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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.

**Continued on Page 5** 

### 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 teach-



ers 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



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

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-tak-ing session when he said, "The appoint-ments 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.

> **Continued on Page 5** Email: ahmed@aljarallah.com Follow me on: facebook  $\mathbb{X}$ ahmedaljarallah@gmail.com

# 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.

#### **Continued on Page 5**

# **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-

#### CITRA boosts security

### Failaka Island home to ancient civilizations

### **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

**Continued on Page 5** 

The State of Kuwait's Failaka Island wit-nessed civilizations dated back to end of 3rd millennium BC and 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-



(KUNA)

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.

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.

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

**Newswatch** 

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 semiofficial 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.

#### 

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)

Relics are seen on Failaka Island.

Photo by lehab Qurtal

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



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

erly wind, with speeds of 08-32 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.			Kuwait Airport	24	17
			Abdaly	24	13
			Jahra	23	16
will appear.			Salmiyah	21	17
Station	Max Exp	Min Rec	Nuwaisib	23	17
Kuwait City	25	17	Wafra	24	15

#### 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 against violence women The UNSC needs

nian 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.

lution 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.

Mauritania, acknowledged in her statement that the number of women leaders has remained small in her country. Her peer, Fatma Al-Muaqqet, 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 İsraeli 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 Kuwaiti Union for Woman's Associations, in coordination with the Arab-League Affiliated Organization of the Arab Woman.

Al-Daiga indicated that the UNSG reso-

Leila Jeddin, a female justice from

The two-day event is organized by



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 coun-

try'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.

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

MEW rejects 14 grievances, refers to CSC



2

Dr Al-Makim

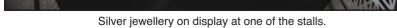
to be activated further to enable the Arab

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, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, 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 Jorda-



#### '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 Mishaal 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 onethird 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 employ-ment, 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.

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-Ŝanad 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.

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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 Hawally.

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 Ab-dullah 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 special representative for the Gulf region, on the fringes of the 60th Munich Security Conference which opened on Fri-

day. The talks focused on ways to strengthen the friendly relationship between Ku-wait 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 deeprooted, 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 data. 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."



# LOCAL

# diwaniya ዮ جيوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

### Spraying public with water, foam spoils charm of the celebrations

"ON THE occasion of the approaching celebrations of the 63rd anniversary of National Day and the 33rd of Liberation Day, I extend my congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, may God protect and preserve him, and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem, and to the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior. Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef, and to all my brothers and sons who are employees of the Ministry of Interior, and to the Kuwaiti people and the Kuwaiti government, may God bring us back the holidays with goodness, prosperity and blessings and may He preserve our dear country, columnist," columnist Tarek Hamada, wrote for Al-Anba daily

and the anniver-sary of Liberation Day are nothing but an expression of love and appreciation for this country and an emphasis on the sincerity of belonging and pride in it.

"Although the Tarek Hamada vast majority of

citizens and residents express their joy in ways that express the value of this occasion that is dear to our souls, some find it an opportunity to depart from the norm.

"Committing to inappropriate behavior disturbs the celebrations, disturbs the celebrants, and causes unnecessary quarrels, in addition to some disorderly behavior, including throwing water and foam at the celebrants, which, in addition to the quarrels, causes accidents and run-overs.

"Some people mistakenly believe that it is okay for children and teenagers to express their joy by throwing water balloons, which has become the dominant feature of celebrations. These irresponsible actions, in addition to what was mentioned above, waste hundreds of thousands of gallons of water in vain.

"Despite the media highlighting it and criticizing the use of pistols, rifles, and hurling at passers-by, we find it present in all national holidays, and I wish it depended on the locations of the celebrations. Rather, we find children stopping on internal roads in various regions and spraying vehicles, putting their lives in danger. Unfortunately, the ones who bought them these tools are themselves (their parents) are concerned about keeping them safe!

"The family must play a major role in guiding the children and making them aware of the danger of continuing to celebrate in this way, to enhance responsibility towards the nation.

"A few days ago, Al-Qabas newspaper published a report on the Ministry of Commerce and Industry's intention han the sale and circulat loons" and "water pistols and sprayers" at all commercial points of sale in Kuwait, whether at the level of cooperative societies, supermarkets, or stores, while imposing heavy penalties on those who do not abide by the decision including closing the point of sale and referring it to the Commercial Prosecution. "In my opinion, this step is important, even if it is somewhat late. We rely on the awareness of parents and the awareness of their children to avoid harming others and do not allow children to use these pistols to spare the revelers from injuries to the face and eyes resulting from throwing balloons or from water pistols filled with fluids and reducing the issues of exchanging blows during the holiday period, which sparks due to these unacceptable behaviors. May God protect Kuwait from all harm. "Last words: The men of the Interior Ministry make a great effort in the national celebrations and aim to provide the maximum safety measures, thus protecting the celebrants and reducing accidents and quarrels, so it is necessary to cooperate with them and help them in performing their duties."

ity'," Dr Bahija Behbehani wrote for Al-Qabas daily.

"The study examined Kuwait's spending on education for 35 years, indicating that 'The development in the educational sector was only quantitative, and was limited to increasing facilities and the numbers of schools and classrooms without the quality of education'.

"Government schools are considered, starting from kindergarten and the stages: primary, middle, and high school - schools established and funded through the government. The curricula and final exams and their dates are unified at the state level, and government schools rely on the Arabic language for teaching, while private schools teach most subjects in English, such as scientific subjects (mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology).

"This is a fundamental difference between private and government schools, and dates also differ. The exams between them, as well as the curricula, are completely different from their counterparts in public schools because they are derived from the educational system in the country in which the private school follows, i.e. whether it is British or American.

"Although private schools are schools established by private parties, and the source of their funding is through pri-vate fees paid by the students' parents, in addition to the high prices of school supplies and books, and conducting an intelligence level test to determine the student's abilities for approval, parents bear their conditions, because they care about Mainly in English, to ensure their children's enrollment in prestigious international universities. Private schools also provide students with various activities. interactive panels in classrooms, various activities, and encourage students to practice their hobbies.

"For all these reasons, parents prefer to enroll their children in private education schools to provide a high-quality scientific environment and achieve a high level of academic achievement for their children, since these schools are distinguished by providing standards of efficiency and quality of teaching.

"The efficiency of teachers in private schools, and their ability to be creative with teaching methods and communicate positively with students and direct them towards self-development, is a necessary effort for them, because if they do not achieve the goals of the school, this will cause them to be dismissed, while the Kuwaiti teacher will not be dismissed even if they do not achieve them. He did not perform the duties assigned to him, and this is the fundamental difference between public and private schools.

"Bahrain reception ... When the country's heritage is present in official receptions, this certainly means that all the people are present. This is what distinguished the royal and public reception for HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, may Allah protect him, on the land of the beloved Kingdom of Bahrain, with which we have had special relations and family ties since ancient times!" columnist Talal Al-Saeed wrote for Al-Seyassah daily. "The entire Bahrain was present at the reception. Observers were dazzled and delighted by the unprecedentedly organized popular art -- the Bahraini Ardha. The art exudes the fragrance of authenticity, as groups chanted amazingwords. The most wonderful content was chanted in the most enchanting manner. The Bahraini Ardha is distinguished by its expressive uniform and the regular movement to the tune of the Bahraini military Ardha, as well as the unified movement of the Ardha rows, and those carrying swords and rifles. "In addition to the uniform that has distinctive heritage significance, everyone who cares about the heritage knows the importance of each color, which gave the parade an ambiance of elegance and beauty. The same applies to the cavalry, and their illustrious reception and traditional military clothing, which made them more prestigious! "As for King Hamad's gift, may Allah protect him, to our Amir, it carefully chosen and it has historical heritage significance. The selection of the Bahraini sword was a very successful choice, in the same manner that the Bahraini sword was the crown of the grand reception ceremony. This sword has an immense status that the elders know and take care of. They appreciate its meaning and what it symbolizes!."

#### **Interpol extradites man to Kuwait**

# Fugitive, wanted in fraud case, held in record time

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: The Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior announced the arrest of a man who was wanted by law in connection with embezzling 300,000 Kuwaiti dinars (about 975.2 thousand dollars), in direct cooperation with the UAE authorities, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a statement, the Kuwaiti Interior Ministry said: "In direct cooperation with the United Arab Emirates, the Criminal Security

Sector was able to arrest a fugitive accused outside Kuwait."

The statement added: "The Criminal Security Sector, represented by the General Department of Criminal Investigation (the Anti-Money Crimes Department and the Interpol Department), was able to arrest a fugitive "based on the decision of the Public Funds Prosecution.'

Regarding the search, investigation and arrest of one of those accused of forgery and tampering with documents and invoices, a research team was formed by the Department of Combating Money Crimes and the Department of Criminal and Arab Police (Interpol) immediately, in order to coordinate with the authorities in the United Arab Emirates and the Kuwait consulate, to arrest the suspect before he fled from Dubai to his country, and was arrested and extradited to the State of Kuwait."

The Interior Ministry stated that "the accused is being investigated and he and those involved are being referred to the competent authority in order to take all necessary legal measures."

3

The statement added, the necessary measures were taken against the suspect as soon as he got off the plane, and he was handed over to the State of Kuwait in record time in implementation of the Gulf and international agreements.

# **32 workshops repairing vehicles** illegally shut down in Jleeb: GTD

Restaurants, groceries functioning without license closed

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Brigadier General Muhammad Al-Adwani, Assistant Director of the General Traffic Department for Technical Affairs, has reaffirmed the department's unwavering commitment to combat all forms of traffic violations, particularly those stemming from unauthorized garages and workshops operating in violation of the law, reports Al-Jarida daily.

During a recent security sweep in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, a notorious area for such activities, a joint committee targeted unauthorized garages and expatriates conducting vehicle repairs in makeshift outdoor spaces. Alarming trends of non-compliance with regulations were observed, prompting swift action. Notably, 32 unlicensed workshops were shut down for operating without permission, engaging in unauthorized vehicle alterations and repairs.

In a recent statement Al-Adwani underscored the department's dedication to ensuring the safety of citizens, residents, and road users by eradicating such illegal activities.

#### Proliferation

Al-Adwani pointed out the alarming proliferation of negative phenomena, particularly in areas like Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, and assured the public that concerted government efforts are being mobilized to address these issues.

Major Abdullah Bu Hassan, from the Public Relations and Traffic Awareness Department at the General Traffic Department, provided further details on the campaign's outcomes.

These included the issuance of 190 traffic violations, vehicle seizures, and the closure of workshops operating without licenses. Additionally, inspectors from various government agencies apprehended violators of residency and labor laws, placed warnings on abandoned vehicles, and shuttered unlicensed restaurants and grocery stores.

Furthermore, inspectors discovered stolen electrical cables in a warehouse and apprehended individuals involved in their theft. These collaborative efforts underscore Kuwait's determination to enforce traffic laws and uphold public safety.

# Ex-con among two held for trafficking in drugs



Brigadier General Muhammad Al-Adwani having a look at the stolen cables found in a warehouse.

#### 82 cases sent for probe: Nazaha

# '910 corruption reports received'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: The Public Anti-Corruption Authority, known as "Nazaha," disclosed that it has received 910 reports of corruption crimes during the previous two fiscal years, spanning from 2021/2022 to 2022/2023. Among these reports, 82 cases have been referred to the Public Prosecution for further investigation and legal action, reports Al-Jarida daily.

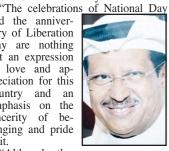
This revelation was made in response to a memorandum from the Minister of Justice and Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Faisal Al-Gharib, following a query submitted earlier by MP Fahd Al-Masoud regarding corruption complaints handled by Nazaha during the specified period.

Nazaha outlined its procedures for dealing with received reports, which involve verification of formal and substantive conditions for report acceptance, followed by registration and initiation of investigative procedures.

Reserves breached

#### 133 Kuwaitis caught, 28 expats 'deported'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Brigadier General Hussein Al-Ajmi, Director of the Environmental Police Department at the Ministry of Interior, disclosed that in 2023, 133 citizens were apprehended and 28 expatriates were administratively expelled (deported) for breaches of environmental regulations and violations within natural reserves. These measures aim to safeguard natural reserves from interference, facilitated through a collaboration protocol between the General



#### Also:

"The continuation of the phenomenon of enrollment in private schools instead of public schools is due to the state's lack of interest in the educational staff, modifying the status of the teacher, and developing methods of evaluation as stated in an academic study conducted by Dr. Wael Al-Shuaie and Dr. Navef Al-Shammari in 2019 stated 'The increase in government spending on education has not improved its qual-

- Compiled by PFX Fernandes

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Two individuals -- one of whom has a criminal record -- were arrested in Fahaheel for trading in narcotic substances with a cocktail of narcotics, a firearm, a rifle, bullets and drug paraphernalia in their possession, reports Al-Anba daily.

This is the result of the implementation of the security plan for the rapid deployment of patrolmen to support the Ahmadi Security Directorate. Director General of Ahmadi Security Directorate Brigadier General Muhammad Metlaq Al-Mutairi laid down the security plan.

The Ahmadi security support patrolmen were roaming around Fahaheel recently as part of the implementation of the security plan when they noticed the suspicious movement of a four-wheel drive vehicle.

They signaled for the driver to stop, but he tried to escape and the patrolmen had to force him to stop. The officers discovered there were two people in the car and they were in an abnormal condition. The suspects showed signs of fear and confusion. When the officers checked the suspects' security records, they found out that one of them had a prior drug case.

When the suspects were instructed to board the police vehicle, the officers found a firearm behind the driver's seat. A precautionary search of the car led to the discovery of an undisclosed quantity of narcotics -- shabu, hashish, narcotic pills and chemicals, in addition to the firearm, a rifle, a large number of bullets, a knife and drug paraphernalia.

The two suspects were referred to the Drugs Control General Department (DCGD), along with the confiscated items.

#### **Suspects flee police**

## Intruders fail to breach GTD car seizing facility

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Three vehicles were abandoned in front of the Mina Abdullah garage as their occupants fled into the night. In response, authorities issued orders to apprehend these individuals who had unlawfully entered the vehicle impoundment garage. The incident, which occurred on Friday, February 16, 2024, was reported by Al-Anba.

Abdullah Qunais, the investigator at the Abdullah Port police station, instructed the criminal security team to detain the unknown individuals responsible for trespassing into the vehicle impoundment garage under the veil of darkness. There were suspicions that these intruders were either attempting to steal vehicles from the garage or forcibly remove one. Both actions constitute criminal offenses.

Interestingly, upon hearing the approaching patrol, the perpetrators hastily abandoned the three vehicles they were using and fled the scene. Authorities promptly seized the vehicles and contacted the General Traffic Department to ascertain ownership and whether they had been reported stolen

According to a security source, the Ministry of Interior operations received a report from garage guards around three in the afternoon, alerting them to the presence of unknown individuals within the premises. These individuals had managed to infiltrate the garage from an undisclosed location. Subsequently, a team from the Abdullah Port police station was dispatched to the Al-Balagh site to investigate. Despite conducting a thorough search, no suspects were found. However, three vehicles - a pair of luxury four-wheelers and a Japanese saloon - were discovered and towed to Mina Abdullah for further examination.

