



Happy National/Liberation Days to all

There will be no issue of the Arab Times on Sunday and Monday. The next issue of the Arab Times will appear on Tuesday, Feb 27. — See you then



Photo during the celebration.

MoFA photo

MoFA celebrates nat'l days

Ministry of Foreign Affairs celebrated National and Liberation Days on Thursday with the presence of Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya, Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and ministry staff.

In a press statement, the Minister wished the dear homeland security, stability and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. (KUNA)



Photo by Mahmoud Jaded

Kuwaiti champions jubilate following their victory in the World Elite Assault Team Competition.

Kuwaiti team dominates in Int'l Elite Assault challenge

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Under the patronage and presence of Kuwait Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, the Kuwaiti team secured the top spot in the World Elite Assault Team Competition. The Russian team clinched second place, while the Bulgarian team took home third place.

During the ceremony honoring the competition winners, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Prime Minister. He emphasized their unwavering concern for the police, army, National Guard, and the overall enhancement of the armed forces' efficiency, capacity, and readiness.

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef highlighted the honor of being part of the military corps and urged the participants to uphold the trust bestowed by His Highness, encouraging them to proudly represent Kuwait on the global stage.

Expressing gratitude to all participants in the International Elite Assault Team Competition, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef commended their dedication and efforts.

The competition, featuring 15 Arab and international countries, witnessed intense participation from teams representing Spain, Jordan, Albania, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Indonesia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Sultanate of Oman, Georgia, Russia, Qatar, Malta, and Egypt. In total, 19 teams, including two from the Special Forces and two from the National Guard, showcased their skills in the challenging event.

Biometrics deadline set

3-month window

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: The Ministry of Interior has set a three-month period for the compulsory biometric fingerprinting of citizens and expatriates starting from March 1, 2024 until June 1, 2024, warning that all transactions related to the ministry will be suspended if the biometrics are not taken, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, the Public Relations and Security Media General Department in the ministry confirmed the continuation of the biometric fingerprinting of Kuwaitis, citizens of other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and expatriates in the borders, Kuwait International Airport and the centers allocated for this purpose.

Following are the designated biometric fingerprinting centers:

- Hawalli Security Directorate in Hawalli Governorate
- Farwaniya Security Directorate in Farwaniya Governorate
- Ahmadi Security Directorate in Ahmadi Governorate
- Mubarak Al-Kabeer Security Directorate in Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate

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NewsWatch

THE HAGUE: Kuwait presents its case at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, seeking an advisory opinion on the legal consequences of the occupying power's violations in the Palestinian territories. The move aligns with the United Nations General Assembly's request to the court.

Kuwait's written plea, submitted on July 25, 2023, reflects the nation's confidence in the court's attention to its arguments and those of other friendly nations and international organizations. The goal is to assert the rights and demands of the Palestinian people for an immediate end to the Israeli occupation. (Agencies)

CAIRO: Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shukry and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Thursday mulled over ongoing diplomatic efforts to put a prisoner swap between Palestinians and Israeli occupation in place, leading up to a several-week truce.

This came during a meeting held between both sides on the sidelines of the meeting of G20 foreign ministers, held in the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry said in a press statement. (KUNA)

DUBAI: A suspected missile attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels set a ship ablaze in the Gulf of Aden on Thursday as Israel intercepted what appeared to be another Houthi attack near the port city of Eilat, authorities said.

The attacks come as the rebels escalate their assaults over Israel's war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. (AP)



Photo by Mahmoud Jaded

The Kuwait Liberation Tower glows in the hues of the Kuwaiti flag, joined by other buildings adorned in patriotic colors as Kuwait prepares to celebrate National Day and Liberation Day.

Election Law No. 120/2023 on hold until October

Kuwait revives political rights with new decree

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Decree No. 4/2024 on the suspension of National Assembly Election Law No. 120/2023 until Oct 1, 2024 was published in the Official Gazette (Kuwait Al-Youm) on Thursday.

According to the decree, the upcoming parliamentary election will be conducted as per its provisions until the abovementioned law is ratified again. It allows every citizen who has reached 21 years old to vote; except those who were naturalized over the past 20 years as per Article Six of Nationality Law No. 15/1959; those found guilty of fraudulent bankruptcy crime through a final court ruling, unless they have been rehabilitated in line with the law; and those convicted through a final court ruling of felony, crimes against honor or trust, and offending Allah, the prophets and Amiri entity unless they have been rehabilitated.

Other conditions that citizens must meet to participate in the election include compliance with the Constitution and Islamic Law.

Exercising the right to vote for military and police officers is suspended, while every eligible voter must exercise this right himself in his respective constituency — where he actually resides as per the address in his civil identification card.

The decree does not stipulate if the number of constituencies will remain the same (five) or it will be increased. It does not specify as well the number of votes allocated for every voter, which means the one-man- one-vote system will probably be implemented.

In addition, if the election is conducted in the holy month of Ramadan, the voting period will be from 12:00 noon to 12:00 am.

In a related development, former MP

Badr Al-Dahoum and former candidate Anwar Al-Fikr are considered the major beneficiaries of the decree since they will be allowed to run for the election after being rehabilitated.

Al-Dahoum expressed his gratitude to HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for issuing the decree. He pointed out that the decree reflects the commitment of HH the Amir to grant political rights to the citizens and his belief in political partnership between the people and their leader.

Former Deputy National Assembly Speaker Muhammad Al-Mutair said the decree has ended the era of disputes, and opened the way towards cooperation and harmony between the people and the leadership. He thanked HH the Amir for the issuance of the decree.

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Delicate balancing act

Symposium maps Kuwait economic transformation

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: During the fourth symposium organized by the Kuwait Economic Society in collaboration with the Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah Foundation, former Minister of Finance and former Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, Manaf Al-Hajri, outlined critical challenges confronting the current economic administration under the Prime Minister's leadership, reports Al-Qabas daily.



Al-Hajri

Among these challenges is the delicate balancing act of addressing public demands while steering the economy towards a transformative shift focused on productivity and the knowledge-based economy. Al-Hajri stressed the urgency of taking decisive measures, advocating for extended working hours and targeted financial assistance for deserving recipients.

Emphasizing the imperative of strengthening regulatory bodies, governance structures, capacity building, and top-level appointments, Al-Hajri drew parallels with successful models such as the Markets Authority's role in enhancing the Kuwait Stock Exchange. He highlighted the need for similar enhancements within institutions like the Audit Bureau.

Al-Hajri underscored Kuwait's economic potential and called for its optimal utilization, leveraging the nation's financial resources, substantial oil reserves, and extensive investment experience. He urged for sweeping economic and financial reforms, advocating for the delegation of responsibilities across ministries to ensure efficient governance.

While acknowledging Kuwait's financial strength, Al-Hajri identified institutional shortcomings as impediments to progress. He urged a shift in focus towards addressing technical and cultural challenges, harnessing Kuwait's significant sovereign wealth and financial resilience.

On the financial front, Faisal Al-Hamad, Head of Wealth Management for the National Bank of Kuwait Group, praised

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MoD photo

Kuwaiti land forces and American Task Force Spartan concluded joint drills in Adera field north of the country, said the Chief of the General Staff on Thursday. The drills were first launched on February 11. In a press release, the General Staff mentioned that attending the drill conclusion were Acting Chief of Staff Major General Ghazi Al-Shammari and Commanding General of U.S. Army Central, Lieutenant General Patrick Frank.

Kuwait FM, Chinese foreign official discuss bilateral ties

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya met on Thursday with Director General of the Chinese Foreign Ministry's West Asia and North Africa Department Wang Di on the occasion of his official visit and his accompanying delegation to Kuwait.

They discussed the deep-rooted friendly relation between China and Kuwait at all levels and mutual cooperation in the context of existing strategic partnership, as well as joint coordination to serve common interests at various international forums.

During the meeting, they tackled the latest developments at regional and international levels, including updates in the Gaza Strip.

Ongoing efforts to end the demarcation of the maritime borders between Kuwait and Iraq were also discussed during the meeting.

Day by Day

THE greatest peril for a nation lies in the presence of individuals or groups wielding influence that perpetuates backwardness, succumbing to irrationality, and propagating deceitful narratives.

These individuals, often adept at the art of falsehood, impart nonsensical beliefs with an air of authority. For instance, they may claim that performing ablution is only valid if one enters the bathroom with the right foot, suggesting dire consequences otherwise.

Such assertions are delivered with an air of false humility and sorrow, as if the purveyors alone possess the insight to avert impending doom. May divine protection shield countries from falling prey to such misinformation, safeguarding the intellect and discernment of their citizens.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Prayer Timings

Fajr 05:03 Asr 15:16
 Sunrise .. 06:22 Maghrib .. 17:42
 Zohr 12:02 Isha 18:59

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Warm and partly cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate northerly wind, with speeds of 06-26 km/h.
By Night: Rather cold and part-

Weather

ly cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 06-26 km/h.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec		
Kuwait City	25	16	Kuwait Airport	24
			Abdaly	24
			Jahra	25
			Salmyah	13
			Nuwaisib	25
			Wafra	26

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



HH the PM with Isnad Association for Support and Development



HH the PM with Kuwait National Integrity Society (Al-Nazaha)



HH the PM with Faculty Members Association

PM receives heads, members of public benefit bodies

His Highness the Prime Minister, Sheikh Dr. Muhammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, held separate meetings today at Bayan Palace with various heads and members of public benefit associations. Among those received were the President and members of the Is-

nad Society for Support and Development, the President and members of the Faculty Association at Kuwait University, the President and members of the Kuwaiti Bar Association, the President and members of the Kuwaiti National Integrity Society, and the President and

members of the Supreme Supervisory Committee of the National Conference (From Kuwait we begin, and at Kuwait we end) in its 23rd edition.

During these discussions, His Highness the Prime Minister listened to the concerns and suggestions

brought forward by the participants regarding local issues. He commended the constructive ideas and proposals put forth by specialists during the meetings, emphasizing their significance in advancing the welfare of the nation and its citizens.

Kuwait celebrates national days

Kuwait's embassies, consulates mark National, Liberation days

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22, (KUNA): Kuwait's embassies and consulates in a number of countries and capitals celebrated Wednesday the country's 63rd National Day and the 33rd Liberation Day.

SAUDI ARABIA

In Jeddah, the Kuwaiti General Consulate marked these dear occasions, in the presence of Governor of Jeddah Prince Saud bin Abdullah, as well as some senior officials, diplomats, businesspeople, media figures and Kuwaiti students.

Speaking to KUNA in a statement on this occasion, Kuwait's General Consul and Permanent Representative to the OIC Mohammad Al-Mutairi conveyed greetings and congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh



Saud bin Abdullah

Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, the government and Kuwaitis.

He lauded the first generation's efforts and sacrifices made for the independence of the homeland and liberation from the Iraqi brutal invasion.

Al-Mutairi also extolled deep-rooted and historical ties between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, saying they are an exemplary for countries and peoples.

He indicated that the relations were based on solid bonds of common language, religion and destiny as well as good-neighborness, recalling the honorable and historical positions of Saudi Arabia in support of Kuwait during the Iraqi invasion.

He hailed the two leaderships' wisdom, balance and rationality in handling all issues, pointing to identical stances between the two sides towards regional and international events.

Kuwait and Saudi Arabia work together to achieve integration between Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and Kuwait's Vision 2035, he stated, stressing the importance of expanding cooperation horizons and economic partnership.

The volume of trade exchange between the two countries hit about KD 900 million (about USD 2.1 billion) in 2022, he said.

Al-Mutairi further referred to visits between the two countries' leaderships, noting Saudi Arabia was the first country His Highness the Amir visited after assuming office.

OMAN

Kuwait's Ambassador to Oman Dr. Mohammad Al-Hajri affirmed that Kuwait-Omani ties are distinguished, historical and deep-rooted.

Addressing a ceremony marking the national days, Al-Hajri conveyed sincere greetings and congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Premier Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

He referred to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's visit to Oman that showed the real brotherly ties between the two countries.

These ties embodied partnership led to the official inauguration of Duqm refinery and petrochemical industries complex, he noted.

He affirmed the two political leaderships' keenness and desire to develop relations between the two brotherly countries and enhance areas of cooperation.

UAE

UAE's Minister of Economy Abdullah Al Marri congratulated Kuwait on its national days.

During a festival held by Kuwait's General Consulate in Dubai and the northern emirates on the national days, Al-Marri said that "we in the UAE are keen on partaking in Kuwait's national days and increasing trade exchange between the two countries".

Speaking to KUNA on the sidelines of the festival, Al-Marri referred to signing a deal between the two sides on protecting investment and avoiding double taxation to encourage investment and build a national economy.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's General Consul Ali Al-Thaydi carried sincere greetings and congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Premier Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and Kuwaitis on this dear occasion.

GHANA

In Accra, Ambassador-designate of the State of Kuwait to Ghana, Mohammad Abdallah Al-Khalidi officially celebrated

Kuwait's 63rd National Day and 33rd Liberation Day on Wednesday at the embassy headquarters in a ceremony attended by a large number of figures, diplomats as well as others.

ALGIERS

In Algiers, the Kuwait Embassy held a ceremony to celebrate the national days.

Algeria's Minister of Finance, Laaziz Fayed and Minister of Economy, Yacine El-Mahdi Oualid attended the event, in addition to many political and cultural figures and lawmakers.

In a speech, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Algeria Mahammad Al-Shabu said the relations between the two countries are historically deep and are based on mutual respect. He pointed to the bonds of sincere brotherhood and shared interests that unite the two peoples.

Al-Shabu added that both countries are preparing to sign many trade exchanges and economic relations agreements.

MALTA

In Valletta, President of the Republic of Malta George Vella underlined Kuwait's important role as a strategic partner for the European Union, congratulating Kuwait on the national days.

During a festival held by the Kuwait Embassy to mark the national days, Vella extended his congratulations to His Highness the Amir, extolling historical ties between the two sides.

During the first years of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1970s, Malta benefited from Kuwait's aid, which contributed greatly to the country's development of infrastructure and agriculture, the president said.

QATAR

In Doha, the Embassy of Kuwait celebrated Wednesday, the 63rd anniversary of the Independence Day and the 33rd Liberation Day, in the presence of a number of Qatari ministers and officials as well as ambassadors and foreign and local dignitaries.

Speaking at the ceremony, Ambassador of Kuwait to Qatar Khaled Al-Mutairi said Kuwait is keen on establishing strong relations with all brotherly and friendly countries.

He recalled with pride and appreciation the honorable role of the sisterly State of Qatar in Kuwait's liberation.

He commended the distinguished and exemplary relations between the two Arabian Gulf States at all levels.

Ambassador Al-Mutairi told KUNA after the ceremony that the celebrations of the Independence Day and Liberation Day enrich national feelings and spirit of belongingness and loyalty to the homeland.

He extended congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and to the Kuwaiti people on the dear occasion.

EGYPT

In Cairo, the Kuwait Embassy held a function to celebrate the national days, attended by large number of Egyptian ministers, senior officials, businesspeople, dignitaries as well as Arab and foreign ambassadors.

The guests were welcomed at the venue by Kuwait's Ambassador to Egypt Ghanim Al-Ghanim, Kuwait's Representative at the Arab League Ambassador Talal Al-Mutairi and several embassy staff members.

On behalf of the Egyptian Prime Minister Dr. Mostafa Madbouly, Minister of Electricity and Renewable Energy Dr. Mohammad Shaker delivered a speech to congratulate the Kuwaiti leadership and people on the national days.

Shaker stressed the strength of Egyptian-Kuwaiti relations on the government and people-to-people levels.

He lauded cooperation between the two countries in various fields, especially electricity and renewable energy, pointing to the great prospects for future cooperation in these domains.

For his part, Ambassador Al-Ghanim thanked all the guests who came to share the joy of the national days with Kuwait.

CAMBODIA

Kuwait's embassies and consulates in Cambodia, Turkiye and South Korea marked Thursday the 63rd National Day and 33rd Liberation Day.

The embassy in Cambodia held a reception in attendance of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Sok Chenda Sophea, as the celebration's guest of honor.

Pledge to raise cleanliness level

Minister visits Al-Wafra, warns cleaning companies

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Dr Noura Al-Mashaan has stressed the importance of raising the level of cleanliness in various regions, reports Al-Anba daily.

During an inspection tour in Wafra Agriculture Area recently, Al-Mashaan called for intensified efforts to raise the level of cleanliness immediately; while confirming that the necessary measures will be taken against companies if they violate the provisions of the contracts they signed with the ministry.

In another development, Al-Mashaan issued a decision to add the library activity to the commercial uses of investment properties.

Article One of the decision states that the library activity is added to Clause 18 (requirements for commercial uses permitted in investment properties in and outside Kuwait City) contained in Table Two detailing the conditions and specifications for investment in residential buildings in and outside the city, provided the library area is not less than 750 square meters.

Article Two mandates the competent authorities to implement this decision that shall take effect on the date of its publication in the Official Gazette.

On the other hand, Al-Mashaan has forwarded the report of the executive body regarding the waterfront project (phase three) in Souq Sharq to her Finance, Economic and Investment Affairs counterpart.

The memorandum of Deputy Director General of the Projects Sector Eng Maysaa Bushahri states: "We would like to inform you that on Dec 26, 2023; the Director General of Kuwait Municipality, Deputy Director General of the Projects Sector and Deputy Director General of Urban Planning and Structural Planning Sector Affair discussed the letter of the finance minister regarding the expansion of the fish market building in Souq Sharq without adding commercial or government administrative offices." The finance minister's letter about utilizing the idle spaces in Souq Sharq was rejected.

Moreover, Al-Mashaan assigned Deputy Director General for the Affairs of Farwaniya and Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorates Eng Nawaf Al-Kandari to carry out the tasks of Deputy Director General for the Affairs of the Capital and Jahra Governorates Eng Thamer Saud Al-Mutairi starting from Feb 27, 2024 until the latter returns from periodic leave.

The minister also assigned Deputy Director General for Financial and Administrative Affairs Farhan Al-Ajmi to carry out the tasks of Deputy Director General for Services Affairs Meshal Al-Azmi until the latter returns from leave.

Refrain from spraying foam, water: sermon

By **Abdulnasser Al-Aslami**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: In the Friday sermon tomorrow, the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs emphasizes the importance of cherishing the blessing of security and safety in our homeland and actively working to safeguard it. The sermon cautions against succumbing to superficial displays, such as splashing water, and emphasizes the need to refrain from actions that endanger public health, safety, and the environment, as well as causing damage to property.

Reflecting on the significance of independence and liberation, the sermon highlights the profound sacrifices and tireless efforts of all who have inhabited this land—be they rulers, subjects, citizens, or residents. It also acknowledges the invaluable support of brotherly nations and allies, who have stood in solidarity with us during challenging times, rallying to ensure our safety and well-being.

The sermon underscores the importance of gratitude for the blessings bestowed upon us, urging individuals to refrain from behaviors that undermine the sanctity of our homeland and its inhabitants. Instead, it calls for a collective commitment to upholding security, stability, and prosperity, while advocating for responsible conduct that respects the rights of others and preserves the integrity of our environment.

In essence, the sermon serves as a reminder of our duty to cherish and protect the invaluable gift of security and safety in our homeland, emphasizing the need for conscientious behavior and mutual respect among all members of society.



Children spraying foam and water on passersby.



Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya pictured with the Board of Trustees of Al-Sumait Prize for African Development.

FM heads AI-Sumait Prize meeting

Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya chaired Wednesday a meeting of the Board of Trustees of Al-Sumait Prize for African Development.

The gathering covered the criteria of selecting prize winners, the nomination process in line with Kuwait's support and encouragement to organizations working effectively in Africa on programs, projects and services related to education, health and food security domains.

The prize is an initiative by late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah; announced at the Third African Arab Summit hosted by Kuwait in November 2013 in honor of the late Dr. Abdurrahman Al-Sumait; a well-known Kuwaiti philanthropist, to support African countries.

The prize is given annually to individuals and institutions working in the areas of education, health and food security.

The Board includes Abdullatif Al-Hamad, former Director General of the Arab Fund for Economic Development, Stefania Giannini, UNESCO Assistant Director General for Education, Jaouad Mahjour, WHO Assistant Director General, Dr. Kwaku Anning, former deputy director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Dr. Asmahan Al-Wafi, Chief Scientist at the World Food and Agriculture Organization, Bill Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Aminah Farhan, Director General of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences. (KUNA)

Ambassadors convey greetings

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22, (KUNA): Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Kuwait Morino Yasunari congratulated Kuwait on the 63rd National Day and 33rd Liberation Day celebrations.

Yasunari expressed to KUNA on Thursday, his country's pride as one of the first countries to recognize the independence of Kuwait and establish diplomatic relations in 1961.

He added that Japan-Kuwait relations date back to even before 1961, in 1957, a Japanese company, Arabian Oil Company (AOC), was granted oil concession in Kuwait, noting that the two countries' strong ties are based on mutual respect and common interest.

He also said that the two countries "have always stood side by side in the face of hardships and crises," including natural disasters where Kuwait never hesitated to offer warmest sympathy and financial support to the Japanese people.

On the other hand, Japan supported Kuwait in its stance against the Iraqi invasion, and contributed USD 13 billion for the liberation of Kuwait, moreover the minesweepers of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Forces participated effectively in clearing the Gulf waters from the mines after the war, Yasunari added.

He also added that, in line with the remarkable diplomatic and business relations, the people-to-people exchange in different fields is also growing, as the number of Kuwaiti visitors to Japan for different purposes, including tourism, business, and study, has noticeably increased.

Yasunari said, "we do appreciate the generosity of Kuwait Government for offering a scholarship to Japanese students to study Arabic language in a year long course," noting that local companies are keen to introduce Japanese products to the Kuwaiti market.

He concluded, "I believe there is more room to take these strong relations to even wider spheres of cooperation that could in-

clude health, environment, water, food and other infrastructures."

Omani envoy congratulates

Omani Ambassador in Kuwait Saleh Al-Kharousi on Thursday extended his congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, as well as the Kuwaiti government and people on the occasion of the country's national and liberation days.

The ambassador expressed these kind sentiments in a press statement to KUNA, in which he also wished Kuwait further progress and prosperity, everlasting security and stability, and for the state to achieve aspiration of its people.

Ambassador Al-Kharousi hailed the growth of the exceptional Kuwaiti-Omani relations embodied most recently by His Highness the Amir's state visit to Oman.

Al-Kharousi dubbed His Highness the Amir's attendance of Al-Duqm refinery inauguration an affirmation of the sturdy ties between both sides, a testament to the fruitful economic cooperation and multifaceted collaboration contributing to a more thriving future for both nations.

Egyptian Pres. congratulates

Egyptian President Abdelfattah Al-Sisi congratulated on Wednesday the Kuwaiti leadership and people on the 63rd National Day and the 33rd Liberation Day.

The statement was conveyed by Secretary of the Egyptian Presidency Abdulaziz Al-Sharif on behalf of President Al-Sisi during the Kuwaiti embassy's celebrations.

He was received during the occasion by Ambassador to Egypt Ghanim Al-Ghanim.

Speaking to KUNA, Al-Sharif affirmed that his participation reflected his country's keenness on bolstering the deeply-rooted ties between the two Arab countries.

On his part, Kuwait's Permanent Representative in the Arab League Ambassador Talal Al-Mutairi, extended congratulations to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the National and Liberation Days. These Days are dear to the heart of every Kuwaiti, he told reporters.

What is the best solution to Kuwait corruption problem?

