



HH Amir receives PM KUWAIT ADDS 45,000 21-YEAR-OLDS TO VOTER LIST

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received, Tuesday, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

Cabinet greenlights April 4 for National Assembly polls

Candidacy applications open March 4: source



Photo by Iehab Qurtal
Traffic builds up on the 4th Ring Road as post-holiday work resumed Tuesday morning.

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27: The Kuwaiti Cabinet on Tuesday approved a draft decree inviting voters to elect National Assembly (parliament) members on April 4, 2024, and referred it to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, said Head of the Local Affairs Sector and Government Spokesman Amer Al-Ajmi.

The spokesman made the statement to KUNA following a Cabinet meeting, presided over by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

According to a government source speaking to Al-Seyassah, the election decree is scheduled to be issued next Sunday, with the candidacy application period opening on March 4.

In other news, around 45,000 citizens, who turned 21 years old, have been added to the list of eligible voters as part of preparations for the 2024 National Assembly election.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Ali Jaber Al-Ahmad said he did not expect that the citizens would be joyful over the dissolution of the Assembly. He hopes the legislature will be suspended for two years or more to eliminate the negative practices of some lawmakers. He added the future lawmakers must understand the message and be aware that the recent dissolution is the result of the attitude of some MPs who crossed the red lines.

Commenting on the above statement, former MP Badr Sayyar Al-Shemmari pointed out the people's joy was due to the celebration of the National and Liberation Days. "Regardless of the reasons behind the dissolution of the Assembly, it is a hindrance to the interests of the nation and the citizens. Only the opportunists, beneficiaries of corruption and those who do not believe in democracy are happy over the dissolution. Suspending the Assembly is a wish that cannot be fulfilled under the wise political leadership and as long as the free people are committed to the Constitution," he asserted.

Opinion

The situation is like this

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

YOUR Highness the Prime Minister, there are two issues that I hope are in the mind of the Cabinet.

Kuwait's main income is dependent on oil, sovereign investments, and some fees collected from citizens and residents, which neither nourish nor avail hunger. However, the largest portion of the state budget is dedicated for salaries and subsidies, amounting to 78 percent, as per the recently approved state budget. On the other hand, investment spending has decreased by about 33 percent. This means a lack of interest in profit-generating projects. It is worth highlighting that the deficit has now reached about KD 6.8 billion.

In this regard, there is a lot of talk about infrastructure projects, trains, metro, and many others that have remained on paper for many years.

In fact, it has become like a unicorn - praised by many but never seen by any. This is because it was not there during conflicts between the parliaments and the successive Councils of Ministers, and delaying it raised its annual cost by about 20 percent.

Your Highness the Prime Minister, when about 78 percent of the budget is allocated to salaries and subsidies, it indicates that the pyramid is upside down. There is no economic vision for the state, which lives on slogans, including not touching the citizens' pockets even if those citizens are wealthy.

Such well-off citizens end up getting everything for free from tea to electricity and water. On the other hand, the country lacks infrastructure and services, as is the case in countries similar to Kuwait in terms of wealth.

Your Highness the Prime Minister, there is no doubt that sovereign funds generate profit, but not to the required level. If there are local service and investment projects, their returns will be better. They also move the wheel of production in the country and localize sovereign investments in the country.

As for the returns from investment in global financial markets, no matter how profitable they may be sometimes, they also have their negatives, just like the 2008 crisis, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Russian-Ukrainian war.

There is also no doubt that Your Highness knows that oil is an exhaustible substance. Therefore relying on it for the main income is a kind of adventure. Such a situation cannot continue like this.

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Kuwait's expatriate remittances decline

By Mahmoud Shendi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27: Data from the Central Bank of Kuwait revealed that remittances from expatriate workers in Kuwait totaled approximately 33.353 billion dinars over the past 7 years, equivalent to 108.3 billion dollars.

The breakdown of remittances showed that in 2017, expatriates sent around 4.142 billion dinars, increasing to 4.306 billion dinars in 2018, then further rising to 5.704 billion dinars in 2019. However, there was a decline in the fiscal year 2020, reaching 5.290 billion dinars. In 2021, it increased to 5.526 billion dinars, slightly decreasing to 5.406 billion dinars in 2022. In the first 9 months of 2023, remittances amounted to about 2.979 billion dinars.

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His Highness the Prime Minister, Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, chairs the Cabinet meeting on Tuesday.

PM Diwan photo

US signals there could be a truce soon

Kuwait seeks UNHRC support on Gaza crisis

GENEVA, Feb 27, (Agencies): Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya stated Tuesday that the atrocious crimes of Israeli occupation forces in Gaza Strip had shocked the conscience of humanity but produced no serious response from the international community.

Minister Al-Yahya made these remarks while heading the Kuwaiti delegation at the 55th session of UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), held over span of two days in Geneva.

The Minister affirmed Kuwait's unwavering and steady commitment to themes of freedom, justice, equality, tolerance, peace, and principles of the UN and its agencies.

He pointed out that the council is convening in the midst of ongoing catastrophe and human suffering in Gaza Strip but the international community has yet to take up serious action to put an end to blatant violations of international laws.

Since beginning of war on Gaza strip, more than 30,000 Palestinians have been killed, infrastructure completely demolished, vital facilities, homes, and worship places all destroyed, relayed the Minister, adding that the occupation has made targets of workers in relief, health or media sectors.

Minister Al-Yahya spoke of Kuwait's immediate response to the humanitarian situation in Gaza, and payloads of living essentials and medical necessities it sent out and campaigns it organized, emphasizing that such operations will remain underway to alleviate even a fraction of the suffering.

The Minister took the time to restate Kuwait's position by Palestinian right of self-determination, saying that there's no resolution in light of continuing oppressive practices, use of brute force, and double standards.

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Other Voices

Breaking the cycles of violence that torment the Middle East

By Alexander Schallenberg

Federal Minister for European and International Affairs of the Republic of Austria, on the occasion of his visit to the region

The Middle East has been plagued by cycles of violence for decades. But the past months have brought a new dimension of devastation. Hamas' barbaric terror attacks have pushed Gaza and the whole region to the edge of the abyss. As in all conflicts, civilians bear the brunt. Israelis are traumatized by the slaughter of 7 October and families fear for their children, parents and grandparents still being held captive in Gaza. At the same time, scores of Palestinian families were evacuated from Gaza and with Israeli mothers whose sons are still held hostage by Hamas. There is no hierarchy of suffering. The pain and trauma of all civilians is heart breaking. It is our joint responsibility to protect them and to put an end to their agony.

Which is why I am travelling to Tel Aviv, Ramallah, Cairo and Amman to listen and engage with partners. The roots of this conflict reach deep. Emotions run high. Positions have grown increasingly entrenched, including abroad. As the foreign minister of a country that is a decades-long, reliable partner of the Palestinian people while firmly acknowledging its unique historic responsibility towards the State of Israel, I consider it my duty to do whatever I can to open the space for diplomacy.

International law is the guiding principle of our foreign policy. A breach of international law is a red line, whenever and wherever in the world. That is why we unequivocally condemn Hamas' continued



Alexander Schallenberg

rocket attacks, its terror tunnels, hostage-taking and cynical use of civilians as human shields. That is why we firmly stand by Israel's right to self-defence in the face of terror. That is why in line with international humanitarian law we urge Israel to take all possible steps to do more to protect innocent civilians and to allow more aid into Gaza. It is also why we categorically reject statements calling for a displacement of Palestinians, why we call for Gaza to remain Palestinian and why we call for sanctions on extremist, violent settlers.

But referring to noble principles is not enough. It is through persistent and tireless diplomacy on the ground that we will reunite the hostages with their loved ones and get more life-saving water, food and medicine to the civilians in Gaza. This is Austria's immediate priority. I am encouraged by recent talks supported by the United States, Qatar and Egypt. An agreement could prepare the ground for an enduring ceasefire and, eventually, a perspective for peace.

There is no time to waste. Every day brings more agony to the families of the Israeli hostages and the Palestinian children, women and men in Gaza. We have mobilized 13 million Euros of emergency aid for the people in Gaza and for the stability of the region. More support will follow.

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Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: During the national celebrations, 136 individuals received ambulance assistance over the last three days, with 17 transported to the hospital and 119 treated at clinics, according to the Ministry of Health (MoH).

Dr. Ahmad Al-Shatti, Director of the Emergency Medical Services Department (EMS), noted that the rise in medical cases during the celebrations was compensated by a decrease in total traffic accidents.

The number of accidents dropped from 12 in the same period in 2023 to three this year, attributed to a Ministry of Interior traffic awareness campaign and rainy weather reducing street congestion. In 2023, ambulance cases doubled from 14 to 29, with a 40 percent increase in individuals from 69 to 94. (KUNA)

CAIRO: A ferry carrying day laborers sank in the Nile just outside the Egyptian capital, killing at least 10 of the 15 people on board, authorities said Monday.

The five who survived were transported to a hospital and later discharged, the Ministry of Manpower said in a statement. The cause of the sinking was not made immediately clear. The ministry allocated compensation of 200,000 Egyptian pounds (around \$6,466) to each family of the deceased and 20,000 (\$646) to each of the five injured. (AP)

PARIS: France's President Emmanuel Macron will receive Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani during the latter's visit to Paris later Tuesday, focusing on ways of strengthening bilateral relations.

The two-day visit demonstrates the depth of bilateral relations between the two countries, said Elysee Palace in a press statement. (KUNA)

TUNIS, Feb 27, (KUNA): Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah called for boosting coordination among the security services of the Arab countries.

Addressing the 41st session of the Arab Interior Ministers Council (AIMC) in Tunis on Monday, Sheikh Fahad said security is "a collective responsibility and cornerstone of development and progress."

"The current session coincides with challenging conditions that require a unified approach to promoting the joint Arab security action and reaching the shared aspirations for development," he said.

Sheikh Fahad commended AIMC plans and strategies for addressing the regional challenges, and sharing information and experience related to security issues of common concern.

He called for greater cooperation among the security services of the Arab countries to enhance their efficacies in combating all forms of organized crime.

"On top of the agenda of current AIMC session is the fight against drug traffickers who tend to use unconventional methods.



KUNA photo

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah addressing the 41st session of the Arab Interior Ministers Council.

Prayer Timings

Fajr 04:57 Asr 15:18
Sunrise .. 06:16 Maghrib .. 17:46
Zohr 12:01 Isha 19:03

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Mild, clouds will decrease and chance of rain will decrease gradually with light variable wind, with speeds of 00-35 km/h.

By Night: Rather cold to cold

Weather

with light to moderate freshening at times northwesterly wind, with speeds of 12-40 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec		
Kuwait City	23	14	Kuwait Airport	22
			Abdaly	22
			Jahra	23
			Salmiyah	21
			Nuwaisib	25
			Wafra	24

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

Catastrophic reality of Palestinians on agenda

Kuwait FM meets UN Chief, ICRC head, counterparts in Geneva

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya met on Monday with the United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres on the sidelines of the 55th session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva.

During the meeting, the two officials discussed the strategic relations and ways to enhance cooperation between Kuwait and the UN to address the regional and global developments.

They also discussed the catastrophic reality of the Palestinians and serious developments happening in Palestine, and the continued efforts to halt the war crimes Israel is committing.

Al-Yahya persisted on Kuwait's never-changing stance with the Palestinians and the objective of granting them their rights and freedoms, pushing to find a just solution for the Palestinian crisis while calling on the international community to increase their efforts towards the same goal.

Guterres praised Kuwait's prominent effort on a regional and global scale for always seeking justice and preserving peace around the world.

FM meets UN High Commissioner for refugees

Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya met on Monday with UN High Commissioner for refugees Filippo Grandi, on the sidelines of the 55th session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva.

During the meeting, the two tackled efforts made by UNHCR to provide aid and support and meet the needs of refugees as a result of conflicts and wars were reviewed.

Al-Yahya praised the noble and valuable contributions made by UNHCR towards refugees around the world.

The Minister also hailed the existing level of cooperation and joint work between the State of Kuwait and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, citing the pioneering role of the State of Kuwait, especially on the humanitarian level, in all international forums.

The two delved into the importance of the international community assuming its responsibilities to find effective solutions to the refugee crisis and creating innovative mechanisms to achieve an effective response to deal with such crises and con-

licts that cause displacement, asylum and suffering, most notably the dangerous consequences of the current developments in the Gaza Strip.

FM meets ICRC chief

Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya met on Monday with President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Mirjana Spoljaric on the sidelines of the 55th session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva.

During the meeting, they looked into Kuwait-ICRC cooperation and its future prospects, ways of promoting international humanitarian action and joint activities in response to regional humanitarian crises and disasters, and joint coordination to serve humanitarian objectives and purposes.

They also explored ways of supporting crises-hit people around the world and joint efforts in the context of the Trilateral Commission for the search of Kuwaiti prisoners of war (POWs) and missing persons in Iraq since 1991, along with steps taken to resolve this significant humanitarian cause.

The Kuwaiti foreign minister, in this context, commended the ICRC's role and noble humanitarian efforts to deliver humanitarian, medical, and relief aid to the needy, stressing that it is necessary to ensure Gaza de-escalation, protect civilians and open crossing points to deliver humanitarian and relief aid to Gazans, and to muster international efforts in this regard.

FM meets Iranian counterpart

Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya met on Monday with his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amirabdollahian on the sidelines of the 55th session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva.

During the meeting, they addressed the latest Palestinian developments, particularly the Gaza Strip, and ongoing efforts to halt the crimes of Israeli occupation forces against Palestinians, along with the humanitarian crisis caused by the aggression.

The Kuwaiti foreign minister restated his country's principled and unwavering support for the Palestinian people and their rights, including an independent state and a just and permanent solution for the Palestinian cause.



Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya meets with United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres.



Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya meets with his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amirabdollahian.

'Public warned against presence of mines, explosives since liberation'

Older, expired bombs more sensitive: Brig Gen Al-Obaidan

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27: The Commander of the Explosive Inspection and Disposal Unit in the Kuwait Armed Forces Brigadier General Yousef Mishari Al-Obaidan affirmed the presence of mines and explosives in the State of Kuwait from the time of its liberation until today.

In a statement to Al-Seyassah on the sidelines of the Ministry of Defense parade on the Gulf Street during the national holidays, Brigadier General Al-Obaidan explained that the Explosives Inspection and Disposal Unit cleared approximately 1,800,000 mines and more than three million explosive objects such as bullets, weapons, grenades, shells, missiles, and all weapons and ammunition that were remnants of the Iraqi invasion.

There is usually an increase in the number of reports received about the discovery of such remnants during the winter, as about 15 reports are received on a daily basis, including eight reports of discovery of explosive objects. The unit is directly connected with Operations Room (hotline No. 112) so that it can respond to such reports and deal with them immediately.

The unit also has been conducting inspections of infrastructure and new projects to ensure they are free of any foreign objects.

Regarding the validity of these explosives, Brigadier General Yousef Al-Obaidan confirmed that the older the explosives are or have expired, the more sensitive they are.

He said, "We in Kuwait have made great strides in the clearing operations. There are many countries around the world such as Germany and the countries involved in World War II where they continue to find bombs and ammunition that still have the ability to explode. Kuwait is working on using the best military equipment to search and detect these explosive objects."

Brigadier General Al-Obaidan affirmed that their participation in the parade was aimed to showcase the capabilities of the Kuwait Armed Forces, especially the engineering of the ground force in terms of daily operations and equipment.

He added that an awareness campaign was held about dangerous and explosive objects, especially during camping and rain, and to alert the public about these objects that may be seen and how to deal with them by taking safety measures and informing the competent authorities.

Brigadier General Al-Obaidan stressed the need to alert people to these dangerous objects and make them aware of their forms.

He wished safety for citizens and residents, and urged for their cooperation to report immediately if they see these objects in order to preserve their safety.

Coach gets 5-years in jail for molesting girl in gym

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27: The Court of Cassation yesterday sentenced an Egyptian coach of a foreign school to five-year imprisonment followed by deportation, for molesting an expatriate teenage girl student in the gym of the school.

According to the case files, the Public Prosecution charged the coach with molesting the student in the gym by touching her inappropriately, and trying to kiss her.

The student's father explained in his complaint that his daughter arrived home in an abnormal state and burst into tears when he asked her. She then revealed what her teacher did to her in the gym. Records of the school's surveillance cameras confirmed that the accused had committed his act.

It is noteworthy that the Court of Appeals had sentenced the accused to ten-year imprisonment with hard labor.

Ruling on March 14: The Court of Appeals has set the session of March 14 to rule on the appeal submitted against the ruling of a lower court, which sentenced an expatriate, two Kuwaiti men and a Kuwaiti woman to prison terms of ten years, seven years and one year respectively, and imposed a fine of KD 308,000, for allegedly leaking and selling exam papers, and for money laundering.

The Public Prosecution had charged them with money laundering. Investigations conducted by the police had previously revealed the involvement of the accused and some others in leaking the high school exam papers, and the money that were sent to their accounts illegally as a result of their crime.



Kuwait Air Force jets patrolling near the Kuwait Towers.

Village marks national days

Air Force, police jets on patrol

By Abdullah Al-Mesry

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27, (KUNA): Fighter jets of Kuwaiti Air Force and police patrol aircraft from the Ministry of Interior paraded above Kuwait Towers on Monday to celebrate the 63rd National Day and 33rd Liberation Day of the country.

They performed acrobatic feats to the amusement of large number of spectators from various age categories.

Participating in the parade were F-18 fighter jets of the Ministry of Defense, and Caracal, Dauphin and Eurocopter police and coastguard aircraft from the Ministry of Interior, spokesman of the Ministry of Defense Col. Staff Hamad Al-Saqr told KUNA.

"The parade is reminiscent of the sacrifices made by the steadfast sons of Kuwait

during their valiant struggle against the brutal invasion until the country gained liberation on February 24-28, 1991," he recalled.

As part of the national celebrations, the Ministry of Defense has also organized an exhibition of the weaponry and military equipment, showcasing the capabilities of the various units of the Kuwaiti Armed Forces, Col. Staff Al-Saqr added.

Meanwhile, Youm Al-Bahar Entertainment Historical Village celebrated on Monday Kuwait's 33rd Liberation Day, reflecting the spirit of patriotism and loyalty to the country and recalling historical moments.

Folk bands and shows displayed the everlasting memoir of Kuwait's liberation from the Iraqi 7-month cruel invasion, creating an atmosphere that renews the pride and relentlessness of the Kuwaiti resistance.



The Ministry of Defence Undersecretary inspects the Kuwaiti Army exhibition on the occasion of national holidays.

'Kuwait falcons here to protect it'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27: A number of military personnel who were present at the military parade held in front of the Kuwait Towers affirmed to Al-Seyassah that their participation with the people in the joy of national celebrations is a confirmation to everyone that they are a sacrifice for the homeland, and that Kuwait has its falcons that protect it, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Firstly, Brigadier General Hussein Taher said the national holidays, which are celebrated in February every year, represent a wonderful occasion in the hearts of the Kuwaiti people.

He stressed that the military parade is aimed to confirm to the Kuwaiti people that Kuwait has its falcons to protect it.

In this regard, Deputy Officer Abdullah Al-Duwaisan said his presence among the falcons that protect Kuwait increases his status out of love and loyalty to his homeland.

He expressed his wish that Allah would

always protect Kuwait, its leader, its people, and all who reside on the land of Kuwait.

Meanwhile, Captain Abdullah Al-Ajmi expressed his pride in being one of the falcons of the state that preserves its borders and security.

Affirming that the army and police forces are redemption for the homeland, he expressed his joy in participating with the people of Kuwait on this national day.

Furthermore, Corporal Muhammad Qasim said the participation of the army and security forces from their various sectors in the people's celebrations on national holidays confirms the extent of popular cohesion with the army and police officers.

He highlighted the keenness of children to take pictures with army men on top of military vehicles, making them feel proud that they belong to the military institution that protects Kuwait.



Photo by Mohammad Morsi

Visitors from the Sultanate of Oman pose near the Kuwait Towers.

Saudis, Bahrainis, Omanis here

GCC citizens share Kuwait joy

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 26: "Our Gulf is one... Our destiny is one... Our people are one" - this traditional song was translated into reality by the nationals of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

They called on all Gulf countries to share with Kuwait and its people the joy of the national holidays during the past two days, insisting that, "Kuwait's joy is our joy."

In separate statements to Al-Seyassah, they revealed that they left their homelands to share the joy of the Kuwaiti people in the national celebrations, adding, "The Gulf people are in the heart of one man."

Following are the details: Jamal Al-Harbi from Saudi Arabia said, "I came with my friends to enjoy the joyful atmosphere of the Kuwaiti national holidays. Saudis love the State of Kuwait."

Hadi Al-Sariri from the Kingdom of Bahrain affirmed that the Gulf people are one heart.

He indicated that the weather did not prevent him and his friends from coming to Kuwait from Bahrain specifically to participate in the Kuwaiti holidays, especially on the Gulf Street, adding, "The joy of Kuwait is our joy."

Baddah Al-Jamil from Qatar said, "Every

year, my family and I make sure to visit Kuwait during its national holidays."

He praised the tremendous development that Kuwait is witnessing year after year.

Khaled Sultan Al-Khulaie from the Sultanate of Oman stressed that Kuwait is the beating heart of the Arab nation and the Gulf countries.

He expressed his joy and pride in the Kuwaiti holidays, and wished for increased economic integration between Kuwait and the Sultanate of Oman.

Younis Abdullah from the Sultanate of Oman said what brings Kuwait and Oman together are close ties, adding, "I am proud of the joint Duqm refinery project between the Sultanate and Kuwait."

He said, "The joy of the Kuwaiti people over their national holidays is the joy of every Omani citizen and Gulf citizen."

In addition, Ahmed Saeed from the Sultanate of Oman affirmed that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad to the Sultanate of Oman at the beginning of February was a holiday for the Sultanate of Oman.

Finally, Tariq Al-Jaafar said he wishes all Gulf countries would remain in ease and prosperity, highlighting that he feels comfortable and tranquil whenever he visits the State of Kuwait.

Citizens, residents praised

'Lesser garbage in national fests'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Municipality praised, Tuesday, the public, both citizens and residents, for keeping public facilities clean during National Day celebrations last Sunday and Monday.

The Kuwaiti Municipality's Public Relations Manager and spokesperson, Mohammad Al-Mutairi, said this year's celebrations' cleanliness was noticeable with fewer waste accumulated throughout the Arabian Gulf Road.



Al-Mutairi

Al-Mutairi elaborated that 2023's waste amounted to 140 tons because of excessive use of water balloons, plastic bags, and plastic water bottles, among others, whereas 2024's trash accumulation was less than that of last year's.

The celebrations were met with a great sense of responsibility by celebrators which underscored the little amount of time sanitation workers had to spend cleaning on both Sunday and Monday, added Al-Mutairi.

He affirmed that the celebrators' responsibility aided in health inspectors' field work during festivity management.

Al-Mutairi extended his gratitude to the people who portrayed commendable mannerliness to sanitation and cleanliness during times of celebrations.

Disconnect between national identity, citizenship practices

"THE government's swift response in refuting rumors surrounding potential amendments to citizenship laws, which could impact individuals' eligibility to run for office and participate in elections, was commendable. This issue not only raises concerns about deprivation but also undermines the fundamental principles of citizenship and belonging in a significant and perilous manner," columnist **Suad Fahad Al-Moajel** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"Additionally, conflating individuals who fraudulently obtain citizenship with those who rightfully earn it according to the law is unjust and contravenes the core tenets of the Nationality Law.

"The innate human need for belonging, whether to a nation, ethnicity, ideology, or specific creed, has been present since the earliest formations of human societies. This urge to belong has evolved alongside the concept of the modern state, leading to the establishment of legal frameworks such as citizenship documentation, symbolizing allegiance, preservation, and defense of one's homeland.

"Kuwait, being both geographically and demographically small, comprises immigrants from diverse backgrounds. The enactment of regulatory laws, notably the Nationality Law, and the subsequent delineation of citizenship criteria within the Constitution, reflect the rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship.