These procedures include initial inquiries, witness summoning, collection of relevant information, and inference gathering regarding alleged corruption incidents.

In cases where corruption is not substantiated but administrative violations persist, Nazaha informs relevant authorities for administrative investigations and corrective measures to prevent future violations. Regarding reports resulting in suspicions of corruption crimes, Nazaha stated that 82 cases were referred to the Public Prosecution for further scrutiny, in accordance with Article No. 22 of the law establishing the Authority.

Furthermore, Nazaha highlighted its efforts in conducting awareness programs, totaling 240 sessions, aimed at enhancing integrity, combating corruption, and familiarizing stakeholders with the scope of Nazaha's work. These programs cover topics such as money laundering, asset recovery, employee

Authority for Agriculture and Fisheries and the Ministry of Interior, reports Al-Rai daily .

Al-Ajmi emphasized various forms of transgressions within natural reserves, encompassing unauthorized entry, hunting or camping, unauthorized grazing of animals, or aggression towards security personnel. The department has fortified its infrastructure, equipped centers with cutting-edge technology, and deployed patrols capable of apprehending offenders, thereby enforcing Environmental Protection Law No. 42 of 2014 and its subsequent amendments.

rehabilitation, and the introduction of laws related to information access rights and conflicts of interest.



#### 'Flasher' used to stop girl

# **Citizen faking as cop acquitted**

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: In a recent verdict, the Misdemeanor Court has acquitted a citizen who was accused of impersonating a security officer while apprehending a girl

with the aid of a device installed in his vehicle, reports Al-Anba daily. The

claimed



accused used a flash-Fatima Safar ing device to stop her

and requested documentation for her vehi-

However, during the investigation, the accused refuted the allegations, asserting

rity officer. He clarified that the seized device was not a "flasher" but a battery that emitted red and blue lights similar to those on police vehicles. He stopped the girl's vehicle to prevent any potential damage to his own due to a nearby traffic accident.

that he never portrayed himself as a secu-

Lawyer Fatima Safar, representing the accused, emphasized his consistent denial of the accusations throughout the investigation. She pointed out the lack of evidence supporting the claim and highlighted that neither the victim, security personnel, nor investigating officers mentioned any assertion of being a security officer by the accused

The court's decision reflects a careful consideration of the evidence presented, ultimately resulting in the acquittal of the citizen from the charges brought against him

# LOCAL

# **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 be-Dr Al-Mishaan tween 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



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.



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.

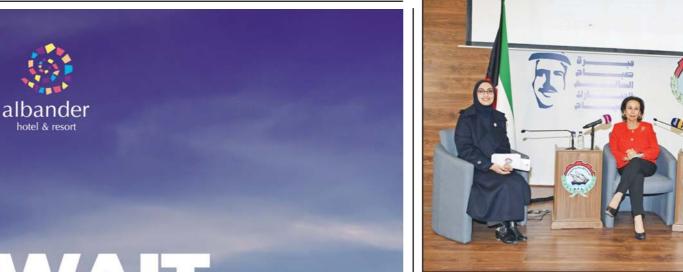
The partnership was signed at Zain's headquarters in Shuwaikh, attended by ktech Chairman of the Board of Trustees Meshari Ayman Bodai, Zain Kuwait Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti, ktech Vice President Abdulrahman Al Ajeel, and team members from both partners.

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.

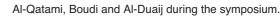
The Kuwait Technical College was founded under Amiri Decree 303 in 2005 to provide opportunities for students who are more oriented toward practical education. Ktech is licensed by Kuwait's Ministry of Higher Education and the General Secretariat of Private Universities Council and offers recognized 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-Roumi

# ATIONAL DAY **Room Promotion**



'Development Dialogue ...'

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: The "Devel-opment 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 mile-stones, 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 "Afiya" 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

Al-Jarida photo

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Acting Under-secretary 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 Secre-tariat 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 Min-ister 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.

35% **DISCOUNT OFF ON ROOM RATES** 

Promo period from 20th February – 2nd March 2024 Terms & conditions apply

#### **Crustaceans thrive in saltwater environments: Al-Zaidan**

# PAAAFR explores brine shrimp's vital role in Kuwait's ecosystem

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Dr. Abdullah Al-Zaidan, Deputy Director General of the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) for Technical Affairs, spoke to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) about the vital role of brine shrimp in Kuwait's ecosystem, reports Al-Qabas daily. Al-Zaidan highlighted collaborative efforts with the Scientific Center to study and cultivate brine shrimp domestically with the aim of protecting biodiversity and utilize the shrimp's resilience to enhance Kuwait's ecological stability. These crustaceans, he said, thrive in

saltwater environments such as land

and coastal areas including salt sabkhas, and are essential for biodiversity preservation due to their ability to withstand harsh climatic conditions.

Brine shrimp, capable of remaining dormant until favorable conditions arise, are pivotal in aquatic ecosystems. Their abundance in locations like the Jahra Nature Reserve and southern ponds reflects Kuwait's conducive environment for their proliferation.

Measuring around 15 millimeters in length, brine shrimp exhibit unique behavior such as swimming upside down and feeding on algae and phytoplankton. Their adaptability to high-salinity environments and pre-

dation dynamics make them integral to Kuwait's ecological equilibrium.

Furthermore, brine shrimp serve as a vital food source for various species including birds like flamingos, insects, fish, and other crustaceans. Economically, they are utilized as feed for coral reefs, fish larvae, and other aquatic organisms, bolstering Kuwait's fisheries sector.

Al-Zaidan stressed the importance of conserving brine shrimp populations to sustain environmental balance and enhance Kuwait's economic outlook. Continued research into these crustaceans holds promise for ecological preservation and economic advancement in Kuwait.

### 'Forbes' announces its list of 100 Most Powerful Businesswomen in Mideast

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Forbes Magazine recently announced its list of '100 Most Powerful Businesswomen in the Middle East', with Executive Vice President of the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) Group Shaikha Al-Bahr as the most powerful businesswomen in Kuwait and second in the Middle East for the year 2024; owing to her achievements in the banking sector and remarkable community services, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The magazine based its selection of the most powerful businesswomen in the Middle East on several criteria -- influence in the region and markets in which women operate; achievements over the past year; sustainability and social responsibility initiatives that they led; size of the business in terms of revenues, assets, market value and assets under their management; number of employees; professional experience and tenure

Al-Bahar contributes to formulating the remarkable development that NBK has achieved over the years in terms of sustainability, in addition to her contribution to formulating policies and laying down plans that support the implementation of the bank's strategic directions aimed at consolidating sustainable financing and supporting the global trend of transitioning to a low-carbon economy and reducing carbon emissions.

#### Thankfully, we

#### **Continued from Page 1**

We have witnessed the outcome of these appointments in recent years, starting with employment, passing through subsidies and poor services, all the way to the strategic backbone of the state, which is investments, and the corruption that has emerged therein, in addition to a lot of other forms of mismanagement.

All of this was covered up either by an influential person, or by an MP, or by a deal concluded overnight between a minister and a group of profiteers.

Therefore, the country today lacks a lot, and the current Council of Ministers has many duties and entitlements that must be dealt with, especially with regard to correcting the relationship between the Cabinet and the subsequently elected National Assembly, and for the country to have one ruler and not 51, as was the case in the past.

That is why we are facing a new path while the legacy is heavy. We must work with vision and deliberation so that there are no instabilities or missteps in the decisions that hinder the paths in order for Kuwait to regain its leadership, or at least, to be at the level of the Gulf countries, and to benefit from the experiences of its people and their wealth, the fruits of which can only be reaped in political, economic and social stability.

The National Assembly had to read carefully the title of the book, just as the Council of Ministers today had to keep in mind its ability to actually translate the broad lines that His Highness the Amir laid down in his sublime speech so as to avoid going back to the old habits.

**Experts weigh** 

by His Highness the Prime Minister to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the regrettable proceedings, said Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereeda Al-Mousherji.

The proceedings drew outcry from the public and the state, the Cabinet noted, urging His Highness the Amir to make whatever decision he deems proper in response to these incidents, Al-Mousherji told reporters following the meeting.

The proceedings infringed on the sovereign status of His Highness the Amir and transgressed the provisions of Article 54 of the Constitution which stipulates that "His Highness the Amir is the Head of State and has an immune status."

While the Sovereign speech falls in the framework of the parameters of the Constitution, the National Assembly insisted on registering the proceedings in the minutes of the session on Tuesday, which is totally unacceptable for the Cabinet.

Insistence on this offending act constitutes a transgression on the norms inherited from forefathers and the genuine values of the people of Kuwait.

The government has made sincere efforts to deepen the principles of action in the program it tabled to the National Assembly in its maiden meeting with MPs after taking oath of office.

In its program, the government showed strong belief in the importance of attaining sustainable development in all areas to ensure prosperous future and translate into action the Sovereign instructions of His Highness the Amir.

The government has been keen on effective cooperation between the Executive and Legislative authorities to review the legislations in the face of mounting challenges in a way that could serve the interests of the homeland and realize the aspirations of citizens in line with the Constitution and the law.

# Memo sheds light on housing loan disbursements to eligible Kuwaitis

19,168 citizens benefit from approximately KD 666m loans

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: A recent memorandum from the Kuwait Credit Bank (KCB) sheds light on the extensive housing loan disbursements made to eligible citizens in collaboration with the Public Authority for Housing Welfare. These loans, totaling approximately 666 million dinars, have benefited 19,168 citizens and generated revenues of about 109 million dinars for the bank, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The memorandum details various categories of housing loans, including government and private vouchers for building, purchases, expansions, and restorations, as well as loans for divorced women, widows, people with disabilities and grants. Notably, the bank facilitated social loans and documented contracts for the Al-Matlaa area, totaling 5,572 contracts.

However, despite the bank's efforts, delays in financial payments have been reported, attributed to factors such as delays in engineering examinations, incomplete work, lack of information, and failure to update data. These delays resulted in 370 complaints in 2023, prompting the bank to address issues through increased cooperation with relevant departments, awareness campaigns, and emphasis on data accuracy.

Challenges also include delays in documenting contracts, system limitations, and errors in client data. Efforts to streamline processes and enhance customer service are ongoing, including improved communication be-



Kuwaiti FM meeting his Iraqi peer on bilateral ties in Munich.



FM meeting his Lebanese peer on bilateral ties.

#### Al-Yahya meets with Qatari PM

Kuwait foreign minister meets Iraqi,

5

#### **Continued from Page 1**

He stated the solution is to issue a decree of necessity on the new election procedures. minor amendment of the new law or reactivation of the previous law. He pointed out that according to the Constitution, the election must be conducted within a few months from the issuance of the decree on dissolving the Assembly. He indicated that at least one month should pass from the issuance of the decree of necessity until Election Day. He said this means less than one month is left to issue such a decree of necessity, so the decree will most likely be issued this week. He expects a decree including the minor amendment of the recent law, taking into consideration that the government already approved this law

Another constitutional expert, Professor Ibrahim Al-Homoud, commented on calls to limit the right to vote and contest for elections to those who hold Kuwaiti citizenship as per Article One of the Nationality Law, meaning only the original Kuwaitis. "Since there are laws on the elections and Kuwaiti citizenship, it is possible to issue a decree on amending any of these laws. The people of Kuwait are the people of HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, so he will push for more freedoms in line with the global trend," he added.

Regarding the recent amendment of the Election Law, Al-Homoud highlighted certain problems; which makes it difficult to implement, such as the way of appointing the judges who will constitute the Higher Commission for Elections tasked to issue the executive regulations for this law. He thinks an Amiri decree will be issued to nullify this law and reactivate the previous law.

On the other hand, the former MPs confirmed that they respect the issuance of an Amiri decree to dissolve the Assembly, stressing this is the absolute right of HH the Amir as per the Constitution.

Former MP Khalid Al-Tamar disclosed that from the beginning, it was obvious that the government was keen on pushing for the dissolution of the Assembly as it refused to cooperate with the latter.

Former MP Badr Sayyar Al-Shemmari said he and his colleagues worked hard to push for teamwork at the Assembly and avoid individual heroic attitude. He added the Assembly proved its success when it cooperated with the previous government, which he described as "serious" and it failed to cooperate with a "temporary" government that was formed to push for the dissolution of the Assembly.

Former MP Mehalhal Al-Mudhaf called on the government to complete all the procedures needed for the issuance of the executive regulations for the recently ratified Election Law.

On Thursday, the Cabinet held an extraordinary session under the presidency of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah at Seif Palace to discuss the proceedings of the National Assembly session of February 7, 2024.

The meeting reviewed the letter addressed

Based on Article 107 of the Constitution and the presentation made by His Highness the Prime Minister, the Cabinet agreed on a decree to dissolve the National Assembly and tendered it to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

#### Kuwait sees

#### Continued from Page 1

Remittances of Filipino workers from Gulf countries represented 42.15%; compared to the value of these workers' remittances from Asia, which amounted to \$13.284 billion last year.

The value of remittances from the Middle East amounted to \$5.816 billion in the previous year, of which 96.27% were remittances from Filipino workers from the Gulf countries.

In 2023, remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries are estimated to reach \$669 billion, with shock-resilient labor markets in advanced economies and Gulf Cooperation Council countries continuing to support migrants' ability to send money home. Excluding China, remittances to the East

Asia and Pacific region saw a growth of 7% to reach \$83 billion in 2023, supported by continued growth in remittance flows to the Philippines, which has migrants in a variety of countries around the world.

The United States remained the largest source of remittances, and the five countries that received the largest amount of remittances in 2023 were India with \$125 billion, Mexico with about \$67 billion, China with \$50 billion, the Philippines with \$40 billion, and Egypt with \$24 billion.

The World Bank described the remittances sent by workers to their countries as a lifeline for low-income countries, as they provide a stable income to millions of people in developing economies, contribute to alleviating poverty, and improve nutritional outcomes.

#### **Kuwait mandates**

#### **Continued from Page 1**

activated on all generations of effective networks in the State of Kuwait.

It also stipulated providing support for displaying the caller's name from other operators' networks and conducting the necessary tests to ensure the quality of the new feature, followed by providing CITRA with the test results in order to obtain its approval before implementation, as well as take the necessary measures to ensure the authenticity of the source of the displayed name and its compatibility with the user's identification identity, and adopting it in accordance with the procedure determined by CITRA.

CITRA stated that the regulations entered into force on January 1, 2024, and all service providers or those authorized to own public telecommunications networks must abide by the regulation and other regulations related to this decision issued by CITRA. tween clients and engineers during property inspections.

Looking ahead, the bank is preparing its budget for 2023/2024 in coordination with the Public Authority for Housing Welfare. The plan involves distributing government vouchers based on available liquidity, with a target of 6,000 vouchers annually until previous distributions are completed.

The budget draft undergoes scrutiny by the Board of Directors before submission to the Ministry of Finance, ensuring alignment with housing welfare objectives and financial feasibility. These measures reflect the bank's commitment to facilitating housing loans and supporting citizens in achieving their housing needs.

#### Zour Sea Port Health Center to be opened

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: The Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi issued a decision to open the Zour Sea Port Health Center to provide preventive and curative services to the visitors of the sea port.