"WHAT is the appropriate solution to the problem of corruption in Kuwait? The answer is very easy and simple, and does not require all this aggravation: each person in his position," **Dr Anwar Al-Saad** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"I will try to explain what I want to say about solving corruption problems according to 3 layers (and more than that, as I will explain in future articles, God willing), which can be followed as follows:

"The first class: The class of makers of the future of Kuwait. We can limit this class to education, which includes students, and everyone who is responsible for them, from public and private schools and universities and ministries.

"We must take a serious stance, and start with the students and feel their needs and the extent of the development of the means of technology that they follow, and integrate this in a combination that can bring the student closer to scientific life, and at the same time guarantee the specializations that can attract them in the future, and that Kuwait will benefit from its development and growth, such as the fields of foreign languages such as Chinese, German, Russian, and other languages that dominate the economy at the present time.



Dr. Al-Saad

"In addition to opening colleges with specializations in important professional industries in the global labor market, including but not limited to: ISO, HACCP in the field of the production process of food and water desalination, the field of Total Quality Management (TQM), the field of international standards, development projects, and others a lot.

"This takes us to the idea that if every student, teacher, and university professor was interested in developing the subject he studies or teaches, while ensuring that the concerns and problems of each group of them are addressed directly by officials and administrators, then these positions would solve the education problem - even part of it - in the country; everyone in his position.

"Second category: handicrafts and industrial crafts. What would you think if I told you that learning handicrafts and industrial crafts would solve a very big problem in Kuwait, which lies in modifying the demographic composition and dispensing with foreign labor - surplus to need - and the matter is not that easy in this class, as we as a people must realize the importance of relying on ourselves.

"This is accepted from a psychological and social perspective - starting from the simplest daily matters such as cleaning the house and repairing the car, and ending with the crafts in which we need national labor, such as mechanics, carpentry, and blacksmithing, and all crafts related to technological and manual tools and methods of using them, and other crafts that the management of small projects can pay attention to. And also the Ministry of Commerce, and begins to offer appropriate positions to be assumed and managed by Kuwaitis.

"The third category: the body to combat racism and nepotism. Just as we have "Nazaha," the Public Anti-Corruption Authority in Kuwait, we must have "Wataniya," which is a body that cares about the affairs of Kuwaiti citizens of all ages, sects, groups, and types of nationalities, and spreading the spirit of patriotism and non-discrimination in Kuwaiti society, and most importantly, punishing everyone who behaves irresponsibly.

"He may harm the citizen by word or action inside and outside Kuwait. The work of this committee is to strengthen the spirit of patriotism at work, and to make every citizen in his position feel responsible and capable of development and making decisions that will benefit the interest of work.

"Most importantly, anyone who belittles a competent citizen should be punished, and there should be committees to promote and care for these people.

"Citizens, and at the same time every citizen who does not do his job in his position is held accountable. As for combating nepotism - and criminalizing it legally - it will resolve the issue of appointments, promotions, and "branch jobs," and resolve the issue of electing members of the National Assembly based on the implementation of services or prioritizing private interests over public interests.

"Thus, every Kuwaiti will feel that he is able in the position he is in to perform his work to the fullest extent, and at the same time he will not feel that his effort is diminished, and he will provide what is required of him, because this body will hold him accountable if he does not do so."

Also:

"During a session of the National Assembly held on February 7, 2024, a representative directed a speech towards the Acting Minister of Defense

and Interior in a manner devoid of tact and politeness, speaking loudly and visibly expressing anger by hitting his hand on the table," **Dr AbdulMohsen Hamada** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"The representative emphasized that the minister should remember his position as a public servant subject to accountability and interrogation, rather than acting as if he held a higher rank.

"The representative questioned the minister about the practice of detaining soldiers in waiting rooms for being late, emphasizing the importance of adhering to working hours and the need for military personnel to respect authority and maintain discipline within their ranks to prevent chaos and laziness.

"Despite not personally knowing the minister, the representative believed that the criticism was unfounded and supported the minister's stance.

"Furthermore, the representative condemned the use of loud voices and aggressive behavior when addressing officials, citing Islamic teachings that emphasize wisdom and respectful discourse. They quoted verses from the Holy Quran that advocate for measured speech and peaceful argumentation.

"The representative expressed concern that such confrontational behavior between members of the Assembly and government officials could strain relations and hinder cooperation necessary for the stability and progress of the state. They warned against frequent dissolution of the Assembly, as it could lead to instability and hamper development efforts, ultimately affecting the welfare of the country's citizens."

"Let us begin a new phase... National Assembly and government. The equation was complete after the dissolution of the Assembly. His Highness the Amir accused both authorities of harming 'the country and the people'. His speech was firm and decisive," columnist **M. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"If the change of the Council of Ministers happened immediately after it was held responsible for the supreme pronouncement in the swearing-in session, then the Assembly, as a popular authority, was given the opportunity to 'correct the path', but the Assembly majority of its members seemed to have not deeply understood the meaning of that speech. Perhaps, the last session of the Assembly proved this. So, what is the point of insisting on a position in a situation that neither provides fats nor relieves hunger? Thus, the Assembly got the result.

"Although the 'control' session was the last straw that broke the camel's back, the matter goes deeper as it relates to the style and nature of parliamentary practice and the extent of its ability and flexibility to adapt to the nature of each stage, and to ensure that it does not deviate from the rules and principles of correct democratic practice.

"If the change of the previous Council of Ministers and the formation of a new one expressed a new phase, then the Assembly was also required to comprehend this phase and deal with it with wisdom and political prudence. Since the opposite happened, we went back to square one - fresh elections, which the citizen may have grown tired of repeating it within short periods. The result is instability. Is this what we want?"

"The answer: Certainly no one wants this, so why don't we stop for a while, evaluate and reconsider the correct democratic practice in a way that ensures the effective performance of the two authorities, and raises achievement for the benefit of the nation and the citizen, since both of them want this.

"Today, we are on the cusp of a new phase and a new era. The stagnation that has afflicted development is enough for us. I am not exaggerating if I say that it has afflicted all aspects of our lives. We have people who aspire for advancement and progress, and with all the capabilities to achieve that. The determination of the Kuwaiti people is enough to take us to the right path -- the path towards stability and development.

"Without a doubt, the upcoming parliamentary election will be a decisive factor in reaching the path towards a new stage, which we have been aspiring for. Therefore, we must choose well.

"On the other hand, the next Prime Minister must also choose well in the next government formation, changing the traditional selection criteria to competence, experience and the quality of political performance, so he has a government team that will assist him, not burden him.

"If the current formation was made under time pressure, he has enough time to consider and choose the most competent, most capable and most fit. This is extremely important for his next ministerial team to be prepared according to effective and constructive standards of appointment in the next stage."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes

Exercise restraint, patience, security staff urged

All set for securing national celebrations: Mol

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: During a security meeting chaired by Lieutenant General Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf, Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, with leaders from various field sectors to ensure comprehensive readiness, the Al-Jarida daily said final preparations have been completed for securing national holiday celebrations.



Sheikh Salem

The discussions centered on security, traffic, media, and awareness arrangements slated for implementation during the festivities while emphasis was placed on the distribution mechanism of security and traffic points across all governorates, under-

scoring the imperative of unwavering vigilance and preparedness.

Al-Nawaf commenced the session by extending warm greetings and appreciation from Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Acting Minister of the Interior, Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef, acknowledging the relentless efforts of attendees in safeguarding the nation's security, underscoring the necessity of decisive action against any violations of the law, particularly offenses related to environmental protection such as the unauthorized throwing of water balloons. Swift legal measures against offenders were deemed essential to uphold order and curb negative behaviors.

Addressing security personnel, Al-Nawaf urged them to exercise restraint and patience while demonstrating compassion towards citizens, especially individuals with special needs

and the elderly. As part of humanitarian efforts, providing necessary assistance to vulnerable segments of society was emphasized.

Concluding the meeting, the Acting Undersecretary outlined key directives and observations aimed at ensuring the seamless execution of established plans.

This gathering, he said, epitomizes the Interior Ministry's dedication to meticulously planning and executing security measures across the nation's governorates during national holiday celebrations.

The Interior Ministry's steadfast commitment to upholding security and fostering a safe and festive environment underscores its pivotal role in safeguarding national interests and ensuring public welfare. Through coordinated efforts and strategic planning, Kuwait remains poised to celebrate its national heritage with peace and unity.

Marking 'national days' reminder of forefathers sacrifices: minister

PAMA launches 'National Palace Festival'

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: The Minister of Justice, the Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, and the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Minors Affairs Faisal Al-Gharib stressed the importance of celebrating the Independence and Liberation days, as a reminder of the sacrifices made by the fathers and grandfathers of the people of Kuwait in order to achieve freedom and independence of Kuwait.

In a ceremony organized by the Public Authority for Minors Affairs (PAMA) yesterday under the slogan of "National Palace Festival" on the occasion of the National Days, Al-Gharib extended his warmest congratulations and blessings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishaal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Al-Sabah, and to all citizens on the occasion of Kuwait's national days.

Highlighted

He highlighted the importance of the authority intensifying its activities and developing its national and entertainment events that enhance communication between the authority and its minors, those under its care and its employees, in addition to enhancing

the spirit of belongingness and reviving national events.

Al-Gharib said, "The participation of our minors and those under our care in these cherished occasions enhances their knowledge of Kuwaiti customs and traditions, ancestral professions, and ancient traditional crafts, in addition to enhancing creativity skills through their participation in activities and events."

Confirmed

Meanwhile, the Director General of the authority Eng. Hamad Al-Barjas confirmed that this year's celebrations were organized at the authority's main headquarters with the participation of minors, those under its care, and their families, as well as a number of the authority's cadres, along with representatives of a number of governmental and private agencies.

He said, "The events witnessed many diverse activities and the participation of people of all age groups, with the aim of reviving Kuwait's heritage and customs and enhancing the visual identity, whose colors were inspired by the country's flag and the spirit of the national heritage.

This year's celebrations were a good opportunity for a meeting between minors, their families, and the authority's employees to exchange views on many topics, services, and activities.

We pray to Almighty Allah to grant Kuwait and its people the blessings of security, prosperity and stability under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishaal Al-Ahmad and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Al-Sabah."



Fireworks for sale in a car.

Schools wear deserted look

90% students absent on Feb 22

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: On February 22, 2024, an overwhelming absence of students was observed in schools across various educational regions, with rates surpassing 90%, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Aligned with the National Holidays, numerous public schools utilized the day to honor exceptional students, while others allowed students to leave after the third period, enabling them to reunite with their families at home.

According to educational sources, this morning marked the highest rate of absenteeism in schools, exceeding 90% across different regions. Many schools chose to focus on celebrating and honoring out-

standing students yesterday, disregarding the enforcement of attendance policies for all absent students.

As a result, grades were not deducted for absences as outlined in the educational guidelines. However, since not all students were included in today's celebrations for outstanding achievements, instructions from schools to refrain from attending further contributed to the spike in absenteeism.

This morning, the roads in front of schools appeared unusually deserted, contrasting with the typical morning rush hour traffic. The absence of students led to a smooth flow of traffic devoid of traffic chaos.

Two arrested in illegal fireworks sale in Kabd

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: In a collaborative effort between the Jahra Governorate Security Directorate and the Kuwait Municipality, the Public Security Sector conducted a thorough security and inspection operation in the Kabd area, targeting mobile grocery stores and street vendors, reports Al-Rai daily. This operation led to the apprehension of two individuals engaged in the illegal sale of fireworks. Additionally, several mobile grocery stores found to be operating in contravention of the law were promptly addressed, with appropriate measures taken against them.

Kuwaiti jailed for helping expat get iqama for cash

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: The Criminal Court issued a verdict against a service center employee, sentencing him to seven years of imprisonment with labor, along with a fine of 1,200 dinars, reports Al-Seyassah daily. The employee was found guilty of fraudulently renewing an expatriate's residency permit in exchange for a bribe of 600 dinars. Additionally, the expatriate involved received the same sentence and faces deportation.



The damaged vehicles at the site.

One dead, one injured in two-car crash on 6th

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Early morning on Thursday, a collision involving two vehicles hitting the road divider occurred on the Sixth Ring Road, reports Al-Rai daily. The fire department from the Tahrir Center promptly responded to the scene. Regrettably, one individual lost his life, while another sustained injuries. The situation was swiftly managed, as the appropriate authorities took over the situation for further investigation.

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Exhibition to last two months: official

Kuwait exhibit highlights diving professions, shipbuilding in past

Works minister issues decision to fill vacant supervisory posts

'Vital to submit financial disclosure statement to Nazaha'



A photo from the seminar organized by Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Minister of Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs, Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, has issued 14 temporary transfer decisions for supervisory roles, signaling a proactive approach to bolstering municipal affairs. These decisions follow the cancellation of the Amiri Decree concerning appointment cessation, promotion, transfer, and temporary transfers, issued earlier this month, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Among the appointments approved by Al-Mashaan are Meshal Al-Daihani as Director of the Municipal Services Audit and Follow-up Department, Daham Al-Anazi as Public Cleanliness Monitor, and Mohammed Al-Mutairi as Safety Licenses Monitor in the Jahra Governorate Municipality. Similarly, Khaled Al-Otaibi has been appointed Director of the Safety Department, and Anfal Al-Abdullah as Building Licenses Monitor in the Al-Ahmadi Governorate Municipality branch.

Assignment

Further decisions include the assignment of Salah Al-Rashidi as Director of the Safety Department, Salah Al-Azmi as Director of the Engineering Audit and Follow-up Department, and Saud Al-Harbi as Director of the Municipal Services Licensing Department in the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate Municipality Branch.

Additionally, Nasser Al-Dhafiri has been tasked with the duties of Director of the Engineering Audit and Follow-up Department, and Muhammad Al-Mutairi as Director of the Municipal Services Licensing Department in the Hawalli Governorate Municipality Branch. Other appointments include Abdullah Al-Mutairi as Job Budget Controller, Maha Al-Hakak as Follow-up and Budget Controller, Tariq Al-Mutairi as Research Controller, and Latifa Al-Kandari as Accounting Controller.

Al-Mashaan emphasized the importance of submitting a financial disclosure statement to the Anti-Corruption Public Authority (Nazaha) within 60 days of assigning department director positions, in accordance with Article 2 of the 2016 decree establishing the authority.

These appointments reflect the ministry's commitment to transparency, efficiency, and accountability in municipal affairs, aiming to enhance governance and public service delivery across various sectors.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22, (KUNA): "A Journey Through Time" exhibition launched on Wednesday at Kuwait National Museum, highlighting Kuwait's history and attachment to the sea through archaeological discoveries of different ages from the modern stone age to modern times.

In a statement to KUNA, Acting Assistant Secretary General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) for Monuments and Museums Mohammad bin Redha said that the exhibition will last two months and its purpose is providing public access to marine

archeological discoveries and teaching students about the history of diving professions and shipbuilding.

Bin Redha added that the event contained marine ship models, like Al-Boom ship, and equipment used in diving and voyages that were acquired through exploration missions that ensured studying historic areas in Kuwait like Al-Subiya and Failaka Island. The exhibition is part of the 29 events organized by NCCAL's Qurain Cultural Festival which concludes their events Thursday with a ceremony honoring Sami Al-Ali at Abdulhussain Abdulredha's theater.



The exhibition brings to mind the past of fathers and grandfathers, the diving professions, and shipbuilding.

Int'l Mother Language Day being marked

Bangladesh congratulates Kuwait on celebration of national events

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 22, (KUNA): Bangladeshi Minister of Social Welfare Dipu Moni conveyed sincere greetings to His Highness the Kuwait Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti people on national celebrations, wishing further progress and development to Kuwait.

This came during an annual reception organized by the Embassy of Kuwait in Bangladesh on the occasion of the 63rd anniversary of Kuwait's National Day and the 33rd anniversary of Liberation Day.

During the reception, the Bangladeshi minister voiced hope that bilateral cooperation in economic and investment fields would be further developed to serve the common interests of both friendly countries.

She also lauded Kuwait's significant role in supporting the Palestinian people and its call for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, as well as its humanitarian and relief to Palestinians in the territory.

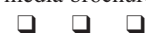
The reception was hosted by Kuwaiti Ambassador to Bangladesh Faisal Al-Adwani where he gave a speech and expressed his congratulations and greetings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Saba and to Kuwaiti people.

Ambassador Al-Adwani praised the deep-rooted relation between Kuwait and Bangladesh, saying that Kuwait is one of the first countries to open an embassy in Dhaka in 1974, which had much influence in supporting and sustaining the bonds of friendship between the two countries.

He added that there are broad horizons for developing bilateral relations between both friendly countries at all levels under the patronage of their wise leaderships who support joint cooperation in political, economic, cultural and investment domains.

According to a statement issued by the embassy, senior Bangladeshi government officials, representatives of economic, cultural and media bodies, ambassadors and other prominent figures attended the reception.

On the sideline of the reception, an exhibition was held for books and visual documents pertinent to Kuwaiti history and the development of economic and social conditions, as well as a number of cultural and media brochures.



Int'l Mother Language Day: In celebration of the International Mother Language Day and Kuwait Liberation Day, the vibrant Bangladesh community in Kuwait is gearing up for an extraordinary event filled with cultural richness and camaraderie. Scheduled to commence from February 22nd and culminate on the evening of February 23rd, this two-day affair promises to be a memorable occasion for all involved.

The heart of the festivities will be a spectacular musical program infused



BCK logo

with traditional Bangladeshi melodies and contemporary performances, offering attendees a delightful auditory experience. Additionally, a joyous picnic will be organized, providing an opportunity for members of the community to bond amidst the beautiful surroundings and partake in leisurely activities.

Leaders from various sectors of the Bangladesh community in Kuwait extend a warm invitation to all Bangladeshi residents living in Kuwait to join in this celebration. They emphasize that the presence of each individual is pivotal in making this event a resounding success, as it not only honors the rich cultural heritage of Bangladesh but also commemorates the liberation of Kuwait.

This amalgamation of cultural festivities serves as a testament to the strong bonds between the Bangladesh community and Kuwait, fostering unity, understanding, and mutual respect. It underscores the importance of preserving and cherishing one's mother tongue while also celebrating the freedom and sovereignty of nations.

As the excitement builds and preparations reach their peak, anticipation runs high for what promises to be an unforgettable event. The Bangladesh community eagerly awaits the participation of all residents, as together, they come together to celebrate diversity, heritage, and the spirit of unity.

Attendees are encouraged to mark their calendars and join in this momentous occasion, ensuring that the International Mother Language Day and Kuwait Liberation Day are celebrated with the fervor and enthusiasm they deserve.

For further details and inquiries regarding the event, interested individuals are urged to contact the leaders of the Bangladesh community in Kuwait.

Let us come together, celebrate our heritage, and embrace the essence of cultural diversity as we commemorate these significant milestones in our shared history.

'Spending levels notably high'

API assesses efficiency of govt spending

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Dr. Walid Abdel-Mawlah, the Undersecretary of the Arab Planning Institute (API), provided an overview of the study conducted by the institute to assess the efficiency of government spending in Kuwait. He highlighted that Kuwait ranks 59th in technical efficiency and 125th in overall efficiency, contrasting with the UAE's higher rankings at 24th and 26th, respectively, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Abdel-Mawlah emphasized that Kuwait's government spending levels are notably high, comparable to Scandinavian

countries. However, despite this substantial expenditure, Kuwait lags behind in efficiency compared to countries with similar spending levels. He pointed out that Kuwait's performance is particularly concerning given its significant investment in education.

This disparity underscores the need for Kuwait to reevaluate its spending strategies and implement measures to enhance the efficiency of government expenditure, ensuring that investments translate into tangible improvements in various sectors.




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Congratulations sent to HH Amir on the occasion of national days

Kuwait committed to values of peace, cooperation: Armenian envoy

On behalf of myself and the Armenian people, it is with great pleasure that I extend my heartfelt congratulations and warmest regards to His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, as well as to the friendly government and people of Kuwait, on the occasion of the 63rd National Day and the 33rd Liberation Day of the State of Kuwait.



Ambassador

We are honored to share in the celebration of this significant day, which symbolizes a rich history marked by achievements and progress, paving the way for a brighter future for your gracious nation.

With its unwavering commitment to the values of peace and cooperation, Kuwait occupies a prominent position on both the regional and international stage, advocating for dialogue and understanding among nations while actively seeking peaceful and

constructive resolutions to conflicts and crises. Additionally, Kuwait's humanitarian efforts shine through in its provision of assistance and invaluable support to regions affected by conflicts and disasters, underscoring its humanitarian and developmental dedication and solidarity with the world's needy populations.

Armenia and Kuwait share a deep-rooted history of distinguished relations, and we remain steadfast in our commitment to expanding the scope of cooperation and fostering mutual dialogue and understanding between our nations. Together, we strive to achieve common objectives that serve the interests of our peoples and contribute to peace and stability in the region and beyond.

I express my hope that the bilateral cooperation between our countries will continue to thrive in the years ahead, characterized by the same spirit of positivity and sincerity, and that our bilateral relations will experience sustained growth and progress.

As we mark this occasion, I extend my best wishes to the friendly people of Kuwait, wishing them security, prosperity, and enduring peace.

Municipality finalizes preparations to hold activities for national days

Around eight tons of rubble said removed

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: The public sanitation teams at Kuwait Municipality have finalized preparations in places and roads designated for holding events and activities to celebrate the National and Liberation days, reports Al-Anba daily.

The team from the Public Sanitation and Road Works Department in the Municipality branch in Jahra Governorate carried out cleaning works and distributed garbage containers of different sizes in areas allotted for celebrating the 63rd Independence Day and 33rd Liberation Day in Jahra Governorate.

Meanwhile, an official at Qasr District Cleaning Center, Mohammad Al-Hajri, confirmed: "We have completed all preparations related to cleaning works on roads and places allocated for the national celebrations. Around eight tons of rubble were removed with the participation of 140 cleaners who used 39 machines and equipment, in addition to the distribution of 50 garbage containers of different sizes."

Head of the Public Sanitation and Road Works Department in the Municipality branch in Farwaniya Governorate Nashmi Al-Dehani said the governorate's cleaning team carried out all the cleaning works in the main areas and streets in the governorate. This resulted in the removal of nine tons of rubble, with the participation of 100 cleaners and provision of 45 garbage containers of different sizes. Three half lorries, a bulldozer and a sweeper were utilized in this campaign.

Head of the Public Sanitation and Road Works Department in the Municipality branch in Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate Khaled Raec Al-Fahmaa stated that the governorate's cleaning team cleaned the beaches along the coastal strip in the governorate. This resulted in the removal of six tons of rubble with the participation of 55 cleaners who distributed 25 garbage containers of different sizes and used two half lorries to complete the work.

Kuwaiti students excel

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Students from the Ministry of Education in Kuwait have achieved remarkable success in the Arabic Language Competition held in the Emirate of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates. The competition, which took place from the Feb 17 to Feb 21 saw Kuwaiti students clinch three medals, reports Al-Rai daily.

Youssef Muhammad Al-Asfour, a twelfth-grade student from the Abdul Rahman Al-Sumait Religious Institute, secured the gold medal, showcasing his exceptional proficiency in the Arabic language; Dalal Anwar Al-Anzi, also in twelfth grade and representing Mariah Al-Qibtiya High School, won the silver medal and Lulwah Ali Majeed, a twelfth-grade student from Fatima Bint Asad High School won the bronze with her impressive performance.

The Arabic Language Competition, held biennially, brings together students from member states of the Arab Education Bureau for the Gulf States. Organized under the supervision of the Educational Center for the Arabic Language for the Gulf States, the competition aims to foster a sense of loyalty and belonging to the Arabic language among students.

