son on the ballot, some observers fear that democracy is eroding.



A woman who was wounded in ongoing fighting between M-23 rebel forces and Congolese forces in the Sake region West of Goma, eastern Congo, stands on crutches by her hospital bed in Goma, on Feb 13. (AP)



Criswell



Pierluisi

## Lat/Am

**Drive-by shooting kills 5:** Five people were killed and four others were in critical condition after a drive-by shooting at a street-side bar in Puerto Rico, police said Tuesday.

Authorities believe the shooting late Monday was tied to drug trafficking. While Puerto Rico has long served as a transit point for multimillion-dollar drug shipments out of South America, drug-related shootings involving multiple victims are considered rare. The shooting raises concerns that this could change.

Police said in a statement that unknown suspects in a moving car opened fire in the northern town of Toa Baja. Three men and two women were killed, and three women and one man were hospitalized. Among those in critical condition was the brother of the former mayor of the coastal town of Cataño, according to police.

Authorities said a 35-year-old suspected drug dealer killed in the shooting appeared to be the target.

No one has been arrested. At least 74 killings have been reported on the island of 3.2 million inhabitants this year, six more than in the same period last year.

Last month, four men and a 16-year-old boy were fatally shot along a highway in another drug-related attack in the eastern town of Ceiba. (AP)

**'A lot of work remains':** Puerto Rico is trudging through reconstruction work after two devastating hurricanes and a string of strong earthquakes, and has spent less than 10% of more than \$23 billion in available federal funds, according to a US government report released Tuesday.

The US territory has "a substantial amount" of permanent projects still pending as their costs soar and threaten to halt the rebuilding work, an audit by the US Government Accountability Office found.

"More than six years after hurricanes Irma and Maria, Puerto Rico's recovery is ongoing," the report stated. The governor of Puerto Rico is Pedro Pierluisi.

The GAO report also referred to a series of earthquakes that hit the island's southern region in December 2019 and January 2020, causing millions of dollars in damage. The report found that more than \$11 bil-

lion of the \$23.4 billion awarded by the US Federal Emergency Management Agency following the hurricanes and earthquakes still requires the agency's approval before Puerto Rico's government can spend it.



An electoral worker holds up a ballot during the vote counting at a polling station following the election in Medan, Indonesia, on Feb 14. Indonesian voters were choosing a new president Wednesday as the world's third-largest democracy aspires to become a global economic powerhouse a quarter-century after shaking off a brutal dictatorship. (AP)

FEMA administrator is Deanne Criswell. It was not clear why the territory's government has not yet taken the steps required to access the money. A spokesperson for Puerto Rico's Office for Recovery, Reconstruction and Resiliency, which receives and awards federal grant funds, did not immediately return a message seeking comment.

However, documents show that Puerto Rico's power company, Department of Education, and Aqueduct and Sewer Authority expect to submit applications to access the money by 2030 or later.

The federal funds are supposed to finance more than 9,300 permanent projects, with more than \$13 billion slated for public utilities and \$7 billion for public buildings and equipment.

However, rising costs have presented a challenge, according to the GAO audit that ran from November 2021 to February 2024.

The GAO noted that the cost of a water treatment plant exceeded its original estimate by more than 40%, while the cost of parts needed for a power plant rose from \$9 million to \$12 million.

The report said rising costs are of "particular concern" because of their cumulative impact.

"For example, officials from Puerto Rico's Aqueduct and Sewer Authority said they anticipate that they will only be able to complete about half of the agency's planned projects," the report stated. (AP)



## oil surges

The price of Kuwaiti crude oil rose by 85 cents to reach USD 82.14 per barrel on Tuesday, compared to USD 81.29 on Friday, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Wednesday.

In international markets, Brent crude oil went down 19 cents to USD 82 per barrel, while West Texas Intermediate fell by eight cents to USD 76.92. (KUNA)

It appears that global oil markets will witness an abundance of crude flows during the current year, at a time when new supplies cover demand and contribute to restricting prices and keeping them at moderate levels, as the Executive Director of the International Energy Agency, Fatih Birol, predicted in a statement to the Bloomberg TV network, that global oil consumption will rise by between 1.2 million barrels per day and 1.3 million barrels per day in 2024, a much weaker pace compared to last year as economic growth slows in China and other countries, reports Al-Qabas daily.

He added that this slowdown in the pace of consumption growth will be offset by a significant increase in the production of the countries of the Americas, especially the

United States, Canada, Brazil, and Guyana, indicating that this growth in production is more than sufficient to meet the increase in global demand for oil, so it is expected that the oil market will stabilize. To some extent, prices will moderate over the course of 2024, in the absence of major geopolitical disturbances and extreme weather events.

On the other hand, Secretary-General of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, Haitham Al-Ghais, described the published expectations regarding demand for oil in the long term as strong, and in a statement to Reuters on the sidelines of the World Government Summit in Dubai, he stressed that Saudi Arabia's decision to postpone its plans to increase production capacity should

## 'oil prices to remain moderate amid supply surplus'

not be interpreted as seeing a decline in demand for oil. Meanwhile, the monthly report issued by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) revealed that Kuwait's oil production last month recorded 2.43 million barrels per day, compared to 2.54 million barrels per day in December 2023, a decline of about 109 thousand barrels per day.

Thus, Kuwait ranked fifth among the largest producers within the organization, and Saudi Arabia came in first place with a production of 8.96 million barrels per day, followed by Iraq with 4.19 million barrels per day, then Iran with 3.16 million barrels per day, and the UAE with a production of 2.92 million barrels per day.

## Market Movements 14-02-2024

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts
SAUDI - Tadawul	+34.18	12,438.77	JAPAN - Nikkei	-260.65	37,703.32
UAE - DFM	+4.17	4,223.48			
EGYPT - EGX 30	+270.45	28,874.99			
PHILIPPINES - PSEi	+26.61	6,854.53			
PAKISTAN - KSE 100	+919.89	62,174.10			

# Business

## Kuwaiti banks witness 10% drop in settlement operations in 2023

Personal cash facilities increase by 1.5% in past year

By Mahmoud Shendi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: Settlement operations between local (consolidated) banks witnessed a decrease during 2023 by 10% and by about 27.7 billion dinars, from 287.6 billion dinars in 2022 to 259.9 billion dinars during the past year.**

This decline coincides with its decline on a monthly basis during last December by 16.4%, with a value of 4.5 billion dinars, from 27.789 billion dinars in October to 23.206 billion dinars at the end of last November.

According to Central Bank of Kuwait data for December, settlement operations between local banks witnessed an annual increase of 17.1% and a value of 3.4 billion dinars, after it was 19.801 billion dinars at the end of December 2022.

This increase in the balance of commercial financing comes in conjunction with the growth in the balance of the total cash credit facilities provided by banks (total sectors) during 2023 by a rate of 2.1 percent and a value of 1.13 billion dinars from 52.447 billion dinars in December to 53.581 billion at the end of December.

The balance of personal cash fa-

## 581mln dinars increase from 2022

### Kuwait's credit card spending soars 16.6% in '23

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: According to official data released by the Central Bank of Kuwait, total spending through credit cards surged by 16.6% in 2023, reaching 4 billion dinars, reports Al-Anba daily.

This marked a substantial rise compared to the 3.48 billion dinars recorded in 2022, reflecting a net increase of 581 million dinars. Credit cards remain a popular choice for electronic purchases abroad and offer multiple benefits including cash withdrawals, particularly for travelers.

However, it is important to note that interest rates apply to credit card transactions, with additional cumulative interest incurred on cash withdrawals based on repayment terms and withdrawal amounts. With global interest rates rising to 4.25% over the past year, cardholders withdrawing cash may face higher interest charges, as per the Central Bank's announcement.

Here are the key points from the report:  
**Total Spending** — Credit card transactions surged by 16.6% in 2023, reaching 4 billion dinars, up from 3.48 billion dinars in 2022.

**Interest Rates** — With global interest rates rising to 4.25% according to the Central Bank of Kuwait, cardholders face higher interest charges, particularly when withdrawing cash.

**Domestic vs. International Spending** — 62.5% of cred-

itilities provided by banks grew during the past year by 1.5 percent and amounted to 284.2 million dinars, from 18.477 billion in December to 18.761 billion in December.

The balance of consumer loans

increased by 300 thousand dinars, or by 0.01 percent, to 1.967 billion dinars in December, and the balance of housing facilities increased by 1.7 percent, and a value of 276.4 million dinars, from 15.74 billion dinars in

card overdrafts were spent domestically, totaling 2.54 billion dinars.

International spending via credit cards accounted for 37.5% of the total, amounting to 1.52 billion dinars.

**Quarterly Withdrawals** — During the fourth quarter of 2023, withdrawals from credit cards totaled 1 billion dinars, contributing to the overall increase in spending.

**Purchase Behavior** — Direct purchases and payments for services via credit cards at local points of sale increased by 21% in 2023, reaching 2.2 billion dinars.

**Online spending** on websites using credit cards increased by 14.7%, amounting to 1.3 billion dinars.

**Cash Withdrawals** — Cash overdrafts accounted for 13% of total overdrafts, reaching 538.9 million dinars in 2023.

Domestic cash withdrawals increased by 5.26%, while international withdrawals rose by 6.8%.

**Overall Growth** — Spending on credit cards for various purposes, including direct purchases, online transactions, and cash withdrawals, saw significant growth in both domestic and international categories.

These trends underscore the increasing reliance on credit cards for transactions, both within Kuwait and abroad, and highlight the evolving consumer behavior in the digital age.

December to 16.01 billion dinars last December, and private and typical housing loans decreased by 7 percent, with a value of 22.9 million dinars, from 326.3 million dinars to 303.4 million dinars.

## Bursa revamps stock lending system

### Kuwait's market indicators dip slightly in third session

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: After a strong start earlier this week, the market indicators experienced a slight decline in the third session yesterday, with overall stability characterizing this month's trading trends. The general market index saw a marginal decrease of 0.13 percent, or 9.83 points, closing at 7,350.19 points, with a liquidity of 68.8 million dinars. Trading saw 304.7 million shares exchanged through 19,037 transactions, with 54 gaining, 55 losing, and 19 remaining unchanged, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Similarly, the Premier Market Index dropped by 0.13 percent, or 10.58 points, ending at 8,068.99 points, with liquidity totaling 50.2 million dinars. Trading involved 138.3 million shares across 9,744 transactions, with 13 shares gaining, 15 losing, and 5 remaining unchanged.

#### Decline

The Main Market index also experienced a decline of 0.15 percent, or 8.70 points, closing at 5,981.68 points, with liquidity reaching 18.5 million dinars. Trading volume amounted to 166.3 million shares through 9,293 transactions, with 41 shares gaining, 40 losing, and 14 remaining unchanged.

The trading day commenced with growth and increased liquidity, surpassing 5 million dinars in the initial ten minutes, driven by buying momentum and profit announcements from various shares.

Notably, KFH and IFA stocks saw significant increases, while Gulf shares rose following historic dividends declarations. Although some stocks, like Kamco and National Investments, recorded notable trading activity, others, including Agility and Zain, faced pressure, leading to declines in the five largest stocks.

However, stocks like Boubyan Petrochemicals, Industries, Buildings, as well as some main market stocks such as Future Kids, KAMCO, and Cement, witnessed clear increases, contributing to the market's overall stability with limited losses.

Meanwhile, positive performance persisted in the GCC market indices, with five indices trading in the green, notably the Saudi market index with a 0.6 percent increase. Despite minor declines in the Dubai and Kuwait market indices, overall trends remained favorable.

Additionally, oil prices experi-

enced an uptick, nearing the \$83 mark for a standard barrel of Brent crude.

#### Also:

**KUWAIT CITY:** The Kuwait Stock Exchange in a move to bolster market liquidity and effectiveness is set to introduce a revamped stock lending and borrowing mechanism encompassing central lending and borrowing services through predefined templates and market maker interventions, this development opens avenues for direct agreements between lenders and borrowers, facilitated through registration with the Kuwait Clearing Company, reports Al-Jarida daily.

This mechanism aims to elevate the role and impact of market makers, whose current trades constitute a modest 15 percent of total financial market transactions. Furthermore, it paves the way for short selling operations, enriching trading strategies and promoting market depth.

Facilitated by stringent controls to safeguard transactional rights, this mechanism is expected to broaden the spectrum of investment tools, attracting both local and foreign capital and enable short selling maneuvers during specific market conditions, such as saturation points, corrections, or targeted price movements.

Eight licensed investment firms have already applied to serve as market makers for select stocks, with allocations not exceeding 25 percent of total listed companies. While the initial phase focuses on servicing market makers and financial institutions with share balances, future stages will extend the lending and borrowing facility to investors and traders directly on the exchange.

Stock lending and borrowing entail temporary security loans for specified durations, allowing for seamless returns within the market settlement cycle. Borrowers assume ownership rights and may utilize securities for trading or further lending, subject to prescribed regulations and cash guarantees.

This service serves as a pivotal instrument in capital markets, empowering investors with strategic portfolio management capabilities and risk-balanced returns. Beyond facilitating short selling, it fosters market stability, liquidity, and efficiency, underpinning the market's developmental trajectory.

## Companies seek leeway amid recovery call

### Kuwaiti stakeholders insist KIA to revitalize financial derivatives

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: As Kuwait endeavors to bolster its financial landscape and attract diverse investments, stakeholders are urging the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) to lead initiatives aimed at revitalizing troubled financial derivative instruments, reports Al-Jarida daily.

With the market clamoring for greater options and tools for local and foreign investors, 2024 is seen as a pivotal year for the actual launch and activation of approved instruments. However, there is a notable emphasis on avoiding monopolistic commission rates that could impede market access.

#### Recovery

In response to the KIA's call for the recovery of contributions from listed companies, there are calls for flexibility in repayment schedules. Companies seek the leeway to fulfill their obligations while maintaining operational stability, especially until the conclusion of existing contracts. The Authority's requirement for companies to liquidate shares obtained as contributions in a manner that doesn't disrupt market dynamics further underscores the need for pragmatic solutions.