"Citizenship laws worldwide outline conditions for acquisition, fostering a sense of security, societal integration, and political participation within established legal parameters. However, in many Arab countries, nationality and affiliation are sometimes politicized, leading to disillusionment and mistrust.

"Nationality embodies a sense of belonging that is reinforced through actions, not just words, fostering voluntary loyalty to one's homeland. Regrettably, some conflate national identity with citizenship, misunderstanding the latter's broader scope, encompassing rights and responsibilities within a legal framework applicable to all.

"Citizenship serves as the behavioral manifestation of national identity. Yet, in Kuwait and across the Arab world, a disconnect exists between rhetoric on national identity and actual citizenship practices, with some individuals paying lip service to patriotism while engaging in corrupt or illegal behavior.

"The rule of law is pivotal in cultivating a just society where duties precede rights, providing equal protection and opportunities for all members. Embracing a legal-centric culture ensures stability and security, as evidenced by European societies, where adherence to the law fosters a sense of citizenship transcending linguistic and cultural barriers.

"The surest path to security and stability lies in embodying the values and behaviors of responsible citizenship, underpinned by legal authority. When individuals uphold the principles of citizenship, there's no need for contentious debates over citizenship laws; rather, a cohesive society emerges, characterized by mutual respect and adherence to the rule of law."

Also:

"In February, we pay homage to our homeland, extolling its beauty, and expressing our profound love for it, as this affection is synonymous with pride and honor," columnist **Fatima Al-Muzayil** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

"The world will endure as long as this love persists, for nothing is more deserving of our devotion than our homeland. It holds a special place in the hearts of honorable

individuals, and discussions about it are constant, akin to the everlasting bond between a mother and her child.

"Just as we owe allegiance to our mothers, so too do we owe allegiance to our homelands. Both have nurtured and cared for us, deserving our unwavering dedication, generosity, and sacrifice.

"Citizenship is a sacred right, entailing a commitment infused with loyalty to the land under its skies. Our homeland is our creator, where our worth is elevated, and our achievements are realized.

"Each citizen bears a responsibility towards the homeland, uplifting its banner, upholding its honor, contributing what they can, and safeguarding it from adversities. It is incumbent upon every citizen to strive for its advancement, sacrificing cherished possessions, and thwarting any threat to its security, prosperity, or unity.

"Our homeland yearns for enlightened citizens, confident in their convictions and proud of their national identity. It beckons for your dedication and effort, recognizing that you are its most cherished asset, just as it is among God's greatest blessings upon you.

"May those who have strayed under the allure of falsehoods propagated by misguided minds rediscover their love for their homelands. Let us unite once more to defend its sanctity against any encroachment."

"Saif-Sword' Jassim ... A rich princely and popular reception was given to His Highness the Amir, may Allah protect him, upon his arrival in Doha Al-Khair -- the Kaaba of Al-Madyoum," columnist **Talal Al-Saeed** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"This is not surprising for Al-Thani, the rulers and the great people of Qatar. Perhaps, what draws the attention of those watching the reception ceremonies is the Qataris' pride in their authentic folk heritage and their commitment to preserve it, as reflected in their keenness to hold popular events as part of the Amiri reception protocol for important State guests.

"The presence of camels with their distinguished riders has had a long and honorable history, which was used as a proverb at one point in time and about which the poet said: 'They are free from the taxes of Ibn Thani's Army.' The presence of camels at the reception made the scene brighter.

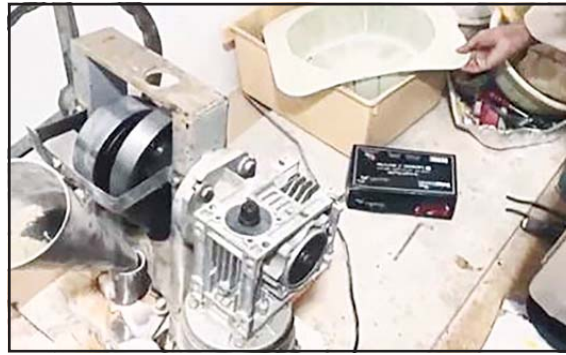
"Then, the Qatari cavalry appeared in their distinctive Arab dress and their purebred Arabian horses -- the Arab breed with a pompous history. This is followed by the Qatari honor guard donned in the intricate clothing, which did not disrupt military control and tethering, and did not obstruct military movements, as some have imagined.

"Finally, the magnificent and distinguished presence of the Qatari military parade, in addition to the elegance of the reception, represented the Qatari people correctly, up to the point that it made the viewer feel that all the Qatari people were in the honor of receiving.

"The sword of the founder, Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammad Al-Thani, has profound historical significance. The Amir of Qatar gave it to our Amir. It was the crown of the ceremony. This sword is considered a grand symbol of Qatar and its people. It is not less important than the Qatari national flag. How could it not be since it is the sword of the great founder of Qatar, the greatness of the history of the State of Qatar? Jassim bin Thani was never an ordinary person. He was history himself that generations could be proud of.

"May Allah bless the beloved State of Qatar, its rulers and its people. The reception ceremony was beyond wonderful. It is a tribute to all of Kuwait and its people, not just our Amir. May Allah bless us and them with security and safety."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes



Machinery used to shape drug pills.

Drug peddler, machine used in business seized

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27: Authorities in Jakhor, Kabd, operating under the General Department of Narcotics Control, have taken decisive action against illicit drug trafficking, culminating in the referral of a suspect for prosecution due to unlawful activities involving narcotic substances. The individual, whose identity has not been disclosed, was apprehended in the Kabd area, where a significant seizure took place, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The confiscated contraband included 96 kilograms of hashish, 2 kilograms of chemical substances, and 15 kilograms of Captagon powder. This haul, deemed substantial, could potentially yield up to a million pills. Additionally, authorities uncovered machinery utilized in the pressing and packaging of narcotics, indicating a sophisticated operation. Furthermore, three unlicensed firearms were seized during the operation.

The apprehended individual has reportedly confessed to engaging in the trafficking and manufacturing of narcotics subsequent to their illegal entry into the country. Investigations are ongoing to ascertain the precise methods employed in the smuggling of Captagon powder, hashish, and chemical substances.

The diligent efforts of law enforcement agencies have once again underscored the unwavering commitment to combatting the scourge of drug trafficking and associated criminal activities within the region.

'Latest scam'

Cunning fraudster robs expat of all his savings

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27: Despite repeated warnings from the Ministry of Interior, national banks, and various media outlets cautioning against fraudulent schemes perpetrated by individuals posing as security personnel and local bank representatives, an expatriate fell victim to a new scam yesterday. A staggering sum of 3,700 dinars was illicitly siphoned from his bank account after he received a call from a mobile number appearing as a local 'Video Call', reports **Al-Anba** daily.

On the other end of the line was a cunning fraudster masquerading as a security guard, who duped the expatriate into conversing with someone purporting to be a bank employee. This bogus bank representative deceitfully informed the victim that he had won a prize in a draw conducted by one of the banks. In order to claim his supposed winnings of 1,000 dinars, the victim was coerced into divulging sensitive bank card information, including his password and verification code.

As soon as the victim complied with these requests, the fraudster swiftly drained his account of 3,700 dinars, effectively wiping out his entire balance.

In response to this egregious act, a case has been filed at the Sabah Al-Salem police station, categorizing the incident as a felony under the title of 'Forgery in a Bank Document.' The phone number used by the perpetrator to contact the victim has been documented as evidence in the case file.



Drugs sachets, cash seized.

Drugs, cash found with wanted person in Jahra

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27: A suspect sought for drug-related offenses has been apprehended in Jahra Industrial City, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

Abdullah Qanis, identified as residing in the country unlawfully, was handed over to Taima detectives by concerned citizens. He was reported for his involvement in the trafficking of narcotics. Along with the referral, a significant quantity of marijuana packaged for distribution and a sum of money believed to be proceeds from drug sales were submitted as evidence against him.

According to a security official, the arrest followed intelligence gathering on the suspect's illicit activities. Law enforcement personnel staged an operation in the Jahra industrial area, leading to the apprehension of the individual. Subsequent search procedures revealed the presence of illegal narcotics in his possession. Further inquiries uncovered that the individual was already wanted by authorities, likely for prior offenses. The detained individual is now slated to undergo thorough investigations to ascertain the origins of the confiscated substances and to delve deeper into his involvement in the drug trade.

26,881 traffic violations recorded; expats held

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27: During the period spanning from the 17th to the 23rd of this month, the General Traffic Department conducted both stationary and foot campaigns, resulting in significant outcomes. A total of 26,881 traffic violations were recorded, accompanied by the apprehension of individuals involved in various offenses, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

Among the enforcement actions, 9 juveniles were arrested for driving without a valid license, reflecting a concerning trend of underage driving. Additionally, 8 expatriates were detained due to expired residency permits, while 26 individuals wanted by authorities were apprehended. Furthermore, enforcement efforts led to the arrest of one individual for drug possession and another for operating a vehicle under the influence of alcohol.

The crackdown also extended to vehicle impoundment, with 78 cars and 8 motorcycles being confiscated and sent to the impound garage.

According to statistics provided by the General Traffic Department, the period witnessed the handling of 317 serious accidents along with 1,548 minor accidents, underlining the department's ongoing efforts to ensure road safety and enforce traffic regulations.

Plan to create emergency 'corridors' on main roads

'Need to educate motorists'

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27: The Municipal Council member Alia Al Farsi submitted a proposal regarding creating an emergency lane on the main roads (Emergency Corridor System) according to international standards and specifications, through cooperation between the municipality and the relevant departments in the Ministry of Interior, the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation, and the Ministry of Health.

In her proposal, Al-Farsi mentioned three items - the first is to allocate a lane on the main roads on which the emergency logo is placed. Second, if the road consists of two lanes in the same direction, vehicles in the left lane will retreat to the far left when the ambulance siren is heard, and vehicles in the right lane will retreat to the far right, creating the emergency corridor in the middle. Third, if the road consists of three or more lanes in the same

direction, the vehicles in the far left lane must move to the left, and all vehicles in the right lane must move to the right immediately upon hearing the ambulance siren.

She stressed the need to educate motorists on the strategy followed in this system.

In the preamble of her proposal, Al-Farsi referred to article 21 of law No. 33/2016 regarding the municipality and the municipal council's jurisdiction to decide on projects and their urban locations, and to beautify and expand cities, villages, suburbs, regions, islands, roads, streets, and squares.

She emphasized on the difficulty of ambulances in arriving on time due to the lack of an emergency lane designated for ambulances on the main roads as well as due to the lack of a culture that regulates the movement of vehicles during emergency times in a way that allows ambulances to pass as quickly as possible to save patients.

She stressed the important role played by the municipality in approving projects and other expansions of streets and squares, as stipulated in law No. 33/2016, in order to preserve the safety of individuals' lives.



Alia Al-Farsi



Schoolgirls join the cleaning campaign.

KUNA photo

'Keep environment clean'

Clean-up campaign after celebrations

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27, (KUNA): Youth Public Authority, in partnership with the Kuwaiti Diving team, announced on Tuesday a campaign aiding the municipality in the cleaning up process after celebrations and marches, in honor of Kuwait's National Day and Liberation Anniversary.

In a statement to KUNA, Waleed Al-Ansari -- the director of Youth Public Authority's Volunteer Work Department -- stated that the campaign's goals were to increase participants' awareness of the value of environmental preservation and to express gratitude for the outstanding work done by the municipality during the period of national holiday celebrations.

The campaign, organized by the

Academy of Volunteer Work at the Authority, was part of a series of events and programs organized in collaboration with government agencies and civil society organizations during national celebrations.

He affirmed that the authority was committed to collaborate with citizens and residents to safeguard the environment.

On his part, the head of the Kuwaiti diving team, Waleed Al-Fadhel, said in a similar statement that the campaign came within a series of environmental campaigns held in partnership between the Public Authority for Youth and the Kuwaiti diving team, which took it upon itself to carry out various environmental awareness campaigns.



Judge refuses Tunisians release

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27: The detention renewal judge decided to extend the detention of two Tunisians on charges of joining ISIS, and rejected the request for their release.

It is worth mentioning that the State Security Department of the Ministry of Interior was able to thwart a plan by a terrorist cell that intended to target places of worship belonging to the Shiite sect and kill people. The security team was able to follow the cell, monitor its movements, and arrest three members of an Arab nationality belonging to a terrorist

organization. All the accused were referred to the Public Prosecution to take legal measures against them.

Detention extended: The detention renewal judge yesterday decided to extend the detention of a female Egyptian doctor for the third time. She was accused of impersonating a Kuwaiti man, entering Kuwait using his passport, and changing her gender and features to resemble the facial features of the Kuwaiti man.

The security authorities had arrested the doctor when he attempted to enter Kuwait, after the immigration officer at the airport raised suspicions.

Kuwait keen to ensure UN rights council serves objectives: envoy

Rights council celebrates its 55th anniversary

GENEVA, Feb 27, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait is seeking to “correct the path” of the UN Human Rights Council to remain on the track for attaining the objectives upon which it had been founded, said the country’s Permanent Representative to the UN and Inter-

national Organizations Ambassador Nasser Al-Hayen.

Ambassador Al-Hayen was speaking to KUNA, marking the council’s 55th anniversary that coincided with the State of Kuwait’s national days. In this regard, he expressed congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the political leaders and the people of Kuwait.

He has declared that Kuwait along with the groups in which it serves as a member has been seeking to improve the council’s performance and setting the priorities and the topics under discussion according to its principles and norms.

He expressed keenness on casting aside political disputes and focusing on the rights and freedoms that safeguard the human race’s dignity.

Such differences particularly those that emerged after the flare-up of the Ukraine war directly affected the council and foiled bids to take decisions to cease fire, and halt the Israeli crimes and breaches against the Palestinian civilians, he said, affirming Kuwait’s unwavering support for the Palestinian cause.

In line with Kuwait’s keenness to partake in the council’s meetings, Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya participates in the senior-level session on February 26-28, along with the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the UN Human Rights Commissioner Volker Turk and other senior officials, he said.

He noted that Kuwait has had a long record of humanitarian activities particularly during natural catastrophes, adding that these relief operations are guided by the wise leaders.

Kuwait was elected by a majority of the UN General Assembly as a member of the Human Rights Council for a three-year mandate, last October.



KUNA photo
The Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva, Ambassador Nasser Al-Hayen.



KUNA photo

Youth Minister Dawood Maarafi hails Kuwaiti entrepreneurs' participation in the summit.

Kuwaiti entrepreneurs' participation in Web summit hailed

Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, and Minister of State for Communication Affairs Dawood Maarafi praised Monday Kuwaiti entrepreneurs' participation in the Web Summit Qatar 2024, being held in the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center.

Maarafi said such participation of Kuwaiti entrepreneurs, initiators and inventors in the Qatar Web Summit 2024 contributes to raising the level of entrepreneur culture, especially in the field of entrepreneurship and modern technology.

The minister's remarks came during a meeting with participants from the Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (one of the centers of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences), following the launch of the (Qatar Web 2024) summit, which is hosted by the Qatari capital, Doha, for four days.

Maarafi added that the presence of Kuwaiti entrepreneurs participating in this summit and their interaction with creators, inventors and entrepreneurs from various countries around the world contributes to exchanging experiences and benefiting from them, especially in the field of entrepreneurship and technology, expressing his thanks and appreciation to the Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity.

Maarafi expressed hopes that all concerned government agencies and public interests will continue to produce young people capable of engaging in the field of technology to participate in such events, especially with the endeavor to raise the level of information technology and digital transformation, stressing that this will have a positive impact on digital transformation in the next stage. (KUNA)



KUNA photo

Kuwaiti artist Jasem Al-Nasarallah.

Kuwaiti artistry and talents in focus

Kuwaiti designers center partakes in Design Doha Biennale in Qatar

DOHA, Feb 27, (KUNA): A group of artists from Kuwaiti designers center sponsored by National Council for Culture, Arts, and Literature (NCCAL) and in cooperation with Khaleejesque cultural institute are participating in the first edition of the Design Doha Biennale in the Qatari capital, Doha, which runs until Wednesday.

Speaking to KUNA Sunday, Sheikha Fawaz Al-Sabah, head of Khaleejesque, said that she and Kuwaiti artists are showcasing at Kuwait Design Center as part of the Biennale activities, which kicked off on Saturday, aiming to spotlight Kuwaiti artistry and talents internationally.

On her side, Mariam Al-Wazzan, the exhibition curator for Kuwait Design Center, stated that the center showcased innovative works by Kuwaiti artists who incorporate sustainability and contemporary Arab identity, emphasizing the integration of environmental awareness and cultural heritage in modern design.

A group of Kuwaiti artists, including Dalia Ali, Luwla Al-Radwan, Kawthar Al-Saffar, Jasem Al-Nashmi, and Jasem Al-Nasarallah, are participating in the Kuwait Design Center, sponsored by the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) and managed by Khaleejesque, she pointed out.

Renovated premises, museum open

NUKS-UK holds 57th annual confab to enhance students' opportunities

LONDON, Feb 27, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ambassador to the UK Bader Al-Awadhi commended recently the role of the National Union of Kuwaiti Students (NUKS) and Kuwait Cultural Office in facilitating matters for approximately 10,000 students.

At the 57th annual conference of NUKS UK Branch held recently, Al-Awadhi underscored the importance of students focusing on academic excellence and utilizing British education to contribute to Kuwait's development after graduation, echoing the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The conference this year aligns with celebrations marking 125 years of Kuwaiti-British partnership and national holidays, he pointed out, extolling Britain's role in liberating Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion.

He emphasized the significance of Kuwaiti students in the UK with their pivotal role in bilateral relations, noting the historical importance of the Kuwait Cultural Office, established in 1958, and NUKS, founded in late 1964, as key pillars of bilateral relations.

The Kuwaiti Embassy in the UK guaranteed support for student activities, he said, expressing gratitude to the Cultural Office, NUKS, and British authorities for their assistance.

In his speech, Cultural Attache of Kuwait Cultural Office Dr. Abdullah Al-Meshal announced internships for graduates in Kuwaiti companies in the UK, with details to be announced in June.

Organize

The office will also organize courses for students to secure admission to prestigious universities such as Oxford and Cambridge.

Regarding admissions and certification, Dr. Al-Meshal mentioned redesigning the office's system for faster processing, explaining the office's involvement in educational policy-making to shape Kuwait's future.

On his side, Head of NUKS UK Branch Salem Al-Shibail emphasized the NUKS' role in defending Islamic, national, and political issues, particularly during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Meanwhile, Chief of Corporate Communications and Relations at Zain Kuwait Waleed Al-Khashti, a major sponsor of the conference, underlined the compa-

ny's commitment to education and youth, highlighting the importance of transparent dialogue with young people to determine future paths.

He underscored the need for jobs that align with future skills and the ability to adopt a mindset focused on efficiency, adaptability, and awareness.

The conference included honoring Al-Awadhi, Dr. Al-Meshal, and Cultural Attache Dr. Hessah Al-Ojayan, as well as media professionals involved in organizing the event, participants, and sponsors. It featured legal, medical, cultural, religious, and sports sections, along with competitions.

In the meanwhile, the National Union of Kuwaiti Students, UK-branch, opened Friday the renovated premises and museum in London in a ceremony that coincides with Kuwait's celebrations of the 63rd anniversary of Independence Day and the 33rd anniversary of Liberation Day.

Speaking at the ceremony, Kuwait Ambassador to the United Kingdom Bader Al-Awadhi commended the Kuwaiti students' efforts and positive activities to represent the dear homeland.

Reward

They deserve reward and support for their actions as instructed by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, said the Ambassador.

There are about ten thousand Kuwaiti students, male and female, studying in the UK currently.

He pointed out that the opening of the NUKS premises and museum also coincides with the 125th anniversary of the launching of the Kuwaiti-British partnership.

The NUKS museum documents the remarkable contribution of the Kuwaiti students and residents in the UK to mobilizing international and British efforts to liberate Kuwait from the Iraqi occupation through the "Free Kuwait" campaign, the Ambassador clarified.

He praised the NUKS tireless work to preserve the history and document these important events.

Ambassador Al-Awadhi noted that the museum showcases circulars, posters and other materials that were distributed during the marches in the streets of the British capital, London, to call for an international action to liberate Kuwait as well as a collection of commemorative photos of those marches.

The NUKS presented to Ambassador Al-Awadhi and the attendees a copy of the book (Epic Popular Action of Kuwaitis in London during the 1990-1991 Iraqi Invasion) by Professor Dr. Othman Al-Khadher, who served as the Secretary of the Union during the invasion.




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Qatar's Shura Council welcomes outcome of Kuwait Amir's visit

HH Amir congratulates Dominican Republic on National Day

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to President of Dominican Republic Luis Abinader on Tuesday on the occasion of his country's National Day.

His Highness the Amir wished Abinader a long healthy life and more development and prosperity for his country and people.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to President Luis Abinader, on his country's National Day.

□ □ □

Amir's visit hailed: Qatar's Shura Council welcomed the results of His Highness

the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's recent visit to Qatar.

The council affirmed during its weekly session that the discussions between His Highness the Amir of Kuwait and Amir of Qatar Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani that his visit to Qatar "would undoubtedly contribute to deepening the bonds of brotherhood and mutual cooperation between the two sides".

Qatar's Amir is keen on supporting the special relations between the two countries and their people to serve and strengthen joint cooperation.

His Highness the Amir's visit to Qatar last Tuesday showed the strong historical ties and fraternal relations between the two leaders and their people to enhance bilateral ties and strategic partnership.

... a legacy of friendship and partnership

Celebrating 125 years of Kuwait-UK ties

By Nasser Al-Hajeri

For over a century, the relationship between Kuwait and the United Kingdom has flourished, marked by mutual respect, cooperation, and shared interests. As we commemorate 125 years of diplomatic ties between these two nations, it is essential to reflect on the journey that has shaped this enduring partnership.

The roots of Kuwait-UK relations can be traced back to 1775, when a ship from the British East India Company unloaded in Kuwait. This historic encounter laid the foundation for a relationship built on trade, diplomacy, and cultural exchange.



Al-Hajeri

Today, the Kuwaiti-UK partnership encompasses a wide range of areas, including education, trade, investment, cyber security, and defense. One of the most notable aspects of this collaboration is the significant presence of Kuwaiti students in the UK. With around 10,000 Kuwaiti students pursuing higher education in British universities, education has become a cornerstone of bilateral cooperation. This exchange of knowledge fosters lasting bonds between the youth of both nations.

Furthermore, Kuwait stands as one of the largest foreign investors in the UK, with investments spanning various sectors, including finance, real estate, and infrastructure. The Kuwait Investment Office in London (KIO) serves as

a testament to this commitment, playing a pivotal role in managing Kuwaiti investments and fostering closer economic ties between the two nations. The tens of billions of dollars injected into the British economy by Kuwaiti investors, facilitated in part by the KIO, have not only contributed to economic growth but also strengthened the partnership between Kuwait and the UK. This robust investment partnership underscores the confidence and trust that Kuwaiti investors have in the stability and prosperity of the UK market, paving the way for continued collaboration and mutual prosperity.

Beyond economic ties, Kuwait and the UK share a deep commitment to promoting peace, security, and stability in the Gulf region and beyond. Through diplomatic dialogue and strategic cooperation, both nations have worked tirelessly to address regional challenges and promote dialogue among nations. Whether it is combating terrorism, resolving conflicts, or advancing humanitarian causes, Kuwait and the UK stand shoulder to shoulder in pursuit of common goals.

As we celebrate 125 years of Kuwait-UK relations, it is evident that the bond between these two nations is not merely diplomatic but deeply rooted in shared history, values, and aspirations. Looking ahead, the future holds immense potential for further collaboration and partnership in various fields. By building on the solid foundation laid by our predecessors, Kuwait and the UK are poised to embark on a new era of cooperation, innovation, and prosperity for the mutual benefit of both nations and their peoples.

The situation

Continued from Page 1

It also does not make sense to collect public money in the form of internal and external donations, and to spend on salaries without any return, as is the case in the laws approved by successive parliaments to bribe voters. In return, the voters spend them on tourism abroad due to the lack of entertainment in the country. This leaves us to wonder, for instance, why 130,000 people travel abroad during the national holidays.