The success of these Kuwaiti students not only highlights their dedication and hard work but also underscores Kuwait's commitment to promoting excellence in Arabic language education. Their achievements serve as an inspiration to their peers and reflect positively on the educational standards upheld by the Ministry of Education in Kuwait.



Safety atomic workshop participants in a group photo.

KUNA photo

Kuwait participates in regional safety atomic workshop

The Bahraini Supreme Council for Environment (SCE), in cooperation with the United States Department of Energy, organized a regional workshop on safety protocols regarding small quantity nuclear particles, with Kuwait participating.

The SCE said in a statement that Bahrain hosted the regional workshop, and international experts attended to cooperate between US Department of Energy and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The aim of the workshop was discussing the best application of safety protocols as per IAEA safeguards agreement, in particular, safety protocols regarding small quantity nuclear particles, and enhance legislative understanding to all participants, the SCE added.

The workshop included lectures on theory, practical exercises and simulations of national and international inspection processes to enhance the exchange of information and expertise among participants and broaden the scope of relationships between them, added the SCE.

The SCE praised the work of the US Department of Energy on applying nuclear safety protocols and the department's role in providing aid and expertise for other countries' development.

The workshop included participants from Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Lebanon, and Bahrain, which make up the countries that apply nuclear safety protocols. It also included six experts in nuclear safety from the US and the IAEA. (KUNA)



Kuwait Deputy PM during his meeting with DGCA board members.

KUNA photo

'Strategic sectors given much importance'

By Abdulaziz Al-Mejri

The Kuwaiti government attaches much significance to strategic sectors, mainly including civil aviation, Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Acting Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah affirmed Thursday.

The minister made the remark to KUNA during his meeting with Direc-

torate General of Civil Aviation board members, adding that the country's civil aviation development coincides with government plans to develop the capabilities of this vital sector.

The new Terminal 2 of Kuwait Airport counts is given much attention by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, he added. (KUNA)

Ten exceptional young artists honored

Al-Qurain Cultural Festival 29 concludes

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: As the 'Al-Qurain Cultural Festival 29' drew to a close, organized by the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Literature, the spotlight was on 10 exceptional young artists honored for their remarkable contributions to the "Youth Fine Arts" exhibition, reports Al-Rai daily.

Throughout the festival, which has served as a celebration of cultural richness, these artists showcased their extraordinary talents and artistic visions.

Selected by a discerning screening and judging committee comprised of esteemed figures in the arts sector, these artists were recognized for their outstanding works, which encompass a diverse range of artistic styles and perspectives.

Their creative endeavors have not only elevated the plastic movement to new creative heights but also demonstrated the depth of artistic talent among Kuwait's youth.

The honoring ceremony, held at the Museum of Modern Art, was graced by the presence of Assistant Secretary-General for the Arts Sector, Musaed Muhammad Al-Zamil, who commended the participants

for their creativity and encouraged them to continue their artistic pursuits. Among the honorees were Nasser Al-Qurini, Sarah Sher, Ali Alamdar, Asma Al-Sawagh, Alaa Al-Mutairi, Khaled Al-Shaalan, Hussein Ismail, Noura Al-Kharji, Muhammad Al-Bannai, and Maryam Qasim.

In addition to recognizing the talented artists, Duajj Al-Ghwanem, the Superintendent of the Fine Arts Department, acknowledged the invaluable contributions of the screening and judging committee members. These individuals, including prominent artists and scholars, played a vital role in evaluating the artworks and selecting the deserving honorees.

Reflecting on the event, Al-Zamil expressed his delight at witnessing the creativity of the young artists and reiterated the National Council's commitment to nurturing emerging talent. He emphasized the importance of continued artistic growth and urged young artists to seek guidance from experienced professionals, striving for excellence in representing their country on both national and international platforms.

Biometrics deadline

Continued from Page 1

- Jahra Security Directorate in Jahra Governorate (for citizens and other GCC nationals)

- Identity Verification Department, Corporate Fingerprinting in Ali Sabah Al-Salem

- Identity Verification Department, Corporate Fingerprinting in Jahra (for expatriates)

- Avenues Mall
- 360 Mall
- Al-Kout Mall
- Assimah Mall
- Ministries Complex

The ministry indicated that travelers are allowed to leave the State of Kuwait without undergoing the biometric fingerprinting process, but they must do so upon return to the country.

Kuwait revives

Continued from Page 1

Former MP Meteb Al-Raathan praised the decree, while congratulating the beneficiaries including political activists, politicians and former MPs. He added the decree ended a painful period in the history of Kuwait as it allows the rehabilitated convicts to exercise their political rights once again.

So far, Marzouq Al-Hebeini, Badr Al-Dahoum, Jaber Al-Mehailbi and Hamdan Al-Azmi are the most likely candidates of Awazem Tribe in the Fifth Constituency.

Symposium maps

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait's advancements in developing financial markets and elevating the stock exchange to an emerging market status. He highlighted increased foreign investment and acquisitions of Kuwaiti companies by

foreign entities, signaling growing confidence in Kuwait's economic outlook.

However, Al-Hamad cautioned against complacency, expressing concerns about government expenditures outpacing inflation rates. He emphasized the need for strategic adjustments to sustain Kuwait's economic viability, particularly in addressing actuarial deficits and promoting reforms to enhance private sector employment and investment.

In summary, Kuwait faces a combination of challenges and opportunities in its journey towards economic reform and growth. The insights shared at the symposium underscore the urgency for decisive action and strategic reforms to unlock Kuwait's full economic potential.

Al-Hajri proposed that the new government's economic team consist of 5 specialized teams:

- A team of specialists concerned with liquidity management.

- A team specializing in governance and oversight, consisting of specialists, working to link the state's general objectives to the priorities of the regulatory authorities, modernizing the regulatory authorities, appointing senior officials, and monitoring the performance of the main board of directors.

- A team that deals with continuous improvements in state agencies, consisting of specialists, works to review ways to improve the state's public finances.

- A team concerned with the immediate needs of the citizen, consisting of ministers and government officials.

- A team that deals with long-term projects and consists of specialized experts, and supervises major state projects in major sectors: transportation, communications, oil energy, housing, tourism, finance, and petrochemicals.

Meanwhile, Al-Hamad stressed on the importance of starting to implement some financial reforms and not being hesitant or afraid of them, most notably the corporate tax (the lost tax), stressing that the state's economy is more deserving of it, as the tax will be implemented on companies whose revenues exceed 750 million euros in the year 2025, in accordance with the international agreements.



Chairman of the Board of Directors of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charitable Society, Jamal Abdul Khaleq Al-Nouri, with the Chargé d'Affaires at the Kuwaiti Embassy in Indonesia.

KUNA photo

Total cost of project hits about \$2.5 mln

Kuwaiti charity inaugurates 1st phase of Sheikh Nawaf Edu Complex in Indonesia

By Abdullah Bugis

GARUT, Indonesia, Feb 22, (KUNA): The Kuwait-based Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity inaugurated the first phase of Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Education Complex in Indonesia Wednesday.

Speaking to KUNA on the sidelines of the inaugural ceremony, Chargé d'Affaires of the Kuwaiti Embassy in Indonesia Advisor Abdullah Yateem Al-Fadhli said Kuwait's charitable projects are a supportive tributary of the country's diplomacy.

He referred that the scheme is part of continued humanitarian, diplomatic and charitable cooperation between the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Indonesia.

He recalled the UN proclamation of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as a Humanitarian Leader and Kuwait as a Humanitarian Center.

Addressing a ceremony, Al-Fadhli expressed his delight at opening this project, saying the late Amir

"Sheikh Nawaf was the Amir of humanity and wisdom who had all positive traits".

Meanwhile, Acting Secretary General of the Awqaf Public Foundation (APF) Nasser Al-Hamad said the total cost of the project hit KD 750,000 (about USD 2.5 million).

He indicated that the late Amir did much in order to enhance brotherhood bonds and friendship between Kuwait and Indonesia.

He stressed that the APF has made all efforts to back Muslim cooperation, partnerships and deals.

Furthermore, Chairman of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity Society Abdul-Khaleq Al-Nouri said the first phase of the project is established on an area of 34,873 square meters.

He added that the project includes a mosque that accommodates more than 800 worshippers, a multipurpose hall, an 18-classroom school for boys, 18 and 8 hostel rooms for boys and girls respectively, a restaurant and an auditorium for 1,000 persons.

The project was jointly inaugurated by the Kuwait Embassy, Al-Nouri Society and the APF.

Emergency medical dept signs protocol with NAEMT, HSI/ASHI

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: The Emergency Medical Department has forged a cooperation protocol with the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians (NAEMT) and the American Safety and Health Institute (HSI/ASHI) to synchronize with globally recognized medical advancements in training, reports Al-Rai daily.

According to the daily, the protocol aims to accredit the Medical Emergency Training Center at the Ministry of Health in Kuwait as an internationally recognized center.

Dr. Ahmed Al-Shatti, Director of the Medical Emergency Department, revealed on Tuesday that the collaboration aims to elevate the qualifications of department personnel, including paramedics and technicians, to attain international paramedic status through accredited training programs from American universities.

Contracts with these international institutions will facilitate a paradigm shift in the medical emergency field.

Initiated during the "Emergency Medical Services: Reality Challenges and Future Aspirations" conference on Feb 18, under the patronage of Minister of Health Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi, this collaboration is poised to significantly impact the overall health system. Given that medical emergencies serve as the primary entry point to the Ministry of Health, improvements in this domain are deemed crucial.

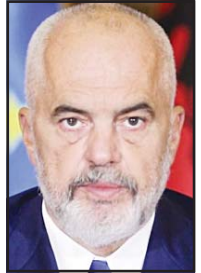
Dr. Al-Shatti stressed that the conference's recommendations include enhancing the performance of paramedics and technicians in line with international standards. It also advocates for supporting accredited training programs through international institutions to drive transformative changes in the medical system, aiming towards international paramedic status.

World News Roundup

Europe

Albania Parliament approves controversial deal: Albania's Parliament approved a deal for the country to hold thousands of asylum seekers for Italy in a Thursday vote, despite protests from opposition lawmakers and human rights groups.

Under the five-year deal, Albania would shelter up to 3,000 migrants rescued from international waters at any one time. With asylum requests expected to take around a month to process, the number of asylum-seekers sent to Albania could reach up to 36,000 in a year.



Rama

Albania is not an EU state, and the idea of sending asylum seekers outside the bloc is controversial. The deal was endorsed by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen but has been widely criticized by human rights groups.

The agreement, signed in November between Albanian Prime Minister **Edi Rama** and Italian Premier **Giorgia Meloni**, is part of Meloni's efforts to share the burden of addressing migration with other European countries. Rama was not at the vote, but said afterward that it showed Albania was standing with Italy and acting like an EU state, by "agreeing to share a burden that Europe should face united as a whole family in the face of a daring challenge that transcends traditional left and right divides." (AP)

Kara-Murza urges Russians not to give up: From behind bars in Siberia, prominent opposition figure Vladimir Kara-Murza on Thursday urged Russians not to give up after the death of Alexei Navalny and alleged there is a state-backed hit squad taking out opponents of President Vladimir Putin, according to a video posted on a social media channel.

A British-Russian citizen, Kara-Murza is serving a 25-year sentence for treason. He spoke from his prison cell while appearing via video link in court over a complaint against Russia's Investigative Committee for what he believes were two poisoning attempts against him. He claimed the committee didn't investigate the attempts properly.

Kara-Murza is one of several key opposition figures behind bars in Russia, while others are abroad or dead. He was found guilty of criticizing Russia's war in Ukraine and was handed a draconian sentence as part of an ongoing crackdown by Russian authorities against critics of the war and freedom of speech. (AP)

'Russia forces threatened to shoot down craft': Russian forces threatened to shoot down French flights patrolling last month in international airspace over the Black Sea, signals of increasingly aggressive behavior from Moscow as its invasion of Ukraine struggles to make headway, France's defense minister said Thursday.

The minister, Sébastien Lecornu, didn't give specific details about the French flights or aircraft involved in the threatened shoot-down. But he said Russia is returning to a "particularly aggressive" posture reminiscent of the former Soviet Union's behavior during the Cold War.

"A month ago, to give you a very concrete example, a Russian air traffic control system threatened to shoot down French aircraft in the Black Sea when we were in a free international zone where we patrol," he said on RTL radio. (AP)

Charles 'reduced to tears' by good wishes: King Charles III said he had been reduced to tears by the messages he has received from people since his cancer diagnosis, as he held his weekly audience with the prime minister for the first time since stepping away from public duties to focus on his treatment.

Charles also met Wednesday with the Privy Council - a group of senior officials who meet about once a month to advise the king on government matters. While the 75-year-old head of state remains absent from public engagements, he has said he intends to continue to perform his state duties.

Wearing a navy blue suit and tie, Charles joked with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak before their formal meeting at Buckingham Palace.

"Wonderful to see you looking so well," Sunak said cheerfully in video released by the palace. (AP)

Assange waits for decision: WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange won't find out until next month at the earliest whether he can challenge extradition to the U.S. on spying charges, or if his long legal battle in Britain has run out of road.

Two High Court judges said Wednesday they would take time to consider their verdict after a two-day hearing in which Assange's lawyers argued sending him to the United States would risk a "flagrant denial of justice."

Attorneys for the U.S., where Assange has been indicted on espionage charges, said he put innocent lives at risk and went beyond journalism in his bid to solicit, steal and indiscriminately publish classified U.S. government documents. (AP)

UK lawmakers seek reassurances: British lawmakers are seeking reassurances about the nation's nuclear deterrent after reports that a test of the system failed dramatically last month when an unarmed missile crashed into the sea near the submarine from which it was launched.

The Sun newspaper reported on Tuesday that the incident occurred last month while Defense Secretary Grant Shapps was on board the HMS Vanguard to witness the test firing of a Trident missile designed to carry nuclear warheads.

The Ministry of Defense confirmed that an "anomaly" occurred but said "the test reaffirmed the effectiveness of the UK's nuclear deterrent." (AP)

5 hurt in an incident at Germany school: Five people were injured in an incident Thursday at a school in the western German city of Wuppertal and a suspect was arrested, police said.

The incident took place at the Wilhelm Dörpfeld high school in the city's Elberfeld district. Police said there was no shooting in the incident, German news agency dpa reported, but gave no further information. The Bild newspaper, which didn't name sources, said it was a knife attack.

Police said they deployed large numbers of officers to the scene. They said the suspect was injured.

Wuppertal is a city of some 350,000 people near Duesseldorf and Cologne. (AP)

Bridge collapse kills 2 workers: Two people died and two others were injured Wednesday when part of a bridge being built over a canal in the eastern Netherlands collapsed, emergency services said.

The accident happened in Lochem, 130 kilometers (80 miles) east of Amsterdam, as workers lifted a large metal arch into place.

Nieke Hoitink, a journalist with a regional newspaper, De Stentor, reported that the arch was hanging from a crane when "suddenly there was a huge bang. The entire arch began to sway. Then the whole thing fell down. We saw two construction workers fall."

The regional security organization that coordinates first responders said in a message on X, formerly Twitter, that the incident "resulted in two fatalities. Two people are injured. Our first thoughts go out to the loved ones of the victims." (AP)

Thousands rally in Slovakia: Thousands rallied in dozens of cities and towns across Slovakia on Wednesday to mark the sixth anniversary of the slayings of an investigative journalist and his fiancée amid a wave of anti-government protests.

Jan Kuciak and Martina Kusnirova, both age 27, were shot dead at their home in the town of Velka Maca, east of Bratislava, on Feb. 21, 2018.

Three people received stiff prison terms for their roles in the killings, including former soldier Miroslav Marcek, who pleaded guilty to shooting them.

Marian Kocner, a businessman who had been accused of masterminding the killings, has been acquitted twice. Prosecutors have said they believe Kocner paid Marcek to carry it out. (AP)



Lawmakers of the Democratic Party, left, look on as their colleagues of the ruling Socialist party vote in Tirana, Albania on Feb 22. Albania's Parliament on Thursday approved a deal for the country to hold thousands of migrants rescued in international waters by Italy while their asylum applications are processed, despite protests from opposition lawmakers and human rights groups. (AP)

Politics

Biden criticizes Putin, takes aim at Trump

WH weighs executive actions on border

WASHINGTON, Feb 22, (AP) - The White House is considering using provisions of federal immigration law repeatedly tapped by former US president Donald Trump to unilaterally enact a sweeping crackdown at the southern border, according to three people familiar with the deliberations.

The administration, stymied by Republican lawmakers who rejected a negotiated border bill earlier this month, has been exploring options that President Joe Biden could deploy on his own without congressional approval, multiple officials and others familiar with the talks said. But the plans are nowhere near finalized and it's unclear how the administration would draft any such executive actions in a way that would survive the inevitable legal challenges. The officials and those familiar with the talks spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to comment on private ongoing White House discussions.

The exploration of such avenues by Biden's team underscores the pressure the president faces this election year on immigration and the border, which has been among his biggest political liabilities since he took office. For now, the White House has been hammering congressional Republicans for refusing to act on border legislation that the GOP demanded, but the administration is also aware of the political perils that high numbers of migrants could pose for the president and is scrambling to figure out how Biden could ease the problem on his own.

Policy

White House spokesperson Angelo Fernández Hernández stressed that "no executive action, no matter how aggressive, can deliver the significant policy reforms and additional resources Congress can provide and that Republicans rejected."

"The administration spent months negotiating in good faith to deliver the toughest and fairest bipartisan border security bill in decades because we need Congress to make significant policy reforms and to provide additional funding to secure our border and

fix our broken immigration system," he said. "Congressional Republicans chose to put partisan politics ahead of our national security, rejected what border agents have said they need, and then gave themselves a two-week vacation."

Arrests for illegal crossings on the US border with Mexico fell by half in January from record highs in December to the third lowest month of Biden's presidency. But officials fear those figures could eventually rise again, particularly as the November presidential election nears.

The immigration authority the administration has been looking into is outlined in Section 212(f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, which gives a president broad leeway to block entry of certain immigrants into the United States if it would be "detrimental" to the national interest of the United States.

Leaned

Trump, who is the likely GOP candidate to face off against Biden this fall, repeatedly leaned on the 212(f) power while in office, including his controversial ban to bar travelers from Muslim-majority nations. Biden rescinded that ban on his first day in office through executive order.

But now, how Biden would deploy that power to deal with his own immigration challenges is currently being considered, and it could be used in a variety of ways, according to the people familiar with the discussions. For example, the ban could kick in when border crossings hit a certain number. That echoes a provision in the Senate border deal, which would have activated expulsions of migrants if the number of illegal border crossings reached above 5,000 daily for a five-day average.

House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., has also called on Biden to use the 212(f) authority. Yet the comprehensive immigration overhaul Biden also introduced on his first day in office - which the White House continues to tout - includes provisions that would effectively scale back a presi-

dent's powers to bar immigrants under that authority.

Also:

SAN FRANCISCO: During a fundraiser for his reelection campaign Wednesday night, US President **Joe Biden** called Russian President **Vladimir Putin** a "crazy SOB" and took aim at former President **Donald Trump**'s comments comparing himself to the Russian opposition leader who died last week in an Arctic prison.

Biden was talking about climate change when he said, "We have a crazy SOB like Putin and others, and we always have to worry about nuclear conflict, but the existential threat to humanity is climate."

Kremlin spokesman **Dmitry Peskov** commented by saying that Biden's "churlish" remark could hardly hurt Putin but was a "huge shame" for the U.S. "Clearly, Mr. Biden behaves in the Hollywood cowboy style to serve internal political interests," Peskov said.

Speaking to donors at a private San Francisco home Wednesday as part of a three-day California swing to raise money for his 2024 reelection campaign, Biden also said he was astounded by recent comments made by his likely Republican challenger.

Trump compared the suspicious prison death of Russian opposition leader **Alexei Navalny** to his own legal troubles in the U.S. Trump was fined \$350 million after a New York judge found he lied for years about his wealth on financial statements in his companies. Trump said the ruling was a form of "communism or fascism."

"Some of the things that this fellow's been saying, like he's comparing himself to Navalny and saying that -- because our country's become a communist country, he's persecuted, just like Navalny was persecuted. I don't know where the hell this comes from," Biden said.

"I mean, if I stood here 10, 15 years ago and said any of this, you'd all think I should be committed," he said. "It astounds me."

according to the Los Angeles Police Department. Officials didn't say what led homicide detectives to him.

The man has agreed to be extradited to California to face charges in the slaying of Maleesa Mooney, police said.

Officers found Mooney dead last Sept. 12 in downtown Los Angeles after her family asked for a welfare check because they hadn't heard from her. Blood was pooling under the refrigerator and the body inside was bound with electrical cords and clothing, according to a corner's report obtained by ABC 7. A cloth gag was stuffed in her mouth. (AP)

Brothers resentenced: Two Pennsylvania brothers sentenced to life in the slayings of their parents and younger brother almost three decades ago have been resentenced to terms that may offer them a chance at parole.

A Lehigh County judge on Wednesday sentenced 46-year-old Bryan Freeman and 45-year-old David Freeman to terms of 60 years to life. Both have served just under three decades in prison for their murder convictions and would be in their 70s before they would be eligible for parole.

Bryan Freeman wept as he expressed remorse and took responsibility for what he called "a terrible crime." The (Allentown) Morning Call reported. (AP)



Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak leaves Downing Street to attend the weekly session of Prime Ministers Questions in Parliament in London on Feb 21. (AP)



Trump

James

America

Man dead after Gila monster bite: A Colorado man who died after getting bitten by a Gila monster was hardly alone in having the gnarly looking lizard for a pet.

They're legal to own in most states, easily found through breeders and at reptile shows, and widely regarded for their striking color patterns and typically easy-going personality.

But while 34-year-old Christopher Ward's death Friday may have been the first from a Gila monster in the U.S. in almost a century, the creature's bite is well-known to be excruciating - and venomous. For that reason, some question the wisdom of keeping the species as pets.

"It's like getting your hand slammed, caught in a car door," Arizona State University professor Dale DeNardo said of the lizard's bite. "Even that initial pain is extended for an hour. Then you get the typical days of soreness, throbbing pain. It's much worse than any bee, wasp or scorpion." (AP)

Trump's property at risk: Donald Trump could be at risk of losing some of his prized properties if he can't pay his staggering New York civil fraud penalty. With interest, he owes the state nearly \$454 million - and the amount is going up \$87,502 each day until he pays.

New York Attorney General **Letitia James** told ABC News on Tuesday that she will seek to seize some of the former president's assets if he's unable to cover the bill from Judge Arthur Engoron's Feb. 16 ruling.

Engoron concluded that Trump lied for years about his wealth as he built the real estate empire that vaulted him to stardom and the White House. Trump denies wrongdoing and has vowed to appeal.

"If he does not have funds to pay off the judgment, then we will seek judgment enforcement mechanisms in court, and we will ask the judge to seize his assets," James, a Democrat, said in an interview with ABC reporter Aaron Katersky. (AP)

Man suspected in slaying: A Minnesota man has been arrested on suspicion

of killing a 31-year-old woman who was beaten, bound and stuffed inside the refrigerator at her Los Angeles apartment, authorities said Wednesday.

The 41-year-old suspect, who was on probation for narcotics offenses, was taken into custody at his home in Minneapolis on an unrelated federal warrant,



US President Joe Biden escorts Rep. Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., from Marine One to attend a fundraiser in San Francisco on Feb. 21. Biden called Russian President Vladimir Putin a "crazy SOB" and took aim at former US president Donald Trump's comments comparing himself to the Russian opposition leader who died last week in an Arctic prison. (AP)

Lat/Am

'Gang video chilling'

Gold mine collapse kills 14 in Venezuela

LA PARAGUA, Venezuela, Feb 22, (AP): The collapse of an illegally operated open-pit gold mine in central Venezuela killed at least 14 people and injured several more, state authorities said Wednesday, as some other officials reported an undetermined number of people could be trapped.