While some companies have promptly initiated partial payments

in good faith, others may require additional time to meet their commitments. This process is expected to unfold gradually, with companies prioritizing the return of funds to uphold strategic relationships with the Authority and sustain their status as valued clients.

Moreover, stakeholders stress the need to utilize recovered funds to support the success of approved but inactive financial instruments. Despite the approval of instruments such as overdraft facilities and equity lending and borrowing, their implementation has been delayed, leaving Kuwait's market trailing behind regional counterparts.

In this context, the proactive role of the KIA is deemed crucial in catalyzing strategic transformation within Kuwait's financial sector.

Leveraging its track record in facilitating successful credit and sales initiatives, the Authority can pave the way for broader industry adoption, fostering market growth and innovation.

As Kuwait navigates its financial evolution, stakeholders emphasize the importance of proactive measures and collaborative efforts to invigorate the derivatives market, ensuring it remains competitive and aligned with international standards.

## 'Creativity and innovation are vital for improving performance'

### KFH honors winners of Innovation Competition

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) celebrated the winners of the Group's Innovation Competition for the year 2023. The honoring ceremony was attended by the Chief Executive Officer - KFH Kuwait, Khaled Al-Shamlan, the Group Chief Human Resources and Transformation Officer, Zeyad Abdullah AlOmar, and the General Manager Digital Transformation and Innovation, Mazyed Abdullatif Al-Mazyed.

Al-Shamlan highlighted the significance of creativity and innovation in improving service quality and advancing performance through inventive offerings that enhance the customer experience. He emphasized that we are living in an era that represents a golden opportunity to translate our creative ideas into tangible actions, thanks to the technological advancements, convenient access to digital tools, AI, and collaboration with FinTechs, as well as providing all essentials to bring ideas to fruition.

"KFH's Executive Management has embraced an innovative approach and adopted multiple initiatives to assist employees in fostering their ideas, enhancing their capabilities, and ultimately putting those ideas into action," added Al-Shamlan.

#### Focus

Al-Shamlan noted that the employees' ideas focus on delivering banking products, solutions, and services. They also involve developing the necessary technological infrastructure and resources for offering technical services, improving work procedures and mechanisms, strengthening cybersecurity, eliminating or reducing the traditional documentary process, and introducing other concepts that bring value-added benefits.

Additionally, the ideas are geared towards enhancing service quality, raising brand value, boosting profitability rates, promoting work environment, and advancing all performance indicators. This is achieved by the utilization of robotics, artificial intelligence, engineering data, and other digital applications and diverse technological tools.

Al-Shamlan congratulated the winners and commended their dedication and enthusiasm in generating creative ideas that have greatly contributed to KFH's suc-



Khaled Al-Shamlan, Zeyad AlOmar and Mazyed Al-Mazyed honoring the winning employees of the innovation competition.

cess and excellence. He emphasized that organizations can only sustain success by embracing innovation, staying abreast with cutting-edge technology, and implementing it across their diverse activities and operations.

He went on to say that during the previous year, KFH has successfully implemented over 35 projects, services, and products. These initiatives greatly contributed to KFH's role as a leader in transforming the banking industry and establishing itself as the foremost provider of high-quality digital banking services. This outstanding performance was confirmed by Euromoney magazine, which ranked KFH the Market Leader - Kuwait in digital solutions.

Group Chief Human Resources and Transformation Officer, Zeyad Abdullah AlOmar Group Chief Human Resources and Transformation Officer, Zeyad Abdullah AlOmar, highlighted KFH's commitment to promoting and fostering innovation within its workforce in line with the Bank's digital transformation strategy. He confirmed that KFH equips employees with development and skills to serve the strategic goals of the Bank.

AlOmar pointed out that the competition had a remarkable turnout and represented exceptional intellectual contributions, carefully assessed by a dedicated committee. Therefore, the winners have earned this honor with their outstanding creativity and innovative concepts.

He affirmed that KFH is dedicated to expanding and enhancing the knowledge and experience of

its employees, expressing pride in KFH's efforts in investing in its talents and providing necessary support to help them achieve their goals and ambitions. This approach fully aligns with the bank's aspirations and objectives.

He said that KFH offers an environment that fosters innovation and growth. This is evident by providing ample opportunities for innovators to share their valuable ideas, whether in Kuwait or at the Group level, and rewarding them for their contributions that bring about tangible results in various aspects of operations.

#### Creativity

"Innovation and creativity are at the core of KFH's strategy of excellence and leadership," said AlOmar.

General Manager Digital Transformation and Innovation, Mazyed Abdullatif Al-Mazyed

General Manager Digital Transformation and Innovation, Mazyed Abdullatif Al-Mazyed, expressed his joy at the large number of employees who participated in the competition. He said that the competition received hundreds of entries from employees at the Group level.

He explained that a specialized committee carefully examined and assessed all the proposals submitted by different departments. The committee evaluated the proposals based on precise professional criteria, particularly their alignment with the institution's overall policy. The proposals should introduce a new idea, product, or service, or con-

tribute to enhancing and advancing the level of service. It is also crucial for the proposals to be feasible and include clear steps and implementation stages, as well as consider the dimensions of competition, profitability, quality, and professional and organizational standards, locally and globally.

The innovation committee at the Group level evaluates ideas that have been given an "exceptional" and "good" rating. These ideas are then included in the list of the top 10 innovative ideas of the year. The owners of these ideas can enter the final competition at the Group level and present their ideas to the CEO and the Executive Management. The best 3 ideas are then selected, contributing to the adoption of a flexible business model for the flow and implementation of innovative ideas at the Group level. This is done based on the nature of each market, customer segments, controls, and standards in which the Group operates.

Meanwhile, the winners expressed their gratitude to KFH for the recognition they received and for motivating them to continue generating innovative ideas that bring value to both KFH and customers.

Some of the exclusive digital services KFH rolled out in 2023:

- Tam Digital Bank
- Liveness Face Matching service in branches
- Emergency Cash Service
- Exclusive Gold Account services (buying, selling, delivering, storing)
- Zaheh Digital platform
- KFHonline for corporates
- Instant credit and prepaid card printing service for the first time in the Middle East
- Transfer cash from prepaid card to an account
- Transfer to Western Union through KFHonline App
- Five digital portfolios to facilitate online payments: Google Pay, Fitbit Pay, Garmin Pay, Samsung Pay and Apple Pay)
- Innovative digital products
- Updating EZway and reporting systems
- Direct automatic classification system for Hesabi and Bayti customers
- Automating the complaint submission process through KFH website
- Enhancing customers statement of accounts



Net profit grew by 15.2%

# Gulf Bank holds its Year End 2023 Earnings Webcast



Waleed Khaled Mandani



David Challinor



Dalal Al-Dousari

**Waleed Khaled Mandani:**

- The local economy remained stable, supported by good oil prices, accelerated government project awards and overall recovery of economic activity.
- The new core banking system's deployment showcases Gulf Bank's commitment to better serve its valued customers using cutting-edge technology.
- The significant capital increase oversubscription reflects shareholders' confidence in Gulf Bank's potential capabilities.

**David Challinor:**

- For 2023, we had overall growth of 1.2%, with retail growth dominating, leading to another year of market share gains in the retail sector.
- We've embarked on a journey to bring down the cost to income ratio over time and targeting a further fall for 2024.
- Our NPL percentage continues to be very low at 1.2% which is broadly similar to a year ago.

**Dalal Al-Dousari:**

- We have a renewed confidence that the mortgage law will ultimately materialize as an alternative financing option through local banks.
- For the year 2024, we aim to maintain our growth strategy of growing retail faster than the market.
- We aim to keep our NPL ratio under the 2% mark due to our prudent risk management approach.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: Gulf Bank held its investors webcast on Tuesday, February 13th, 2024, to present and discuss the Bank's financial performance for year-end 2023. The webcast was organized by EFG Hermes and presented by Waleed Khaled Mandani, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Gulf Bank, and David Challinor, Chief Financial Officer of Gulf Bank. The discussion was moderated by Dalal Al-Dousari, Deputy General Manager of Investor Relations at Gulf Bank.

**Operating Environment**

Mr. Waleed Mandani, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Gulf Bank, commenced the webcast with key updates regarding Gulf Bank's operating environment during year 2023. Mandani stated: "During the year, the local economy remained stable, supported by good oil prices, accelerated government project awards and overall recovery of economic activity."

Mr. Mandani added "One of the key milestones during the year 2023 was the implementation of phase I of the new core banking system. This milestone repre-

sents a major leap in the Bank's digital transformation journey. It empowers the Bank to provide enhanced services, improve efficiency, and deliver seamless customer experiences. Another major achievement for the Bank during the year was the launch of the latest version of its mobile application. The new version of the app incorporates advanced security features to safeguard customer data and financial transactions while providing a seamless user experience."

Mr. Mandani stated "the Bank has obtained the necessary final regulatory approvals to setup Gulf Capital Investment Company, known as Invest GB, to operate officially as a wholly owned investment subsidiary of the Bank. We believe GB Invest complementary services will positively enhance the fees and commissions income of the Bank over the long run."

Regarding Gulf Bank Capital Increase Mr. Mandani mentioned "Furthermore, during the fourth quarter of 2023, Gulf Bank has successfully completed a capital increase totaling KD 60 million. This was approxi-

mately seven times oversubscribed. The significant oversubscription reflects shareholders' confidence in Gulf Bank's potential capabilities."

**Key Financial Indicators**

- Net Profit grew by 15.2%.
- Earnings Per Share is up 13.2% to 21 fils.
- Recommended dividends of 12 fils and 5% bonus shares.
- Gross loans and advances reached KD 5.5 billion.
- NPL ratio stood at 1.2% and coverage ratio 466% including total provisions and collaterals.
- Capital Adequacy Ratio of 18% and Tier 1 Ratio of 15.8%.

**Margins**

Gulf Bank's Chief Financial Officer Mr. Challinor responded to questions related to margins by saying: "For Q4 we continued to see the margin expand but at a slower pace than for Q2 and Q3. For the full year 2023 our net interest margin was 217 basis points versus the prior year which was 210. And this increase was in line with the guidance we gave at the beginning of the year. As you know the margin dynamics are complex as there are many variables."

**Loan Growth**

Regarding loan growth and what segments drove the growth, Mr.Challinor commented: "For the full year 2023, we had overall growth of 1.2%, with retail dominating, leading to another year of market share gains in the retail business. We're aiming to continue gaining market share, which we have done in both 2022 and 2023, so we think this second half trend will play nicely into our strategic goals for next year. We also believe that the market will be more active next year and have seen signs of positive movement in the project space locally. So, all in all, I think we should expect a solid year of loan growth next year more in line with long-term system average."

**Credit Cost & Asset Quality**

Regarding the credit cost and asset quality of Gulf Bank, Mr. Challinor stated: "For 2023, the credit costs were KD 29 million which translated to a cost of risk of 54 basis points, we've had 2 consecutive years where credit costs have been historically very low. So, I'm very pleased with this continued low level of credit costs considering where in-

terest rates are. Our NPL percentage continues to be very low at 1.2%, which is broadly similar to a year ago."

**Operating Expenses**

Regarding operating expense and improvement in cost to income ratio Mr.Challinor mentioned: "The total cost growth was under 1% year on year, which is a strong outcome, and demonstrates our prudent approach to cost control during 2023. Looking at the cost to income ratio there's been a meaningful drop of 2% and it now stands at 45.6% down from 47.6% a year ago. Looking forward, we've embarked on a journey to bring down the cost to income ratio over time and are targeting a further fall for 2024."

**Real Estate Financing**

Regarding the home financing law and if there are any updates, Ms. Al-Dousari stated: "It's been nearly two years since the first announcement of the draft law of real estate financing for private housing in Kuwait. We have a renewed confidence that the law will ultimately materialize as an alternative financing option through local banks. We are optimistic about the potential mortgage law in Kuwait

and its positive impact on the overall credit market. We believe that the law aligns well with our Bank's retail focused strategy, and we are in a good position to benefit from this market opportunity."

Before concluding the webcast Al-Dousari concluded with a recap on Gulf Bank 2024 key guidance indicators:

■ For loan growth, our strategy remains unchanged, more in line with long-term system average that seems to have been around mid-single digits.

■ We have guided earlier that cost to income ratio is expected to decrease. This achieved during the year and it's at a lower level compared to last year. We expect the declining trend of cost to income ratio to continue.

■ We continue to proactively manage our balance sheet and we should expect, at this stage, the full year charge to land somewhere in the 50-70 basis point range.

■ Our NPL ratio remained near the 1% levels over the previous quarters. We aim to keep our NPL ratio under the 2% mark due to our prudent risk management approach.

**Airbnb loses \$349 mln on Italian tax dispute**

ROME, Feb 14, (AP): Airbnb said Tuesday that it lost \$349 million in the fourth quarter due to an income tax settlement with Italy, but bookings and revenue rose, and the short-term rental giant said demand remains strong.

The company forecast first-quarter revenue that would meet or beat Wall Street expectations.

However, the pace of bookings growth is likely to "moderate" from the fourth quarter into the first, and the early timing of Easter could hurt growth in the second quarter, Airbnb said.

CEO Brian Chesky said on a call with analysts that Airbnb is "perfecting" its business - making pricing more transparent, reining in exorbitant cleaning fees, and reducing cancellations by hosts. Now it plans to go beyond its core.

Chesky said the company will build out its rental platform in countries where it isn't as strong as the United States. He said that is already underway in Germany, Brazil and South Korea, and will soon be tried in Switzerland, Belgium and the Netherlands.

"But this is only one piece of a much bigger strategy because we have always believed that Airbnb was destined to offer more than just a place to stay," he said.