In a press statement, he revealed that work is being done to equip a health center at the new airport terminal T2 to provide preventive and curative services to travelers in an advanced manner, befitting this new edifice.

Dr. Al-Awadhi highlighted the work to conduct a comprehensive development of health centers at the land, air and sea border crossings in the country, affirming the keenness and commitment to implement the government's work program for the "100-day plan."

He explained that the maritime border health centers supervised by the Public Health Sector of the Ministry of Health include the health centers of Ahmadi Port, Zour Port, Shuwaikh Port, Shuaiba Port and Doha Port. They play an important and essential role in dealing with emergency health cases for travelers, sailors and workers in the maritime field.

The centers provide First Aid and urgent care for emergency cases, and also conduct check-ups on visitors before they enter the country, in addition to providing vaccination services and taking preventive measures in order to protect the country from epidemics and diseases.

# Lebanese and Omani counterparts

MUNICH, Germany, Feb 17, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya held talks with his Iraqi counterpart Dr. Fuad Mohammad Hussein on the fringes of the 60th Munich Security Conference which opened on Friday.

The talks focused on ways to strengthen the historical bonds on the state-to-state and people-to-people levels, and cooperation in various fields.

The meeting also dealt with the efforts to complete delineation of the maritime borders between the two sisterly countries beyond mark 162.

Meanwhile, Abdullah Al-Yahya met with Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman on the sideline of the 60th Munich Security Conference (MSC), in Munich, southern Germany.

The Kuwaiti FM also held talks with his Omani

counterpart Sayyid Badr Albusaidi on the fringes of the 60th Munich Security Conference.

KUNA photos

The talks focused on ways to strengthen the bilateral relations in various fields as well as a range of regional and international issues of common concern, including the latest developments of the situation in Gaza Strip.

They also discussed boosting joint GCC action to overcome regional and international challenges.

They touched upon the efforts exerted to help demarcate maritime borders between Kuwait and Iraq beyond the 162th border mark.

Also, Abdullah Al-Yahya held talks with his Lebanese counterpart Abdullah Bou Habib, on the fringes of the 60th Munich Security Conference.

The talks focused on ways to strengthen the bilateral relations in various fields.

Environmental Police's efforts win praise

# PAAAFR training course highlights protection of natural reserves in accordance with environ law

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: The Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) organized a training course titled "Protecting natural reserves in accordance with the Environmental Protection Law and its executive regulations" at its headquarters.

This training program was organized as part of the programs of the cooperation agreement between PAAAFR and the Ministry of Interior's Environmental Protection Police.

The program was presented by Colonel Saud Al-Otaibi from the Environmental Police Department in the presence of the Director General of PAAAFR Eng. Nasser Taqi, and Director of the Environmental Police Department Brigadier General Dr. Hussein Al-Ajmi.

Colonel Al-Otaibi touched on several topics, including learning about the most prominent environmental laws for natural reserves, the important legal skills that workers in natural reserves and security observers must be familiar with in accordance with the law, and ways to deal with aggressors in natural reserves.

Meanwhile, the Acting Director of PAAAFR Eng. Nasser Taqi appreciated the efforts exerted by the Environmental Police in the Ministry of Interior to protect natural reserves and cooperate with PAAAFR's workers to protect vegetation and rehabilitate the terrestrial and marine environment.

He called for the necessity of increasing environmental awareness among citizens and residents and preserving these reserves, which aim to rehabilitate the Kuwaiti environment, maintain its balance, reduce dirt and dust, and reduce temperatures in order to achieve sustainable development and increase biodiversity.

In addition, Director of the Environmental Police Department Brigadier General Dr. Hussein Al-Ajmi warned citizens and residents against entering fenced natural reserves without obtaining a permit in order to avoid being subject to environmental violations.

He stressed that the Environmental Protection Law prohibits introducing any type of animal or plant that does not belong to the environment into natural reserves or carrying out any action that would obstruct efforts made to preserve the natural environment or cause harm to land and marine organisms within the reserves.

Brigadier General Dr. Al-Ajmi indicated that the violator shall be punished by imprisonment for not more than one year and/or a fine ranging between KD 500 and KD 5,000.

He indicated that those who were arrested in 2023 against whom cases of environmental violations were filed, including violations and transgressions against the reserves, had reached 130, and 28 among them were administratively deported in the year 2023.

Brigadier General Dr. Al-Ajmi added that coordination is underway to prepare centers, equipment and patrols according to the latest specifications with the ability to arrest violators and trespassers on protected areas and implement the environmental protection law No. 24/2014 and its amendments.

# INTERNATIONAL

# **World News Roundup**

#### Europe

### Zelenskyy warns allies Russia's Putin blamed for 'death' of Navalny

TALLINN, Estonia, Feb 17, (AP): World leaders and Russian opposition activists wasted no time in blaming the reported death of imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny on President Vladimir Putin and his government.

"It is obvious that he was killed by Putin," said Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who was visiting Germany for the Munich Security Conference as he sought aid for his country's efforts to fight off an invasion by Russia.

"Putin doesn't care who dies - only for him to hold his position. This is why he must hold onto nothing. Putin must lose everything and be held responsible for his deeds," Zelenskyy added.



US President Joe Biden said Washington does not know exactly what happened, "but there is no doubt that the death of Navalny was a consequence of something Putin and his thugs did."

Navalny "could have lived safely in exile," but instead returned to Russia to "continue his work," despite knowing he could be imprisoned or killed because he believed so deeply in his country, in Russia.' German Chancellor Olaf

Putin

Scholz, whose country temporarily took in Navalny in 2020 after he was poisoned with a nerve agent, praised the Kremlin critic's bravery and said his death makes clear "what kind of regime this is.

Navalny was "brutally murdered by the Kremlin," said Latvian President Edgars Rinkevics in a post on X, formerly Twitter. "That's a fact, and that is something one should know about the true nature of Russia's current regime.

Meanwhile, floral tributes to Navalny were re-moved overnight by groups of unidentified people while police watched, videos on Russian social media show

More than 100 people were detained in eight cities across Russia after they came to lay flowers in memory of Navalny, according to OVD-Info, a group that monitors political repression in Russia. On Saturday, police blocked access to a memorial in the Siberian city of Novosibirsk and detained several people there as well as in another Siberian city, Surgut, OVD-Info said.

#### 

Prez warns of 'artifical deficit' of weapons: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy warned allies Saturday that an "artificial deficit" of weapons for his country risks giving Russia breathing space, hours after his military chief said he was withdrawing troops from the eastern city of Avdiivka.

Zelenskyy spoke to the Munich Security Conference, an annual gathering of security and foreign policy officials. Ukraine is back on the defensive against Russia in the nearly 2-year-old war, hindered by low ammunition supplies and a shortage of personnel.

"Ukrainians have proven that we can force Russia to retreat," he said. "We can get our land back, and (Russian President Vladimir) Putin can lose, and this has already happened more than once on the battlefield.



Protesters stage a demonstration opposite the Russian Embassy in London on Feb 16. Alexei Navalny, who crusaded against official corruption and staged massive anti-Kremlin protests as President Vladimir Putin's fiercest foe, has died in the Arctic penal colony where he was serving a 19-year sentence. That's according to Russia's prison agency. He was 47. (AP)

**Politics** 



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Ze-lenskyy, (left), and French President Emmanuel Macron shake hands after a press conference on Feb 16 at the Elysee Palace in Paris. Zelenskyy arrived in Paris to sign a bilateral se-curity agreement with France hours after he officialized a similar one with Germany agreements send a strong signal of long-term backing as Kyiv works to shore up Western support nearly two years after Russia launched its full-scale war. (AP)

# Harris repudiates Trump worldview Manchin says he won't run for president

NEW YORK, Feb 17, (AP): West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin announced that he is not running for president, saying he didn't want to be a "spoiler."

"I will not be seeking a third-party run," he said in a speech at West Vir-ginia University. "I will not be involved in a presidential run. I will be involved in making sure that we secure a president that has the knowledge and has the passion and has the ability to bring this country together."

#### Seek

The speech was billed as part of a national listening tour Manchin announced when he decided not to seek another Senate term. He told the Morgantown audience that he had no interest in being "a deal-breaker, if you

## **Top diplomats from US and China** hold talks on issues dividing them

MUNICH, Feb 17, (AP): Top diplomats from the US and China on Friday held a "candid and constructive" discussion on issues vexing their strained relations over Taiwan, the situation in the South China Sea, Russia's war against Ukraine and synthetic opioids, the State Department said

The meeting between US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the Munich Se-

#### Also:

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden plans to welcome Ken-yan President William Ruto to the White House in May, hosting a state visit after reneging on his promise to visit Africa last year.

White House press secretary Ka-rine Jean-Pierre announced Friday that the visit set for May 23 will mark the 60th anniversary of US-Kenya diplomatic relations and "celebrate a partnership that is delivering for of both countries people affirming "our strategic partnership" with Ruto's country. 

Ukraine, France sign agreement: Ukrainian Pres ident Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Friday signed a 10year bilateral security agreement with France hours after he officialized a similar one with Germany. The agreements send a strong signal of long-term backing as Kyiv works to shore up Western support nearly two years after Russia launched its full-scale war.

Zelenskyy was greeted in Paris at the Elysee presidential palace by President Emmanuel Macron.

The agreement provides an additional package worth 3 billion euros (\$3.2 billion) in military aid this year, the largest annual amount France has given to Ukraine since the war began.

"The outcome of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine will be decisive for our interests, our values, our security and our model of society," Macron said.

"Yes, we must further invest" to support Ukraine "at a greater scale and in the long term," he added. Macron said he would travel to Ukraine by mid-March.

UK voters deliver double blow to PM: Beleaguered British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Friday urged voters, and his restless party, to stick with him after two English districts elected opposition-party lawmakers in seats that Sunak's Conservatives had held for years.

The results will worsen fears among Conservatives that, after 14 years in power, the party is heading for a drubbing when a national election is held in less than a year. The Tories consistently lag between 10 and 20 points behind the left-of-center Labour Party in nationwide opinion polls.

Labour candidate Damien Egan won the House of Commons seat of Kingswood in southwest England, and Labour's Gen Kitchen took Wellingborough in the country's center, results announced Friday showed.

Thousands at anti-govt rally in Croatia: Thousands of people rallied in Croatia's capital on Saturday, accusing the ruling center-right party of corruption and demanding that this year's parliamentary election be held as soon as possible.

The gathering in Zagreb was organized by 11 center and left-leaning opposition parties, with political tensions in the European Union member nation rising.

Croatia is set to hold both parliamentary and presidential elections in 2024, as well as those for the European Parliament in early June. The dates for the domestic votes have not been determined yet.

The opposition parties want the parliamentary vote held immediately. They have lodged a formal demand to dissolve Croatia's parliament amid a row over the election of the country's new state attorney.

Slovak leader challenges govt's move: Slovakia's president said Friday that she will challenge at the Constitutional Court an amendment to the country's penal code that eliminates the office of the special prosecutor dealing with major crimes and corruption.

President Zuzana Caputova said she was also asking Slovakia's top court to freeze the legislation. which was approved by lawmakers loyal to populist Prime Minister Robert Fico, until it decides on her complaint. It is not clear when the court will rule.

The measure, approved by Parliament on Feb. 8, has faced sharp criticism at home and abroad.

The changes include abolishing the special prosecutors' office, which handles serious crimes such as graft, organized crime and extremism.



Williams

#### America

Deaths to be investigated: The deaths of two people who were shot in a dorm room at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs on Friday morning will be investigated as homicides, police said.

The victims, who were not immediately identified, were found dead when police responded to a report of a shooting around 6 am.

"At this point in our investigation, this incident does not appear to be a murder-suicide and both deaths are being investigated as homicides," the Colorado Springs Police Department said in a statement on social media Friday evening.

The coroner's office will determine how they died, but each person was shot at least once in what appeared to be an "isolated incident," police spokesperson Ira Cronin said at a briefing.

A lockdown across campus lasted for about 90 minutes and later was isolated to a student apartment complex on campus, school spokesperson Chris Valentine said. (AP)

Explosion kills 1, eleven hurt: One firefighter was killed and nine others were injured when an explosion in a Washington, DC, suburb on Friday leveled a home where they were investigating a gas leak. Two civilians were also injured.

The firefighters were called to the home in Sterling, Virginia, by a report of a gas smell shortly after 7:30 pm and a fiery ex-plosion took place about 30 minutes later, fire officials said.

The blast and fire occurred while firefighters were inside the building, James Williams, assistant chief of operations for Loudon County Fire and Rescue, said at a news conference. (AP)

Jury awards \$10m to man: A jury awarded \$10 million to a Detroit-area man who spent nearly six years in prison for the killing of a 15-year-old girl before his conviction was thrown out at the request of prosecutors.

The jury said Alexandre Ansari's con-

will, a spoiler, whatever you want to call it."

"I just don't think it's the right time."

The centrist Democrat who often bucked his party's leadership had been considering a run for the presidency and had said he thought it would be clear by March if there was a path for a third-party candidate this year. He said in the speech that he thought a thirdparty bid might be viable at some point "but right now it's really challenging."

His decision comes as the leadership of No Labels, a national political movement that could offer an independent presidential ticket in 2024, has worked privately to identify serious candidates to represent the group in the general election. Manchin was viewed as one of the top prospects.

Manchin is not running for reelection in 2024. His Senate seat in a heavily Republican state is expected to be a prime pickup opportunity for the GOP. Manchin, the only Democrat holding statewide office in West Virginia, has been at odds with members of his own party over his support for coal and other fossil fuels. With the Democrats holding a slim majority in the U.S. Senate, Manchin was a critical vote who

wielded considerable influence to shape legislation and diluted much of President Joe Biden's social spending plans.

In addition to the No Labels effort, a

stitutional rights were violated by a Detroit police detective who concealed evidence in the fatal shooting.

The verdict, returned Thursday in fed-



First responders arrive at the scene after an explosion at a house on Feb 16, 2024, in Sterling, Va. One firefighter was killed and nine others were injured when an explosion in a Washington, DC, suburb on Friday leveled a home where they were investigating a gas leak. (AP)

Conference marked the latest cur and highest-level meeting between the two sides since US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping held talks late last year in California.

State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said Blinken emphasized the importance of maintaining peace in the Taiwan Strait as well as expanding on nascent counternarcotics efforts. Blinken also raised concerns about China's support for Russia's defense industrial base that Washington sees as helping Moscow's military operations against Ukraine.

group pushing for Manchin to partner with retiring Utah Sen. Mitt Romney to seek a third-party presidential bid filed paperwork last year to form a draft committee with the Federal Election Commission. Romney and Manchin did not sign on to the effort.

#### Also:

MUNICH: US Vice President Kamala Harris on Friday warned of the dangers of growing authoritarianism and isolationism in a not-so-veiled repudiation of Donald Trump's worldview and threats to renege on security guarantees for NATO allies should he return to the White House.

Speaking at the Munich Security

eral court, "restores some of Mr Ansari's dignity and will allow him to recover from the horrendous experience of being wrongfully convicted of a heinous crime he did not

commit," attorney Wolf Mueller said.

Mueller argued that police had crucial information about a different suspect, but it was not shared with the prosecutor or defense at the 2013 trial in Wayne County court.