Bolivar state Gov **Angel Marciano** told local reporters that 14 bodies had been removed so far and authorities knew of at least 11 people injured.

"We continue to carry out rescue work," he said, with relatives demanding swift rescue efforts.

The accident took place in the Angostura municipality Tuesday, when a wall collapsed at a mine known as Bulla Loca, which can only be reached by an hours-long boat ride.



Marciano

Angostura Mayor Yorgi Arciniega said late Tuesday that he planned to take "some 30 caskets" to a community near the mine, indicating that officials feared the death toll could rise into the dozens.

Relatives of the miners gathered in La Paragua, the closest community to the mine, to ask the government to send aircraft to the remote location to rescue the injured and recover bodies.

"We are here waiting, please, for the government to support us with helicopters, planes, anything," said Karina Ríos, whose daughter's father was trapped in the collapse. "There are quite a few dead, there are people wounded. Why don't they give us support, where are they?"

Ríos said she is worried that bodies could quickly decompose because of the area's conditions.

Moïse's widow rejects indictment: An attorney for Haitian President Jovenel Moïse's widow, who was indicted in his assassination, told The Associated Press on Wednesday that he believes the accusations against her are politically motivated.

US-based attorney Paul Turner said he was surprised by media reports this week detailing the indictments against Martine Moïse and dozens of other suspects including the former prime minister and the ex-police chief. He also questioned whether the judge's report is real or has been finalized, noting that Haitian government officials did not contact his client as required and that he and other attorneys are reaching out to them for clarity.

"If there is a genuine reason to talk to Martine ... we can make her available if the circumstances were fair and just," Turner said, adding that she could talk online. "Or we can meet in the U.S. where we know there's not going to be a safety concern."

Turner said he believes not everyone involved in the July 2021 assassination at Jovenel Moïse's private residence has been arrested, and that Martine Moïse, who was injured in the attack, and her children still fear for their lives.

Gang video chilling - Mexico police: Authorities in Mexico said Wednesday they have largely confirmed the contents of a grisly drug cartel video showing gunmen shooting, kicking and burning the corpses of their enemies.

In a country where videos of decapitations and executions have appeared on social media before, the video released Tuesday was still chilling.

A squad of whooping, cursing gunmen can be seen on a wooded mountainside, standing over the bullet-ridden bodies of their rivals. They then kick and abuse the corpses, shoot them repeatedly, strip some and drag them to an improvised pyre and set them on fire.

Some of the dead gunmen appeared to have made a last stand inside a low, circular pile of stones. Drug cartels in Mexico frequently make videos of dead or captured gang members to intimidate or threaten rivals.

Prosecutors in the Pacific coast state of Guerrero said late Tuesday they had reached the remote scene of the crime in the mountain township of Totolapan and found five charred bodies.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said Wednesday that a total of a dozen bodies had been found so far.

Climbing accident kills 2, one missing: Two people died and another remains missing on Mexico's Pico de Orizaba, the highest mountain in the country, authorities said Wednesday.

Authorities in the central state of Puebla said late Tuesday that rescuers had found the body of a guide who was leading an ascent of the 18,619 feet (5,675 meter) volcanic peak. Another person from the 12-member climbing group died earlier on the peak, which is also known by its Indigenous name Citlaltépetl.

The guide's body was found at an altitude of about 15,000 feet (4,600 meters), and was being brought down from the mountain on Wednesday.

But the state interior department said the search continues for another climber from the group who was still missing.

The state civil defense office said the group had started up the mountain on Saturday, but lost their way amid difficult weather conditions. Five made it down on their own on Sunday, and four others were rescued on the mountain.

Accidents on the peak are not uncommon, and since 2015 rescuers and climbers have found at least three mummified bodies in the snow there. They apparently were climbers lost in a 1959 avalanche.

Army takes over another civilian role: Mexico's president acknowledged that the armed forces have taken over yet another civilian role: fixing the nation's highways.

Filling potholes has now been added to a long list of projects ranging from planes, trains and policing that the armed forces now control.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said highway maintenance in southern Mexico had been transferred away from the government's Transportation Department.

The department usually gave private companies contracts for road maintenance but López Obrador claimed those contracts were too expensive and riddled with corruption.

"There are very few serious construction companies, because they were all rotten with corruption," the president said.

López Obrador has given the armed forces the leading role in law enforcement, including the quasi-military National Guard, and entrusted them with far more duties than his predecessors.



In this photo released by the Taiwan Presidential Office, Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen, (right), talks to US Rep Mike Gallagher, the Republican chair of the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, left, in Taipei, Taiwan on Feb 22. A group of United States Congress members met with Taiwan's president Thursday in a show of support that's certain to draw scrutiny from China, which opposes such visits and sees them as a challenge to its claim of sovereignty over the island. (AP)

Asia

'Crime boss conspired to traffic N-material'

US politicians praise Taiwan's democracy

TAIPEI, Taiwan, Feb 22, (AP): A group of United States Congress members met with Taiwan's president Thursday in a show of support that's certain to draw scrutiny from China, which opposes such visits and sees them as a challenge to its claim of sovereignty over the island.

A visit by then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan two years ago resulted in China dispatching warships and military aircraft to all sides of the self-governing island democracy, and firing ballistic missiles into the waters nearby.

In a meeting Thursday with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, Rep. Mike Gallagher, the Republican chair of the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, highlighted the bipartisan support for the US-Taiwan partnership, which he described as "stronger and more rock-solid than ever now."

The US, like most countries, doesn't formally recognize Taiwan as a country but maintains robust informal relations with the island and is bound by its own laws to provide it with the weapons it needs to defend itself.

Leadership

Gallagher thanked Tsai, who is nearing the end of her second and last term in office, for her leadership in Taiwan and for distinguishing herself "as a leader within the free world."

Tsai thanked the US for continuing to help Taiwan strengthen its self-defense capabilities.

"Together we are safeguarding freedom and democracy and maintaining regional peace," she said, adding that she hoped to see more exchanges between the U.S. and Taiwan in a range of domains.

The delegation, led by Gallagher, R-Wis., and Raja Krishnamoorthi, D-Ill., was expected to be in Taiwan for three days as part of a larger visit to the Indo-Pacific region. Other members include Reps. John Moolenaar, R-Mich.; Dusty Johnson, R-S.D.; and Seth Moulton, D-Mass.

Consisting of some of Congress' staunchest critics of China, the bipartisan delegation was to meet with other senior Taiwanese leaders and members of civil society to discuss U.S.-Taiwan relations, regional security and trade, among other issues of mutual interest.

Krishnamoorthi said Taiwan is one of the United States' "closest friends" and a role model for democracy, after

Lai Ching-te emerged victorious as Taiwan's president-elect and vowed to safeguard the island's de facto independence from China and further align it with other democracies.

"It's one of the most robust, most vibrant, one of the most exciting democracies in the world," Krishnamoorthi said. "And this year, when half of the world's population will be going to the polls to vote, you provided a role model for how elections should be conducted, and for that we salute you on this peaceful transfer of power, and you are an exemplar of democracy."

Krishnamoorthi is the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party's ranking Democrat. The committee was formed in 2023 and has held numerous hearings focused on human rights, trade, cyber intrusions and other issues central to the rising tensions between the two superpowers.

Also:

PNOM PENH, Cambodia: Six months after becoming Cambodia's new prime minister, the eldest son of the country's long-serving autocratic leader on Wednesday won approval from lawmakers to have his youngest brother take the post of deputy premier.

The development is the latest in a generational change in top positions in the Southeast Asian nation that tightens control of Cambodia's government by a small circle of families associated with the ruling Cambodian People's Party.

Last August, **Hun Manet**, 46, the son of longtime leader **Hun Sen** and Cambodia's military chief, became the prime minister after having engaged in foreign diplomacy more and more over the past few years. His father stepped down after 38 years in power.

Hun Manet had studied at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point before serving as deputy commander-in-chief of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces, and army chief.

On Wednesday, the National Assembly overwhelmingly approved his 41-year-old brother **Hun Many** - Hun Sen's third son - as deputy prime minister. All but five members of the 125-seat chamber are from the ruling party, and the 120 lawmakers who were present at Wednesday's session voted unanimously in favor of Hun Many.

Speaking to lawmakers, Hun Manet, said his brother's appointment was in line with his government's policy of

promoting efficiency to help Cambodia reach its goal of becoming a high-income country by 2050.

NEW YORK: A leader of a Japan-based crime syndicate conspired to traffic uranium and plutonium from Myanmar in the belief that Iran would use it to make nuclear weapons, US prosecutors alleged Wednesday.

Takeshi Ebisawa, 60, and his confederates showed samples of nuclear materials that had been transported from Myanmar to Thailand to an undercover Drug Enforcement Administration agent posing as a narcotics and weapons trafficker who had access to an Iranian general, according to federal officials. The nuclear material was seized and samples were later found to contain uranium and weapons-grade plutonium.

"As alleged, the defendants in this case trafficked in drugs, weapons, and nuclear material - going so far as to offer uranium and weapons-grade plutonium fully expecting that Iran would use it for nuclear weapons," DEA Administrator **Anne Milgram** said in a statement. "This is an extraordinary example of the depravity of drug traffickers who operate with total disregard for human life."

SYDNEY: A taekwondo instructor was charged from his hospital bed Thursday with three counts of murder for the deaths of a 7-year-old student and the boy's parents in Sydney.

Lawyers for **Kwang Kyung Yoo**, 49, appeared on his behalf in the Par-ramatta Local Court hearing, but did not apply for Yoo to be released on bail or enter any plea to the charges.

Yoo, the owner of the Lion's Taekwondo and Martial Arts Academy and known to his students as Master Lion, remains under police guard at a hospital after undergoing surgery for what police described as stab or slash wounds to his chest, stomach and arms.

Police allege Yoo strangled his student and the boy's mother, **Min Cho**, to death at his academy on Monday evening. Yoo then allegedly drove her car to the family home where he fatally stabbed her husband **Steven Cho**.

Yoo then drove himself to hospital where he told medical staff and police he had been attacked in a supermarket car park. The bodies were discovered on Tuesday.



Police investigate at a crime scene in Sydney on Feb 21. A taekwondo instructor killed a 7-year-old student at his academy and the boy's parents before going to a Sydney hospital with stab and slash wounds on his body, police said Wednesday. (AP)



Barre



Mackenzie

Africa

Somalia announces deal: Somalia announced on Wednesday a defense deal with Turkey that includes support for the Horn of Africa nation's sea assets and appears aimed at deterring Ethiopia's efforts to secure access to the sea by way of the breakaway region of Somaliland.

Ethiopia signed a memorandum of understanding with Somaliland on Jan 1. The document has rattled Somalia, which said it's prepared to go to war over it because it considers Somaliland part of its territory. Somaliland says Ethiopia agreed to recognize its independence in return for a naval port.

Somali Prime Minister **Hamza Abdi Barre** described the defense and economic deal with Turkey as "a historic day for the country," after the council of ministers approved it.

"Somalia will have a true ally, a friend, and a brother in the international arena," he said.

Details of that agreement have not been made public, but Somalia sees such a deal as an act of aggression, even though Somaliland has enjoyed de facto independence for three decades.

Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud told reporters on Saturday that senior officers from Ethiopia's military were in Somaliland "preparing the ground" for the territory's annexation.

Ethiopia has not addressed the allegations but its Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has downplayed fear of conflict, telling lawmakers earlier this month that he had "no intention" of going to war with Somalia. (AP)

Suspects get emergency care: A Kenyan magistrate ordered the main suspect in a doomsday starvation cult and 94 of his followers to receive emergency care after some of the suspects had to be carried into the courtroom to answer manslaughter charges, too frail and weak to "even open their eyes" after an apparent hunger strike.

At the law courts in the coastal town of Mombasa, Chief Magistrate Alex Ithuku directed **Paul Mackenzie**, his wife Rhoda Maweu and others charged with 238 counts of manslaughter to be escorted to hospital for an immediate doctors' examination.

The visibly emaciated suspects pleaded not guilty on all counts, which were read out over four and half hours.

Doomsday cult leader Paul Mackenzie and some of his followers have been blamed for the deaths of 429 members of his Good News International Church, many of whom

are believed to have starved themselves. This took place between January 2021 and September 2023 at Shakahola area in Malindi Sub-County within Kilifi County, according to prosecutors.

Ithuku, who visited the suspects in the basement cells of the court, said afterwards

that he observed some could barely stand or open their eyes, so he was calling for them to be treated immediately. (AP)

'Ship caused a big stink': What stinks? Authorities in Cape Town launched an in-



Somalia members of parliament address the media outside parliament buildings in Mogadishu, Somalia, Wednesday, Feb 21, 2024. Somalia announced a defense deal with Turkey to deter Ethiopia's access to sea through a breakaway region. (AP)

vestigation after a foul stench swept over the South African city.

City officials inspected sewage facilities for leaks and an environmental health team was activated before the source of the smell was discovered: a ship docked in the harbor carrying 19,000 live cattle from Brazil to Iraq.

Zahid Badroodien, the official in the mayor's office in charge of water and sanitation, wrote on X, formerly Twitter, that investigators had confirmed that the source of the "sewage smell blanketing parts of the city" was the cattle ship.

The ship was expected to leave Cape Town on Tuesday night, likely to the relief of residents who had an unpleasant start to their working week.

But the boat also became a target of serious criticism by animal welfare groups. South Africa's National Council of Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals sent a veterinary consultant onboard the ship to assess the welfare of the animals, it said, and found dead, diseased and injured cattle. Eight cows were humanely euthanized, the council said. It didn't say how many cattle were found dead.

The SPCA council said it was strongly opposed to the export of live animals by sea and called the conditions on the ship "abhorrent" because of a buildup of cattle urine and feces during the journey. The animals had no option but to lie in their own excrement, it said. (AP)

ABK announces closure for Kuwait's National and Liberation Day



Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) extends its greetings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, as well as the government, people, and residents of Kuwait on the occasion of Kuwait's National and Liberation Day.

ABK discloses that its branches will be closed on Sunday, 25 February 2024 and Monday, 26 February 2024 to resume operations on Tuesday, 27 February 2024. During this time, ABK's digital branch in Al Khiran Mall will be functional to service customers from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

The Bank has also confirmed its full operational readiness to serve customers 24/7 via its various digi-

tal platforms throughout the New Year holiday. This includes Online Banking via eahli.com, Mobile Banking through the ABK app, as well as the Bank's call center Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899.

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

Across the region, the Bank offers individuals and corporates the convenience of comprehensive bank-

ing and financial services in the Egyptian market through ABK-Egypt's network of 44 branches.

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

ABK is a strong supporter of Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association's 'Let's Be Aware' awareness campaign. Through its various initiatives, the Bank aims to promote financial inclusion by educating Kuwaiti society about customer rights, responsibilities, and the different types of banking and special needs services.

Market Movements

22-02-2024

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts
JAPAN - Nikkei	+836.52	39,098.68	UAE - DFM	-25.78	4,229.21
EGYPT - EGX 30	+17.68	29,309.73			
PHILIPPINES - PSEI	+5.79	6,903.15			
PAKISTAN - KSE 100	+312.27	61,933.13			

Business

Stock market reports strong financial performance for '23

Boursa Kuwait records third consecutive gain

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: The Boursa Kuwait continued its positive momentum for the third consecutive session this week, with all major indices recording gains. The general market index increased by 0.35 percent to close at 7420.42 points, while the Premier Market Index rose by 0.35 percent to 8135.25 points, and the main market index saw a 0.36 percent increase to reach 6075.95 points. Overall liquidity amounted to 65.8 million dinars, with a total of 306.4 million shares traded through 17,950 transactions, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Investor focus remained on leading stocks, particularly Kuwait Finance House, which saw significant trading volume and breached the 800 fils level. Agility and Masharie stocks also experienced gains, with the latter rebounding from previous losses. Additionally, there were modest gains in Human Soft shares, while major bank shares like National Bank, Boubyan, and Al-Khaleej performed well and contributed to overall liquidity.

However, some stocks like Arzan and Kuwait Real Estate experienced declines, while others like IFA showed positive movement. Notably, new selective stocks, including collections and Osas, attracted investor attention and saw significant increases during the session.

Overall, trading activity remained positive with high liquidity exceeding 65 million dinars. Investors are now awaiting the final trading session before a four-day holiday for National and Liberation Days, with expectations of continued market activity and possibly further gains.

Also:

KUWAIT CITY: Boursa Kuwait Securities Company (the Boursa) unveiled its consolidated financial results for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2023, showcasing robust performance with net profits reaching 15.80 million dinars, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The Boursa Kuwait reported total operating revenues of 30.68 million dinars, resulting in a net operating profit of 18.27 million dinars. Earnings per share stood at 78.68 fils, with total assets amounting to approximately 118.89 million dinars and shareholders' equity at 64.23 million dinars.

The Board of Directors recommended distributing 74 fils per share as cash dividends for 2023, reflecting 94 percent of net profits, subject to approval at the 2023 Ordinary General Assembly and competent authorities.

Commenting on the financial results, Chairman of the Board of Directors, **Hamad Al-Humaidhi**, emphasized the resilience of the company's business model amid economic and geopolitical challenges. Al-Humaidhi highlighted strategic goals aimed at developing a credible and liquid financial market, aligning with international standards, and contributing to Kuwait's transformation into a leading financial center.

Al-Humaidhi further noted the company's commitment to sustainability, citing prestigious awards and certifications received in 2023, including the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification in the gold category.

CEO **Mohammed Al-Osaimi** praised the company's flexibility in navigating the financial landscape of 2023, strengthening Boursa Kuwait's position regionally. Al-Osaimi emphasized the market's attractiveness to global investors, facilitated by aligning services with international best practices and enhancing transparency and governance.

Boursa Kuwait's initiatives included infrastructure development in collaboration with the Kuwait Clearing Company and strategic promotional tours, such as the London tour with Jefferies Financial Group, aimed at highlighting market developments and attracting institutional investors.

The company's efforts also focused on improving market accessibility, including accelerated account opening for foreign clients and enhanced electronic general assemblies participation.

The Boursa Kuwait's role in diversifying the national economy and supporting privatization efforts was underscored, with ongoing reforms and product introductions reinforcing its regional and international standing.

In summary, Boursa Kuwait's robust financial performance and strategic initiatives underscore its pivotal role in advancing Kuwait's financial market and economy.

ABK prioritizes financial literacy and cybersecurity

Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait warns against interacting with suspicious companies

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) reaffirms its steadfast support for the 'Let's Be Aware' Diraya banking awareness campaign, a joint initiative by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and Kuwait Banking Association (KBA). The campaign focuses on promoting financial inclusion in Kuwaiti society and educating customers about their rights and responsibilities when dealing with banks.

The Bank remains dedicated to disseminating financial literacy and banking awareness content through various communication channels, including video advertisements, awareness messages, and tips and advice shared on its official social media platforms and digital channels. Additionally, ABK consistently disseminates CBK's awareness content related to cyber fraud, providing valuable insights to customers on cybersecurity, fraud prevention, and scams.

Emphasizing the significance of identifying and disregarding scam emails and suspicious messages, ABK highlighted that scam emails often mimic well-known organiza-



Mr. Loai Muqames, CEO-Kuwait of ABK

tions' logos, such as banks and telecom companies, aiming to deceive customers.

Loai Muqames, CEO-Kuwait of ABK, stressed, "Protecting customers' data is our top priority. Hence, we regularly publish awareness material that underscore the importance of ignoring suspicious phone calls

and text messages enticing customers with cash prizes and high investment returns in exchange for their personal banking information."

Furthermore, Muqames reassured customers that ABK would never request personal information through phone calls, SMS, or social media platforms. He advised, "Refrain from responding to or sharing personal information with unknown parties and promptly contact the Bank to block your card in case of suspected fraudulent transactions."

In conclusion, Muqames expressed, "At ABK, we are deeply committed to implementing the highest safety measures for banking transactions, in line with the goals and objectives of the Diraya campaign, to safeguard customers from all forms of fraud."

ABK urges against clicking on suspicious links and storing personal and confidential information, such as banking card numbers, PIN codes, and one-time passwords (OTP), on mobile phones. Additionally, customers should log out from the Bank's application and website after completing transactions.

GCC chief affirms cooperation with OPEC

Kuwaiti crude oil price declines to \$81.71 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti crude oil went down by USD 1.30 on Wednesday to reach USD 81.71 per barrel, compared to USD 83.01 on Tuesday, said the Kuwait petroleum corporation (KPC) on Thursday.

In international markets, Brent crude oil rose by 69 cents to USD 83.03 per barrel, while West Texas Intermediate rose by 87 cents to reach USD 77.91.

Also:

RIYADH: Secretary General of the Gulf Council Cooperation (GCC) **Jasem Al-Budaiwi** affirmed Wednesday the GCC's keenness on stabilizing global oil markets through cooperating with the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

This came in a statement by the GCC's General Secretariat, Wednesday, during Al-Budaiwi's reception of OPEC's Secretary General **Haitham Al-Ghais** the previous night at the GCC's General Secretariat's headquarters in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

During the meeting between Al-Budaiwi and Al-Ghais, they discussed enriching the strong relations between the GCC and OPEC by continuous coordination that aims at stabilizing oil markets during a time of political unrest regionally and internationally that had a noticeable impact on global energy markets, continued the statement.

Al-Budaiwi praised the major efforts by OPEC and its member states through their role in preserving stability in the markets while facing challenges.

Projects to reach \$140 bln by 2050

Investment surge in Oman's renewable sector

MUSCAT, Feb 22, (KUNA): Oman is racing against time to keep abreast of global transition to renewable energy and climate, having already taken significant steps by finishing the review of relevant regulatory and legal frameworks.

Oman's 2040 vision is primarily based on leading world green energy producers and exporters by targeting the production of one million tons of green hydrogen per annum by 2030 and eight million tons by 2050.

Oman, which is now a fossil-fuel producing country, has allocated plots of land spanning 50,000 kilometers for investment in renewable energy and green hydrogen projects, with estimated investments to hit USD 140 billion by 2050.

The sultanate abounds in great potential for green hydrogen production, chiefly solar energy and wind energy, extended onshore land, industrial harbors near production areas and long experience in fuel production and exportation, not to mention political and social stability and manpower.

Unquestionably, all these capabilities would put this Gulf country on track to be a powerhouse of green hydrogen production and exportation.

In August 2021, the Omani Ministry of Energy and Minerals launched a national green hydrogen alliance known as "Hi Fly" to place the Sultanate of Oman on the map of developing the production of clean hydrogen and usage.

The alliance includes 13 main entities from public and private sectors that would work to support and facilitate the production, transportation, local utilization and exportation of clean hydrogen.

Policies

On March 13, 2022, Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tareq instructed fast-track measures to regulate the green hydrogen sector, set out necessary legal frameworks and policies, allocate appropriate locations and establish a clean energy agency and a green hydrogen development company.

Oman has taken it upon itself to reduce emissions and reach carbon neutrality, which means a balance between emitting carbon and absorbing carbon emissions from carbon sinks, by 2050 only as part of Gulf commitments towards growing global transition to clean energy.

The sultanate has also taken tangible steps towards the reduction of fossil fuel consumption by means of promoting solar and wind energy projects with a view to capitalizing on nice weather conditions and appropriate geographical nature.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) predicted the sultanate to become the world's sixth-largest hydrogen exporter by 2030, and the biggest in the Middle

Eastern market.