Chesky, however, gave no details about the "multiyear journey," only promising news late this year. Rivals such as Vrbo parent Booking Holdings and Expedia Group also make money from things like flight and rental-car listings.

The fourth-quarter loss compared with a profit of \$319 million a year earlier. The recent results were dragged down by \$1 billion in one-time tax withholding expenses and lodging tax reserves.

The vacation-rental platform disclosed in December that it would pay Italy's tax agency 576 million euros (\$621 million at the time) to a case involving withholding from property hosts in that country. Airbnb not admit wrongdoing, and company officials say they don't fact any similar liability in other countries.

Excluding the special expenses, Airbnb said it would have earned \$489 million.

Revenue rose 17% to \$2.22 billion, beating the \$2.17 billion forecast of analysts in a FactSet survey. Bookings rose 12%, and the average daily rate gained 3%.

Airbnb forecast first-quarter revenue of between \$2.03 billion and \$2.07 billion. Analysts were looking for \$2.03 billion.

The company said demand remains strong, especially among new users of the site. Bookings grew 12% from a year earlier, and picked up after "volatility" in October, when economic uncertainty and the start of war in Israeli-occupied Gaza raised doubts about travel demand.

# US inflation slows but remains high in sign that price pressures easing only gradually

Core prices climbed 0.4% last month

**WASHINGTON, Feb 14, (AP): Consumer inflation in the United States cooled last month yet remained elevated in the latest sign that the pandemic-fueled price surge is only gradually and fitfully coming under control.**

Tuesday's report from the Labor Department showed that the consumer price index rose 0.3% from December to January, up from a 0.2% increase the previous month. Compared with a year ago, prices are up 3.1%.

That is less than the 3.4% figure in December and far below the 9.1% inflation peak in mid-2022. But the latest reading is still well above the Federal Reserve's 2% target level at a time when public frustration with inflation has become a pivotal issue in President Joe Biden's bid for re-election.

Excluding volatile food and energy costs, so-called core prices climbed 0.4% last month, up from 0.3% in December. On a year-over-year basis, core prices were up 3.9% in January, the same as in December. Core inflation is watched especially closely because it typically provides a better read of where inflation is likely headed.

Tuesday's report showed that the drivers of inflation have decisively shifted from goods, like used cars, gasoline and groceries, which are now falling in price or rising much more slowly, to services, including hotel rooms, restaurant meals and medical care. That shift could raise concerns for the Fed, because services inflation typically takes longer to cool.

At his most recent news conference, Fed Chair Jerome Powell singled out persistently high services prices as a concern and indicated the central bank's policymakers would like to see services inflation ease further before starting to cut their key interest rate.

"There's still some inflation in the system that's going to take some time to work through," said Omair Sharif, founder of Inflation Insights, a research firm. "This justifies the Fed wanting to wait and see how things are going to go."

Tuesday's unexpectedly sticky inflation data sent stock and bond prices tumbling, with financial markets now envisioning the Fed's first cut rates in

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: Changes made by the United Kingdom in travel regulations, particularly the reinstatement of tax-free shopping and the introduction of a new electronic travel permit system, are poised to attract a significant increase in tourists from Gulf countries, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, a Conservative MP, has voiced support for the tax-free shopping initiative, citing its potential to bolster retail businesses

and stimulate trade. Statistics reveal a decline in spending by Gulf tourists in the UK in recent years, contrasting with increases seen in other European destinations. The absence of tax-free shopping in Britain has been cited as a key factor driving tourists to opt for shopping in countries like France, Spain, and Italy instead.

Economic experts argue that discontinuing tax-free shopping was a strategic misstep that failed to align with tourists' spending preferences. Clifton-Brown emphasizes the importance of providing equal opportunities for Britain to compete with other European tourist destinations.

While restoring tax-free shopping is estimated to cost the UK economy around £2 billion by the 2025/2026 financial year, projections indicate substantial benefits in terms of increased tourist numbers and spending. The Center for Business and Economics Research (CBRE) suggests that maintaining tax-free shopping could lead

to a 5.4% increase in tourist numbers, equivalent to 1.7 million additional tourists, along with higher spending. Despite challenges posed by the temporary suspension of tax-free shopping, the UK continues to witness growth in tourism, with visitor numbers reaching 11 million in the third quarter of last year. However, the potential for increased spending underscores the significance of initiatives like tax-free shopping in maximizing the economic benefits of tourism.

June, rather than in May or March as many traders had previously expected. The S&P 500 was off nearly 1.2% in early afternoon trading, and the yield on the 10-year Treasury note jumped by a sharp one-tenth, to 4.28%.

Biden administration officials responded to Tuesday's report by noting that average hourly pay, adjusted for inflation, rose in January and is 1.4% higher than it was a year earlier. But the average work week has declined because some businesses have reduced their employees' hours, leaving weekly inflation-adjusted pay slightly lower than it was a year earlier.

"We understand there's more work to be done, but this is an economy that is in a much different place than it was a year ago," said Karine Jean-Pierre, the White House press secretary. "When you see eggs and milk and products like that at the grocery store going down, they're lower than they were a year ago, that's important."

Some economists cautioned against assigning too much weight to January's inflation data, noting that many companies impose annual price increases in the first month of the year, imparting a temporary boost to January's figures. The government seeks to seasonally adjust the data to account for such trends but doesn't always do so perfectly.

A raft of forward-looking data, in fact, suggests that inflation will continue to cool. The pace of wage growth has slowed, which reduces the pressure on companies to raise prices to offset higher labor costs. And consumers and business owners collectively expect lower inflation in the coming months and years, surveys show, a trend that can itself hold down price increases.

From December to January, average national gas prices tumbled 3.3%, the government said. Yet so far this month, the average price has climbed higher, rising 15 cents to \$3.23 a gallon as of Tuesday, according to AAA.

Grocery prices rose 0.4% from December to January, the biggest such rise in a year, though compared with 12 months earlier, food prices are up just 1.2%.

But the costs of services - including auto insurance, apartment rents, and concert tickets - are still rising faster than they did before the pandemic and keeping overall inflation persistently high. The cost of car insurance has soared more than 20%, on average, compared with a year ago.

Such price spikes are causing heartburn for many consumers. Bill Milligan of Atlanta said he was stunned last month to find that the cost of insuring one of his cars had soared nearly 30% compared to six months earlier.

"I was going, 'What the hell is that?'" Milligan said he thought when he saw the charge on his bank statement.

Milligan, a 46-year-old software architect, called his insurance company, which confirmed that the price increase didn't reflect any recent tickets or accidents and said he was still receiving a discount for insuring several cars at once.

"And they're like, 'Yeah, sorry, it's just the price of everything is going up,'" Milligan said.

Milligan, who said he received a substantial pay raise last year, acknowledged that financially he is still doing fine.

"I can't complain about this," he said, referring to inflation overall.

But as with many Americans, higher prices have caused him to worry about the future. He wonders how his oldest of three daughters, who wants to become a schoolteacher, will live on an educator's salary with costs having risen so high.

The mixed data released Tuesday will likely reinforce the caution of Fed officials, who have said they're pleased with the progress in sharply reducing inflation but want to see further evidence before feeling confident that it's sustainably headed back to their 2% target. Most economists still think the Fed will start cutting its rate in June from its 22-year-high of roughly 5.4%.

Another driver of high prices has been housing costs, particularly the price of home ownership. It rose 0.6% from December to January, the biggest one-month jump since April. That measure is 6.2% higher than it was a year earlier.

But housing costs should slow in the coming months. The price of new apartment leases has been declining steadily as new apartment buildings have been completed. It can take months for the drop in new lease prices to feed through into the government's data.

At the same time, economists say that inflation in health care services is likely to stay high. The cost of hospital services jumped 1.6% just from December to January. Doctors' services rose 0.6%.

Sharif said those increases likely reflected, in part, sharp pay gains in recent years for nurses and other in-demand medical workers, such as anesthesiologists and radiologists.

The Fed raised its key rate 11 times, from March 2022 to July of last year, in a concerted drive to defeat high inflation. The result has been much higher borrowing rates for businesses and consumers, including for mortgages and auto loans. Rate cuts, whenever they happen, would eventually lead to lower borrowing costs for many categories of loans.

Lower borrowing costs could boost economic growth. But a strong economy may also pose a challenge for the Fed because faster growth can accelerate wages and consumer spending. If businesses aren't able to keep up with greater customer demand, they typically respond by raising prices, which would worsen inflation.



# What's On



Dr. Nasser Almuhaissen, Madhi Al Khamees, and Waleed Al Khashti with Zain's team.



The company claimed the biggest share of trophies at the event.

## Five trophies in recognition of its captivating TVCs and engaging community programs

# Zain claims biggest share at 11th Kuwait Creativity Award

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: Zain claimed the biggest share of accolades during the 11th ceremony of the Kuwait Creativity Award, where it was recognized for its captivating TVCs, engaging media content, and successful awareness campaigns and community programs in 2023, becoming the most recognized company in the Award's 11-year history.

The company was awarded on-stage during the special event held under the patronage of H.E. Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al Mutairi, attended by Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information Dr. Nasser Almuhaissen and a distinguished group of guests including Kuwaiti music icon Abdulaziz Almufarrij (Shadhi Alkhaleej), veteran Kuwaiti anchorman Majed Alshatti, along with actors, artists, diplomats, ambassadors, content creators, influencers, and public figures from the local and regional media

scenes.

Zain received a total of five awards: the Direction Award in recognition of its Eid TVC, the Creativity in Awareness Award in recognition of its Ramadan TVC, the Distinguished Entertainment Programs Award for its Eid Play 'Nothing Ever Like Zain', the Creativity in Community Service Award for its partnership with the Kuwait Diving Team, and the Public Relations Personality Award presented to Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti.

Zain was awarded with the Direction Award for its Eid 2023 TVC in recognition of Director Khalid Alrefaie. The TVC amassed over 70 million views online and was produced by Joy Productions and Production House All Over Group. It featured the talented child actress Ritan (Fala-wla), the Rouh Al Sharq Egyptian choir, and a hologram of the iconic



The accolades shed light on Zain's distinguished media and artistic projects.

Andaleeb, with lyrics by Menna Al Kiey, vocals by Jassar, vocals supervision by Mohamed Rubat, music composition by Ehab Abdelwahed,

and music arrangement, mix & master by Wesam Abdelmunem.

The company was also awarded with the Creativity in Awareness Award in

recognition of its Ramadan TVC 2023, which shed light on the stigma of mental health. It received over 20 million views online and was produced by Joy Productions and Production House VIP. The TVC was directed by Samir Aboud, featured Syrian actor Basel Khaifat and Lebanese actress Razane Jammal, with lyrics by Heba Hamada, music composition by Ehab Abdelwahed, music arrangement by Ahmad Tarek Yehia, and also featured artists Rasha Shamouby and Ahmed Saidaly.

In addition, Zain was awarded with the Distinguished Entertainment Programs Award for its Eid Play 2023 'Nothing Ever Like Zain', which delivered on its annual promise to bring the most spectacular of theatrical performances to its loyal fans. With daily mesmerizing shows throughout Eid holiday at the Arena Kuwait, the play mixed stunning theatrical performances with the latest technologies to present a show

like no other that reflected positive values and featured top local and regional stars. The play was directed by Sameer Aboud and written by Hiba Hamada, with music composed by Ehab Abdelwahed and distribution by Ahmed Tarek Yahya.

The company was also awarded with the Creativity in Community Service Award for its partnership with the Kuwait Diving Team, where it recently presented a new and fully equipped boat to aid the team's marine protection operations in Kuwait. This was the fourth boat presented by Zain to the team throughout their partnership of over 25 years that started back in 1997. The boats were used by the team's volunteers to run and maintain hundreds of marine protection missions, resulting in the removal of thousands of tons of harmful waste, and the protection of tens of thousands of sea creatures.



Esteemed Chief Guest, honorable Ahmad Lari and Dr. Manaf Behbehani.



Guest of Honour with Dr. V. Binumon lighting the lamp of knowledge.



The blessing ceremony for outgoing class XII batch.

## 'Significant impact on lives of those in need'

# Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait sponsors 2024 Blood Drive

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) proudly announced its sponsorship of the 2024 Blood Drive under the theme of 'Your Blood, Their Hope,' organized by LOYAC in collaboration with Kuwait Central Blood Bank and TriStar Motorcycles.

This compelling initiative aimed to encourage blood donation while engaging with the public to underscore the importance of community involvement and altruism.

The event kicked off with a biker's journey where they assembled at LOYAC early in the morning and rode to the venue, symbolizing the spirit of working together for a common cause. A press conference followed featuring remarks by Sager Albenali, Acting Chief Communications Officer at ABK, as well as Jafar Behbehani, owner of TriStar Motorcycles, underlining the significance of the event and its goals.

Albenali expressed his enthusiasm stating, "We are truly excited to have had the opportunity to bring the community together. This event is not only about encouraging blood donation but also about fostering a sense of unity and compassion within the community. We believe that by coming together, we can make a significant impact on the lives of those in need."

The event featured a diverse range of activities, including a live singing performance, raffle draws for donors, engaging competitions, and a children's activities corner. Additionally, attendees had the chance to explore



Sager Albenali, Acting Chief Communications Officer.

booths pertaining to various companies, restaurants, and cafes, contributing to the vibrant atmosphere.

"We are thrilled to see the overwhelming support from the community and our partners as we come together to make a difference in the lives of those in need," remarked Fotouh Al-Dalali, Member of the LOYAC Board. "The 2024 Blood Drive proved to be an enriching experience that not only helped raise awareness about the importance of blood donation but also brought people together in a spirit of compassion and solidarity."

ABK's participation in the 2024 Blood Drive highlighted the importance of working together as a community, showcasing humanitarian efforts

while encouraging public attendance for blood donation, and inspiring the youth to become blood donors - all under the overarching theme of collective hope and support.

