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KUWAIT GRAPPLES WITH IMPLEMENTATION AMID ASSEMBLY DISSOLUTION

Sheikh Fahad stresses compliance

Deputy PM calls for law equality

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17. (KUNA): Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah ordered military and security officials to implement His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah directives about applying law equally to all.

Sheikh Fahad's remarks were made during a meeting with the senior commanders and officials of the ministries of defense and interior at the Ministry of Defense on Friday, according to a statement by the Army.

He also called for executing His Highness the Amir's directives about intensifying efforts, increasing cooperation and coordination among the military sectors to defend the homeland and maintain its security and stability.

He pointed out that the military institution has great responsibilities and enormous tasks that require adherence to instructions, seriousness, and firmness in applying the law to everyone without exception or discrimination.

He noted that His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah are closely following up the efforts



MoD photo Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah during the meeting.

exerted to boost capabilities of the military sectors. Sheikh Fahad vowed to work according to the directives and instructions of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Premier, and follow up on the efforts and the decisions made in this regard. He promised to employ all potential and remove any obstacle facing the materialization of their vision and goals.

Experts weigh in on Election Law issues

Cabinet decries unacceptable proceedings

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: The dissolution of the National Assembly as per an Amiri Decree could lead to different scenarios in an attempt to protect the system that will be adopted to conduct the elections; considering the recently ratified Election Law has yet to be enforced, while the previous law has been nullified as per the most

recent amendment. Constitutional expert Professor Muhammad Al-Fili pointed out that the recent amendment of the law states the formation of the Higher Commission for Elections by the judges after submitting their resignation to be appointed with a temporary term renewable only once. He said this condition made the judges hesitant to accept the appointment as they feel it is not in their interest. He added the judges can be assigned to the Higher Commission for Elections, but this is not in line with the ratified law.

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Opinion

Thankfully, we now have one ruler and not 51

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

GIVEN that you can tell a book by its title, a gesture should therefore be enough for a wise man to understand.

However, it seems that the majority of parliamentarians have failed to comprehend the insistence of the Council of Ministers on implementing the fingerprint system on teachers, especially since its implementation revealed corruption in one of the most important state systems, which is education, and the waste of time and money in this sector.

The insistence on implementing the fingerprint system also revealed that hundreds of teachers usually fail to report to work, dozens of them are outside Kuwait, and they rely on "nepotism", all of which has been harming the education sector.

From there, their practices extend to the rest of the sectors, appearing in the ugliest form, which is low employee productivity. This is the result of relying on the MPs' protection of them, as well as those who are influential in bending decisions to their interests, and not for the interest of the country. These are the ones with people everywhere and make the country look like "cantons" governed by 51 rulers, and not by one head of state.

The National Assembly failed in the test of detecting the signal, due to which the solution was an urgent remedy. It was a decision based on a vision that must be handled with a lot of understanding about the fact that institutions are governed by laws stemming from the Constitution, which must be applied in letter and spirit, and in a manner that is commensurate with the country's development and progress, without just going around a vicious circle.

Decisions were taken by the current government that corrected the mistakes of the past stage, based on an approach that must be implemented so that we can see its results later, and the National Assembly had to keep up with it.

However, it seems that the fever of temporary and personal gains for the parliamentarians has overshadowed everything else. It also seems that the continuation of the parliamentary overstepping of the authorities of ministers, the "parachute" appointments, and the neglect of the rights of employees are more important to them than the devastation they have caused in state institutions.

In this regard, His Highness was clear in his lofty statement during the oath-taking session when he said, "The appointments and transfers that took place in some jobs and positions were not consistent with the most basic standards of justice and fairness. Therefore, we stopped the absurdity of appointments by a sovereign decision."

In recent years, many cases of corruption have appeared in institutions, not only in encroaching on public funds, but also appointing someone who is not qualified to a leadership position. This means thwarting the role of the institution, and thus paving the way for more destruction, which appears to be systematic, because the custom for 30 years has been "finders-keepers". Unfortunately, there were many corrupt people.

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Badriya Nasser Al-Jai'an Mosque, a stunning display of Ottoman architecture, commands attention at the heart of Salmiya, Kuwait.

Photo by lehab Qurtal

Kuwait sees 2 pct drop in Filipino remittances

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Statistics revealed an increase in Filipino workers' remittances from the Gulf Cooperation Council countries during 2023 by 4.32% annually, reaching \$5.59 billion, compared to \$5.36 billion in 2022, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Filipino workers' remittances from Kuwait recorded a slight decline during 2023 by \$12 million, or 2%, to reach the \$585.1 million compared to \$597.1 million in 2022, according to "Mubasher Information" statistics based on data from the Central Bank of the Philippines.

The annual growth of remittances from the six Gulf Cooperation Council countries supported their growth from 5 countries, and the growth was led by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with 5.90%, while remittances from Kuwait declined by about 2.01%.

Saudi Arabia continued to capture the largest share in the Gulf of these transfers. Filipino workers sent remittances worth \$2.06 billion, while the Kingdom of Bahrain topped the list with only \$254.99 million.

According to statistics, remittances of Filipino workers from the Gulf countries together represent 16.72% of the total remittances from countries around the world in 2023, amounting to \$33.491 billion.

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Ministry of Information readies national days celebration plans

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17. (KUNA): All personnel and cadres of the Ministry of Information are preoccupied with executing the ministry's programs marking the State of Kuwait's 63rd Anniversary of the National Day and the 33rd Liberation Day, "Kuwait Glory and Pride."

The plan encompasses integrated programs aimed at engaging all Kuwaiti nationals and residents of the country and in celebrating these national days in the dear homeland, said Saad Al-Azmi, the assistant undersecretary for the media services and new media at the Ministry of Information, in a statement on Saturday.

The Agenda of the celebrations and activities will be distinguished and will involve various public and private sectors, bodies, and public welfare societies, with the aim of promoting the significance of the occasion and boost-

ing patriotism, said Al-Azmi, also the head of the public relations, media, and marketing at the permanent committee of the national celebrations.

The ministry, during the celebrations, will launch an awareness campaign, titled, "Celebrate with responsibility," designed to bolster values of national unity and belonging to the homeland, he said, adding that it will also hold an "open day" for the diplomats' families at the heritage village, "yom al-bahar," where they will closely get acquainted with "our history, our sea and land heritages," examining tools and items of the Kuwaiti handicrafts and old professions.

Moreover, there will be a digital exhibition named "the path of memories," displaying historic television and radio programs shedding light on Kuwait's history since the 70s of the past century, at the Avenues Mall.

NewsWatch

CAIRO: Arab Parliament Speaker Adel Al-Asoumi warned of expanding the scope of conflict in the Middle East region.

Calling for activating Arab parliamentary diplomacy to limit consequences on the region's security and stability, Al-Asoumi's remarks came during a meeting with Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union (AIPU) President and Iraqi Acting Parliament Speaker Mohsen Al-Mandalawi on sidelines of the Parliamentary Conference for South-South Cooperation hosted by Morocco. (KUNA)

TEHRAN: A 30-year-old man gunned down 12 of his relatives Saturday in a remote rural area in southeast Iran, the deadliest shooting reported in decades.

Head of the justice department of the province of Kerman, Ebrahim Hamidi, told the semi-official ISNA news agency the gunman opened fire on his father, brother and other relatives early morning in a village because of family disputes. (AP)

DUBAI: Missile fire apparently targeted a ship Friday off Yemen in the Red Sea, the latest attack suspected to have been carried out by Yemen's Houthi rebels amid Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The vessel's captain reported an explosion nearby the ship in the Red Sea off the Yemeni city of Mocha, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Organization center said.

"The crew and the vessel are reported safe," the UKMTO said. (AP)

UNITED NATIONS: The U.N. special envoy for Libya warned the country's feuding political actors Thursday that if they don't urgently form a unified government and move toward elections the oil-rich North African nation will slide into "disintegration."

Abdoulaye Bathily told the U.N. Security Council there are numerous alarming signs of such a slide and urged all political leaders to put aside "their self-interests" and come together to negotiate and reach a compromise "to restore the dignity of their motherland." (AP)

CITRA boosts security

Kuwait mandates caller ID to combat deception

By Muhammad Al-Musleh Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: In a step that contributes to reducing telephone calls aimed at deceiving people into becoming victims of financial fraud, the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority of Kuwait (CITRA) has issued regulations to reveal the names of callers to public telecommunications networks.

The authority stated in the regulations that this move is aimed to improve user experience and provide users with reliable caller identification before they answer calls.

CITRA explained that the regulations will regulate the process of revealing the names of callers to telecommunication networks in the State of Kuwait of licensed network operators. The display of callers' names will be limited to calls that are received from legal entities only.

It called on service providers to activate this feature without the need for users to change any settings on their device, and without charging any additional fees.

CITRA requested service providers to apply to it for approval before implementation, configure the network settings, and provide the necessary technical systems to identify the callers' names, in accordance with recognized international standards and protocols, and ensure that the feature is

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Failaka Island home to ancient civilizations

The State of Kuwait's Failaka Island witnessed civilizations dated back to end of 3rd millennium BC and extended until 19th century AD.

Dilmun Town, also known as Tell Sa'ad, contains remains of houses and rooms from 1950 BC and late Dilmun 1450 BC. The site also includes Rest House of Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who ruled Kuwait (1921-

1950). Al-Hakem Palace and Dilmunian Tower Temple, northeast of Tel Sa'ad, 2000 BC, and a small housing unit belonged to the Third Ur Dynasty (2100 BC).

The Hellenistic Fortress, also known as Tell Sa'eed, is one of the largest archeological sites in Failaka dated back to 280-150 BC. (KUNA)



Relics are seen on Failaka Island.

KUNA photo

## Prayer Timings

Fajr ..... 05:06 Asr ..... 15:14  
Sunrise .. 06:26 Maghrib .. 17:39  
Zohr ..... 12:02 Isha ..... 18:56

# Local

**Expected weather for next 24 hrs:**  
**By Day:** Warm with light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 12-32 km/h.  
**By Night:** Rather cold to cold with light to moderate northwest-

Weather			Kuwait Airport	
erly wind, with speeds of 08-32 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.	24	17	Abdaly	23
	24	16	Jahra	21
	21	17	Salmiyah	23
	23	17	Nuwaisib	24
	24	15	Wafra	

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

## Hardships suffered by Palestinian women highlighted

### 'Promote UN resolution which renounces violence against women'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17, (KUNA): The regional conference, "The Arab woman, peace and security: challenges facing woman in the Arab region .. halting the war on Gaza now, not tomorrow," proceeded in Kuwait for the second day in a row on Friday.

Dr. Hila Al-Makimi, a political sciences professor at Kuwait University, said during today's session that the Kuwait Union of Woman's Associations called for promoting the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 which essentially renounces violence against women.

The UNSC needs to be activated further to enable the Arab woman to be a peacemaker, Dr. Al-Makimi said.

The resolution, adopted on 31 October 2000, reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacemaking, humanitarian response, and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

Maha Ali, secretary general of the Jordanian national committee for women affairs, indicated that the UNSG resolution needs to be literally heeded, citing hardships suffered by the Palestinian women, in particular, due to complacency, in this respect.

Jordan has worked out a national plan to ensure women's participation in the security, military and non-conventional sectors, she said. Number of the Jordanian women occupying jobs, particularly in the general security and peace-keeping missions has increased, she added.

Dr. Yosra Mohsen, the director general of the circuit for empowering Iraqi woman, spoke about her government's measures to boost women's participation at various levels. Iraq has sought to bolster the role of the civil society through an executive plan focusing on protecting women, she said, alluding as a tangible result, to the mounting participation of the female citizens in elections.

Wafaa Al-Daiqa, a member of the executive council of the Arab Women Organization, called in her speech for a cease-fire in Gaza and protecting the Palestinian people from the genocides carried out by the Israeli occupation. Al-Daiqa indicated that the UNSG resolution could not be literally heeded in Lebanon due to recurrent events and jitters. Dr. Chefika Abdeh, the head of the Yemeni women committee, echoed an identical picture due to the internal violence.