It goes without saying that there are vast areas of unexploited land, and therefore spending on projects there has become an urgent necessity.

However, in order to get out of the crisis of lack of any productive outlets, there must be a strict control on spending, so that none of it costs ten times its actual cost, and to ensure that there is no systematic plundering.

Your Highness the Prime Minister, it is true that there is a housing crisis, but there is also a deliberate neglect in addressing it, because those who benefit from it seek to continue it in order to achieve optimum profits.

If such lands are used for building housing cities similar to what is being done in other countries, it would generate huge returns for the state and achieve social stability. However, this requires a change in the approach to rentier spending and unifying salaries in order for the state to get rid of the burdens placed on it as a result of the parliamentary and ministerial chaos that made public money resemble Ali Baba's adventures.

Breaking the

Continued from Page 1

In the past ten years, Austrian aid to the region amounted to more than 320 million Euros. In response to the shocking allegations that UNRWA employees were involved in the 7 October attacks, we and several other donors temporarily suspended our payments, pending thorough, comprehensive and transparent investigations. But we never stopped Austrian aid. We appreciate that the UN has now taken action and are working closely with international partners to define benchmarks that will allow us to restore payments once allegations have been examined and there is clarity about the consequences. It is crucial for the United Nations to be above reproach.

Israelis and Palestinians alike deserve to live in peace, security and dignity.

They say the Middle East is a cruel place for optimists. Indeed, in the midst of all the horror and trauma it seems daunting to chart a path towards lasting peace. But to me, there is no viable and lasting alternative to the two-state solution. It's the only game in town.

I want a future in which terrorist groups do not threaten the security of Israel. Where a civilian administration in Gaza invests in the hopes, dreams and aspirations of the Palestinian people instead of digging tunnels and plotting attacks. Where Arab states have

normalized their relations with Israel and all can reap the economic and political benefits from an integrated and interconnected Middle East. A future in which the Palestinians have realized their aspirations for a viable, democratic state under a reformed Palestinian Authority.

Families – both Israelis and Palestinians – deserve to feel secure in their homes, children deserve to play and go to school without fear, women and men deserve to pursue their work and create a life in dignity for themselves and their loved ones.

Progress will not come easy and no doubt there will be setbacks. But if we have learned anything from 7 October and its aftermath, it is that we cannot continue as before. In my conversations with fellow Jewish and Muslim Austrians, with Israeli and Palestinian partners, with colleagues from North Africa to the Gulf, I have learned that despite many real or perceived differences, we can all unite around principles of common decency and humanity. Our courage and political will has to be equal to the task. Austria is committed to making this vision a reality and to preserving future generations of Israelis and Palestinians from the scourge of war.

Kuwait's expatriate

Continued from Page 1

Comparing the first nine months of 2023 to the same period in 2022, there was a 29.67% annual decline in the value of remittances, from 4.237 billion dinars (\$13.822 billion) to 2.979 billion dinars (\$9.718 billion).

Breaking down the transfers further, the second quarter of 2023 saw the largest decline at 40.33% annually, totaling 892.1 million dinars, followed by a 31.46% decline in the third quarter to 867.7 million dinars. Transfers in the first quarter recorded 1.22 billion dinars, reflecting a 17.34% decrease.

Kuwait seeks

Continued from Page 1

In latest development, U.S. President Joe Biden signaled that a cease-fire in Gaza could be at hand, saying that Israel has agreed to pause its offensive during the upcoming Muslim holy month of Ramadan if a deal is reached to release some hostages held by Hamas.

But both Israel and Hamas downplayed on Tuesday the idea that a breakthrough was imminent.

In the wake of Hamas' attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, Israel's air, sea and ground campaign in Gaza has killed tens of thousands of people, obliterated large swaths of the urban landscape, displaced 80% of the battered enclave's population and sparked concerns that a famine could be imminent, according to the United Nations.

Now, the prospect of an invasion of Rafah has prompted global alarm over the fate of civilians trapped there.

People of Kuwait come together to celebrate nat'l days with joy

Decision to ban use of water guns, foam hailed

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27: With souls overflowing with enthusiasm, loyalty, and belonging, the people of the nation, both individually and in groups, rose to the sound of patriotic chants and songs in order to express their love for Kuwait and their overwhelming joy in its national holidays.

They affirmed that the anniversary of Kuwait's independence and the liberation of Kuwait from the brutal Iraqi aggression are the two great occasions in the history of their country that reinforce in the hearts of generations the preservation of the homeland, unity and cohesion, and remind them of the sacrifices of the martyrs.

In an interview with Al-Seyassah, they said what distinguishes this year's celebrations from the previous ones is that they are completely free of the disturbances and inconvenience of water guns, balloons, and the spraying of foam, which used to harm everyone and cause many accidents and injuries.

Below are the details of the interview:

A Kuwaiti citizen Hussein Al-Farhan said he went out with his children to celebrate the national holidays.

He asked Almighty Allah to grant Kuwait the blessing of security both in the country and in the region.

Meanwhile, Bu Muhammad said celebrating the national holidays confirms the love of the Kuwaiti people for their homeland.

He expressed his satisfaction at the ban on the use of water guns and water balloons that used to trouble citizens during the celebration of national holidays in the past.

Proud

Bu Muhammad praised the Kuwaiti military parade that was held opposite the Kuwait Towers, stressing that it made everyone feel proud of the homeland's guards and the members of the army.

Also, another citizen Hamdan Al-Husseini said his attendance at national holiday celebrations has become a necessity, as the national celebrations represent an occasion of overwhelming and indescribable joy for all his family members.

Furthermore, Umm Muhammad said she came with her entire family to celebrate the national holidays.

She prayed to Almighty Allah to have mercy on the nation's martyrs who sacrificed their lives for its pure soil and freedom.

Umm Muhammad said she wishes the main roads would bear the names of the martyrs.

In addition, Abeer Al-Azmi said she came from Ahmadi Governorate with her family to participate in the national holidays on the Gulf Street.

Another citizen Ali Al-Thuwaini stressed that the celebrations are of great importance as they shed light on the martyrs of Kuwait who sacrificed their lives for the sake of the homeland.

He said he hopes there will be facilities for the disabled in the coming years to allow them to enter all places using wheelchairs.

For his part, Yacoub Al-Sayer said the national day celebrations this year were very positive.

He indicated that the increased fine for throwing water balloons, using water guns, and spraying foam on vehicles contributed to the disappearance of these negative aspects



Kuwaitis and expats enjoying the National and Liberation Days celebrations along the Gulf Street. Photo by Mohammad Morsi

Embassies mark Kuwait's National, Liberation days

Armenian president congratulates Kuwait

ANKARA, Feb 27, (KUNA): Armenian President Vahagn Khachaturyan on Monday congratulated the State of Kuwait, the Amir, the government and people, on the 63rd anniversary of National Day and the 33rd anniversary of Liberation Day.

Kuwait Ambassador to Armenia, Nawaf Al-Enezi, told KUNA that the Armenian president informed him during his reception at the Presidential Palace to convey his warmest congratulations and blessings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti people.

The ambassador extended his sincere thanks and gratitude to the Armenian president for the invitation and keenness to strengthen relations with the State of Kuwait.

The ambassador expressed joy for this occasion and wished more development and prosperity under the wise leadership of Kuwait's Amir.

Kuwait Embassy in Malaysia held a celebration on Monday marking the 63th anniversary of Kuwait's Independence and the 33rd of Liberation, with the attendance of Malaysian Minister of Plantation and Commodities Johari bin Abdulghani and other officials.

Kuwait Ambassador Rashed Al-Saleh told KUNA that they conveyed their "deepest congratulations and blessings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, and to all the Kuwaiti people."

The ambassador noted on the strong historical relationship between the two countries.

For his part, the Malaysian minister praised the investments of Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KAFED) and its efforts in many countries, stressing that countries aspire to attract the fund's investments and expertise in development.

Abdulghani expressed his hope to expand relations between the two countries, especially in the fields of plantation and commodities, namely the natural oil industry, expressing his hope to see more Kuwaiti investments in Malaysia.

Embassy of Kuwait in Argentina held a celebration on Monday marking the 63th anniversary of Kuwait's Independence and the 33rd of Liberation.

In a statement by the embassy, Ambassador Abdulaziz Al-Besher expressed his sincere congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and all the Kuwaiti people,

wishing Kuwait more prosperity, security, and stability.

The celebration was attended by Argentinian officials, including President of the Chamber of Deputies, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, and other media and cultural representatives.

The ambassador noted on the strong historical relationship between the two countries, reaffirming the two countries' keenness for further bilateral cooperation.

Kuwait Embassy cooperated with concerned authorities in Argentina republic to illuminate a number of landmarks in the capital, Buenos Aires, with the colors of the Kuwaiti flag.

Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to Kuwait Salah Al-Maliki congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti people on the occasion of Kuwait's 63rd National Day and 33th Liberation Day.

Speaking to KUNA, Ambassador Al-Maliki lauded the brotherly deep-rooted relations between Kuwait and Bahrain, saying "when we speak of the Kuwaiti-Bahraini relations we recall with pride the long history and many achievements which reflect the historical depth of the two countries".

"The Kuwaiti and Bahraini people also have long decades of many, diverse, distinct and continuous social and fraternal relationships," Al-Maliki added.

The ambassador mentioned the old relations between the two countries in the economic and trade fields, stating that both nations have a common history filled with accomplishments.

He expressed his happiness to share with the Kuwaiti people their celebrations marking the Gulf country's National Day, wishing for Kuwait further progress and prosperity.

Director General of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) Dr. Salim M. Al-Malik on Monday congratulated the leadership, government and people of the State of Kuwait on the country's national celebrations.

Speaking to KUNA on the occasion, Al-Malik recalled the time when the State of Kuwait had obtained its independence and then liberation as a milestone that marked the founding of the State and the establishment of its identity.

The ICESCO chief, further, pointed out fruitful cooperation between the Rabat-based bloc and Kuwait in the areas of education, science and culture.

significantly.

Meanwhile, Abdullah Al-Kandari said he believes the Liberation Day in particular has its sanctity, as it is the day that reminds the people of the country's liberation from the Iraqi invasion that lasted seven months.

He stressed that preventing the negative scenes that people were complaining about in previous national celebrations, such as throwing water balloons at cars, using toy guns to spray water on cars, or

spraying white foam on cars contributed to many Kuwaiti families and even the elderly refusing to come out to participate in the joy of national holidays.

Also, a young citizen Muhammad Al-Dhafiri, said he had previously refused to go out to celebrate national holidays on Gulf Street due to the practices that were taking place there, but this time his father allowed him to go out with his friends after the Ministry of Interior stressed the prevention of negative

phenomena.

In addition, another young citizen Abdulaziz Abdullah indicated that he went out with his friends to celebrate the holidays and did not use water guns or balloons this year, as was the case in the past.

The two other Kuwaiti boys - Sattam Abdullah and Mohsen Al-Sayer - confirmed that they love the atmosphere of celebrating national holidays because it is a joy that is only repeated in February of each year.

Kuwait ... a strategic & historical ally of Yemen: PM bin Mubarak

By Sami Neman

ADEN, Feb 27, (KUNA): Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Yemen Dr. Ahmad Awad bin Mubarak has said that Kuwait is considered to be a historically strategic ally and supporter of the Yemeni people in different fields since the 1960's.

In a statement to KUNA, bin Mubarak noted that on the occasion of Kuwait's 63rd National Day and 33rd Liberation Day, Kuwait will continue to be recognized and appreciated by Yemeni generations.

Bin Mubarak gave his sincere congratulations to His Highness Kuwait's Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the government, people, and to his Kuwaiti counterpart Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah on occasion of the 63rd National Day and 33rd Liberation Day and wished Kuwait more progress and prosperity under the visionary leadership of His Highness the Amir.

He added that Kuwait has supported the

Yemeni people for decades and helped support its progress and stability through major development projects that represent its strong bond and commitment to Yemen, leading up to the Yemeni reconciliation and the end of the wars between the two parts of Yemen at the end of the 1970s.

He pointed out that Kuwait had restored that faith for the Yemeni people in the 2016 negotiations but the Houthi militia's intransigence foiled the conciliation talks.

He noted Kuwait's support for dozens of humanitarian projects and its contribution to funding UN humanitarian aid plans in Yemen annually.

Bin Mubarak added that there are plenty of development projects by Kuwait either through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) or through its leading humanitarian and relief organizations like the Kuwaiti Red Crescent and Kuwait Society for Relief and their partners in development and charitable associations continue to support Yemen in various fields.

The Embassy of the United States of America

Will Hold

A PUBLIC AUCTION

on Saturday, March 02, 2024, at the American Embassy in Bayan, Al-Masjed Al-Aqsa Street, at the parking lot outside the front gate. Viewing begins at 8:00 am, and the auction begins at 9:00 am.

Sale items include used vehicles, shipping containers, used household/office furniture, office equipment, appliances, draperies, carpets, computers, and more. All items will be sold to the highest bidder, and all sales will be in Kuwaiti Dinars (cash or K-Net).

For more information call:

22591263 - 22591264

22591094 - 22591267

World News Roundup

Europe

Orlov gets 30 months

'Countries united in support for Ukraine'

PRAGUE, Feb 27, (AP): The prime ministers of Czech Republic and Poland said Tuesday their countries are united in their support for Ukraine and pledged to look for ways to increase their help in its fight against Russian military aggression.

"I'm glad that we absolutely share the same view of Ukraine, the Russian aggression and what we need to do," Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala said at a joint news conference with his Polish counterpart, Donald Tusk.



Tusk

"We know who's the aggressor, we know who's the victim," Fiala said. "We're clearly ready to strongly support Ukraine and to look for all possible ways of further boosting our support."

Tusk said it is important "that in this region, quite complicated recently, there are two capital cities that speak in one voice practically on all issues. On Ukraine, on Russia's aggression, on the responsibility for this tragedy, we have been speaking in one voice since the beginning of this conflict."

'Sending troops is not ruled out': French President Emmanuel Macron said Monday that sending Western troops on the ground in Ukraine is not "ruled out" in the future.

Macron spoke after a meeting on Ukraine in Paris brought together over 20 European heads of state and government and other Western officials in Paris.

"There's no consensus today to send in an official manner troops on the ground. But in terms of dynamics, nothing can be ruled out," Macron said.

Macron declined to provide details about which nations were considering sending troops.

Rights advocate gets 30 months: A Moscow court on Tuesday sentenced a veteran human rights advocate who spoke out against the war in Ukraine to two years and six months in prison.

Oleg Orlov, 70, was convicted of "repeatedly discrediting" the Russian army in an article he wrote denouncing the invasion of Ukraine. He has rejected the case against him as politically motivated, telling the court in his closing statement: "I don't regret anything and I don't repent anything."

Orlov was handcuffed and taken directly into custody from the courtroom. His verdict concluded a retrial in which Orlov was earlier ordered to pay a fine. Underscoring how little tolerance President Vladimir Putin's government has for criticism of its invasion of Ukraine, the prosecution had appealed, seeking a harsher punishment.

Navalny close to being freed before death: Associates of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny said Monday that talks were underway shortly before his death to exchange him for a Russian imprisoned in Germany.

"Alexei Navalny could have been sitting here now, today. It's not a figure of speech," Maria Pevchikh, a close associate who lives outside Russia, said in a video statement posted on social media. She said she received confirmation the talks were in the "final stages" on Feb. 15, the day before Navalny was reported dead.

Her claims, which were reiterated on social media by other Navalny aides, could not be independently confirmed and she did not offer any evidence to back them up.

Hungary ratifies Sweden NATO bid: Hungary's parliament voted Monday to ratify Sweden's bid to join NATO, ending more than 18 months of delays that frustrated the alliance as it sought to expand in response to Russia's war in Ukraine.

The vote, which passed with 188 votes for and six against, was the culmination of months of wrangling by Hungary's allies to convince its nationalist government to lift its block on Sweden's membership. The government of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán submitted the protocols for approving Sweden's entry into NATO in July 2022, but the matter stalled in parliament over opposition by governing party lawmakers.

Hungary's decision paved the way for the second expansion of NATO's ranks in a year after both Sweden and Finland applied to join the alliance in May 2022 following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine - an assault that was purportedly intended to prevent further NATO expansion.

William pulls out of memorial service: Kensington Palace says Britain's Prince William has pulled out of attending a memorial service for his godfather, the late King Constantine of Greece, because of a personal matter.

The palace declined to elaborate on Tuesday but said his wife, the Princess of Wales, who is recovering from abdominal surgery, continues to do well.

It said William called the Greek royal family, which is attending the memorial service in St. George's Chapel in Windsor, to let them know he was unable to attend. Constantine II of Greece died in January of last year at the age of 82.

Ex-member of Red Army Faction arrested: A former member of the disbanded left-wing militant Red Army Faction group has been arrested after more than 30 years on the run, German authorities said Tuesday.

Prosecutors in the northern town of Verden confirmed the arrest of Daniela Klette, 65, but wouldn't immediately give further details. The Bild daily, which cited unidentified security sources, reported that she was arrested in Berlin on Monday evening.

Klette is one of three former Red Army Faction members whom police have been seeking for years. Klette, Ernst-Volker Staub and Burkhard Garweg have been linked to at least 12 robberies in northern Germany between 1999 and 2016.

Dutch court convicts 17 gang members: A Dutch court convicted 17 suspects on Tuesday in the long-running trial of an underworld gang that planned a string of killings. Judges handed life sentences to three of them, including the gang's "undisputed leader," Ridouan Taghi, once the Netherlands most-wanted fugitive.

The trial and three more murders linked to the case have enthralled and rattled the Netherlands, exposing the deadly reality of the country's drug-fueled criminal underworld.



The New York state Senate meets in the Senate Chamber on the opening day of the legislative session at the state Capitol in Albany, NY on Jan 8, 2020. (AP)

NY Dems reject bipartisan congressional map, will draw their own

US Democrats in the New York Legislature on Monday rejected a congressional map drawn by the state's bipartisan redistricting commission, setting the stage for the party to craft lines that help Democrats in battleground House races that could determine control of Congress.

The Democrat-dominated state Legislature will now have to submit and approve a new set of congressional lines, which is expected in the coming

days. Republicans are already threatening a legal challenge.

Congressional races in New York, particularly suburban contests, are expected to determine which party controls the House after the November elections, adding major significance to even the slightest tweaks in how districts are drawn.

The move came about two weeks after the state's Independent Redistricting Commission approved a

map that would have helped Democrats in two districts and a Republican in one, but left most of the current lines in place.

Democrats had panned the commission's map, arguing it split up so-called communities of interest, among other issues. Many expected Democrats to kill the proposal so they could draft maps that were more advantageous for the party's congressional candidates. (AP)

Politics

'Taylor Swift endorsement classified'

Biden, Trump plan trips to Mexico border

WASHINGTON, Feb 27, (AP): US President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump will make dueling trips to the U.S.-Mexico border on Thursday, as both candidates try to turn the nation's broken immigration system to their political advantage in an expected campaign rematch this year.

Biden will travel to Brownsville, Texas, in the Rio Grande Valley, an area that often sees large numbers of border crossings. White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Monday. He will meet border agents and discuss the need for bipartisan legislation. It would be his second visit to the border as president. He traveled to El Paso in January last year.

"He wants to make sure he puts his message out there to the American people," Jean-Pierre said.

Clash

Trump, for his part, will head to Eagle Pass, Texas, about 325 miles or 520 kilometers away from Brownsville, another hotspot in the state-federal clash over border security, according to three people who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss the plans.

Biden, speaking in New York on Monday, said he had planned to head to the border on Thursday and didn't know "my good friend apparently is going," too. The White House announcement of the trip came after Trump's plan to visit the border had been reported. The president declined to say whether he would meet with migrants on the trip.

The trips underscore immigration's central importance in the 2024 presidential race, for Republicans and increasingly for Democrats, particularly after congressional talks on a deal to rein in illegal migration collapsed.

Biden has excoriated Republicans for abandoning the bipartisan border deal after Trump came out in opposition to the plan to tighten asylum restrictions and create daily limits on border crossings. Trump, meanwhile, has dialed up his anti-immigrant rhetoric, suggesting migrants are poisoning the blood of Americans.

The number of people who are illegally crossing the US border has been rising for years because of complicated reasons that include climate change, war and unrest in other nations, the economy, and cartels that see migration as a cash cow.

The administration has been pairing crackdowns at the border with increasing legal pathways for migrants designed to steer people into arriving by plane with sponsors, not illegally on foot to the border. But US policy right now allows for migrants to claim asylum regardless of how they arrive. And the numbers of migrants flowing to the US-Mexico border have far outpaced the capacity of an immigration system that has not been substantially updated in decades. Arrests for illegal crossings fell by half in January, but there were record highs in December.

Also:

NEW YORK: US President Joe Biden joked Monday that a potential 2024 endorsement by Taylor Swift is a "classified" matter as he made a rare media appearance to mark the 10th anniversary of "Late Night With Seth Meyers."

Biden's arrival was nominally a surprise to the audience: He stepped on stage after the announced guest - comedian and actor Amy Poehler - noted that Biden had been a guest on Meyers' first show when he was vice president. Poehler said she could get

him to return, prompting Biden to enter to "Hail to the Chief."

"It's good to be back," Biden told Meyers. "Why haven't you invited me earlier?"

Going into this year's presidential election, Biden is seeking additional ways to reach out to voters, having largely avoided White House press conferences and on-the-record sit-downs with text reporters. Biden also skipped the traditional pre-Super Bowl presidential interview.

Meyers quizzed Biden about a conspiracy theory spread among some conservatives on social media that Swift and Super Bowl champion Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce are part of an elaborate plot to help Democrats win the November election.

MIAMI: Emergency crews responded Monday after a letter containing an unidentified white powder was sent to the Florida home of Donald Trump Jr., the eldest son of former President and GOP front-runner Donald Trump.

A person familiar with the matter said that results on the substance were inconclusive, but officials do not believe it was deadly. The person spoke on condition of anonymity to confirm details of the letter, which were first reported by The Daily Beast.

Trump Jr. opened the letter, which also contained a death threat, in his home office, and emergency responders wearing hazmat suits responded.

Jupiter police said the investigation is being handled by the Palm Beach Sheriff's Office, which said it was working with the US Secret Service but didn't have any further details. The Secret Service declined to comment.



French President Emmanuel Macron speaks during a press conference at the Elysee Palace in Paris on Feb 26, 2024. More than 20 European heads of state and government and other Western officials are gathering in a show of unity for Ukraine, signaling to Russia that their support for Kyiv isn't wavering as the full-scale invasion grinds into a third year. (AP)



Jimenez Jr



Marshall

America

Teenager in custody: Two people were killed and two were seriously wounded during a shooting at a home in a remote Inupiat whaling village on Alaska's northwest coast and a 16-year-old boy was in custody Monday, according to the Anchorage Daily News.

Details were slow to emerge about Sunday's shooting in Point Hope, which shook the small community and prompted a local school's closure on Monday.

The newspaper, citing court documents, reported that the teenage suspect has been charged with two counts of first-degree murder and two counts of first-degree attempted murder. State law allows minors 16 and older to be tried in adult court on murder charges. (AP)

Court docs shed details: The suspect in the killing of a nursing student on the University of Georgia campus used an object as a weapon in the crime and he's also accused of "disfiguring her skull," according to newly filed arrest affidavits.

Jose Ibarra, who faces multiple murder and assault charges, is also accused of dragging 22-year-old Laken Riley to a secluded area on Thursday, according to one of the affidavits obtained Tuesday by The Associated Press. The allegation that he dragged Riley's body was filed to support the charge of concealing the death of another person.

Authorities have not said exactly how Riley was killed, only that her death was caused by blunt force trauma. (AP)

Explosive device detonated: An ex-

plosive device was detonated outside Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall's office over the weekend, he said in a statement Monday.

Marshall confirmed no one was injured. "Thankfully, no staff or personnel were injured by the explosion," Marshall said. The Alabama Law Enforcement Agen-



US President Joe Biden talks with Seth Meyers during a taping of the 'Late Night with Seth Meyers' on Feb 26 in New York. Biden joked Monday that a potential 2024 endorsement by Taylor Swift is a 'classified' matter as he made a rare media appearance to mark the 10th anniversary of the show. (AP)

cy said a suspicious package, which was determined to be an explosive device, was discovered Monday morning. The device was detonated early Saturday morning, but no damage to nearby buildings was reported, the agency said.