Since its establishment in 1967, ABK has progressed to become one of the leading Kuwaiti banks in the region that offers a wide array of personal, corporate, and private banking products and services. ABK also provides a broad range of local, regional, and global investment solutions and services through its subsidiary, ABK Capital.

This is in addition to ABK's three branches located in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) in the United Arab Emirates, servicing both Kuwaiti and Emirati individual and corporate clients.

ABK is a strong supporter of Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association's 'Let's Be Aware' awareness campaign. Through its various initiatives, the Bank aims to promote financial inclusion by educating Kuwaiti society about customer rights, responsibilities, and the different types of banking and special needs services. Additionally, ABK consistently provides strategic information on how to avoid banking and financial fraud, loan application requirements, digital services, and more.

For more information about ABK, please follow the Bank's Instagram account @abk\_kuwait, visit eahli.com, contact Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 or visit one of the Bank's branches across Kuwait.

# Indian Community School, Kuwait celebrates 61st Aashirvaad 2024

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: With a heart full of blessings and prayers, the Indian Community School, Senior rolled out a carpet of welcome for the dignitaries, parents, teachers, staff and students to the 61st Aashirvaad 2024 - The Blessing Ceremony for outgoing class XII batch on Thursday 1st February 2024. The day marked with the auspicious significance of bestowing blessings to 430 young pillars of ICSK. The ceremony motivated the students to lead a prosperous and humble life and put forth the highest endeavors to bring forth a fruitful result.

The event was graced by the esteemed presence of the Chief Guest Honorable Ahmad Lari, Member of Parliament of Kuwait. Ms. Ancheta Ketwas, Second Secretary, Indian Embassy graced the occasion as the Guest of Honor and Dr. Manaf Behbehani, Marine Scientist and Environment Expert was the Special Guest. Among the dignitaries were Mr. Shaikh Abdul Rahiman, Hon. Chairman to the Board of Trustees, Mr. Vinukumar Nair, Hon. Vice Chairman to the Board of Trustees, Mr. Azharuddin Amer Muhammed, Hon. Secretary to the Board of Trustees, Mr. Agnelo Sebastio Fernandes, Hon. Jt. Secretary to the Board of Trustees, Dr. V. Binumon, Principal and Senior Administrator of ICSK, K. Gangadhar Shirath, Principal of ICSK, Khaitan, Mr. Rajesh Nair, Principal of ICSK, Amman, Mrs. Sherry Dennis, Director of The Indian School of Excellence and Mrs. C. Sheeja, Principal of ICSK, Junior.

To the beats of the drums, resonance of trumpets, the tinkling vibrates of cymbals into the evening skies, mesmerizing dance and with a thunderous applause the guests were escorted to the auditorium in a ceremonial way. Bedecked with lights and vibrant hues, the auditorium had an ambience of serenity and happiness. The auspicious day commenced with the recitation of verses from the holy Quran by Mst. Yusuf Raoot followed by Aaradhana, a soulful rendition invoking the blessings of Almighty presented by the school choir.

Dr. V. Binumon, Principal and Senior Administrator of ICSK presented an august welcome to the gathering. In his address, he blessed the students for a bright and successful future. He advised the students that in their pursuit of achieving the zenith of success, they should be resilient, accept change and be a life-long learner. They should turn every challenge into opportunities and build positive relationship with people. He stressed on the importance of self-care.

The esteemed Chief Guest, Mr. Ahmad Lari, Guest of Honor, Ms. Ancheta Ketwas, Special Guest Dr. Manaf Behbehani, accompanied by Dr. V. Binumon formally inaugurated the programme by lighting the lamp of knowledge signifying great intellectual and spiritual energy.

"Success is the result of perseverance and perfection". Students who excelled in academics were bestowed with certificates by the honorable Chief Guest Mr. Ahmad Lari. The title Best Scholar was bagged by Ms. Rea Sabu Pillai from the Science stream, Ms. Lavanya Nair from the Commerce stream, Ms. Hannah Rael Zachariah from Humanities stream and Ms. Shirley Coutinho from NIOS.



Special guests presented with a memento.

Mathew Thomas, Mst. Taha Mohammed Hussain, Mst. Pranav Ashok Chudasama, Mst. Rovel Nikhil Cuthinha, Mst. Tanush Manoja Shetty and Ms. Ritaj Rizwan Rawoot were honored with certificates for 100% attendance. Mr. Shaikh Abdul Rahiman, Hon. Chairman to the Board of Trustees presented a memento to the esteemed Chief Guest as a token of love and appreciation.

The Guest of Honour, Ms. Ancheta Ketwas congratulated the students for the milestone achieved. She motivated the students to develop a close bond with their parents and seek their blessings in every journey they undertake. She encouraged them to follow their passion and never be afraid of failures. Mr. Azharuddin Amer Muhammed, Hon. Secretary to the Board of Trustees presented a token of love to the esteemed Guest of Honour.

Dr. Manaf Behbehani, Special Guest in his address appreciated the perseverance and dedication of the students for their success in their long academic journey of 15 years. Stressing on the value of time, he encouraged the students to follow and chase their dreams without wasting time. He urged the parents to be the strongest pillar of their ward and support them in realizing their dream. Mr. Vinukumar Nair, Hon. Vice Chairman to the Board of Trustees and Mr. Agnelo Sebastio Fernandes, Hon. Jt. Secretary to the Board of Trustees presented a memento to the honorable Special Guest.



ABK, Loyak and TriStar Motorcycles group photo.



### Film

# How did live ammunition get on Alec Baldwin's 'Rust' set?

SANTA FE, N.M., Feb. 14, (AP) — The scheduled trial next week of a movie weapons supervisor in the fatal shooting of a cinematographer by Alec Baldwin may hinge on an enduring mystery: How did live ammunition find its way onto the set of a film set where it was expressly prohibited?

Investigators recovered six live rounds of ammunition from a box, a bandolier, a gun belt and other locations on the set of the Western movie "Rust," including the round that killed cinematographer Halyna Hutchins and wounded director Joel Souza.

Special prosecutors say they will present "substantial evidence" at the trial that movie armorer Hannah Gutierrez-Reed unwittingly brought live rounds onto the set when she first began work on the film.

They say that includes photos showing that live rounds were present on the set days before Hutchins was killed. They also plan to present testimony that, months before the shooting, Gutierrez-Reed had looked for and purchased live .45-caliber ammunition.

"Ms. Gutierrez is not charged with intentional homicide, she is charged with homicide based on negligence," special prosecutor Kari Morrissey said in a recent court filing. "The tragedy occurred due to a series of negligent acts given that live rounds were on set well before October 21, 2021. Her ongoing negligent acts created numerous opportunities for live rounds to go undetected."

Gutierrez-Reed has pleaded not guilty to the involuntary manslaughter charge.

Filmsy is how her attorneys describe the evidence that she might have unknowingly brought live rounds on set, saying it falls far short of standards for prosecution.

Her attorneys also accuse prosecutors of compromising a crucial trial witness by handing over privileged communications about their case to the Albuquerque-based dummy ammunition supplier for "Rust" — whom they contend is the source of live ammunition that made its way onto the set. A civil lawsuit by Gutierrez-Reed against ammunition supplier Seth Kenney was dismissed in August and can't be refilled.

Much of the evidence about ammunition on set — culled from sources including thousands of text messages between "Rust" crew members — has not been made public under commonplace rules of evidentiary discovery prior to trial.

### Implications

The proceedings against the armorer hold implications for Baldwin, the lead actor and co-producer on "Rust." He has pleaded not guilty to a charge of involuntary manslaughter and could face trial later this year. "Rust" assistant director and safety coordinator David Halls pleaded no contest to unsafe handling of a firearm and received a suspended sentence of six months of probation, agreeing to cooperate in investigations of the shooting.

Prosecutors allege that Gutierrez-Reed eventually loaded a live round into the gun that Baldwin discharged during the October 2021 rehearsal, killing Hutchins, and that the tragedy was a consequence of lax oversight of ammunition.

Baldwin has said he assumed the gun had only inert dummy rounds inside that can't fire and that someone else is responsible.

But the indictment against Baldwin provides two alternative stand-

ards for prosecution, one based on the negligent use of a firearm and another tied to negligence without due caution or "circumspection," also defined as "total disregard or indifference for the safety of others." Legal experts say the latter standard could broaden the investigation beyond Baldwin's handling of the gun. A date has not been set for Baldwin's potential trial.

"Rust" used an operable revolver. Industry-wide guidance, under a bulletin that applied to "Rust," says that "live ammunition is never to be used nor brought onto any studio lot or stage." It also says to "treat all firearms as if they are loaded."

Crew members also say Bonanza Creek Ranch, the movie set location where Hutchins was shot, forbade the presence of live ammunition on its property.

State workplace safety regulators say Gutierrez-Reed was responsible for storage, maintenance and handling of firearms and ammunition on set and for loading firearms with blanks that have a charge but no projectile, or inert dummy rounds.

Live rounds are typically distinguished from dummy rounds by a small hole in the dummy's brass cartridge, indicating there is no explosive inside, by a missing or dimpled primer at the bottom of the cartridge, or by shaking the round to hear the clatter of a BB that is inserted inside.

In New Mexico, a scathing report from state regulators about the "Rust" shooting said the production company did not develop a process for ensuring live rounds were kept away from the set and failed to give the armorer enough time to thoroughly inventory ammunition.

### Variety



This image released by Sony Pictures shows Dakota Johnson in a scene from 'Madame Web.' (AP)

### Film

Dakota Johnson is fun enough

## 'Madame Web,' a twist on superhero origins

By Lindsey Bahr

There is a lot of pretty niche comic book mythology swirling around "Madame Web," the inspiration for the newest of Sony's "Spider-Man" spinoffs.

This is a character who goes back to 1980 and whose powers of clairvoyance helped Peter Parker at some point. She's elderly and blind and sits atop a web throne that keeps her alive. But to be honest, reading about her didn't help give any more meaning or urgency to the Dakota Johnson movie that's heading to theaters Wednesday. You've been warned.

"Madame Web" is striving to be a classic superhero setup movie, about how the future Madame Web — now just single gal paramedic Cassie Webb — comes to terms with her newfound power that allows her to see the future. Well, sometimes at least, when it involves a death or something extremely violent.

It's also about the origins of a few other Spider-Women who are now just a couple of teenage girls, played by 20-somethings Julia Cornwall (Sydney Sweeney), Anya Corazon (Isabela Merced) and Celeste O'Connor (Mattie Franklin). Watching the flash-forwards to these three in their Spidey costumes makes you feel like there's some Marvel TV show you forgot to watch that might make you care more.

A scene in which they try to sell the idea that all four women are connected in some cosmic way is so wildly strained ("you live in my building," "you ran in front of my truck") and inconsequential, you wonder if whichever screenwriter wrote their run-ins initially was even talking to the one who had to try to sell these coincidences. It's impossible to know what exactly the four credited screenwriters (and three "story by" credits) are responsible for, but "Madame Web" feels like the stitched-together product of a bunch of people who weren't actually collaborating.

There is also an alarming amount of repetition in just under two hours. Part of this is because Cassie is learning about her powers and sees various incidents play out over and over, which, by the fourth set piece, starts to get very tedious. You forgive it, a little, because Johnson is just always fun to watch and it at least serves a story purpose in theory. But then there's all these scenes in which the bad guy, Ezekiel Sims (Tahar

Rahim), is either seeing his future death at the hands of the Spider-Girls (or whatever we're calling them) or barking at his associate (Zosia Mamet) to find them with her "Dark Knight"-era surveillance setup in his blandly cold penthouse.

We know Rahim to be a talented, charismatic actor, but Ezekiel is one of the dullest, most thinly sketched superhero villains in recent memory. The movie doesn't even withhold his own cosmic connection to Cassie as a reveal — it literally opens with him killing her mother (Kerry Bishé) who is on a spider research trip in the Amazon while very pregnant with her. The venom, and some Amazonian spider-people, save the baby though.

Johnson's singular performance style can make almost anything watchable. Her cool-girl deadpan is always interesting and funny and, thankfully, filmmaker S.J. Clarkson has the good sense to keep the camera on her as much as possible. She makes gems out of nothing and finds humor even while the script and story are crumbling around her. It's too bad because there could have been a more fun movie in here — Clarkson imbues it with a distinctly feminine and teenage energy that makes good use of its soundtrack. But it spins itself into a knot trying to justify a silly story instead.

The studio, it seems, is playing a very long game with this one. Cassie's paramedic colleague is Ben Parker (Adam Scott), whose sister-in-law Mary Parker (Emma Roberts) is about to give birth. But one has to imagine after seeing "Madame Web," that, ironically, whatever payoff was planned may be a vision that will not come to pass.

"Madame Web," a Sony Pictures release in theaters Feb. 14, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association for "violence/action and language." Running time: 117 minutes. One and a half stars out of four.

### Also:

**LONDON:** One actor won't be nervous as the camera comes in for a close-up at the British Academy Film Awards.

**David Tennant** is hosting Sunday's ceremony in London and says it's more relaxing to be the master of ceremonies than a nominee.

"I reserve the right to get back to you on the night of Feb. 18, when I'm quivering at a corner having some

sort of panic attack," he says. "It feels like a very privileged position to be in, but without the nervousness of wondering if you've won one or not. You don't have to prepare a little hastily scribbled speech in the back of an envelope. What larks."

And while comedians come under intense scrutiny when they host an awards ceremony, Tennant says there's less pressure on actors.

"This not being my day job is something of an advantage," he admits. "There's not that much expectation because this is not what I do. So if I do it terribly, then what's the harm?"

He won't have to walk the fine line between insulting or amusing an A-list audience, while entertaining viewers at home.

"My stand-up career will not stand or fall on how this goes. Which, again, slightly takes the pressure off me. I'm just gonna have a really good time."

**Sophie Ellis-Bextor** and **Hannah Waddingham** will also be on hand to help entertain the nominees with musical performances at the Royal Festival Hall.