A failure to disclose the information would be "egregious," US District Judge Stephen Murphy III said earlier in the litigation. (AP)

#### 

Ukrainian pleads guilty: A Ukrainian man has pleaded guilty to involvement in two separate malware schemes including a cyberattack at the University of Vermont Medical Center in 2020 that temporarily shut down some of its vital services and cost it tens of millions of dollars, according to the US Department of Justice.

Vyacheslav Igorevich Penchukov, also known as Vyacheslav Igoravich Andreev, 37, pleaded guilty Thursday in federal court in Nebraska to one count of conspiracy to break U.S. anti-racketeering law and one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud.

Records in the case are sealed, so the name of Penchukov's lawyer was not immediately known Friday.

Penchukov was accused of helping lead a racketeering enterprise and conspiracy that infected thousands of business computers with malicious software starting in May 2009, and later leading a conspiracy that infected computers with new malware from at least November 2018 through February 2021, according to federal prosecutors. (AP)

WARSAW, Poland: US President Joe Biden will host Poland's President Andrzej Duda and Prime Minister Donald Tusk for a meeting in Washington on March 12, the 25th anniversary of **Poland**'s joining the NATO Alliance, the White House said Thursday. A statement from Press Secretary

Karine Jean-Pierre said the leaders will "reaffirm their unwavering support for Ukraine's defense against Russia's brutal war of conquest.

Conference, Harris offered a broad defense of the Biden administration's approach to global challenges, especially in leading international support for Ukraine in its war with Russia. Her comments came as the Ukraine risks losing US support due to congressional dysfunction and positions taken by Trump and many of his supporters.

Amid an atmosphere of deep angst at the conference that was punctuated by the news Friday of the death in prison of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, Harris said the United States would not back down on supporting democracy and multilateralism as well defending international rules and norms from attempts to subvert them.

# **INTERNATIONAL**

#### Africa

#### 'Poll as soon as possible'

# IS poses rising threat in Africa: UN experts

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 17, (AP): The Islamic State extremist group poses a rising threat amid political instability in West Africa and the Sahel and remains intent on carrying out attacks abroad, the UN counterterrorism chief said.

**Vladimir Voronkov** reiterated UN findings that IS continues to pose a significant threat to international peace and security, especially in conflict zones, despite significant progress by UN member nations in countering the threat. The group has also increased operations in its former strongholds in Iraq and Syria as well as Southeast Asia, Voronkov said.

Voronkov told the UN Security Council that in West Africa and the Sahel, a broad region cutting across the continent, the situation has deteriorated "and is



becoming more complex," as local ethnic and regional disputes cross with the agenda and operations of the extremist group, which is also known by its Arabic name Daesh, and its affiliates. "Daesh affiliates continued

to operate with increasingly more autonomy from the Daesh core," he said, warning that if this trend persists there is a risk "that a vast area of instability may emerge from Mali to

Voronkov the borders of Nigeria.

Natalia Gherman, executive director of the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, said: "They are exploiting the political instability and expanding their radius of influence, their operations and territorial control in the Sahel, with growing concerns for coastal West Africa."

"The African continent now accounts for almost half of terrorist acts worldwide, with central Sahel accounting for about 25% of such attacks," she told the council.

Voronkov, who heads the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, said countering the threat of terrorism in Africa remains a priority for his office.

Gherman said that "enduring challenges persist in the Middle East and Southeast and Central Asia, with indications that Daesh is attempting to resurge in those sub-regions as well."

#### Intensified

The Islamic State group broke away from al-Qaeda over a decade ago and attracted supporters from around the world. Despite its defeat in Iraq in 2017 and in Syria two years later, UN experts said last month that there are still between 3,000 and 5,000 fighters. In Iraq, they are carrying out "a low-intensity insurgency with covert terrorist cells" while in Syria attacks have intensified since November, the experts said.

In positive developments, Voronkov pointed to the group's prolonged delay in naming a new leader after the previous leader was killed, saying this "is assessed to reflect internal challenges and difficulties in ensuring the new leader's security." In countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Egypt and Mozambique, he said, terrorist activity by Islamic State affiliates "has been reduced by effective counter-terrorism efforts by member states."

Government efforts to tackle IS financing are also continuing to produce results, Voronkov said. "Daesh's financial reserves are currently estimated between



A protester shouts slogans during a rally against alleged fraud in the Feb. 14 presidential election outside the General Election Commission's office in Jakarta, Indonesia, on Feb 16. Inset: Indonesian Defense Minister and presidential frontrunner Prabowo Subianto greets supporters before visiting the grave of Habib Ali bin Abdurrahman Al-Habsyi at the Al Riyadh Mosque in Jakarta, Indonesia on Friday. (AP)

Asia

#### Seoul calls for punishing NKorea provocations

## Indonesia activists protest Subianto's win

JAKARTA, Indonesia, Feb 17, (AP): Protesters marched in Indonesia's capital demanding the election authority stop Prabowo Subianto from taking office as the next president and claiming widespread electoral fraud.

Subianto, a former general linked to past human rights abuses, has claimed victory in the presidential election on Wednesday after unofficial tallies showed him taking over 58% of the vote in a three-way race.

Subianto's win is not yet official as the official results could take up to a month to be tabulated. His two rivals, former governors Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo, refused to concede and alleged massive fraud in the election.

Authorities blocked streets leading to the heavily guarded General Election Commission building, which was barricaded with razor wire. Dozens of demonstrators held banners and signs that slammed President Joko Widodo for supporting Subianto, who picked Widodo's son as his running mate. eral of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, which nominated Pranowo, said that election irregularities were enforced from the top down, starting with Widodo's son Gibran Rakabuming Raka's candidacy for vice-president. The Constitutional Court had to make an exception to the minimum age requirement

of 40 for Raka to run. The current chief justice, who is Widodo's brother-in-law, was later removed by an ethics panel for failing to recuse himself and for making lastminute changes to the election candidacy requirements.

Widodo dismissed fraud allegations and any manipulation of the judiciary or favoring a particular pair of candidates, saying the election process was watched by many people, including representatives of the candidates, the election supervisory agency and security personnvel.

"Layered supervision like this would eliminate the possible fraud," Widodo told reporters on Thursday, "Don't scream fraud. We have mechanism to solve the fraud, if you have evidence, take it to the Election Supervisory tion south of the Military Demarcation Line and the Northern Limit Line, sternly punish them immediately, strongly and until the end, and completely destroy the force undertaking provocations and its support forces," Shin stressed, according to his office.

He also said the North is intentionally creating an atmosphere of war to strengthen internal solidarity and sow division within South Korea, the report added.

#### 

**BANGKOK:** Myanmar's military government said it will draft 60,000 young men and women yearly for military service under its newly activated conscription law, with call-ups beginning after the April festival marking the country's traditional New Year.

The conscription measure was activated on Saturday by order of the chairman of the ruling military council, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing.

His surprise announcement appeared to confirm that the military has been stretched thin by increasing pressure from armed pro-democracy



Demonstrators protest President Macky Sall decision to postpone the Feb 25 vote, citing an electoral dispute between the parliament and the judiciary regarding some candidacies in Dakar, Senegal on Feb 9. Senegal's top election authority has voided the president's postponement of a presidential election scheduled for Feb 25 and its rescheduling in December, saying the moves were un-

constitutional. (AP)

\$10 million and \$25 million, down from hundreds of millions a few years ago," the UN undersecretary-general said.

In Afghanistan, Voronkov said, efforts by the country's Taliban rulers "have reportedly had an impact on the ability of the Daesh affiliate to conduct attacks inside the country." But UN experts have described ongoing ties between the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

Gherman said a priority for her committee is working with the 193 UN member states to address the use of new technology for terrorist purposes, pointing as an example to IS's increasing use of drones for intelligence gathering and attacks.

Interpol Secretary General Jürgen Stock said the international police organization is working closely with U.N. counter-terrorism officials on a project to help law enforcement "identify and prevent the exploitation for terrorists purposes of enablers such as encryption services, video distribution tools and new propaganda platforms."

#### Also:

**DAKAR, Senegal:** Senegal will hold a presidential election as soon as possible given that the country's top election authority has overturned a decree by President **Macky Sall** to postpone the vote, the government said Friday.

Sall in early February sought to postpone the Feb. 25 election citing unresolved disputes over who could run, and the National Assembly voted to reschedule it for Dec. 15.

However, the country's Constitutional Council ruled Thursday that those moves were unconstitutional and ordered the government to hold the election as soon as possible, presumably allowing enough time for campaigning. The panel acknowledged that Feb. 25 wouldn't now be feasible, but said the government should act quickly.

In a statement Friday, presidential spokesperson **Yoro Dia** said that Sall intends to ensure full compliance with the council's decision and hold the elections as soon as possible, though the government didn't yet specify a new date.

Senegal has been seen as one of the region's most stable democracies, but election disputes have plunged the country into a political crisis that has sparked deadly protests and cuts to mobile internet. At least three people have been killed by security forces and dozens injured.

Sall has been accused of trying to delay leaving office, something he denied to during an AP interview last week.

#### 

**KINSHASA, Congo:** At least a dozen people were killed and 16 kidnapped by rebels at a mining site in eastern Congo, said a civil society organization on Thursday.

Rebels from the CODECO armed group attacked a gold mine Wednesday near **Djugu** district in **Ituri** province, said **Vital Tungulo**, the head of Mabendi, a local rights group.

"We are outraged by this enemy attack," he said.

Violence has been surging across eastern Congo, where conflict has flared for decades. More than 120 armed groups are fighting in the region, most for land and control of mines with valuable minerals, while some groups are trying to protect their communities.

CODECO is a loose association of militia groups mainly from the ethnic Lendu farming community. Since 2017, it has been fighting with Zaire, a selfdefense group mainly drawn from the ethnic Hema herding community.



#### **Lat/Am**

Bribery witness gets 6 months: A

Venezuelan businessman who helped hide almost \$17 million in bribe payments by an ally of President Nicolas Maduro was sentenced to six months in prison Friday by a federal judge who expressed frustration that his cooperation with law enforcement was undone by President Joe Biden's recent pardon of a top U.S. criminal target.

Orlando Contreras had been working with the US Drug Enforcement Administration since 2019 to investigate corruption in the South American nation.

As part of that assistance, prosecutors said, he made several dangerous trips to Venezuela to gather evidence against businessman Alex Saab and former Gov. Jose Vielma.

Saab and Vielma had both been targeted by a secret spying program exposed by The Associated Press in which the DEA sent undercover informants into Venezuela to surreptitiously record and bring criminal charges against Maduro's inner circle. (AP)

**'Close UN rights office':** Venezuela's government ordered the local United Nations office on human rights to suspend operations and gave its staff 72 hours to leave, accusing it of assisting coup plotters and terrorist groups.

Foreign Affairs Minister **Yván Gil** announced the decision at a news conference in Caracas, which came amid heightened concerns that the government is repressing real or perceived opponents in an election year. Nearly a week ago, Venezuela detained a prominent human rights attorney and members of her family, setting off a wave of criticism inside and outside the country.

Gil said the local technical advisory office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, authorized in 2019, was supposed "to improve, to optimize," human rights. Instead, he said, it had become an "international sounding board to maintain a discourse against the Bolivarian government and against the Venezuelan people."

The office had "become the private law firm of coup plotters and terrorist groups that permanently conspire against the country," Gil said, though he did not show any evidence or point to a specific example of that alleged activity. (AP)

"We demand justice, we demand a fair vote count," Siti Aisyah, one of the protesters, said. "Don't let cheating win, they will ruin democracy in our country again."

Demand

Families of Indonesian activists who were kidnapped and tortured by the military 25 years ago demanded justice in a protest and expressed shock over the apparent presidential victory of Subianto, whom they blamed for the atrocities.

Standing in a downpour outside the presidential palace in the capital, Jakarta, relatives of the activists held posters with pictures of the generals they held responsible for the 1998 disappearances. One of the pictures showed Subianto.

"Mr Prabowo, if you are going to be the president, please resolve the enforced disappearance cases so that we, the victims' families, can have peace," Paian Siahaan, 77, told The Associated Press.

The campaign teams of both Baswedan and Pranowo said they would provide evidence for their claims of cheating.

"There are strong indications that violations occurred in a structured, systematic and massive way in the presidential election," said Hamdan Zoelva, a former Constitutional Court chief judge who is part of Baswedan's team.

Hasto Kristiyanto, the secretary-gen-

**Bolsonaro's youngest son charged:** Brazilian police have charged the youngest son of former President **Jair Bolsonaro** with alleged fraud, adding to the legal presAgency, if you have evidence, challenge it to the Constitutional Court."

Subianto had refused to accept the result of the 2019 election that pitted him against Widodo for a second time, leading to violence that left seven dead in Jakarta. In the past two elections, Indonesia's Constitutional Court had rejected Subianto bids to overturn Widodo's victory and dismissed his claims of widespread fraud as groundless.

#### Also:

**SEOUL, South Korea:** South Korea's Defense Minister **Shin Won-sik** on Friday called for "sternly" punishing any North Korean provocation south of the sea and land borders amid tensions from **Pyongyang**'s continued weapons tests and increasingly harsh rhetoric, Yonhap News Agency reported.

Shin made the call during his visit to an Army command tasked with overseeing front-line operations, two days after the North fired multiple cruise missiles off its eastern coast in its fifth such launch this year. The North's leader **Kim Jong-un** 

The North's leader **Kim Jong-un** oversaw the new "surface-to-sea" missile test and called for using force against South Korean vessels violating its waters, while claiming that the Northern Limit Line the de facto inter-Korean sea border, is a "ghost" line without any legal ground.

"If the enemy carries out a provoca-

sure on the family of the far-right leader who is himself facing several investigations. Police in Brazil's Federal District region, which includes the capital city of Brasilia,



Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro and Alex Saab stand in an embrace during an event marking the anniversary of the 1958 coup that overthrew dictator Marcos Perez Jimenez, in Caracas, Venezuela, Jan 23. A Venezuelan businessman who helped hide almost \$17 million in bribe payments by an ally of President Nicolas Maduro was sentenced to six months in prison on Feb 16 by a federal judge. (AP)

resistance forces that emerged after the army seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021. There are no reliable figures for the size of Myanmar's military. The CIA

size of Myanmar's military. The CIA World Factbook estimated that last year it had around 150,000-400,000 personnel. The Washington-based U.S. Institute of Peace has suggested that 21,000 service personnel have been lost through casualties, desertions and defections since the military takeover, leaving an effective force of about 150,000.

Under the law, men aged 18 to 35 and women 18 to 27 can be drafted into the armed forces for two years. A higher age limit of 45 for men and 35 for women applies in certain professional categories such as medical doctors and engineers, and their term of service is three years.

The army's information office said in a statement sent to journalists that 5,000 people each month will be called up and given training. Women will be called up starting with the fifth batch, it said.

Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Tun, spokesperson for the military government, said in a statement published in the staterun Myanma Alinn newspaper that about 14 million people - 6.3 million men and 7.7 million women - of the country's population of 56 million are eligible for military service.

said in a statement that Jair Renan Bolsonaro and a friend of his are suspects of fraudulent misrepresentation, use of false documents and money laundering in connection with a bank loan request.

Police declined to give further details, because the investigation remains sealed until local prosecutors decide whether they will move on with the probe or not.