Marshall asked anyone with information to contact the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency. A spokesperson for the Montgomery Police Department referred questions to the attorney general's office. (AP)

Man sentenced to life: A man convicted of fatally shooting two teenagers at a Southern California movie theater during a 2021 showing of "The Forever Purge" was sentenced Monday to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Joseph Jimenez Jr., 23, was found guilty in December of two counts of first-degree murder, as well as a sentencing enhancement of personal use of a firearm causing death.

Prosecutors said he shot Rylee Goodrich, 18, and Anthony Barajas, 19, in the back of the head as they watched a late-night showing of the horror-action film at a theater in Corona, southeast of Los Angeles, on July 26, 2021. They were the only other people in the theater.

Goodrich died at the scene. Barajas, a budding social media star, died at a hospital. (AP)

Lat/Am

YouTube criticized

Argentina prez slams Chubut gov's 'threat'

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, Feb 27, (AP): The government of Argentina's libertarian President **Javier Milei** on Monday condemned a threat by the governor of the oil-rich province of Chubut to cut off energy supplies to the rest of the country amid a dispute over funding reductions.

"(The threat) is not an attack on the federal government, but on all Argentines," presidential spokesperson Manuel Adorni told reporters Monday.

The squabble started late last week, when the federal government held back the transfer of 13,000 million pesos (around \$15 million) in federal tax revenues to the Chubut province.

In response, Chubut Gov. Ignacio Torres - who belongs to Argentina's main conservative bloc that has backed Milei - said his province would cut off oil and gas supplies on Wednesday if the funds are not disbursed. Torres' position



Milei

was shared by five other governors in hydrocarbon-producing Patagonia.

While verbal exchanges between Milei and provincial governors have been going on for weeks, this is the first large-scale confrontation, with heads of provinces threatening to cut off energy supplies to the rest of the country.

Adorni said Monday that the government of Milei, an ultra-liberal economist who has applied a series of shock economic policies since assuming power in December, "will not allow any more whims" to provincial leaders.

Couple likely thrown overboard, died: A US couple whose catamaran was hijacked last week in the Caribbean by three escaped prisoners were presumed dead and likely had been thrown into the ocean, police said Monday.

The accounts by police in Grenada and in St. Vincent and the Grenadines were a blow to those who were independently helping search for Ralph Hendry and Kathy Brandel and had hoped they were alive.

Don McKenzie, commissioner of the Royal Grenada Police Force, said at a news conference that the three prisoners escaped on Feb. 18 from the South Saint George Police Station. They hijacked the catamaran *Simplicity* on the following day and then headed to St. Vincent, where they were arrested last Wednesday, he said.

"Information suggests that while traveling between Grenada and St. Vincent, they disposed of the occupants," McKenzie said.

Mexico crowns 'Queen of Mountains': On the flanks of a central Mexico volcano, the country's female mountaineers have chosen a new "Queen of the Mountains," complete with crown, ice axe and red cape.

The tradition that dates to the 1950s came this year at a somber time for Mexico's mountaineers, as the tight-knit community was still reckoning with the recent deaths of two people on another mountain, the Pico de Orizaba, the country's highest.

This year's queen, Mariana García López, a 42-year-old administrator and teacher at the National Technology Institute of Mexico's Zongolica campus, hails from Orizaba, Veracruz, the gulf coast state that shares the peak with the state of Puebla. She started hiking the mountains of Veracruz 20 years ago and has made several ascents up Orizaba's different faces.

García López and women from more than 60 mountaineering clubs made their way up the Malinche volcano in central Mexico on Sunday. Normally, her coronation would have occurred at the 14,636-foot (4,461-meter) summit, but after the deaths on Orizaba, mountain rangers tightened requirements for those attempting to summit.

Obrador lashes out at YouTube: Mexico's president again lashed out at social media platform YouTube on Monday for taking down part of his daily news briefing where he revealed a reporter's phone number.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said the platform in Mexico "has been taken over by conservatives," accused it of censorship and claimed YouTube "is in full decline."

It marked the latest chapter in the Mexican president's love-hate relationship with social media. López Obrador's YouTube channel has 4.2 million subscribers, and the president gives preference to social media blogs and news sites at his briefings, often answering questions only from them.

Press freedom groups said the president's decision to make public the phone number of a New York Times reporter Thursday was an attempt to punish critical reporting, and exposed the reporter to potential danger.

Suspected illegal loggers kill 3: Suspected illegal loggers shot and killed three forest rangers on patrol and wounded a fourth in central Mexico, near the slopes of the Iztaccihuatl volcano.

Police in the central state of Puebla, east of Mexico City, said late Sunday that the killings took place earlier in the day. The wounded man was being treated at a hospital, police said.

The four men were "carrying out the duties of forest rangers" when they were shot, police said. Because Mexico has no national forest service, farmers from local communal farms often take up patrolling to protect their communities' forests, combat forest fires and logging.

The attackers were "presumed to be illegal loggers," according to a police statement, and a search was underway for them.

7 seriously injured by gunfire: At least seven people were shot at a crowded soccer match in the Cayman Islands and were hospitalized with serious injuries, police said Monday.

The shooting that police believe could be gang-related occurred late Sunday in West Bay, located in the northwest point of Grand Cayman island, authorities said.

As of late Monday afternoon, four of seven victims were discharged from the hospital, Police Commissioner Kurt Walton said at a press conference.

He noted that while the investigation is ongoing, the hypothesis is that a lone shooter opened fire on a small group of people gathered in the stadium's northeast corner, seeking to kill at least two of them.



The South Korean Air Force's Black Eagles aerobatic team performs during the Singapore Airshow in Singapore on Feb 20. (AP)

Asia

China's ex-FM steps down as member of legislature

Thailand & US hold annual military drills

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 27, (Agencies): The Thai armed forces and the US began on Tuesday the 43rd Cobra Gold military exercises at U-Tapao International Airport in Rayong city, with the participation of 9,570 military personnel from several countries.

According to the Thai newspaper, The Nation, Thai Defense Forces Chief General Songwit Noonpackdee said in a speech during the opening ceremony that these exercises will help develop aspects of cooperation between countries in responding to threats that come through land, sea, space and electronically.

US Ambassador to Thailand Robert Godec thanked the Royal Thai Armed Forces for hosting Cobra Gold and said that the US Navy is ready to support its Thai counterpart for training on the limited recover mission of the HTMS Sukhothai, a US-made warship that sank in the Gulf of Thailand during a storm in December 18, 2022.

Ambassador Godec added that these exercises ensure the protection of trade routes in the Indo-Pacific region and the free flow of goods and services, keeping transport costs low and enabling Thai and U.S. companies to prosper.

The 43rd Cobra Gold will include joint military exercises to enhance preparations against many types of national and international threats, as well as newly added training programs related to space and cyber threats.

Military forces from seven countries are taking part in this year's military exercises including Thailand, the US, Singapore, Japan, Indonesia, South Korea and Malaysia, while personnel from 30 other countries will take part in humanitarian aid exercises.

The Cobra Gold exercise is scheduled to take place until March 10 in various locations in Thailand including Lopburi, Chanthaburi, Sa Kaeo and Rayong.

Also:

TOKYO: South Korea's Defense Minister **Shin Won-sik** stated that North Korean munitions factories were operating at full capacity to supply weapons to Russia in exchange for much-needed food and other necessities, Yonhap News Agency reported Tuesday.

"While North Korea's arms factories operate at 30 percent capacity due to shortages of raw materials and power, certain factories are operating at full capacity, which primarily produce weapons and shells for Russia,"

Shin said in a meeting with reporters.

According to the report, Shin made the assessment as concerns have heightened about North Korea's alleged arms supply to Russia for its war in Ukraine while the war-torn nation is facing shortages of munitions due to delayed Western military aid.

North Korea is estimated to have shipped around 6,700 containers to Russia since the summit between North Korean leader **Kim Jong-un** and Russian leader **Vladimir Putin** in September, the minister said.

The amount is enough to accommodate approximately 3 million rounds of 152 mm artillery shells or 500,000 of 122 mm artillery shells in return for supplying weapons to Russia, Shin said.

North Korea appears to be receiving food and other necessities, as well as raw materials and parts used in weapons manufacturing, the minister added.

"The volume of containers from Russia to North Korea is presumed to be approximately 30 percent larger than those shipped from North Korea to Russia over the period," he noted.

The minister said Moscow is also likely to have provided satellite-related technology to Pyongyang as the country put its first spy satellite into orbit in November and vowed to launch three more this year.

Adding, if Russia's dependence on North Korean munitions and weapons grows, Shin anticipated the extent of Russia's military technology assistance is likely to broaden in the future.

TAIPEI, Taiwan: China's former foreign minister, **Qin Gang**, who has been missing from public view since last June, resigned his seat in the national legislature, state media reported Tuesday.

Qin was dismissed from office in July, in one of China's biggest political surprises in years.

The 57-year-old served as foreign minister for only seven months before he disappeared from public view last June. The government announced a month later that he had been dismissed from his post. He has yet to resurface publicly.

Qin was replaced as foreign minister by his predecessor, **Wang Yi**.

According to a notice by the National People's Congress Standing Committee, the Tianjin Municipal People's Congress accepted Qin's resignation as a delegate to the upcoming annual parliamentary session.

Official websites no longer list Qin as a member of the State Council, China's cabinet.

His disappearance came amid a series of dismissals at the top echelons of the party that included former defense minister **Li Shangfu** and other top military officials.

Signs of overt political friction are extremely rare in China, especially since President **Xi Jinping** tightened his control over the country's politics, partly through an anti-corruption drive that purged scores of his presumed rivals.

Qin's and Li's ousters are believed to be part of a broader effort to reduce security vulnerabilities amid China's increasing competition with the United States and its allies.

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia: **Tep Vong**, the senior monk who headed Cambodia's Buddhist community and was vital for its rejuvenation in the wake of the **Khmer Rouge** genocide in the late 70s, has died. He was 93.

Cambodia's Ministry of Cult and Religion said Tep Vong died Monday after an extended illness.

Tep Vong in 2006 was granted the title of the Great Supreme Patriarch, making him the religious chief of both the Mahanikay and Dhammayut orders of Theravada Buddhism in Cambodia.

About 97% of Cambodia's 17 million people are Buddhists.

He had been close to the ruling Cambodian People's Party and its leader, Hun Sen, who served as prime minister for 38 years before stepping down last year.

WELLINGTON, New Zealand: A 15-year-old rally driver and his co-driver were killed Sunday when their car left the road and plunged into a river at a rally event at Paparua in the north of New Zealand.

Police named the victims as **Brooklyn Horan**, 15, who was driving and his co-driver **Tyson Jemmett**, 35.

A police crash investigator said the car had slid off a gravel road into a river swollen by rain.

While New Zealanders cannot obtain a driver's license until they are 16, younger drivers are able to compete in motorsport events on closed roads under certain conditions.

Governing body MotorSport New Zealand said it "offers Junior Competition Licenses for competitors aged 12 to 15.

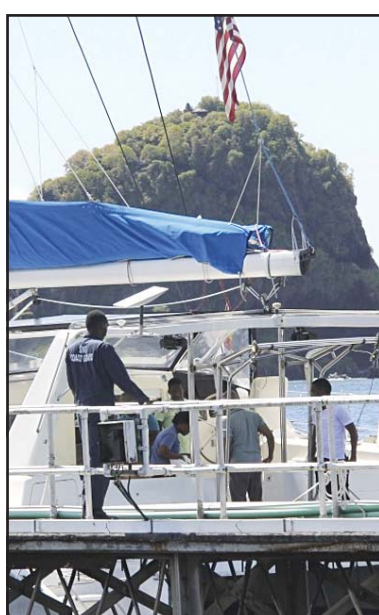
pursued them and opened fire on civilians. "We live in fear of being attacked at any time," another witness said.

Both witnesses spoke on condition of anonymity out of concern for their safety. (AP)

US 'deeply concerned': The United States expressed deep concern by the Sudanese army's recent decision to prohibit cross-border humanitarian assistance from Chad.

US State Department Spokesperson **Matthew Miller**, in a statement late Friday, said that there were reports of the Sudanese Armed Forces obstructing assistance from reaching communities in areas controlled by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). "We are also concerned that the RSF are looting homes, markets, and humanitarian assistance warehouses in areas under their control, and that both sides are harassing humanitarian workers and hindering delivery of lifesaving aid. We call on both the SAF and RSF to immediately allow unhindered humanitarian assistance deliveries to all parts of Sudan.

"We remind the SAF and RSF of their obligations under international humanitarian law, as well as their commitments in the Jeddah Declaration to protect civilians and facilitate humanitarian deliveries to meet the needs of civilians. (KUNA)



Investigators from Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines stand aboard the yacht 'Simplicity', that they say was hijacked by 3 escaped prisoners with two people aboard, now anchored at the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Coastguard Service Calliaqua Base, in Calliaqua, St Vincent on Feb 23. A US couple whose catamaran was hijacked last week in the Caribbean by three escaped prisoners were presumed dead and likely had been thrown into the ocean, police said on Feb 26. (AP)



Sall



Miller

Africa

'Poll before rainy season': Senegal's President **Macky Sall** told a national dialogue Monday that elections will be held before the rainy season begins around July, and reiterated his commitment to leave office before his mandate ends in April.

But the election's 16 candidates refused to take part in the dialogue, insisting that an election date must be set as soon as possible in line with a court order earlier this month.

Sall, who has said he wouldn't run again after his two terms in office, had postponed the election for 10 months while citing unresolved disputes over who could run. Senegal's Constitutional Court struck down the delay as illegal.

The court on Feb. 15 ordered the government to set a new election date as soon as possible, but Sall's government still hasn't done so. (AP)

Double standards denounced: Minister for International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa Naledi Pandor denounced on Monday the double discourse and standards adopted by some delegations of the participating states during their interventions on the war against Ukraine and Palestine stressing the non-discrimination among the victims.

Addressing the United Nations Human Rights Council, Pandor said such double standards prevented a focus on victims. She reiterated her country's support for freedom-seekers around the world.

The minister called upon the Israeli occupying entity and its supporters to comply with the decisions of the International Court of Justice and to stop the aggression against the Gaza Strip. (KUNA)

Rebels kill 9 people: An official in Burundi says nine people have been killed in an attack by rebels opposed to his government and again accuses neighboring Rwanda of supporting the armed group.

Government spokesman Jérôme Niyonzima described a "cowardly attack" by assailants with rifles in western Bubanza province Sunday night.

He said six women and a soldier were among the victims of the attack in Gihanga, and five others were injured.

The rebel group RED-Tabara claimed responsibility. Its fighters are based in South Kivu province of neighboring eastern Congo. The group said it killed six

Burundian soldiers in the attack.

One resident of the area told The Associated Press that government troops fled the scene as heavily armed attackers



Supporters of the Aar Sunu Senegal opposition collective demonstrate on a street, in Dakar on Feb 17. Senegal's President Macky Sall told a national dialogue on Feb 26 that elections will be held before the rainy season begins around July, and reiterated his commitment to leave office before his mandate ends in April. (AP)

oil down

The price of Kuwaiti crude oil went down by USD 1.65 on Monday to reach USD 80.65 per barrel, compared with USD 82.30 pb last Friday, said Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Tuesday.

In international markets, Brent crude went up 91 cents to reach USD 82.53 pb, while the West Texas Intermediate crude went up USD 1.09 to reach USD 77.58. (KUNA)

Gulf government-linked company debts decrease, Fitch reports

Fitch Ratings Agency has released a report indicating a significant decrease in the debts of government-linked companies across Gulf countries. This trend, as highlighted by the agency, underscores the enduring role these entities will play in shaping economic and financial policies in the region for the foreseeable future. The reliance of Gulf governments on these companies remains steadfast, with a continued emphasis on leveraging them to drive economic diversification and support budgetary priorities.

According to the report detailed in Al-Qabas daily, the dynamics surrounding government-linked companies in the Gulf exhibit a spectrum of strategies, ranging from the Sultanate of Oman's initiatives to reorganize and enhance the sustainability of its government institutions, to Saudi

Arabia's utilization of these entities to catalyze economic diversification efforts.

Noteworthy findings from the report reveal a significant reduction in the total debts of non-banking companies affiliated with Gulf governments, dropping from 33% to 25% of GDP. However, the debt levels varied across the region, with Kuwait at 13% and Abu Dhabi at 44%.

Similarly, debts of government-linked banks in Gulf countries, excluding customer deposits, saw a decline to 16% of GDP. This ranged from 6% in Bahrain to 44% in Qatar. It's worth highlighting that the banking sector's assets constituted a substantial portion of GDP, ranging from 91% in Oman to 225% in Qatar, largely attributed to government protection of depositors.

Fitch emphasized the long-standing tradition of Gulf countries in providing support to their affiliated institutions, a commitment evident both during stable periods and crises. This reaffirms the likelihood of future government assistance to these companies, emphasizing the enduring importance of government institutions in driving economic growth strategies. In concluding remarks, the agency underscored that the indebtedness of government-related institutions in Gulf countries, particularly in Qatar and Oman, could significantly impact sovereign ratings due to the size of exposure relative to the strength of their balance sheets. However, risks have diminished in recent years, contributing to the recent improvement in credit ratings for Qatar and Oman, alongside other mitigating factors.

Market Movements

27-02-2024

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts				
SAUDI	-	Tadawul	+69.79	12,601.55	PHILIPPINES	-	PSEi	-30.82	6,860.67
UAE	-	DFM	+49.30	4,272.55	PAKISTAN	-	KSE 100	-226.07	63,169.59
JAPAN	-	Nikkei	+5.81	39,239.52					
EGYPT	-	EGX 30	+273.24	29,205.16					

Business

CEO prioritizes digital transformation

KCC appoints new CEO

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27: The Kuwait Clearing Company's Board of Directors has appointed Duaij Al-Saleh as the CEO, replacing the previous foreign CEO. The company is embarking on a comprehensive digital transformation, aiming to conduct most operations digitally and limiting dealings with individuals to specific cases, reports Al-Jarida daily.

This transformation includes updating the company's application and consolidating all operations into a single headquarters to align with anticipated market shifts.

Meanwhile, the Qualified Central Broker Project (CCP) has undergone extensive testing and discussions within the market system. However, the regulatory authority has raised observations related to clarification, which must be addressed before finalizing the project.

An action plan is in place to address these observations fully, ensuring that no service is launched without the authority's satisfaction, particularly

regarding the central counterparty's work system. The project's implementation is crucial for advancing the financial market and may require adjustments to the timeline based on stakeholders' readiness.

Furthermore, the Capital Markets Authority is prioritizing the qualification of brokerage companies and their workers through the Qualified Broker Program. Brokerage companies must adhere to all observations as part of the development strategy outlined by the authority to elevate the financial market.

The qualified broker system enables brokerage firms to manage clients' funds and securities with proper licensing and approval from regulatory bodies. This stage represents a significant advancement for brokerage companies aiming to compete internationally.

Currently, the brokerage sector in Kuwait lags behind international standards, primarily limited to executing buy and sell orders.

'Experts predict rich and comprehensive articles ahead'

NBK Wealth unveils monthly 'Thought Leadership' series

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27: NBK Wealth, a leading wealth management group, announced the unveiling of its "Thought Leadership" series. This monthly publication will showcase comprehensive articles and insights spanning various topics related to investment and wealth management solutions.

The Thought Leadership series from NBK Wealth aims to provide a broad audience with valuable insights, knowledge, and access to insightful information as they navigate the ever-evolving investment landscape.

The series will feature contributions from a team of seasoned professionals at NBK Wealth, offering insights, analysis, and innovative ideas to a diverse audience. Each article covers different subjects and is written in a way that is intended to appeal to readers with different levels of sophistication and knowledge about financial and economic matters, as well as industry trends.

It is a precious resource that aims to educate, inspire, and empower individuals on their learning journey. It also serves as a guide



NBK Wealth logo

for anyone seeking to expand their knowledge and stay tuned on the latest trends in, and insights on, the world of investment management and wealth creation.

Moreover, the series will offer a wealth of suggestions, expert opinions, and perspectives on investment strategies and solutions, empowering readers to make informed decisions and stay updated on both current and emerging investment trends.

Kuwait's oil sector slump drives GDP contraction: Al-Shall report

GDP shrinks 11.7% in Q3 2023

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27: According to the Al-Shall Center's weekly report, the Central Administration of Statistics released estimates regarding the gross domestic product (GDP) for the third quarter of 2023 compared to the same period in 2022, reports Al-Jarida daily.

At current prices, the GDP amounted to approximately 12.7 billion dinars, showing a contraction of 11.7% compared to the third quarter of 2022, which stood at about 14.4 billion dinars. Similarly, the GDP at constant prices for the third quarter of 2023 was about 9.8 billion dinars, reflecting a contraction of about 3.7% compared to the previous year's figure of approximately 10.2 billion dinars.

These contractions are attributed to a decline in the added value of the oil sector, which saw a decrease of 22.1% at current prices and about 9.0% at constant prices. This underscores the economy's heavy reliance on oil despite promises to diversify income sources.

Production

In 2023, Kuwait reduced its oil production by approximately 263 thousand barrels per day, or 9.8%, coinciding with a decline in the average price per barrel by about 15.5 US dollars, or 15.6% compared to 2022.

The dominance of oil over the economy is evident in its contribution to the GDP, decreasing from 57.6% in the third quarter of 2022 to 50.8% in the third quarter of 2023. These changes are tied to fluctuations in oil production levels and global market prices, variables beyond local administrative control.

Moreover, the suspension of GDP data publi-

cation for two years during the pandemic raises doubts about the accuracy of the figures, highlighting a disconnect between public policies and economic realities.

The delayed release of GDP figures, five and a half months after the end of the period, underscores a lack of awareness of their significance compared to other countries' practices.

While the current government's program shows promise in addressing economic sustainability issues, there are concerns about potential populist tendencies and the sustainability of public finances if certain provisions are implemented without careful consideration.

Effective financial and economic reform necessitates accurate and timely data and indicators. The government's success in translating its program into action will be the true measure of its awareness and commitment to addressing economic challenges.

Zain maintains region-leading carbon emission disclosure CDP score of A- for 3rd straight year

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27: Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative technologies and digital lifestyle communications operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, has maintained for the third year in a row its leadership position of A- score in the 'CDP Score Report - Climate Change 2022'. This grade, first achieved in 2021, positioned Zain as the highest ranked and only telecom operator in the Middle East and Africa to achieve this high rating.

This score re-affirms Zain's commitment to setting emissions targets that are in line with the Science-Based Targets initiative (SBTi) guidance (@sciencetargets) to halve carbon emissions before 2030 and achieve Net-Zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Zain's activities to mitigate the negative impact of its operations on the environment are in line with the reductions required to keep global warming to the 1.5C goal set by the Paris Agreement by 2050.

CDP is a global non-profit organization that works to encourage companies and governments to disclose their environmental impacts, particularly related to climate change. The organization provides a platform for investors, companies, cities, states, and regions to measure, manage, and disclose their environmental data.

Jennifer Suleiman, Zain Group Chief Sustainability Officer stated: "Climate change is a key priority for Zain as we target halving our carbon emissions before 2030 and achieve Net-Zero carbon emissions by 2050. This alignment with global best practices and standards, reinforces Zain's position as a leader in corporate sustainability."

Suleiman added, "There are few

more important topics affecting the world as climate change, and it is incumbent for organizations like ours that can contribute to a meaningful reduction in harmful emissions to do so. We shall continue to be active and transparent about our efforts and hope more organizations in the region will be inspired to follow our example."

In 2022, Zain developed a comprehensive Climate Change Compliance Framework to structure its climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives, with the aim of becoming Net Zero by 2050. The Framework encompasses key energy efficiency initiatives and covers Zain's entire value chain, including eco-design principles; energy-efficient equipment adoption; renewable energy deployment; supplier and partner engagement; and waste management.