Ellis-Bextor is singing "Murder on the Dancefloor," the hit song invigorated 22 years after its release by its appearance in Emerald Fennell's "Saltburn," which is nominated for best British film.

"Award ceremonies are funny, aren't they?" Tennant muses. "There's so much nervous energy in the air. It's terribly exciting to be around that. And then they go on and on and on and on forever."

"Can we get everyone through to the other end of it, still feeling like we're celebrating and not desperate for their dinner?" he wonders.

Atom-bomb epic "Oppenheimer" leads the race for the BAFTA trophies, with 13 nominations, including best film.

Gothic fantasia "Poor Things" received 11 nominations, while historical epic "Killers of the Flower Moon" and Holocaust drama "The Zone of Interest" have nine each. (AP)

Only two people know in advance that they will have to make a speech on the night: Samantha Morton, receiving the BAFTA Fellowship, and **June Givanni** — the founder of The June Givanni PanAfrican Archive, who is being honored for outstanding British contribution to cinema. (AP)

**LOS ANGELES:** Pearl Jam's forthcoming album is called "Dark Matter," its first single of the same title has been released, and the band will start a world tour in May.

The Rock and Roll Hall of Famers revealed the new details on the project and their 2024 plans on Tuesday. "Dark Matter," their 12th studio album and first since 2020's "Gigaton," will be released April 19 on Monkeywrench and Republic records. A tour is sched-

uled to begin May 4 in Vancouver, **British Columbia.**

Singer **Eddie Vedder**, 59, lead guitarist **Mike McCready**, 57, and bassist **Jeff Ament**, 60, played the record for the first time on Jan. 31 for invited guests at the Troubadour club in **West Hollywood.**

"No hyperbole, I think this is our best work," Vedder said from the



Bouley Vedder

stage as he introduced the album.

The band spawned from the Seattle scene of three decades ago shows no signs of softening with age on the album, which leans toward their rocking side even more than "Megaton" did, with drummer **Matt Cameron's** pounding at the forefront. (AP)

**PHILADELPHIA:** Missy Mazzoli's "The Listeners" will be given its delayed US premiere on Sept. 25 to open the season of the Opera Philadelphia, which abandoned the world premiere of **Jennifer Higdon's** "Woman with Eyes Closed" because of budget.

"The Listeners," with a libret-

to by **Royce Vavrek** and based on **Jordan Tannahill's** story, is about charismatic leaders, cult-like rituals and an environmental hum only a few people can hear. It premiered at the Norwegian Opera on Sept. 24, 2022, and returns soprano **Nicole Heaston** from the original production. (AP)



People & Places



Michael Kors



Tory Burch



Tory Burch



Tory Burch



Tory Burch

Fashion

**NEW YORK:** The original location of the legendary Barney's Department store in the Chelsea section of Manhattan set the stage for designer **Michael Kors** to present his Fall-Winter 2024 collection at New York Fashion Week. Inside the mirrored lobby, the celebrity-rich crowd included actors **Blake Lively**, **Katie Holmes**, **Rachel Zegler**, **Brie Larson**, **Gabrielle Union**, and many others. Vogue Editor-in-Chief **Anna Wintour** was also in attendance, as well as recording artist **Kelsea Ballerini**.

Before the show, Kors explained his mission for this collection during an interview with The Associated Press.

"When the world is upside down, I think my job is to make people feel more confident. It's that simple," Kors said.

His mother, **Joan Kors**, who died last year, had a strong influence in his life and career. And while her legacy remains with the designer, this time it was his grandmother who inspired him.

"I found my grandmother's wedding gown and she got married in the 30s, and I started delving into the 30s because her dress looked so incredibly modern," Kors said.

From there, he thought about old Hollywood.

"We saw the two sides of women's personalities, we saw things that were very sensual and we saw **Carole Lombard** and **Jean Harlow**, and then we saw the great classic tomboys like (**Marlene Dietrich** and **Katharine Hepburn** and the connective thread that all of that kept going," Kors said.

The idea of creating the collection based on those elements and ideas impressed **Rachel Brosnahan**.

"I feel like any time you can inspire your art, whether it's fashion or acting or music with any kind of emotion, it just makes that iconic and timeless and stand out. So I'm excited and I didn't know that," Brosnahan said.

The Emmy-winning star of "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" leaves town next week to take on the role of **Lois Lane** in "Superman: Legacy."

"I guess the cat's out of the bag. We're doing our first table read next week in **Atlanta**," Brosnahan said.

Once the runway show began, the crowd was treated to an assortment of tweed jackets, double-breasted coats, slit skirts, and sequined dresses. There were cashmere turtleneck sweaters, thick eye-wear, and slender bags. With a few exceptions, the majority of designs employed a neutral color palette, with some gray, and lots of black.

Tory Burch

Shimmer and glimmer with a dash of the majestic was on display Monday as Tory Burch showed her 2024 Fall Winter Collection at New York Fashion week.

Inspired by ordinary objects like a

Above and below: Models present creations from Michael Kors, Tory Burch and Carolina Herrera collections during Fashion Week in New York on Feb 12 and 13. (AP)

Style



Michael Kors



Tory Burch



Carolina Herrera



Tory Burch



Tory Burch

While many of the designs took Burch out of her comfort zone, the one that stood out was the hooded sweater with orange lampshade skirt.

Burch says the vibrancy of color juxtaposed with the "beautiful neutral tones" in the collection's palette.

"I thought what was kind of interesting is how do you take neutrals and create enough depth where they resonated as a palette and then shock them with the parrot blue and that vibrant orange. And so for me, it is different and we're constantly trying different things," she said.

Getting creative with faux materials also played a role in the collection.

"We had a porcupine jacket that was a faux fur. The leather was cotton with a finish on it that looked like croc... it's a cotton blend. So it's not - it wasn't leather. And then we use paper leather."

Using sustainable materials has become increasingly more important to Burch, but she says there's more work to be done in the industry.

Carolina Herrera

A single pink peony greeted each guest at Carolina Herrera's latest fashion show, which celebrated the flower with splashy prints and detailed embroidery.

Monday's New York Fashion Week show was held on the 40th floor of a downtown skyscraper, with 360-degree views of Manhattan serving as the perfect backdrop for a fall/winter collection of bright colors in unconventional combinations, and striking gowns in sumptuous fabrics.

Peonies made several appearances on the catwalk, too. An A-line grey wool collarless coat had pink peonies of varying sizes splashed over it, while a shorter white wool cape was adorned with similar detailed pink and yellow peony embroidering. (AP)

lampshade or well-worn coat, Burch set out to redefine the form of her designs with this collection.

"I started with the concept of how to make the everyday sublime," Burch told the Associated Press at a post-show interview.

She went on to express her desire to present the silhouette in a fresh, new

way by using different textures and creative ways to join seams to create a "light" feel.

"I became really obsessed with the

idea of volume, but not a heaviness." **Emily Ratajowski**, **Paloma Elsesser**, and **Irina Shayk**, who closed out the show in a **Tinsel Raffia** coat, were

among the models showing off the collection's 34 designs.

Along with the other models, they walked the long, narrow hallway of the New York Public Library showing variations of Burch's concept, including faux croc tops and skirts, along with Tinsel raffia coats and dresses.

"I really thought a lot about working on fabrics that created shape, and whether it's through technique of bonding or seam sealing, but having the fabric be really featherweight and adhere to the body with a lot of stretch," Burch said.



## The Conversation

## Feeling bad can lead to good outcomes

## Anger, sadness, anxiety ... negative emotions can be useful

By Heather Lench

Texas A&amp;M University

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

□ □ □

Remember the sadness that came with the last time you failed miserably at something? Or the last time you were so anxious about an upcoming event that you couldn't concentrate for days?

These types of emotions are unpleasant to experience and can even feel overwhelming. People often try to avoid them, suppress them or ignore them. In fact, in psychology experiments, people will pay money to not feel many negative emotions. But recent research is revealing that emotions can be useful, and even negative emotions can bring benefits.

In my emotion science lab at Texas A&M University, we study how emotions like anger and boredom affect people, and we explore ways that these feelings can be beneficial. We share the results so people can learn how to use their emotions to build the lives they want.

Our studies and many others have shown that emotions aren't uniformly good or bad for people. Instead, different emotions can result in better outcomes in particular types of situations. Emotions seem to function like a Swiss army knife - different emotional tools are helpful in specific situations.

Sadness occurs when people perceive that they've lost a goal or a desired outcome, and there's nothing they can do to improve the situation. It could be getting creamed in a game or failing a class or work project, or it can be losing a relationship with a family member. Once evoked, sadness is associated with what psychologists call a deactivation state of doing little, without much behavior or physical arousal. Sadness also brings thinking that is more detailed and analytical. It makes you stop and think.

## Benefit

The benefit of the stopping and thinking that comes with sadness is that it helps people recover from failure. When you fail, that typically means the situation you're in is not conducive to success. Instead of just charging ahead in this type of scenario, sadness prompts people to step back and evaluate what is happening.

When people are sad, they process information in a deliberative, analytical way and want to avoid risk. This mode comes with more accurate memory, judgment that is less influenced

by irrelevant assumptions or information, and better detection of other people lying. These cognitive changes can encourage people to understand past failures and possibly prevent future ones.

Sadness can function differently when there's the possibility that the failure could be avoided if other people help. In these situations, people tend to cry and can experience

increased physiological arousal, such as quicker heart and breathing rates. Expressing sadness, through tears or verbally, has the benefit of potentially recruiting other people to help you achieve your goals. This behavior appears to start in infants, with tears and cries signaling caregivers to help.

Anger occurs when people perceive they're losing a goal or desired outcome, but that they could improve the situation by removing something that's in their way. The obstacle could be an injustice committed by another person, or it could be a computer that repeatedly crashes while you're trying to get work done. Once evoked, anger is associated with a "readiness for action," and your thinking

focuses on the obstacle.

The benefit of being prepared for action and focused on what's in your way is that it motivates you to overcome what's standing between you and your goal. When people are angry, they process information and make judgments rapidly, want to take action, and are physiologically aroused. In experiments, anger actually increases the force of people's kicks, which can be helpful in physical encounters. Anger results in better outcomes in situations that involve challenges to goals, including confrontational games, tricky puzzles, video games with obstacles, and responding quickly on tasks.

Expressing anger, facially or verbally, has the benefit of prompting other people to clear the way. People are more likely to concede in negotiations and give in on issues when their adversary looks or says they are angry.

Anxiety occurs when people perceive a potential threat. This could be giving a speech to a large audience where failure would put your self-esteem on the line, or it could be a physical threat to yourself or loved ones. Once evoked, anxiety is associated with being prepared to respond to danger, including increased physical arousal and attention to threats and risk.

Being prepared for danger means that if trouble brews, you can respond quickly to prevent or avoid it. When anxious, people detect threats rapidly, have fast reaction times and are on heightened alert. The eye-widening that often comes with fear and anxiety even gives people a wider field of vision and improves threat detection.

## Motivation

Anxiety prepares the body for action, which improves performance on a number of tasks that involve motivation and attention. It motivates people to prepare for upcoming events, such as devoting time to study for an exam. Anxiety also prompts protective behavior, which can help prevent the potential threat from becoming a reality.

There is less research on boredom than many other emotions, so it is not as well understood. Researchers debate what it is and what it does.

Boredom appears to occur when someone's current situation is not causing any other emotional response. There are three situations where this lack can occur: when emotions fade, such as the happiness of a new car fading to neutral; when people don't care about anything in their current situation, such as being at a large party where nothing interesting is happening; or when people have no goals. Boredom does not necessarily set in just because nothing is happening - someone with a goal of relaxation might feel quite content sitting quietly with no stimulation.

Psychology researchers think that the benefit of boredom in situations where people are not responding emotionally is that it prompts making a change. If nothing in your current situation is worth responding to, the aversive experience of boredom can motivate you to seek new situations or change the way you're thinking. Boredom has been related to more risk seeking, a desire for novelty, and creative thinking. It seems to function like an emotional stick, nudging people out of their current situation to explore and create.

People want to be happy. But research is finding that a satisfying and productive life includes a mix of positive and negative emotions. Negative emotions, even though they feel bad to experience, can motivate and prepare people for failure, challenges, threats and exploration.

Pleasant or not, your emotions can help guide you toward better outcomes. Maybe understanding how they prepare you to handle various situations will help you feel better about feeling bad. (AP)

Oregon resident contracts disease from pet cat

## Light shed on bubonic plague in US: causes, symptoms, prevention tips

NEW YORK, Feb 14, (AP) - Officials in central Oregon this week reported a case of bubonic plague in a resident who likely got the disease from a sick pet cat.

The infected resident and the resident's close contacts have all been provided medication, public health officials say, and people in the community are not believed to be at risk. The cat was also treated but did not survive.

Plague isn't common, but it also isn't unheard of in the western United States, where a handful of cases occur every year. It's different from Alaskapox, a rare, recently discovered disease that killed a man in Alaska last

month.

Here are a few things to know about what the plague is, who is at risk and how a disease that was once a harbinger of death became a treatable illness.

Plague is an infectious disease that can affect mammals. It's caused by the bacterium *Yersinia pestis*, which is carried by rodents and fleas. Sunlight and drying can kill plague bacteria on surfaces, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Humans and pets suspected to be sick with plague are typically treated with antibiotics, and sometimes with other medical measures.

Plague symptoms can manifest in a few ways. Bubonic plague - the kind contracted by the Oregon resident - happens when the plague bacteria gets into the lymph nodes. It can cause fever, headache, weakness and painful, swollen lymph nodes. It usually happens from the bite of an infected flea, according to the CDC.

## Bacteria

Septicemic plague symptoms happen if the bacteria gets into the bloodstream. It can occur initially or after bubonic plague goes untreated. This form of plague causes the same fever, chills and weakness, as well as abdominal pain, shock and sometimes other symptoms like bleeding into the skin and blackened fingers, toes or the nose.