Last year, Brazilian media reported Jair Renan and a friend were under investigation for allegedly inflating revenues of one of his companies so they could get a bank loan. (AP)

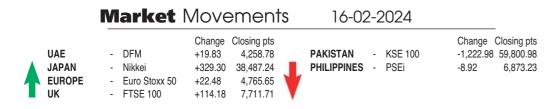
#### 

**Boat accident kills 5:** At least five people died and the search continued for one more who was missing Thursday after a boat carrying more than two dozen migrants capsized off Panama's Caribbean coast in an apparent attempt to avoid the treacherous Darien Gap land route.

Panama's Public Safety Ministry said in a statement Thursday the boat carrying 27 people - mostly Afghans - capsized off the Guna Yala Indigenous area Wednesday. The dead included two women and a child.

The ministry said that at this time of year, bad weather is often a factor in such accidents, especially involving clandestine migrant smuggling attempts. Video from the government showed the open boat upside down on the rocky coast beside the migrants' bodies. (AP)

#### al Court chief judge who is vedan's team. Kortean Li Korean sea without any





ABK Group plans to enhance competitiveness in Kuwait, UAE and Egypt

# Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait Group holds analyst conference call for the 2023 end of year financial results

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently hosted its analyst conference to discuss the results of the year ending 31 December 2023. The conference was attended by Abdulla Al Sumait, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer; Shiamak Soonawalla, Group Chief Finance Officer; Abdulaziz Jawad, Chief Strategy Officer; and Yaqoub Almulla, Senior Manager of Investor Relations.

The conference entailed a review of ABK Group's financial indicators, highlighting the key developments in 2023, as well as an outline of future plans to bolster its competitive position in Kuwait's banking sector and the markets it operates in, including the UAE and Egypt.

#### **Strong Financial Results**

Al Sumait expressed his satisfaction, stating, "I am delighted to present the impressive results of another successful year, demonstrating our resilience and unwavering commitment to strengthening our position. Our financial performance in 2023, which saw a 40% increase in Net Profit to KD 45.2 million, a 46% increase in EPS from 13 fils to 19 fils, and an improved Capital Adequacy Ratio of 16.74% and a healthy NPL ratio of 1.33%, highlights our capacity to adapt to economic shifts and effectively address local, regional, and global challenges.

He added that ABK has maintained a positive momentum throughout the previous year, as evidenced by positive growth ratios in profitability, ROAA, ROAE, and improving asset quality ratios well above regulatory requirements, emphasizing its financial strength for the year.

#### **Distinctive Position**

Al Sumait noted, "The Group continues to leverage its distinctive position among Kuwaiti banks, particularly withour extensive geographic reach. This is instrumental in driving revenue, facilitating loan distribution, and gathering deposits. Notably, our international operations, including our UAE branches and ABK-Egypt subsidiary, contribute 41.6% of our Operating Income and 38% of our assets." Furthermore, the Group's sustained ef-

forts to implement its digital transformation plans, marked by the inauguration of the first hologram-powered digital branch in the Kuwaiti market at Al Khiran Mall, demonstrate the Group's dedication to leveraging cuttingedge banking technologies. The Group plans to introduce additional digital branches in the future to provide seamless service to customers around the clock.

In terms of its regional footprint, Al Sumait revealed that the Group has expanded itspresence in Egypt. This involves the opening of four new branches equipped with state-of-theart technologies, aligning with the Group's strategy to expand its presence and serve cus-

tomers across Egypt. Looking ahead, Al Sumait affirmed that the Group remains diligent and confident in its commitment to driving innovation, growth, and enhancing its market position in the banking sector by consistently delivering added value to



Abdulla Al Sumait - Acting GCEO of ABK

■ Abdulla Al Sumait: The 2023 financial results reflect the Group's commitment to enhancing its position in the competitive banking industry

operational performance, our Operating Income has reached KD 185 million, with an Operating Profit of KD 97.1 million. Regarding risk management and stability, the Group's NPL ratio is 1.33% and the Group Loan Loss Coverage Ratio is 445%."

He added, "We maintain excess provisions of KD 213 million, well above the IFRS requirements as per the guidelines set by the Central Bank of Kuwait, demonstrating our unwavering commitment to prudent financial practices."

Furthermore, the Group has maintained operational stability with a Net Interest Margin of 2.2% and an Operating Profit to average assets ratio of 1.5%, indicating healthy performance and sustained growth across the Group's diverse businesses.

Additionally, Soonawalla disclosed, "Our liquidity position remains strong, with a Net Stable Funding Ratio of 113%, a Liquidity Coverage Ratio of 225%, and a self-backed balance sheet supported by customer deposits totaling KD 3.8 billion, representing 68% of our total liabilities.

He added that ABK is currently examining the key factors influencing changes in income, margins, and costs. He continued, "Total Operating Income has seen an 8% increase compared to 2022. Notably, the Group's ROAE of 6.8% has risen by 36% compared to the previous vea



Shiamak Soonawalla - Group Chief Finance Officer

Shiamak Soonawalla: Our investment in digital technologies contribute to lowering operating expenses and improving operational efficiency

treasury operations. In terms of asset allocation. 58% is in commercial banking, 13% in retail, and 29% in treasury.

Soonawalla continued, "Total Interest Income for YE 2023 is KD 413.5 million, a significant growth of KD 144 million or 54% from the previous year. This growth is primarilv attributed to increased asset levels and an improved interest rate environment.

Furthermore, the majority of non-interest income is derived from core banking activities, providing stability compared to more volatile income from trading activities. This, together with an increase in net interest earnings, has had a positive impact on operating profit, which increased by 7%

#### **Excellent Investments**

Soonawalla emphasized, "The Group's commitment to excellence is evident in our ongoing investments in key business initiatives, digital technologies, and process enhancements, contributing to lowering operating expenses and improving operational efficiency

The cost-to-income ratio for 2023 is 47.5%, up from 47.2% in 2022. The Group has maintained a prudent and conservative approach in managing credit exposures and provisioning.

ABK's geographical footprint plays a crucial role in driving revenue, facilitating loan distribution and gathering deposits. Soonawalla ntrihut added from international



Abdulaziz Jawad -- Chief Strategy Officer

**Abdulaziz Jawad:** Our ABK2X strategy is yielding tangible outcomes, driving significant market share growth

sets reached KD 6.3 billion, with Net Loans and Advances increasing by 5% from KD 4 billion in 2022 to KD 4.3 billion in 2023. Soonawalla stated, "We have diversified our funding sources, securing more long-term borrowings through international markets, enhancing the stability and reliability of our funding and improving balance sheet efficiency."

In summary, the financial results for 2023 demonstrate continuous improvements in key operational factors. These include increased loans, decreased provisions and impairments, a strong balance sheet, ample liquidity, and a solid capital base.

#### **Promising Economic Forecast**

Turning to the Chief Strategy Officer, Jawad emphasized that the global economy is displaying macroeconomic resilience, with the IMF forecasting global economic growth to 3.6% in 2024, up from 3.0% in 2023. Slight fluctuations are expected in the economic growth of advanced economies this year, driven by geopolitical challenges and uncertainties. However, this is expected to be offset by growth in other emerging economies, resulting in world GDP similar to 2023's level.

He continued, "GCC economies are positioned favourably to demonstrate a promising economic forecast, while remaining cautious and exposed to the overall global backdrop. se of Kuwait the e In the promising outlook and we are optimistic of the commitment to accelerate the awards pipeline across various projects.'

In 2023, project awards surpassed KD 2.5 billion, a remarkable achievement attributed to the backlog of awards from the pandemic era.

Jawad added, "The IMF forecasts a GDP growth rate for Kuwait slightly over 3.6%, surpassing both the global and GCC averages, with projections to more than KD 5-6 billion worth of project awards in the pipeline. These projects are primarily in the energy and oil sector, with additional growth in foreign investments."

#### **A New Phase**

Jawad disclosed that ABK is committed to precisely implementing its strategy throughout 2024, positioning it to consistentlycreate added value for stakeholders. He claimed, "ABK advances into a new phase of progress. Our steadfast commitment has been reaffirmed by credit ratings of A from Fitch in November, and A2 from Moody's.

He expressed the Group's commitment to delivering enhanced value to shareholders, highlighting the Board's proposal to distribute cash dividends of 9% equivalent to 9 fils per share, valued at KD 21.23 million as well as bonus shares of 5% equivalent to 5 shares for every 100 shares, valued at KD 11.87 million.

Jawad continued, "The implementation of our ABK2X strategy is yielding successful results, with 95% of critical milestones slated for delivery by 2023 completed as planned, and 102 initiatives executed so far. Our strategy is yielding tangible outcomes, driving significant market share growth across multiple products and expanding our customer base.

He also discussed the introduction of Elite Plus to cater to the affluent segment, while targeted acquisition campaigns are capturing market share among key salaried Kuwaiti segments and higher-income expats. Furthermore, the successful launch of 'ABK Advantage Rewards' has led to increased customer adoption, prompting enhancements to credit card offerings to better meet evolving customer needs.

#### **Nine Syndicated Loan Transactions**

In the realm of international business, 2023 proved to be an exceptional year, marked by nine syndicated loan transactions, concluded by ABK-DIFC. These transactions spanned across various jurisdictions, including the GCC, Europe, and Asia.

Jawad shared, "As of 11 February 2024, ABK has been upgraded to the Premier Market, moving into a relatively larger and more liquid arena in Boursa Kuwait. The listing signifies the Bank's successful compliance with the requirements of Kuwait Capital Market Author-

#### **Sustainability and Governance**

Jawad emphasized ABK's commitment to advancing its ESG and sustainability agenda through a 5-year group ESG strategy consisting of six pillars: Climate Resilience; Responsible Banking; Community Investment; Robust Governance Foundation; Empowering Our People; and Financial Inclusion. In order to ensure the integration of these elements implemented an ESG e-learning program for approximately 1,000 staff members in Kuwait and the UAE.

#### its customers Growth Indicators

On his part, Soonawalla said, "In terms of

Breaking down the Operating Income of KD 185 million, 49% comes from commercial

banking, 43% from retail banking, and 8% from

operations, including the UAE branches and ABK-Egypt subsidiary, have been significant. As of the end of 2023, the Group's Total As-

**Other Voices** 

#### Chamber pushes for gov't delegation

# Privatization a solution amid gov't constraints

right

to

graduates,

but it must

#### **By Kamel Al-Harami** Independent Oil Analyst

THIS was clearly stated by our new Prime Minister during his recent press conference: We just cannot hire or recruit 30,000 fresh Kuwaiti graduates. The private sector is the solution.

Finally, such a warning is coming from our government regarding its inability to find or create jobs. It has done



Al-Harami

be ready for this.

It is the government's task to free itself from controlling almost everything in the country in every sector; from running postal sector, airport, roads, transportation, hospitals, education and so on, as well as running more than ten oil companies in every field such as refining, oil tankers, petrochemical, marine oil services, gas stations and services, cylinder gas distribution, lube factory, etc.

However, the private sector is not encouraging fresh graduates to join it. The same applies to our chamber of commerce, which is encouraging the government to hand off its immense activities.

The reluctance of the young graduates to join the private sector is due to their concern about the working conditions, such as the

long hours, hard work, as well as the possibility of being dismissed at short notice. It is here that the chamber of commerce and the private sector must play a role in addressing the concerns of the young graduates about working outside the government chambers, and assuring them of incentives and good conditions.

At the same time, the government has been issuing monthly payments to encourage Kuwaitis to work in the private sector. It may also add more financial incentive, as well as guarantee their job security.

It is time for our government to free itself from controlling almost every activity of the oil sector and pass it to the public. It is time that we move forward, let our country move forward, and let our young people get the opportunity to excel and perform instead of being stuck in government bureaucracy jobs.

Time has come for the government to free itself and pass the responsibility to the people away from government jobs and payouts, as it is becoming impossible to find and create new jobs for all the young graduates. The private sector and the chamber of commerce should play a greater role and be more proactive.

It is an opportunity to open our country and give our private sector the space to create and perform, and repeat the past experience of private ownership and its limits of creativity.

Time has come for the government to free itself and pass the responsibility to the private sector but on the basis of its own established rules and regulations.

#### Email: naftikuwaiti@yahoo.com

# **Boursa Kuwait indices surge** amid active stock purchases

Market value exceeds 44 bln dinars with notable increase

#### **By Mahmoud Shendi**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: During the seventh week of 2024, Boursa Kuwait indices experienced an uptrend, driven by active purchases of listed stocks. Optimism surrounding the fiscal year 2023 results of banks and companies played a significant role, propelling the market value to a notable increase of 1.177 billion dinars. The total market value surpassed the 44 billion dinar mark, marking a rise from 42.849 billion dinars the previous week.

Investors in the market exhibited a heightened focus on bank stocks, particularly those that reported substantial growth in their 2023 financial results. This interest was amplified by the anticipation of cash dividend distributions. The first market's value surged by 2.3 billion dinars during the week, reaching 36.2 billion dinars from 33.8 billion dinars. Conversely, the main market experienced a decrease of 1.1 billion dinars, falling from 8.960 billion dinars to 7.798 billion dinars.

As a result of the robust purchasing momentum and traders' confidence, the general market index climbed by 77 points or 1%, closing at 7,333 points compared to the previous week's close at 7,256 points. The main index increased by 88 points or 1.4%, settling at 6,007 points, while the first market index

# Kuwait commits to innovation & sustainability in energy sector

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Since by the Fukushima disaster. Global efforts to address clithe 1950s, Kuwait has undergone a remarkable transformation in the

energy sector, transitioning from

traditional fuels to cutting-edge

renewable technologies. This jour-

ney reached a milestone with the

inauguration of the Al-Shaqaya

Renewable Energy Complex in 2016, underscoring Kuwait's dedi-

cation to innovation and sustain-

The complex integrates photo-

voltaic, concentrated solar, and

wind energy systems, aligning

with the late Amir Sheikh Sabah

Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's

vision of deriving 15% of energy from renewables by 2030. How-

The main market index expe-

rienced a 16.7-point increase to

reach 6,007 points, marking a

closed at 8,039 points.

lars).

ability, reports Al-Qabas daily.

mate change, exemplified by agreements at COP 28, highlight the imperative of transitioning to clean energy sources. Kuwait, once a regional energy leader, is now at the forefront of this transition. In the late 1970s, the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research initiated solar energy programs and explored nuclear energy possibilities, demonstrating its commitment to diversification.

Looking forward, Kuwait faces the challenge of securing vast land for renewable projects, with projections indicating a need for over 500 square kilometers to achieve 50% renewable energy produc-

0.2% rise. Trading involved 168 million shares through 8,568 cash transactions, with a total value of 20.9 million dinars (about 63.7 million dollars). The primary market index decreased by 1.5 points, reaching 8,039 points, a 0.02% decline. Trading encompassed 151 million shares through 8,191 transactions, valued at 48.6 million dinars (approximately 148 million dollars).

Additionally, the Main 50 index

tion by 2050. Amid geopolitical complexities, there is increasing consensus on the necessity of a peaceful nuclear power station, following the example set by the UAE, leveraging advancements in reactor safety.