Leila Jeddin, a female justice from Mauritania, acknowledged in her statement that the number of women leaders has remained small in her country. Her peer, Fatma Al-Muaqdet, the head of the Palestinian fund, said that a number of legislations for improving the women's status had been drawn up in Palestine, and argued that the UNSG resolution has proven ineffective in the shadow of the Israeli aggression on Palestine.

The State of Kuwait Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah had inaugurated the conference on behalf of the Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya.

The two-day event is organized by the Kuwaiti Union for Woman's Associations, in coordination with the Arab-League Affiliated Organization of the Arab Woman.



Dr Al-Makimi



Participants at the regional conference for Arab women.

KUNA photo

## Amir, PM congratulate Lithuania, Kosovo on Nat'l Day

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has sent a cable of congratulations to President of Lithuania Gitanas Nauseda on the occasion of his country's National Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished the President of Lithuania everlasting health and wellness, and further progress and prosperity for his country and people.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah has also sent a cable of congratulations to President of Lithuania Gitanas Nauseda on the occasion of his country's National Day.

### Kosovo National Day

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to President of the Republic of Kosovo, Dr. Vjosa Osmani, on her country's national day.

His Highness the Amir wished President Osmani good health and wellbeing; for Kosovo and the friendly Kosovar people optimal progress and prosperity.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah also sent a cable of congratulations to President of the Republic of Kosovo, Dr. Vjosa Osmani, on her country's national day.



Silver jewellery on display at one of the stalls.

### 'Exhibition standard improves'

## 'Expo 965 highlights local & Gulf talent in creative heritage craft'

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: The Minister of Information and Culture Abdul Rahman Al-Mutairi says the Expo 965 contributes to highlighting and encouraging national and Gulf energies and talents in the field of creative craft heritage.

In a speech issued the day before yesterday evening at the exhibition held at Palestine High School, Al-Mutairi explained that the Expo 965 exhibition has witnessed development and distinction over the past years. The current exhibition is titled "Day of Homeland and Heritage" in light of the festive atmosphere that Kuwait is experiencing these days on the occasion of National day celebrations.

He said, "We ask Allah Almighty to protect Kuwait and its people and to perpetuate the blessing of security, safety and prosperity under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad."

Al-Mutairi affirmed that honoring the creative and distinguished people of Kuwait and the Arabian Gulf region, and the exhibitions that include a distinguished elite in the craft and creative fields, reflect the extent of the development and excellence of the quality of creative human capital in the Gulf countries, and confirms everyone's support for these talents and the constant keenness to develop them.

He stressed the keenness of the Ministry of Information and the National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature to harness all capabilities, and provide an appropriate, encouraging and supportive environment for young people to support their talents, develop their abilities and encourage their skills in various media and cultural fields in a way that contributes to the service of culture and media and advances the wheel of development through appropriate and stimulating laws, regulations, systems and infrastructure according to a participatory methodology in cooperation with all governmental, private and civil state institutions.

Al-Mutairi extended his sincere congratulations to the honorees in this event, wishing them more creativity and excellence. He also extended his sincere gratitude to all participants in the exhibition accompanying the event, the Expo 965 team for heritage and craft exhibitions, and Kuwaiti innovators for this distinguished organization and the efforts exerted to make the event a success.

The exhibition is held under the patronage of the Minister of Social Affairs, Fam-

## Statistics on Kuwait's labor market spread

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Government institution statistics provide a comprehensive overview of Kuwait's workforce, spanning both the public and private sectors, revealing notable trends in employment distribution, reports Al-Qabas daily.

In the government, the education sector emerges as a significant employer, with approximately 154,000 employees, comprising around one-third of the total government workforce of approximately 471,000 employees. Following closely is the public administration and defense sector, employing around 172.3 thousand individuals, constituting about 36.5% of the total workforce.

The breakdown within the education sector indicates that 128,000 Kuwaiti citizens are employed alongside 22.7 thousand non-Kuwaitis. Meanwhile, the health and social work sector employs approximately 41,000 individuals, representing about 8.7% of government employment, with 14.1 thousand Kuwaitis and 26.8 thousand non-Kuwaitis contributing to the workforce.

Turning to the private sector, which boasts approximately 1.6 million employees, accommodation and food activities emerge as the predominant employer, with 639 thousand individuals, comprising 39.1% of the total private sector workforce.

The construction sector follows closely behind, employing 225 thousand workers, constituting approximately 13.85% of the private sector workforce. Manufacturing industries rank third, with approximately 163 thousand workers, while administrative and support services activities employ about 131 thousand individuals.

ily and Childhood Affairs and the Acting Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Feras Al-Sabah, the Minister of Information and Culture Abdul Rahman Al-Mutairi, and the Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Adel Al-Adwani.

## 'E-sick leave application slashes visitors to clinics by 21 percent'

MEW rejects 14 grievances, refers to CSC

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: The Director of the Health Media Center and the official spokesman for the Ministry of Health Dr. Abdullah Al-Sanad says the electronic sick leave application system has contributed to reducing the number of visitors to clinics by 21 percent within 90 days of its launch.

He said this while reviewing the results of a study conducted by the Information Systems Department of the Ministry of Health on the implementation of the electronic sick leave application system, and its impact on the level and quality of service provided through primary health care centers.

After analyzing the results of a sample that included more than 23 million visits to primary health care centers, and 630,000 sick leave requests submitted by those over 18 years of age, it was found that the rate of visits to primary health care centers decreased by 21 percent. This is after comparing the number of visits in the last quarter of 2022, which amounted to 4,025,157 visits, compared to 3,182,195 visits in the last quarter of 2023.

Dr. Al-Sanad indicated that the results of the study also showed a decrease in total sick days by 16 percent. The average sick leaves issued per month were 537,782 in the last quarter of 2022, and this has reduced to 450,151 sick days per month in the last quarter of 2023. It also provided more than 56,000 working hours for health and administrative personnel.

On a parallel line, Dr. Al-Sanad affirmed the distribution of about 10,000 Afya insurance cards through 18 centers in all governorates of the country since Sunday, with 25 percent of the new segments or categories added, according to statistics.

**Grievances rejected:** According to informed sources in the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, the ministry rejected 14 grievances of its employees regarding promotions by selection, and referred them to the Civil Service Commission (CSC).

They indicated that the rejection of the 14 grievances and their referral to CSC came in compliance with the decree issued on 10/5/1981 regarding the procedures for submitting grievances and reviewing administrative decisions.

In a related context, the sources revealed that 54 employees were appointed to supervisory positions in the last two years, and 51 employees were seconded in the past three years, bringing the total number of vacant supervisory positions in the ministry's sectors as of the end of January to 229 positions.

They highlighted the ministry's keenness to adhere to the decisions of the Civil Service Council that regulate promotions, and the ministerial resolution No. 103/2019 regarding adding conditions for candidacy for supervisory positions.

Meanwhile, the ministry announced that some work was carried out on the water network of the Fahaheel Expressway adjacent to Funaitees on Friday from 10:00 pm, which resulted in low pressure of freshwater in Salwa, Rumaithiya, Salmiya, Bayan, Mishref, Jabriya and Maidan Hawalli.



Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya meets the US Special Envoy for Climate Affairs John F. Kerry.

### FM meets US climate envoy

Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya held talks with US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate (SPEC) John F. Kerry on the fringes of the 60th Munich Security Conference (MSC) which kicked off earlier Friday.

They explored ways to strengthen the bilateral relations in various fields and discussed a range of regional and international issues of common concern, including the topics on the MSC agenda.

Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya also held talks with Luigi Di Maio, the European Union spe-

cial representative for the Gulf region, on the fringes of the 60th Munich Security Conference which opened on Friday.

The talks focused on ways to strengthen the friendly relationship between Kuwait and the EU in various fields as well as a range of regional and international issues of common concern, including the situation in Gaza Strip.

The meeting also dealt with the efforts to complete delineation of the maritime boundaries between Kuwait and Iraq beyond mark 162. (KUNA)

'Coincides with 125th 'versary of ties'

## 'Britain in Kuwait' fair begins Feb 18

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: The 11th British Week in Kuwait (Britain in Kuwait Exhibition) will be held at Assimah Mall from Feb 18-20 under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad, reports Al-Anba daily.

The Organizing Committee revealed this year's exhibition is special, as it coincides with the celebration of the 125th anniversary of the British-Kuwaiti relationship which, it pointed out is historical and deep-rooted, especially with the announcement of Kuwait and Britain that 2024 will be "the year of the Kuwaiti-British partnership".

In a press statement, Chairman of the Organizing Committee Ahmad Ismail Behbehani asserted: "On this occasion, I am pleased

to extend my thanks and appreciation to His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad for his generous sponsorship of this major event, which confirms the depth and history of Kuwaiti-British relations. It confirms His Highness' keenness to support events and activities that boost the national economy, strengthen ties, and develop trade relations with brotherly and friendly countries.

Behbehani added: "The British Week in Kuwait embodies the bonds of British-Kuwaiti relations that are rooted deep in history since the signing of the late Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah, God willing, of the Kuwaiti-British treaty in 1899, which confirmed the independence of Kuwaiti decision-making and kept Kuwait away from major international conflicts, and it continues till date. These distinguished relations were strengthened between the two countries in all political, economic and cultural fields, and we cannot forget Britain's courageous positions during the brutal Iraqi invasion in 1990."



Sheikh Nasser



# MC's Al-Roumi submits proposal regarding supervision contracts

Works minister issues two decisions

By Inass Awadh and Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: The Municipal Council member Farah Al-Roumi submitted a proposal recently regarding supervision contracts concluded between property owners and engineering firms.**

She explained that the contracts concluded between property owners and engineering firms related to the supervision of first stage work (especially in the private residential sector) may be devoid of some of the items mentioned in the supervision pledge approved by the municipality. The engineer supervising the project and the owner of the engineering office or consulting firm are obligated to adhere to the municipality in order to maintain the structural safety of the building or facility.

The municipality, as the management body that regulates construction work and issues licenses to preserve the interests of parties related to construction work (the property owner, the supervising body, and the contractor).

Engineering firms must be obligated to include in their supervision contracts concluded with property owners a clause stipulating compliance with what was stated in the undertaking to supervise the implementation of the construction (structure) of the site by those engineering offices.

#### Benefit

Al-Roumi said her proposal will benefit all parties related to the construction process, as the property owner will guarantee the quality of the concrete used in its construction, and will discover in the early stages of building the concrete structure the failure of the concrete effort, if it occurs, and will thus avoid bearing future losses resulting from that failure.

She indicated that this will also save effort, time and money if failure is discovered after the completion of the concrete structure work.

In addition, the office and engineering firms will guarantee, if they implement all their obligations stipulated in the contract concluded with



Dr Al-Mishaan



Al-Roumi

the property owner, that they will not be held responsible for the failure of the concrete effort at any stage of implementing the first stage of the structural work, if it happens.

By this, it can avoid being charged compensation for any damages that may befall the property owner as a result of this failure, as well as avoid any future losses for the contractor and the company supplying the concrete. This will reflect positively on the reduction of complaints submitted to the municipality from property owners and companies executing the construction, or complaints submitted against them before the Public Prosecution. This in turn will reduce the pressure on the judicial system and its supporting bodies in examining these lawsuits and complaints.

#### Postponing

In another development, the Minister of Public Works and the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Dr. Noura Al-Mishaan has issued two decisions. The first decision was aimed at postponing the implementation of 25 ministerial decisions dated October 18, 2023 and their amendments, which include postponing the referral of 25 employees to retirement from March 7 to September 1, 2024.

The second decision issued by Dr. Al-Mishaan was to form a technical support team affiliated with the minister, headed by Eng. Bashayer Al-Hilal. According to the decision, the team is tasked with preparing technical and contractual studies for the topics referred by the minister, providing the necessary opinion on them, and reviewing all decisions and circulars referred by the minister related to project management and making any comments regarding their development.