Aligned with recommendations from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Science-Based Targets initiative (SBTi) and the GSM Association (GSMA), Zain's Compliance Framework will continue to assess the progress of each of the company's operations toward the Net Zero goal, reducing climate change risks, and capitalizing on potential opportunities.

Zain's performance in comparison to other organizations and regions is impressive, ranking amongst the 31% of companies that reached Leadership level in the media, telecommunications, and data center group, with Zain scoring A in six categories, namely Business Strategy, Financial planning and Scenario Analysis, Emissions reduction initiatives and low carbon products, Governance, Opportunity Disclosure, Risk Disclosure and Scope 1 & 2 emissions.



Zain maintains region-leading carbon emission disclosure CDP score of A- for 3rd straight year.

Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia markets rise

Gulf financial market indices show mixed performance

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27: The state of variation in the performance of financial market indices in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries continued for the third week in a row. The main reason for this discrepancy may be the decrease in the impact of general factors on performance, whether geopolitical or economic, and a tendency for indicators to move according to local stimuli and technical movement. Last week ended with growth in the indices of 3 financial markets, reports Al-Jarida daily.

They are the indices of Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, while the indices of the UAE markets, Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and the Muscat and Manama markets, declined.

The gainers were topped by the Qatari market index, which moved slightly away from the level of 10,000 points and closed at the level of 10,303.24 points after gaining 1.46 percent, or 148.72 points, and reducing its loss for this year to 4.3 percent, after 46 listed Qatari companies finished announcing their annual results for the year 2023. Data was held for

only 7 companies that were not announced until the end of last week.

The overall result was a decline in profits by 3 percent compared to the results of the year before last, 2022. 33 companies recorded growth, while the profits of 12 companies declined and one company lost.

The Saudi market index came second, with a growth of 1.20 percent, or 149.74 points, to close at the level of 12,634.33 points, with a growth for the year 2024 of 5.6 percent. Companies continued to announce their annual results in the Saudi market, reaching 45 companies, but it came with an overall decline in profits of 5.5 percent, as the profits of 27 companies increased, the profits of 14 companies declined, and 4 companies lost, while 187 companies are awaiting the announcement of their annual results.

The pressure was from basic materials companies such as SABIC Nutrients, Yansab, Kayan, and Maaden, as all of them showed a significant decline

in profits compared to 2022.

Positivity continued in the performance of the main Kuwait Stock Exchange indices, as all of them achieved good growth during last week's trading before the national holidays, which continued for Sunday and Monday at the beginning of this week.

The general market index gained 1.10 percent, or 80.89 points, to close at the level of 7414.62 points, raising its gains for this year. To a rate of 8.8 percent, topping the Gulf performance and being one of the best growing global markets at the beginning of 2024, the first market index gained an approximately 1.10 percent rate, or 88.64 points, to close at the level of 8128.07 points, with a similar annual growth of 8.8 percent, and the 50 main index gained a smaller percentage.

It was 0.53 percent, or 31.58 points, to close at the level of 5967.63 points, approaching the level of 6 thousand points, with a growth of 8.8 percent, as is the case with the general and first indices.

Trade liquidity up by 37.8%

Kuwait's real estate market liquidity surges in Jan 2024

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27: The Al-Shall report said that the latest data available in the Ministry of Justice -- the Real Estate Registration and Documentation Department -- (after excluding both craft activity and the coastal strip system) indicate an increase in the liquidity of the real estate market in January 2024 compared to the liquidity of December 2023, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The total value of contract trades for January 2024 is about 263.6 million dinars, which is a value higher by 37.8% than the level of liquidity in December 2023, which was amounted to about 191.3 million, while lower by -7.0% compared to the liquidity of January 2023, when liquidity at that time amounted to about 283.6 million.

All January 2024 trades were contracts, with the number of real estate deals for this month reaching 402 deals. Al-Ahmadi Governorate had the highest number of deals, with 148 deals, representing about 36.2% of the total number of real estate deals, followed by Hawalli Governorate, with 92 deals, representing about 22.5%, while Al-Jahra Governorate had the lowest number of deals, with 15 deals, representing about 3.7%.

The value of private housing activity transactions amounted to about 141.4 million dinars, an increase of about 45.6% compared to December 2023, when it amounted to about 97.1 million. Its contribution increased to about 53.6% of the total value of real estate transactions, compared to 50.8% in December 2023. The average monthly value of private housing trades during the last 12 months was about 121.5 million dinars, meaning that the value of trades for the month of January 2024 is 16.4% higher compared to the average.

The number of deals for this activity increased to 309 deals, compared to 215 deals in December 2023, and thus the average value of one deal for private housing activity reached about 458 thousand dinars compared to about 452 thousand in December 2023, that is, an increase of about 1.3%.

The value of investment housing activity trades amounted to about 76.9 million, a decrease of about -10.3% compared to the previous month

(December 2023), when it amounted to about 85.8 million. Its contribution to the total liquidity decreased to about 29.2% compared to 44.9% in December 2023.

The monthly average value of investment housing activity trades over 12 months amounted to about 74.2 dinars, meaning that the value of million January trades is 3.6% higher compared to the 12-month average.

The number of its deals increased to 91 deals, compared to 75 deals in December 2023, and thus the average value of one deal for investment housing activity reached about 845 thousand dinars, compared to about 1.14 in December 2023, a decrease of approximately -26.1%.

The value of commercial activity trades increased to about 43.2 million, an increase of about 592.1% compared to December 2023, when it reached about 6.2 million. Its contribution to the value of real estate trades increased to about 16.4% compared to 3.3% in December 2023.

The average value of commercial activity trades over 12 months reached about 42.4 million dinars, meaning that the value of January trades is about 1.9% higher than the average of the last 12 months.

The number of its deals reached 8 deals, compared to 6 deals for the month of December 2023, and thus the average value of one deal for the month of January 2024 reached about 5.40 million compared to the rate for December 2023, which amounted to about 1.04 million, i.e. an increase of approximately 419.1%. One deal was also completed for warehouse activity worth 2.11 million during January 2024, compared to one deal worth 2.10 million during December 2023, i.e. an increase of 0.5%.

When comparing the total trading of January with that of the same month of last year (January 2023), we notice that it decreased from about 283.6 million dinars, that is, by -7.0%, as mentioned above. The decrease included the liquidity of investment housing activity by -15.9%, the liquidity of commercial activity by -10.6%, the liquidity of warehouse activity by -6.2%, and the liquidity of private housing activity by -0.1%.

Microsoft inks deal with France's Mistral AI

Microsoft announced an artificial intelligence partnership Monday with the French startup Mistral AI that could lessen the software giant's reliance on ChatGPT-maker OpenAI for supplying the next wave of chatbots and other generative AI products.

Mistral AI emerged less than a year ago but is already what Microsoft described Monday as an "innovator and trailblazer" at the vanguard of building more efficient

and cost-effective AI systems.

Microsoft and Mistral didn't disclose the financial terms of the deal, though Microsoft said it involves a small investment in the Paris-based startup. That suggests it is far smaller than Microsoft's investment of billions of dollars into OpenAI, a years-long relationship that has attracted the scrutiny of antitrust regulators in the U.S. and Europe.

Mistral on Monday released a public test version of its own

chatbot, called Le Chat, that apparently was flooded with so much interest that a company executive said it was temporarily unavailable for part of the day.

The company announced its large language model, Mistral Large, which it claims is in the same league as competitors such as OpenAI's GPT-4, Anthropic's Claude 2 and Google's Gemini Pro and will be available on Microsoft's Azure cloud computing platform. (AP)

EU targets foreign cos over dual-use exports to Russia

The European Union announced that it is imposing sanctions on several foreign companies over allegations that they have exported dual-use goods to Russia that could be used in its war against Ukraine.

The 27-nation bloc also said that it was targeting scores of Russian officials including "members of the judiciary, local politicians and people responsible for the illegal deportation and

military re-education of Ukrainian children."

The asset freezes and travel bans constitute the 13th package of measures imposed by EU against people and organizations it suspects of undermining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

The package was timed to mark the second anniversary of the Russian invasion. The U.S. Treasury also plans to impose

more than 500 new sanctions on Russia and its war machine on Friday.

"Today, we are further tightening the restrictive measures against Russia's military and defense sector," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said. "We remain united in our determination to dent Russia's war machine and help Ukraine win its legitimate fight for self-defense." (AP)

Gulf Bank advises customers

'Avoid responding to unknown calls and messages'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27: In line with its social responsibilities and ongoing support for the Let's Be Aware "Diraya" campaign, Gulf Bank continues its efforts to educate both customers and the banking community about the risks associated with electronic crimes targeting their information and bank accounts.

AbdulMohsen Al-Nassar, the Corporate Communications Officer at Gulf Bank, urged bank clients to exercise caution when dealing with emails, text messages, and phone calls from unfamiliar sources, to safeguard their banking details

from theft.

He emphasized that banks never request personal informa-

AbdulMohsen Al-Nassar:

Banks do not request personal information via email, text messages, or phone calls.



AbdulMohsen Al-Nassar

tion from customers via email, text messages, or phone calls, advising against responding to such communications as they frequently serve as fraudulent attempts to obtain banking infor-

mation for illicit purposes. Clicking on links in such messages could unintentionally expose

sensitive banking information to theft. Al-Nassar pointed out the increase in fraudulent activities, especially through fake donation pages established following disasters, as opportunistic fraudsters aim to exploit people's compassion and steal their funds.

He recommended that bank customers refrain from storing confidential information such as ATM card numbers, credit card details, or PIN codes on their mobile devices and cautioned against writing PINs directly on credit cards.

Additionally, he discouraged

the sharing of one-time passwords (OTPs) and emphasized the importance of logging out from the bank's mobile application or website immediately after completing a transaction.

Emphasizing the pivotal role of customer awareness in safeguarding banking data, particularly amid the widespread of electronic services, Al-Nassar advised customers to verify the authenticity and licensing of institutions before making donations.

It is noteworthy that the Central Bank of Kuwait, in collaboration with the Kuwait Banking Association, initiated the Let's

Be Aware "Diraya" banking awareness campaign in 2021.

The campaign aims to familiarize bank customers with essential banking services, enhance their ability to conduct secure transactions, ensure transactional safety, and promote financial inclusion, monetary stability, and economic resilience through comprehensive awareness of customer rights and obligations. Additionally, the campaign introduces the advantages of electronic financial transactions, strategies to reduce associated risks, and the importance of cybersecurity.

Businesses downbeat

Gloom settles over Germany economy

FRANKFURT, Germany, Feb 27, (AP): Germany's businesses remain mired in pessimism, a key survey showed, as Europe's largest economy struggles with shortages of skilled labor, slower global trade, high interest rates and political squabbling.

The closely watched Ifo institute survey of business sentiment rose only slightly to 85.5 points in February from 85.2 points in January due to "slightly less pessimistic expectations," the institute said in an accompanying statement.

"The German economy is stabilizing at a low level," the institute said.

The survey results follow a sharp downgrade of the government's expectations for growth this year, to only 0.2%, from 1.3% in the previous forecast. Germany's economy shrank 0.3% in 2023, the worst performance by a major economy and a reversal of years of economic success as an export champion.

Giant chemical company BASF on Friday joined a string of major employers saying they would cut positions, citing a "low-demand environment." The company said it made money last year "in all significant countries except Germany" and losses at its home base in Ludwigshafen meant it would seek to cut cut costs there by 1.1 billion euros (\$1.2 billion) a year by the end of 2026.

The efficiency program "will therefore also unfortunately lead to further job cuts," CEO Martin Brudermueller said in a statement with specifying how many positions would go.

Other employers recently announcing job reductions include appliance maker Miele, which plans to move 700 jobs to Poland, and Deutsche Bank, which said it will drop 3,500 positions.

Germany faces a combination of temporary and long-term headwinds. A burst of inflation after Russia cut

off natural gas supplies over the war in Ukraine robbed consumers of spending power. While inflation has since eased and wages are starting to catch up, slowing global trade has held back an economy that is heavily dependent on exports.

High interest rates from the European Central Bank - aimed at squelching inflation - have held back credit-sensitive business areas like construction of new apartments and offices.

Meanwhile, companies say they can't find enough skilled labor and have to spend time and money on extensive approval processes and bureaucracy. Over the longer term, the government skipped on investing in infrastructure such as rail networks and high-speed internet in order to balance budgets.

A 2009 constitutional amendment limiting deficit spending has come back to haunt the current government, which had to revise its spending for this year at the last minute after the constitutional court rejected the practice of putting additional spending in special emergency funds.

A relatively modest package of tax breaks for business proposed by Chancellor Olaf Scholz's coalition government is stalled in the upper house of the legislature. It is being blocked by the conservative opposition party, which demands restoration of a subsidy on diesel fuel for farmers. The cancellation of the subsidy has led to farmers blocking roads with their tractors.

The economy shrank 0.3% in the last three months of 2023, official figures confirmed Friday, and economists are forecasting another shrinkage in the current quarter.

Friday's Ifo release "gives very little hope of an imminent rebound," said Carsten Brzeski, global head of macro at ING bank.

Home sales rose in January as easing mortgage rates 'entice' homebuyers

LOS ANGELES, Feb 27, (AP): Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes rose in January as homebuyers were encouraged by easing mortgage rates and a modest pickup in properties on the market.

Existing home sales rose 3.1% last month from December to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4 million, the National Association of Realtors said Thursday. That's the strongest sales pace since August and is slightly higher than the 3.98 million sales pace economists were expecting, according to FactSet.

The modest sales increase is an encouraging start for the housing market, which has been mired in a slump the past two years. Still, compared with January 2023, sales fell 1.7%. Existing home sales sank to a nearly 30-year low last year, tumbling 18.7% from 2022.

"While home sales remain sizably lower than a couple of years ago, January's monthly gain is the start of more supply and demand," said Lawrence Yun, the NAR's chief economist.

The pickup in sales helped push up home prices compared with a year earlier for the seventh month in a row. The national median sales price rose 5.1% from January last year to \$379,100. That's the highest median sales price for January on records going back to 1999.

For the first time in 14 months, the median home sales price outpaced the 4.5% annual gain in U.S. wage growth recorded in January.

"It's unhealthy, we don't want to see it, but it's a testament to the housing shortage we're facing in America," Yun said.

Competition for relatively few homes on the market and elevated

modest pickup in properties on the market

Applications for US 'jobless' benefits fall again as labor market powers on

WASHINGTON, Feb 27, (AP): The number of Americans applying for jobless benefits fell to its lowest level in five weeks, even as more high-profile companies announce layoffs.

Applications for unemployment benefits fell by 12,000 to 201,000 for the week ending Feb. 17, the Labor Department reported Thursday. The four-week average of claims, a less volatile measure, fell by 3,500 to 215,250, down from 218,750 the previous week.

Weekly unemployment claims are broadly viewed as representative of the number of U.S. layoffs in a given week. They have remained at historically low levels in recent years, despite efforts by the U.S. Federal Reserve to cool the economy.

The Federal Reserve raised its benchmark borrowing rate 11 times beginning in March of 2022 in an effort to bring down the four-decade

high inflation that took hold after the economy roared back from the COVID-19 recession of 2020.

Many economists expected the rapid rate hikes to weaken the labor market and potentially tip the country into recession, but it hasn't happened. Jobs have remained plentiful and the economy has held up better than forecast thanks to strong consumer spending.

U.S. employers delivered a stunning burst of hiring to begin 2024, adding 353,000 jobs in January in the latest sign of the economy's continuing ability to shrug off the highest interest rates in two decades.

Last month's job gain - roughly twice what economists had predicted - topped the December gain of 333,000, a figure that was revised sharply higher. The unemployment rate stayed at 3.7%, and has been below 4% for 24 straight months - two full years - the

longest such streak since the 1960s.

Though layoffs remain at low levels, there has been an uptick in job cuts recently across technology and media. Google parent company Alphabet, eBay, TikTok, Snap and the Los Angeles Times have all recently announced layoffs. Last week, Cisco Systems announced it was cutting 4,000 jobs.

Outside of tech and media, UPS, Macy's and Levi's also recently cut jobs.

In total, 1.86 million Americans were collecting jobless benefits during the week that ended Feb. 10, a decrease of 27,000 from the previous week.

Though inflation has eased considerably in the past year, the Labor Department reported last week that consumer prices remain well above the Fed's 2% target.

The Fed has left rates unchanged at its last four meetings.

Taiwan chipmaker TSMC opens 1st plant in Japan

TOKYO, Feb 27, (AP): Chip giant Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. opened Saturday in an official ceremony its first semiconductor plant in Japan as part of its ongoing global expansion.

"We are deeply grateful for the seamless support provided by you at every step," TSMC Chairman Mark Liu said after thanking the Japanese government, local community and business partners, including electronic giant Sony and auto-parts maker Denso. The company's founder Morris Chang, was also present. This comes as Japan is trying to regain its presence in the chip production industry.

The Japan Advanced Semiconductor Manufacturing, or JASM, is set to be up and running later this year. TSMC also announced plans for a second plant in Japan earlier this month, with production expected to start in about three years. Private sector investment totals \$20 billion for both plants. Both plants are in the Kumamoto region, southwestern Japan.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida sent a congratulatory video message, calling the plant's opening "a giant first step." He stressed Japan's friendly relations with Taiwan and the importance of cutting-edge semiconductor technology.

Japan had previously promised TSMC 476 billion yen (\$3 billion) in government funding to encourage the semiconductor giant to invest. Kishida confirmed a second package, raising Japan's support to more than 1 trillion yen (\$7 billion).

Although TSMC is building its second plant in the U.S. and has an-

nounced a plan for its first in Europe, Japan could prove an attractive option.

Closer to Taiwan geographically, Japan is an important U.S. ally. Neighboring China claims the self-governing island as its own territory and says it must come under Beijing's control. The long-running divide is a flashpoint in U.S.-China relations.

The move is also important for Japan, which has recently earmarked about 5 trillion yen (\$33 billion) to revive its chips industry.

Four decades ago, Japan dominated in chips, headlined by Toshiba Corp. and NEC controlling half the world's production. That's declined lately to under 10%, due to competition from South Korean, U.S. and European manufacturers, as well as from TSMC.

The coronavirus pandemic has negatively affected the supply of electronic chips, stalling plants, including automakers, with Japan almost entirely dependent on chip imports. This has pushed Japan to seek chip production in pursuit of self-sufficiency.

Sony Semiconductor Solutions Corp. - wholly owned by Sony Corp. - Denso Corp. and top automaker Toyota Motor Corp. are investing in TSMC's Japan plant, with the Taiwanese giant retaining an 86.5% ownership of JASM.

Once the two plants are up and running, they're expected to create 3,400 high-tech jobs directly, according to TSMC. Ensuring access to an ample supply of the most advanced chips is vital with the growing popularity of electric vehicles, as well as artificial intelligence.

Farmers converge on the EU's HQ in a new show of force

BRUSSELS, Feb 27, (AP): Concrete barriers and barbed wire surrounded the European Union's headquarters on Monday as farmers angry at red tape and competition from cheap imports drove their tractors into Brussels in a fresh show of force as the bloc's agriculture ministers met.

Police carrying riot gear patrolled near barricades set up at the main entry points to the European Council building, where the 27-nation bloc's agriculture ministers were gathering. Scores of tractors adorned with flags and banners were ranked in lines, snarling city traffic.

Some lamented what they see as the slow death of working the land. "Agriculture. As a child you dream of it, as an adult you die of it," said one.

Farmers dumped a trailer load of tires a few hundred meters (yards) from the European Council building, and police brought in water cannons before the piles of rubber were set alight.

At the start of the month, a similar demonstration turned violent as farmers torched hay bales and threw eggs and firecrackers at police near a summit of EU leaders.

"We are getting ignored," Marieke Van De Vivere, a farmer from the Ghent region in northern Belgium told The Associated Press.

Luxembourg DoD partners with SES and HITEC

The Luxembourg Directorate of Defence (DoD) procured two ground stations following a competitive call for tender to enable the Luxembourg Army to improve its resilience by accessing secure satellite communications services, the DoD, SES and HITEC Luxembourg said today.

The ground stations, which will be installed at the Luxembourg Army's Military Centre in Diekirch, will be used for Luxembourg's GovSat-1 satellite services in X- and Military Ka-band frequencies, as well as for the Wideband Global Satcom (WGS) system, the backbone of the satellite communications capability of the U.S. DoD.

The addition of the two new ground stations reinforce resiliency and augment the existing Luxembourg Army satcom infrastructure already built by SES and HITEC Luxembourg 10

years ago, bringing the total number of dedicated antennas to four. The new ground stations unlock the strong potential to scale and add interoperability with the NATO partner systems, in line with the country's defence strategy for the years to come.

Yuriko Backes, Luxembourg Minister of Defence: "Access to secure satellite communications has always been among the priorities and strengths of Luxembourg, allowing the country to reinforce defence capabilities, as well as enabling fulfillment of Luxembourg's commitments towards the EU and NATO. To keep the upper technological edge, we will continue to leverage Luxembourg's globally-renowned expertise in the space sector, to increase our resilience, including that of our armed forces."

"It is an honour for SES to help strengthen the Luxembourg Govern-

ment's defence pillar by adding resiliency to its secure satcom," said Adel Al-Saleh, CEO of SES. "Following the successful implementation of the initial ground stations by the Luxembourg Army, we are delighted to extend its communications infrastructure that leverages Luxembourg's GovSat-1 and enhances interoperability with the partner systems."

"We are proud to be part of the project and once again join efforts with SES to help augment Luxembourg's defence capabilities with resilient and proven technology," said Philippe Osch, CEO of HITEC Luxembourg. "The ground terminals to be supplied for the Luxembourg Army's satcom infrastructure are a source of particular pride for us as they combine the latest technological innovations and a track-record of superior "Made in Luxembourg" quality." (AP)

The movement has gathered pace as political parties campaign for Europe-wide elections on June 6-9. It's already had results. Earlier this month, the EU's executive branch shelved an anti-pesticide proposal in a concession to the farmers, which make up an important voting constituency.



Group photo of AmCham Kuwait's successfully organized Chairman's Club Roundtable dinner.

Diplomatic ties strengthened as Ambassador Sasahara engages in business discussions

AmCham Kuwait hosts successful Chairman's Club Roundtable dinner

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27: AmCham Kuwait successfully organized a Chairman's Club Roundtable dinner and discussion in collaboration with the U.S. Embassy, and in attendance of Her Excellency, U.S. Ambassador Karen H. Sasahara. The dinner was sponsored by Kuwait & Gulf Link and Kuwait Resources House.

Amidst an atmosphere of camaraderie and strategic dialogue, leaders representing various sectors engaged in substantive discussions aimed at fostering partnerships and charting pathways for mutual advancement. The Chairman's Club Roundtable and Dinner served as a platform for exchanging insights and ideas, reinforcing the commitment to bilateral growth and prosperity between Kuwait and the United States.

The evening highlighted the importance of strengthening Kuwaiti-American ties and fostering innovation across industries. Participants seized the opportunity to explore collaborative opportunities, recognizing the transformative potential

inherent in cross-border cooperation.

Key highlights of the evening included:

Strategic Dialogues: Key leaders from business, government, and academia participated in constructive dialogues, exploring opportunities for collaboration and innovation in key sectors.

Networking Opportunities: Attendees, including Her Excellency Ambassador Sasahara, engaged in introductions and discussions, fostering connections and sharing insights about their industries and areas of expertise.

This provided an invaluable opportunity for H.E. and other participants to establish new relationships and deepen their understanding of Kuwait's business landscape.

Acknowledgment of Contributions: Participants were recognized for their dedication to promoting bilateral relations and economic development between Kuwait and the United States.

"The Chairman's Club Roundtable and Dinner exemplified the spirit of collaboration and shared vision for a brighter future," Pete Swift, The Chairman at AmCham Kuwait. "We are honored to have Her Excellency Ambassador Sasahara join us, underscoring the significance of fostering strong diplomatic and business relations between our nations."

The evening underscored the enduring bonds of friendship and cooperation, reinforcing AmCham Kuwait's commitment to promoting economic empowerment and sustainable development initiatives.

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.