The CDC says this form comes from flea bites or from handling an infected animal.

Pneumonic plague is the most serious form of the disease, and it occurs when the bacteria gets into the lungs. Pneumonic plague adds rapidly developing pneumonia to the list of plague symptoms. It is the only form of plague that can be spread from person to person by inhaling infectious droplets.

All forms of plague are treatable with common antibiotics, and people who seek treatment early have a better chance of a full recovery, according to the CDC.

In the U.S., an average of 7 cases of human plague is reported each year, according to the CDC, and about 80% of them are the bubonic form of the disease. Most of those cases were in the rural western and southwestern U.S.

A welder in central Oregon contracted it in 2012 when he pulled a rodent out of his choking cat's mouth in 2012 - he survived but lost his fingertips and toes to the disease. A Colorado teen contracted a fatal case while hunting in 2015, and Colorado officials confirmed at least two cases last year - one of them fatal.

Worldwide, most human cases of plague in recent decades have occurred in people living in rural towns and villages in Africa, particularly in Madagascar and Congo, according to the Cleveland Clinic.

## Outbreak

People can reduce the risk of plague by keeping their homes and outdoor living areas less inviting for rodents by clearing brush and junk piles and keeping pet food inaccessible. Ground squirrels, chipmunks and wood rats can carry plague as well as other rodents, and so people with bird and squirrel feeders may want to consider the risks if they live in areas with a plague outbreak.

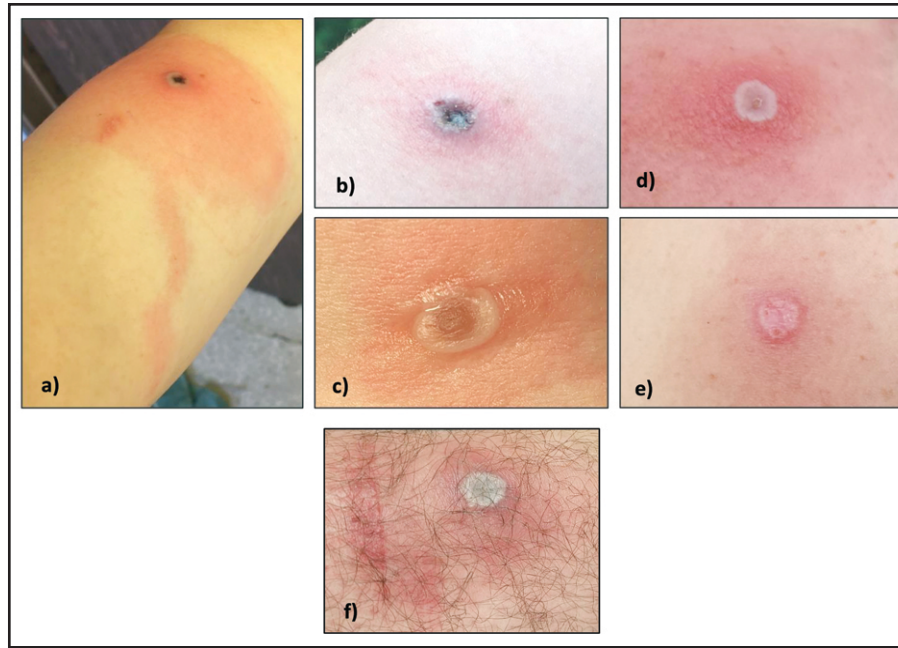
The CDC says repellent with DEET can also help protect people from rodent fleas when camping or working outdoors.

Flea control products can help keep fleas from infecting household pets. If a pet gets sick, they should be taken to a vet as soon as possible, according to the CDC.

The Black Death in the 14th century was perhaps the most infamous plague epidemic, killing up to half of the population as it spread through Europe, the Middle East and northern Africa. It began devastating communities in the Middle East and Europe between 1347 and 1351, and significant outbreaks continued for roughly the next 400 years.

An earlier major plague pandemic, dubbed the Justinian plague, started in Rome around 541 and continued to erupt for the next couple hundred years.

The third major plague pandemic started in the Yunnan region of China in the mid-1800s and spread along trade routes, arriving in Hong Kong and Bombay about 40 years later. It eventually reached every continent except Antarctica, according to the Cleveland Clinic, and is estimated to have killed roughly 12 million people in China and India alone.



This image provided by the Alaska Department of Health shows several Alaskapox lesions. 'A' is a lesion about 10 days after symptom onset, and 'B' is the same lesion two days later. 'C' is a lesion about 5 days after symptom onset, about 1.2 cm across. 'D' is a lesion about 5 days after symptom onset, about 1 cm across, and 'E' is same lesion about 4 weeks after symptom onset. 'F' is a lesion around the reported symptom onset date. Alaskapox belongs to a family of viruses that can infect animals and humans, known as orthopoxviruses, which tend to cause lesions, or pox, on the skin. (AP)

## Unusual virus probed

## Rare but deadly Alaskapox case sparks concern in US

NEW YORK, Feb 14, (AP) - For nine years, Alaska health officials have been aware of an unusual virus causing rare, relatively mild illnesses in the Fairbanks area. But a recent case in another part of the state - this one resulting in a man's death - has brought new attention to the so-called Alaskapox virus.

Here's some background on the virus:

Alaskapox belongs to a family of brick-shaped viruses that can infect animals and humans. These bugs, known as orthopoxviruses, tend to cause lesions, or pox, on the skin. Each has its own characteristics, and some are considered more dangerous than others.

Smallpox is perhaps the most famous of the lot, but other family members include camelpox, cowpox, horsepox and mpox - formerly known as monkeypox.

Alaskapox was discovered in 2015 in a woman who lived near Fairbanks, Alaska. It mainly has been found in small mammals, including red-backed voles and shrews. But pets, such as dogs and cats, may also carry the virus, health officials say.

Seven people, all in Alaska, have been infected with it in the last nine years.

People with Alaskapox have developed one or more bumps or pustules on the skin, as well as joint

or muscle pain and swollen lymph nodes.

Nearly all patients had mild illnesses that resolved on their own after a few weeks. But people with weakened immune systems can be in danger for more severe illness.

Officials believe Alaskapox spreads through contact with infected animals.

There has been no documented case of it spreading from one person to another. But other viruses in the same family can spread when one person comes in contact with another person's lesions, so Alaska health officials are advising anyone with an Alaskapox lesion to cover it with a bandage.

Alaska health officials are aware of seven people infected with Alaskapox since the virus was discovered, but the latest case represents the first time someone is known to have died from it.

The elderly man, who lived in the Kenai Peninsula, was being treated for cancer and had a suppressed immune system because of the drugs. In September, he noticed a red sore under his right armpit and went to see doctors over the next two months because of fatigue and burning pain. He was hospitalized in November and died last month, according to a bulletin last week from Alaska public health officials.

## MEDICAL CLASSIFIEDS

Take care of your health



To advertise in this page please call: (+965) 24813566 Ext.: 513 or E-mail: advt@arabtimesonline.com

**For your ads on this page**

Call: **24813805** E-mail: **advt@arabtimesonline.com**

**www.arabtimesonline.com**

**مرکز شفاء الجزيرة الطبي**  
**SHIFA AL JAZEERA MEDICAL CENTRE**  
الفروانية FARAWANIYA

**DENTAL & COSMETIC DEPARTMENT**

- SCALING & GUM TREATMENT
- COSMETIC SMILE RECONSTRUCTION
- GUM & ORAL SURGERY
- BAD BREATH TREATMENT
- SURGICAL TREATMENT
- ROOT CANAL TREATMENT
- COSMETIC FILLING
- FIXED & REMOVABLE DENTURES
- CROWN TREATMENT
- SIMPLE & SURGICAL EXTRACTION

**Dr. Shajahan V.M**  
BDS, MDS  
Dental Surgeon

**Dr. Ayham Askar**  
BDS  
Dental Surgeon

**Dr. Raina Fernandes**  
BDS  
Dental Surgeon

**Working Time: From 9am to 1pm & 5pm to 9pm**  
**Ph: 24 734 000**

Behind Maghateer Commercial Complex & Opp. Police station - Farwaniya  
[www.shifaaljazeera.com.kw](http://www.shifaaljazeera.com.kw)



# Celtics extend winning streak to 5



Phoenix Suns' Kevin Durant drives around Sacramento Kings' Malik Monk during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Phoenix, Tuesday, Feb. 13, 2024. (AP)

## Kohli's continued absence helps England's chances

# Ahmed picked by England for 3rd test vs India

RAJKOT, India, Feb 14, (AP): After a tense 48 hours waiting to secure a visa, Rehan Ahmed was selected by England for the third cricket test against India starting Thursday.

### CRICKET

The 19-year-old legspinner was initially denied entry to India when England's squad returned on Monday from a mid-series break in the United Arab Emirates. He only held a single-entry electronic visa, which he used ahead of the start of the test series that

stands at 1-1.

Ahmed was granted an emergency two-day visa, allowing him to train in Rajkot on Tuesday, and the situation has now been resolved.

England captain Ben Stokes, who will be making his 100th test appearance, said he had no hesitation picking Ahmed in the team.

"I don't know how we ended up being in that situation but when it came up, we were straight on to doing what we needed to do to get Rehan in rather than wasting time trying to find out whose fault it was," Stokes said Wednesday. "The great

thing about youth is they just take everything in their stride. He handled a situation that could have affected quite a lot of people in a different way very, very well for such a young kid.

"There was no thoughts around not playing him this week. The test matches he's played so far, he's done very, very well and everything we've asked of him he's gone out and tried to deliver."

For that reason, England stuck with Ahmed and chose to leave out another spinner, Shoib Bashir, who himself was hit with visa problems at the start of

the tour.

The 20-year-old Bashir missed the first test as a result and made his international debut the second test, which India won by 106 runs last week to square the series.

With Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum opting to start with two fast bowlers for the first time this series, pacer Mark Wood was recalled to join James Anderson and Bashir dropped out. Ahmed and Tom Hartley will be the spinners, with Jack Leach - the senior spinner in the touring squad - ruled out of the series because of a knee injury.

Stokes said the selection was based on how the Rajkot pitch played in England's high-scoring draw against India in 2016.

"Bringing in an extra seamer this week is the option we've gone with because we think it's going to give us the best chance of winning this week," Stokes said.

India has yet to announce its team.

India (from): Rohit Sharma (captain), Jasprit Bumrah, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Rajat Patidar, Sarfaraz Khan, Dhruv Jurel, KS Bharat, Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohd. Siraj, Mukeesh Kumar, Akash Deep, Devdutt Padikkal.

England: Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ollie Pope, Joe Root, Jonny Bairstow, Ben Stokes (captain), Ben Foakes, Rehan Ahmed, Tom Hartley, Mark Wood, James Anderson.

Meanwhile, the continued absence of Virat Kohli can only improve England's chances of a rare test series win in India.

Not that Ben Stokes sees it like that. "I think when it's a situation like this," the England captain said Wednesday, "when it's someone missing a big series and a lot of cricket for personal reasons which we're not sure of, I think we shouldn't label that as a positive or a negative to our team."

"It should just be that it's a miss to cricket in general that Virat is not here."

Kohli, the world's most famous cricketer, announced ahead of the high-profile series that he would not play the first two tests because of personal reasons. The Board of Control for Cricket in India said at the time it respected Kohli's belief that "certain personal situations demand his presence and undivided attention" and confirmed Saturday that the superstar batter wouldn't be available for the final three tests, either.

## Thunder strike Magic

NEW YORK, Feb 14, (AP): Jayson Tatum had 41 points and 14 rebounds, and the NBA-leading Boston Celtics won their fifth straight game by beating the Brooklyn Nets 118-110 on Tuesday night in the opener of a home-and-home series.

Jaylen Brown added 19 points for the Celtics, who improved to 42-12 and will host the Nets on Wednesday in the final game for both teams before the All-Star break.

Tatum tied his career high for points in a first half with 31 and the Celtics led comfortably much of the way while playing without Kristaps Porzingis because of a lower back contusion.

Al Horford replaced Porzingis and scored 16 points on 6-for-6 shooting. Derrick White also scored 16 and Jrue Holiday had 14 points and 12 assists as the Celtics won their sixth straight in Brooklyn.

Mikal Bridges scored 27 points and Cam Thomas had 26 for the Nets, who lost for the fourth time in five games.

### Thunder 127, Magic 113

In Orlando, Fla., Jalen Williams scored 33 points, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander added 32 points and five assists and Oklahoma beat Orlando.

Gilgeous-Alexander scored 13 points during a five-minute stretch of the third quarter in which the Thunder took command of the game, which was played on the night the Magic retired Shaquille O'Neal's No. 32.

### BASKETBALL

Chet Holmgren had 13 points, nine rebounds and five blocks for the Thunder.

Paolo Banchero led the Magic with 23 points and 10 assists. Wendell Carter Jr. had 22 points and seven rebounds.

### Heat 123, Bucks 97

In Milwaukee, Nikola Jovic scored a career-high 24 points, Bam Adebayo had his second triple-double of the season and Miami beat Milwaukee.

Adebayo finished with 16 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists. Duncan Robinson added 23 points and shot 6 of 8 from 3-point range for the Heat, who have won five of seven since a seven-game skid. The Heat played their second straight game without Jimmy Butler, who remains on personal leave following the death of a relative.

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 23 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists for the Bucks but didn't attempt a free throw all night. Milwaukee's Khris Middleton missed a fourth straight game with a sprained left ankle.

### Timberwolves 121, Trail Blazers 109

In Portland, Ore., Anthony Edwards had 41 points and Minnesota sent Portland to its fifth straight loss.

Rudy Gobert added 16 points and 15 rebounds for his sixth straight double-double. Karl-Anthony Towns, who had foul trouble early, finished with 13 points for the Western Conference-leading Timberwolves.