Based on its high-quality renewable energy resources and vast tracts of available land, Oman aims to produce at least one million tons of renewable hydrogen a year by 2030, up to 3.75 million tons by 2040 and up to 8.5 million tons by 2050, it said in a recent report.

The 2040 hydrogen target would represent 80 percent of Oman's current liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports in energy-equivalent terms, while achieving the 2050 target would almost double them, it said.

Achieving its targets and using one-third of renewable hydrogen for domestic uses would significantly contribute to Oman's clean energy transition, said the IAE, listing the benefits as reducing domestic use of natural gas by three billion cubic meters a year and avoiding seven million tons of carbon dioxide emissions.

In this context, Najla Al-Jamali, Chief Executive of Alternative Energy at OQ, a global integrated energy company, said renewable energy projects contribute to attaining economic diversification goals through the balance in energy sources by cutting reliance upon fossil fuel and natural gas as main sources of national income.

She said there are joint projects between the sultanate and the State of Kuwait, including an ammonia production project in Al Wusta Governorate, in partnership with Shell Global, Kuwait's EnerTech Holding Company and Inter Continental Energy Company.

EnerTech Holding Company, a fully owned subsidiary of Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), runs investments in energy, clean technology, recycling, water, waste management and renewable energy sectors, while OQ, together with global partners, invests in three mega green hydrogen projects valued at over USD 15 billion, she added.

OQ also seeks to explore opportunities for investment in green hydrogen-based industries and supports local renewable energy companies by entrusting them with environmental studies, geographical and soil surveys.

Green hydrogen is produced using emissions-free renewable power sources, like wind, solar and hydro power to separate hydrogen from water. This makes it a sustainable fuel source that can be used to help hard-to-abate industries like steel making and shipping decarbonize.

Hypport Duqm, which is a joint venture of Belgium's Deme Concessions and OQ Alternative Energy, is a major strategic green hydrogen production project in Oman, covering 150 kilometers.

The project includes a solar and wind park with a total installed capacity of about 1.3GW, a dedicated, high-voltage green electricity transmission line, and a utility-scale electrolysis and ammonia conversion plant.



Left to right Mr. Abdallah Dalab Strategic Relations Director & Iraq General Manager – GulfCryo; Abdullah Al-Mutairi, Executive Committee Co-Chair, Manager (Production and Projects - GAS), Kuwait Oil Company; Badriah-Farhad, Former Heavy Oil Manager, NK, KOC; Waleed Refaay, Executive Director, AEP, Sylvia Ansara, VP External Relations, AEP.

Event highlights initiatives for net-zero economy

Arab Association organizes Kuwait Hydrogen Technology Symposium

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: The Arab Association of Energy Professionals (AEP) is delighted to organize the inaugural Kuwait International Hydrogen Technology Symposium, themed, "The Kuwait Hydrogen Outlook from Vision to Action." This grand two-day event will take place from March 5-6, 2024, at the prestigious Hilton Resort Hotel in Kuwait City.

Given the growing need for a sustainable and low-carbon future, the symposium emphasizes the transformative potential of Hydrogen energy and Kuwait's burgeoning role in producing blue and green Hydrogen. The World, now more than ever, is calling for a revolutionary shift in energy generation, affordability, and security, wherein Hydrogen will play a critical role. The event will strategically highlight Kuwait's path to becoming a global Hydrogen hub, emphasizing the extensive resources the country possesses and its comprehensive initiatives towards achieving a net-zero economy.

"In 2020, the production of hydrogen in Kuwait accounted for 2% of the world's total output. However, with the forthcoming advancements in technology and government backing, it is predicted that Kuwait has the potential to contribute significantly to the world's hydrogen market. As the co-chairs of the Executive Committee for the 1st Kuwait International Hydrogen

Technology Symposium, we are both eager and proud to see Kuwait stepping up to spearhead discussions around one of the most promising energy alternatives of the 21st century, hydrogen. The Symposium's theme, "The Kuwait Hydrogen Outlook from Vision to Action," aptly captures the trajectory of Kuwait's intent to embrace a future driven by green, clean energy sources," said the Executive Committee Co-Chair, Abdullah Al-Mutairi, Manager (Production and Projects - GAS), Kuwait Oil Company & Executive Committee Co-Chair, Peter Jensen, E.T.S.A Contract Manager North Kuwaiti Jurassic Gas, Shell.

The co-chairs added "As we look forward to the impact and benefits of hydrogen technology, we are reminded that success can only be achieved through progressive vision coupled with immediate, determined action. This Symposium seeks to stimulate discussion and drive both collaboration and action. Our vision for Kuwait is a nation empowered by Sustainable Energy, driving an energy transformation to enhance economic diversification, job creation, and sustainability. The transition to hydrogen isn't just an opportunity for Kuwait but a commitment towards building a more sustainable and energy-efficient future.

Top-ranking executives from Kuwait Oil Company and Shell, along with es-

teemed members from the Hydrogen sector, constitute the program committee that orchestrates the symposium. This symposium provides an invaluable platform to partake in discussions defining the future of energy, said the Co-Chair of the Executive Committee and Manager (Production and Projects - GAS), Kuwait Oil Company.

GulfCryo, the leading provider of industrial and medical gases in the Middle East, has come forward as a lead sponsor for the symposium, marking its commitment towards energy diversification and supporting the shift towards Hydrogen as a viable energy alternative. Their participation demonstrates their active role in propelling the Hydrogen industry's growth in the GCC region and strengthening Kuwait's standing as a future major player in this sector.

Delegates and industry thought-leaders from across the globe will assemble to address crucial aspects related to the future of Hydrogen. Participants can anticipate incisive dialogues on an array of topics such as Hydrogen potential markets and applications, technology selection, associated risks and opportunities, and effective Hydrogen transportation and export strategies. This ground-breaking event promises exclusive insights and education on the latest advancements and trends from industry leaders.

BUSINESS

Company earns \$5.16 a share in the latest quarter

Nvidia's 4Q revenue, profit soar, thanks to demand for its chips used for AI

SANTA CLARA, Calif., Feb 22, (AP): Nvidia Corp., which has seen its value skyrocket over the past year thanks to soaring demand for its graphics chips used for artificial intelligence, posted stronger-than-expected results Wednesday for its latest quarter, with its revenue more than tripling from a year earlier.

Nvidia reported revenue for its fiscal fourth quarter that ended Jan. 28 of \$22.1 billion, up from \$6.05 billion.

The company based in Santa Clara, California, earned \$12.29 billion, compared to a profit of \$1.41 billion a year ago.

Adjusted for one-time items, Nvidia earned \$5.16 a share in the latest quarter, that topped Wall Street forecasts for \$4.59 per share, based on analysts surveyed by FactSet Research. Analysts had expected revenue of \$20.4 billion for the period that concluded the company's fiscal year.

The company's specialized chips are key components that help power different forms of artificial intelligence, including the latest generative AI chatbots such as ChatGPT and Google's Gemini.

"Accelerated computing and generative AI have hit the tipping point," said Jensen Huang, founder and CEO of Nvidia, in a statement. "Demand is surging worldwide across companies, industries and nations."

Nvidia carved out an early lead in the hardware and software needed to tailor its technology to AI applications, partly because Huang began to nudge the company into what was then seen as a still half-baked technology more than a decade ago. It also makes chips for gaming and cars.

Huang looked at ways that Nvidia chipsets known as graphics processing units might be tweaked for AI-related applications to expand beyond their early inroads in video gaming.

"Another blockbuster quarter from Nvidia raises the question of how long its soaring performance will last," said Insider Intelligence analyst Jacob Bourne. "It has a massive lead in the growing global AI chip sector but can't rest on its laurels."

Bourne said Nvidia faces a number of challenges, including broader economic uncertainty, tech giants' drive to make their own AI chips and emerging rivals. But he said the company's market strength, for the near future, is "durable"

For the current quarter, Nvidia expects revenue of about \$24 billion. Analysts are currently expecting Nvidia to post revenue of \$22.2 billion for the February-April period. The company expects "continued growth" to 2025 and beyond.

The company said its data center revenue grew in all regions except China, where the U.S. government has imposed export regulations.

"Although we have not received licenses from the U.S. government to ship restricted products to China, we have started shipping alternatives that don't require a license for the China market," Huang said in a conference call with analysts.

Nvidia relies heavily on the world's biggest maker of computer chips, the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, to churn out the chips that Nvidia designs.

Taiwan's Taiex benchmark index last week jumped 3% to a record high, buoyed by a surge in TSMC's share price.

The leap came after Morgan Stanley analysts raised their price target on Nvidia's stock to \$750 from \$603, citing an increase in demand for AI chips.

"Generative AI has kicked off a whole new investment cycle to build the next \$1 trillion of infrastructure of AI generation factories," Huang said. "We believe these two trends will drive a doubling of the world's data center infrastructure installed base in the next five years and will represent an annual market opportunity in the hundreds of billions."

Nvidia's shares jumped 7.5%, to \$726 in after-hours trading.

Growth forecast cut

Germany says Europe's largest economy is in 'troubled waters'

FRANKFURT, Germany, Feb 22, (AP): The German government said Europe's largest economy was in "troubled waters" and slashed its growth forecast for this year as it struggles with a lack of skilled labor, excessive bureaucracy, high interest rates and lagging investment in new projects - while a relatively modest set of tax breaks for business remains blocked in the legislature.

The growth forecast was lowered to 0.2% from the previous forecast from last fall of 1.3%. That would follow a shrinking of the economy by 0.3% for all of last year.

Germany is recovering "more slowly than we hoped" from the shock of Russia cutting off most supplies of natural gas after its invasion of Ukraine, Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck said as he presented the government's annual economic report. "The economy is in troubled waters."

The loss of Russian gas in Germany led to a spike in energy costs that hammered energy intensive industries and contributed to high consumer inflation that eroded purchasing power and made consumers more reluctant to spend. Those two headwinds have eased as inflation and oil and gas prices have fallen, and as wages have started to rise to make up for inflation and restore lost disposable real income.

And unemployment remains low, meaning last year's downturn does not resemble a classic recession.

"The good news is, Putin failed in his attempt to drive Germany into an energy shortage and thus into an economic catastrophe," Habeck said. As wages rise faster than inflation, workers "finally have more money in their wallets in real terms."

Slowing global trade is another factor behind Germany's troubles,

since exports of autos and industrial machinery have been mainstays of the economy.

Other, often longer term problems continue to plague what used to be Europe's industrial and export growth motor. High interest rates from the European Central Bank have slowed construction of new homes and offices; companies complain they can't get skilled workers; and excessive red tape and lengthy approvals slow the construction of new projects such as renewable energy generation.

Investment in digital and transport infrastructure has lagged after the government focused on balancing budgets to avoid piling up new debt. A 2009 constitutional amendment limiting deficit spending has come back to haunt the current government after the constitutional court ruled it could not use special emergency funds to skirt deficit limits.

The coalition government led by Social Democratic Chancellor Olaf Scholz had to revise this year's spending at the last minute, including cancelling a subsidy for agricultural diesel fuel. That has led to protests by farmers who have blocked roads with their tractors.

A relatively modest set of tax breaks amounting to 3.2 billion euros (\$3.5 billion) has passed the lower house but has been blocked by the conservative opposition in the upper house. Opposition leader Friedrich Merz's Christian Democrats have made their approval conditional on restoring the farm fuel tax break.

The government has attempted to deal with the shortage of skilled labor by passing laws easing immigration for workers in needed fields and by shortening the wait to become a citizen from eight years to five, and three in some circumstances.

Two CEOs cite AI's 'voracious' appetite for processing power

OpenAI and Intel chiefs meet for brainstorming session

SAN JOSE, Calif., Feb 22, (AP): Two tech CEOs scrambling to produce more of the sophisticated chips needed for artificial intelligence met for a brainstorming session while the booming market's early leader reported another quarter of eye-popping growth.

The on-stage conversation between Intel CEO Pat Gelsinger and OpenAI CEO Sam Altman unfolded in a San Jose, California, convention center a few hours after Nvidia disclosed its revenue for the November-January period nearly quadrupled from the previous year.

Intel, a Silicon Valley pioneer that has been struggling in recent years, laid out its plans for catching up to Nvidia during a daylong conference. Gelsinger kicked things off with an opening speech outlining how he envisions the feverish demand for AI-equipped chips revitalizing his company in a surge he dubbed the "Siliconomy."

"It's just magic the way these tiny chips are enabling the modern economic cycle we are in today," Gelsinger said.

OpenAI, a San Francisco startup backed by Microsoft, has become one of technology's brightest stars since unleashing its most popular AI innovation, ChatGPT, in late 2022. Altman is now eager to push the envelope even further while competing against Google and other companies such as Anthropic and Inflection AI. But the next leaps he wants to make will take far more processing power than what's currently available.

The imbalance between supply and the voracious appetite for AI chips explains why Altman is keenly interested in securing more money to help expand the industry's manufacturing capacity. During his talk with Gelsinger, he dodged a question about whether he is trying to raise as much as \$7 trillion - more the combined market value of Microsoft and Apple - as was recently reported by The Wall Street Journal.

"The kernel of truth is we think the world is going to need a lot more (chips for) AI compute," Altman said. "That is going to require a global investment in a lot of stuff beyond what we are thinking of. We are not in a place where we have numbers yet."

Altman emphasized the importance of accelerating the AI momentum of the past year to advance a technology that he maintains will lead to a better future for humanity, although he acknowledged there will be downsides along the way.

"We are heading to a world where more content is going to be generated by AI than content generated by humans," Altman said. "This is not going to be only a good story, but it's going to be a net good story."

Perhaps no company is benefiting more from the AI gold rush now than Nvidia. The 31-year-old chipmaker has catapulted to the technological forefront because of its head start in making the graphics processing units, or GPUs, required to fuel popular AI products such as ChatGPT and Google's Gemini chatbot.

Over the past year, Nvidia has been a stunning streak of growth that has created more than \$1.3 trillion in shareholder wealth in less than 14 months. That has turned it into the fifth most valuable U.S. publicly traded company behind only Microsoft, Apple, Amazon and Google's corporate parent, Alphabet Inc.

Intel, in contrast, has been trying to convince investors that Gelsinger has the Santa Clara, California, company on a comeback trail three years after he was hired as CEO.

Since his arrival, Gelsinger already has pushed the company into the business of making chips for other firms and has committed \$20 billion to building new factories in Ohio as part of its expansion into



Stock traders are seen at Tokyo Stock Exchange in Tokyo, on Dec. 29, 1989. Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 index surged Thursday past the record it set in 1989 before its financial bubble burst, ushering in an era of faltering growth. The index closed Thursday at 39,098.68, up 2.2%. It had been hovering for weeks near 34-year highs. Its previous record was 38,915.87, set on Dec. 29, 1989. (AP)

Nikkei stock index breaks its 1989 record & surges to an all-time high

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 index surged Thursday past the record it set in 1989 before its financial bubble burst, ushering in an era of faltering growth.

The index closed Thursday at 39,098.68, up 2.2%. It had been hovering for weeks near 34-year highs. Its previous record was 38,915.87, set on Dec. 29, 1989.

That was more than a generation ago at the height of Japan's post-war boom.

After the peak, as banks wrote off some 100 trillion yen in bad debts, shares meandered well below the record for many years - dipping below 8,200 in 2011 after the triple disasters of a massive earthquake and tsunamis and meltdowns at the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant in northeastern Japan.

But the market has logged sharp gains in recent months, helped by strong interest from foreign investors who account for the majority of trading volume on the Tokyo exchange.

Unlike in the United States, where shares have been topping records on hopes the Federal Reserve will begin cutting high interest rates once it decides inflation is truly under control, in Japan the benchmark rate has remained at minus 0.1% for over a decade.

News that the economy slipped into recession in late 2023 has raised hopes that the Bank of Japan will stick to the easy money policies it has been using to try to spur inflation and push growth higher.

Plenty of the money the central bank has pumped into the economy has found its way into the stock market. And many global investors have been shifting their portfolios away

running so-called "foundries" for third parties.

During Wednesday's conference, Gelsinger predicted that by 2030 Intel would be overseeing the world's second largest foundry business, presumably behind the current leader, Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co., or TSMC, largely by meeting the demand for AI chips.

"There's sort of a space race going on," Gelsinger told reporters Wednesday after delivering the conference's keynote speech. "The overall demand (for AI chips) appears to be insatiable for several

years into the future."

Gelsinger's turnaround efforts haven't impressed investors so far. Intel's stock price has fallen by 30% under his reign while Nvidia's shares have increased by roughly fivefold during the same span.

Intel also is angling for a chunk of the \$52 billion that the U.S. Commerce Department plans to spread around in an effort to increase the country's manufacturing capacity in the \$527 billion market for processors, based on last year's worldwide sales.

Less than \$2 billion of the funds available under the 2022 CHIPS and

Foreign investors, who account for more than two-thirds of trading activity in Japan, have plunged in, seeking bargains to be had given the yen's weakness against the U.S. dollar, which is trading at about 150 yen compared with about 140 yen a year ago.

In January, international investors bought 125.2 trillion yen of Japanese stocks, double a year earlier, according to the Tokyo Stock Exchange. As is true in the United States, some of the biggest winners have been technology companies like Renesas, SoftBank and Tokyo Electron.

So far, experts say Japan's shares are not overpriced.

The price-to-earnings ratio for the Tokyo market is about 16, compared with 23 for the S&P 500, 24 for India's Sensex, and 8 for Shanghai. In 2023, investors in Tokyo shares earned a return of more than 28%, according to the Nikkei's website.

Meanwhile, another entirely different scenario has been playing out in China, where the markets have never fully recovered from a meltdown in 2015 that wiped out trillions in value. The Shanghai Composite index is down nearly 10% from a year earlier and almost 5% from three months ago.

The smaller market in Shenzhen has fallen by about 25% in the past year, while on Hong Kong's exchange, the world's fifth largest, the Hang Seng index is down about 20%.

Markets in both Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland have been chilled by the tensions between Beijing and Washington that oblige companies to think ever more carefully about where to invest.

Science Act has been awarded so far, but Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, in a video appearance at Wednesday's conference, promised "a steady drumbeat" of announcements about more money being distributed.

Raimondo also told Gelsinger that she emerged from recent discussions with Altman and other executives leading the AI movement having a difficult time processing how big the market could become.

"The volume of chips they say they need is mind-boggling," she said.

Boosting rooftop solar eyed

India 'determined' to hook its population onto clean energy

BENGALURU, India, Feb 22, (AP): Just a few years ago, someone who wanted to install a rooftop solar connection in India faced getting multiple approvals, finding a reliable company to install the panels and spending heavily before seeing the first surge of clean energy.

But that's changing. The government has streamlined the approvals process, made it easier for people to claim subsidies and pushed mountains of cash - including \$9 billion announced this month - to encourage faster adoption of technology that's seen as critical for India to reach its clean-energy goals.

"We had to get 45 signatures to set up a small rooftop solar connection in 2021," said Shreya Mishra, CEO of Mumbai-based Solar Square, one of India's largest rooftop solar companies. "Today it's almost instantaneous."

For this sun-soaked country, growth in rooftop solar can't come soon enough. India last year became the world's most populous nation, with 1.4 billion people and a hunger for energy that is rising fast.

Yet India, one of the world's biggest emitters of planet-warming gases, is also highly vulnerable to climate change. Its people are affected by deadly floods, extreme rainfall, extreme heat, prolonged droughts and cyclones with increasing frequency. A study earlier this year found that nine out of India's 28 states will be among the world's hardest-hit regions due to climate change by midcentury.

India has grown its clean power rapidly in recent years and has the fourth-most installed renewable power, trailing only China, the U.S. and Brazil. It had 180 gigawatts as of December, enough to power about 18 million homes, with nearly half from solar.

But most of that solar power comes from numerous football-field-sized solar farms. Less than 15% comes from rooftop arrays, and India has so far managed to set up only 11 gigawatts of rooftop solar. That's far less than the 40 gigawatts it hoped to have by 2022.

Energy experts say rooftop solar

is essential to bring power to remote areas, where it can be installed cheaply where it's needed and avoid the cost of transmitting the energy over long distances.

India's latest push was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who said the \$9 billion would provide "free electricity" for up to 10 million homes.

Neeraj Kuldeep of the New Delhi-based think tank, Council on Energy, Environment and Water, has tracked rooftop solar for nearly a decade. A report from CEEW last year found that only 50% of Indians are likely aware of rooftop solar as an energy solution and most of those who were aware thought it was too expensive. The report released last November recommended subsidies for consumers who can benefit from small rooftop solar arrays but can't afford them.

Kuldeep said consumer awareness about rooftop solar is one key to driving growth. Others are efficient governments at both the federal and state level, and finding the right "fit" for a particular user's power needs.

Experts say another is getting buy-in from state-owned electricity companies who sometimes see rooftop solar as a threat to their profits.

Kuldeep said that's short-sighted. The companies can often actually make more money if they help install rooftop solar in a low-consumption home, he said. That's because they cut their transmission and distribution costs to carry power to a house with a subsidized bill that already earns them little profit.

Installations have also risen since the government launched a national rooftop solar portal in 2022 that consumers can use to claim and steer government subsidies directly to their bank account, say experts and rooftop solar companies.

Mysun, a rooftop solar company based in New Delhi, offers potential buyers a "solar calculator" on its website where they can enter their location and current electricity costs to see what kind of savings they could expect. CEO Gagan Vermani said it's about simplifying the process for potential customers.

Beyond the fairways: Event captivates with victors and lavish raffle delights

ABCK-AmCham Kuwait holds their 21st Annual Golf Tournament

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: ABCK-AmCham Kuwait held its 21st Annual Golf Tournament on February 2nd at Sahara Kuwait Golf Resort. This Annual Golf Tournament event was sponsored by Gold Sponsor- Eastern United Petroleum Services, Silver Sponsor- Saudi Arabian Chevron, and the event's Exclusive Travel Partner and our newest chairman club member IFA International Travel and Tourism. The event kicked off with opening remarks from AmCham Kuwait's Chairman, Pete Swift, expressing gratitude to members for their unwavering support and welcoming all participants, encouraging them to enjoy a day of camaraderie and competition.

Following the tournament, an Awards Ceremony and lunch were held, with Swift acknowledging the golfers, hosts, and sponsors for their contributions. He recognized IFA International Travel and Tourism as the Exclusive Travel Partner and applauded Eastern United Petroleum Services, represented by Mr. Partha Chaudhury, and Saudi Arabian Chevron, represented by Mr. Jody Mangus, for their support.

For the next recognitions, Swift recognized the winners of the category awards, starting with the Lon-



Group photo during the ABCK-AmCham Kuwait's 21st Annual Golf Tournament.

gest Drive- won by Benjamin Du-royon, and Closest to the Pin- won by Jamie Urbaneck. Consequently, the tournament-winning teams were announced- The third place was earned by the team of Eoin Fitzgerald, Michaela Abey, Steven Be-zuidenhout, and Darragh Meredith. The second place was earned by the

team of Philip Kotsis, Les Moska-liuk, Dan Leritz, and Aaron Dikos. The first place of the Annual Golf Tournament was earned by the team of David Sims, Scott Dunnings, Harold Yambao, and Mark Assistin.

To wrap up the event, the AmCham Kuwait team conducted a raffle with various enticing prizes. The first set

of prizes included 4 complimentary invitations to Spa Aquatic, 1 complimentary room at Holiday Inn in Far-waniya, and 1 complimentary 1-night stay at Crowne Plaza in Farwaniya, courtesy of the Crowne Plaza Hotel. In the second raffle, 2 complimentary lunches or dinner buffets at Lamar in the Millennium Hotel for 2 people

were up for grabs. The third raffle prize offered 2 invitations for dinner at Sintoho restaurant in Four Seasons. Sahara Kuwait generously provided the fourth raffle prize of Four Lessons for newcomers. Fahrenheit Restaurant contributed the fifth raffle prize with 3 vouchers each worth 20 KD for dine-in at their Mahboula branch in Spoons.