The decision assigned the team to carry out any other duties or tasks assigned by the minister for a working period of three months starting from the date of issuance of this decision on November 14, 2024, provided that the team's meetings happen outside official working hours, and the quorum necessary for the validity of its meetings is an absolute majority, which is half of the members and then one more.

## PAFN inspector granted judicial officer status

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: The chairman of the board of directors and director general of the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) issued a decision granting an employee the status of judicial officer, reports Al-Anba daily.**

Article One of the decision stipulates that Food Inspector Saad Hamad Saad Al-Dhafiri is granted the status of judicial officer in accordance with law number 112/2013 on the establishment of

PAFN and its amendment, law number 16/2019.

Article Two states that the decision will take effect upon its publication in the Official Gazette and all those required to implement it must be notified.

In another development, the Commercial Control Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry closed 48 shops and registered 513 arrest reports in January, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to the ministry, the number licensing violations in January totaled 24; indicating that the work of the judicial control officer, which includes the inspection and emergency teams at the ministry and the Tripartite Committee, resulted in the issuance of 608 confiscation reports – 310 by the inspectors, 192 by the emergency teams and 106 by the Tripartite Committee.



A group photo from Zain-ktech partnership 2024.

### Supporting education, youth empowerment

## Zain inks strategic partnership with Kuwait Technical College

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Zain signed a strategic partnership with the Kuwait Technical College (ktech) to support student, academic, cultural, and sports activities held throughout the current academic year. The step affirms the company's ongoing support to education and youth empowerment in the local community.**

The partnership was signed at Zain's headquarters in Shuwaikh, attended by ktech Chairman of the Board of Trustees Meshari Ayman Bodai, Zain Kuwait Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti, ktech Vice President Abdulrahman Al Ajeel, and team members from both partners.

Through this partnership, Zain supports a wide variety of programs, activities, and initiatives organized by ktech during the current academic year, including the annual student carnivals, where exciting entertainment and interactive segments are held for students. Zain also supports thrilling sports competitions that promote the spirit of teamwork and encourage being active, including the Ramadan Futsal

Tournament for male students, the Ramadan Volleyball Tournament for female students, and more.

Zain is always eager to take an active part in supporting education and engaging with students and young people by partnering with schools, universities, and colleges from both the public and private sectors. The company will spare no efforts to offer its support and encouragement to any entity that embraces the youth and contributes to the further progress of the community.

The Kuwait Technical College was founded under Amiri Decree 303 in 2005 to provide opportunities for students who are more oriented toward practical education. Ktech is licensed by Kuwait's Ministry of Higher Education and the General Secretariat of Private Universities Council and offers recognized two-year Diploma programs. Its vocational education is designed to prepare students to enter the market upon graduation by providing practical training to develop specific industry skills.



Al-Qatami, Boudi and Al-Duaij during the symposium.

### 'Development Dialogue ...'

## Symposium sheds light on impact of taxes on Kuwait's overall situation

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: The "Development Dialogue ... Reality and Aspirations" symposium, hosted by the Kuwait Economic Society in collaboration with the Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Foundation and moderated by society member Haya Boudi, concluded with insights suggesting that taxes could positively impact Kuwait's overall situation, especially in terms of enhancing services, reports Al-Jarida daily.**

Key stakeholders, including Wafaa Al-Qatami, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Investment Promotion Authority, and Sheikh Ahmed Al-Duaij, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Commercial Bank, emphasized that implementing taxes could be mutually beneficial for the state and citizens. However, they emphasized the importance of a clear government plan outlining milestones, objectives, and the expected benefits in terms of quality services for citizens. Transparency and citizen awareness regarding tax disbursement paths were highlighted as essential factors.

Speakers discussed existing taxes on listed companies and various government service fees, as well as the global application of taxes such as value-added tax. They emphasized the urgency for Kuwait to implement taxes promptly to prevent missed opportunities and potential tax evasion by Kuwaiti companies.

Al-Qatami supported tax imposition but stressed the need for a well-defined plan focused on service improvement and overall development. She emphasized addressing housing and social issues, advocating for education and human development to drive sustainable development. Al-Qatami also proposed reallocating budget resources from wasteful practices, such as overseas treatments and the "Afya" card, towards enhancing government hospitals.

Diversifying income sources away from sole reliance on oil was highlighted, with suggestions for investments in sectors like medical and recreational tourism to reduce budget deficits.

Al-Duaij highlighted the success of Kuwaiti banks domestically and internationally, advocating for fair competition to foster innovation. Regarding public debt, he suggested that the government determine its financing needs and involve

### 'Social Affairs' Sari clarifies on budget

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs Abdulaziz Sari has clarified that the budget for development projects is different from the ministry's budget, indicating there is an independent budget for each project and it is approved by the Secretariat General for Planning, reports Al-Anba daily.**

Sari made the statement to reporters on the sidelines of the closing ceremony of the Al-Baghli Award for the Righteous Son 2023, held recently at the Crowne Plaza Hotel under the patronage of Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs, Sheikh Feras Saud Al-Sabah.

He affirmed that the completion rate of the ministry's development projects has exceeded 60 percent. He also explained that disbursements are processed based on the completion rate.

He added the minister recently issued a decision on the formation of teams to inspect all cooperative societies throughout the year. He revealed the teams will carry out inspections as per the instruction of director of the concerned department.

He said the ministry is committed to the decision to suspend appointments, indicating the vacant supervisory positions will be filled once the suspension is lifted. "We are keen on adhering to all decisions issued by the regulatory authorities. By the end of 2024, the ministry will be among the institutions with few violations and observations; especially since it received a letter of appreciation from the Civil Service Commission (CSC), owing to zero observation from the CSC," he revealed.

the private sector in development projects. Al-Qatami emphasized the role of the Investment Promotion Authority in facilitating investments and job creation for citizens.

Al-Duaij expressed optimism about the future contributions of Kuwaiti banks to local and Gulf economic expansion, citing significant growth in profits and Kuwaitization rates within the banking sector.



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Chairman highlights growth momentum in GCC economies

# Markaz reports assets under management of KD 1.21 billion as total revenue surges by 40.0% YoY to KD 26.32 million in 2023

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" (KSE: Markaz, Reuters: MARKZ.KW, Bloomberg: MARKAZ: KK) reported its financial results for 2023 with a Total Revenue of KD 26.32 million, as compared to KD 18.80 million in 2022, led by gain from the sale of international and GCC real estate investments. Net Profit attributable to shareholders was KD 4.15 million, compared to KD 2.86 million in 2022 and Earnings Per Share was 8 Fils for the year ended 31 December 2023.

Mr. Diraar Yusuf Alghanim, Chairman stated: "During the year 2023, the GCC Economies witnessed huge development driven by the momentum in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The MSCI GCC index increased by 7.7% in 2023. In the context of the national economy, the IMF anticipates 2.9% real GDP growth in 2024, underpinned by attractive oil market dynamics. Inflation is expected to remain relatively subdued.

Throughout the year, the global economy encountered significant challenges due to the effects of escalating inflation, rising interest rates and the prolonged war in Ukraine. The outbreak of war in the Middle East, and the cooling of the US-China relationship, further intensified supply chain constraints, and global GDP growth in 2023 declined to 3.1% compared to the previous year (World Economic Outlook January 2024 edition). On the other hand, the asset management sector is experiencing a data-driven transformation led by artificial intelligence. By generating superior insights, artificial intelligence supports decision-making, constructing investment portfolios, and enhancing risk management. This opens doors to a new approach to alpha generation and a future where asset management is dependent on leveraging the power of data."

Mr. Ali H. Khalil, CEO, stated: "Markaz's Asset Management fees for 2023 were KD 7.17 million as compared to KD 10.60 million for the previous year. Investment Banking and Advisory fees for 2023 were KD 0.84 million as compared to KD 0.67 million for 2022, an increase of 25.4%. GCC real estate markets showed improvement, with a backdrop of higher oil prices and economic growth initiatives across the region, resulting in firmer rental and occupancy rates. As a result, our Net Rental Income was KD 2.19 million. From an Asset Management perspective, Markaz Assets Under Management (AUM) increased by 5.03% to reach KD1.21 billion as of December 31, 2023.

Although market concerns are likely to continue well into 2024, the Markaz approach to risk adjusted investment decision making will well serve its corporate, institutional and high-net-worth clients. A deep understanding of our client's financial objectives has underpinned Markaz's success over the last 50 years, especially during uncertain market conditions. As M&A favorable conditions return, the Investment Banking team is well positioned to advise on those transactions and also complex restructurings, listings, and IPOs. The real estate sector is expected to offer promising opportunities due to regional demographic and economic reforms, benefiting our real estate division. Markaz's adaptable business strategy and dedicated focus on client goals position us to capitalize on emerging opportunities in asset management and investment banking."

New financial services, funds, awards and other key highlights recorded in 2023

Markaz marked the end of 2023 on a high note having recorded a series of achievements over the year. These successes included the launch of new investment tools and financial services, new and renewed business deals, employee well-being initiatives, and ten prominent award receptions. Alongside new products announced, Markaz reiterated its commitment to local communities through its corporate social responsibility (CSR) campaigns, partnerships and sponsorship programs.

Reflecting on the year, Ali H. Khalil, Chief Executive Officer of Markaz, said: "At Markaz, we take each year as a new opportunity to surpass our previous achievements, and ensure that we take our talent, dedication, and operations to the next level. Our solid strategy has always paved the way for Markaz to take on new challenges and endeavors and watch them materialize over the course of the year. Our clients and stakeholders' interests are at the core of our operations and with more than 50 years of expertise in the investment community, we pride ourselves on our market knowledge, research-based framework and more so, our people behind every success we can record. 2023 has been a good year for Markaz, with every year representing yet another steppingstone for what is to come, and we look forward to what 2024 will bring."

Abdullatif W. Al-Nusif, Managing Director of Wealth Management and Business Development at Markaz, also commented on the achievements recorded throughout 2023. He said: "We are proud to have achieved another successful year with the introduction of new research-driven investment solutions, tailored to address our clients' investment needs and goals. In 2023, Markaz exemplified its commitment to Kuwait's financial market as we introduced landmark services, with the aim of reinforcing our mission to help generate and retain wealth for our clients, accompanied with a myriad of other achievements that have made the year indeed one for the books."

## Impact through Innovation

Underlining its dedication to proactively delivering innovative products and solutions to the Kuwait market, Markaz officially launched its GCC Momentum Fund during 2023. The passive fund follows a momentum methodology, providing investors with an opportunity to invest in top performing GCC stocks at a lower expense ratio than other GCC equities funds. Moreover, in an effort to play an impactful role in the development of the Kuwaiti capital market, Markaz became the first company to launch Securities Lending and Borrowing (SLB) services in Kuwait. The company hosted an introductory seminar in October at Boursa Kuwait's offices on the central lending and borrowing service as well as the advantages and risks associated with short-selling activities. The introduction of the new



Markaz Executives discussing outlook trends for 2024



Markaz Chairman Diraar Alghanim



Markaz Executives at seminar on 'Securities Lending' services



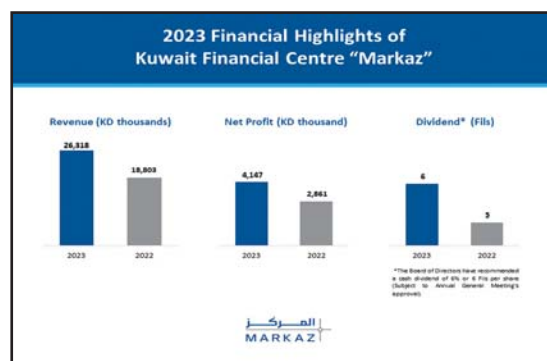
Markaz successfully sponsors Watheefti career fair.



Markaz conducts breast cancer awareness seminar for its employees.