Deandre Ayton had 22 points and 16 rebounds for the Blazers, who host Min-



Los Angeles Lakers forward Anthony Davis shoots next to Detroit Pistons guard Jaden Ivey during the second half of an NBA basketball game Tuesday, Feb. 13, 2024, in Los Angeles. (AP)

nesota again on Thursday night.

### Suns 130, Kings 125

In Phoenix, Kevin Durant scored 28 points, Devin Booker added 25 and Phoenix outlasted Sacramento.

The Suns erased an 11-point deficit in the third quarter and took a two-point lead into the fourth. The game was tied at 108 and stayed tight the rest of the way. Royce O'Neale's 3-pointer with 47 seconds left put the Suns up 122-118. De'Aaron Fox responded with a 3 to cut the margin to 122-121 with 41 seconds remaining, but Booker hit a jumper after a timeout for a 124-121 advantage and the Suns made enough free throws on the final possessions to stay in control.

Domantas Sabonis had his third straight triple-double with 35 points, 18 rebounds and 12 assists. De'Aaron Fox scored 40 for Sacramento.

Phoenix guard Bradley Beal injured his left hamstring in the first quarter and didn't return.

### Lakers 125, Pistons 111

In Los Angeles, LeBron James had 25 points and eight assists, Anthony Davis had 20 points and 14 rebounds, and Los Angeles beat NBA-worst Detroit for its fifth win in six games.

D'Angelo Russell scored 21 points and hit four 3-pointers for the Lakers, who have won 10 of 15 overall to move three games above .500 (29-26) for the first time since a week before Christmas. Rui Hachimura and Austin Reaves added 15 points apiece. Spencer Dinwiddie had six points and seven assists in his debut with the Lakers.

Ausar Thompson scored 19 points and James Wiseman had 18 points and nine rebounds for the Pistons, who had won two of their previous three games for only the third time all season. Team owner Tom Gores, who lives in Beverly Hills, watched from courtside.



Sacramento Kings' Domantas Sabonis, middle, drives to the basket between Phoenix Suns' Devin Booker (1) and Royce O'Neale (00) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Phoenix, Tuesday, Feb. 13, 2024. (AP)

## Venus and Wozniacki receive wild-card entries

INDIAN WELLS, Calif., Feb 14, (AP): Seven-time major champion Venus Williams and former world No. 1 Caroline Wozniacki have received wild card entries into the BNP Paribas Open next month.

The combined ATP and WTA event is March 6-17 at Indian Wells Tennis Garden.

Williams has been dealing with the lingering effects of a knee injury she suffered in her first-round match at Wimbledon last July. She lost in the first round of the U.S. Open in September and hasn't played a tour match since.

The 43-year-old player will return to the Southern California desert for the first time since 2019, when Williams reached the quarterfinals.

### TENNIS

Wozniacki also returns to the desert for the first time since 2019. She took three years off to have two children. She won the Indian Wells title in 2011 and was a finalist in 2010 and 2013.

# ARAB TIMES

Subscribe to our service "ArabTimes WhatsApp" to stay updated on the latest local and international news and events



To activate this Free Service:

- 1- Save our number on your contacts **92220947**
- 2- Send "Start" WhatsApp message to the number you saved.

www.arabtimesonline.com arabtimeskuwait arabtimeskuwait arabtimeskuwait Join us on Telegram



## Change Name

I, Abdul Rahman holder of Indian Passport No. M 3438015 having permanent address, 87/1167, Nagi Reddy Revenue Colony, Kurnool Dist, A.P. 518002. Residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that hence forth my name will be read as under (Shaikh Abdul Rahman) s/o Shaikh Nabi Rasul

## FOR RENT

**PARTIALLY FURNISHED PRIVATE 6 BDRM 6 BATH LUXURY VILLA IN SABAH ALAHMED**  
(Great commute for expats working in Mina Abdullah, Arifjan or Wafra) IN-HOUSE GARDEN AND PATIO, FULL GYM, 2 EQUIP. KITCHEN, POOL TABLE, PRIVATE GARAGE (electronic gate) PLUS OUTDOOR COVERED PARKING, SEC. CAMS, KD 1,250/month. Minimum 1 year lease.  
For more info pls contact Mobile or WhatsApp for Pics **50999320**

## For Foreigners and Diplomats only

**For Rent villa in Mushrif Rent 2600 k.d**

- \* Water and electricity included
- \* Two and a half floors, a basement and a swimming pool
- \* 6 bedrooms, including 4 master
- \* Two kitchens and three bathrooms

Please do not interfere with brokers **97586661**



## Kuwait's equestrian success

## Hosting international championships raises riders standards

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: Kuwaiti international judge Nabila Al-Ali has affirmed that the hosting of two- and three-star international championships in Kuwait, under the International Equestrian Federation's supervision, has significantly elevated the technical prowess of male and female riders. The remarkable success achieved by the private sector in supporting equestrian sports, particularly showjumping, has played a pivotal role in this advancement in recent years.

Al-Ali praised SAFEX Company for its successful organization of the "KIB The Stadium" International Championship, sponsored by Kuwait International Bank, held at Marina Beach. The event attracted a substantial number of male and female knights representing European and Gulf countries, underscoring the private sector's capability to organize international tournaments under the scrutiny of the International Equestrian Federation.

She highlighted the presence of

key sports figures, including His Highness Prince Abdullah bin Fahd bin Abdullah, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Saudi Equestrian Federation, who com-

## EQUESTRIAN

mended the excellent organization and success of the events.

The ongoing third international championship at Marina Beach features three rounds at heights of

120, 130, and 140 cm, concluding on Friday with three additional rounds at heights of 110, 120, 135, and 140 cm. The championship's culmination on Saturday is expected to witness intense competition for the Grand Prize round at a height of 145 cm. Saudi international jockey Abdullah Al Sharbatly, having secured the Grand Prix title in the past two tournaments, sets the stage for a compelling showdown in the third international competition.



Prince Abdullah bin Fahd (center), Nabila Al-Ali and Masoud Hayat.

## Kuwait Club, Al-Arabi strengthen positions in Zain Premier League



Kuwait Club players celebrate after their victory over Al-Qadisiya in the Zain Premier League match.

## Al-Fahaheel take a positive step away from relegation zone

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: In the fifteenth round of the Zain Premier League, both Al-Kuwait and Al-Arabi emerged victorious, further solidifying their positions at the top of the league. Al-Kuwait's narrow win against Al-Qadisiya not only helped them recover from relinquishing the Amir's Cup title but also increased their lead over Al-Qadisiya to four points.**

Al-Arabi, on the other hand, bounced back from their elimination in the Crown Prince's Cup by defeating Al-Jahra, restoring balance to the team and overcoming the setback of the previous "Derby" loss. This win maintained their strong standing in the league, waiting for the anticipated seventeenth-round fixtures.

## SOCCER

Despite Al-Qadisiya's astonishingly lackluster performance against Kuwait Club, they maintained their third-place position, struggling to break through their opponent's organization. Al-Salmiya continued to impress, securing another victory over Al-Shabab, firmly holding the fourth spot in the league with 34 points.

While Al-Fahaheel took a positive step away from the relegation zone with a crucial 2-1 win over Al-Nasr, the latter team faced setbacks, dropping to fifth place. Kazma, after a goalless draw with Khaitan, finds itself in seventh place, raising concerns about potential relegation if they don't recalibrate in the remaining two rounds.

Al-Shabab, now in eighth place, is increasingly at risk of the relegation battle, particularly as Khaitan remains stagnant at the bottom with 8 points. Al-Jahra, with only two points, appears destined for relegation unless a miraculous turn of events occurs in the final rounds.

Adel Oqla, the Vice President of the Football Authority in Kuwait, has initiated negotiations with Al-Qadisiya player Eid Al-Rashidi, signaling a departure from the widely enforced code of honor in Kuwaiti football. Oqla emphasized his club's right to engage in talks,

MANCHESTER, England, Feb 14, (AP): Jim Ratcliffe's proposed bid to buy a 25% stake in Manchester United moved nearer to completion on Wednesday after the Premier League club said the deal had been approved by the English Football Association.

## SOCCER

The Premier League has already cleared Ratcliffe to take up a minority share under its rules regarding who is allowed to be an owner or director of a soccer club.

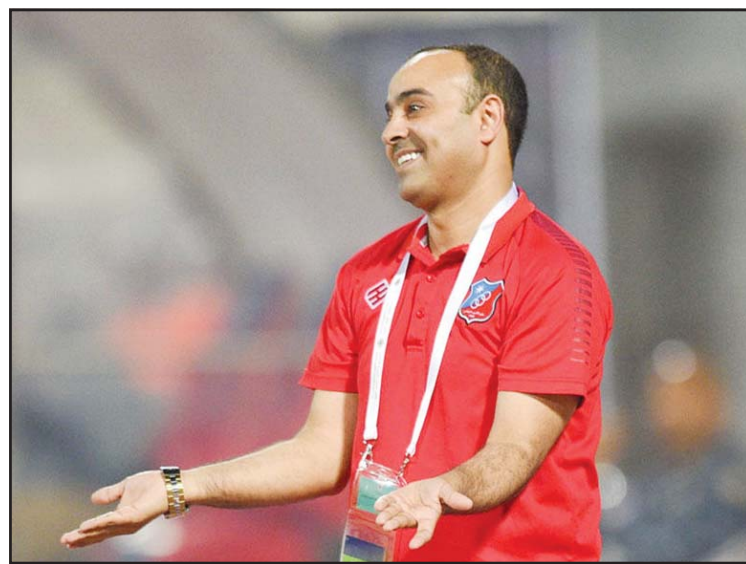
The British billionaire has until February 17 to complete his purchase, although confirmation could come later than that.

In a filing to the Securities and Exchange Commission on Wednesday, United said the FA had given its approval for the deal

highlighting the renewal of defender Meshari Ghanem's contract as a strategic move to thwart other clubs' interest in the player.

Reflecting on the recent victory over Al-Qadisiya, Oqla noted the acquisition of three crucial points and acknowledged the lengthy nature of the league. He emphasized the need to shift focus to the upcoming match against Al-Fahaheel.

Meanwhile, Al-Qadisiya's coach, Muhammad Al-Mishaan, conceded that Kuwait Club deserved the win in their recent en-



Adel Oqla

## Ratcliffe proposed bid moves nearer to completion

## Man U gets approval from FA to sell minority stake

## Buenos Aires to host Copa final

Buenos Aires will host this year's Copa Libertadores final in November, although a stadium for the match has yet to be selected, South American soccer body CONMEBOL said.

It will be the first time the Argentine capital will host the Copa Libertadores final since the competition switched to a single-match format in 2019.

CONMEBOL President Alejandro Dominguez said on social media that the decision

to go ahead. League approval was confirmed on Monday.

Ratcliffe is one of Britain's richest

was an acknowledgement of "the great work" of Argentina's soccer federation.

Argentina is the reigning Copa America and World Cup champion but its teams have struggled to do well in the South American club competition. Brazilian clubs have won every title since 2019.

In 2018, Argentine clubs River Plate and Boca Juniors played for the Copa Libertadores trophy in Madrid because of fan violence in Buenos Aires. River won the title that year.

people and the owner of petrochemicals giant INEOS. He agreed a deal to buy a stake in United in December after owners the Glazer family had put the club up for sale in 2022.

The Glazers, who also own the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, eventually opted to sell a minority of the 20-time English champion after also fielding bids from Qatari banker Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad Al Thani.

The 71-year-old Ratcliffe has paid \$1.3 billion for "up to 25%" of the club and will invest a further \$300 million for "future investment into Old Trafford," United has said.

He will provide \$200 million upon completion of the deal and a further \$100 million by the end of 2024. That additional investment will eventually take Ratcliffe's stake up to 29%. The Glazer family will have a 49% stake under the deal.

Ratcliffe's INEOS Sport division will take over control of United's soccer operation.

Fan has been disillusioned with the team's onfield decline since the retirement of former manager Alex Ferguson in 2013. United has not won the title since Ferguson's final season and has repeatedly missed out on qualification for the Champions League during that period.

Many United fans have campaigned to drive the Glazers family out.

While fans hoped for a complete buyout of the club, there is optimism Ratcliffe, who was a boyhood United supporter, can help return it to its glory days.

## Argentine coach Alvarez to lead Kuwait's national volleyball team

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: The Kuwait Volleyball Federation has officially inked a contract with Argentine coach Julian Alvarez to take on the role of technical leader for the first national volleyball team in the upcoming period, with a one-season agreement. With a notable track record and prior experience coaching Burgan and Al-Qadisiya teams, the Argentine coach brings expertise to Kuwait stadiums. The signing of Julian is geared towards achieving a qualitative shift for the first team, aspiring to attain distinguished results at both regional and international levels.



Kuwait volleyball new coach Julian Alvarez.

## VOLLEYBALL

In a separate development, Al-Shabab Club's first volleyball team secured a victory over Al-Sahel, winning three games to one in a match held at the Al-Ittihad Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex, as part of the general league.

As of now, the league standings are as follows: Al-Arabi and Burgan with 35 points each, Kazma with 34 points, Kuwait

Club and Al-Qadisiya with 31 points each, Al-Shabab with 24 points, Yarmouk with 17 points, Al-Tadamon with 15 points, and Al-Sahel and Sulaibkhat with 3 points each.

It's worth noting that Kuwait Club and Al-Qadisiya have postponed matches due to their recent participation in the West Asian Championship, and Kazma is currently in a Turkish camp preparing for the Arab Club Championship.

## Best of the Rest

**Russia to host Paraguay:** Russia is going to host Paraguay for a soccer friendly next month in what would be its first men's national team game against a South American team since the invasion of Ukraine.

The Russian Football Union said Wednesday the game will take place at Dynamo Moscow's stadium on March 25, four days after Russia plays Serbia in another friendly at the same venue.