Safety & Fire Experts sponsored the sixth raffle prize with 2 at-home safety kits. Nova Clinic provided the seventh raffle prize with 5 gift certificates for use at their clinic. The eighth raffle prize featured 1 invitation for 2 to any AmCham Kuwait signature event for 2024. Lastly, the highlight of the event was the raffle prize of one roundtrip economy class ticket to the USA, graciously provided by our Exclusive Travel Partner and Chairman Club member, IFA International Travel and Tourism.

A photo session with the winners, the raffle gift sponsor representatives, and AmCham Kuwait's Chairman concluded the event, as Swift thanked AmCham Kuwait's team and the volunteers for organizing the event.

ABCK-AmCham Kuwait: Is a non-profit organization operating since 1985 and is composed of Fortune 500 corporations, small and medium-sized companies, and prominent business leaders and entrepreneurs, both American and Kuwaiti. ABCK-AmCham Kuwait has acted as an advocate for American interests in the state of Kuwait. For More Information, please visit our website at www.amchamkuwait.org or follow us on our social media channel @abck1985.

To be always closer to customers and share with them celebration of national days

NBK offers customers exclusive 20% discounts at X-cite online

24/7 access across multiple channels

KFH continues to serve customers during holiday

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) continues to provide its banking services around the clock through a group of various technological and digital tools during Kuwait national day and liberation day.

Most of the banking services are available in several channels around the clock, whether through the bank's website, KFH.com, or via the KFHOnline mobile application, or through the KFHGo electronic branches that are spread in many important locations, in addition to the KFH accounts on social media and many E-service channels and KFH branch at Kuwait international airport.

KFH Go branch is considered a new electronic channel that helps transfer normal customer transactions to an innovative automated branch, that provides capabilities that allow customers to benefit from highly efficient banking services.

It includes more than 80% of the services and business provided by the branches in their traditional sense, which makes KFH Go branches the preferred choice for many segments of customers, especially the youth.

KFH GO branches include the XTM device that allows direct video call with service personnel, as well as automatic teller machines and cash deposit machines. The cash deposit machines receive 300 notes per transaction.

Moreover, Customers can perform a variety of interactive banking services through KFH Go's 10 branches located in various places in Kuwait, including Kuwait International Airport, such as: establishing "Murabaha" financing transactions, requesting credit and prepaid cards, updating data and phone numbers, activating bank cards, opening deposits and accounts, instant cheque printing, receiving gold biscuits (10 grams), opening (gold, savings, Al-Rabeh, electron) accounts, online gold purchase and sell, cardless withdrawals using QR code through mobile, or by using Civil ID or phone number, in addition to many other financing and banking services conducted quickly, easily and safely.

The electronic banking services at KFH are also characterized by their high efficiency in addition to ease and safety.

This was evident in the number of electronic banking operations that KFH customers carried out via KFHonline, on the website or through the mobile application.

The e-banking transactions includes: opening a bank account online for citizens and residents to join become a KFH customer without having to visit the branch, local and telex financial transfers, opening de-



KFH round the clock services

posits, adding beneficiaries, balance inquiry, cheque book request, requesting financing, opening an account, requesting Al-Kheir Card, and checking the PINs for credit and debit cards, activating new bank cards, reporting a lost credit/debit cards, checking the financing obligations and the number of installments, perusal of investment plans, receiving account balances and deposits summary, along with other wide range of digital services.

KFH has recently launched digital signature service in personal financing products through KFH mobile app or desktop from anywhere without having to visit the branch, instant card issuance within 3 minutes, Live FX Pricing, instant cross-border payments service at KFH-Turkey using Ripple's technology and digital Wallet service through smart mobiles and watches which provides advanced and smart digital payment methods according to highly developed security standards in cooperation with Samsung, Fitbit and Garmin.

Meanwhile, the call center continues to provide services around the clock to receive customer calls, listen to their enquiries and respond to them through a qualified and technically advanced staff. KFH provides the automated telephone service 1803333 that works with the same efficiency and speed, to respond to transfers between accounts, inquire about financial operations, pay bills, and recharge Mobile phone cards, along with other services.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) always strives to enhance customer banking experience with valuable offers and rewards. In this context, has announced an exclusive discount of 20% on their purchases on X-cite, on the occasion of celebrating the national days.

According to the offer, NBK Visa cardholders will get a 20% discount at X-cite capped at KD 30 for one-time use per customer on National & Liberation days on 25 and 26 February.

The offer will be available on X-cite website and in-app only, with minimum spends of KD 20 made using the following eligible NBK Cards:

- NBK KWT Visa Infinite Credit Card
- NBK-Kuwait Airways Visa Infinite Credit Card
- NBK-Kuwait Airways Visa Signature Credit Card
- NBK Visa Infinite Credit Card
- NBK-KPC Visa Infinite Credit Card
- NBK Visa Signature Credit Card
- NBK Avios Visa Signature Prepaid Card

Commenting on this offer, Bader Al-Janah, Head of Card Products, Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait said, "Coinciding with national days celebrations,

we are keen to be closer to customers and share with them their joy. To this end, we are providing valuable exclusive offers tailored to meet the needs of their different segments and ages, as we are tirelessly working to keep pace with their changing needs and live up to their evolving expectations."

"NBK maintains solid relationships with leading institutions across different sectors, which we leverage to enhance customer banking experience by delivering top-notch offers, discounts and benefits for unmatched banking experience" he added.

"Service excellence and top-notch customer experience are embedded in NBK's culture. We maintain close communication with customers to identify their needs and expectations,



X-cite National-Liberation Day flyer

and work to fulfill these needs by delivering top-notch services and exclusive offers that even go beyond their expectations for a highly luxurious banking experience," he noted.

"Partnering with National Bank of Kuwait to offer this exclusive discount on Xcite electronics products for the national holidays reflects our commitment to delivering outstanding value and service to our customers. Through this collaboration, we aim to enrich the celebration for our customers by enhancing their shopping experience with us." - Saleem Hammad, Senior General Manager - E-commerce, Alghanim Industries.

NBK Credit Cards offer the best payment method for the convenience and benefits they provide to customers, especially when using them in shopping including NBK Miles Program, NBK Rewards Program as well as Purchase Protection and Extended Warranty and getting the chance to various draws.



Al-Janah

ABK announces Naser Moajab AlHajri as the winner of Alfouz KD 10,000 weekly draw prize

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced Naser Moajab AlHajri as the KD10,000 Alfouz weekly draw winner on Monday, 19 February 2024, whereby the draw was held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Since its launch, the Alfouz account continues to offer an impressive weekly draw of KD10,000. The Bank has recently expanded its offering by adding a new alluring monthly draw of KD20,000, and an exceptional quarterly draw of KD100,000.

The account also retains its hallmark mega annual draw of a KD5,000 monthly salary for ten years. Furthermore, the Bank now offers customers an increased opportunity to win for every KD10 as opposed to KD100 previously.

ABK encourages everyone to open an Alfouz draw account and/or increase their balances to have more chances in winning in the upcoming monthly draw winner announcement, which will take place on Tuesday, 27 February 2024. The higher the deposits, the higher the chances to win.

For more information about ABK, please follow the



NBK's Alfouz weekly draw flyer.

Bank's Instagram account @abk_kuwait, visit eahli.com, contact Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 or visit one of the Bank's branches across Kuwait.

Exploring Kuwait's press history

AUK library hosts captivating lecture and exhibition



Photos during the lecture and exhibition hosted by AUK.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: The American University of Kuwait (AUK) library hosted a lecture and exhibition, shedding light on the rich history and evolution of press in Kuwait. Titled "Kuwaiti Press: From Inception to Liberation," the talk featured Mr. Fahad Ghazi Al-Abduljaleel, Chairman of the Kuwait Heritage Society and author of the Encyclopedia of Kuwaiti Press, alongside Mr. Saleh Al Mesbah and Ms. Nada Al-Rifae.

Mr. Al-Abduljaleel highlighted pioneers who contributed to the development of press in Kuwait such as Abdulaziz Al-Rasheed who established the first Kuwaiti magazine, Majalat Al-Kuwait in 1928. The Kuwaiti students union in Cairo also established Al-Bitha magazine (the mission), which played a prominent role in covering news from Kuwait and allowing students to express their viewpoints on political and social affairs. Additionally, Kuwait published Al-Arabi magazine in 1958 which became a leading cultural magazine in the Arab world and a hub for prominent Arab writers, poets, and intellectuals.

Kuwaiti press did not stop during the invasion but re-emerged as a voice of resistance. Most of the newspapers continued to publish domestic and international editions from various locations abroad such as London, Saudi Arabia, and Cairo. The first edition of "Sawt Al Kuwait" newspaper was launched during the occupation to support the legitimacy of the government.

The event concluded with a Q&A session and an exhibition showcasing the first issues of various publications dating back to 1928.



PIES winning team.

PIES achieves back-to-back victory

A team of Grade 12 senior high school students from the Philippine International English School has won again for the second time the most coveted Championship title and for placing third place from the recently held Research-based competition at Gulf University of Science and Technology (GUST). Bested their opponents in the Championship round are Luke Emmanuel Caparros and Althea Samantha Dimapilis

while coming out as third place are Rob Trent Asumen and Sheikha Alexis De Leon.

Shown above are the members of the winning team composed of student-participants together with their teacher-coaches led by Science Coordinator Mr. Kristoffer P. Arroyo, Science teacher Mr. Ivan P. Tolerino, and SHS Department Head Dr. Romel P. Ramos.

'Co-founders Frey and Henley very disappointed with the manuscript'

Unpublished Eagles book dished on the band's 1980 breakup: manager

NEW YORK, Feb 22, (AP) - A never-published biography of the Eagles delved deeply into the superstar classic rock band's 1980 breakup, their longtime manager testified Wednesday, saying co-founders Glenn Frey and Don Henley were "very disappointed" with the manuscript.

The book never found a publisher. But four decades later, it's part of another story: a criminal trial that opened Wednesday and involves roughly 100 pages of hand-drafted lyrics to "Hotel California" and other Eagles hits.

The defendants - rare-books dealer Glenn Horowitz, former Rock & Roll Hall of Fame curator Craig Inciardi and memorabilia seller Edward Kosinski - got the documents via Ed Sanders, a noted poet and nonfiction writer who also co-founded the avant-garde rock group the Fugs.

Sanders isn't charged with anything, but a key question is whether he had the right to sell the lyrics pages he obtained while researching the biography.

Manhattan prosecutors say Horowitz, Inciardi and Kosinski peddled the pages while knowing their ownership history was shaky at best. Then, prosecutors say, they schemed to thwart Henley's efforts to reclaim what he says are stolen pieces of his legacy.

"All these lyrics are very personal to him, they're a part of musical history, and it was simply unacceptable to him that they be stolen by anyone else," Irving Azoff, the Eagles' manager, said during testimony. He said he had never known Henley to part with any of the legal pads on which he, alongside Frey, worked out some of the best-known lyrics in the rock songbook.

Defense lawyers say Henley voluntarily gave away the documents and leveraged prosecutors to try to take them back.

"They have accused three innocent men of a crime that never occurred," Inciardi's lawyer, Stacey Richman, told Judge Curtis Farber during opening statements. Farber will decide the verdict, as the defendants chose to forgo a jury.

The documents include lyrics-in-development for tracks from 1976's "Hotel California," the third-biggest selling album ever in the U.S.

Frey and Henley crafted them in a Beverly Hills house rented for the purpose, since the tidy Henley's tendency to pick up after Frey "would drive them crazy" if they worked in their own homes, Azoff testified.

Henley did most of the writing, he added, with Frey leaning in to make suggestions such as the phrase "Life in the Fast Lane," which became the title of a hit single.

Musical tale

The disputed pages include lyrics to that song, to "New Kid in Town" and, of course, to "Hotel California," the more than six-minute-long, somewhat mysterious musical tale of a hedonistic but ultimately dark place where "you can check out any time you like, but you can never leave."

If scorned by some as an overexposed artifact of the '70s, the Grammy-winning song is still a touchstone on classic rock radio and many personal playlists. The entertainment data company Luminate counted more than 220 million streams and 136,000 radio plays of "Hotel California" in the U.S. last year.

The case was brought in 2022, a decade after some of the pages began popping up for auction and Henley took umbrage. He bought four pages for \$8,500 but also reported the documents stolen, prosecutors said.

At the time, the lyrics sheets were in the hands of Kosinski and Inciardi, who had bought them from Horowitz for \$65,000. His company had purchased them for \$50,000 in 2005 from Sanders.

A friend of Frey's, he was hired in 1979 to write a band biography for \$25,000 and enjoyed extensive access. But Azoff testified that the co-founders disliked the resulting manuscript and that, "for me personally, all the stuff about the Eagles' breakup was unacceptable."

As the project stalled, a frustrated Sanders asked Azoff in a 1982 letter for "a substantial amount of money," saying he'd "behaved with great reserve" by not approaching a major magazine with a story about the Eagles' split.

That worried them. "He had inside knowledge," Azoff said, and with Frey and Henley cultivating solo careers, "we didn't want some ugly story of the breakup of the Eagles to be published."

They ultimately paid Sanders about \$75,000 and agreed to let him look for a publisher, comfortable that any book still would need the band's approval under his 1979 contract, Azoff said.

Sanders hasn't responded to a phone message seeking comment about the case. Emails sent to him bounced back.

Sanders told Horowitz in 2005 that Henley's assistant had mailed along any documents he wanted for the biography, though the writer worried that Henley "might conceivably be upset" if they were sold, according to an email shown in court.

"It cast significant doubt on whether Sanders actually owned Henley's lyric notes or had the right to sell them," Assistant District Attorney Nicholas Penfold said in opening remarks.

MUSIC

Variety



This image released by Lionsgate shows Hilary Swank, left, and Alan Ritchson in a scene from 'Ordinary Angels.' (AP)

Film

Inspiring tale of community, compassion, and predictable miracles

Swank elevates predictable plot in 'Ordinary Angels'

LOS ANGELES, Feb 22, (AP) - At the end of "Ordinary Angels," we're given one of those now-see-how-it-really-happened moments with real footage mirroring the climax of the film. That's a really good thing.

Because otherwise, one might be tempted to think the filmmakers had dreamed up a story too sappy and inspirational to be true. But no, this tale of how one determined woman rallied her community to help save a dying young girl took place largely as it's presented.

Despite the compelling source material, "Ordinary Angels" is one of those movies where you can predict developments with certainty. You know in your bones when the phone's about to ring with a fateful call. You know when a character is finally going to lose patience, telegraphing the obligatory Moment of Conflict. And you know when an alcoholic is going to relapse, even before the shot of the beers in the fridge.

Such predictability can be fatal for a film, but "Ordinary Angels," directed by Jon Gunn, has something crucial going for it - Hilary Swank. Not for nothing, we soon recall, has Swank won two Oscars. With her innate groundedness - even in big hair, fringed jacket, sparkly dress and pink heels - she can lend truth to most any scenario. She gives what could have been merely a pass-the-Kleenex weepie its heart, yes, but more importantly its heft.

First, though, we meet Ed, a Kentucky roofer (Alan Ritchson, solid and appealing). In flashback, Ed welcomes his second daughter at the hospital with his wife, and the loving couple name her Michelle. Flash forward five years, though, and Ed's wife is dying of a congenital disease. A devastated Ed promises to take care of the girls.

Now we meet Sharon (Swank), a single hair-

dresser with an estranged son. She's also what they call hard-living, which means we meet her at - where else? - a bar, where she dances on the counter and does shots and falls down and ends up a mascara-stained mess. Her wise friend Rose - there's always a wise friend - forces her to an AA meeting, but Sharon still won't call herself an alcoholic.

But she does hear some good advice at the meeting, where a man describes learning to "find a reason to be here that's bigger than you are."

Like clockwork, Sharon sees an article in the local paper about a 5-year-old girl - Ed's daughter Michelle - whose mother has just died and who now needs a liver transplant. Sharon shows up at the funeral unannounced, then tells Rose back at the salon that she thinks her destiny is to find the money for the transplant.

Fundraiser

But meanwhile, there are huge hospital bills, and Ed can't afford them. Without asking, Sharon holds a fundraiser and shows up at the house with several thousand dollars in cash. Ed is, understandably, perplexed at this woman who is soon eating dinner with the family. But his mother, Barbara, welcomes Sharon with open arms. "Mom, she's a mess," Ed says. "Perfect, she'll fit right in here," Barbara replies.

Certainly they need money. For one hospital stay, Ed, who has no health insurance, is charged more than \$6,000 (the scene is an advertisement for socialized medicine). Soon Sharon is sitting down with Ed and going through all his bills, making piles of "urgent" and "very urgent." ("Daddy's in over his head," says older daughter Ashley.) Sharon also helps Ed market his roofing skills.

But Sharon is struggling in her own life. Her estranged son, embittered by her alcoholism dur-

ing his childhood, rejects her efforts to reconcile. Sharon's words to him, even uttered by the always-authentic Swank, are trite: "I know I let you down," she says. "Being a single mom ain't easy." The by-the-numbers script also leaves us wondering when, a full hour into the movie, Ed asks Sharon about her past: "Married? Kids?" You'd think that would have come up many moons ago, but OK.

Things go back and forth between Ed and Sharon, who may be an angel but lacks boundaries. She pretends to be his sister to call and find out what he owes the hospital. But later, she convinces a group of hospital executives to erase hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt. Ed is moved to tears, but then Sharon goes too far, angering him when she calls a news crew to the home without permission.

Sharon suffers a predictable relapse with alcohol, but then the stakes are raised dramatically for the denouement of the story. A new liver for Michelle is in reach, but the family needs a private plane to get there - during the famous Kentucky Blizzard of 1994, the worst in state history. Sharon needs more miracles and the whole town needs to help.

Again, this would all seem made up if it didn't actually happen. We won't spoil the ending, but this is an inspirational tale, so you can count on being inspired. Luckily Swank is on hand, almost single handedly raising the material to a level that keeps you wanting to watch. And sometimes, for a good cry at the movies, that's really all you need.

"Ordinary Angels," a Lionsgate release, has been rated PG by the Motion Picture Association of America "for thematic content, brief bloody images and smoking." Running time: 116 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

Features

ARABIC TIMES
FRIDAY-SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23-24, 2024

SANTA FE, N.M.: Attorneys prepared to make opening statements Thursday at the first trial related to the fatal shooting of a cinematographer by actor Alec Baldwin during a rehearsal for the Western film "Rust."

Before Baldwin's case progresses, the movie's weapons supervisor is being tried on charges of involuntary manslaughter and tampering with evidence in the death of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins on Oct. 21, 2021, on a movie ranch outside Santa Fe.

Armorer Hannah Gutierrez-Reed has pleaded not guilty to the charges and says she's not directly to blame for Hutchins' death. In court filings, lead defense counsel Jason Bowles has pointed to findings by workplace safety regulators of broad problems that extended beyond the armorer's control.

Prosecutors plan to present evidence that Gutierrez-Reed unwittingly brought live ammunition onto a film set where it was expressly prohibited. They say the armorer missed multiple opportunities to ensure safety, eventually loading a live round into the gun that killed Hutchins. (AP)

MIAMI: South Florida rapper Kodak Black was freed from jail Wednesday after a federal judge sentenced him to time served for a probation violation, though a drug trafficking case from 2022 remains ongoing.

U.S. District Judge Jose E. Martinez in Miami handed down the sentence nearly two weeks after a drug possession charge was dismissed in neighboring Broward County, according to court records.

Broward County Circuit Judge Barbara Duffy ruled earlier this month that prosecutors could not refute or negate the fact that the rapper, whose real name is Bill Kapri, had an oxycodone prescription filled by a pharmacy.

Plantation police arrested Kapri in December after finding him asleep at the wheel with white powder around his mouth, officials said. Although authorities said the powder initially tested positive for cocaine, a lab test later revealed it was oxycodone, for which Kapri obtained a prescription in July 2022. The arrest was a violation of his probation from an unrelated case, which led to him being locked up

in Miami for two months. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Some of Hollywood's most prominent filmmakers have purchased a 93-year-old iconic theater known as a cultural landmark for moviegoers in Los Angeles.

Jason Reitman along with more



Baldwin



Black

than 30 directors including Steven Spielberg, Christopher Nolan and Bradley Cooper acquired Westwood's Village Theater, the group announced Wednesday. The coalition wants to preserve the theater, which has become a mainstay for movie premieres since the venue opened in 1931.

The terms of the purchase were

not disclosed.

Reitman said he felt compelled to pull together other filmmakers after the theater went up for sale last year. As a Los Angeles native, he wants to extend the rich history of the Village Theater, which is known for its 170-foot (52-meter) white Spanish tower and a large auditorium that can seat 1,300.

It's also nearby the University of California, Los Angeles.

"I immediately made an offer and hoped my fellow directors would join me on this adventure," Reitman said in a statement. He noted that some of his films, including "Up in the Air," "Ghostbusters: Afterlife" and "Juno" premiered at the theater. (AP)

People & Places



Fendi



Fendi

MILAN: An anti-fur protester crashed the Fendi runway show Wednesday during the first day of Milan Fashion Week of mostly womenswear previews for Fall-Winter 2024-25.

The PETA activist jumped into the models' finale holding up a sign that read "Animals are not clothing," before being whisked away by security. The animal rights group is pressuring Fendi to join other global fashion brands that have agreed to use synthetic alternatives to real fur.

Fendi was born nearly a century ago as a fur and leather shop in Rome, and fur remains a core part of the brand's DNA, even if featured a bit less on their runway shows in recent years.

Some highlights from Wednesday's shows:

Kim Jones created utilitarian looks in a somber palette for Fendi's next cold-weather season, with a twist.

Outerwear was sculpted with big sleeves and arching lines, made cozy by criss-crossing knitwear that layered over top as fishermen knit scarves or cardigan shawls, sometimes anchored by sleeves.

Suggesting a devil-may-care attitude, ribbed bodysuits were left untucked with leather trousers and a shearing jacket. One-shoulder knitwear hedged bets against climate warming, paired with shiny leather skirts and boots.

Jones said the collection was meant to marry 1980s British subculture with Roman style epitomized by Silvia Venturini Fendi, the brand's menswear and accessories designer, who was wearing a "very chic utilitarian suit" when they met.

"That fundamentally shaped my view of what Fendi is," Jones said. "It is how a woman dresses that has something substantial to do. And she can have fun while doing it."

Sardinian-born Italian designer Antonio Marras doesn't just create a new collection every season. He creates entire new worlds.

Marras celebrated Sardinia's most famous heroine, the medieval Princess Eleonor of Arborea, having a dialogue with her falconer that was the backdrop to the runway collection: Eleonor, in an embroidered cape over an empire waist dress. The falconer in a kilt, an intarsia sweater and heavy hiking boots.

Models emerged from the ruins of an observatory being overtaken by vines, as if coming from another world or emerging from hibernation. They were enveloped in protective capes, crocheted helmets and corsets as breastplates.

Argyle knitwear was constructed with silver hardware, as if armor; jackets featured big bustles covering shorts. An enormous white headpiece with a face-covering trap door gave drama to a sheer chiffon trailing dress with leaf imprints.

The collection was made from a mélange of wispy florals and sturdy checks and tartans. Unfinished or deconstructed garments with loose



Fendi



Max Mara

threads or spiky beading gave the collection an organic feel, as if the wearer could blend back in with the natural world.