Awards in 2023



Financial results info graphics

services aligns with Markaz's track record of providing traders with a wide spectrum of innovative, wealth-creation tools including Mumtaz 'the first domestic mutual fund', Forsa Financial Fund 'the first and only options market maker in the GCC in 2005, Idikhar 'the first money market fund in Kuwait', and MREF 'the first real estate investment fund in Kuwait'.

In the investment banking spectrum, Markaz and the Commercial Bank of Kuwait (Al-Tijari) jointly announced the successful issuance of bonds with a nominal value of KWD 50 million and a tenure period of 10 years, callable after 5 years. Markaz, as the lead manager and subscription agent, was successful in issuing bonds for KD 50 million under the subordinated Tier 2 capital bonds program.

The first-of-its-kind bond issuance denominated in Kuwaiti dinar signifies a milestone with both institutions and was fully subscribed through private placement to qualified investors. Another notable achievement during the period was the completion of the first KD-denominated convertible bond issuance for Sultan Center Food Products Company K.S.C.P., where Markaz served as the structuring advisor and lead manager, which had a nominal value of KD 9.65 million and a 10-year term. Markaz continues to support local companies from various sectors in issuing bonds and sukuk to secure the necessary financing for their operations. Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) has successfully issued KD 50 million worth of bonds in cooperation with Markaz as one of the joint leads managers. Dur-

ing 2023, Markaz was able to work on numerous mandates throughout the year predominantly with new clients. Those mandates involved work in valuations, feasibility studies, mergers, sell-side M&A, and financial restructurings amongst others.

Markaz successfully exited one multifamily project and partially exited an industrial project, achieving a net IRR of 10.0% and 18.0%, respectively, in the US. In Europe, we achieved a net IRR of 11.9% on the sales of our Industrial project in the Netherlands. Furthermore, Markaz completed the exit of Dubai property "Vezul" Abu Dhabi Property "Parkside", and the Riyadh complex "Rihab Pearl". These milestones demonstrate Markaz's commitment to offering diversified global investment opportunities and delivering favorable returns for its clients.

## Promoting Employee Wellness

Reinforcing its people-first culture throughout 2023, Markaz successfully hosted a series of events aimed at promoting wellness among its employees. In addition, 2023 was a landmark year with the strategic relocation of its headquarters to Burj Alshaya. This move reflects Markaz's commitment to continuous growth and adaptation in the evolving financial services industry and signifies its dedication to creating a dynamic and robust working environment for its employees. The new headquarters, symbolizing Markaz's growth journey and proactive approach to change, enhanced integration among departments, increased efficiency, thereby fostering a nurturing environment that elevates employee well-being. It also aligns with Markaz's vision of providing an environment conducive to innovation and productivity reaffirming its readiness for the next phase of its journey.

## Giving Back to Society

Since its inception, Markaz has firmly believed in making a difference by giving back to society, guided by its CSR strategy's three pillars: building human capacity, aligning the business environment with sustainable development principles, and promoting good governance in the business environment.

Aligning with the building human capacity pillar of its CSR strategy, Markaz extended its partnerships with a number of local organizations and non-profits. The company continued its support towards LOYAC, AC Milan Soccer School in Kuwait, Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospital (KACCH), Bayt Abdullah Children's Hospice (BACCH), and the Children's Cancer Center of Lebanon (CCCL), as well as the "Watheefti" fair and the project exhibition organized by engineering students at the Australian University of Kuwait (AUK). Markaz also renewed its contribution to the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' humanitarian missions.

The year 2023 also witnessed Markaz participating as a Gold Sponsor of the Golfe Vision 2023 conference, a new platform aimed at fostering greater business collaboration between France and countries within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Similarly, Markaz served as the Gold Sponsor of the 2nd edition of the Kuwait Public-Private Partnership Conference, and as a 'Strategic Partner' in the 2nd edition of the MoneyTech Summit, organized by Al-Jarida.

In line with Markaz's efforts towards empowering investors to make informed, responsible decisions, Markaz held its annual seminar titled "Markaz 2024 Outlook: Investment Trends and Opportunities", in the presence of a group of experts from Markaz, along with local and international prominent institutions. The seminar aimed at sharing insights on emerging investment opportunities regionally as well as globally, in equities, real estate and fixed income, and investment banking services including IPOs and advisory and Mergers and Acquisitions.

The Markaz Graduate Development Program (MGDP), which first launched in 2017, continued to provide young Kuwaiti graduates with hands-on training to equip them with the skill set necessary to excel in their respective financial sector careers. The program enabled the training of 57 graduates with 42% of them being offered a position at Markaz upon completion.

In line with its commitment to responsible investment, Markaz has become the first Kuwaiti financial institution to be a signatory to the United Nations-supported Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI). By joining this leading international network of institutional investors, the financial institution reinforces its dedication to integrating environmental, social, and governance (ESG) considerations into its investment decisions and practices.

## Awards and Recognition

Markaz ended 2023 with 10 prestigious new awards including 'The Best Private Bank in Kuwait'; from Global Finance and 'The Best Private Bank or Wealth Manager Servicing the State of Kuwait' from Wealth Briefing. Markaz was also recognized by Euromoney as "Middle East's Best for Investment Research" and "Best Domestic Private Bank in Kuwait", in addition to being ranked as a Market Leader in investment banking, Highly Regarded in CSR and digital solutions, and Notable in Diversity and Inclusion. As a leading investment solutions provider, Markaz was also recognized with two major awards from MEEED including 'MENA Investment Bank of the Year' and 'Excellence in Real Estate Investment'.

## Embracing 2024 with an Optimistic Outlook

Markaz looks forward to 2024 with a highly optimistic vision to continue delivering leading investment banking, wealth management, asset management and research to its stakeholders. Innovation and buoyant growth strategy will remain at the heart of its operations where the team of experts will relentlessly persevere to design, deploy, and manage effective solutions that would drive growth, development, and expansion. Markaz will continue its journey of building successes while focusing on a customer-centric approach and upholding its promise to deliver on clients' objectives and further cement its position as the trusted partner in wealth creation in the Middle East and beyond.



## 'Bob Marley: One Love' doesn't stir

# Jennifer Lopez returns with new album, 'This Is Me ... Now'

Music

LOS ANGELES, Feb 17, (AP) — On "This Is Me ... Now," Jennifer Lopez's first solo album in a decade, the singer takes back her rightful place on the throne of pop music.

In 2002, Jennifer Lopez dropped "This Is Me ... Then," her third studio album that married her glossy-eyed romanticism with R&B-pop rhythms. She also announced an engagement to the actor Ben Affleck, who she met while filming the movie "Gigli" in 2001. The pair broke up a few years later.

Fast forward 20 years and "Bennifer" — as they were dubbed by the '00s press — has returned, and so has her sublime pop. In 2022, they married, and now in 2024, the "This Is Me" series continues — articulating nostalgia and a loving feeling she knows best. It is the soundtrack to a new J.Lo Renaissance — one where she got her happy ending and has made the art to let listeners into her dreamy love story.

The opening track, "This Is Me ... Now," is quintessential J.Lo, with romantic instrumentation of flutes and harps. "Had a lot to learn, had a lot to grow, had to find my way," sings Lopez on a track reminiscent of a track that might've been on her 2002 R&B dance-pop album — with a new, refined wisdom.

It proceeds "To Be Yours," an energetic love song — sentimental but never saccharine — perfect for a serenade or the dance floor atop hip-hop beats. The album releases Friday, the same day as a film by the same name: "This Is Me ... Now: A Love Story."

"Can't Get Enough," an early single that doubled as a tease for the movie, was released with a music video that depicts the singer getting married several times, as she has in real life. In that way, the visual communicates that she's ready to open the door to her life and show it all — the good and the ugly — all the while sweetly singing "I'm still in love with you, boy," a gender-flipped take on Alton Ellis' 1967 reggae classic "I'm Still in Love with You," which her song samples.

As for that relationship transparency: "Dear Ben pt. II" is a sequel to the slow-burn "Dear Ben" from the 2002 album. The second install-

ment is a more dynamic take on the same relationship. "When I think you'll let me down, you lift my hopes," she sings about finding love with Affleck again, two decades later.

At the end of the album is the R&B anthem "Greatest Love Story Never Told" — a bow on the album's full package — Lopez's breathy vocals sway above an acoustic guitar, piano and strings. "It's destiny how we found each other twice in one lifetime," she sings both for her audience and for her husband.

"This Is Me ... Now" is for the Jennifer Lopez loyalists who patiently awaited her return, Bennifer fans, and those who believe in true love — no matter what shape it takes, or how long.

Meanwhile, Bob Marley was born in 1945, the son of an 18-year-old mother and a much older white man who had nothing to do with his son. As a boy raised in poverty, he often slept on the cold ground. Five years after moving to Kingston's Trench Town, he made his first record, at 17. Not 20 years later, he was dead.

### Monumental

By then, Marley had become the face of not just reggae, Rastafarianism and Jamaica, but of revolution, resistance and peace. He left behind a body of work that has only grown more monumental with time. "Redemption Song," "No Woman No Cry," "War," "Trench Town Rock," "Get Up Stand Up," "Lively Up Yourself," "One Love People Get Ready." The Beatles could argue they were bigger than Jesus but no one thought — like some did Marley — that they were actually the Second Coming.

So, yeah, it's a lot for a movie — any movie. "Bob Marley: One Love," directed by Reinaldo Marcus Green, is a noble but uninspired attempt to capture some of the essence of Marley. Its lived-in textures and attention to Marley's political consciousness, just by themselves, are enough to make "One Love" something more substantial than many recent, glossier music biopics.

But the power and complexity of Marley is still out of reach for

"One Love," which takes a typical biopic framework in plotting itself around the run-up to an important concert with flashbacks mixed in. When footage of the real Marley inevitably plays over the credits, it's a painful comparison to the ruminative but inert movie that played before it.

The first thing you notice about the performance by Ben Kingsley-Adir, the talented British actor of "One Night in Miami..." and "Barbie," is that he's got the voice. His Marley has the growl and lilt of the singer's resonant Jamaican accent. But what the performance is missing — an absence so clear when the real Marley turns up — is the physical dynamism and charismatic velocity of Marley.

The sheer vibrancy of Marley, who spent afternoons playing soccer and had at least 11 children in his short life, would undoubtedly be a tall order for most films. "One Love," set in the aftermath of a 1976 shooting that wounded Marley, follows a more contemplative Marley in self-imposed exile in London — on tour in Europe, recording the 1977 album "Exodus" and ultimately receiving a diagnosis of cancer.

Marley was by many accounts a more private person than often remembered, so the rendering here is surely a genuine aspect of a man rife with contradictions. "One Love," which lists four screenwriters and was made with Marley's estate (Ziggy and Cedella Marley are producers), appears to have wrestled with finding a single portrait, and the movie's patchwork pacing occasionally shows signs of that struggle.

But just as he showed in "King Richard," Green is skilled at finding intimacy in the lives of larger-than-life figures. Early in "One Love," Marley and his band assemble in a smoke-filled living room to play "I Shot the Sheriff," and it's moments like these that work far better than those in the public eye.

The performance that bookends the film is the One Love Peace Concert, which was put on in Jamaica in 1978 as a way to heal the divided, violent country. Marley, during "Jammin'," brought the rival party leaders Edward Seaga and Michael Manley on stage.

## Variety



This image released by Toho International shows a scene from 'Godzilla Minus One'. (AP)

## Film

### Oscar newbie nominated for best visual effects

# Godzilla stomps into the Academy Awards

NEW YORK, Feb 17, (AP) — Godzilla has been to Tokyo, Hong Kong, Paris, San Francisco, Boston, Moscow, London and Hawaii. But before now, he's never been to the Oscars.

When the Academy Awards roll around on March 10, Godzilla will stretch its scaly, reptilian legs down the Oscars red carpet for the first time in the franchise's 70-year history. "Godzilla Minus One," the 37th film in the film series, is nominated for best visual effects.