Furthermore, Kuwait is venturing into hydrogen power, with plans to establish both partial and complete hydrogen stations to further reduce emissions.

These initiatives, coupled with investments in waste energy and green hydrogen production, underscore Kuwait's commitment to carbon neutrality and sustainable energy sources. As Kuwait continues to innovate, it sets the stage for a cleaner, more resilient energy future.

rose by 34.9 points to reach 5,936 points, a 0.59% increase. The trading volume for this index amounted to 133 million shares through 6,052 cash transactions, valued at 18.3 million dinars (about 55.8 million dollars). Notably, the session saw increases in six sectors, led by consumer goods with a 2.60% rise, while five other sectors experienced declines, primarily led by insurance with a 0.68% decrease. The health care and financial services sectors remained stable.

ever, plans for nuclear energy were reevaluated post-2011, influenced Daily trading activities revealed that the Boursa Kuwait's general index rose by 2.4 points, reaching 7,333 points, a 0.03% increase. A total of 319 million shares were traded through 16,759 cash transactions, valued at 69.6 million dinars (approximately 212 million dol-

### 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 in-dex 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 en-countered 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."





Markaz Chairman Diraar Alghanim



Markaz Executives at seminar on 'Securities Lending' services



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 partner-ships with a number of local organizations and nonprofits. 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 par-ticipating 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 Nationssupported 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.

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, researchbased 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 successfully sponsors Watheefti career fair.



Markaz conducts breast cancer awareness seminar for its employees.



Awards in 2023

2023 Financial Highlights of Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz' MARKAZ

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 lead managers. Dur-

#### 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 rec-ognized 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 MEED 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.

# **BUSINESS**

#### Airbus targets 800 aircraft deliveries for 2024

Airbus plans to deliver more air-craft to customers in 2024 even as supply chain headaches continue to afflict the European airplane maker. The company reported healthy results for its commercial aircraft business Thursday in its latest annual earnings report, and signaled that there was more to come this year by setting a target of 800 commercial aircraft deliveries, 65 more than in 2023.

"We progressed on our produc-

tion ramp-up against a backdrop of an operating environment that remains complex and affected by supply chain challenges and geopolitical conflicts so at the end that's quite an achievement in my view," CEO Guillaume Faury said. Airbus's fortunes contrast with struggles at U.S. rival Boeing, which is battling manufacturing quality control concerns after an

emergency door panel blew off a 737 Max 9 jetliner last month.

Faury indicated that Airbus wouldn't see any short-term bump from airlines that want to switch suppliers as it already has a hefty order backlog for its A320 narrowbody jets that compete directly with Boeing's 737 family. "What's happening in the broader indus-- you refer to the situation of the competitor - has obviously an impact on all of this," Faury told reporters at its headquarters in Toulouse, France. (AP)

#### Scholz welcomes Microsoft's \$3.5b AI investment

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz welcomed an announcement Thursday by Microsoft that it would invest almost 3.3 billion euros (\$3.5 billion) in Germany over the next two years to massively expand its data center capacities for applica-tions in the field of artificial intelligence and cloud computing.

"This is a really good commitment to progress, to growth, to modernity and to global openness as the basis for these opportunities," he said, adding it was also linked to the "fact that Germany remains very determined to be an open economy." "Not only are we probably the most successful export economy in the world in terms of the size of our country, but we are also a country that trades with the whole world, that invests everywhere, but also invests in our own country," he said.

Microsoft President Brad Smith made the announcement in Berlin

during a presentation with Scholz. The largest single investment in Microsoft's 40-year history in Germany also includes an AI training program that aims to reach up to 1.2 million people, German news agency dpa reported. Microsoft is looking to be close to major customers, such as the pharmaceutical company Bayer AG and energy company RWE, in order to keep data latency between data centers and applications as low as possible. (AP)

Option to switch the screen to dark mode, ensuring privacy added

# Gulf Bank: customers can increase transfer limits via the mobile app

# **'NBK Wealth' for Premium Wealth Management Solutions 'unveiled'**

A world class wealth management group

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) revealed the launch of its prestigious "NBK Wealth" brand, positioning itself as a leading global organization and one of the most significant regional groups in comprehensive wealth management.

The brand features a unique visual identity that accurately represents the Group's business orientation and encapsulates the trust, credibility, and success associated with NBK Group, the leading financial institution in the Middle East

NBK Wealth, set for its official brand launch next April, encompasses a range of services and products under its umbrella. This includes the private banking services of NBK - Kuwait, Watani Investment Company, Watani Wealth Management Company (Saudi Arabia), NBK Banque Privée (Suisse), as well as National Bank of Kuwait (International) PLC and Watani Financial Brokerage Company (WFBC).

NBK Wealth provides an extensive array of comprehensive solutions in private banking services, coveringfinancial planning and wealth management, as well as investment management and advisory services. This is facilitated through a vast global network of integrated operations spanning 9 cities across 5 countries worldwide.

#### Boasting

The Group, boasting personal financial assets of approximately US\$ 37.6 billion as of the end of 2023, is supported by an elite team of over 100 investment professionals and traders. each with extensive experience in their field. NBK Wealth stands as a premier destination and a trusted partner for delivering innovative solutions and sophisticated services in asset management. This includes investment management and alternative investments. alongside traditional investments, and trading solutions. The new brandcaters to a sophisticated group of ultra-high-net-worth individuals and institutions with a passion for maintaining and accelerating their financial wellness. It offers financial consulting services aimed at growing and sustaining their wealth through holistic investment and banking solutions. Within wealth management, NBK Wealth presents a broad spectrum of innovative solutions, backedby an extensive network of investment professionals with specialized knowledge, and a distinguished team of highly skilled asset management experts. The valuable collaborations with JP Morgan Asset Management and Intervest further leverage multiple dimensions, including advisory services and the development of new investment solutions. Commenting on this news, Mr. Faisal Al-Hamad, CEO - NBK Wealth, stated: "The introduction of the NBK Wealth brand marks a pivotal moment in our dedication to offering unmatched wealth management services and solutions. It underscores our role in assisting our clients as they navigate the path to accumulating significant wealth and creating a lasting legacy that will benefit many generations.

#### KFH welcomes Landmark Group to Baitak Rewards KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has announced its recent partnership with Landmark Group, welcoming the Shukran Rewards programme to Baitak Rewards through Tam Application, and KFH Rewards website.

Owing to Landmark Group's famous brands that span several categories in the Middle East, the newly signed partnership represents significant value to the customers of Baitak Rewards program, encouraging them to use KFH credit and prepaid cards inside or outside Kuwait. Customers can collect points for each purchase transaction starting from KD 1 and transfer them to Shukran Programme through the "Points Exchange" feature, and shop from Shukran's participating brands. Every 1000 points in Baitak Rewards are equivalent to 250 points in the Shukran Programme.

Among the participating brands under the Shukran Programme are Home Centre, Centrepoint, and Splash, including many other shops. This partnership will offer an enjoyable experience to Baitak Rewards users when shopping and benefitting from KFH points.

KFH Executive Manager Credit and Charge Card Products, Talal AlArbeed said that welcoming Landmark Group as a participating partner in Baitak Rewards is a qualitative improvement in the array of benefits offered by the program, which caters to customers' needs and aspirations.

Hestressed that this cooperation is part of KFH efforts to enhance the ben-



KFH Executive Manager - Credit and Charge Card Products, Talal AlAr-

**Talal AlArbeed** KFH offers the best customer experience and caters to their shopping aspirations

Remarkable benefits for cardholders from famous brands

website of the participating shops."

He added that there are several remarkable offers associated with the launch of the new Baitak Rewards program, including 1000 points for customers downloading the program for the first time.

categories may earn points through local and international shops by using all points of sale and e-marketing. They may also transfer KFH points to any other member in the program. Cardholders of the green category can earn points only through participating shops. KFH total points are added automatically within 24 hours after each purchase transaction which is qualified to earn points, provided that the customer is not a participant in any other promotional program for the cards.

AlArbeed noted that the program is the outcome of several developments made on KFH cards including design, services, and advantages to encourage customers to further use the cards and benefit from the advantages. He added that KFH has launched the Oasis Club credit card in collaboration with Kuwait Airways. It includes Oasis Club Master-Card World Elite, which is allocated exclusively to private banking customers, and KFH Oasis Club Master-Card World, which is allocated to Al Tamavoz and Al Ruwad as well as qualified customers.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: In its rapid journey towards digital excellence, Gulf Bank's latest mobile application offers a diverse range of highquality services. Among them is the ability to increase the daily limit on transfers, as well as switching the screen mode to dark mode to provide more privacy when browsing the application near others.

Bader Al-Ali, Deputy General Manager of the Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank, emphasized the distinctive features of the bank's mobile app, making it the most user-friendly, efficient, and advanced in the banking industry. He highlighted the app's smart user interface, designed to meet the specific needs of each individual customer, ensuring a seamless experience that surpasses customer expectations.

Al-Ali explained that Gulf Bank customers can easily adjust their daily transfer limits, whether for local, international, or intra-bank transfers, through the mobile app, with approval typically obtained within 24 hours. Customers interested in increasing their minimum transfer amounts can do so by accessing the app's profile settings and selecting from four package options: Basic, Standard, Premium, and VIP. Upon selection, a confirmation message will appear, confirming the change in the minimum limit.

Regarding switching to dark mode, Al-Ali outlined two simple methods for customers to achieve this. The first involves accessing the login page and navigating to the side menu, where they can select the semi-colored circle to choose between light or dark mode, or maintain identical system settings. The second method requires logging into the mobile app, accessing profile settings from the side menu, and selecting "Application Attributes" to customize the screen mode.

Al-Ali concluded by emphasizing that the new version of Gulf Bank's mobile application represents a significant advancement in customer experience, impacting various banking services and transaction stages. It is accessible to everyone, regardless of location or time, via a simple, fast and secure interface.

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



Bader Al-Ali – Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank

#### **Bader Al-Ali**

The distinctive features of the bank's mobile app, make it as the most user-friendly, efficient, and advanced in the banking industry.



App Dark mode

transactions, all while ensuring a

"At NBK Wealth, our approach is client-centric and comprehensive, aimed at thoroughly understanding our clients' needs to offer solutions that align with their aspirations. Our objectives extend beyond merely generating wealth; we strive to fulfill their requirements and deliver long-term added value from a holistic and inte-grated standpoint," Al-Hamad added.

Furthermore, the CEO elaborated that the Group is dedicated to reinforcing its status as the premier and trusted

efits provided to customers and meet their needs. Every KD 1 spent, whether outside or inside Kuwait, customers will gain points that can be used to purchase items from over 150 renowned brands and outlets. All KFH customers with eligible cards are enrolled in the Baitak Rewards program automatically," said AlArbeed. "Baitak Points can be redeemed through e-vouchers issued from Baitak Rewards Mobile Application, or directly through the

"KFH brings together a number of new partners to the rewards program, offering more options and distinguished rewards to KFH cardholders," dded AlArbeed.

He pointed out that there are 3 different card categories with Baitak Rewards program. Each category contains exclusive offers customers may avail themselves of Categories include black, silver, and green tiers. Cardholders of the black and silver

simple and seamless banking experience.

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

#### Faisal Al-Hamad Al-Hamad

■ NBK Wealth marks a significant milestone in assisting our clients to accumulate wealth and create a lasting legacy for future generations. Our motto, "Guiding Your Path Beyond Wealth? embodies our forward-looking approach to wealth management for both individuals and institutions

■ NBK Wealth stands at the forefront of offering cuttingedge and sophisticated solutions in wealth management.

Our extensive global network spans the key financial and business capitals worldwide, ensuring integrated operations across the most significant markets.

We are dedicated to solidifying our status as the primary and reliable option for wealth management on both a regional and global scale. By adopting a holistic,

client-centric approach, we aim to fully understand our clients' needs and deliver tailored solutions that align with their goals.

option in wealth management, both regionally and globally, backed by an extensive global network of integrated operations.



"Our motto, "Guiding Your Path Beyond Wealth,' encapsulates our vision for ushering in a new era of wealth management for both highnet-worth individuals and institutions. This vision is realized through holistic investment strategies, leveraging our global presence in key financial and business hubs, and our extensive experience in delivering exceptional service that fulfills all their aspirations," Al-Hamad noted

#### **NBK** Wealth in numbers

■ US\$37.6 billion in personal financial assets as of the end of 2023

More than 100 investment professionals and traders, and 80 relationship managers

Presence in 5 countries and 9 key financial hubs around the world

■ Offers private banking solutions, encompassing financial planning, wealth management, and banking services

Asset management solutions covering investment management, alternative investments, traditional investments, and trading solutions For more information on NBK Wealth, including its key services and solutions, please visit: https:// www.nbkwealth.com/

# **US Treasury is promoting new** rules to stop money laundering

WASHINGTON, Feb 17, (AP): The Biden administration is stepping up efforts to stop dirty money from flowing through the U.S. financial system with a slew of new rules aimed at increasing corporate transparency and regulating occupations that are exploited for money laundering.

As the second anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine approaches and the war in Gaza enters its fifth month, the U.S. also faces renewed pressure to close loopholes that allow illicit funds to flow from the U.S. into Russia, Iran and the hands of militant Hamas figureheads.

Brian Nelson, Treasury's undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, will be in Paris next week to lay out the latest U.S. efforts at meetings of the Financial Action Task Force, an initiative of the Group of Seven involving 39 nations that sets international standards on how to combat money laundering and illicit finance. He previewed U.S. strategy in remarks Thursday at the Atlantic Council, a nonpartisan think tank.

"We are undertaking a concerted effort to address the systemic deficiencies in the United States' antimoney laundering and countering the financing of terrorism framework," Nelson said.

The international community is expecting the U.S. to improve its corporate transparency rules in order to maintain its status as a safe haven for investment.

A 2016 assessment by the task force on the effectiveness of measures to combat money laundering and terrorist financing identified four categories where the U.S. is "not compliant"- including real estate ownership, regulating certain non-banking professions and otherswhich could threaten the U.S.' standing as a place for safe investment.

Treasury in recent months has announced a collection of rulemakings intended to make the financial system more transparent.

"We have identified numerous cases involving criminals and U.S. adversaries seeking to operate with anonymity using opaque corporate structures," Nelson said.

"A recurring risk that we are focused on is the misuse of corporate structures to launder or conceal funds. Anonymous companies are a favorite tool for bad actors seeking to conceal their activities and their funds," Nelson said.

This year, Treasury started building out a new database that collects "beneficial ownership" information on firms as part of a new government effort to unmask shell company owners. Critics of the rule say it is unduly burdensome on small firms, violates privacy and free speech protections and infringes on states' powers to govern businesses.

There have also been rollouts of a rule that would require real estate professionals to report information to the agency about non-financed sales of residential real estate to legal entities, trusts and shell companies and new recordkeeping rules for U.S. investment advisers that would require them to develop anti-money laundering programs and file reports with the government when suspicious activity is detected by clients.

Addressing the gaps in the U.S. anti-money laundering regime "will help prevent bad actors from operating across the United States and protect Americans from harm," Nelson said. 'Treasury's efforts, therefore, will help us to advance prosperity and security at home, while leading by example around the world."