The collection's motive was a broken heart, appearing on tights and socks, or as purses. Tradition has it that Eleonor, after uniting Sardinia, died of the plague, which in Marras' telling

forced her to abandon her beloved falconer. Artistic director Glenn Martens staged his latest runway show in front

Style

Max Mara



Del Core

of a wall of 1,000 zoomed-in Diesel fans from around the globe, some of whom used their moment in the fashion spotlight to apply makeup or literally

flex their muscles. At least one mother hovered in the background.

The cameras started airing behind-the-scenes shots of Martens and his team preparing 72 hours before the show. "Diesel is a fashion democracy, so it is natural for us to reveal what is usually kept hidden," Martens said in show notes.

Martens continued his experimentation with textiles, creating fabrics that seemed to disintegrate into something else, a floral into an animal print, or, conversely, a bright red underlayer seemed to burst out of a dark floral. The

MILAN

Fendi



Max Mara

Fashion

effects created a kind of celebratory doomsday scenario of shifting garments, a sense of impermanence.

Plaid trousers seem to be disappearing, as if melting, in a process the show notes describe as "burnt out;" a bra top burst out of a disappearing argyle minidress. Whatever the technique, it's all proprietary to Diesel, and kept under lock at its Veneto headquarters, part of the brand's new mystique.

German-born designer Daniel Core drapes his woman in rich cashmere for elegant day looks and bustles her in soft, thick knitwear outfitted with protective snoods, before transitioning to an explosion of color and a more fitted silhouette for his latest collection.

The Gucci alum who was head of VIP dressing said backstage that he wanted to make a collection that "could be easy, but still be chic."

A centerpiece of the season was a sleeveless corset jacket zipped up, fitted at times with a thick cropped snood sweater or left to fall casually open at the neckline and layered with crystals. Crocheted long dresses included bursts of fringe, and big oversized hoods created a personal safe space. Del Core confronted head-on the human form's pointy bits, highlighting hip bones, knees and nipples with little upturned points, a tailored version of merengue swirls, best seen on a sleek bodysuit with a green and red photographic print.

"We all have pointy parts. It is like 'look but don't touch.' It's kind of a sexy thing," he said, adding, "I think we need a little lightness."

Creative director Fausto Puglisi recreated textile versions of Italian marble with every technique imaginable for his latest Roberto Cavalli collection. (AP)

Max Mara



Fendi

Health experts emphasize risks and recommend approved solutions

FDA warns against smartwatch and ring blood sugar monitors

WASHINGTON, Feb 22, (AP): Smartwatches and rings that claim to measure blood sugar levels for medical purposes without piercing the skin could be dangerous and should be avoided, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration warned Wednesday.

The caution applies to any watch or ring, regardless of brand, that claims to measure blood glucose levels in a noninvasive way, the agency said. The FDA said it has not authorized any such device.

The agency's notice doesn't apply to smartwatch apps linked to sensors, such as continuous glucose monitoring systems that measure blood sugar directly.

Roughly 37 million Americans have diabetes. People with the disease aren't able to effectively regulate their blood sugar because their bodies either don't make enough of the hormone insulin or they have become resistant to insulin.

To manage the condition, they must regularly check their blood sugar levels with a finger prick blood test or with a sensor that places needles just under the skin to monitor glucose levels continuously.



A sign for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration is displayed outside their offices in Silver Spring, Md., Dec. 10, 2020. Smartwatches and rings that claim to measure blood sugar levels for medical purposes without piercing the skin could be dangerous and should be avoided, the FDA warned Wednesday, Feb. 21, 2024. (AP)

Jill Biden unveils \$100 mln ARPA-H Sprint for women's health research

WASHINGTON, Feb 22, (AP): Jill Biden on Wednesday announced \$100 million in federal funding for research and development into women's health as part of a new White House initiative that she is heading up.

The money is the first major deliverable of the White House Initiative on Women's Health Research, which was announced late last year. The money comes from the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health, or ARPA-H, which is under the federal Department of Health and Human Services.

The first lady announced the ARPA-H Sprint for Women's Health during an appearance in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Biden has said women don't know enough about their health because the research historically has been underfunded and lacking. The White House initiative aims to change the approach to and increase funding for women's health research.

The \$100 million will be used to invest early in "life-changing" work being done by women's health researchers and startup

companies that cannot get private support, Biden said.

"We will build a health care system that puts women and their lived experiences at its center," she said. "Where no woman or girl has to hear that 'it's all in your head,' or, 'it's just stress.'"

Where women aren't just an after-thought, but a first thought. Where women don't just survive with chronic conditions, but lead long and healthy lives."

President Joe Biden created the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health in 2022 to work on advancing solutions to health issues. The agency is part of what he called his "unity agenda."

In the coming weeks, the agency will solicit ideas for groundbreaking research and development to address women's health, according to the White House.



Biden

Silent brain changes precede Alzheimer's

Study uncovers biomarker sequence

WASHINGTON, Feb 22, (AP): Alzheimer's quietly ravages the brain long before symptoms appear and now scientists have new clues about the dominolike sequence of those changes - a potential window to one day intervene.

A large study in China tracked middle-aged and older adults for 20 years, using regular brain scans, spinal taps and other tests.

Compared to those who remained cognitively healthy, people who eventually developed the mind-robbing disease had higher levels of an Alzheimer's-linked protein in their spinal fluid 18 years prior to diagnosis, researchers reported Wednesday. Then every few years afterward, the study detected another so-called biomarker of brewing trouble.

Scientists don't know exactly how Alzheimer's forms. One early hallmark is that sticky protein called beta-amyloid, which over time builds up into brain-clogging plaques. Amyloid alone isn't enough to damage memory - plenty of healthy people's brains harbor a lot of plaque. An abnormal tau protein that forms neuron-killing tangles is one of several co-conspirators.

Abnormalities

The new research, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, offers a timeline for how those abnormalities pile up.

The study's importance "cannot be overstated," said Dr. Richard Mayeux, an Alzheimer's specialist at Columbia University who wasn't involved in the research.

"Knowledge of the timing of these physiological events is critical" for testing new ways of treating and maybe eventually even preventing Alzheimer's, he wrote in an accompanying editorial.

The findings have no practical implications yet. More than 6 million Americans, and millions more worldwide, have Alzheimer's, the most common form of dementia. There's no cure. But last year a drug named leqembi became the first approved with clear evidence that it could slow the worsening of early Alzheimer's - albeit for a few months.

It works by clearing away some of that gunky amyloid protein. The approach also is being tested to see if it's possible to delay Alzheimer's onset if high-risk people are treated before symptoms appear. Still other drugs are being developed to target tau.



This Oct. 7, 2003 file photo shows a closeup of a human brain affected by Alzheimer's disease, displayed at the Museum of Neuroanatomy at the University at Buffalo in Buffalo, New York. (AP)

Tracking silent brain changes is key for such research. Scientists already knew that in rare, inherited forms of Alzheimer's that strike younger people, a toxic form of amyloid starts accumulating about two decades ahead of symptoms and at some point later tau kicks in.

The new findings show the order in which such biomarker changes occurred with more common old-age Alzheimer's.

Researchers with Beijing's Innovation Center for Neurological Disorders compared 648 people eventually diagnosed with Alzheimer's and an equal number who remained healthy. The amyloid finding in future Alzheimer's patients was the first, 18 years or 14 years prior to diagnosis depending on the test used.

Differences in tau were detected next, followed by a marker of trouble in how neurons communicate. A few years after that, differences in brain shrinkage and cognitive test scores between the two groups became apparent, the study found.

"The more we know about viable Alzheimer's treatment targets and when to address them, the better and faster we will be able to develop new therapies and preventions," said Claire Sexton, the Alzheimer's Association's senior director of scientific programs. She noted that blood tests are coming soon that promise to also help by making it easier to track amyloid and tau.

Consequences

Using the unapproved smartwatch and smart ring devices could result in inaccurate blood sugar measurements, with "potentially devastating" consequences, said Dr. Robert Gabbay, of the American Diabetes Association. That could cause patients to take the wrong doses of medication, leading to dangerous levels of blood sugar and possibly mental confusion, coma or even death.

Several companies are working on noninvasive devices to measure blood sugar, but none has created a product accurate and secure enough to get FDA approval, said Dr. David Klonoff, who has researched diabetes technology for 25 years.

The technology that allows smartwatches and rings to measure metrics like heart rate and blood oxygen is not accurate enough to measure blood sugar, said Klonoff, of the Sutter Health Mills-Peninsula Medical Center in San Mateo, California. Efforts to measure blood sugar in body fluids such as tears, sweat and saliva are not ready for prime time, either.

"It's challenging, and I believe at some point there will be at least one scientist or engineer to solve it," Klonoff said.

In the meantime, consumers who want to measure their blood sugar accurately can buy an FDA-cleared blood glucose monitor at any pharmacy.

Old European satellite plunges harmlessly through the 'atmosphere' over the Pacific

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida, Feb 22, (AP): An old Earth-observing satellite fell out of orbit Wednesday and harmlessly broke apart over the Pacific.

The European Remote Sensing 2 satellite reentered halfway between Hawaii and Alaska. The European Space Agency confirmed the demise of the 5,000-pound (2,300-kilogram) spacecraft, known as ERS-2.

No damage or injuries were reported. Experts had expected most of the satellite to burn up.

Launched in 1995, the spacecraft was retired in 2011. Flight controllers quickly lowered its orbit to avoid hitting other satellites, using up all the fuel, and natural orbital decay took care of the rest. Its entry was uncontrolled, and so the precise location could not be predicted.

"Gone, but not forgotten," ESA said on X, formerly Twitter. "ERS-2 left a remarkable legacy of data that still continue to advance science."

Its predecessor, ERS-1, which



This photo provided by the European Space Agency shows the European Remote Sensing 2 satellite (ERS-2) in a clean room before its launch in 1995. The Earth-observing satellite fell out of orbit Wednesday, Feb. 21, 2024, and harmlessly broke apart over the Pacific. (ESA via AP)

failed and stopped working decades ago, remains in an orbit several hundred miles (kilometers) high.

Intuitive Machines 'Odysseus' aims to surpass Apollo legacy

Private US spacecraft enters orbit around the moon

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida, Feb 22, (AP): A private U.S. lunar lander reached the moon and eased into a low orbit Wednesday, a day before it will attempt an even greater feat - landing on the gray, dusty surface.

A smooth touchdown would put the U.S. back in business on the moon for the first time since NASA astronauts closed out the Apollo program in 1972. The company, if successful, also would become the first private outfit to ace a moon landing.

Launched last week, Intuitive Machines' lander fired its engine on the back side of the moon while out of contact with Earth. Flight controllers at the company's Houston headquarters had to wait until the spacecraft emerged to learn whether the lander was in orbit or hurtling aimlessly away.

Intuitive Machines confirmed its lander, nicknamed Odysseus, was circling the moon with experiments from NASA and other clients. The lander is part of a NASA program to kickstart the lunar economy; the space agency is



This photo provided by Intuitive Machines shows the company's IM-1 No-va-C lunar lander in Houston in October 2023. (AP)

paying \$118 million to get its experiments on the moon on this mission.

On Thursday, controllers will lower the orbit from just under 60 miles (92 kilometers) to 6 miles (10 kilometers) - a crucial maneuver occurring again on the moon's far side - before aiming for a touchdown near the moon's south

pole. It's a dicey place to land with all the craters and cliffs, but deemed prime real estate for astronauts since the permanently shadowed craters are believed to hold frozen water.

The moon is littered with wreckage from failed landings. Some missions never even got that far. Another U.S.

company - Astrobotic Technology - tried to send a lander to the moon last month, but it didn't get there because of a fuel leak. The crippled lander came crashing back through the atmosphere, burning up over the Pacific.

A rundown on the moon's winners and losers:

First victories

The Soviet Union's Luna 9 successfully touches down on the moon in 1966, after its predecessors crash or miss the moon altogether. The U.S. follows four months later with Surveyor 1. Both countries achieve more robotic landings, as the race heats up to land men.

Apollo rules

NASA clinches the space race with the Soviets in 1969 with a moon landing by Apollo 11's Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin. Twelve astronauts explore the surface over six missions, before the program ends with Apollo 17 in 1972. Still the only country to send humans to the moon, the U.S. hopes to return crews to the surface by the end of 2026 or so, a year after a lunar fly-around by astronauts.

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Karachi top Peshawar

Multan hands Lahore third straight loss in PSL

LAHORE, Pakistan, Feb 22, (AP): Multan Sultans continued their dream start by handing defending champion Lahore Qalandars their third straight loss in the Pakistan Super League on Wednesday.

Earlier at Lahore, experienced power-hitter Kieron Pollard upstaged Babar Azam's landmark Twenty20 and led Karachi Kings to an emphatic seven-wicket win over Peshawar Zalmi.

Pollard bludgeoned an unbeaten 49 off 21 balls with four towering sixes and four boundaries as the veteran West Indian helped Karachi cruise to 157-3 in 16.5 overs for its first win in the tournament.

Babar's landmark 271st T20 in which he became the fastest batter to reach 10,000 runs saw Peshawar getting bowled out for 154 in 19.5 overs after Karachi won the toss and elected to field.

Babar followed his half-century in the first game against Quetta Gladiators with a knock of 72 off 51 balls, but his effort went in vain for the second successive game.

Chris Gayle of the West Indies held the previous record of reaching



Multan Sultans' Iftikhar Ahmed celebrates after hitting winning shot during the Pakistan Super League T20 cricket match between Multan Sultans and Lahore Qalandars in Multan, Pakistan Wednesday, Feb. 21, 2024. (AP)

the 10,000-run milestone in 275 T20 games.

Peshawar's innings revolved around Babar's brilliance after it lost three wickets inside the batting powerplay with Shoaib Malik clean bowl-

ing Saim Ayub off the first ball with a full pitched delivery that didn't turn much.

Hasan Ali, playing against his former franchise, also had a dream start

when he knocked back Tom Kohler-Cadmore's off stump off his first ball.

Babar revived the innings with Rovman Powell (39) in a 68-run stand and Asif Ali scored 23 before Peshawar lost its last six wickets for only 18 runs in the last four overs. Powell top-edged reverse sweep against left-arm spinner Mohammad Nawaz and Ali holed out at long-on.

Left-arm fast bowler Mir Hamza (3-28), who bowled to hard lengths with the new ball, chipped in with the wickets of Aamer Jamal and then took a fine return catch to dismiss Babar in his last over as Peshawar innings folded quickly.

Pollard brought an early finish when he smashed three straight sixes and two fours in a 27-run over against Afghanistan left-arm wrist spinner Waqar Salamkheil, one of the two changes Peshawar made in the team which lost the first match by 16 runs. Salamkheil conceded 54 off his four overs and got Malik stumped for run-a-ball 29.

James Vince remained unbeaten on 38 and denied Pollard a much deserved half century when he drove

Luke Wood (2-20) for a winning boundary.

Karachi, which lost its first game against Multan by 55 runs, has two points from two games while Peshawar is still looking for its first win.

Iftikhar Ahmed smashed 24 runs in the penultimate over and earned Multan a five-wicket win over defending champion Lahore in a rematch of last season's final.

CRICKET

Lahore's much trumpeted pace attack, led by Shaheen Shah Afridi, has now failed to defend in three successive games as Haris Rauf continued to struggle in three games and Zaman also proving expensive (2-52).

Multan now sits pretty on top of table with six points from three straight home wins while Lahore is yet to get first win under its belt.

Skipper Mohammad Rizwan, who was dropped on 40 by Afridi, went on to compile this season's top-score of 82 off 59 balls before Ahmed charged

against Zaman's pace in the 19th over, smacking two sixes and three fours and guided the home team to 170-5.

Iftikhar wiped the hopes of Lahore for its first win with a robust knock of unbeaten 34 off 11 balls after the home team needed 21 off the last two overs.

The inclusion of left-arm spinner George Linde (1-26) of South Africa seemed to have beefed up Lahore's bowling in the absence of injured Rashid Khan when he bowled brilliantly in the middle overs after Lahore posted 166-5 but Iftikhar's onslaught against Zaman sealed the game.

Earlier, Rassie van der Dussen (54) scored his second half-century in three games and Fakhar Zaman made 41 as they put on 94 runs for the second-wicket stand and pushed for a daunting total before Multan pulled back despite dropping four catches.

Khushdil Shah, who dropped two catches in the last game against Islamabad United, floored two more chances on Wednesday, but fast bowler Mohammad Ali (2-28) continued to impress with his swing and variations which restricted Lahore in the end.

Beginning of the 'end' for Tuchel at Bayern as Leipzig game looms

DUESSELDORF, Germany, Feb 22 (AP): It's the beginning of the end for Thomas Tuchel at Bayern Munich.

After Bayern confirmed Tuchel will leave the club at the end of the season, the team faces a tough task to salvage what it can from the remaining Bundesliga and Champions League games.

That starts on Saturday against Leipzig, a team Bayern has failed to beat in any of its three games under Tuchel.

Leipzig's young, fast forwards like Lois Openda, Xavi Simons and Benjamin Šeško could do well against a Bayern defense badly depleted by injuries.

In his statement announcing Tuchel's departure, Bayern chief executive Jan-Christian Dreesen made a point on Wednesday of saying he would "hold the team accountable" for its performances over the rest of the season.

That followed midfielder Joshua Kimmich seeming to confront Tuchel's assistant coach Zsolt Lőrincz after losing at Bochum 3-2 last week, and comes

after Tuchel's repeated claims that the team underperforms in games compared to what the players show in training.

In theory, at least, Tuchel's Bayern still has a shot at two trophies, though it would mean unbeaten Bayer Leverkusen blowing an eight-point lead and Bayern coming back from a 1-0 first-leg deficit to Lazio in the

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Champions League.

Leverkusen could extend its lead to 11 points if Xabi Alonso's team beats Mainz on Friday, a day before Bayern hosts Leipzig.

Tuchel has lost 11 of his 44 games in charge at Bayern. When Bayern management fired his predecessor Julian Nagelsmann in March, Nagelsmann had lost 10 of 83.

Bayern's defense also has a worrying tendency to collapse under pressure, too. Last week's loss at Bochum was the eighth time in Tuchel's

11-month tenure the team conceded three or more goals in a game.

One player at fault in the most recent losses at Lazio and Bochum was defender Dayot Upamecano, who was sent off in both games. He's suspended against his old club Leipzig, deepening selection problems for Tuchel and his injury-hit squad.

The most pressing priority is who should play the right back role. Options include Eric Dier, on loan from Tottenham, or Konrad Laimer, a midfielder who's covered the role before but has been out injured for the last month. Tuchel might even opt for Kimmich to return to the right back role he played early in his career but hasn't occupied regularly for five years.

The announcement of Tuchel's departure overshadowed another development that was arguably more significant for Bayern, and for German soccer as a whole. The collapse of the league's plan to sell a stake in future media rights income to an outside investor should end months of increasingly disruptive protests causing long delays at German games.



From left to right, England's Head Coach Brendon McCullum, Ollie Pope, Shoaib Bashir and James Anderson during a practise session ahead of their fourth cricket test against India in Ranchi, India, Thursday, Feb. 22, 2024. (AP)

Sri Lanka win T20 series despite loss in last game

Afghanistan claim 3-run victory

DAMBULLA, Sri Lanka, Feb 22, (AP): Fast bowler Wafadar Momand held Kamindu Mendis to defend 19 runs in the last over and hand Afghanistan a three-run win over Sri Lanka in the third and final Twenty20 international Wednesday.

Sri Lanka won the series 2-1. Afghanistan captain Ibrahim Zadran won the toss, elected to bat first, and they made 209-5 in 20 overs.

In the last over, Mendis hit Momand for two fours in the first and third deliveries and the bowler was lucky to escape a waist-high no-ball in the fourth which the leg umpire failed to spot.

Needing 10 off the last two balls, Mendis failed to score off the second-to-last ball and then hit a six to fall three runs short.

Mendis remained unbeaten on

65 off 39 deliveries with two sixes and seven boundaries.

Sri Lanka captain Wanindu Hasaranga sharply criticized Sri Lankan umpire Lyndon Hannibal for not spotting a ball higher than the waist saying he is unfit to officiate international games.

"This cannot happen in an international match," Hasaranga said. "If it was close it would have been OK but it was so high

CRICKET

it was close to striking the batsman's head. If he cannot see such a thing, this umpire is unfit for international matches and it is better for him to find another job."

Earlier, Afghanistan opener Hazratullah Zazai and Rahmanullah Gurbaz got off to a brisk start scoring 72 runs in the first five power play overs without losing a wicket.

Zazai made 45 off 22 deliveries and Gurbaz ended a lean patch by

scoring 70 off 43 deliveries.

Gurbaz was named player of the match.

Spinner Akila Dananjaya and fast bowler Matheesha Pathirana took two wickets each for Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka's opening batter Pathum Nissanka left the field at 60 because of an injury.

He and Kusal Mendis shared 64 runs for the first wicket giving Sri Lanka a solid start. Kusal Mendis' (23) dismissal and Kusal Perera getting out without scoring with the total on 65 slowed Sri Lanka's momentum.

After Nissanka left the field at 83, Sadeera Samarawickrama (23) and Kamindu Mendis shared 53 runs for the fourth wicket brining Sri Lanka back into the match.

Despite late innings efforts from Sri Lanka, Afghanistan managed their first victory of the tour having lost the only test match and the three-match one-day international series 3-0.

Overcoming an 'injury' to Thuram could be one of Inter's challenges

ROME, Feb 22, (AP): Overcoming an injury to forward Marcus Thuram might be one of the last major challenges that Inter Milan faces in pursuit of a 20th Serie A title.

Thuram injured a muscle in his right leg during Inter's 1-0 victory over Atletico Madrid in the first leg of the Champions League round of 16 on Tuesday.

The France forward is the only Inter player who has featured in all 34 of their matches this season. In Serie A, he's scored 10 goals and provided seven assists and seamlessly replaced

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Romelu Lukaku as Lautaro Martinez's strike partner.

Making matters more complicated is that Marko Arnautovic has been an inconsistent replacement. Before he ultimately scored the deciding goal against Atletico, Arnautovic missed a handful of chances - as he often has lately.

It's unclear if Thuram will return in time for the second leg at Madrid on March 13. And Inter has a busy schedule with four Serie A matches before then, starting with a visit on Sunday to a Lecce team that has surprised at times.

Inter lost its advantage to Juventus briefly last month when it was in Saudi Arabia to win the Italian Super Cup but has since surged ahead and opened up a nine-point lead over the Bianconeri.

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PSG's Kylian Mbappe celebrates after scoring his side's second goal from penalty spot during the French League One soccer match between Nantes and Paris Saint-Germain at the Stade de la Beaujoire in Nantes, France. (AP)

Al-Nassr reach Asian CL quarterfinals

Ronaldo scores

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia, Feb 22, (AP): Cristiano Ronaldo's Al-Nassr moved into the quarterfinals of the Asian Champions League with a 3-0 aggregate win over Al-Fayha in an all-Saudi Arabian matchup.

Ronaldo scored the only goal in the first leg and then found the net in the return match in Riyadh with four minutes remaining of the second leg. Otavio had opened the scoring to ensure that Al-Nassr



Ronaldo in action during the Asian Champions League match.

progressed. Al-Nassr is still aiming for a first-ever continental title and will take on Al-Ain of the United Arab Emirates in

the quarterfinals next month.

In the eastern zone - the tournament is divided into two geographic halves until the final - there are representatives from South Korea, Japan and China.

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There will be an all-South Korean quarterfinal between Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors and Ulsan HD, both two-time champions.