AUK & AU PR image

Bank reaffirms commitment to education sector

ABK promotes student products at AUK and AU

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the education sector by promoting its A+ Student account and ISIC Youth prepaid card at a booth located at the American University of Kuwait (AUK) and Australian University (AU).

Commenting on the Bank's participation, Johair Marafi, General Manager of Retail Banking at ABK, said, "I would like to express our deep commitment to understanding students' needs and providing a distinctive banking experience."

ABK's booth garnered significant interest among students who had the chance to directly engage with the attending representatives to inquire about the Bank's products and services. ABK's team were ready to address questions and provide a valuable opportunity to gain deeper insights into the benefits of these student-centric banking products.

She continued, "We remain keen on providing tailored promotional offers and campaigns for our customers, with a special focus on our youth segment,

in collaboration with various entities from across multiple sectors."

ABK plans to continue to expand its presence at academic institutions and in events to showcase its innovative banking solutions and products to better serve the student community.

Marafi concluded with an invitation to follow the Bank's social media accounts to remain up to date with the latest marketing initiatives and to benefit from the current promotional campaigns and offers.

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

solutions and services through its subsidiary, ABK Capital.

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

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

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



Marafi

Fostering sense of unity among attendees

Bangladesh Community commemorates Int'l Mother Language Day, Kuwait Liberation Day

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27: The Bangladesh community in Kuwait came together to organize a vibrant program commemorating International Mother Tongue Day and the Liberation Day of Kuwait on the 22nd and 23rd of February. The event witnessed the enthusiastic participation of thousands of individuals, fostering a sense of unity and celebration among attendees.

The program was meticulously planned, offering a diverse range of activities to engage the community. On the evening of the 22nd, festivities commenced with a special tribute to International Mother Tongue Day. Esteemed guests delivered inspiring speeches, highlighting the significance of linguistic diversity and cultural heritage. Following the speeches, a local musical band enthralled the audience with a captivating performance, adding a melodious touch to the celebrations.

The following morning, the program continued with a delightful cultural and sweet festival. This segment of the event featured an array of cultural showcases, including traditional dances and performances, showcasing the rich tapestry of Bangladeshi culture. Additionally, children's games added an element of fun and excitement, bringing joy to the youngest members of the community. As a gesture of appreciation and encouragement, gifts were distributed to participating children, further enhancing the festive atmosphere.

Throughout the program, participants exuded warmth and happiness, reflecting the spirit of camaraderie and unity that prevailed during the event. The successful organization of the health program underscored the Bangladesh community's commitment to fostering cultural exchange and strengthening bonds within the Kuwaiti society.

In conclusion, the Bangladesh community in Kuwait demonstrated its ability to host a memorable and impactful event, bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds to celebrate.



Photos from the event.

KCICAI annual Family Day event brings laughter & outdoor fun to its members

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27: The Kuwait Chapter of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (KCICAI) successfully hosted its annual Family Day. The event, themed "LUDO: Laugh, Unwind & Dabble Outdoors," brought together 450 enthusiastic participants for a day filled with laughter, relaxation, and outdoor activities.

The Family Day aimed to foster a sense of camaraderie among the KCICAI members and their families, providing a platform for them to unwind and create lasting memories. The chosen theme, LUDO, symbolized the spirit of the event - laughter, bonding, and the joy of spending quality time together.

Highlights of the KCICAI Family Day included a variety of outdoor games and activities suitable for all age groups. The Hilton Resort provided a picturesque backdrop for the festivities, enhancing the overall experience for attendees. From engaging team-building exercises to family-friendly competitions, the day was designed to cater to the diverse interests of the KCICAI community.

Mr. Rabin Gonsalves, the Chairperson of KCICAI, expressed his gratitude for the overwhelming response, saying, "The KCICAI Family Day is an annual tradition that brings our members and their families together in a relaxed and enjoyable setting. This year's LUDO theme added a playful touch, encouraging everyone to laugh, unwind, and engage in outdoor activities. It was heartening to see 450 members actively participating and creating cherished memories."



Photos from the event.

The success of the KCICAI Family Day underscored the organization's commitment to promoting a healthy work-life balance and strengthening the bonds within the accounting community.

Another unique feature of the event was a mobile dental clinic provided by Maidan clinic which offered free dental check-ups to the members and kids. This was very well received.



Group photo during the executive meeting.

Future Eye Film Club inaugurated

On February 16, 2024, the executive meeting of Future Eye Theatre convened at Kala Auditorium in Mangaf. During the session, it was resolved to inaugurate the Future Eye Film Club (FEFC), envisioned by President Santosh Kuttat, aiming to provide a platform for discussing, reviewing, and screening critically acclaimed movies under the Future Eye Theatre banner.

The initiative is set to commence with the screening of "Nomparkood," a film lauded with both the Film Critics Award and the Satyajit Ray Award. The protagonist, portrayed by Mr. Somu Mathew, was previously active in Kuwait's arts and cultural sphere before relocating to India. Furthermore, a post-screening discussion with Mr. Mathew is planned, with details regarding the date and venue to be announced later.

Additionally, it was agreed that short films pro-

duced in Kuwait, as well as those selected for various competitions, will be screened and accompanied by discussions. Invitations for participation will be disseminated by the association, welcoming all interested individuals to reach out to the office bearers.

Furthermore, other resolutions encompass a bi-monthly solo act or short-play theatre performance, with a maximum duration of 15 minutes, featuring artists in Kuwait. Workshops and plays tailored for children were also slated for implementation. Interested parties are encouraged to engage with the office bearers for further details.

For more details please contact Contact No. 97106957, 97784460, 97298144, 50799885.

Kara Swisher's 'Burn Book': A blistering critique of tech titans

Books

Technology is so pervasive and invasive that it's polarizing people, producing feelings of love and loathing for its devices, online services and the would-be visionaries behind them, according to a long-time Silicon Valley reporter.

Kara Swisher unwraps how we got to this point in her incendiary memoir, "Burn Book," coming out Tuesday, an exposé that also seeks to avert technological calamity on the perilous road still ahead.

Swisher skewers many of the once-idealistic tech moguls who, when she met them as entrepreneurs decades ago, promised to change the world for the better but often chose a path of destructive disruption instead. And along the way, they amassed staggering fortunes that have disconnected them from reality.

Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, who broke into a sweat during an on-stage interview with Swisher in 2010, and Tesla CEO Elon Musk, who once talked to her regularly before cutting off communications after he bought Twitter in 2022, are painted in the harshest light.

"If Mark Zuckerberg is the most damaging man in tech to me, Musk was the most disappointing," Swisher writes in her 300-page book.

That's one of the milder critiques in what's a mostly scathing take-down by one of the most respected and feared reporters covering technology. Her reputation is such that Swisher has become as synonymous with Silicon Valley as the famous entrepreneurs who shaped it since she began covering the industry in the 1990s.

CEOs, including Zuckerberg and Musk, regularly granted her exclusive interviews, fed her scoops and sometimes even secretly called her for advice, according to her book. When the HBO series, "Silicon Valley," needed someone to play an influential reporter in an episode, Swisher was cast as herself - a role she still regularly fills as a technol-

ogy commentator on major TV networks.

Swisher no longer resides in Silicon Valley. She moved to Washington, D.C., a few years ago, mostly because that's where her wife works, but also because she was feeling a need to escape what had become an increasingly toxic and insular scene.

But she has remained plugged into - and worried - about what is happening with technology, particularly with the accelerating rise of artificial intelligence and its potential for causing even more damage than she thinks has already been done by social media, smartphones and other products that haven't been tightly regulated.

Missteps

Swisher told The Associated Press that she hopes "Burn Book" serves as shot across the bow of both the technology industry and governments around the world, a warning that the same missteps that happened during the past 20 years must not be repeated as artificial intelligence seeps into all corners of society.

"Don't get fooled a second time," Swisher said of what she hopes the book's main takeaway will be. "We need our government to make these (technology-industry) people accountable and that has not happened. We need them to understand consequences because they certainly haven't done us right on the damaging parts of technology. We need to stop letting them off the hook."

Swisher initially didn't even want to write another book, partly because she has become more interested in focusing on her Pivot podcast. But she but finally got on a roll after she hired Nell Scovell, who co-wrote a best-selling book with former Facebook executive Sheryl Sandberg, to help her remember all the stories she accumulated.

Those recollections led her to disassemble some of the world's richest people in her book, but Swisher isn't worried about the blowback. "I don't care what they think," Swisher said. "The worst thing I do is tell people what I think of them, but I am being truthful."

Musk, who also runs rocket ship maker SpaceX and social media company X, used a pejorative term for anus to describe Swisher in his last email sent to her in October 2022, according to her book.

"You can see it every day on Twitter (renamed X by Musk), there is something wrong with him," Swisher said of Musk during the AP interview. "He is in desperate need of attention, he is a classic narcissist who has turned into a malevolent narcissist."

Swisher doesn't spend her entire book bashing tech leaders. She devotes an entire chapter to the industry's "mensches," a list that includes Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff, investor Mark Cuban and the late Dave Goldberg, who was CEO of SurveyMonkey and Sandberg's husband when he died in 2015 while on vacation in Mexico. She also has mostly kind words for the likes of former Netflix CEO Reed Hastings, former Yahoo CEO Jerry Yang, Apple CEO Tim Cook and his late predecessor, Steve Jobs.

Eventually, Swisher said she hopes she will look back kindly on the tech leaders at the vanguard of AI, especially Sam Altman, the CEO of OpenAI, the San Francisco startup behind the popular chatbot ChatGPT.

"One thing I do like about Sam is he is able to hold two conflicting ideas in his head at the same time," Swisher said. "Of course, he is going to be a techno-optimist, but he is not a techno-idiot. Now what will be a problem is he just takes whatever he wants, even though he has warned of unsafe things, and then does nothing about them. That's what too many of these tech moguls have done." (AP)

Variety



This image released by FX shows Hiroiyuki Sanada as Yoshii Toranaga in a scene from 'Shogun.' (AP)

Film

A modern saga of power, betrayal and cultural fusion

'Shogun' revitalizes literary classic for 2024

NEW YORK, Feb 27, (AP) - When FX sent screenwriter Justin Marks a copy of James Clavell's hit 1975 novel "Shogun" with the idea of turning it into a series, he initially couldn't put it down. That's because he was reluctant to pick it up.

The book about a British navigator shipwrecked in feudal Japan was massive - over 1,000 pages. And old: "It was the book that was on our parents' nightstand." Plus it sounded culturally out of step. He assumed it couldn't be adapted for 2024.

Marks laughs that he "was being a jerk" and judging a book by its cover. With urging from his wife, novelist Rachel Kondo, he eventually picked it up and soon realized why Clavell's novel was so celebrated.

"When you open it and you go through it, it is a remarkably modern story," he said. "It really does get to the core of what it is to encounter another culture and to encounter oneself in that culture."

Marks and his wife plunged into the fish-out-of-water tale and now are ready for the world to see their 10-episode fictional limited series "Shogun." Set in Japan in 1600, it's rooted in the real history of the period, a dangerous time when several warlords jockeyed for ultimate power as European powers warily circled the island nation.

The arrival of a shipwrecked Englishman - John Blackthorne - disrupts the balance in Japan and yet offers intriguing possibilities since he knows important global information. A pawn at first, he rises to become a trusted adviser and ally.

"It really came down to being the story about agency and this story about characters who are trying to exert control over the path of their own destiny in a very chaotic world where you can literally lose your head at any moment," said Marks.

The series has elements of intrigue and spectacle like "Game of Thrones," with brutal beheadings, people boiled alive or sliced open with katanas, blood splashing on window screens and fire-tipped

arrows.

It also shows the hesitant understanding growing between Blackthorne (Cosmo Jarvis) and Lord Toranaga (Hiroiyuki Sanada) and a love story between Blackthorne and translator Lady Mariko (Anna Sawai).

"Maybe fate brought you here for a reason," Blackthorne is told shortly after shipwrecking in Japan. "Maybe you'll live long enough to find out what it is."

Sanada says the cast and creators came at the project hoping to respect the novel but also to ground it in historical reality and make the characters believable. "Our North Star was authenticity from the beginning," he said.

Asian culture

The series is riding a wave of new TV offerings that embrace Asian culture, including Max's "Ninja Kamui," "Warrior" and "Tokyo Vice," Paramount+'s "The Tiger's Apprentice," and "Avatar: The Last Airbender" and "House of Ninjas," both on Netflix.

The 1975 book "Shogun" sold millions and a 1980 TV miniseries, starring Richard Chamberlain and Toshiro Mifune, was watched by 1 in 3 U.S. households, winning three Emmys and three Golden Globes. Both the series and book triggered a wave of interest in feudal Japan, from kids playing with toy katanas to video games to Tom Cruise starring in "The Last Samurai."

"It's almost impossible not to continue to read 'Shogun' once having opened it," The New York Times said in its review. "Yet it's not only something that you read - you live it. The imagination is possessed."

The new series - with Clavell's daughter Michaela as a producer - adjusts the story. Sanada said that if the book was "blue eyes watching Japan," the FX series puts on "Japanese lenses."

Blackthorne is less the hero here than a catalyst, as co-creators Marks and Kondo explore power dynamics.

Those tuning in may feel a whiff of "The Godfather," another epic in the 1970s with a strong sense of loyalty, family and honor, while violence lurks nearby. There's also a note of "Succession," which Marks doesn't deny.

"There's always in a writers' room a show we're all watching when we're doing it and 'Succession' was that show," he says with a laugh. "We really were sort of just loving it. And in some ways it probably bled into the mix."

Perhaps the most enjoyable parts of the series is the moments when both East and West realize they can learn from the other.

At first, Blackthorne calls the Japanese "barbarians," and they, in turn, use the same term to describe him. But his bravery and expertise with weapons makes him valuable, and he learns about karma and inner calm.

"Do not be fooled by our politeness, our bows, our maze of rituals," Lady Mariko tells him. "Beneath it all, we could be a great distance away, safe and alone."

Sanada said it was appropriate that Western and Japanese crew members worked together to create the show. "The making of 'Shogun' itself has great drama and overlaps the story," he says. "This is another good message for now: If we get together, we can create a better future together."

Marks, who also served as showrunner and executive producer, says the "Shogun" team tried hard to fix mistakes in the novel, but such errors are always going to happen when bridges are built between cultures.

"We're never going to get to place where we don't make mistakes. What we do reach, hopefully, is every 40 years, whatever it may be, we reach a point where we just make better mistakes."

SANTA FE, N.M.: Testimony at trial Monday turned emotional and argumentative as an eyewitness recounted the fatal 2021 shooting of a cinematographer by actor Alec Baldwin during a movie rehearsal and described gun misfires, crew members walking out and a "ludicrous" pace of work.

Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, who was the armorer for the upcoming Western movie "Rust," is fighting charges of involuntary manslaughter and tampering with evidence at a trial that entered its third day of testimony Monday. A trial date was set for Baldwin in July on a single charge of involuntary manslaughter in the death of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins. He has pleaded not guilty.

Defense attorneys highlighted Gutierrez-Reed's unusual disadvantage and vulnerability at the time as a part-time, 24-year-old armorer without trade-union membership on a set where few dared confront Baldwin directly about concerns about safety and related budgeting.

Monday's testimony veered into the actor's handling of the revolver that killed Hutchins - including a video of Baldwin twice practicing a cross-draw maneuver for a camera on Oct. 21, 2021, shortly before the fatal shooting that day. Investigators found no video of the shooting.

The video of Baldwin was accompanied by searing testimony from Ross Addiego, a front-line "Rust" crew member who helped guide the film's camera. Addiego said that in the moments after a shot rang out on set, he made eye contact with a wounded Hutchins and tried to calm wounded director Joel Souza.

"The first person I made eye contact with was Halyna, who was clearly injured. In fact, she was starting to go flush and I think holding her right side," said Addiego, breaking into tears. "I think I yelled out, 'If you can't help, get ... out of here, and someone call 911.'"

Prosecutors guided Addiego through testimony in which he described his anger and frustration with safety procedures on set, including the sight of a storage cart for guns and ammunition that frequently appeared to be unattended and Gutierrez-Reed's work as an armorer in charge of loading guns

with blank and dummy rounds. Investigators found six live rounds on the set of "Rust," including the one that killed Hutchins.

Addiego noted two gun misfires on set - confirmed as blank rounds without projectiles by workplace safety regulators - and just one safety meeting over the course about two work weeks, when daily



Baldwin



Hutchins

meetings are the norm.

He said prior to the fatal shooting he lodged safety complaints with union representatives and the film's top safety official, assistant director David Halls, who pleaded no contest last year to a charge of negligent use of a deadly weapon and may be called on to testify.

"At times we seemed to be

working at ludicrous speeds," said Addiego, who also testified to the grand jury that indicted Baldwin in January. "We always seemed to be rushed and under the gun."

In a tense cross-examination, defense attorney Jason Bowles asked Addiego whether he was aware that Gutierrez-Reed had unsuccessfully requested more time

for focus on her responsibilities as armorer instead of other prop duties, such as rolling cowboy cigarettes.

"Did you ever stand up to Mr. Baldwin and say, 'No, we're not going to move this fast?'" Bowles asked.

"That's not my job," Addiego said. (AP)

Features

ARABIC TIMES

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2024

People & Places



This image released by Netflix shows Gordon Cormier in a scene from the series 'Avatar: The Last Airbender.' (AP)

Music

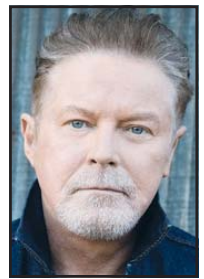
Hits very personal

'Hotel California' lyrics stolen, Henley testifies

NEW YORK, Feb. 27, (AP) — **Don Henley** never gave away handwritten pages of draft lyrics to "Hotel California" and other Eagles hits, he said Monday, calling them "very personal" in testimony that also delved into an unrelated piece of his past: his 1980 arrest.

Henley, the Grammy-winning co-founder of one of the most successful bands in rock history, is prosecutors' star witness in an unusual criminal trial surrounding about 100 legal-pad pages from the birth of a blockbuster 1976 album.

Henley says the documents were stolen from his barn in Malibu, California. He testified Monday that he was appalled when the material began turning up at auctions in 2012.



Henley

"It just wasn't something that was for public viewing. It was our process. It was something very personal, very private," he said. "I still wouldn't show that to anybody."

At issue are about 100 sheets of paper inscribed with lyrics-in-the-making for multiple songs on the "Hotel California" album, including "Life in the Fast Lane," "New Kid in Town" and the title track that turned into one of the most durable hits in rock. Famed for its lengthy guitar solo and puzzlingly poetic lyrics, the song still gets streamed hundreds of millions of times a year. The album is the third-biggest seller in U.S. history.

On trial are rare-book dealer Glenn Horowitz and rock memorabilia specialists Craig Inciardi and Edward Kosinski. They bought the pages through writer Ed Sanders, who worked with the Eagles on a never-published band biography and isn't charged in the case.

The defendants have pleaded not guilty to charges including conspiracy to criminally possess stolen property. The men's lawyers maintain that Henley willingly gave the pages to the scribe and that nothing criminal happened at any point.

Defense attorney Jonathan Bach played tapes Monday of 1980 phone calls between Sanders and Henley, including one in which Henley said he'd "try to dig through" his legal pads full of lyrics drafts. The attorney showed Henley a shipping label showing that his property caretaker, at some point, sent Sanders a box. Its contents weren't listed.

Henley acknowledged that he didn't remember the entirety of his conversations with Sanders.

But the singer and artists' rights activist insisted he gave the writer only access to the lyrics pages, not possession of them. He said he told Sanders he could examine the documents, ideally in an attic apartment on the Malibu property, so the book could benefit from a firsthand view of "the time and effort that went into" writing Eagles songs.

Henley said he'd discussed sending music reviews and magazine clips to Sanders but didn't recall offering to send handwritten lyrics.

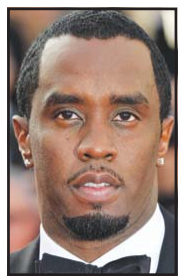
"You know what? It doesn't matter if I drove a U-Haul truck across country and dumped them at his front door," Henley said, his raspy drawl quickening. "He had no right to keep them or to sell them."

Sanders' 1979 book contract said any material furnished by the Eagles was deemed their property, Henley noted.

The defense had signaled that it planned to question Henley, 76, about how clearly he remembers an era when he was living in his own fast lane. In an apparent attempt to defuse some of those questions, a prosecutor brought up Henley's 1980 arrest.



Josh Brolin, left, and Kathryn Boyd attend the premiere of 'Dune: Part Two,' at Lincoln Center Plaza, on Feb. 25, 2024, in New York. (AP)



Combs



Swift

Variety

NEW YORK: Sean "Diddy" Combs was sued Monday by a music producer who accused the hip-hop mogul of sexually assaulting him and forcing him to have sex with prostitutes.

The suit, filed in federal court in New York, accuses Combs of repeated instances of unsolicited groping and sexual touching. It also says the man had to work in a bathroom while Combs showered and walked around naked.

A lawyer for Combs called the events described in the lawsuit "pure fiction."

"We have overwhelming, indisputable proof that his claims are complete lies," said Combs attorney **Shawn Holley**. "We will address these outlandish allegations in court and take all appropriate action against those who make them," he added.

A lawyer, **Tyrone Blackburn**, who filed the lawsuit on behalf of the producer did not immediately return an email seeking comment. The Associated Press does not typically name people who say they were sexually assaulted unless they consent to being identified or decide to tell their stories publicly.

In the lawsuit, the producer claims Combs made him solicit prostitutes and pressured him to have sex with them. It also described a time when the producer woke up in bed with two sex workers, suspecting he had been drugged.

The legal claim is one of several sexual assault lawsuits filed against Combs in recent months, including a lawsuit from the R&B singer Cassie that was settled last year. Another of Combs' accusers was a woman who said the rap producer raped her two decades ago when she was 17.

Combs has denied the allegations. In a statement in December, he said the "sickening" claims had been made by people "looking for a quick payday."

"Let me be absolutely clear: I did not do

Film

The Last Airbender sets new standard

Netflix's Avatar series debuts strong

NEW YORK, Feb. 27, (AP) — A new entry in the "Avatar" franchise is about to soar and James Cameron has no part in it.

"Avatar: The Last Airbender" is a completely different fictional world from Cameron's Pandora but the two similarly named dueling sci-fi fantasy properties have kept throwing out new entries over the decades.

On Thursday — two years after the debut of "Avatar: The Way of Water" — Netflix offers "Avatar: The Last Airbender," a multi-part, lush live-action adaptation that mixes adventure and friendship, martial arts and philosophy, all through an Asian lens.

It's a potentially fraught step because fans of this universe are very protective of the franchise, which began as a beloved cartoon series in the anime style airing on Nickelodeon from 2005 to 2008.

"When you have an opportunity to be part of a world that is beloved by generations of people, it can be daunting sometimes because it's a big responsibility," says actor Paul Sun-Hyung Lee. "But, at the same time, as performers, you don't often get chances to sort of dive into worlds like that and to be part of gigantic productions."

"Avatar: The Last Airbender" is centered on a world with four tribes — air, water, earth and fire. Some can manipulate or "bend" their respective elements: hurl giant blobs of water, raise up rocks or zap someone with a wave of flames.

The eight-part saga starts with this world unbalanced — there has been a

war for nearly 100 years as the Fire Nation tries to take over the planet, pretty much wiping out the airbenders along the way.

Then a young waterbender named Katara and her older brother, Sokka, discover a 12-year-old airbender named Aang, who has been frozen for a century. They realize that he may be the prophesied Avatar who can control all four elements and unite all four nations.

"I never asked to be special," Aang says early in the first episode. "The world needs you, Aang," he is told by an elder. "I don't want this power," replies Aang. The elder counters: "Which is why you will make a great Avatar."

"It's Joseph Campbell's hero's journey," says Daniel Dae Kim, who plays the leader of the Fire Nation, connecting the series to such franchises as "Star Wars" and "The Matrix". "It makes it relatable to any kid or anyone to say, 'I don't have to be born with a sense of destiny.' Anyone can have that destiny thrust upon them."