# Eni, TotalEnergies developing natural gas deposits off Cyprus

NICOSIA, Cyprus, Feb 17, (AP): Eni said that drilling to appraise a third natural gas discovery in waters off Cyprus shows the commitment of the Italian energy company and its French partner TotalEnergies to swiftly develop the deposit and bolster energy supply to Europe

Eni said in a statement the appraisal well has proven the "excellent gas deliverability capacity" of the Cronos-1 deposit that's estimated to contain around 2.5 trillion cubic feet (70.8 billion cubic meters) of the hydrocarbon.

The appraisal well was drilled approximately 100 miles (160 kilometers) southwest of the Cyprus coast inside Block 6, one of 13 designated areas inside the nation's offshore economic zone, where Eni and partner TotalEnergies of France hold exploration licenses. Drilling "confirms the commitment of Eni and its partner Total-Energies, to progress swiftly towards the selection of the most suitable and economically viable development solution, which will contribute to the supply of gas to Europe and the region," the company said.

TotalEnergies said in a separate statement that the deposit's thickness is around 337 feet (115 meters).

The other gas discoveries in Block 6 were made in 2018 and 2022, respectively. Eni and TotalEnergies are partners in another six blocks with the Italian company operating four of them. Cyprus' government spokesman

Constantinos Letymbiotis said the multiple discoveries in the block "is expected to contribute to expediting their development.'

Although Cyprus is investing to increase its energy generation from renewable sources, it counts natural gas as a key component of its future energy mix as it seeks to steer away from its dependence on crude oil imports.

# Faisal Al-Hamad, CEO - NBK Wealth

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

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-

Variety

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-yearold 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.





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

Film



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 Ayo Edebiri 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

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 moviedom. 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 highestgrossing 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 flying. 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 Ishir 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 hydrogenbomb 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.

"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 intro-

duced changes to increase the awards' diversity in 2020, when no women were nominated as



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)

# **NEWS/FEATURES**

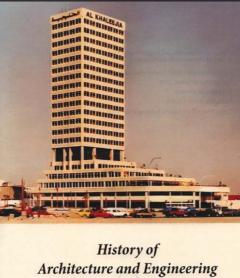
# **People & Places**



Sabah Al Rayes with Sheikha Hussa Al-Sabah

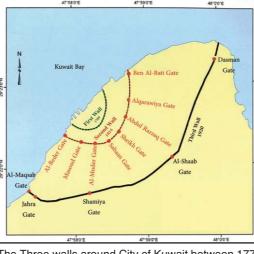


Al Rayes with Prince Albert of Belgium at PACE office, 24 January 1985



in Kuwait A story of a homeland in autobiography Sabah Mohmmad Amin Al-Raye

New book



The Three walls around City of Kuwait between 1770 and 1920



Souq Mubarakiya by Mubarak Kiosk

In Airplane to London 1958

#### 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 cof-fee 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

# From adobe anecdotes to modern abodes

# Al Rayes chronicles Kuwait's architectural saga

#### By Chaitali B. Roy Special to the Arab Times

Books

he sixties, seventies and eighties were The sixties, sevenices and eigenee 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 socioeconomic 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 en-gineering, 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's 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 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.

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

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 Montealegre, 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, saving 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.

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 galvaniz-

#### 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 airconditioned with running water and a sewage treatment plant. We built a whole city, with the houses prefab 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 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 Khaleejia 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," he said.

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.

ing 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



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 cofounder 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)



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# **HEALTH/SCIENCE**

#### 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 aller-gies 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 al-lergens. 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 treat-ment 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



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

#### 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.

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 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

#### 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 flag-ship 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 today 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.



An H3 rocket lifts off at Tanegashima Space Center in Kagoshima, south-ern 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-feet) -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.

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

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.

#### **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

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.

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.

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 fiover 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.



#### "I want to win and I hate losing,"

# Mathurin caps Pacers' All-Star celebration with Rising Stars MVP, title in 26-13 win

INDIANAPOLIS, Feb 17, (AP): Pacers guard Bennedict Mathurin wanted his family to have something to cheer about after traveling to Indianapolis for All-Star weekend.

Turns out, the crowd enjoyed Mathurin's championship run, too. San Antonio rookie Victor Wembanyama never got the chance to celebrate Friday night. Despite scoring 11 points in the second of the night's three games, Wembanyama was eliminated in his first All-Star contest.

Instead, two second-year play-

ers - Mathurin and Oklahoma City guard Jalen Williams - led Team Jalen past Team Detlef 26-13 in the Rising Stars championship game. Mathurin celebrated by taking home MVP honors.

#### BASKETBALL

"To see my family and friends traveling all this way just to see my have a good time, I felt I needed to play well," Mathurin said after scoring 22 points in two games. "If I'm being totally honest, it's also my makeup to make sure I bring it home, so that was the main thing."

Mathurin, a first-team all-rookie selection last season, stole the show as teammates Myles Turner and Tyrese Haliburton, a first-time All-Star starter rooting for him.

The crowd even serenated briefly with chants of "M-V-P! M-V-P!"

Mathurin's strong showing may not have been a surprise, but Wembanyama's early exit was. And the 20-year-old French sensation certainly wasn't pleased with the result. "I want to win and I hate losing," he said. "But at the same time, I have so much going on and you know I'm happy that I just knocked one thing off the list this weekend. So it's mixed feelings." But it was an all-Pacers celebration.

Coaches Jalen Rose and Detlef Schrempf, both former Pacers players reached the championship round. And Indiana rookie Oscar Tshiebwe led Schrempf's team with eight points in the title game. Game 1

Mathurin rallied Team Jalen from an early 9-0 deficit by fueling a 21-8 run that swung the game. Portland rookie Scott Henderson, playing in his third Rising Stars game, Tamika Catchings' team with 10 points. Jaden Ivey, whose mother played for the WNBA's Indiana Fever, had eight points and four steals.

#### Game 2

Wembanyama had mixed results in his first All-Star contets. He was 5 of 6 from the field but also committed five turnovers.

Two G-League players, Mac Mc-Clung, the defending Slam Dunk champion, Alondes Williams led Team Schrempf. McClung scored 12 points while Williams had 11.

#### **Banchero Fans**

Last season's NBA rookie of the year Paolo Banchero certainly has a strong following this weekend. Banchero finished with five points, three rebounds and two assists in his only game playing for Hall of Famer Tamika Catchings.

Afterward, Wembanyama called Banchero an underrated performer. Max McClung also praised Banchero. "I think a lot of it starts by his character to do this game and be in the All-Star game," McClung said. "I don't think there's any limit on Paolo Banchero."

#### Odermatt finishes 7th. US has six in top 20

# Hintermann wins World Cup downhill

KVITFJELL, Norway, Feb 17, (AP): On a rare day with dominant World Cup skier Marco Odermatt absent from the podium, his teammate Niels Hintermann stepped up to earn Switzerland victory in a downhill on Saturday.

Hintermann edged out runnerup Vincent Kriechmayr of Austria by 0.08 seconds for his second downhill win, nearly two years after his triumph at the same resort in Norway.

In March 2022, Hintermann shared the victory with Cameron Alexander. On Saturday,

#### SKIING

the world championship bronze medalist from Canada was 0.19 behind in third.

"It's not really explainable," Hintermann said about winning twice in Kvitfjell. "I didn't have the feeling that my run was perfect, I felt like you could go half a second or a second faster."

Hintermann has six podiums in downhill, including three in Kvitfjell, and won a combined event in Wengen seven years ago.

Following a run where he seemed to miss some of his usual fluency, Odermatt shared seventh position with American racer Ryan Cochran-Siegle, 0.75 seconds off the winner. KVITFJELL

Austria's Vincent Kriechmayr celebrates on the podium after taking second place in an alpine ski, men's World Cup downhill race, in Kvitfjell, Norway, Saturday, Feb. 17, 2024. (AP)

It was only the third time in his 19 starts across all disciplines this season that Odermatt didn't finish in the top three. He won 10 of those races, including his first in downhill in Wengen in January.

"My run was OK. There were maybe one or two spots where I could have gained one or twohundredths of a second," said Odermatt, the downhill world champion.

Odermatt extended his lead in

the discipline standings as his main competitor for the downhill title, Cyprien Sarrazin, sat out the race.

The French ski federation said Sarrazin crashed and injured his left calf in training Friday. Sarrazin, who won two downhills in Kitzbuehel last month, is also Odermatt's closest challenger in the overall standings.

Odermatt said he didn't hold back in the race because of his rival's absence.

"I always try to focus on myself, and I always want to win," said the Swiss star, who is closing in on his third overall title.

Sarrazin's teammate Nils Allegre had a nasty crash in the race as he slid off the course into the safety netting. Allegre, who won his first World Cup race at a super-G in Germany three weeks ago, stayed down for a while but the French skier ultimately got up and seemed to have avoided major injuries.

Cochran-Siegle's seventh position added to a strong showing by the U.S. team, which had six racers in the top 20, with Bryce Bennett in fourth, Sam Morse in 10th, Jared Goldberg in 17th, and Kyle Negomir and Wiley Maple in shared 19th.

For Morse and Negomir, it marked career-best results.

A super-G on Sunday concludes the race weekend in Norway.

# Netherlands, China each claim 2 swimming gold medals at worlds



Daniel Wiffen of Ireland competes in the men's 1500-meter freestyle heat at the World Aquatics Championships in Doha, Qatar, Saturday, Feb. 17, 2024. (AP)

#### Spain's Gonzales captures gold in 200 backstroke

DOHA, Qatar, Feb 17, (AP): Marrit Steenbergen and Tes Schouten made it a golden night for the Netherlands at the World Aquatics Championships. China was celebrating as well, adding two more victories to its medal haul on Friday.

Steenbergen touched first in the women's 100-meter freestyle and Schouten captured gold in the 200 winning Dutch team in the 4x100 freestyle relay.

Haughey settled for silver at 52.56, repeating her showing from the 2023 worlds. The bronze went to Shayna Jack of Australia at 52.83, while American Kate Douglass just missed a spot on the podium in fourth.

"My strength is typically in the first half of the race," Haughey said. "I died a little at the end, but that's OK. That's how I swim the 100."

The reigning world champion, Australia's Mollie O'Callaghan, was among many top swimmers who skipped the Doha meet to focus on the hard and see what happens. That's what I did and it turned out pretty good."

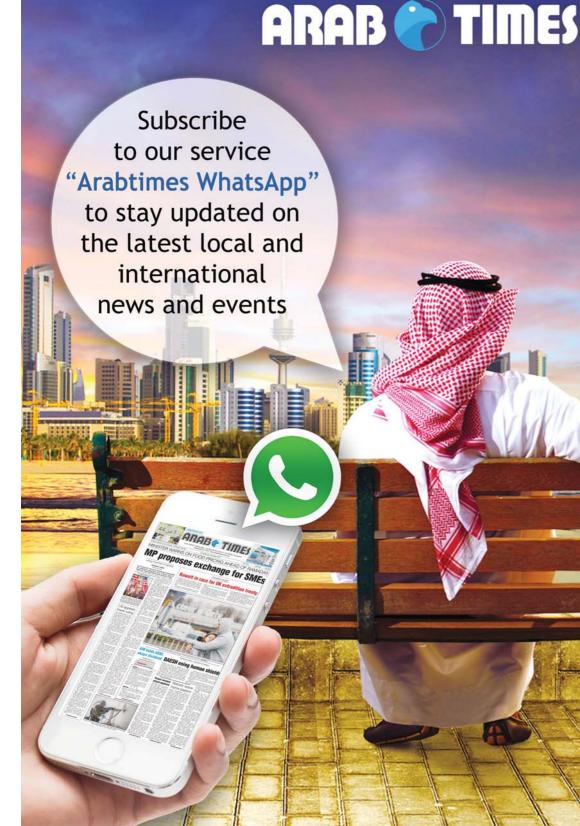
Douglass still managed to grab the silver (2:20.91), while the bronze went to Sydney Pickrem of Canada at 2:22.94.

"That was definitely a tough double," said Douglass, who earlier in the meet won the 200 individual medley. "But a silver is awesome."

Corbeau used the same strategy as Schouten, going out fast and doing his best to hold on. It nearly worked, but Dong produced a dazzling final lap to win in 2:07.94.

The 18-year-old Chinese swimmer went nearly 2 seconds faster than

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breaststroke.

The Dutch nearly made it three golds, but China's Dong Zhihao chased down Caspar Corbeau in the men's 200 breast.

With a similar comeback, China rallied on the final lap behind 16-year-old anchor Zhang Zhanshuo for a victory in the men's 4x200 freestyle relay.

Spain's Hugo González captured gold in the night's other final, the men's 200 backstroke.

In the 100 free, Siobhán Haughey of Hong Kong went out strong, making the turn with the lead.

But Steenbergen had the better finishing kick, touching first in 52.26 seconds to improve on a bronze-medal finish at last summer's worlds in Fukuoka and stamp her as one of the top contenders for the Paris Olympics.

"The back half is my specialty," said Steenbergen, who also anchored the Olympics. World record-holder Sarah

#### SWIMMING

Sjöström of Sweden is at the championships but withdrew from the 100 free before the preliminaries to focus on the 50 butterfly.

The 30-year-old Sjöström was top qualifier in the semifinals at 25.08 as she goes for her sixth straight world title in the non-Olympic event.

On a grueling night, Douglass returned to the deck about 45 minutes later for the final of the 200 breast. She didn't have enough to keep up with Schouten, who set the pace right from the start and breezed to victory in 2 minutes, 19.81 seconds.

"I felt really good," Schouten said. "There's not much lose. Just go out Corbeau on the last 50, relegating the Dutchman to a silver at 2:08.24. The bronze went to American Nic Fink at 2:08.85, his fourth medal of the championships.

"You might as well fly and die and put it all on the line," Corbeau said. "Those last 20 meters were real bad."

In the last race of the night, the U.S. built a big lead in the relay but Zhang was too strong at the end. He combined with teammates Ji Xinjie, Wang Haoyu and Pan Jhanle for a winning time of 7:01.84.

China had previously taken gold in the men's 4x100 free relay.

"That is my personal (best)," Zhang said. "What can I say? Anything is possible!"

South Korea took the silver at 7:01.94, while the Americans - missing many of their top swimmers in Doha - faded to the bronze in 7:02.08.

### Termination And Cut Relation Oregon Sta



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#### **Oregon State beats UCLA 79-77**

CORVALLIS, Ore., Feb 17, (AP): Talia von Oelhoffen made a 3-pointer from the top of the key at the buzzer to lift No. 11 Oregon State to a 79-77 victory over No.

9 UCLA on Friday night. After an official's review, the basket counted and the Beavers (21-3, 10-3 Pac-12) had their sixth

straight win. On the game's last possession, Von Oelhoffen said UCLA focused its defense on Timea Gardiner, who had made 3 of 4 3-pointers. "I had a feeling that they were going to help on that and that I was going to be open on the pop," von Oelhoffen said. "I was just ready for it. I had just had that layup so I had a little bit of confidence and shot it well in that second half." Von Oelhoffen scored 18 of her 22 points in the second half, including all four 3-pointers. She also made a driving layup with 2 seconds left to put the Beavers ahead 76-75. Oregon State rallied from

seven points down in the final three minutes. Von Oelhoffen finished with 22 points on 6-for-12 shooting from the field and 6-for-6 at the foul line, and Gardiner had a career-high 21 points.

Change Name

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# **SPORTS**

#### Al-Qadisiya emerge victorious against Al-Nasr in league

Burgan's handball team shows promise with draw against Al-Ittihad in Bahrain

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: In its inaugural test match during the current training camp in Manama, Burgan drew 31-31 against its Bahraini counterpart, Al-Ittihad. The team is scheduled to face Bahrain in another friendly match on the 22nd of this month. Seeking a third friendly encounter, Burgan plans to depart for the Qatari capital, Doha, on the 23rd of this month to participate in the 40th Gulf Championship for the Cup Champions Clubs, taking place from the 25th of this month until the 5th of next March.

#### HANDBALL

In the tournament draw, Burgan found itself placed in the first group alongside host clubs Al-Arabi Al-Qatari, Al-Dair Al-Bahraini, and Al-Amman Al-Omani. Meanwhile, the defending champion, Al-Kuwait Club, is set to compete in the second group against Al-Rayyan of Qatar, Maliha Al-Emirati, and Al-Shabab of Bahrain. Abdusig Naigeb Director of Hand

Abdulaziz Najeeb, Director of Handball at Burgan Club, commended the Bahraini camp and the players' dedication to the instructions of the technical and administrative staff, expressing confidence in their commitment to putting up a strong performance and contending for the championship title.

Najeeb expressed aspirations to en-



Burgan player overcomes an opponent to score during the friendly encounter.

gage in additional matches to finalize the tournament squad and enhance cohesion among players, particularly the new professionals. He also extended gratitude to the Burgan Club's Board of Directors for the substantial support provided to the handball team ahead of their Gulf Championship participation.

In other developments, during the second week of the Handball League, Al-Salmiya triumphed over Al-Sahel with a score of 39-26, securing 4 points for Al-Samiya while leaving Al-Sahel without a score. Additionally, Al-Fahaheel defeated Khaitan 30-26, earning Red Al-Janoub 4 points and Khaitan 2 points. Al-Qadisiya also emerged victorious against Al-Nasr with a score of 30-26, granting "Yellow" their initial two points in the league, while Al-Nasr obtained one point. Lastly, Kuwait Club secured a win over Al-Qurain with a score of 42-32, elevating Whites to 4 points and granting Al-Qurain one point.

# Kazma and Burgan volleyball teams gear up for 42nd Arab Club Championship in Jordan

#### By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff ISTANBUL, Feb 17: Kazma Club embarks on its journey from Turkey to Jordan for the 42nd Arab Volleyball Club Championship. The tournament, scheduled in Amman from the 20th to the 28th of this month, will see the "Orange" delegation led by Game Director Khaled Al-Bahwa, including Alaa Al-Maarouf.

#### VOLLEYBALL

The administrative team consists of Iranian coach Jawad Shamami, assistant Saeed Yaqoub, fitness coach Hani Fereydoun, team doctor Marko Simulović, and physical therapist Mehdi Khabbaz. Fourteen players, namely Muhammad Abdullah, Abdullah Ali, Abdulaziz Al-Shatti, Abdulrahman Al-Mutawa, Ali Saadoun, Mishal Al-Omar, Ibrahim Ahmed, Muhammad Qassem, Hussein Al-Bahr, Abdulaziz Shaker, Saleh Ahmed, Muhammad Walid, German player Igor, and Bulgarian player Flynn complete the delegation.

Similarly, the Burgan delegation departed on a direct flight to Jordan for the same tournament. Led by Burgan Club's treasurer, Abdullah Al-Bous, the team includes Game Director Youssef Al-Hamdan, administrator Mubarak Al-Azmi, and Argentine coach Alejandro Schneider. Among the 14 players are Serbian professionals Irfan Hamza and



A file photo of players in action.

Argentinian Lucas Ocampo.

The tournament draw placed Kazma in the first group with Al-Seeb of Oman, Al-Ahly Benghazi of Libya, Al-Najma of Bahrain, Qatar of Qatar, and Shabab Al-Hussein of Jordan. Meanwhile, Burgan is in the second group with Dar Kulaib of Bahrain, Al-Shorta of Qatar, Al-Suwaihli of Libya, Masafi Al-Shamal of Iraq, and Shabab Ayra of Jordan. Kuwaiti referee, Faisal Al-Shammari is participating in managing the tournament matches.

In other news, in the postponed matches of the Volleyball League, Al-Qadisiya defeated Al-Arabi with a score of three sets (28-26, 25-15, 20-25, 25-19), and

victory over Damac, and Al-Wahda

had a similar goal draw with Al-Taei.

ment includes 21 consecutive vic-

tories in all official tournaments,

encompassing the Saudi League, the

King's Cup, and the AFC Champi-

ons League. The latest victory came

against Sepahan Isfahan of Iran (3-

1) in the first leg of the Champions

Since the draw with Damak in the

seventh round of the Saudi League

on September 21, Al-Zaeem has

maintained an unbroken chain of

victories, winning 12 league match-

es, 6 Champions League matches,

Under the guidance of Portuguese

coach Jorge Jesus, Al Hilal has re-

mained undefeated throughout the

current season, boasting a record of

26 wins and 3 draws across all tour-

naments. Ajax holds the legendary

record with 26 consecutive wins in

SOCCER

Al Hilal needs 7 more victories to

surpass New Saints and claim the his-

toric record, potentially securing an un-

precedented achievement in the Guin-

ness World Records. Their upcoming

challenge includes a tough match

against Iranian Sepahan in the second

leg of the AFC Champions League

round of 16, with the possibility of fac-

ing either Al-Ittihad or Uzbekistan's

Currently tied with Manchester

City at 21 victories each, Al Hilal

eyes breaking into the top ranks of

the longest winning streaks in his-

tory, noting that Manchester City

achieved its series under the leader-

ship of coach Pep Guardiola in the

"2020-2021" season.

Navbakhor in the quarter-finals.

League final last Thursday.

and 3 King Cup matches.

the 1971-1972 season.

Al Hilal's remarkable achieve-

-Kuwait Club secured victory against Al-Sahel by three sets (25-15, 25-16, 25-16). The league standings currently show Al-Arabi and Burgan with 35 points, Kuwait Club, Al-Qadisiya, and Kazma with 34 points, Al-Shabab with 24, Yarmouk with 17, Al-Tadamon with 15, and Sulaibikhat and Al-Sahel with three points each.

Notably, Kuwait Club and Al-Qadisiya have five "postponed" matches remaining for their participation in the Second West Asian Championship, recently concluded in the Sultanate of Oman. Kazma has two postponed matches due to their current participation in the Arab Club Championship.

# Jaiswal ton puts India in total command

RAJKOT, India, Feb 17, (AP): Yashasvi Jaiswal scored his second hundred of the series as India took complete control of the third test against England on Day 3 on Saturday.

Jaiswal hit 104 before retiring hurt with back spasms as India piled up 196-2 in its second innings. Shubman Gill was unbeaten on 65 at stumps, with Kuldeep Yadav 3 not out.

Earlier, fast bowler Mohammed Siraj took 4-84 to help bowl out England for 319, surrendering a first-innings lead of 126 to India.

The hosts were missing off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, who picked up his 500th test wicket on Friday. He flew home to Chennai because of a family medical emergency and is unavailable for the remainder of the test.





#### 'Frenchman leaving'

# Who will replace Mpappe at PSG?

PARIS, Feb 17: (AP): The future looks much brighter for Kylian Mbappé than it does for Paris Saint-Germain.

With Mbappé leaving PSG at the end of the season, following former star teammates Neymar and Lionel Messi out of the door, the Qatari-owned club's project to dominate European soccer has taken another severe blow.

For while Mbappé will have Europe's biggest clubs chasing him -Real Madrid seems in pole position - PSG faces uncertainty.

The cash-rich club's next steps will be heavily scrutinized.

Who will replace the 25-year-old Mbappé? How will PSG cope without Mbappé given that his goals have helped paper

helped paper over so many cracks? How does coach Luis Enrique prepare for the rest of this season and the next? An exasperated Enrique

tried his best not



to answer at his pre-match news Mbappe conference on

conference on Friday, on the eve of his team's French league game at Nantes. He flatly de-

#### CRICKET

The rules do not allow for a replacement player, unless there is a concussion or a COVID-19 case, so India will be down to 10 batters.

Despite Ashwin's absence, India claimed three wickets in the morning session as England reached 290-5 at lunch.

Joe Root was caught at second slip for 18 attempting his signature reverse ramp stroke off Jasprit Bumrah. The experienced batter appeared visibly upset at his poor shot selection.

Jonny Bairstow went lbw for a four-ball duck to Yadav. The Englishman reviewed the decision but it stayed in India's favor.

Ben Duckett added 20 runs to his overnight score before he hit a delivery straight to cover. His brilliant 153 came off 151 balls and included 23 fours and two sixes.

The touring side then collapsed, losing its last five wickets for just 20 runs.

Skipper Ben Stokes was caught off Ravindra Jadeja at midwicket for 41.

Ben Foakes was caught at midon for 13 at the start of Siraj's next over.

Jadeja had Tom Hartley stumped for nine, while Siraj bowled Rehan Ahmed (6) and James Anderson (1).

Jaiswal then took centre stage. The opening batter, who struck a maiden double hundred in the second test at Visakhapatnam, followed up with a 122-ball century.

It was his third hundred in tests. He faced 133 deliveries in all, hitting nine fours and five sixes.

India was 44-1 at tea, having lost skipper Rohit Sharma lbw to Root for 19.

Post the break, Jaiswal and Gill shared a stand of 155 for the second wicket as India took charge.

Jaiswal clubbed Hartley over long-on twice in succession. Gill batted sedately by comparison, facing 120 deliveries in all, though he reached his 50 with a six over square leg off Mark Wood.

Shortly before stumps, Jaiswal complained of a back condition and walked off the field. The break in play helped England as Rajat Patidar was out for a 10-ball duck, caught at short midwicket off Hartley.

India's Yashasvi Jaiswal plays a shot on the third day of the third cricket test match between England and India in Rajkot, India. (AP)

#### Al-Ittihad take on Al-Riyadh

## Record in making: Al Hilal aim for longest winning run

RIYADH, Feb 17: Al Hilal Saudi Arabia is on the brink of setting a new record for the longest winning streak in the history of football clubs across all tournaments.

In the 20th round of the Roshan Saudi Professional Football League, Al-Hilal is set to face Al-Raed, while Al-Ittihad will take on Al-Riyadh today. Al-Akhdood secured a 3-2 victory over Al-Ahly, maintaining Al-Ahly's third position with 40 points, while Al-Akhdood climbed to 23 points, securing the 11th place in the league standings. Al-Shabab secured a clean goal

#### 'One fan injured after bus hit with stones following game in Lyon'

NICE, France, Feb 17, (AP): French soccer club Nice says one of its fans was injured when a bus carrying supporters was pelted with stones after a league game at Lyon on Friday night.

Nice said in a statement overnight on X, formerly known as Twitter, that it wants the authorities to investigate this incident "where the consequences could have been tragic."

Images online showed the bus had a crack on the windscreen. The incident reportedly happened on the way back from the game.

Lyon and Nice fans share a longstanding animosity that has led to clashes between rival groups in the past. Only around 300 Nice fans were allowed to attend the game, which ended in a 1-0 win for Lyon, and arrived at the stadium under police escort.

Earlier this season, Lyon's team bus was pelted with objects as it approached bitter rival Marseille's stadium and former Lyon coach Fabio Grosso sustained a serious head injury.

Buses carrying Brest supporters were also targeted after games at Paris Saint-Germain and Montpellier, where a bus was hit by rocks reportedly thrown from a motorway bridge.

This season has been marred by increasing soccer violence in France and elsewhere in Europe, where a Greek fan was killed in August following a clash before a Champions League game between AEK Athens and Dinamo Zagreb. After a Nice fan was stabbed and killed in Nantes before a match in early December, France's sports minister Amélie Oudéa-Castéra urged a clampdown on away fans at games in a bid to stem the violence.

The move, however, was seen as panicky and too widespread by many supporters' groups because it punished clubs whose fans and Ultras were not usually involved in any violence.

After the latest incident, Oudéa-Castéra said on X that further measures will be taken to combat the problem. On Friday, the Interior Ministry banned PSG's fans from going to Nantes for a league game later Saturday due to a high risk of clashes between rival groups, who fought each other last season and in a prearranged fight in Nantes in 2020 on the eve of a match.

However, the ban was overturned by the Council of State, France's highest administrative body, and PSG fans were authorized to travel - only for the number to be reduced from 1,000 to 500 by the local prefecture.



A file photo of Al Hilal players celebrating during a league match.

livered one-line responses such as "I won't comment until the parties concerned have commented" and "No player is bigger than the club."

When a reporter tried one last time in Spanish, he told her: "I don't have any information to give you on this subject."

Mbappe's exit is also not good news for the French league as it negotiates the next set of TV rights with broadcasters up until 2029. Mbappé's departure will close the chapter on a local boy who ended up at his hometown club and helped repair its battered image.

Mbappé was 12 years old, playing for his local club AS Bondy in the Paris suburbs, when Qatari owners QSI bought PSG in June 2011. The club was reeling from years of soccer violence, resulting in the death of two PSG fans in the streets around Parc des Princes stadium, and results on the field were poor with no league title won since 1994.

#### SOCCER

After QSI's arrival, the stadium's hostile atmosphere gave way to cushioned seats and major celebrities like Jay-Z, Michael Jordan and Beyoncé. Nine more league titles followed, giving PSG a national record of 11.

Mbappé joined in 2017 along with Neymar for a combined 402 million euros (\$433 million). They helped PSG become the biggest club in France.

Once again, PSG will likely have to import a leading striker to stay competitive.

Here's a look at some of PSG's possible targets:

Victor Osimhen, Napoli

The Nigeria striker is the same age as Mbappé and appears the best option. Osimhen is excellent with his back to goal, strong in the air, quick and a good finisher. His 26 league goals helped Napoli win the Serie A title last season. He has a contract until 2026 and knows the French league, playing one season for Lille before joining Napoli in 2020.

Mohamed Salah, Liverpool

The livewire Egypt forward is under contract until 2025 and would be 32 if he joins next season. He likely does not have many prime years left but his scoring and passing remain sharp. He has passed the 200-goal mark for Liverpool, but Juergen Klopp's departure at the end of the season could coincide with his own. However, if Salah goes it could be to the Saudi Arabian league rather than PSG.

Marcus Rashford, Manchester United

The 26-year-old England forward might want to leave Old Trafford after being overlooked by coach Erik ten Haag. Rashford's form has dipped with only five goals in 29 games compared to a career-best 30 in 59 last season. A move to PSG could prove good for both Rashford and United.



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)



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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 last Mond with the tas



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 Faisal 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.



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)

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.

### **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.

**ATHLETICS** 

Leading the Kuwaiti delegation in

these championships, Al-Ajmi lauded

the exceptional efforts of disabled athletes across various categories, high-

lighting their prowess and dedication.

He emphasized that this achievement

solidifies the superiority of these ath-

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-Aimi 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.



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)



#### 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

were

players

talking about Mbappé in the Ancelotti 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.'

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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