Though one of the most potent and long-running (or at least long-stomping) forces in movies, Godzilla has never before rubbed elbows at the Academy Awards. Its domain has been, well, the Pacific Ocean, but also the more popcorn-chomping realm of movie-dom. Laying waste to metropolises has not, typically, been a gateway to Hollywood's biggest night.

"We knew of the existence of the Oscars, of course, but there was never any kind of link between what was happening on the other side of the world and what we were doing," says Takashi Yamazaki, the writer-director of "Godzilla Minus One." "It's entirely unexpected that these two worlds collide."

But "Godzilla Minus One" has proven to be an especially border-breaking phenomenon. And its success at both the Oscars and the box office reflects a deeper shift in moviegoer — and Oscar voter — tastes toward international productions.

"Godzilla Minus One," the first Toho Godzilla film since 2016's "Shin Godzilla," was an unexpected hit when it landed in North American theaters in December. Though it was largely intended for Japanese audiences, "Godzilla Minus One" became the highest-grossing Japanese live-action film ever in the U.S. and Canada. Only two international live-action movies — "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" and "Life Is Beautiful" — collected more than the \$56.4 million grossed by "Godzilla Minus One."

It's all the more impressive because the film was made, somewhat miraculously, with a budget of less than \$15 million. Some 610 effects shots were created by Yamazaki, who also served as effects supervisor, and his small team of artists. Lacking the budget for hydraulics, the crew shook would shake a boat set to mimic ocean bobbing or rotate a cockpit to simulate fly-

ing. Godzilla, nominated alongside films like "Guardians of the Galaxy 3" and "Mission: Impossible — Dead Reckoning Part One" — is this time a plucky underdog.

Set in the waning days of World War II and just before the events of the 1954 original by Ishirō Honda, "Godzilla Minus One" was also roundly acclaimed by critics who praised it for returning to the essence of Godzilla and grounding it in a Japanese perspective. Godzilla fans marveled at what Yamazaki accomplished. At the Oscar luncheon, Steven Spielberg warmly greeted Yamazaki and told him he had seen "Godzilla Minus One" three times.

"Quite frankly, I wasn't looking at the world when we set out to make this movie," Yamazaki said in a recent interview. "A lot of our team members said, 'Oh, it's Godzilla. The whole world is going to see this. You have to treat it differently.' I told them all: 'This is a small budget film made for a certain audience.' They've proved me wrong and I'm very happy that they did."

### Double feature

Much has been made of the pairing of "Oppenheimer" and "Barbie," but the better double feature for Christopher Nolan's film might be "Godzilla Minus One." Across seven decades of movies, Godzilla has been deployed in a variety of ways. But "Godzilla Minus One" returns to the essential nature of Godzilla as a sober symbol of nuclear holocaust and atomic trauma.

In the 1954 original, Godzilla is woken by hydrogen-bomb testing. Producer Tomoyuki Tanaka once said: "The theme of the film, from the beginning, was the terror of the bomb. Mankind has created the bomb, and now nature was going to take revenge on mankind."

Ironically, that "Godzilla" didn't reach American audiences at the time. The version released in the U.S. was heavily edited and stripped of much of political themes. Raymond Burr, a Canadian actor, was inserted in new footage.

For some Western moviegoers, "Godzilla Minus One" is a truer introduction of Godzilla, one of the movies' greatest and grandest metaphors, than ever before.

"One of the many interpretations of Godzilla, through the evolution of the series of films over the

years, has been forgotten — which is the original interpretation," says Yamazaki. "Given the current state of affairs, what the world is going through right now, I thought it was very important that message not be forgotten. My intent was to put a spotlight on what Godzilla represented."

In "Godzilla Minus One," just as WWII is ending, Godzilla is growing. He begins appearing off the coast of Tokyo. For a kamikaze pilot Koichi (Ryunosuke Kamiki), who didn't kill himself in battle, confronting Godzilla offers a chance for redemption. When Koichi returns to Japan, he finds his parents dead and the city in ruins. Meanwhile, American bomb tests on Bikini Atoll are fueling Godzilla's power.

Recent Hollywood versions of Godzilla have put the kaiju into less Japan-centric contexts. The last was 2021's "Godzilla vs. Kong." Legendary Pictures, which licenses the character from Toho, will on March 29 release with Warner Bros. "Godzilla x Kong: The New Empire." If not for its coming debut, "Godzilla Minus One" might still be playing in theaters. It bowed out of cinemas in late January after the one-week run of a black-and-white version.

But unlike more broadly blockbuster-styled Godzilla films, "Godzilla Minus One" is rigorously rooted in a Japanese perspective. Some have lamented that "Oppenheimer," in staying close to J. Robert Oppenheimer's story, leaves out any Japanese experience of the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But what's absent of "Oppenheimer" is everywhere in "Godzilla Minus One."

Yamazaki has only seen an English version of "Oppenheimer"; the film hasn't yet been released in Japan. But he believes it's telling that both he and Nolan were separately drawn back to the dawn of the nuclear era.

"The world, in some sense, has forgotten the implications, the impact, the ramifications of what a nuclear war could entail," Yamazaki says. "How bad that can be, our collective awareness has been either desensitized or we've simply forgotten about because so much time has passed. This increased level of threat and the possible usage of it, perhaps humanity on a very subconscious level is feeling that and we're somehow compelled to address it or come up with our interpretations to this issue."

**LONDON:** Prepare for Poppenheimer.

"Poor Things" and "Oppenheimer" are the leading contenders for the British Academy Film Awards, which will be handed out Sunday in front of an audience of filmmakers, movie stars and the heir to the **British throne**.

**Yorgos Lanthimos'** gothic fantasia is up for 11 trophies, while **Christopher Nolan's** atom-bomb epic has 13 nominations for the British prizes, known as BAFTAs. That's the same number "Oppenheimer" has for the Oscars, where it is also the frontrunner.

The ceremony at London's Royal Festival Hall will be a glitzy, British-accented appetizer for Hollywood's Academy Awards, closely watched for hints about who might win at the Oscars on March 10.

Nominees including **Bradley Cooper**, **Carey Mulligan**, **Emily Blunt**, **Robert Downey Jr.**, **Rosamund Pike**, **Ryan Gosling** and **Yao Edebi** are expected on the red carpet beside the **River Thames**, along with presenters such as **Andrew Scott**, **Cate Blanchett**, **Chiwetel Ejiofor** and **Idris Elba**.

Guest of honor will be **Prince William**, in his role as president of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts. He'll be without his wife **Kate**, who is recovering after abdominal surgery last month. The show will be hosted, with a dash of self-deprecating humor, by "Doctor Who" star **David Tennant**.

"People keep telling me I should be terribly nervous." Tennant said about the notoriously pitfall-plagued role of awards show host. "But it's not like I'm up for the award. I just get to hand them out." Historical epic "Killers of the Flower Moon" and Holocaust drama "The Zone of Interest" have nine nominations each for the prizes, officially called the EE BAFTA Film Awards.

French courtroom drama "Anatomy of a Fall," boarding school comedy "The Holdovers" and **Leonard Bernstein** biopic "Maestro" each have seven, while grief-flecked love story "All of Us Strangers" is nominated in six categories and class-war dramedy "Saltburn" in five. "Barbie," one half of 2023's

"Barbenheimer" box office juggernaut, also has five nominations, but missed out on nods for best picture and best director. Many see the omission of "Barbie" director **Greta Gerwig** — for both BAFTAs and Oscars — as a major snub. **Britain's** film academy introduced changes to increase the awards' diversity in 2020, when no women were nominated as



Nolan



Blunt

best director for the seventh year running and all 20 nominees in the lead and supporting performer categories were white. But there is only one woman among the six best-director nominees: **Justine Triet** for "Anatomy of a Fall." **Emerald Fennell** for "Saltburn" and Celine Song for "Past Lives" also failed to make the list.

The best film race pits "Op-

penheimer" against "Poor Things," "Killers of the Flower Moon," "Anatomy of a Fall" and "The Holdovers." "Poor Things" is also on the 10-strong list for the separate category of best British film, an eclectic slate that includes class-war dramedy "Saltburn," imperial epic "Napoleon," south London romcom "Rye Lane" and chocolatier origin story "Wonka,"

among others. A woman of color could take the best actress BAFTA for the first time, with **Fantasia Barrino** for "The Color Purple" and **Vivian Oparah** for "Rye Lane" nominated alongside **Sandra Hüller** for "Anatomy of a Fall," **Mulligan** for "Maestro," **Margot Robbie** for "Barbie" and **Emma Stone** for "Poor Things." (AP)

Features

ARABIC TIMES

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2024

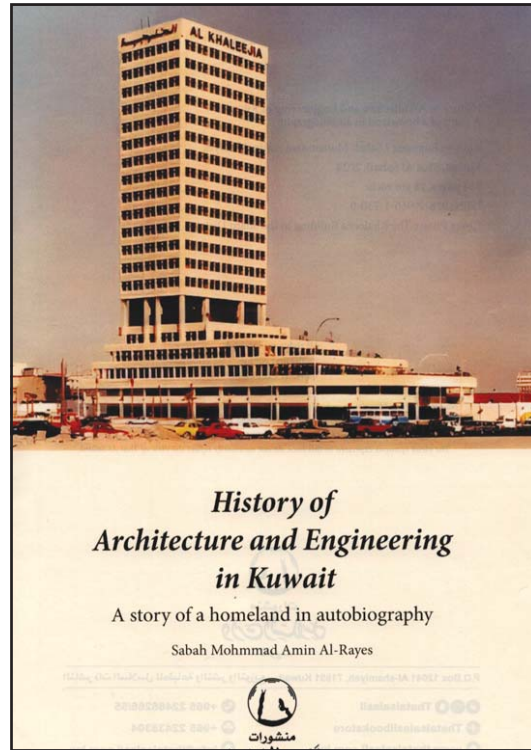
People & Places



Sabah Al Rayes with Sheikh Hussa Al-Sabah



Al Rayes with Prince Albert of Belgium at PACE office, 24 January 1985

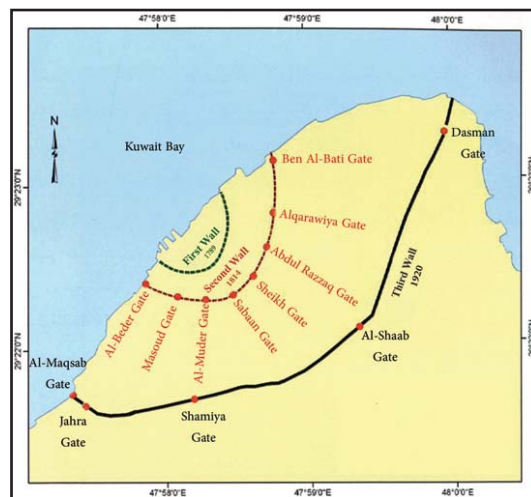


History of Architecture and Engineering in Kuwait

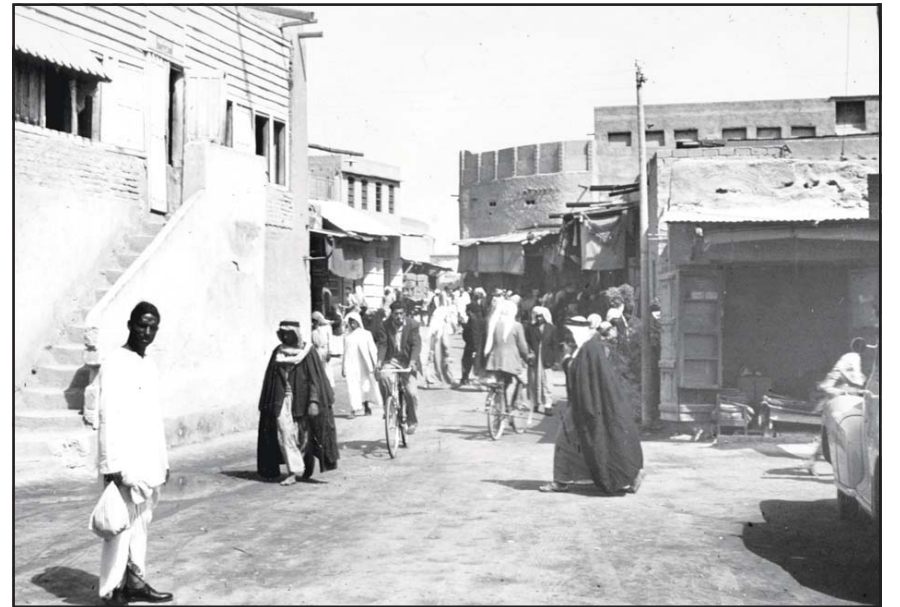
A story of a homeland in autobiography

Sabah Mohammad Amin Al-Rayes

New book



The Three walls around City of Kuwait between 1770 and 1920



Souq Mubarakiya by Mubarak Kiosk



In Airplane to London 1958

Books

Variety

**NEW YORK:** Gushing after the New York Philharmonic performed Leonard Bernstein's music, Bradley Cooper talked about creating the film "Maestro" in hopes of drawing more attention to the composer and conductor.