Netflix has created a lushly crafted universe, where our heroes soar over roiling seas aboard bison that fly and armies battle with staffs, mid-air flips and power blasts. Port cities teem with elegant sailing ships, costumes are colorful and pockets of humor and romance lighten the action sequences.

"It's such a deep show," says Gordon Cormier, born just a year after the original animated show ended its run and who now plays Aang. "Like the cartoon, it has so many character arcs and just amazing stories."

Aang teams up with Katara and Sok-

ka to travel around their world, looking for clues for a way to channel his inner Avatar. There are plenty of slo-mo martial arts face-offs and mind-blowing manipulations of the elements.

Cast members were quick to give credit to showrunner and executive producer Albert Kim for being true to the beloved animated series while developing elements and crafting it for a live-action audience.

"I'm a fan of the original animated series myself and we wanted to do it justice," says Lee. "We wanted to make sure that the OG fans were happy with it, but at the same time, we're not just giving them beat by beat the exact same thing because it already exists."

Dallas Liu, whose credits include "PEN15" and "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings," plays the Fire Nation's crown prince and says Albert Kim helped them give the Netflix series its own identity.

"I think we found a very nice balance of staying faithful, but also allowing people who have never seen the show to watch a similar journey that still holds the essence of the original series."

The show is riding a wave of new TV series that embrace Asian culture, including Max's "Warrior," Paramount+'s "The Tiger's Apprentice," FX's "Shogun" and "House of Ninjas" at Netflix.

The world of "Avatar: The Last Airbender" has had a live-action treatment before — M. Night Shyamalan's film adaptation in 2010 that many fans deride. An animated sequel, "The Legend of Korra," aired from 2012-14.

any of the awful things being alleged. I will fight for my name, my family and for the truth," he said. (AP)

MELBOURNE: A photographer told police he was punched in the face by Taylor Swift's father on the Sydney waterfront on

Tuesday, hours after the pop star's Australian tour ended.

Ben McDonald said he provided police with a statement alleging that **Scott Swift** assaulted him at the Neutral Bay Wharf, where the father and daughter had just come ashore from a yacht.

The veteran paparazzo said he decided to

report the attack to police despite not being seriously injured.

"It was just a punch in the chops. It's a little tender, but I don't have any bruising and it didn't require medical assistance," McDonald said.

"In 23 years, I haven't been assaulted and punched in the chops, particularly by the talent's dad," he added.

Taylor Swift's representative accused members of the media of aggression during the interaction.

"Two individuals were aggressively pushing their way towards Taylor, grabbing at her security personnel, and threatening to throw a female staff member into the water," the representative said in an email.

The New South Wales Police Force media office confirmed that police were investigating the alleged assault of a 51-year-old man by a 71-year-old man at 2:30 a.m. Police did not release names, in accordance with their policy for such allegations.

Taylor Swift left the country on a private jet Tuesday, after more than 600,000 fans saw the Australian leg of her Eras Tour at seven Australian stadium concerts.

McDonald said media had been waiting to photograph the star as she walked with her entourage from a jetty to two waiting cars.

"There were about four or five security there and at one point, one of the American security started shoving his umbrella into me and my camera and then Taylor got in her car," McDonald told The Associated Press. (AP)



This image released by MNRK Records shows '10,000 Volts' by Ace Frehley. The ex-Kiss guitarist is back with another great solo album. (AP)

The Conversation

Pulmonary fibrosis defense

Omega-3 fatty acids linked to improved lung function

By John Kim

University of Virginia

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

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Omega-3 fatty acids have garnered significant interest among patients and clinicians for their potential protective health effects, including lung health. In our recently published research, my colleagues and I found that higher dietary intake of omega-3 fatty acids is linked to better lung function and longer survival in patients with pulmonary fibrosis, a chronic respiratory disease.

Found in foods such as fish and nuts and in some supplements, omega-3 fatty acids are polyunsaturated fats that are essential nutrients for people. They serve several important functions in the body, such as providing structure to cells and regulating inflammation.

Researchers believe two omega-3 fatty acids, docosahexaenoic and eicosapentaenoic acids, or DHA and EPA, are the most beneficial to overall health. When the body breaks them down, their by-products have anti-inflammatory effects.



Kim

I am a pulmonologist at the University of Virginia School of Medicine, and my research team and I are working to identify risk factors that may contribute to the development of pulmonary fibrosis. In this disease, scarred lung tissue can lead to respiratory failure and death.

We examined whether higher levels of DHA and EPA in the blood of patients with pulmonary fibrosis in different groups of research participants in the U.S. were linked to disease progression. We found that patients with higher levels of omega-3 fatty acids in their blood had a slower decline in lung function and longer survival.

Notably, these findings persisted even after we accounted for other factors such as age and co-occurring diseases.

Currently, there are very few treatments available for pulmonary fibrosis. Those that do exist have significant side effects. Our findings suggest that increasing omega-3 fatty acids in a patient's diet may slow the progression of this devastating disease.

Researchers have investigated the role of nutrition in many other diseases, but it remains understudied in chronic lung diseases, including pulmonary fibrosis. Our study, along with other published research, suggests dietary modifications may influence the trajectory of this disease and improve a patient's ability to tolerate treatment.

Furthermore, other studies using mice have shed light on how omega-3 fatty acids may protect against pulmonary fibrosis by regulating the activity of inflammatory cells and slowing buildup of scar tissue in the lungs.

Since we were able to measure omega-3 fatty acid levels in the blood at only one point in time, we could not determine whether changing levels over time correlates with changes in pulmonary fibrosis.

Crucially, it remains unknown whether increasing omega-3 fatty acid levels in the blood will have a meaningful effect on the lives of patients with pulmonary fibrosis. Omega-3 fatty acids in the blood might not directly affect pulmonary fibrosis and may simply reflect healthier lifestyles and diets.

Clinical trials are necessary to actually determine whether omega-3 fatty acids are beneficial for patients with respiratory diseases.

We plan to continue researching whether omega-3 fatty acids have a protective effect against pulmonary fibrosis.

Specifically, we hope to determine the mechanism by which omega-3-enriched interventions affect the lungs of patients with pulmonary fibrosis.

These will be important steps to identify patients who may be particularly responsive to omega-3 therapies and move these treatments toward clinical testing. (AP)

Newborns at a higher risk for premature birth

Hundreds of thousands of US infants every year pay consequences of prenatal exposure to drugs

By Anna Umer

West Virginia University

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

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Nearly 1 in 12 newborns in the United States in 2020 - or about 300,000 infants - were exposed to alcohol, opioids, marijuana or cocaine before they were born. Exposure to these substances puts these newborns at a higher risk for premature birth, low birth weight and a variety of physical and mental disabilities.

These substances can have direct and indirect consequences on fetal development. By crossing the placental barrier directly, they can cause abnormal development. And by affecting the mother's organs, they can reduce blood flow to the placenta and damage the health of the growing fetus.

Considerable socio demographic and geographic disparities exist in the U.S. regarding the rates of prenatal substance exposure. This includes in West Virginia, where I live, a rural Appalachian state struggling with extraordinary rates of substance use and an opioid crisis.

As an epidemiologist, I study the relationship between substance use during pregnancy and infant health outcomes. I am a member of the Project WATCH team, which is a long-standing, state-mandated surveillance and referral system in West Virginia funded by the West Virginia Department of Health. The surveillance system expanded in 2020 to include substance exposure data from all births in the state.

Our research work showed that between 2020 and 2022, prenatal substance exposure in West Virginia was nearly 50% higher, at 124 per 1,000 births, than the national rate of 80 per 1,000 births. This means that nearly 1 in 8 infants born in the state had exposure to substances during pregnancy.

We found that the rate of prenatal cannabis exposure in West Virginia was 80 per 1,000 births, similar to the national rate. However, the rates of opioid exposure, 44 per 1,000 births, and stimulant exposure, 21 per 1,000 births, during pregnancy were nearly 10 times higher than national rates. Additionally, 1 in 5 women in the study smoked, and 64% of the infants exposed to substances were also exposed to smoking during pregnancy.

There are many reasons why the numbers in West Virginia are staggering. Economic challenges, including poverty, low education and limited job opportunities, contribute to chronic stress, a known risk factor for substance use. Moreover, nearly half the population lives in rural areas with a limited number of hospitals and clinics. The geographic isolation limits access to health care and substance use treatment services. Finally, stigma and judgment within close-knit rural communities may discourage these mothers from seeking help.

Our earlier work demonstrated that alcohol consumption during pregnancy was associated with preterm birth, which is when a baby is born before the 37th week of pregnancy, and low birth weight, defined as babies born weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces (2,500 grams).

Our more recent study has shown that prenatal opioid exposure is also associated with low birth weight, while stimulant exposure was associated with preterm birth.

Stimulants include cocaine, methamphetamines, ecstasy and prescription stimulants such as those used for the treatment of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. Illicit or misuse of prescription stimulants have increased among pregnant women over the past decade.

While many national and statewide efforts have focused their attention on addressing the opioid crisis, the prevalence of prenatal stimulant use remains a growing and underrecognized epidemic in the U.S.

After alcohol, cannabis is the most common psychoactive substance used during pregnancy and its rate is increasing. This trend in cannabis use may be due to the increasing legality for medicinal or recreational purposes and the social acceptability that comes with it.

In addition, many people wrongly assume that cannabis is relatively safe and helps manage pregnancy-related conditions such as morning sickness, nausea, vomiting, weight gain and sleep difficulty.

However, a growing body of research, including our own, has shown that prenatal cannabis exposure is associated with adverse pregnancy outcomes, including low birth weight, preterm birth, stillbirth or hypertensive disorders of pregnancy.

In addition, using multiple substances during pregnancy poses a higher risk to infants than using a single substance. We found that compared to no substance exposure during pregnancy, the risk of low birth weight was twice with opioids alone, four times with concurrent exposure to opioids and stimulants, and almost six times with concurrent exposure to opioids, stimulants and cannabis.

Another adverse outcome that is associated with prenatal substance exposure, primarily to opioids, is a set of withdrawal symptoms experienced by the newborn known as neonatal abstinence syndrome. Symptoms include irritability, feeding difficulties, tremors and respiratory issues. The syndrome requires specialized care and attention in neonatal units and a prolonged stay in the hospital.

Alongside the rising prevalence of opioid use in pregnancy, a fivefold increase in incidence of infants with this condition has been documented over the past two decades. The highest rate has been observed in West Virginia, at 53 per 1,000 births. Other states with high rates include Maine, Vermont, Delaware and Kentucky, which are between three and four times the national average of 7.3 per 1,000 births. (AP)



A container with frozen embryos and sperm stored in liquid nitrogen is removed at a fertility clinic in Fort Myers, Fla., on Oct. 2, 2018. The Alabama Supreme Court ruled, Friday, Feb. 16, 2024, that frozen embryos can be considered children under state law, a ruling critics said could have sweeping implications for fertility treatments. (AP)

Lawmakers look for a fix

Alabama facing backlash over IVF ruling

MONTGOMERY, Ala., Feb. 27, (AP): Lawmakers began scrambling for ways to protect Alabama in vitro fertilization services after multiple providers paused services in the wake of a state Supreme Court ruling that frozen embryos could be considered children under a state law.

Facing a wave of shock and anger from the decision, legislators prepared separate proposals in the House and Senate that would seek to prevent a fertilized egg from being recognized as a human life or an unborn child under state laws until it is implanted in a woman's uterus.

Justices ruled last week that three couples who had frozen embryos destroyed in a mishap at a storage facility could pursue wrongful death claims for their "extrauterine children."

Justices cited sweeping language that the GOP-controlled Legislature and voters added to the Alabama Constitution in 2018 saying that the state recognizes the "rights of the unborn child."

Senate Minority Leader Bobby Singleton, a Democrat, said Republicans helped create the situation in their push to enact some of the most stringent anti-abortion laws in the country.

The result, he said, was eliminating a path for people to become parents.

"At the end of the day, the Republican Party has to be responsible for what they have done,"

Singleton said.

Former President Donald Trump joined the calls for Alabama lawmakers to act Friday and said he would "strongly support the availability of IVF."

State Republican lawmakers said they were working on a solution.

"Alabamians strongly believe in protecting the rights of the unborn, but the result of the State Supreme Court ruling denies many couples the opportunity to conceive, which is a direct contradiction," House Speaker Nathaniel Ledbetter said.

Republican state Sen. Tim Melson, who is a doctor, said his proposal seeks to clarify that a fertilized egg is a "potential life" and not a human life until it is implanted in the uterus.

"I'm just trying to come up with a solution for the IVF industry and protect the doctors and still make it available for people who have fertility issues that need to be addressed because they want to have a family," Melson said.

House Minority Leader Anthony Daniels, a Democrat, introduced legislation to clarify that a "human egg or human embryo that exists in any form outside of the uterus shall not, under any circumstances, be considered an unborn child" under state law.

"This is just the first step in unwinding this predicament our state has placed itself in," Daniels said.

New varieties of tried-and-true vegetables invite gardeners to experiment



This image provided by Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Co. shows Lila Lu Sang carrots, which are deep purple on the outside and bright orange on the inside. (AP)

MANSFIELD, Missouri, Feb. 27, (AP): Tomatoes, garlic, chives, basil, parsley, thyme and sage have been permanent residents in my garden for ages. But every year, I experiment with new -- or new to me -- crops.

Many turn out to be transient, like the Instagram-worthy Voyager tomatoes that disappointed in the flavor department, and the goji berries I couldn't fit into my diet. But others, like 8-ball zucchini, rain-

bow Swiss chard and golden beets have earned permanent homes in my raised beds.

This year's new introductions, available now in seed catalogs, are just as enticing. Four new Fruit Snacks apple trees from Plants Nouveau -- Blushing Delight, Golden Treat, Tangy Green and Tasty Red -- are ideal for folks like me with limited garden space. The narrow, columnar fruit trees top out between 8 and 10 feet tall

and just 3 feet wide, and will even grow in pots. Plant two different varieties for cross-pollination and fruit production.

Love Gourmansun beefsteak tomatoes from Burpee are available in two new varieties, each producing 10-ounce, heart-shaped fruits on indeterminate (vining) plants. Choose Red or Sunrise (a bicolor yellow-red fruit), which have similar growth habits and taste profiles but slightly different disease resistance.

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Zalmi, Babar and Yaqoob shine

Peshawar in sensational victory over Islamabad

LAHORE, Feb 27, (AP) — Peshawar Zalmi rode Babar Azam's century and leg-spinner Arif Yaqoob's four-wicket over to beat Islamabad United by eight runs in the Pakistan Super League on Monday.

Babar smashed 111 not out off 63 balls with 14 fours and two sixes and anchored Peshawar to 201-5.

Islamabad was on course to upstage Babar's masterful 11th Twenty20 century as Azam Khan (75) and Colin Munro (71) combined in an electrifying century stand. But Islamabad lost six wickets off the last 13 balls and stumbled to 193-9.

Yaqoob left two-time champion Islamabad shell-shocked after taking four wickets in the penultimate over that included the key wicket of Munro. Yaqoob finished with 5-27.

CRICKET

It was Peshawar's second win in a high-scoring thriller in two days after beating Lahore Qalandars by same margin on Sunday.

Peshawar has three successive wins in the last four days. Islamabad has lost three in a row.

Afghanistan fast bowler Naveen-ul-Haq ignited Islamabad's collapse off his final ball in the 18th over when Azam Khan was caught at mid-off. Yaqoob then bowled one of the most memorable overs in PSL history by dismissing Munro, Haider Ali, Faheem Ashraf and Hunain Shah.

Earlier, after being put in to bat, Peshawar was tied down in the middle overs by spinners Shadab Khan (2-28) and Agha Salman (1-25) until Babar

Azam plundered the Islamabad pace bowlers.

Babar reached his half-century off 39 balls and completed his fastest T20 hundred off the next 20 balls. He smashed fast bowler Hunain for four boundaries and a six over extra cover in one over.

Also:

WELLINGTON, New Zealand: The hard-working and durable New Zealand fast bowler Neil Wagner has announced his retirement from test cricket at 37.

South Africa-born Wagner played 64 tests for New Zealand and will finish fifth on New Zealand's list of all-time test wicket-takers with 260 at an average of 37.

The left-armers likely was not going to be included in New Zealand's lineup for the first test against Australia, starting at the Basin Reserve in Wellington on Thursday and decided to retire from the five-day game.

Wagner made his test debut in 2012 and was a key figure in one of New Zealand's most successful eras, helping the team win the inaugural World Test Championship in 2022. He moved from South Africa to New Zealand in 2008 and quickly established himself in first-class cricket with Otago province.

In recent years Wagner pursued a sort of leg theory of continual short-pitched bowling which was contentious among some fans but invariably produced results. New Zealand won 34 of the 64 tests in which he played.

His strike rate of 52 is bettered only by Richard Hadlee among New Zealand bowlers who have taken more than 100 wickets.



Peshawar Zalmi's Babar Azam plays a shot during the Pakistan Super League T20 cricket match between Peshawar Zalmi and Islamabad United, in Lahore, Pakistan, Monday, Feb. 26, 2024. (AP)



Toronto Raptors forward Kelly Olynyk (41) blocks a shot by Indiana Pacers forward Pascal Siakam (43) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Indianapolis, Monday, Feb. 26, 2024. (AP)

J. Hart's late basket helps Knicks nip Pistons 113-111

Heat silence Kings

NEW YORK, Feb 27, (AP): Jalen Brunson missed a 3-pointer, eventually got the ball back and passed it to Josh Hart for the go-ahead basket.

In between were three turnovers and a missed foul call in one of the most chaotic and controversial possessions of the season.

Hart ended it with a layup with 2.8 seconds left and the New York Knicks beat the Detroit Pistons 113-111 on Monday night.

"We won. This is the NBA, man. We don't care how we win. We don't care how ugly it is," Hart said.

Brunson had 35 points and 12 assists for the Knicks, and it was his missed 3-point attempt with 20 seconds remaining that started the wild back-and-forth that led to Hart's basket and left Pistons coach Monty Williams irate afterward.

Detroit chased down the rebound but threw it away, then appeared to recover when Ausur Thompson stole a pass by Donte DiVincenzo. But then Thompson lost the ball during a collision with DiVincenzo along the sideline, the Knicks came up with it and Brunson found Hart under the basket for his layup while being fouled.

"Donte dove for the ball and the ball came loose and then I looked at the clock, looked up the floor, saw Josh was open and just got around their defense and hit him," Brunson said.

Brunson, however, never should have got the ball back. Referees determined afterward that DiVincenzo fouled Thompson.

"Upon postgame review, we determined that Thompson gets to the ball first, and then was deprived of the opportunity to gain possession of the ball," crew chief James Williams said.

"Therefore, a loose-ball foul should have been whistled on New York's Donte DiVincenzo."

After the Pistons lost their sixth straight, Williams went onto the court to yell at one of the officials near where Thompson went down.

"The absolute worst call of the season," Williams said during his brief postgame remarks. "No call, and enough's enough."

It left the Pistons with the same anger the Knicks had after a Feb. 12 loss in Houston, when officials said afterward they shouldn't have called a foul on Brunson with 0.3 seconds remaining, giving Aaron Holiday the free throws that gave the Rockets a 105-103 victory. The Knicks have filed a protest with the NBA.

"I'd say livid," Detroit guard Cade Cunningham said. "That's the word of the day. Livid."

Hart added 23 points and DiVincenzo had 21 for the Knicks, who beat the Pistons for the 14th straight time.

Cunningham scored 32 and Jalen Duren had 11 points and 16 rebounds for Detroit.

It was a wild ending to the first meeting between the teams since a Feb. 8 trade that brought Bojan Bogdanovic and Alec Burks to New York and sent Quentin Grimes, Evan Fournier and Malachi Flynn to Detroit. Grimes received mostly cheers the first time he

entered, but Fournier, who had long been out of coach Tom Thibodeau's rotation, was booed when he came in and the first few times he had the ball.

Grimes' basket gave the Pistons a 111-110 lead with 37 seconds remaining before the sequence that started with Brunson's missed 3.

Grimes chased it down in the corner and threw the ball back into the middle to teammate Simone Fontecchio. Hart stole it from Fontecchio and the Knicks got it to DiVincenzo, who threw it away but then regained it from Thompson along the sideline by appearing to crash into the rookie's legs.

BASKETBALL

"I was very confused when I was on the ground and the play kept going. I'm not gonna lie," Thompson said. "But, I mean, that's how it goes."

Heat 121, Kings 110

In Sacramento, Calif. Bam Adebayo scored 28 points, Jaime Jaquez Jr. added 26 and short-handed Miami beat Sacramento for its fourth straight win.

Kevin Love provided a spark with 19 points off the bench and Caleb Martin scored 16 for the Heat, who were missing three starters because of injuries or suspensions.

Sacramento's Domantas Sabonis had 14 points, 14 rebounds and 10 assists for his NBA-high 21st triple-double of the season. Sabonis also became the 10th player in history with 40 straight double-doubles in a season.

Keegan Murray scored 28 and

De'Aaron Fox added 27 for Sacramento, which had its three-game winning streak snapped.

Raptors 130, Pacers 122

In Indianapolis, All-Star Scottie Barnes had 21 points, 12 rebounds and 12 assists for his fourth triple-double of the season and Toronto beat Indianapolis.

RJ Barrett scored 24 points for the Raptors. Rookie Grady Dick added 18 points and matched his season high with four 3-pointers for Toronto, which won its third straight.

Benedict Mathurin matched his career high with 34 points for the Pacers. Pascal Siakam had 27 points, nine rebounds and six assists against his former team. But All-Star Tyrese Haliburton struggled for Indiana, finishing with nine points.

Nets 111, Grizzlies 86

In Memphis, Tenn. Dennis Schroder scored 18 points, Dorian Finney-Smith added 13 points and nine rebounds, and Brooklyn beat Memphis, giving Kevin Ollie his first win as an NBA coach.

Cam Thomas had 14 points before leaving the game with 7:23 remaining with a right ankle injury. Lonnie Walker IV added 13 for the Nets.

Lamar Stevens scored 17 points on 8-of-9 shooting for the Grizzlies, and Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 15 while going 2 of 12 from the field. GG Jackson had an even worse night, making one of his 13 shots, and Memphis shot 38.7% overall.

Ollie improved to 1-2 since being named Brooklyn's interim coach, replacing the fired Jacque Vaughn.



Memphis Grizzlies forward Ziaire Williams (8) shoots against the Brooklyn Nets in the first half of an NBA basketball game Monday, Feb. 26, 2024, in Memphis, Tenn. (AP)

South Korea replaces Klinsmann with Hwang

SEOUL, South Korea, Feb 27, (AP): Jurgen Klinsmann's successor as South Korea coach is former international Hwang Sun-hong.

Hwang will take temporary charge of the team for at least two 2026 World Cup qualifiers against Thailand in March, the Korea Football Association said on Tuesday.

He led the under-23 team to gold at the Asian Games last October and has also coached in the domestic league with Seoul, Busan IPark and Pohang Steelers. The former international scored 50 goals for South Korea.

"Hwang has recently demonstrated his achievements with his team's victory at the Hangzhou Asian Games," said Jung Hae-sung, the new chief of the KFA national team committee. "He also has experience in international competitions and an understanding of Asian soccer."

The KFA is expected to name a

full-time coach before World Cup qualification continues in June with games against Singapore and China.

Klinsmann was dismissed on Feb. 16, 10 days after Korea lost to Jordan in the semifinals of the Asian Cup. He was widely criticized for his strategy on the field and working methods off it.

In Herning, Denmark, Sweden midfielder Kristoffer Olsson has been hospitalized with an acute brain condition after suddenly losing consciousness at home, his Danish club FC Midtjylland said Tuesday.

Olsson is on a ventilator in Aarhus University Hospital, the club said, while a team of Denmark's leading medical experts work to make a diagnosis and begin the correct course of treatment.

Midtjylland said the 28-year-old Olsson lost consciousness on Tuesday last week and was transferred to the hospital, where he is surrounded

by his immediate family and members of staff at Midtjylland.

"Olsson is affected by an apparently acute disease related to the brain, which is not caused by self-harm of any kind, nor is the cause due to external factors," the club said.

Midtjylland said it was "forced" to release the information about Olsson because of "increasing rumors" about his absence from the team.