Since the invasion of Ukraine saw Russia removed from international soccer competitions, the Russian national team has mostly organized friendlies against teams from Asia and Africa, as well as one game against Cuba in November.

The Russian women's national team played Paraguay in two away friendlies last year. Russia won one game 3-0 and the other was a 1-1 draw. (AP)

**Rayo fire coach:** Spanish club Rayo Vallecano fired coach Francisco Rodriguez on Tuesday after a run of poor results.

The announcement came two days after the team's 2-1 loss at Mallorca in the Spanish league, a result that left the team from southern Madrid in 14th place, seven points from the relegation zone.

Rayo has won only one of its last 11 games in all competitions - at Getafe in January. Before that it had won only one of its last eight matches.

Rayo hosts Spanish league leader Real Madrid on Sunday.

A replacement to Rodriguez was not immediately announced. (AP)

**US men to play Colombia:** The United States will play Colombia in an exhibition at FedEx Field in Landover, Maryland, on June 8 ahead of the Copa America.

The game, announced Tuesday, is on a FIFA international fixture date, which means top European-based players will be available.

The U.S. hopes to play an additional exhibition on June 12, possibly against Brazil. The Americans open against Bolivia at Arlington, Texas, on June 23, play Panama four days later at Atlanta and close group play July 1 against Uruguay at Kansas City, Missouri.

Colombia opens against Paraguay at Houston on June 24, plays Costa Rica or Honduras four days later at Glendale, Arizona, and finishes the first round against Brazil on July 2 at Santa Clara, California. (AP)

**Hamoud dies:** Norwegian soccer club Strømsgodset said Mounir Hamoud, a former forward who played for the country's youth

teams, died after suffering cardiac arrest.

Hamoud, who was 39, died on the morning of the first day of his new job in player development with Strømsgodset, the team said.

Hamoud, a Moroccan-born forward, spent the final eight seasons of his 15-year playing career at Strømsgodset before retiring in 2019. He played for Norway's Under-18, Under-19 and Under-21 teams and was selected once for the country's senior team but didn't get off the bench in a 1-0 win over Germany in Dusseldorf in 2009, the Norwegian news agency NTB said.

"This is a brutal and shocking message to receive," Strømsgodset, a club from Drammen, south of Oslo, said in a statement.

Øivind Nilsen, of the Norwegian Football Association, said Hamoud's death was "a shock that affects the entire football family."

"We are in mourning," Nilsen said. "Mounir will be deeply missed."

Hamoud also played for FC Lyn and Bodo/Glimt in Norway. In total, he made 358 club appearances and scored 28 goals. (AP)

**Bay FC sign Kundananji:** National Women's Soccer League expansion team Bay FC signed forward Racheal Kundananji of Zambia to a four-year deal with an option for a fifth year.

Kundananji was acquired from Spanish club Madrid CFF in exchange for a transfer fee, Bay FC announced. Her arrival in the San Francisco Bay Area is pending the approval of her visa and international transfer certificate.

Bay FC begins play in the NWSL this year as the league's 14th team. The regular season starts on March 16.

Kundananji played for Zambia in last year's Women's World Cup. Overall she has 10 goals in 18 games with her national team.

She had 33 goals in 43 Liga F games since joining Madrid CFF in 2022.

"Racheal has a composure in front of goal and a natural ability to score with different types of finishes and from various locations," Bay FC general manager Lucy Rushton said in a statement. "We believe she will continue to grow and develop at our club, showcasing her skillset and adding to the array of exciting attacking talent we have here."

Kundananji arrived at Madrid CFF from Sociedad Deportiva Eibar and quickly became one of the club's top players.

"(She) improved with our club to become a great forward and we hope for the best in her next professional adventure," the Spanish club said. "Madrid CFF once again demonstrates that it is one of the best clubs in attracting and incubating talent and will continue working with that goal in the future." (AP)





FC Copenhagen's Oscar Højlund (left), and Manchester City's Phil Foden (right), fight for the ball during the Champions League, Round of Sixteen first leg, soccer match between FC Copenhagen and Manchester City in Copenhagen, Denmark. (AP)

# Sports

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

## De Bruyne stars as City take commanding lead

Díaz makes up for Bellingham's absence, leads Real to win over Leipzig in Champions League

**COPENHAGEN, Denmark, Feb 14, (AP):** Kevin De Bruyne is so often Manchester City's man for the big occasion. He delivered again at the start of the Champions League's knockout stage.

By scoring one goal and having a hand in two others, the Belgium playmaker inspired City to a 3-1 win at FC Copenhagen in the first leg of the round of 16 as the English champions resumed their quest to retain their European crown.

It's an English-record nine straight wins in the Champions League for City stretching back to last season, and 10 victories in a row in all competitions over the past two months.

It is going to take something special to stop Pep Guardiola's defending champions.

Only a careless mistake from goalkeeper Ederson Moraes, which led to Copenhagen's equalizer in the 34th minute, prevented City from taking an even more commanding lead into the second leg in Manchester in three weeks.

### SOCCER

Still, few will give the Danish champions hope of turning this around.

Not with De Bruyne seemingly back in top form already after missing five months with a hamstring injury sustained on the opening day of the season.

De Bruyne's sure making up for lost time, with nine goal involvements in six games since his return.

De Bruyne scored the opening goal at atmospheric Parken Stadium with a low finish into the far corner in the 10th minute after running onto Phil Foden's pass on the right side of the area.

Copenhagen, without a competitive match in two months because of the Danish league's midseason break, was outplayed in the first half - by the 20th minute, City had enjoyed 85% possession - but still managed to pull level in the 34th after Ederson's pass out from his area went astray.

It was intercepted by Mohamed Elyounoussi, whose shot was blocked by City defender Ruben Dias. The ball flew toward Copenhagen midfielder Magnus Mattsson, who curled home a first-time shot from edge of the area in a memorable way to mark not only his Copenhagen debut but his first ever Champions League game.

City retook the lead in the first minute of first-half stoppage time. While the build-up wasn't pretty, the finish from Bernardo Silva certainly was.

De Bruyne overran the ball and lunged to make a tackle, inadvertently sending the ball flying into the path of Silva in the area. As the goalkeeper came out, Silva deftly flicked the ball with his left foot up and into the far corner.

The build-up to the third goal in second-half stoppage time was much easier on the eye and again it involved De Bruyne, who ran onto Foden's pass down the inside right channel and cut the ball back to the England midfielder, who slotted home.

"There's no better player in the world at passing the ball," Foden said of De Bruyne.

There was a huge gulf in quality between the English and European champions and a team playing in the Champions League's round of 16 for only the second time - and the first time since 2010-11.

City wasn't even thrown off by an early injury to winger Jack Grealish, who lasted just 21 minutes of his first game in more than a month before be-



Representatives of the 16 clubs pose for a group photo.

Participants revealing hidden documents and legal violations

## Clubs address unprecedented advertising cancellation

ing forced off with a suspected right groin injury.

After scoring Real Madrid's winner with a mazy solo run, Brahim Díaz jogged to the sideline and spread his arms wide open to celebrate.

He was imitating the trademark goal celebration of Jude Bellingham, the injured teammate he replaced in the starting lineup.

Bellingham, one of Madrid's best players this season after joining from Borussia Dortmund, couldn't play after spraining his ankle in a Spanish league game this weekend. The England international has 20 goals in 29 games in all competitions this season, including four goals - and three assists - in five Champions League matches. He is expected to be sidelined for two to three weeks.

The return leg will be on March 6 at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium in Madrid.

In the other Champions League game Tuesday, Manchester City won 3-1 at FC Copenhagen.

Díaz combined some nifty dribbles with a powerful run to get past three Leipzig defenders before hitting the top corner with a left-footed shot from inside the area in the 48th minute.

Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti again had to improvise in defense, as several players remained injured. He used midfielder Aurélien Tchouaméni as one of the central defenders, playing alongside Nacho Fernández.

Leipzig had most of the chances but was denied by some good saves by Madrid goalkeeper Andriy Lunin, who has been replacing the injured Thibaut Courtois.

Leipzig had won the last meeting between the teams in a group-stage game last season.

The German club has qualified for the competition's knockout rounds for the fourth time in five seasons.

Madrid has been in the round of 16 every season since the format was introduced in 2003-04. It has reached at least the semifinals the last three seasons, having won its record-extending 14th European title in 2022.

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14:** A gathering of 16 esteemed clubs, whose endorsements were revoked by the former Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Muhammad Al-Aiban, convened in a meeting chaired by Yousef Al-Baidan, head of the General Sports Authority. During the session, a unanimous decision was reached to organize a forthcoming press conference. In this event, various undisclosed matters and concealed documents, involving fraudulent activities and explicit legal violations not previously brought to the attention of the Sports Street, will be revealed.

Additionally, the participants agreed to seek interviews with the current Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Mr. Daoud Marafi, and the President of the Kuwaiti Olympic Committee, Sheikh Fahd Nasser Al-Sabah. The purpose is to address concerns and present their perspectives on the unprecedented decision to cancel their advertising.

The 16 clubs expressed their deep disappointment, branding the cancellation of their endorsements as a catastrophic event that has dismantled the hard work and positive reputation painstakingly built over the years. These clubs, which have been pillars of Kuwaiti sports on both local and international fronts, emphasized that the decision has not only tarnished their history but also impacted Kuwait's standing in international sports federations. The cancellation poses a threat to Kuwait's positions in these federa-



Faisal Al-Rajhi (right) with other winners on the podium.

KUNA photos

tions, with potential repercussions on the global stage.

Furthermore, the decision adversely affected the employees of the clubs and federations, abruptly rendering their status illegal. With the revocation of advertising, these individuals found themselves unemployed, facing challenges in transferring their residency to alternative entities.

## Kuwaitis 'secure' three medals at Fazza International Para Athletics

**DUBAI, Feb 14, (KUNA):** Kuwait's team secured three medals—gold, silver, and bronze—at the 15th Fazza International Para Athletics Grand Prix. Nasser Al-Ajmi, the head of the Kuwaiti delegation, shared with KUNA that Ahmad Al-



Silver medalist Faisal Sorour.

### ATHLETICS

Mutairi clinched gold in the 100m wheelchair race (F33), Faisal Sorour earned silver in 'F42,' and Faisal Al-Rajhi secured bronze in the 1500m race (T54).

This achievement follows the 17 medals previously won by Kuwaitis at the 12th Sharja Para Athletics Forum, which concluded approximately a week ago, Al-Ajmi added. As the vice president of Kuwait Disabled Sports Club, he emphasized the club's commitment to enabling

its athletes to participate in international sports events, fostering skill development and acquiring valuable expertise.

The ongoing three-day tournament showcases 600 male and female athletes from 74 countries.

## Carey equals record with 8 catches

**ADELAIDE, Australia, Feb 14, (AP):** Australia's test wicketkeeper Alex Carey has equaled an international record with his eight catches Wednesday in a domestic one-day cricket match.

Carey held eight catches for South Australia state in a limited-overs win over Queensland in his first 50-over

match since being replaced as Australia's first-choice white ball wicketkeeper at the World Cup in India last year.

He took five catches off the bowling of Jordan Bockingham and equaled the List A world record with his eighth catch to dismiss Matt Kuhnemann.

## Blackstone's interest ends

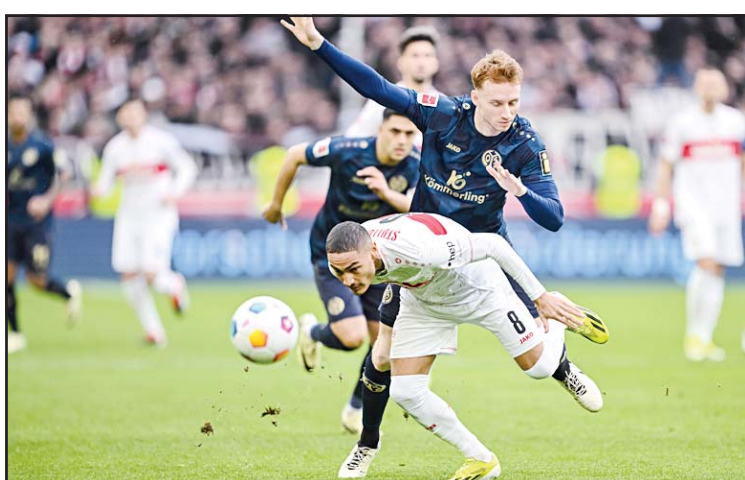
## CVC only prospective investor for Bundesliga

**FRANKFURT, Germany, Feb 14, (AP):** CVC Capital Partners is the only remaining prospective buyer for a stake in the Bundesliga's media rights income after competitor Blackstone ended its involvement in the process, the league says.

Blackstone's exit comes as fans step up protests against the league's plans to sell a share of its income from TV and other media rights. Since clubs narrowly voted to approve the deal in December, fans have disrupted numerous games by throwing objects such as tennis balls onto the field.

"We confirm that Blackstone is no longer under consideration as a strategic marketing partner for the Bundesliga and the Bundesliga 2," the league said in an e-mailed statement. "The process will continue according to the planned schedule with CVC."

The league added that talks with



Stuttgart's Enzo Millot (front), and Mainz's Sepp van den Berg battle for the ball during the Bundesliga soccer match between VfB Stuttgart and FSV Mainz 05 at MHP Arena, Stuttgart, Germany. (AP)

Blackstone had been largely "positive" but that "critical points" had emerged, including regarding governance and economic aspects of the process.

The league is offering a share of up to 8% of income over 20 years from sources such as TV rights and league sponsorship. It has previously said it hopes to have a deal concluded by the end of March, before a planned auction of TV rights for the 2025-26 season and beyond.

The league argues that an up-front payment from an investor would help to modernize its marketing and clubs' infrastructure. CVC is also an investor in the Spanish and French leagues.

Fan groups are concerned that the planned deal would reduce supporters' influence and the accountability of senior executives in a league where most clubs are majority-controlled by their members.