"Many people don't know who he is," the actor and director told the sold-out crowd of about 1,800 at Lincoln Center's David Geffen Hall on Wednesday night. "If you go to a coffee shop in New York City, let alone any other state in America, people have heard of 'West Side Story' but not Leonard Bernstein."

Yannick Nézet-Séguin made his New York Philharmonic debut conducting works from the movie over an hour mixed with video and audio clips, then had an onstage conversation with Cooper, who portrayed Bernstein. They were joined by Carey Mulligan, who played Felicia Montelegre, the actor and wife of Bernstein.

In an interview with The Associated Press before the concert, Cooper recalled how he got into character during the 55-day shoot in 2022, when he had time for only a brief nap at the end of each day. Bernstein's voice was the key.

"When I would be in the makeup chair before crew call, when I put that wardrobe on," he said, "I had to make that leap of faith to stop talking like this and start talking and breathing like him, with a deviated septum and asthmatic and all the things that he had to deal with."

"Maestro" premiered at the Venice International Film Festival last September and has since been nominated for seven Academy Awards, including best picture, Cooper for best actor in a leading role and Mulligan for best actress in a leading role.

Nézet-Séguin, a 48-year-old Canadian who is music director of the Metropolitan Opera and the Philadelphia Orchestra, served as a consultant to Cooper on conducting.

Bernstein, who died in 1990 at age 72, was an exuberant conductor known for occasionally leaping off the podium while calling for triple forte playing.

"We feel that sometimes we're not as well known as Beyoncé, let alone Taylor Swift," Nézet-Séguin told the crowd. "Bradley Cooper is our hero in the world of music." (AP)

**LONDON:** Prince Harry said Friday that he immediately arranged to go to London after his father, King Charles III, called to tell him he had cancer.

"I jumped on a plane and went to go see him as soon as I could," Harry told the news program "Good Morning America." "I love my family. The fact that I was able to get on a plane and go see and spend any time with him, I'm grateful for that."

Harry arrived from California less than 48 hours after Buckingham Palace announced on Feb. 5 that the king had cancer and had begun treatment.

The visit between the monarch and his younger son at Clarence House was relatively brief, as Charles and his wife, Queen Camilla, were seen leaving about an hour later.

The palace has not revealed the type of cancer the 75-year-old king has, saying only that it was discovered during a treatment for an enlarged prostate but isn't prostate cancer.

The Duke of Sussex wouldn't reveal any details about his father's prognosis. "That stays between me and him," he said.

Harry has had a troubled relationship with his family since he quit royal duties in 2020 and moved to Los Angeles with his wife, Meghan, citing what they said were the unbearable intrusions and racist attitudes of the British media. He showed up alone for his father's coronation in May but left as soon as the ceremony ended to return to California for his son's birthday.

By Chaitali B. Roy  
Special to the Arab Times

The sixties, seventies and eighties were a time of renaissance in Kuwait. The sleepy, laid-back port town that had been chiefly dependent on trading, fishing and pearl diving was reaping the benefits of the discovery of oil. In 1962, Al Sabah Hospital, the first grand hospital built by the Ministry of Health, opened. It treated patients from Kuwait and other countries in the Arabian Gulf. In 1966, Kuwait University, the first and oldest university in the Arabian Gulf, was established. Students from the Gulf region flocked to Kuwait to study under faculty members who held PhDs from some of the best universities in the world. Kuwait was home to some of the best literary magazines and published work in the region. It became a center of literary and theatrical arts and scored high with a free press.

Around this time, a similar renaissance was taking place in the built landscape of Kuwait. Among the Kuwaitis who led this renaissance was Sabah Mohammad Amin Al Rayes, a young Kuwaiti civil engineer who had recently graduated from Indiana Tech in the United States in 1965. Sabah Al Rayes is one of the first generation of Kuwaiti engineers who lived through the urban development of Kuwait. In the beginning, as an employee of the Ministry of Public Works and then as Founder of Pan Arab Consulting Engineers (PACE), a leading architectural consultancy, he contributed to the change that was taking place in the architectural narrative of Kuwait.

Sabah Al Rayes is a man of many parts. Apart from being a pioneering civil engineer, he is passionate about arts and music. A member of the steering committee of Dar Al Athar Al Islamiyah, he has played an important role in developing DAI's music programme. He is a legend to many Kuwaitis and architects who have worked under him or with him. Next week, Mr. Al Rayes will release "The History of Architecture and Engineering in Kuwait: A Story of a Homeland in Autobiography" to the public. Published by That Salasil, a local publishing company, the book's 800-plus pages explore not only the architectural heritage of the country but also comment on the socio-economic history of Kuwait seen through the lens of an extraordinary Kuwaiti who experienced both the lows and highs.

Sabah Al Rayes grew up in Kuwait in the fifties, a time when the country was still a protectorate of the British Empire. He studied at Shuwaikh Secondary School, a leading public school of the time. "In those days, one had to choose between liberal arts and science. I chose science and specialized in mathematics," he recalls. In those days, Kuwait was heavily invested in nation-building, and it was very important as part of the nation-building process that young people should be trained in fields the country needed most. Worthy students were selected for great scholarships.

When asked why he chose to pursue civil engineering, Mr. Al Rayes smiles. "The government decided for me and my friends. After I graduated, the government decided that all students who had taken up science and math would do civil engineering."

In 1958, Sabah Al Rayes and thirteen young high school graduates found themselves on a flight to the United States. "We had a long stopover in London, which we reached after 24 hours," he recalls. In those days, Al Rayes and his friends travelled in propeller planes with short breaks in Beirut, Athens, Rome and Paris. "From London to the US, it took us another 24 hours. We flew from London to Glasgow and then to Newfoundland before reaching New York after another 24 hours." For 17-year-old Al Rayes, who had never been out of Kuwait, it was quite an experience. "In Kuwait, the highest building then had two floors. Seeing those tall buildings in London and New York was quite an experience. Then, we encountered elevators for the first time. You enter this little box, and it takes you up and down. It was all quite fascinating." Al Rayes can still remember the excitement of being at Times Square during his first New Year celebrations in the States. "It was amazing," he smiles.



Al Rayes

What was Kuwait like when he was growing up? It must have been very different from what is today. "It was a beautiful pedestrian city," recalls the civil engineer. "Everyone walked. My grandfather, my father and my friends – all walked. You could walk from one side to the other. There were less than 800 vehicles in the total area of Kuwait in 1957." As far as built landscape was concerned, most buildings were adobe, a combination of mud and hay. Mr. Al Rayes' new book, "History of Architecture and Engineering in Kuwait" discusses the traditional architecture of Kuwait in detail. "Adobe buildings provided good insulation, but the problem was it eroded in rain. Before the rains, people would start plastering buildings and preparing for the season. In the early thirties, we had terrible rains and most buildings in Kuwait were ruined. The same thing happened in 1954. Adobe buildings were not sustainable. They required continuous maintenance." Interestingly, in the mid-twentieth century, 35% of Kuwait lived in one-room adobe houses. Only two percent of the people lived in big homes with multiple rooms.

Mr. Al Rayes stayed abroad until 1965. By the time he returned, Kuwait had gained its independence. The architectural landscape of the country had changed. According to him, it was the first master plan by British planners Minoprio, Spencely & Macfarlane in 1951 that really defined the road map for

urban development in Kuwait. By the time Al Rayes came back, Kuwait had changed. "By 1961, the first five-storey building with central air conditioning and elevators was built in Kuwait. Two buildings were five-storied. One of them is now occupied by the National Council for Culture, Art and Letters, and the other is the Kuwait Municipality building. The roads were upgraded. From 8,000 cars in 1957 to 800,000 cars in 1965. It was a big change in a short time."

After returning to Kuwait, Mr. Al Rayes joined the Ministry of Public Works for three years. "We were seven engineers that controlled the development taking place in Kuwait," he recalls. "I think we could have done much better. We could have stopped this slaughter of pedestrian space." In 1968, Mr. Al Rayes resigned from the Ministry and founded The Pan Arab Consulting Engineers (PACE), which not only became a leading architectural consultancy in the region but, along with other Kuwaiti consultancies, took part in the urban development of Kuwait. Mr. Al Rayes believes that in its quest for modernization, Kuwait lost its old-world charm.

Modernization

"Unfortunately, this is the price we paid for modernization. We got rid of what the West is trying to develop in their cities. They want pedestrian cities while we demolished what we had. Unfortunately, this is still going on."

Kuwait saw an urban renaissance in the seventies and eighties, as it evolved from a society dependent on trade and pearl diving to a society driven by oil. In 1946, after oil started being shipped, the foundation stone of Ahmadi was laid. The town of Ahmadi was built from scratch in the desert where roads were laid. On the other hand, Kuwait City had the infrastructure, but it was not adequate. "The main buildings of Ahmadi were air-conditioned with running water and a sewage treatment plant. We built a whole city, with the houses prefabricated from Europe. Ahmadi was built as a British countryside village. We used to visit Ahmadi to admire the buildings and the landscaping. The development in Ahmadi took a completely different course than the development of Kuwait City."

Speaking of the story behind his new book "The History of Architecture and Engineering in Kuwait", Sabah Al Rayes said, "As a person in the profession, I started reading to learn more about the past, and I was shocked to find out there were no books except for two. One of them was by Dr. Saba George Shiber, a wonderful planner who documented many things. He came to Kuwait in 1960 and passed away in 1968 at the age of 45. He contributed so much to the development of Kuwait. He reviewed the master plan of 1952. I failed to find something else that was more detailed, and that's what drove me to write my first book in Arabic about the history of architecture and engineering in Kuwait." Although the new release shares the same title

as the Arabic one, it is not a mere translation. "I have added a lot to it. This is a different book that targets expatriates," he urged.

In his book, Mr. Al Rayes speaks at length about old Kuwait. When asked about life then and if Kuwaitis of the past were more resilient, he said, "I disagree with many people from my generation who speak of the good old days. There were no good days. There was really a lot of suffering. There were times my mother sent me to get the donkey boy to bring water. We were eight children in the house, and we didn't have enough water. Those days were tough. And we were considered middle-income, above-average people. So, imagine the plight of the poor people."

The tome, whose cover page features the Khaleeja building, the first twenty-storied building in Kuwait that Sabah Al Rayes designed, addresses the lack of reference to the development of the built landscape in Kuwait. From an in-depth historical overview, the book, which took six years to be published, takes us through the old city, the fascinating three walls built to protect the city, the socio-cultural context, the housing policy, accommodations, the master plans, distinctive buildings in Kuwait's past, Ahmadi, the reign of Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Al Sabah, infrastructure, occupation of Kuwait and the liberation of Kuwait.

The British were strongly involved in the first and second master plans. "The British were involved in everything," says Mr. Al Rayes. "From 1946 until independence, they were involved in everything. They were economic, architectural, and engineering advisors to the Ministry of Public Works. The group that did the first master plan did a fantastic job defining and designing the city of Kuwait with a string of roads. They set the roadmap for any development. The master plan saved us a lot of the chaos that took place in other countries that did not follow a master plan."

As Kuwait underwent an urban renaissance, it did away with several vestiges of the past. "Civilization is half destruction," he says. "At that time, people wanted to eliminate anything that had to do with the past. They did not want to remember the misery we lived in." But Sabah Al Rayes is glad about the awareness and resistance of Kuwaitis to the recent plan to get rid of iconic structures like the Bayt Lothan or the Ice-Skating rink. "I am 85 years old. I have done many things that I am very proud of and satisfied with. All the buildings I designed or was very much involved with became iconic buildings." What about the urban landscape now? Are they environmentally sustainable? "No. Unfortunately, because of the cheap cost of fuel and energy, this part is truly neglected. Even though people talk about smart buildings or talk about the environment, I see little on the ground."

The History of Architecture and Engineering in Kuwait is available in That Salasil.

Angeles with his wife, Meghan, citing what they said were the unbearable intrusions and racist attitudes of the British media. He showed up alone for his father's coronation in May but left as soon as the ceremony ended to return to California for his son's birthday.

Asked if the illness could help reunify his family, Harry, speaking at an Invictus Games event near Vancouver, said, "Yeah, I'm sure." He said he has witnessed that type of galvanizing

effect among the wounded service members who compete in the games the prince founded in 2014.

"Throughout all these families, I see it on a day to day basis," he said. "You know, again, the strength of the family unit coming together." (AP)

**LOS ANGELES:** The management team of Brian Wilson has petitioned to place him in a conservatorship



Cooper



Prince Harry

because of his mental decline and the recent death of his wife, Melinda Ledbetter Wilson, who managed his daily life.

The 81-year-old Beach Boys co-founder and mastermind has a "major neurocognitive disorder" and is taking medication for dementia, according to a doctor's declaration filed with the petition Wednesday in Los Angeles Superior Court.

The petition asks a judge to appoint

two longtime Wilson representatives – publicist Jean Sievers and manager LeeAnn Hard – to be conservators overseeing his personal and medical decisions because "Mr. Wilson is unable to properly provide for his own personal needs for physical health, food, clothing, or shelter."

The two women "have had a close relationship with Mr. and Mrs. Wilson for many years, and Mr. Wilson trusts them," according to the filing. (AP)

Study shows 68% success in peanut allergy trial

FDA expands use of asthma drug Xolair to treat severe food allergies

NEW YORK, Feb 17, (AP): A medication used to treat asthma can now be used to help people with food allergies avoid severe reactions, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration said Friday.

Xolair, the brand name for the drug omalizumab, became the first medication approved to reduce allergic reactions caused by accidental exposure to food triggers. Patients as young as age 1 with allergies can take the drug by injection every two to four weeks, depending on their weight and their body's response to allergens.

An estimated 17 million people in the U.S. have the type of food allergies that can cause rapid, serious symptoms, including severe, whole-body reactions that are potentially deadly.

People who use Xolair must continue to avoid the foods that cause them reactions, such as peanuts, cashews, hazelnuts, walnuts, milk products and eggs. The medication allows them to tolerate higher amounts of such foods without causing major reactions.

Many people with allergies - and their families - live

with constant anxiety about exposure to allergens and often avoid dining out and other social situations.

"To have this protection is going to be life-changing," said Dr. Robert Wood, director of the pediatric allergy division at Johns Hopkins Children's Center.

The FDA decision is based on a study led by Wood and funded by the National Institutes of Health. It showed that Xolair allowed about 68% of participants with peanut allergies to tolerate about 600 milligrams, or about 1/2 teaspoon, of peanut protein, compared with about 6% of those who received dummy injections.

The results were similar for other allergens such as tree nuts, milk, egg and wheat, a study abstract reported. Full results are expected to be presented at a meeting and published in a peer-reviewed journal later this month.

Wood estimated that 25% to 50% of people with food allergies, particularly children and young adults, would elect to use Xolair.

The drug has been used "off-label" to treat food allergies, said Dr. Ruchi Gupta, director of the Center for



This Feb. 20, 2015 photo shows an arrangement of peanuts in New York. Xolair, the brand name for the drug omalizumab, used to treat asthma can now be used to help people with food allergies avoid severe reactions, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration said Friday, Feb. 16, 2024. (AP)

Food Allergy & Asthma Research at Northwestern University. She welcomed full approval of the product.

Xolair is a monoclonal antibody, a type of treatment that works by blocking the body's natural response to allergens. It was first approved in 2003 and has been used to treat asthma, nasal polyps and chronic hives. It is produced by drugmakers Novartis and Roche and is distributed by a Roche subsidiary, Genentech.

The most common side effects of Xolair are injection site reactions and fever, but the FDA noted that the drug has also been associated with joint pain, rash, parasitic infections, malignancies and abnormal laboratory tests. Xolair comes with a warning saying the treatment itself can cause anaphylaxis and must be started in a health care setting equipped to manage the reaction.

The medication is not approved for emergency treatment of allergic reactions. The list price for Xolair ranges from about \$2,900 a month for children to \$5,000 a month for adults, according to Genentech. Most insured patients typically pay less out of pocket, the company said.

Kuwait takes center stage in global health innovation

MoH unveils 7 state-of-the-art ECMO centers

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17, (KUNA): Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi said Thursday the State of Kuwait has seven Extra Corporeal Membrane Oxygenation (ECMO), also known as Extra Corporeal Life Support (ECLS) centers run by capable, experienced physicians.

Investment in human capital is the mainstay of sustainable socioeconomic development, he said in opening remarks at the 10th Conference of the South West Asia and Africa Extracorporeal Life Support Organization (SWAAC-ELSO), being hosted by Kuwait for the first time on February 15-17.

Dr. Al-Awadhi said his ministry has a strategy for building the capacity of national cadres in collaboration with SWAAC-ELSO and world-renowned centers to share ECMO knowledge.

"The Ministry of Health launched the seven centers and organized a several training courses accredited by the Organization over the past years."

"The centers and courses helped qualify more than 300 members of the national ECMO team for working in various specializations," the minister noted.

On the agenda of the SWAAC-ELSO Conference, he said it has 120 topics to be addressed by 70 lecturers from across the world.

Presentation

The conference will see presentation of 60 scientific papers and seven workshops meant to build the capacity of nearly 140 ECMO members from various countries, he went on.

Meanwhile, President of the Conference Dr. Huda Al-Foudri said Kuwait hosting of the Conference signals the confidence placed by the Organization in health sector of Kuwait.

"The ECMO center at Al-Adan Hospital has been the first Kuwaiti center to win the golden award of excellence of SWAAC-ELSO in 2020," she said, noting the ECMO centers of the Amiri and Jaber hospitals won the same awards recently.

Al-Adan Hospital's ECMO center was accredited by the ELSO in 2022, which is indicative of the quality of medical training at the center. The Center has qualified 300 ECMO medical staff over the past four years, she added.

The three-day conference gathered celebrated physicians in various medical specializations from over 20 countries.



Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, Minister of Health during the SWAAC-ELSO conference. KUNA photo

Illicit versions of painkiller involved

More people die after smoking drugs than injecting them, study suggests

NEW YORK, Feb 17, (AP): Smoking has surpassed injecting as the most common way of taking drugs in U.S. overdose deaths, a new government study suggests.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention called its study published Thursday the largest to look at how Americans took the drugs that killed them.

CDC officials decided to study the topic after seeing reports from California suggesting that smoking fentanyl was becoming more common than injecting it. Potent, illicit versions of the painkiller are involved in more U.S. overdose deaths than any other drug.

Some early research has suggested that smoking fentanyl is somewhat less deadly than injecting it, and any reduction in injection-related overdose deaths is a positive, said the study's lead author, Lauren Tanz.

Overdose

But "both injection and smoking carry a substantial overdose risk," and it's not yet clear if a shift toward smoking fentanyl reduces U.S. overdose deaths, said Tanz, a CDC scientist who studies overdoses.

Illicit fentanyl is an infamously powerful drug that, in powder form, increasingly has been cut

into heroin or other drugs. In recent years, it's been a primary driver of the U.S. overdose epidemic. Drug overdose deaths in the U.S. went up slightly in 2022 after two big leaps during the pandemic, and provisional data for the first nine months of 2023 suggests it inched up last year.

For years, fentanyl has mainly been injected, but drug users have been increasingly smoked it. People put the powder on tin foil or in a glass pipe, heated from below, and inhale the vapor, explained Alex Kral, a RTI International researcher who studies drug users in San Francisco.

Smoked fentanyl is not as concentrated as fentanyl in a syringe, but some drug-takers see upsides to smoking, Kral said. Among them: People who inject often deal with pus-filled abscesses on their skin and risk infections with hepatitis and other diseases.

"One person showed me his arms and said, 'Hey, look at my arm! It looks beautiful! I can now wear T-shirts and I can get a job because I don't have these track marks,'" Kral said.

CDC investigators studied the trend by using a national database built from death certificates, toxicology reports and reports from coroners and medical examiners.

NASA doubles asteroid rubble return goal

Japan's flagship H3 rocket reaches orbit in a key test after failed debut last year

TOKYO, Feb 17, (AP): Japan's flagship H3 rocket reached orbit and released two small observation satellites in a key second test following a failed debut launch last year, buoying hope for the country in the global space race.

The H3 rocket blasted off from the Tanegashima Space Center on time Saturday morning, two days after its originally scheduled liftoff was delayed by bad weather.

The rocket successfully reached orbit at an altitude of about 670 kilometers (about 420 miles) and released two satellites, the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, or JAXA, said.

"We feel so relieved to be able to announce the good results," JAXA President Hiroshi Yamakawa told a news conference.

The H3's main missions are to secure independent access to space and be competitive as international demand for satellite launches grows. "We made a big first step toward achieving that goal," Yamakawa said. The launch is a boost for Japan's space program following a recent streak of successes, including a historic precision touchdown on the moon of an unmanned spacecraft last month.

Space development

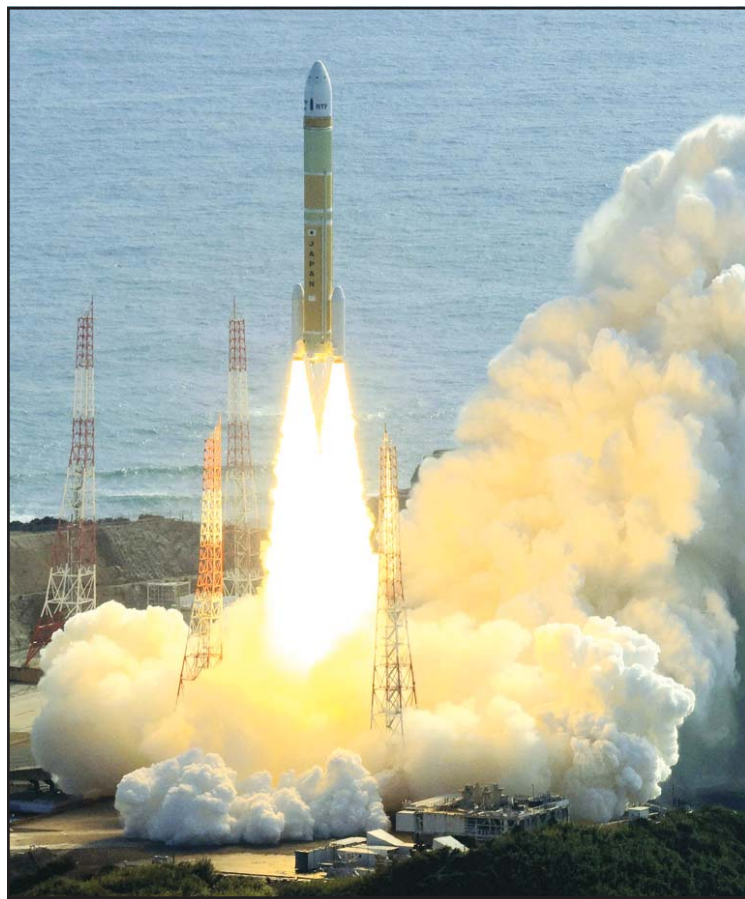
The liftoff was closely watched as a test for Japan's space development after H3, in its debut flight last March, failed to ignite the second-stage engine. JAXA and its main contractor Mitsubishi Heavy Industries have been developing H3 as a successor to its current mainstay, H-2A, which is set to retire after two more flights. As the rocket soared and released its first payload successfully, project members at the JAXA command center cheered and hugged each other in livestreaming footage. NHK television showed some staff at a press center crying with relief and joy.

JAXA H3 project manager Masashi Okada called the result "perfect," saying H3 cleared all missions set for Saturday's flight. "After a long wait, the newborn H3 finally had its first cry."

"I now feel a heavy load taken off my shoulders. But now is the real start for H3, and we will work to steadily improve it," Okada said.

The H3 No. 2 rocket was decorated with thousands of stickers carrying messages sent from well-wishers around the country.

Two microsatellites - observation satellite CE-SAT-IE, developed by Canon Electronics, and TIRSAT, which was co-developed by a number of companies and universities - were piggybacked on the H3 Saturday.



An H3 rocket lifts off at Tanegashima Space Center in Kagoshima, southern Japan Saturday, Feb. 17, 2024. (AP)

Their makers said they were willing to take the chance as they see a growing market in the satellite business.

The 57-meter (187-foot)-long H3 is designed to carry larger payloads than H-2A at much lower costs of about 50 billion yen (\$330 million), to be globally competitive.

Masayuki Eguchi, head of defense and space segment at Mitsubishi Heavy, said his company hopes to achieve better price competitiveness after about a dozen more launches.

"I'm delighted to see this incredible accomplishment in the space sector right after the success of the SLIM moon landing," Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said on X, formerly Twitter. "I expect the Japanese mainstay rocket will steadily make achievement."

Last month, a H-2A rocket successfully placed a spy satellite into its planned orbit, and days later JAXA's unmanned spacecraft SLIM made the world's first "pinpoint" moon landing then captured lunar data.

Also;

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla.: NASA fi-

nally has counted up all the asteroid samples returned by a spacecraft last fall - and it's double the rubble return goal.

Officials reported Thursday that the Osiris-Rex spacecraft collected 121.6 grams (4.29 ounces) of dust and pebbles from asteroid Bennu. That's just over half a cup and the biggest cosmic haul ever from beyond the moon.

It took NASA longer than expected to pry open the sample container because of stuck fasteners.

The black, carbon-rich samples - the first ever collected from an asteroid by NASA - are stored at a special curation lab at Houston's Johnson Space Center.

Osiris-Rex returned the samples last September, three years after gathering them from the asteroid. The haul for the \$1 billion mission would have been greater, but rocks jammed the lid of the container following the grab and some samples floated away.

The spacecraft is now on its way to another space rock, but that will involve only a flyby with no stop for samples.

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Liverpool's Mohamed Salah has a shot at goal past Brentford's goalkeeper Mark Flekken during the English Premier League soccer match between Brentford and Liverpool at the Gtech Community Stadium in London. (AP)

# Sports

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## Liverpool stay 'top' of league

Salah scores on return

LONDON, Feb 17, (AP): Mohamed Salah made a scoring return for Liverpool as the Premier League leader routed Brentford 4-1 to stay on top of the league on Saturday.

Salah had been out for a month since sustaining a hamstring injury at the Africa Cup of Nations. He came on as a substitute just before halftime at the Gtech Community Stadium and struck his 19th goal of the season in all competitions in the 68th minute.

Liverpool already led 2-0 at that point, after Darwin Nunez opened the scoring in the 35th and Alexis Mac Allister added another from Salah's assist.

Ivan Toney pulled a goal back for Brentford in the 75th, scoring for the fourth time in five games since returning from an eight-month ban for breaching betting rules.

But substitute Cody Gakpo sealed a 4-1 win for Liverpool in the 86th, which provisionally extended its lead at the top of the table to five points.

In Germany, fan protests halted another game in the Bundesliga when supporters threw tennis balls and sent remote control cars careening around the penalty area during Werder Bremen's 1-0 win over Cologne.

The match was halted for almost 10

minutes early in the second half. Fans have been protesting at games across the country against a proposed deal to sell a future stake in the league to a private equity investor.

Players kicked the tennis balls off the pitch as two bright orange cars sped up and down the penalty box doing flips and about turns.

### SOCCER

In previous protests, apples and chocolate coins have been thrown onto the pitch. Last week, a second division game between Hamburg and Hannover was interrupted after fans attached bicycle padlocks to a goalpost. Officials cut the locks off with a power saw.

When Friday's game restarted, Bremen returned to winning ways while Cologne's relegation worries deepened.

Substitute Justin Njinmah scored with 20 minutes remaining. Cologne goalkeeper Marvin Schwäbe missed Mitchell Weiser's cross from the right and Nijnmah turned the ball into the empty net. Bremen climbed into seventh spot.

The defeat was a blow to Cologne, which appeared to have steadied after a poor run left it in relegation trouble.

Since Timo Schulz took over on Jan. 4, Cologne had lost only once and picked up five of a possible nine points before Friday's reverse.

The inability to score has cost it dearly, and defeat meant it remained third from bottom, six points from safety.

In Turin, Serie A leaders Inter Milan scored three times in the first half on its way to a comprehensive 4-0 defeat of bottom club Salernitana.

Marcos Thuram opened the scoring with a fine side-foot finish after 16 minutes and Lautaro Martinez doubled the lead three minutes later with a shot from outside the box.

Denzel Dumfries made it 3-0 five minutes before halftime when he tapped in from close range after the goalkeeper spilled a shot from Nicolò Barella. Austrian center forward Marko Arnautovic rounded off the rout in the final minute.

It was a sobering start for Fabio Liverani, who was appointed Salernitana coach last Monday with the task of keeping the club up.

His new side remained rooted to the bottom of the table, five points adrift of Cagliari and with just two wins all season.

Earlier, Duván Zapata scored his third goal in four games as Torino's super start to 2024 continued after beating Lecce 2-0.



Liverpool's Alexis Mac Allister celebrates scoring his sides second goal during the English Premier League soccer match between Brentford and Liverpool at the Gtech Community Stadium in London. (AP)

## Kuwaiti Sports Club for the Disabled celebrates remarkable win in Sharjah

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Nasser Al-Ajmi, the Vice President of the Kuwaiti Sports Club for the Disabled, expressed immense pride in the Kuwaiti national team's remarkable success at the Sharjah International Forum and the 15th Fazza International Athletics Championships for the Disabled in the Emirates. The team secured an impressive total of 24 medals, consisting of 7 gold, 10 silver, and 7 bronze.

letes in their respective fields.

Al-Ajmi also revealed that the participation led to the qualification of two players, Faisal Sorour in shot put and Faisal Al Rajhi in wheelchair running (800 meters and 1500 meters), for the upcoming World Athletics Championships for the Disabled in Japan.

Under the leadership of Shafi Al-Hajri and the council members, Al-Ajmi affirmed the club's commitment to continuing its support for players in diverse sports. The aim is to attain further successes in upcoming international competitions. He dedicated this significant accomplishment, coinciding with national holidays, to the esteemed His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the people of Kuwait, and the Kuwaiti disabled sports family.

### ATHLETICS

Leading the Kuwaiti delegation in these championships, Al-Ajmi lauded the exceptional efforts of disabled athletes across various categories, highlighting their prowess and dedication. He emphasized that this achievement solidifies the superiority of these ath-



Inter Milan's Denzel Dumfries (left), jumps for the ball with Salernitana's Alessandro Zanoli during the Serie A soccer match between Inter Milan and Salernitana at the San Siro stadium in Milan, Italy. Inter won 4-0. (AP)



General Administration for Private Education B players celebrate with the championship trophy.

Al-Khamis receives Best Player Award

## General Administration for Private Education B win title

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: The B team of the General Administration for Private Education clinched the championship title in the Warba Bank Basketball League for the secondary stage. The league, organized by the Kuwait School Sports and Higher Education Federation, concluded with the B team's victory over the Al-Ahmadi Educational Zone with a score of 70-58 in the final match held at the Gulf University for Science and Technology hall. The event witnessed the presence of notable figures including Fais-

al Al-Maqseed, President of the School Union, Dhari Burgess, President of the Kuwait Basketball Federation, and Walid Ayesh, General Director of Physical Education in the Ministry of Education and Vice President of the School Union.

### BASKETBALL

Securing the third-place position, the Mubarak Al-Kabeer District team triumphed over the Hawalli District

with a score of 43-37. Talal Al-Khamis from the Al-Ahmadi Educational District received the prestigious Best Player Award in the league.

Hamad Al-Fawzan, Head of the Strategic Planning Group at Warba Bank, commended the high technical level witnessed during the final match.

He expressed satisfaction as partners with the Kuwait School Sports Federation and Higher Education, emphasizing the importance of supporting the talents of young players.

Al-Fawzan highlighted the significance of providing opportunities for high school students to join clubs and teams.

The presence of the President of the Kuwait Basketball Federation on the closing day underscored the keen interest in the Warba Bank Basketball League for the secondary stage.

Al-Fawzan concluded by expressing anticipation for the improvement of the league in its second edition through continued collaboration with the school union.



Kuwaiti Sports Club for the Disabled delegation.

Focus remains on winning this season

## Ancelotti not thinking about Mbappé just yet

MADRID, Feb 17, (AP): Coach Carlo Ancelotti is trying to keep Real Madrid focused on the task at hand despite all the talk about Kylian Mbappé.

Ancelotti said Saturday he is not thinking about the possible signing of Mbappé, and that his only concern is to get his team ready for Sunday's match at Rayo Vallecano in the Spanish league.

Mbappé on Thursday told Paris Saint-Germain he will leave the French club at the end of the season, opening the door for a possible move by Madrid to sign the star forward.

Madrid tried signing Mbappé a couple of years ago but the player ended up staying with PSG.

"I see and hear things," Ancelotti said. "And I understand that it is the topic of the day for you, but for us

it's tomorrow's game. We have to play well tomorrow, that's what I think."

Ancelotti sidestepped questions about whether his players were talking about Mbappé in the locker room, or about whether he would like to coach the forward.

"We talked about the game, we saw videos of Rayo, we know that this is a vital game for us this season," Ancelotti said. "What I would like to do is to finish this season well, to win titles. That's what I would like. There's a long time to go before next season."



Ancelotti

Midfielder Aurélien Tchouaméni said recently that he and his Madrid teammates did talk about France colleague Mbappé at times, saying it was an important subject.

### SOCCER

Mbappé will be a free agent after seven years with PSG. He informed the French club last year that he would not trigger an extension to the contract he signed in 2022.

There could be a bidding war among several clubs to sign the former World Cup winner, but Madrid is widely considered to be in the front seat. Mbappé never hid his dream of one day playing for the Spanish powerhouse.

Madrid has a five-point lead over Girona in the Spanish league. It defeated Leipzig 1-0 in the first leg of

the quarterfinals of the Champions League. Villarreal came from behind to draw with Getafe 1-1 at home and extend its unbeaten run to five games in the Spanish league on Friday.

It was its third home draw in a row and the fourth draw in the last five.

"We don't deserve so few points in these last three home games," said striker Alberto Moreno, who scored Villarreal's equalizer early in the second half. "Results haven't gone for us but we're happy."

Getafe took the lead after 24 minutes. Mason Greenwood's flighted free kick fell to Nemanja Maksimović and he stabbed home from the middle of a packed penalty box. Moreno leveled 11 minutes into the second period when his left-foot shot squeezed between the goalkeeper and the post.

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