"Everyone at FC Midtjylland is of course deeply affected by Kristoffer's sudden illness and our thoughts and full support go to Kristoffer and his family," the club said.

Olsson has played 47 times for Sweden, most recently against Estonia in November. He joined Midtjylland in 2022 for a second spell, having previously played for Anderlecht in Belgium, Krasnodar in Russia, AIK in Sweden and in the youth teams at English club Arsenal.

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Dybala has first hat trick for Roma in win over Torino

West Ham halt winless run, non-league Maidstone's FA Cup fairy tale ends

LONDON, Feb 27, (AP): Jarrod Bowen scored his first English Premier League hat trick for West Ham as they beat Brentford 4-2 and eased pressure on coach David Moyes.

The Hammers' first win in 2024 ended an eight-game winless run in all competitions.

West Ham jumped from 10th to eighth in the league, behind Brighton only on goal difference.

Brentford was 16th, five points above the relegation zone.

Bowen was already West Ham's top goal-scorer but he hadn't scored in the league since before Christmas, and he broke that drought in spectacular fashion.

His first goal was a potent left-foot strike that gave the goalkeeper no chance, and the second capped a counter-attack when he side-footed home a cross from Vladimir Coufal.

Neal Maupay got one back soon after for Brentford but Bowen grabbed

his and West Ham's third after 63 minutes when he headed home a cross from Mohammed Kudus.

Full-back Emerson Palmieri made it 4-1 six minutes later with a spectacular long-range shot.

Yoane Wissa got a second for Brentford with eight minutes remaining.

A first-half hat trick from Coventry's Ellis Simms helped to end Maidstone's FA Cup fairy tale 5-0.

Maidstone, from the south coast, was the first sixth-tier team to appear in the fifth round since 1978.

But second-tier Coventry was too strong from the off, with Kasey Palmer pulling the strings in midfield.

His passes helped Simms to his first hat trick for the club. Tavares Desidério got two more in the dying seconds to complete the rout.

The rest of the fifth-round ties will be played on Tuesday and Wednesday.

In Rome, Paulo Dybala scored his first hat trick for Roma as the home side beat Torino 3-2 in Serie A.

On a day that Chris Smalling started for Roma for the first time since September, Dybala took all the plaudits.



West Ham United's Jarrod Bowen and Brentford's Kristoffer Ajer (right), battle for the ball during the English Premier League soccer match between West Ham United and Brentford at the London Stadium, London. (AP)



Dybala

FIFA launches 20-team lineup in global series of friendlies with Saudi Arabia hosting 2 pools

'Series aims to accelerate progress for national teams'

GENEVA, Feb 27, (AP): FIFA has teamed with Saudi Arabia to launch a new series of men's international friendlies that aim to help lower-ranked teams better prepare for one day playing at a World Cup.

Announced on Monday, the 20 teams taking part in the first FIFA Series games next month include just four that ever qualified for a World Cup. They are Algeria, Bolivia, Bulgaria and South Africa.

Saudi Arabia will host - though not play in - two of the four-team pools playing from March 18-26, in the kingdom's latest cooperation with FIFA after staging the seven-team Club World Cup in December.

Saudi Arabia's hosting of the 2034 World Cup will be confirmed this year when it is the only candidate in a vote by FIFA member federations.

Algeria, Azerbaijan and Sri Lanka also will host pools they will each play in next month.

The games hosted by 2019 Africa Cup of Nations winner Algeria also include Bolivia, South Africa, an Africa Cup semifinalist this month, and European minnow Andorra.

The FIFA Series project was revealed at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar by the governing body's president, Gianni Infantino. He has targeted raising the level of play in countries outside

soccer's power bases of Europe and South America and making World Cups more competitive.

European and South American teams have dominated all 22 men's World Cups with only three teams from outside those continents ever reaching a semifinal: the United States in the inaugural 1930 tournament, South Korea in 2002 and Morocco in 2022.

The 2026 tournament being hosted by the U.S., Canada and Mexico will be the first 48-team edition instead of 32, giving more chances to teams who never qualified for a World Cup.

In 2026, Africa will have nine guaranteed places at the World Cup instead of five, and the Asian Football Confederation will send at least eight teams instead of four. Extra entries

can be earned in intercontinental play-offs.

The FIFA Series aims to accelerate progress for national teams who rarely play outside their own continent. Some will have their travel costs paid by FIFA.

FIFA chief member associations officer Kenny Jean-Marie said teams were being offered "windows of opportunity" to learn from other styles of play.

"It could be an additional opportunity for member associations to travel to Saudi Arabia to play matches at their nice stadiums," Jean-Marie said in an online briefing, "and for Saudi Arabia to gain international experience of hosting different friendlies."

The Saudi-hosted pools next month will each feature teams that reached

the Africa Cup quarterfinals. Cape Verde will play with Cambodia, Equatorial Guinea and Guyana. Guinea will play with Bermuda, Brunei Darussalam and Vanuatu.

Azerbaijan will host Bulgaria, Mongolia and Tanzania. Ranked No. 204 of FIFA's 211 men's national teams, Sri Lanka will host Bhutan,

Central African Republic and Papua New Guinea.

None of the three European teams playing in the first FIFA Series qualified for the 24-team Euro 2024 being played in Germany. The next FIFA Series in March 2026 is intended to include more than 20 teams with plans for higher-ranked teams to play.

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Today's match holds significant importance for Al-Abyad, the defending champion, as a triumph over Al-Rayyan would secure its spot in the semifinals, irrespective of the outcomes in the third and final round. Recognizing the crucial nature of the match, Al-Abyad's coach, Haitham Al-Rashidi, is focused on securing the two points, particularly considering Al-Rayyan's

reputation as a strong team and a potential semi-finalist.

The team, led by notable players such as Qatari professional Frankis Marzo, Portuguese Angel Hernandez, Brazilian Vinicius, and local talents including Abdullah Al-Khamis, Saleh Al-Moussawi, Mishal Taha, Mishari Siwan, Ali Safar, Saif Al-Adwani, Abdulaziz Al-Shammari, Muhammad Amer, Muhammad Daif, and others, needs to address issues from their previous match against Maliha. This includes maintaining composure, avoiding hasty shots, and ensuring players are closely aligned on the defensive end to counter the opponent's proficiency in penetrating from various positions.

Both Kuwait Club and Al-Rayyan

Kuwait Club 'gear' up for a crucial showdown against Al-Rayyan in Gulf Club Championship

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

DOHA, Feb 27: Kuwait Club is set to face its Qatari counterpart, Al-Rayyan, today at 6:00 pm. This match marks the second round of the second group in the 40th edition of the



Kuwait Club player is defended as he makes a goal attempt.

the Africa Cup quarterfinals. Cape Verde will play with Cambodia, Equatorial Guinea and Guyana. Guinea will play with Bermuda, Brunei Darussalam and Vanuatu.

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It was Dybala's first club hat trick since October 2018, when he was with Juventus.

Roma stayed sixth, while Fiorentina rose to seventh after beating Lazio 2-1.

Lazio dropped to eighth, and Torino remained 10th.

Dybala got the opener from the penalty spot three minutes before half-time and Duvan Zapata equalized for the visitors two minutes later when he headed home a corner kick from the left.

Dybala score a splendid second goal after 58 minutes, swerving a 30-yard shot low past goalkeeper Vanja Milinkovic-Savic.

The Argentine striker capped a fine performance when he worked a neat one-two with substitute Romelo Lukaku and slotted home from a tight angle.

Smalling's substitute, Dean Huijzen, conceded an own goal at the end.

Later, Fiorentina hit the woodwork four times and missed a penalty but still managed to win from a goal down against Lazio in Florence.

Lazio took the lead seconds before halftime when Luis Alberto took Matteo Guendouz's pass and shot low into the net to end a flowing move.

The 19-year-old Michael Kayode equalized for Fiorentina 16 minutes into the second half with his first goal of the season.

Nicolas Gonzalez saw his penalty come back off the post midway through the second half but one minute later the home side went ahead. Lazio keeper Ivan Provedel could only parry a shot from Andrea Belotti and Giacomo Bonaventura followed up to give Fiorentina the lead.



Infantino

SOCCER

Monterrey, put Mexico ahead in the 28th minute. U.S. defender Becky Sauerbrunn tried to defend Ovalle but kicked the ball right at her. Ovalle floated a shot over goalkeeper Alyssa Naehar and two U.S. defenders and into the net.

It was the first goal conceded by the U.S. to a CONCACAF opponent in 33 matches.

"I think it just shows how far the game is coming and there's no easy

games anymore. And if we don't take care of business and we don't execute, this is to be expected," Kilgore said. "We'll step up and take ownership in that and I think anytime you have a group that is willing to take ownership in things like this, it's a good thing for the future of the tournament. Everything's still on the table and we'll be motivated, that's for sure."

Sauerbrunn took full responsibility for the goal, both on the field and in

the locker room afterward.

"As a veteran, you know, you have some rough days at the office and tonight is definitely a rough day," she said. "But luckily, you'll have another day at the office and it's just what you make out of it."

Mexico nearly scored again in first-half stoppage time but Karla Nieto's shot from distance hit the crossbar.

Kiana Palacios had a good chance to give Mexico a cushion but her shot hit defender Abby Dahlkemper and bounded away.

By that time, Mexico could feel its momentum. Pelayo scored from distance in stoppage time and Mexico's players celebrated wildly on the field.

"If we lose in the quarterfinals, then the beautiful win of today is useless," Lopez Ramos said through a translator. "I hope that this is not an isolated moment." The United States saw success from its teenagers in the first two games of the tournament. Olivia Moultrie, 18, scored twice in a 5-0 victory over the Dominican Republic and Jaedyn Shaw, 19, scored a pair in a 4-0 victory over Argentina.

But Mexico played surprisingly tough and the United States could not rebound after conceding that first goal.

the Women's World Cup last summer in the round of 16. Emma Hayes will take over for Kilgore this spring.

Mexico, which failed to qualify for last year's World Cup, finished atop Group A in the Gold Cup while the United States finished second. Both teams advanced to the knockout round.

"They went out and they were bold, they were brave with the dream of playing a good game against the United States," Mexico coach Pedro Lopez Ramos said.

Ovalle, who plays for Tigres of



United States forward Lynn Williams (left), and Mexico defender Greta Espinoza (right), vie for the ball during a CONCACAF Gold Cup women's soccer tournament match in Carson, Calif. (AP)

SOCCER

Hamilton kept his Ferrari move quiet even his parents didn't know

LONDON, Feb 27, (AP): Formula 1 great Lewis Hamilton kept his Ferrari move so closely guarded that he didn't even tell his parents until the day it was announced.

The British driver rocked the F1 world when it was announced on Feb. 1 he was joining the Italian manufacturer next year, despite signing a new contract with Mercedes last summer.

"I didn't speak to anybody. I didn't tell my parents till the day of

it being announced. So, no one knew," Hamilton told a BBC podcast. "I really wanted to do it for myself. Ultimately, I had to find out what would be the best for me."

It then emerged that the two-year deal penned with Mercedes and announced last August was actually for one year with an option for a second year, which Hamilton did not take.

Hamilton informed Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff of his

decision to leave only the day before over breakfast at Wolff's home. They have become close friends over the years after Hamilton joined Mercedes from McLaren in 2013.

The 39-year-old Hamilton and Michael Schumacher have a record seven F1 titles each, and Hamilton is the outright leader with 103 race wins and 104 pole positions.

Hamilton has spoken in the past of the lure of racing with Ferrari, where Schumacher won five of his world titles.

"I mean, the opportunity just popped up and I was like, 'OK, I've got to think for a second,'" Hamilton said. "(But) I didn't have a lot of time to think and I had to just go with my gut feeling and I decided to take the opportunity."

Hamilton begins his last season with Mercedes on Saturday at the season-opening Bahrain Grand Prix.

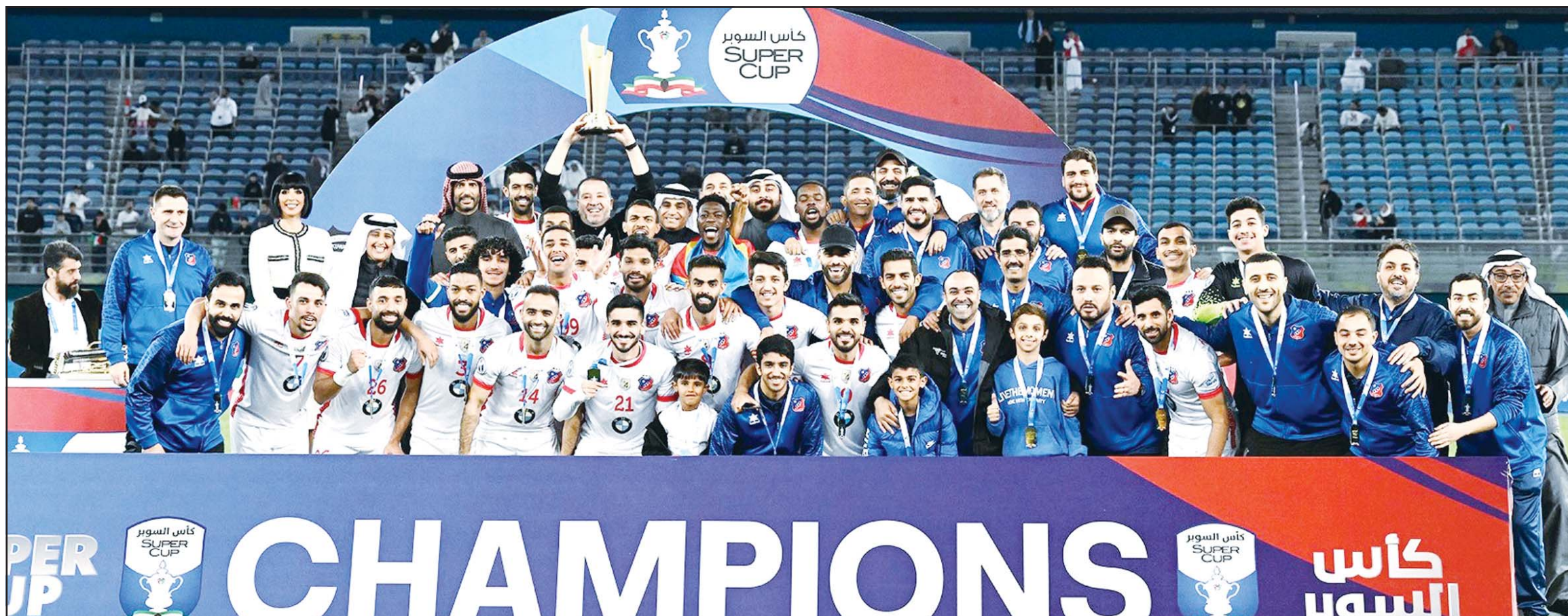
His last win was at the Saudi Arabian GP in the penultimate race of the 2021 campaign, where Max Verstappen won the first of his three straight titles with Red Bull.



Roma's Paulo Dybala in action during the Italian Serie A soccer match between Roma and Torino at Rome's Olympic stadium, Italy. Roma won 3-2. (AP) — See Page 15

Sports

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Super Cup champions Kuwait Club celebrate with officials at the end of the match.

Kuwait Club primed for league challenges after Super Cup win

Loss doesn't mark the end: Kazma

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 27: Kuwait Club concluded their Super Cup journey with jubilation, securing a 2-1 victory over Kazma and claiming their seventh Super Cup title in the history of Al-Ameed. This triumph marks their first championship in the current season. Kuwait Sporting Club (SC) clinched victory in the 16th edition of the Super Cup, triumphing over Kazma SC with a final score of 2-1. The thrilling match saw Kazma SC initially taking the lead and scoring in the 33rd minute, but Kuwait SC

quickly responded, equalizing in the 36th minute.

As the second half unfolded, Kuwait SC secured their second goal in the 57th minute, ultimately claiming the Super Cup trophy. With this win, Kuwait SC now boasts a total of seven Super Cup titles in its history, surpassing

SOCCER

Qadisiya SC with six titles and Al-Arabi SC with three titles.

Kuwait Club aspires to carry the momentum from the Super Championship into the upcoming Zain Premier League matches. The Super Cup success is seen as a confidence booster, especially after Kuwait's elimination from the Amir's Cup competition. The team aims to bolster morale ahead of the clash

against Al-Arabi on Sunday, a crucial fixture in the 17th round of the league.

Kuwait Club President, Khaled Al-Ghanem, expressed the club's ambition to lead in all tournaments. He attributed their success to meticulous planning initiated during the tenure of former club president Marzouq Al-Ghanem. Al-Ghanem commended everyone involved in Al-Abyad's journey to the top spot currently occupied by most of the club's teams.

"The White Train will not stop," affirmed Al-Ghanem, emphasizing the present focus on league matches, starting with the upcoming confrontation against Al-Arabi. The race for the Premier League title necessitates accumulating the highest number of points in the remaining "League Six" competitions.

Coach Nabil Maaloul acknowledged the challenges faced recently, including notable absences like strik-

er Taha Al-Khanisi and goalkeepers Abdul Rahman Kamil and Dhari Al-Otaibi. He expressed hope in recovering key players before the Al-Arabi match and urged his team to maintain their high level of performance and spirit during challenging times.

Maaloul emphasized the belief in strategic preparation for each match, particularly in facing Al-Arabi, underscoring the importance of leveraging simple details to secure victory.

In the Kazma camp, a sense of contentment prevailed after defeating Al-Arabi in the semi-finals and engaging in a fierce battle against Al-Abyad. Assistant coach Badr Al-Enezi highlighted that losing the Super Cup doesn't mark the end, acknowledging the team's tremendous effort in the tournament. Looking ahead, the focus shifts to preparing for the decisive match against Al-Fahaheel in the seventeenth round of the league to maintain their standing among the teams in the first group.



Adel Oqla holding the Super Cup, accompanied by Khaled Al-Ghanem and Nabil Maaloul.



A Kuwaiti player celebrates after team win over Bermuda.

Best of the Rest

Olsson in hospital: Sweden midfielder Kristoffer Olsson has been hospitalized with an acute brain condition after suddenly losing consciousness at home, his Danish club FC Midtjylland said Tuesday.

Olsson is on a ventilator in Aarhus University Hospital, the club said, while a team of Denmark's leading medical experts work to make a diagnosis and begin the correct course of treatment. Midtjylland said the 28-year-old Olsson lost consciousness on Tuesday last week and was transferred to the hospital, where he is surrounded by his immediate family and members of staff at Midtjylland.

"Olsson is affected by an apparently acute disease related to the brain, which is not caused by self-harm of any kind, nor is the cause due to external factors," the club said. (AP)

Bayern presents Eberl: Bayern Munich chief executive Jan-Christian Dreesen says they have enough work for two sporting directors after presenting Max Eberl on Tuesday.

Bayern had already appointed former Salzburg sporting director Christoph Freund to replace the fired Hasan Salihamidzic last September, but that hasn't prevented it from handing Eberl a three-year deal through June 2027 to oversee a major shakeup.

Dreesen said on Tuesday he had spoken with Freund, "a real team player," about Eberl's potential signing last September. "There is work, plenty of work for two, and I am sure that it will work brilliantly as a team," Dreesen said. (AP)

Bermuda beaten by 5 wickets

Kuwait 'secure' Super Six qualification in World Cup Challenge League play-off

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 27: Kuwait's stupendous victory against Bermuda by 5 wickets secured Super Six qualification in ICC 50 Overs Cricket World Cup Challenge League play-off, 2024. Stellar & swashbuckling performances from Sayed Monib (5 wickets) and Meet Bhavsar (101 runs) will be forever etched in history books as Kuwait continues its dream journey in the ICC Challenge League Play-off.

In a pivotal match between Kuwait and Bermuda at the YSD-UKM Cricket Oval, Bangi, Malaysia, Kuwait led by skipper Aslam emerged triumphant, defeating Bermuda by 5 wickets and securing their spot in the Super Six phase.

Bermuda won the toss and opted to bat first, Bermuda posted a respectable and competitive total of 226 runs within their allocated 50 overs. Terry Fray led the charge with an impressive 50 runs, closely followed by Derrick Brangman with 32 runs. Kuwait's pacer Sayed Monib delivered a stellar performance, claiming 5 wickets in his 10 overs, including a maiden. The consistent Yasin Patel also contributed with 2 wickets, while Ilyas and Shiraz secured 1 crucial wicket each.

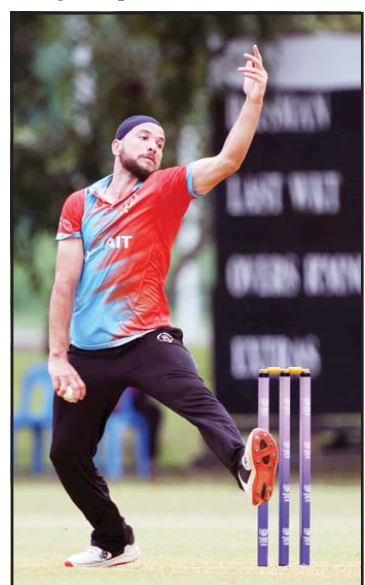
Kuwait chased down the target of 226 runs, powered by an exceptional century from their opening batsman, Meet Bhavsar, who scored 101 runs off 131 balls. Yasin Patel contributed

with an extremely gutsy innings of 22 runs, the experienced Mohammed Amin added classy 39 runs and had a match winning partnership of 87 runs with Meet whereas Bilal Tahir Khan

CRICKET

smashed 25 runs with two towering sixes to chase the target of 227 in style with 5 wickets remaining.

Bermuda's bowlers managed to take 1 wicket each, but it wasn't enough to prevent Kuwait from se-



A Kuwaiti bowler in action.

curing victory. Meet Bhavsar was rightfully awarded the Player of the Match for his outstanding century that played a pivotal role in Kuwait's victory, and Sayed Monib's 5fer was right up there too in the context of the game. With this crucial victory, Kuwait booked their most treasured spot in the Super Six phase alongside Italy and Bermuda from Group A, and Bahrain, Tanzania, and Vanuatu from Group B. The hosts Malaysia and team Saudi Arabia are out of the tournament.

The Super Six phase will now witness Group A (3 teams) take on Group B (3 teams) where all teams will get to play 3 matches. Kuwait will therefore play their 3 matches against Bahrain, Tanzania and Vanuatu respectively and the top 4 teams (based on points) at the end of the super 6 stage will qualify for the ICC Challenge League 50 overs World Cup Qualification.

Kuwait's impressive performance in this match and against Italy showcases their strength and determination to comeback from any stage of the tournament as they progress to the next super six phase leading all other 5 teams with 4 bonus points to their tally whilst all others will only carry 2 points each as per the playing conditions and tournament format.

Wishing our team all the best for the remainder of the tournament as they still have to win a few more games to make the important cut.

Antony backed to come good at Man U

MANCHESTER, England, Feb 27, (AP): Brazil international Antony was assured on Tuesday that he still has a future at Manchester United despite plunging down the pecking order of wingers at the English club.

The 24-year-old Antony became the second most expensive player in United's history when he arrived for \$95 million in the summer of 2022, following manager Erik ten Hag in joining from Ajax.

However, a difficult season for Antony has seen him briefly take a leave of absence in order to address allegations made against him of violence toward women. Now he has dropped to being the fourth-choice winger at United, with Ten Hag starting two 19-year-olds - Alejandro Garnacho and more recently Omari Forson - ahead of him along with

Marcus Rashford.

Ten Hag is under pressure to get the best out of Antony, given the amount of money United spent on the Brazilian, and the Dutchman has given him strong backing.

"I have known Antony for a long time and I know his abilities. He has great abilities," Ten Hag said at a news conference ahead of United's FA Cup fifth-round match at Nottingham Forest on Wednesday. "When he plays how I know from

SOCCER

the past, he is unstoppable. "No defender can stop him because he is one of the quickest players over the first 10 yards (meters). So when he plays that game, then he will perform."

Still, Ten Hag said Antony has to work hard to get back in the team. "I am very confident he will do (in) the future," he added. "I am sure he is resilient, he is hurt and he will fight back. He has now to wait for that chance. Once he is there, he has to take it."



Antony