In the second round, Ulsan defeated second-tier Japanese team Ventforet Kofu 5-1 on aggregate, winning 2-1 away after taking the first leg 3-0.

Jeonbuk followed its 2-0 win at home against fellow Korean team Pohang Steelers with a 1-1 draw.

China's Shandong Taishan squeezed past Kawasaki Frontale of Japan with a dramatic 6-5 victory over two legs.

Shandong, down 3-2 from the first leg at home, quickly moved into a two-goal lead in Japan thanks to Brazilian forward Cryzhan and Gao Zhunyi.

Sota Miura and Erison restored Kawasaki's lead but with 17 minutes remaining, Cryzhan made it 5-5. In the 97th minute, Jadson struck to send Shandong, seeking a first title, into a quarterfinal against another Japanese opponent.

Yokohama F. Marinos, booked a place in the last eight for the first time after defeating Bangkok United 3-2 on aggregate with Anderson Lopes scoring the only goal in the return match after the first leg in Thailand ended 2-2.

Marseille take on Montpellier under new coach Gasset

Mbappé chasing milestones in French league before summer exit

PARIS, Feb 22, (AP): Kylian Mbappé has 12 matches left to play in the French league. Twelve matches left to set new records in a league he has dominated for years.

The star striker is leaving Paris Saint-Germain at the end of the season when his contract expires. He is widely expected to sign a lucrative deal with Real Madrid, the club he dreamt of playing for when he was a kid.

Since his debut with Monaco at age 16 in December 2015, Mbappé has scored 185 league goals, making him one of the top 10 marksmen in Ligue 1 history.

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It's impossible for the 2018 World Cup winner to catch Delio Onnis, the league's all-time leader with 299 during the 1970s-80s. But Mbappé, who has 21 goals this season, has a chance to reach 200.

At 25, Mbappe is already PSG's all-time best scorer, with 244 in all competitions. He will set another record if he finishes as the league top scorer for a sixth consecutive time. He currently shares the record with Onnis, Carlos Bianchi and Jean-Pierre Papin.

PSG has dominated French football since Qatari owners took over in 2011, and is on track for a record-extending 12th league title. It hosts Rennes on Sunday with a 13-point lead over second-placed Brest.

Brest, the surprise of the season, will be without striker Steve Mouñié for the next two games.

Mouñié was suspended for his red card last week for elbowing a

defender during a 1-0 win against Marseille. He will miss facing Strasbourg on Saturday then Le Havre.

Since coming back from two goals down to stun last season's runner-up Lens on the opening day of the season, Brest has been living a fairy tale and has dreams of qualifying for the Champions League for the first time. Brest has a best league finish of eighth.

With Gennaro Gattuso gone, Marseille takes on Montpellier under new coach Jean-Louis Gasset. Some might say it's good timing, since Gasset is a former Montpellier player and coach. He was born there and knows the club inside out.

Stuck in ninth place, Marseille needs to win to avoid getting distanced in the race for European spots. Gasset said his first task was to give players their confidence back to ensure the team stops conceding from individual errors.

"The mind is 80% of the performance," Gasset said. "They're professionals, they need to do a bit more. When you take goals like that, it's not because of the tactical systems. We have to reassure the players. That's how I started to work with them."

The 70-year-old Gasset was appointed less than a month after getting fired by Ivory Coast. He faced questions about his age during his inaugural news conference in Marseille this week.

"Speaking of the greats," Gasset said, "do people ask the question about (Arsene) Wenger, (Alex) Ferguson, (Raymond) Goethals? I'm not comparing myself to them. But age is the age in your head. I've got four months of my life to succeed in my mission."



Cavalry FC's Eryk Kobza (left), and Orlando City's Ivan Angulo vie for the ball during the second half of a CONCACAF Champions Cup soccer match, in Langford, British Columbia. Orlando City won 3-0. (AP)

Girona look to end slump against Rayo

Squad woes continue for Spanish league leaders Real

MADRID, Feb 22, (AP): Coach Carlo Ancelotti has to deal with two more absences to an already depleted squad when Spanish league leaders Real Madrid hosts Sevilla this weekend.

Ancelotti won't be able to count on suspended midfielder Eduardo Camavinga and defender Dani Carvajal on Sunday.

Carvajal was sent off last Sunday at the end of the team's 1-1 draw at Rayo Vallecano, while Camavinga received his fifth yellow card to prompt an automatic suspension.

Madrid have a six-point lead over second-placed Girona, which host Rayo on Monday. Madrid are eight points ahead of third-placed Barcelona and 11 points ahead of fourth-placed Atletico Madrid.

Five Madrid players remain out injured, including Jude Bellingham with a sprained ankle and defender Antonio Rüdiger because of a thigh injury. Nursing long-term knee ligament injuries are goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois and central defenders David Alaba and Eder Militão.

Ancelotti has been improvising using midfielder Aurélien Tchouaméni as a central defender in recent matches. Lucas Vazquez is expected to replace Carvajal on Sunday, and Luka Modric will likely play in Camavinga's place in the midfield.

Madrid chose not to add any de-



Real Madrid's Toni Kroos (right), and Leipzig's Lois Openda (left), challenge for the ball during the Champions League round of 16 first leg soccer match between RB Leipzig and Real Madrid at the Red Bull arena stadium in Leipzig, Germany. (AP)

fenders during the winter transfer window. Ancelotti said the players he had were enough to make up for the absence of the injured players.

The good news for Ancelotti is left back Ferland Mendy will be back from suspension at Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

Sevilla, sitting in 15th place, drew at Valencia 0-0 in the previous round after two consecutive victories helped them move away from the relegation zone.

Girona will try to stay close to Madrid by ending a slump in the

match against Rayo.

The Catalan club, the league's feel-good story, are winless in three straight matches and have lost two in a row - 3-2 at Athletic Bilbao on Monday and 4-0 at Madrid previously. They drew 0-0 against Real Sociedad before that.

Rayo, in 14th place, held Madrid to a draw but haven't been able to win in six consecutive league matches. Their last win was in January.

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Barcelona host Getafe with a chance to get back into second place with a victory on Saturday.

Barcelona have won three of their last four league matches. They trail Girona by two points.

Mid-table Getafe have one win in their last four games.

There's no respite for last-placed Almeria, which last weekend made history for the wrong reason by becoming the first team to go 28 straight games without a league win.

Almeria drew at Granada 1-1 for their 25th consecutive winless game this season. They also didn't win their last three matches last season.

Almeria host Atletico Madrid, which are looking to rebound from their loss at Inter Milan in the Champions League.

'Verdict serves as an exemplary measure'

Soccer star Alves 'found' guilty of rape, sentenced to 4 and half years in prison

BARCELONA, Spain, Feb 22, (AP): Dani Alves, one of the most successful soccer players of his generation, was found guilty of raping a woman in a Barcelona nightclub and sentenced to four years and six months in prison on Thursday.

A three-judge panel at the Barcelona Provincial Court convicted the 40-year-old Alves of sexual assault for the incident on Dec. 31, 2022.

The court ordered Alves to pay 150,000 euros (\$162,000) in compensation to the victim, banned him from approaching the victim's home or place of work, and from communicating with her by any means for nine years.

Alves was in the courthouse to hear the verdict and sentence, and his lawyer, Inés Guardiola, said he was "calm and collected."

David Sáenz, a member of the victim's legal team, said, "We are satisfied because this verdict recognizes what we have always known, that the victim told the truth and that she has suffered."

The victim's lawyer, Ester García, said on Wednesday she and her client would not be present for the verdict.

The victim said Alves raped her in the bathroom of a Barcelona nightclub on the morning of Dec. 31, 2022. The court considered it proven that the victim did not consent and there was evidence, in addition to the defendant's testimony, that she was raped.

Alves denied during the three-day trial this month that he raped the woman, testifying to the court "I am not that kind of man."

State prosecutors had sought a nine-year prison sentence for Alves while the lawyers representing his accuser wanted 12 years. His defense asked for his acquittal, or if found guilty a one-year sentence plus 50,000 euros compensation for the victim.

The sentence of four years and six months is near the lowest sentence for a rape conviction, which when the rape took place was penalized by four to 12 years under Spanish law. That has since been modified to six to 12 years. The court in its sentence said it considered favorably for Alves that he had "before the trial paid the court 150,000 euros to be given to the victim without any conditions attached."

Sáenz said his legal team did not agree with the application of the extenuating circumstance, saying the money did not compensate the harm done to their client. During the trial, medical experts testified she was suffering from post-traumatic trauma.

"Clearly (it does not compensate), but that is what the court decided," Sáenz said. "We have to examine the sentence to see if its contents are adequate for his acts."

The state prosecutor's office said it will study the verdict and consider whether to appeal.

Spain Deputy Prime Minister Yolanda Díaz said she hoped the verdict "serves as an exemplary measure for all the sexist behaviors that women suffer in all areas of our lives."

Alves has been in jail since being detained on Jan. 20, 2023. His requests for bail were denied because the court considered him a flight risk. Brazil does not extradite its own citizens when they are sentenced in other countries.

The victim told state prosecutors she danced with Alves and willingly entered the nightclub bathroom, but that later when she wanted to leave he would not let her. She said he slapped her, insulted her and forced her to have sexual relations against her will.

A police officer who testified during the trial said the victim had to overcome her fears that "nobody would believe her" before she formally accused Alves. Another officer said the woman told him "I don't want money, I want justice."

Alves modified his defense during the investigative phase while in custody, first denying any contact with her before admitting to relations that he said were consensual. He said he had been trying to save his marriage by not admitting to the encounter initially.

During the trial, his defense focused on trying to show that Alves was drunk when he met the woman. The court, however, did not consider that an extenuating circumstance in its ruling.

His conviction shatters Alves' legacy as one of soccer's most successful players.

Alves won dozens of titles with elite clubs including Barcelona, Juventus and Paris Saint-Germain. He also helped Brazil win two Copa Americas and an Olympic gold medal at age 38. He played at his third World Cup, the only major title he hasn't won, in 2022. He played for Barcelona from 2008-16, helping to win three Champions Leagues and six Spanish leagues, and briefly rejoined the club in 2022. He still has a residence near the city.

He was with Mexican club Pumas when he was arrested. Pumas terminated his contract immediately.

Three days after his arrest, Alves was transferred by officials for safety reasons to the Brians 2 prison about 45 minutes northwest of Barcelona. He has been there ever since.



Soccer star Dani Alves' lawyer Inés Guardiola (center), speaks as she is surrounded by media outside the court in Barcelona, Spain. (AP)

Best of the Rest

Cirstea saves 6 match pts: Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova lost from 6-2, 5-1 ahead against Sorana Cirstea in the Dubai Championships quarterfinals on Thursday.

Vondrousova blew six match points in losing 2-6, 7-6 (1), 6-2.

Cirstea also won their previous two matchups but the Romanian veteran admitted she thought she was going to lose heavily in Dubai.

"This has to be the biggest comeback of my career," Cirstea said. "To be honest, at a set and 5-1, I wasn't really thinking about winning anymore. I was like, make it nicer for the public, try to make it a little bit longer, try to give them a little bit of nicer tennis. I still don't know how I managed it."

She suddenly started swinging freely while No. 7-seeded Vondrousova gradually grew more passive. (AP)



Artur Jorge dies at 78: Artur Jorge, the Portuguese soccer coach who led Porto to the European Cup title in 1987 and had two spells in charge of his national team, has died. He was 78.

Jorge's death was announced through a family statement issued in Portuguese media, including state broadcaster RTP. It said Jorge "died peacefully, surrounded by his closest family" after a long illness.

Easily identifiable because of his thick mustache, Jorge was best known for becoming the first Portuguese coach to win the European Cup when Porto beat Bayern Munich 2-1 in Vienna thanks to two late goals - the first being an impudent backheel by Rabah Madjer.

He coached Porto in two spells - from 1984-87 and 1989-91 - and won the Portuguese league three times with the team. He also won the French league as a coach with Paris Saint-Germain in 1994, and managed clubs in Spain, the Netherlands, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Algeria. (AP)



Rashid Al-Kandari addresses the press after Kuwaiti sports clubs reinstated.

Sports

Latest sports scores at — <http://sports.arabtimesonline.com>

Minister Marafi commended for legal rectification

Kuwaiti sports clubs reinstated after Ministerial decision overturns dissolution

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Rashid Al-Kandari, the president of the Kuwaiti Triathlon Federation, has expressed his congratulations and blessings to all athletes for the reinstatement of their rights. He extended gratitude to the Minister of Youth, Dawood Marafi, acknowledging his bold step that rectified injustices faced by players, club boards, and employees, and upheld the law to protect against sports tampering.

Al-Kandari emphasized their commitment to showcasing the Kuwaiti flag on the global stage, celebrating the return of foreign participation for Kuwaiti players. Despite the challenges faced during the period of club advertising cancellation, he affirmed their determination to build on past achievements, enhance players' technical prowess, and prepare for upcoming competitions in the field of triathlon.

Marafi issued a ministerial decision to retroactively cancel previous decisions announcing the dissolution of 36 sports clubs. This action was taken in response to grievances submitted by the clubs, citing legal flaws. The Minister emphasized compliance with the Olympic Charter and international sports federations' regulations.

The decision, grounded in Law No. 87 of 2017 regarding sports and sports governance rules, aims to safeguard the interests of sports and athletes. It also seeks to ensure the independence of the sports movement, prevent government interference, and mitigate the risk of halting sports activity in Kuwait.

Marafi announced the scrutiny of all clubs by a neutral committee in the next stage, emphasizing the application of the law to anyone attempting to manipulate sports clubs' capabilities and jeopardize the sporting future of Kuwaiti youth.

The affected clubs, including Kuwaiti Inspire for cars and motorbikes, Al-Wafra for sports and equestrian games, and others, were reinstated following the ministerial decision. This decision underscores the commitment to fair play, the sanctity of public funds, and the protection of sports clubs and athletes from unwarranted interference.

Lewandowski and Osimhen trade goals as Barca draw at Napoli in 1st leg of CL last 16

NAPLES, Italy, Feb 22, (AP): It was hyped as a matchup between high-scoring center forwards Robert Lewandowski and Victor Osimhen and both strikers found the net in a 1-1 draw between Barcelona and Napoli in the first leg of the Champions League round of 16.

Lewandowski shot through the legs of Napoli captain Giovanni Di Lorenzo and inside the near post on the hour mark for his 93rd goal in the top club competition.

Osimhen replied 15 minutes later with a shot from near the penalty spot after leaving his marker on the ground for his sixth goal in Napoli's last six home matches in the Champions League.

The second leg is scheduled for March 12 in Spain.

Napoli had struggled until Osimhen's goal to construct much of anything in the debut of new coach Francesco Calzona, who was hired only 48 hours before kickoff by the struggling Serie A champion.

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Osimhen was playing his first match for Napoli since returning from the Africa Cup of Nations, where he helped Nigeria reach the final.

Barcelona is back in the knockout rounds after two consecutive group-stage eliminations. It still had Lionel Messi the last time it made it to the round of 16.

Barcelona has been eliminated in the Copa del Rey, is eight points behind leader Real Madrid in the Spanish league and coach Xavi recently announced he will leave the club at the end of the season.

Napoli has won only one of its last six matches and is only ninth in the Italian league standings, which led to Walter Mazzarri being fired on Monday.

Barcelona controlled at the start and produced a series of shots on target that were stopped by Napoli goalkeeper Alex Meret.

Barcelona has never lost to Napoli in five meetings, all since February 2020.

Wenderson Galeno came through for Porto with the final whistle about to blow. Now, Arsenal needs to rally to return to the Champions League quarterfinals for the first time since 2010.

Galeno scored deep into stoppage time to give Porto a 1-0 win in the first leg of the round of 16. The English team will need a victory in the return leg in London on March 12 to make it back to the last eight of Europe's elite club competition.

Galeno broke the deadlock with a right-footed shot into the far corner four minutes into added time. His strike from outside the area came in what was supposed to be the final minute of stoppage time at the Estadio do Dragao.

The Brazilian forward, who had hit the post in the first half, was named the man of the match.

Porto was mostly in control and kept Arsenal from having any attempts on target. The English side was coming off five consecutive wins in which it scored 21 goals in total.

Porto was eliminated in the round of 16 last season. The Portuguese team is trying to reach the quarterfinals for the first time since 2021.

"It was a good game, a Champions League game," Porto coach Sérgio Conceição said. "Our opponents had more of the ball, but Porto were always more dangerous."

Arsenal, making its first Champions League appearance since 2016-17, failed to get past the round of 16 in seven consecutive tries from 2011-17. It has lost its last seven first-leg matches in the last 16.

Porto stun Arsenal with stoppage-time goal by Galeno



Public Authority for Applied Education and Training celebrates with the championship trophy.

PAAET clinches Warba Bank 3x3 Basketball League title

The team representing the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training emerged victorious in the Warba Bank 3x3 Basketball League, a part of the third sports games for higher education organized by the Kuwait Sports Federation for Schools and Higher Education. In the final match held at Marina Mall Stadium, they secured a 19-11 win over Kuwait Technical

College. The American University team secured the third position by defeating the Australian University with a score of 17-9. The competition featured the active participation of six government and private educational institutions.

The awards ceremony, attended by Faisal Al-Maqseed, President of the School Union, Ahmed Al-Qatami, Head of the Retail Bank-

ing Group at Warba Bank, and Walid Ayeshe, Vice-President of the School Union, marked the culmination of the event. Al-Maqseed, who also serves as the Chairman of the Supreme Committee for the Third Sports Games for Higher Education, commended the significant role played by the organizing committees and the dedicated efforts of Warba Bank, the strategic partner

in the event. Expressing his satisfaction with the inaugural edition of the Warba Bank 3x3 Basketball League, he highlighted the remarkable success achieved, prompting plans to expand the participation of teams in subsequent editions due to the outstanding performance exhibited by the players and the overall excellent organization throughout the tournament days.

'The eyes of the world are on Inter'

Messi gets assist as Miami opens MLS season with win

FORT LAUDERDALE, Feb 22, (AP): Lionel Messi had two Real Salt Lake defenders on either side of him, two more a few yards in front of him. He quickly tapped the ball away from them all with his left foot, to a spot where only teammate Robert Taylor could reach.

Moments later, Inter Miami had the first goal of the Major League Soccer season.

Taylor's goal in the 39th minute set the tone, Diego Gómez added an insurance score in the 83rd minute and Inter Miami - to start Messi's first full season with the club - opened the 29th season of MLS with a 2-0 win over Real Salt Lake on Wednesday night.

Messi was in midseason form, darting through and around defenders, almost giving the sellout crowd what they wanted to see by nearly scoring on a free kick and then a corner kick midway through the first half.

"I think the eyes of the world are on Inter Miami, and I'm hoping that they're

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able to deliver on that and whatever expectations people have," said MLS Commissioner Don Garber, who was at Wednesday's match. "Mostly, I'd just like his experience to be good, the experience of the team to be successful, how they're positioned both here in the league but also around the world. That's the story that I think is most important to us."

Messi had 11 goals in 14 total matches with Inter Miami last season, leading the team to a Leagues Cup championship - its first-ever trophy - shortly after he stunned much of the soccer world by signing a 2 1/2-year contract worth around \$150 million. He appeared in only six MLS matches in 2023, scoring once. Injuries slowed him late in the 2023 season and Inter Miami, which was way out of the postseason picture when Messi joined last summer, didn't make the MLS playoffs.

Liverpool mount second-half fightback to beat Luton

LIVERPOOL, England, Feb 22, (AP): Liverpool mounted a second-half fightback to overwhelm Luton in a 4-1 win and move four points clear atop the Premier League.

Trailing 1-0 at halftime, Liverpool recovered at Anfield thanks to goals in the space of 125 seconds by Virgil van Dijk and Cody Gakpo that put the Reds in front by the 58th minute.

Luis Diaz added a third for the Reds in front of his celebrating father, Luis

Manuel Diaz, who was at the stadium - and wearing a Liverpool jersey - 2½ months after being released by members of a guerrilla group who kidnapped him in northern Colombia. Harvey Elliott wrapped up the scoring in the 90th.

It was ultimately a strong response from an injury-hit Liverpool to title rival Manchester City's 1-0 win over Brentford on Tuesday. That had left Liverpool, City and Arsenal separated

like a contender. That wasn't the case in the exhibition season.

Inter Miami started its season with an international preseason tour with seven matches in five different countries - netting roughly 25,000 miles of travel, a total of eight goals, multiple apologies to refund-seeking fans after Messi missed a game in Hong Kong because of injury, and just one win.

by just two points in what is shaping up to be a three-team fight for the title.

Liverpool is now four points clear of City and five ahead of Arsenal, but has played an extra game.

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp was without senior players Mohamed Salah, Trent Alexander-Arnold, Alisson Becker, Darwin Nunez, Diogo Jota and Curtis Jones, among others, for the match and it showed at times with Luton - adopting a bold man-to-man marking approach - looking dangerous on the break.

From one of those occasions, Tahith Chong raced into the area and sent in a shot that was saved by the legs of goalkeeper Caoimhin Kelleher and rebounded out to Chiedozie Ogbene, who nodded the ball into an empty net in the 12th minute.

Liverpool squandered a glut of half-chances before the break through either weak shots or poor decision-making in the final third. When Elliott overhit a pass through to Diaz, there

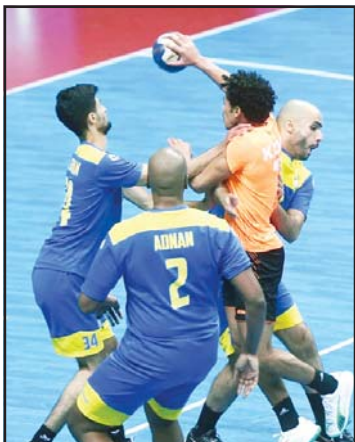
SOCCER

were groans from the Main Stand - eliciting an angry reaction from Klopp as he turned to Liverpool's fans in that section.

Liverpool found its cutting edge in the second half, with Van Dijk heading in a 56th-minute corner by Alexis Mac Allister, who then drove over a cross that Gakpo nodded in.

Substitute Andrew Robertson forced a turnover that led to Diaz's goal in the 71st, and Elliott whipped home a finish for the fourth as Luton's overstretched defense tired.

Liverpool plays Chelsea in the English League Cup final on Sunday.



Players challenge for the ball.

Burgan 'set' for Gulf Champ'ship in Doha

Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

MANAMA, Feb 22: The Burgan handball team is embarking on a journey from Manama to the Qatari capital, Doha, for its participation in the 40th Gulf Championship for Cup Winners' Clubs. The championship is scheduled to take place in Qatar from the 25th of this month until the 5th of the next March.

Leading the Burgan delegation is the game director, Mohamed Al-Faraj, accompanied by his assistant Abdulaziz Najib, administrator Abdullah Al-Yousifi, coach Saeed Hegazy, and his assistants Khaled Melhem, Elias Al-Bastanji, and specialist Mohamed Amin.

The delegation includes 20 players, featuring the Orange team's professionals Semedo and the Egyptian Mustafa Bashir. In Doha, they will be joined by goalkeeper, Al Wakra Mo-

HANDBALL

ammed Al Abdi.

Burgan finds itself placed in the first group following the tournament draw, alongside Al-Arabi of Qatar, Oman of Oman, and Al-Dair of Bahrain. The second group includes the Kuwait club team, along with Al-Rayyan of Qatar, Maliha of Emirates, and Al-Shabab of Bahrain.

In other handball news, the Al-Qurain Club's handball team secured a decisive victory against Al-Tadamon with a score of 40-15 in the third round of the League matches. Simultaneously, Kazma triumphed over Al-Sahel with a score of 36-19. The matches took place in the hall of the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex.