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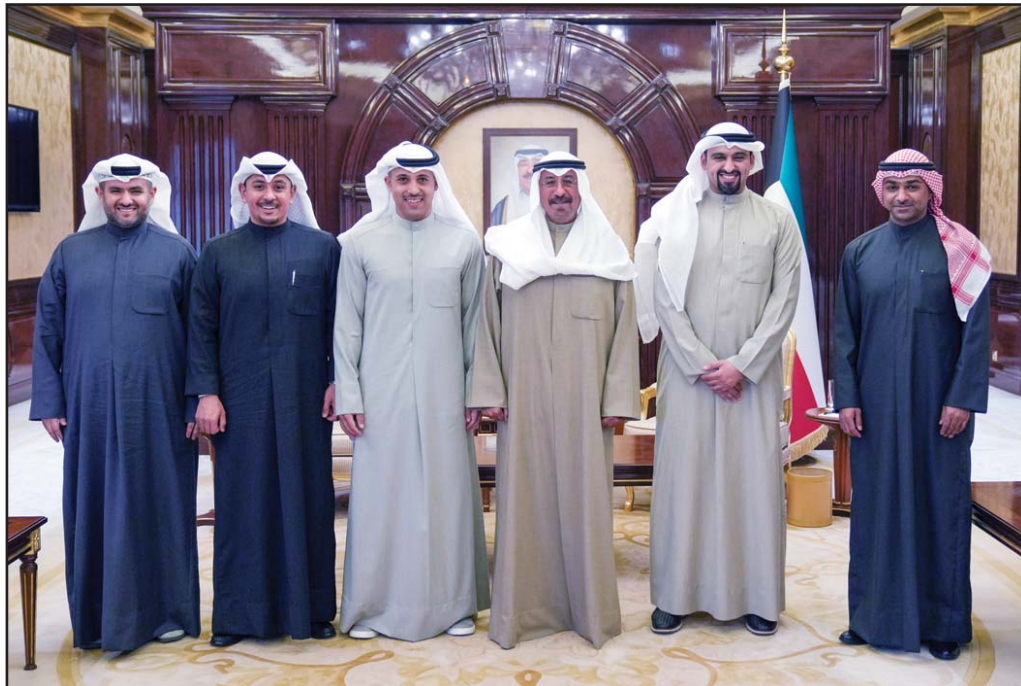
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Prime Minister hosts Economic Society and university faculty



Opinion

This is not how things get done

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

THE housing crisis continues to be one of the most complex issues in Kuwait that exacerbates the social situation of families who are waiting for their dream house.

However, it seems that the solutions are only slogans that continue to be fictitious, because the vision falls short of realizing the reality of the future in terms of housing, especially with regard to proper structure and the environment.

Even though the state is obligated to provide housing care for citizens, it is not concerned about rendering areas to bad scenery of concrete forest that also lack structure. In other countries, there are civil regulations based on clear standards that citizens do not deviate from when it comes to construction, including the colors on the exterior of the building, environmental preservation, and other specifications that give a beautiful view of the area.

From 1963 until today, several attempts have been made to organize population care, but they have failed because the primary goal was not a radical solution.

Other countries, especially the Gulf ones, solved the problem within years, as they relied on building integrated cities in terms of self-sufficiency either in roads, public services, or even parks. For all of this, the state did not pay a single penny of its public money.

It instead obligated the citizens to borrow from real estate banks, while the state paid the interest, similar to what the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco, and even Britain and other countries did.

The reasons for the housing crisis also include the scarcity of land allocated for housing, and the lack of liquidity at the credit bank, which is why the number of housing applications has exceeded 100,000. This number increases annually with the increase in the number of housing care seekers.

There are about 95,000 families who do not have homes. The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) pays each applicant KD 150 per month as rent allowance, meaning that there are additional costs that can be saved if the government works to adopt solutions applied in other countries.

Here it must be noted that the Kuwait Credit Bank has debt worth about KD four billion owed by citizens. It is possible to borrow this amount from banks and work to rotate its loans.

Continued on Page 5

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Health Ministry extends medical services to ports

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: The Ministry of Health announced the allocation of five marine health centers to provide medical services to travelers, sailors and workers in the seaports of Kuwait at all times around the clock.

Continued on Page 5



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah received teaching staff members from Kuwait University's College of Administrative Sciences and

PM Diwan photos at Bayan Palace on Wednesday. His Highness also received the chair and members of the Kuwait Economic Society. (KUNA)

Gov't commends Interior Ministry

Cabinet lauds peaceful, organized celebrations

Newswatch

GENEVA: Gulf Cooperation Council General Secretary, **Jassim Al-Budaiwi**, urged Wednesday the international community to end the Palestinian suffering and to immediately and permanently implement ceasefire in **Gaza Strip**.

Al-Budaiwi stressed in his speech at the 55th meeting of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, the importance of the Palestinian Case for the GCC and demanded the end of the occupation of Palestine.

He condemned the Israeli occupation violations against the Palestinians and their policies of hunger and killing, stressing that aid must be delivered promptly to Gaza Strip. (KUNA)

GENEVA: Britain has called for "further action" against extremist Israeli settlers involved in human rights violations, including "urgent sanctions" to stop them.

There needs to be a "sustainable and irreversible ceasefire in **Gaza**" that would allow for the protection of Palestinian civilians and hospitals, Minister of State for the **Middle East, North Africa and South Asia Lord Tariq Ahmad** said on Wednesday.

Addressing the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Lord Tariq called for "life-saving aid" to be delivered immediately.

The British minister went on to press the Israeli "occupying entity" to respect international humanitarian law, underlining the UK's commitment to working with its partners in the region to achieve de-escalation of violence across the Palestinian enclave. (KUNA)

BERLIN: The German army (Bundeswehr) said on Wednesday its naval frigate (Hessen) deployed to the Red Sea, successfully repelled a Houthi attack.

The vessel, part of an EU mission to protect shipping in the vital seawater inlet, successfully engaged two "enemy" targets on Tuesday evening, the mission's command said, without mentioning the ship the Houthis were targeting.

The reports came from German sources following the US announcement of a US aircraft and an allied ship taking down five drones launched from Houthi-controlled territories. (KUNA)



Moi photo
Sheikh Fahad in talks with Saleh Al-Fadhalah.

Kuwait aims for solutions

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28, (KUNA): Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, held a meeting with head of the Central System for the Remedy of Situations of Illegal Residents, Saleh Al-Fadhalah, to bolster coordination between the Central System and concerned state bodies.

Continued on Page 5

Kuwait boosts poll 'vigilance'

Election preparations begin

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: According to security sources, the General Department of Criminal Investigations has issued strict instructions to follow up and monitor any illegal actions related to the upcoming parliamentary elections that is scheduled to be held on April 4.

They said the instructions stressed on the need to take strict legal measures against any illegal actions related to the elections such as holding by-elections and vote-buying operations.

The sources confirmed the presence of specialized security teams to deter such actions and eliminate them completely during these elections as well as refer any violators to the Public Prosecution.

They explained that the Ministry of Interior, during the parliamentary elections last year, was able to thwart the process of holding by-elections in the Second Constituency.

Two years ago, the ministry thwarted the by-elections held in the fifth and fourth constituencies. Those accused of organizing these by-elections were sentenced to two years in prison. Candidates and their electoral keys in the fifth and second constituencies were also sentenced to two years in prison on issues related to vote-buying.

Continued on Page 5

Day by Day

IT'S often said that someone brought up in a dog pen won't become a lion, even if fed with the milk of countless lionesses.

One who's used to the company of dogs will always carry that identity, no matter how earnestly they attempt to conceal their true nature. Their barking will betray

them, unabashedly echoing their inner essence. Their destiny is predetermined, confined to the confines of their upbringing, and although they may weave intricate webs of deceit, fate remains impartial to their plight.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar



Photo by Samer Shikher
H.E. Belinda Lewis, the British Ambassador to Kuwait, attends the opening of the Kuwaiti-British Defense Cooperation Exhibition on the 1961 Crisis. — See Page 2

Employment surges but gender wage disparities persist: report

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: The Central Administration of Statistics report sheds light the number of workers in the State of Kuwait as at the end of the third quarter of 2023, classified according to number, gender, nationality, wages, ages, etc, putting its size to about 2.107 million workers, not counting the number of domestic workers, reports Al-Jarallah daily.

An increase of 6.6% (1.977 million workers at the end of the third quarter of 2022), which is an increase that, if true, contradicts all the goals of modifying the demographic composition.

When adding domestic workers and the like -- the family sector -- whose number is about 790 thousand, the total rises to about 2.897 million workers (2.688 million workers at the end of the third quarter 2022), and the percentage of domestic workers amounts to about 27.3% of the total employment in Kuwait as of the end of the third quarter 2023 (26.5% of the total employment at the end of the third quarter 2022).

The numbers of the Central Administration of Statistics sometimes differ from the numbers of the Public Authority for Civil Information and the two government agencies. Population and employment numbers are an essential input for formulating public policies and it is not permissible for them to differ, and they and other national statistics are supposed to be accurate in the program.

The latest data on wages and employment in Kuwait shed light on several key trends in the labor market, particularly in terms of gender disparities and sectoral dynamics.

In the government sector, the average monthly wage for male Kuwaiti workers stood at approxi-

mately 1,952 dinars, compared to 1,364 dinars for female Kuwaiti workers, indicating a significant gender wage gap of 43.1%. Similarly, non-Kuwaiti male workers earned an average of 795 dinars, while their female counterparts earned 709 dinars, reflecting a smaller gender wage gap of 12.1%.

When considering both sectors, Kuwaiti workers receive substantially higher wages than non-Kuwaitis, with Kuwaiti males earning about 1,886 dinars and females earning 1,322 dinars. Non-Kuwaiti males earned an average of 323 dinars, significantly lower than the average wage for non-Kuwaiti females, which was 482 dinars.

Despite efforts to promote employment in the private sector, the number of Kuwaiti workers in this sector decreased slightly, while government sector employment increased. However, the productivity of Kuwaiti government sector employees remains a concern, attributed to factors such as overcrowded work environments, educational shortcomings, and a mismatch between skills acquired and labor market demands.

The educational profile of Kuwaiti government sector employees is relatively high, with approximately 86.5% holding degrees ranging from high school diplomas to postgraduate qualifications. Despite this, challenges persist in translating this educational attainment into productivity and effectiveness in the workplace.

Efforts to address these challenges will require comprehensive strategies aimed at enhancing workforce skills, improving the efficiency of government operations, and promoting greater gender equality in wages and opportunities.

'Kuwait Legal Forum' emphasizes need for legal innovation and dev

Minister Al-Gharib patronizes conclusion of forum

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: The "Third Kuwait Legal Forum," organized by the Kuwait International College of Law, completed its sessions and accompanying workshops, under the patronage of the Minister of Justice and Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Faisal Al-Gharib, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The third session of the forum was entitled "Reviews of the Administrative Division of the State," which was chaired by Dr. Suha Al-Tarkait from the General Secretariat of the College's Office of Quality Assurance and Academic Accreditation.

The Dean of Graduate Studies at the College, Dr. Ahmed Al-Farsi shed light on the importance of administrative division, especially after the state transformed

into a welfare state that provided services to citizens, which led to the creation of a new administrative system based on the principle of division of labor.

Lawyer Abdul Rahman Al-Humaidan, stated that the municipality previously controlled all state activities, and it eased somewhat in the 1970s, and the ministries began to exercise their role, and the municipality departed from this system, and became specialized only in municipal work.

He stressed the need to develop municipal work in Kuwait by expanding the administrative division, pointing out that moving away from centralization contributes to providing greater services.

The college president, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Al-Muqata'a talked about the problem in the plan and the government's work program, and stated that both of them miss Article 123 of the Kuwaiti Constitution, which talks about the issue of centralization, as the Council of Ministers dominates the state's interests, formulates the state's general policy, and follows up on its implementation.

Al-Muqata'a pointed to the, "The absence of general policies for the state, despite the existence of long-term plans and a vision, but we do not have general policies, nor do we have references that govern the policies that the state follows, and therefore it is not permissible to deviate from them, and overnight the ministry changes, and the policies change with it," he explained.

In turn, strategic expert Dr. Ahmed Bouzbar, spoke about a coordination strategy between the laws of the development plan and the government's work program, pointing out that the citizen wants from development matters that directly affect his needs and requirements, asking: Do you think that there is coordination between the development plan in Kuwait and the government's work program?

He explained that the citizen wants a financial increase, the absence of taxation, the fight against corruption, public services and transactions without interference, stability of the two authorities, and quality education, health and housing.

The fifth session of the forum discussed "Innovation in the Justice and Law Sectors," which was chaired by lawyer Badr Al-Muqata'a, during which the former minister of health, electricity, water, housing, and oil, Dr Adel Al-Subaih said that information technology can do a lot, and courts can shorten many procedures that enable them to make the right decision, pointing out that information technology can govern dealings and prevent disputes from their foundations.

For his part, a full-time board member of the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority, Dr. Walid Al-Hassawi, said that innovation in the justice and law sectors may be very limited, and it must be benefited from, pointing to the impact of technology on various fields, including the entry of technology into existing industries and creating a major change in them, media, marketing, journalism, taxis, aviation, hotels, e-commerce, delivery services, and telephone communications.



A photo from the conclusion of the 'Third Kuwait Legal Forum.' Al-Jarida photo

Dept received only 14 cases in Feb: expert

Number of eye-injury cases down during nat'l days compared to '23

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: Chairman of the Council of Ophthalmology Departments at the Ministry of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Foudari revealed that there was a decrease in the number of eye-related cases at the ophthalmology departments of the hospitals of the Ministry of Health during the national holidays.



Dr Al-Foudari

He explained that the ophthalmology departments received only 14 cases in February this year in all governorates of the country when compared to the 331 cases they

had received during the national holidays last year.

This year, only one case was received at Al-Bahar Eye Center, five cases in Adan Hospital, seven cases in Jahra Hospital, and only one case in Farwaniya Hospital. The ophthalmology department at Jaber Hospital and the Shamiya Health Center did not receive any cases.

Dr. Al-Foudari appreciated the efforts exerted by the relevant state authorities in ensuring that the celebrations were held in an honorable, civilized manner, free of many negative aspects that may harm health.

He praised the level of awareness of the Kuwaiti society and people, and their commitment to the decisions and legal frameworks, the positive results of which were reflected in the significant decrease in the rate of eye injuries.

Decision on classifying cleaning cos vital

Council member submits questions to executive body regarding hygiene-file

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: A Municipal Council member Munira Al-Amir submitted questions to the executive body regarding the follow-up of the procedures that were taken regarding activating the new hygiene-related decisions.

It comes as a continuation of what was stated in cooperation with the municipal administration to communicate and discuss everything related to the hygiene file, as well as to follow up immediately on what is happening to ensure the activation of the new decisions that Al-Amir believes will have a positive impact on developing the performance of this important file.

In the preamble to the letter on her questions, Al-Amir explained that she had previously submitted questions on the same subject, but had not received much information about any timetable or details related to implementing the new decisions approved by the Municipal Council regarding the hygiene file.

The most important of the decisions is the one to classify cleaning companies (cleaning companies operating in cities) according to capacity, capabilities and experience, in addition to the decision to contract with an international office to lay the technical foundations for cleaning contracts and determine the

control standards and levels.

These decisions are approved and must be implemented, especially since the municipal administration will now begin work on renewing contracts for city cleaning.

Al-Amir asked several questions, such as:

1. "What measures has the executive body taken so far in order to ensure the inclusion of the Municipal Council's decisions issued in this regard?"

2. "What is the timetable expected by the executive body of the Kuwait Municipality to see a real process of activating these decisions individually?"

3. "What steps has the executive body of the Kuwait Municipality taken so far to address the various state agencies, most notably the Central Agency for Public Tenders, to include the data of these decisions in their next presentation to ensure their activation?"

4. "Can the executive body of the Kuwait Municipality pledge before the Municipal Council to ensure the implementation of the decisions referred to in the upcoming contracts in accordance with the procedures it has taken, since the current one is about to expire?"

5. "What is the municipality's plan and alternative steps if it does not have enough time to ensure these decisions are implemented while concluding new contracts for city cleanliness?"

News in Brief

Mol to review cash grants: Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Acting Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef, announced that the Interior and Defense Ministries will establish their sectors by the end of March, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Speaking to reporters during his inspection of a security checkpoint set up on Al Khaleej Al Arabi Street for the country's national holiday celebrations, Al-Yousef stated that a review of cash allowances and other financial matters will follow once the organizational structure is finalized, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Highlighting his understanding of the disparities in workload among sectors, Al-Yousef emphasized the need for fair compensation, stating that equal allowances for unequal workloads would be unjust and could lead to migration of personnel.

Several decrees issued: Several decrees have been issued, including Text No. 23 of 2024, which establishes a connection between the Public Authority for Civil Information and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Decree No. 20 involves the transfer of oversight over the Central Administration of Statistics (CAS), while No. 21 transfers supervision over the General Secretariat of the Supreme Planning Council (SPC) and Development to the Minister of Commerce and Industry (MCI).

Furthermore, Decree No. 22 of 2024 shifts supervision of the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources to the Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs.

Aid provided to 76K people: As part of its endeavor to localize charitable work,

Al-Najat Charitable Society provided aid to more than 76,000 people inside the country in 2023, reports Al-Anba daily.

Director of the Aid Department at the Society Muhammad Al-Khalidi revealed that the types of support granted included rent, financial aid, food supplies, electrical appliances and others.

Elaborating on the rent payment project, Al-Khalidi disclosed that the Society paid rent for 449 families; indicating that the total number of months paid reached 1,165 months as part of the 'Give Good News' campaign.

He added the Society provided financial assistance to 2,000 families and food cards to 8,034 families that used these cards to purchase the commodities they needed in the markets.

Al-Ajmi refutes rumors: Amer Al-Ajmi, the Head of the Local Affairs Sector and the official spokesperson for the government, debunked rumors circulating on social media regarding the government's alleged plan to revise electoral districts and voting procedures, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Al-Ajmi made it clear to KUNA that the government has not entertained any proposals regarding district revisions and has no intentions to do so.

He reassured that the upcoming elections will proceed using the existing electoral districts and the one-vote system.

Additionally, the latest electoral registration data reveals that there are 837,000 eligible voters for the forthcoming National Assembly elections. The electoral lists, scheduled for publication in the Official Gazette next Sunday, show that there are 792,000 previously registered voters, along with an additional 45,000 individuals who have reached the voting age of 21.



Kuwaiti participants in the Web Summit Qatar 2024. KUNA photo

Kuwaiti participants explore new opportunities

A global business summit bringing together international entrepreneurs and investors in the Qatari capital on Tuesday should provide new opportunities to explore, Kuwaiti participants in the event agreed, underlining the significance of the gathering.

Besides allowing participants to explore these opportunities, Web Summit Qatar 2024 also provides a platform for the exchange of know-how and expertise, members of the Kuwait-based Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity said.

Among the primary objectives of taking part in such an event is to keep abreast of the latest breakthroughs seen in the world of technology, according to Abdulaziz Al-Farhan, one of the Kuwaiti participants, citing the chance in bringing back home such tech know-how.

The event also allows international entrepreneurs and investors the chance to interact with one another, which is an important step towards gaining more knowledge in the field, said Abdulrahman Al-Menefi, another participant from Kuwait. (KUNA)




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PHILIPPINES	- PSEi	+15.85	6,876.52				
PAKISTAN	- KSE 100	+633.98	63,803.57				

Business

Groundbreaking merger propels KFH to pinnacle of Islamic banking with unprecedented assets and profitability

KFH completes largest-ever merger in Kuwait's banking sector

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: Following its landmark cross-border acquisition of Ahli United Bank - Bahrain, one of the largest deals in the region, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Chairman, Hamad Abdulmohsen Al Marzouq announced the successful completion of its merger with Ahli United Bank - Kuwait (AUB-Kuwait), including the stock swap of KFH capital's increase with the shareholders of AUBK. This historic merger officially establishes KFH as the continuing entity and AUB-Kuwait as the merged entity, marking the first-ever such project in Kuwait's banking sector.

On this occasion, Al Marzouq expressed his deepest gratitude to everyone involved in the merger project. He acknowledged the length and complexity of the process, emphasizing that it was made possible by the unwavering support of the employees. He also lauded the role of the regulators and extended his thanks for their continuous support.

He added: "KFH and AUB are now united as a single team, with a unified banking identity and a shared Sharia vision. We warmly welcome the AUB teams to their new home at KFH. We look forward to their valuable contributions as they become key members of the KFH team, solidifying our position as the largest bank in Kuwait and the world's second-largest Islamic bank by total assets, which stood at KD 38.01 billion in 2023."

"Furthermore, KFH holds the top spot for market capitalization in Kuwait, exceeding KD 12



Hamad Abdulmohsen Al Marzouq - KFH Chairman

billion. It also boasts the highest traded liquidity on Boursa Kuwait, surpassing all other listed companies, groups, and banks. In 2023, KFH achieved a record net profit of KD 584.5 million attributable to the shareholders, marking the highest profit ever recorded in Kuwait's banking sector and reflecting a strong

Al Marzouq:

- Boosting national employment and creating high-quality jobs in the local market
- A formidable banking group with enhanced cross-border competitiveness

63.4% increase from the previous year," Al Marzouq said.

He continued, "As we step into this era, the world's attention turns to us, spotlighting our united Sharia and vision. This merger is not just a landmark for us, but it sets the stage for a new global Islamic banking era led by KFH."

Al Marzouq explained that the merger will enable KFH to enhance its services, significantly contribute to economic diversification, and support Kuwait's development plans. It will also allow KFH to create quality jobs in the local market as the new merged units in Kuwait. In addition, the organization's expansion requires more employees and may require sending some employees abroad to support the Group's operations in other markets.

He indicated that the acquisition contributed to boosting KFH's capability to employ the best competencies and support national manpower. 400 employees were hired during 2023, with a nationalization rate of 100% of the total number of hires. Thus, the Kuwaitisation ratio exceeded 81%, in addition to appointing national employees to leadership positions during the year.

Al Marzouq concluded: "Our focus now shifts to the integration phase. As we blend our operations, systems, and client base, we are set to pave the way for new success defined by innovation, digital advancement, and ethical professionalism, catering to the growing needs of our diverse multinational clientele. Enhancing the presence of a giant banking group, we gain greater cross-border competitive capabilities that expand its presence across many markets. KFH Group spans 12 geographical locations, chief among them is Kuwait, Bahrain, Turkey, Germany, Egypt, United Kingdom, Malaysia, among other strategic markets."

Kuwaiti banks' 2023 financing to oil & gas sector hits 1.81b dinars

December sees sharp 68.6% decline

By Mahmoud Shendi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: Throughout the year 2023, Kuwaiti banks provided a total financing of approximately 1.81 billion dinars to the oil and gas sector. However, there was a notable decline in funding for the sector in December, plummeting by 68.6% to 84.5 million dinars compared to the 269.7 million dinars recorded in November. On an annual basis, this represented a significant decrease of 44.6%, amounting to 68.1 million dinars in December 2023.

The financing landscape for the sector displayed a fluctuating pattern over the course of 2023. Starting at 78.8 million dinars in January, it increased to 243.3 million dinars in February, sharply declined to 61.2 million dinars, followed by an upswing to 159.2 million dinars in April. The trend continued with a substantial rise to 274.3 million dinars in May, a dip to 169.1 million dinars in June, a further drop to 84.9 million dinars in July, and a significant surge to 298.7 million dinars in August. Subsequently, there was a decline to 6.2 million dinars in September, a subsequent increase to 125.1 million dinars in October, and a peak at 269.7 million dinars in November.

In the broader context of credit facilities, the total cash credit facilities provided by banks, encompassing all sectors, witnessed a 2.1% increase during 2023, reaching 53.581 billion dinars by the end of December.

Chinese firm secures contract for JPF-5

KOC & Spetco nears completion of Jurassic Production Facility 4

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: MEED Magazine has reported that Kuwait Oil Company and Spetco are nearing the completion of operations for the oil and gas facility known as the Jurassic Production Facility 4 (JPF-4), with expectations to finalize operations by next week, according to sources within the oil industry. The project, which has incurred a cost of \$398 million, is in its final stages, and operational activities are scheduled to conclude within the next seven days, reports Al-Anba daily.

The magazine noted that Spetco currently owns and operates the third Jurassic production facility, JPF-3, which is already opera-

tional, along with the fourth facility, JPF-4, which is in the process of being operated.

It's worth mentioning that Kuwait Oil Company had awarded the main contract, valued at \$398 million, for the aforementioned facility to the Kuwaiti company Spetco in December 2021. Additionally, the Chinese company Jirah secured a contract worth \$426 million for the construction of the fifth production facility, JPF-5, during the same period.

The source further indicated that the operation of the fifth facility, JPF-5, is expected to be completed at some point in the future.

Personal cash facilities provided by banks experienced a growth of 1.5%, amounting to 284.2 million dinars, while housing facilities increased by 1.7%, reaching 276.4 million dinars. However, private and typical housing loans decreased by 7%, totaling 22.9 million dinars.

The new credit facilities provided, consolidated for 12 months, saw a decline of about 618 million dinars or 2.75% during 2023, dropping from 23.049 billion dinars in 2022 to 22.431 billion in 2023. Personal facilities provided by banks decreased significantly by 43.1%, totaling 1,562 billion dinars, falling from 5.184 billion dinars in 2022 to 3.621 billion dinars in 2023. Consumer loans declined by 7.3%, amounting to 67.2 million dinars, and housing loans decreased by 59.2%, totaling 1.12 billion dinars.

Meanwhile, on the global front, oil prices experienced an upswing, nearing their highest levels in three weeks. Brent crude futures rose to

\$83.59 per barrel, while West Texas Intermediate crude futures for April delivery increased to \$78.48 per barrel. Contracts for March delivery also saw a rise, reaching \$79.43 per barrel.

Analysts attributed the positive sentiment in oil markets to signs of rising demand in China, driven by a 47.3% year-on-year increase in tourism revenues during the Lunar New Year holiday. The International Energy Agency revised its forecast for global oil demand growth to 1.22 million barrels per day for the current year, a slight decrease from the previous month's estimates. In contrast, OPEC maintained its projection of oil demand growth at 2.25 million barrels per day.

The International Energy Agency had previously anticipated that oil demand would peak in 2030 as the world shifts towards clean energy. In contrast, OPEC expected oil consumption to continue rising for the next two decades.



Fahad Al Ali, Chief Technology Officer at stc Kuwait, and Yang Chaobin, President of ICT Products & Solutions at Huawei, attended the signing ceremony.

Collaboration aims to boost network efficiency and intelligence

stc Kuwait and Huawei sign strategic cooperation MoU to accelerate 5.5G

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, and Huawei signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to further enhance their strategic cooperation and business monetization on 5.5G. The two parties will jointly build a 5.5G intelligent wireless network based on their previous joint innovation on 5G, along with incubating new services related to 5.5G ToC/ToH and ToB, while promoting the maturity of the 5.5G industry and ecosystem.

The signing ceremony of the MOU took place at MWC Barcelona 2024 in the presence of Fahad Al Ali, Chief Technology Officer (CTO) at stc Kuwait, Yang Chaobin, President of ICT Products & Solutions at Huawei, and other members of the management teams of both parties.

Under the MoU, stc Kuwait and Huawei will carry out strategic cooperation on 5.5G technology innovation to build intelligent wireless networks and converge cross-domain data. Intelligent wireless networks include solutions such as WTTx Suite 2.0, Smart Care, and RAN digital twin systems. Cross-domain data convergence uses NOC and SOC convergence to proactively manage user experience, continuously improve network performance, achieve digital intelligence transformation and build a network security architecture to protect stc digital assets from threats. In terms of business monetization, further explore and incubate new ToC and ToH applications based on 5.5G technologies, and release new services based on network capabilities to promote the growth of 5G users. In the ToB field, focus on the SME and oil and gas industry, launch smart office solutions customized for

SME, and incubate vertical applications. The two parties will verify the concept and then iterate into commercial products to lead the market development.

Fahad Al Ali, CTO at stc, said, "as a pioneer of the 5G technology in the regional market, stc adopts the most advanced intelligent solutions to support and enable the country's digital transformation and is committed to enrich customers' experience through unique and innovative solutions. Huawei has been our strategic partner since the inception of the Company and jointly we have introduced and launched cutting edge technologies and solutions to the market. With the changing customers' demands and requirements along with the evolving technological advancements in the world, the two parties will jointly promote 5.5G innovation, improve network performance, efficiency, and intelligence, meet diversified requirements of users and industries, and bring more business opportunities and competitive advantages to stc."

Yang Chaobin, President of ICT Products & Solutions at Huawei, said, "Huawei is committed to providing customers with the best products and solutions to help them for digital intelligence transformation and business growth. stc is Huawei's strategic partner in Kuwait. The two parties will jointly explore new technologies and applications for intelligent wireless networks and provide strong support for stc's digital strategy and Kuwait's digital vision."

With the 2024 commercial launch of 5.5G, Huawei is collaborating with operators and partners around the world to pursue exciting new innovation in networks, cloud, and intelligence. Together, we will drive 5G business and foster a thriving industry ecosystem, creating a new era for intelligent digital transformation.

What's On



Group photo during the 16th ASSP GCC HSE Excellence Award-2023.

Private sector companies lauded for their dedication to improving HSE standards

ASSP Kuwait Chapter organizes GCC HSE Excellence Awards 2023

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP), Kuwait Chapter ISO 9001:2015 is a premier voluntary, non-profit Health, Safety and Environmental organization, which strives to provide professional guidance, training, consultancy and resources to the industrial and social sectors in the region.

One of our flagships annual event "16th ASSP GCC HSE Excellence Award-2023" under the patronage of Kuwait Petroleum Company (KPC), which was endorsed by BCSP, IADC, IPAF and GDA, announced in the month of August 2023 and received nominations from private sector companies of GCC countries. The award ceremony organized on 21st February 2024 at Hilton Resorts Kuwait, and recognized the winning companies.

The annual award program's primary aim is to recognize and commend the exemplary Health, Safety, and Environmental (HSE) Management Systems and performance of private sector contractors and business partners of K-Companies, Manufacturing industries, Hospitals, and other private sectors of Kuwait. This award is also extended to all the above sectors of GCC countries, those who are committed to improving HSE standards and performance during the last three years to prevent accidents and injuries. As we say "You Perform... We Recognize".

The opening session was attended by:

- Shamlan Bader Al-Roomi, Manager HSE - KOC
- Omar Al Molhem, Manager HSE-KNPC
- Mr Abdul Raheem Al Rashidi, Team leader HSSE KPC, Representative of Manager HSSE-KPC
- Abdulla Al Awadi, TL, HSE West Kuwait - KOC
- Eng. Hassan Alibrahim, Responsible Care & EHS Director - Equate,
- Mohammad Al-Qahtani, TL, Soil Remediation Projects - I, KOC

and several other dignitaries from oil sector companies from all over the GCC and other distinguished guests attended the function. Engr. Fadhel Al Ali, Chairman ASSP Kuwait, Engr. Faris Al Mansouri, Director ASSP GCC HSE Excellence Awards along with Mr. Safdar Ali Khan, President ASSP Kuwait Chapter 2023-2024 also preceded the inaugural ceremony.

Engr. Fadhel Al Ali, Chairman of the ASSE Kuwait Chapter in his opening address welcomed everyone to this prestigious event. The Chairman extended appreciation to KPC management for their patronage and acknowledged the support of KPC, KOC, KNPC and KIPIC management. Expressed gratitude for tremendous participation from Kuwait and GCC Private companies. The event, now in its 16th year, has played a pivotal role in transforming organizational attitudes towards HSE commitment, fostering a culture of excellence in the region. In his concluding remarks, the Chairman acknowledged the dedication of the ASSP Kuwait Chapter's volunteer team and praised the leadership of Engr. Faris Al-Mansouri.

Engr. Faris Al Mansouri, Director ASSP GCC HSE Excellence Awards 2023 in his welcome address thanked and congratulated all the participating companies, emphasized on HSE culture by having focus on safety always been a



Top & above: photos during the opening address from the distinguished guests and during the annual award ceremony.

core value of the industry and will always remain at the forefront, strongly support employees to promote HSE culture. Moreover, he shared that since the commencement of this award in 2009, participation is steadily grown in the Middle East region. While concluding he thanked KPC and its subsidiaries for patronaging, the Evaluation Committee for maintaining standards and appreciated all the members of the award organization.

Mr. Mustaq Mirza, Deputy Director, ASSP GCC HSE Excellence Awards 2023, briefed about the scheme of the GCC Awards Program, and a video capsule was unveiled, he congratulated and extended best wishes to all the win-

ners. Appreciated organizations for providing safe, healthy work environment, high industrial standards, and performance. Thanked the organizing team, committee members, EC members, and Chapter Admins for their dedication. Invited companies to participate in the 2024 ASSP GCC award program.

Mr. Safdar Ali Khan, President ASSP Kuwait Chapter 2023-2024, urged the commitment of HSE excellence serves as a beacon of hope and inspiration. ASSP Kuwait chapter is recognized for quality HSE training provider. In conclusion, let us cherish the moment and recognized how to carry forward the spirit of innovation, collaboration and ded-

ication for our people, our planet, and for future generations Mr. Safdar, along the Chairman and other dignitaries launched "ASSP GCC HSE Excellence Awards 2024 , 5th Dec" with a video capsule and further "12th ASSP PDC Conference & Expo May 2025" was also launched by unveiling a beautiful video capsule. He requested all the executives from various companies and organizations to participate and get recognized in the HSSE fraternity.

ASSP KUWAIT CHAPTER Safety professional of the year (spy) award 2023 was conferred to Mazharuddin R. Shaikhy the chairman and other dignitaries

There was a special address from the board of Certified Safety Professional (BCSP) representative Mrs Kavita Prabh. BCSP President Mr Ashok Garlapati also witness the award function .

After the opening ceremony Engr. Fadhel, Engr. Faris along with Shamlan Bader Al-Roomi, Mr. Omar Al Molhem, Mr. Abdulla Al Awadi, Eng. Hassan Alibrahim and Mr. Mohammad Al-Qahtani , Mr Abdul Raheem started the Awards program and distributed the awards to the successful companies who had won Platinum, Gold, Gold Medal (for companies who achieved Gold Award for consecutive 5 years), Silver & Merit awards.

A total of 49 companies from the GCC countries participated and won a total of 79 awards in the following categories.

- HSE Excellence Award
- Best Corporate Social Responsibility Program Award
- Environment Excellence Award
- Best HSE Initiative Award
- Best Management of Driving Safety Award
- Best Risk Management Awards

All the above submissions were meticulously evaluated by a professional team of adjudication panel.

After the award ceremony, Engr. Fadhel Al Ali, Chairman, ASSP Kuwait Chapter, Engr. Faris Al Mansouri, Director, recognized EC Core committee, ASSP GCC HSE Excellence Award organizing committee members with ASSP-branded mementos.

A lucky draw was conducted among participant with three lucky winners.

The closing ceremony of the event was held by Mr. Mohammad Yusuff, Actg. Vice President ASSP Kuwait Chapter 2023-2024 in his vote of thanks he appreciated the overwhelmed response from the Kuwaiti Companies and the GCC countries.

He thanked all ASSP volunteers and supporting & endorsing organizations for making this program grand success. Engr. Omar Al Sadi and Mr. Salim Al-Alawi facilitated the award ceremony. He thanks the exhibitors Falcon Plus, Raja Traders, Safety & Fire and Al Mouwasat hospital.

Last but not the least he thanked all the volunteers who had put their personal time in making this event a great success, also appreciated the event organizing team from VCONEX headed by Mr. Mohammad Riaz for a flawless production.

The event concluded with press coverage by various Arabic newspapers and social media journalists.

Second collaboration with singer Nabil Shuail in 2024, paying tribute to song 'Free Kuwait'

Gulf Bank's National Day commercial hits 13 million views

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: For the second time this year, the renowned singer, Nabil Shuail, has redirected his support to Gulf Bank, encouraging his fans and followers to transfer their accounts to Gulf Bank and take advantage of its cards without any limitations and enjoy all their benefits. His latest commercial for Kuwait National Day has garnered 13 million views since its release just a few days ago.

In a notable gesture, Gulf Bank has paid tribute to the importance of the song "Free Kuwait," by singer Nabil Shuail after the liberation of Kuwait, by incorporating it into a special commercial for Kuwait National Day. Presented in an engaging and uplifting manner, the commercial promotes the prepaid card, featuring with Kuwait's flag, symbolizing deep sentiments in the hearts of all citizens.

On this occasion, Najla Al-Eisa, Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank's Marketing Department, emphasized Gulf Bank's commitment to actively engaging with the community on every occasion.

This reflects the bank's longstanding role as one of Kuwait's leading financial institutions supporting the national economy, and aligns with its motto "Always With You," signifies Gulf Bank's commitment to maintain-



A group photo of the artist Nabil Shuail with Najla Al-Eisa, Mahdi Suleiman and Abrar Al-Yaqout from Gulf Bank.

ing strong ties with the community.

Al-Eisa expressed joy in teaming up with singer Nabil Shuail and the commercial team, following the remarkable success of their previous campaign "Ya Shams," which garnered millions of views. She confirmed their ongoing collaboration with Nabil Shuail on future projects.

Regarding the Gulf Bank prepaid

card, Al-Eisa highlighted its convenience in managing expenses and its instant benefits and discounts for customers. She emphasized its user-friendly and secure features, suitable for both children and family members. Particularly noteworthy are the immediate discounts of up to 25% at over 550 restaurants and cafes in Kuwait, and up to 30% at over 300 commercial

outlets across various sectors including travel, entertainment, health, beauty, and luxury lifestyle.

The prepaid card stands out for its convenient and rapid payment options via point-of-sale devices, available at over 2 million ATMs and more than 33 million stores. Customers have the flexibility to add credit of up to KD 3,000 through various channels, or by visiting one of the branches.

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

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



Students immersed themselves in learning about Kuwait, its rich heritage, and cultural nuances.

'Nurturing a strong sense of identity'

Kindergarten for Special Needs marks Kuwait's National and Liberation Day

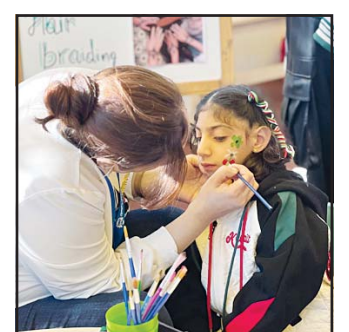
KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: Royal Britannia Kindergarten for Special Needs celebrates Kuwait National and Liberation Day with Joyous Carnival.

On Thursday, 22nd of February, Royal Britannia Kindergarten for Special Needs transformed into a festive carnival to mark Kuwait National and Liberation Day. The event, held at the enchanting Hyde Park Garden, became a vibrant celebration of Kuwaiti culture, traditions, and national pride.

As part of their curriculum, students immersed themselves in learning about Kuwait, its rich heritage, and cultural nuances. The carnival served as the culmination of their exploration, fostering a sense of identity and instilling pride in the blessings their country offers.

The Hyde Park Garden was adorned with the vibrant colours of the Kuwaiti flag, showcasing various elements of the country's landscape, landmarks, and traditions. Several engaging stations offered students and parents the opportunity to celebrate together, fostering familial bonds in the spirit of the occasion.

The RB Team, led by the Arabic Teacher, orchestrated a beautifully



Carnival served as the culmination of their exploration.

organized event. Multiple stations provided students with diverse activities aimed at promoting communication, social and emotional development, cognitive skills, and motor coordination.

Dr. Hanan Almutawa, Chair and Co-founder of Royal Britannia, expressed her vision for the event, stating, "Celebrating Kuwait National and Liberation Day is not just a tradition; it's an integral part of our commitment to nurturing a strong sense of identity in our students. Our carnival is a testament to the importance of community, cultural understanding, and the joy of learning."

ICSK Khaitan's little graduates shine in a heartwarming ceremony

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: Honouring the hard work and dedication of the tiny tots, The Indian Community School Kuwait, Khaitan, organized its Kindergarten Graduation Ceremony on 22 February 2024. The day at ICSK Khaitan began with the radiant morning sun greeting parents as they eagerly entered the school auditorium, awaiting the momentous occasion of their children's graduation. Warm and traditional welcomes were extended to the parents and the esteemed Chief Guest, Ms. Khadija Rangwala, Operation Manager at en.v, a non-profit organization based in Kuwait, who graced the event with her vibrant presence. K.G. Shirsath, the Principal, the Vice Principal, the Academic Coordinator, teachers, parents and students of the UKG wing were a part of the splendid event.

The formal function started on a pious note with the recitation of verses from the Holy Quran, followed by the national anthems of Kuwait and India. The ceremonial lamp was jointly lit by the Chief Guest, Principal and Vice-principal of ICSK, Khaitan. The young prodigies gave a wonderful tribute to their mentors in the form of a well-choreographed wel-



Photo during the Indian Community School Kuwait, Khaitan's kindergarten graduation ceremony.

come dance. The principal honoured and felicitated the Chief Guest and also extended a warm welcome to the August gathering. Ms Khadija, a vibrant personality, delivered a warm speech to the parents in the auditorium and shared parenting tips. Ms Khadija Rangwala and Mr K.G. Shirsath congratulated the

graduates of UKG and also gave honours to the rising stars of LKG and UKG classes.

The event was filled with vibrant performances by the UKG students, touching the audience's hearts with their renditions dedicated to parents and teachers. A highlight of the day was the captivating dances and melodious song rendition performed by the students, evoking nostalgic moments for teachers and parents alike. The stately procession of the little scholars in blue gowns and caps created an air of reverence and celebration. The Supervisor and the teachers of the kindergarten department had meticulously planned and put in their best efforts, along with the tiny tots, to make the event a memorable one. The graduation ceremony culminated with the vote of thanks proposed by Ms. Sushmeeta Prakash, the Vice Principal.

As the young graduates bid farewell to their kindergarten days, they joyously marched on to new horizons with excitement and lovely memories of the kindergarten and their teachers. The joyous faces of parents and their young champions were a testament to the grand success of the KG graduation ceremony 2024.

Proof copy of Harry Potter book sells for more than \$13,000

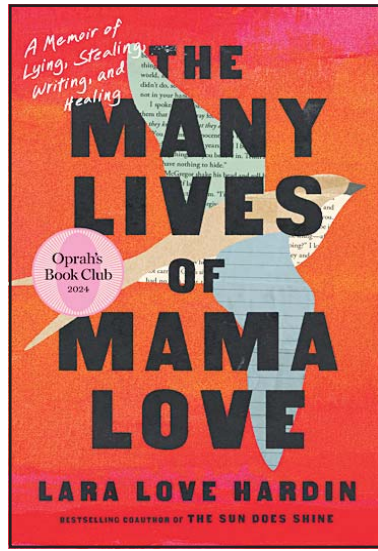
Winfrey unveils gripping memoir: 'The Many Lives of Mama Love'

NEW YORK, Feb. 28, (AP) — Oprah Winfrey's latest book club selection is an author and ghost writer's life story, chronicling her journey from prison and drug addiction to collaborating with the Dalai Lama, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and others.

Lara Love Hardin's "The Many Lives of Mama Love: A Memoir of Lying, Stealing, Writing, and Healing" was published last summer.

"Once you start reading, be prepared, because you won't want to stop as Lara chronicles how she went from surviving behind bars to becoming a best-selling ghostwriter and author, sharing her harrowing, sometimes hilarious, and often heart-breaking journey from her arrest and conviction to her release and ultimate reinvention," Winfrey said in a statement Tuesday.

As she has done with previous club picks, Winfrey popped up during a video conference call between Hardin and her publisher, Simon & Schuster,



This cover image released by Simon & Schuster shows 'The Many Lives of Mama Love' by Lara Love Hardin. (AP)

and broke the news.

"I had to ask myself if this was real life or my overactive imagination," Hardin said in a statement. "Her spotlight is humbling and validating and I know it will also shine a light on the shared story of all incarcerated women."

Words are inadequate to convey what an incredible, fantastical, dream-filling honor this is as an author, nor how much it means to me that this new plot twist to my story will become a part of the story my children someday tell to their children."

Hardin has been cited by Winfrey before. She co-wrote, and was fully credited for the prison memoir "The Sun Does Shine," by Anthony Ray Hinton, who spent nearly 30 years on death row in Alabama on a wrongful murder conviction. "The Sun Does Shine" was a Winfrey selection in 2018. "The Many Lives of Mama Love" is Winfrey's 104th book choice since she started the

club in 1996, her previous selections ranging from Michelle Obama's "Becoming" to Cormac McCarthy's "The Road."

Tuesday's announcement comes at a time of growing prominence for ghost writers, among them J.R. Moehringer, widely praised for his work on Prince Harry's "Spare." In January, the Gotham Ghostwriters and the American Society of Journalists and Authors co-presented the first-ever national conference of ghost writers, "Gathering of the Ghosts," in New York City.

Also:

LONDON: A proof copy of the first Harry Potter novel that was bought for pennies in a second-hand bookshop almost 30 years ago has sold at auction for 11,000 pounds (\$13,900.)

British auctioneers Hanson's said Monday that the first-edition copy of "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone," which states "uncorrected proof copy" on the cover, was bought

in 1997 from a shop in south London with two other books for a total of 40 pence (\$0.50.)

The seller, who was not named, picked up the book about the famous boy wizard as a "throw-in" with other titles and didn't read it or pay much attention to it for years - until she read online about the high prices some Potter copies achieved, Hanson's said.

The book was sold to a private U.K. buyer on Wednesday for a hammer price of 11,000 pounds, and a total of 14,432 pounds including a sales premium.

Jim Spencer, head of books at the auction house, said the copy's inside title page mistakenly stated the author's name as "J A Rowling" instead of **J.K. Rowling**.

"This book so deserved to do well. This proof copy is where the Harry Potter phenomenon began. This is the very first appearance in print of the first Potter novel," Spencer said.

Books

Variety



This image released by A24 Films shows Julio Torres, left, and Tilda Swinton in a scene from 'Problemista.' (AP)

Film

Toying with reality, a surreal masterpiece

Torres a brilliant storyteller in 'Problemista'

NEW YORK, Feb. 28, (AP) — The hero of "Problemista" sees the world differently. He's an aspiring toy designer named Alejandro who thinks today's toys are too fun. He proposes a toy truck with a deflating tire to teach kids they're running out of time.

Alejandro is the creation of Julio Torres, who stars, directs and has written "Problemista," an off-kilter and very winning movie from a rising artist who thrillingly reflects his own toy maker's singular, idiosyncratic mind.

"Problemista" is not like a Wes Anderson-type hyper-whimsy, but more like the surreal bursting joy of "Everything Everywhere All at Once." It even breaks space and time like the latter. It is absolutely captivating.

It tells the story of Alejandro (Torres), an El Salvadoran immigrant desperate to work for Hasbro but needing to extend his New York stay by getting his work visa approved. His artistic mother back home has tried to shield him from life's harshness, but he's alone in a hulking, unfriendly city filled with trash. Isabella Rossellini narrates, adding a starry gravitas.

Torres plays the aspiring toymaker as a delicate soul, always trying to be accommodating and a dreamer. He is childlike, with terrible bangs and a tuft of hair jumping out like an exclamation mark, always with a backpack, and walking in little unsure steps, almost hopping like a small bird, as if he doesn't want to leave an impression.

Twist of fate

A twist of fate gets him into the orbit of Elizabeth, the widow of an artist who has been cryogenically frozen by FreezeCorp. To afford to keep her husband on ice, she must locate and sell his unloved paintings - a 13-painting series of eggs in different places - and she needs the computer and gofer assistance of Alejandro. He sees this as a potential lifeline.

Tilda Swinton - a Wes Anderson favorite - plays the widow as an unhinged, self-involved, rude and frightening force of nature. She thinks people are



This image released by A24 Films shows RZA, left, and Greta Lee in a scene from 'Problemista.' (AP)

screaming at her when she's the one screaming, she can't turn her iPhone light off, she confronts waiters over tiny things and is banned from Uber. Swinton is in her element here.

These two very opposite souls need each other and not just in a transactional sense. She needs his calmness and vision, and he needs her forthrightness. "When they tell you you can only turn left or right, you let them know you're going up. Always send

the food back. Stand up for yourself," she tells him.

Torres displays a Kafkaesque bent as he illustrates the byzantine hurdles of red tape that immigrants face, with Alejandro negotiating a fantasy office maze, like a human rat opening vents to climb into sterile offices. In one scene, an immigrant who is told she must leave the country suddenly disappears - poof!

Filmmaker

The filmmaker also skewers the Catch-22 of another overly bureaucratic institution - banks. "I know that there's a still person in there and I know that she can hear me," he pleads to a bank representative about a nonsense overdraft fee. Both institutions feast on people who have no margin of error.

Torres is a comedian and TV writer, who worked at "Saturday Night Live" - his skit for Ryan Gosling about how "Avatar" weirdly used the Papyrus font is a new classic. He also was the creator of the oddball HBO sitcom "Los Espookys." He revels in the surreal and this movie proves he's one of the best out there.

If the hysterical weirdness about fonts is any indication, viewers won't be surprised that there are bizarre sequences about FileMaker Pro, misbehaving iPads, dropdown menus and Ikea's Billy bookcases. Craiglist is portrayed by a sinister man (Larry Owens) crowded by junk, people prove odd and kinky and a tense phone call is depicted as a knight in armor battling a dragon. Customer service calls descend into horror movie chanting and madness.

There is so much rich material in the absurdity: how immigrants and artists crave to be seen, how modern systems eat up people, how we try to cheat death and how technology doesn't live up to its promise. The movie even speeds more than 300 years into the future.

In that cool future, we're pretty certain they'll be talking about the big directorial debut of a talented filmmaker. Torres is just starting to toy with us.

LOS ANGELES: If you watched Lifetime's **Wendy Williams** docuseries that premiered over the weekend and felt uncomfortable, you weren't alone.

"Where is Wendy Williams?" premiered over the weekend and featured numerous scenes of the former talk show host unsteady, belligerent, confused and also drunk. Her manager would regularly find liquor bottles hidden throughout her apartment, behavior that producers say unnerved them while filming. But they say they didn't know at the time that Williams had dementia, which the public learned late last week.

"We all became very concerned for her safety. To be honest, I was so concerned she would fall down the stairs and for numerous different reasons," said **Erica Hanson**, an executive producer who can be seen and heard speaking to Williams at certain moments in the series.

Hanson said soon after she and the filmmakers were told Williams had dementia by her son, they turned the cameras off.

"We decided to stop filming as a team. We kept hoping that she was going to get better but it became apparent to us that she was not and that she really needed help," Hanson said.

"Where is Wendy Williams?" debuted Saturday, two days after her care team released a statement saying she has been diagnosed with primary progressive aphasia and frontotemporal dementia, the same disease **Bruce Willis** has. Its two episodes aired after attorneys for Lifetime successfully fended off an effort by Williams' guardian to stop the broadcasts.

In a review, *Variety* called the series "an exploitive display of her cognitive decline and emotional well-being." **Danie Buchanan**, a radio DJ in Atlanta posted a video reaction on Instagram saying, "I couldn't finish it... It was so hard to watch, it was so hard to see her like that," she said.

Throughout the documentary, Williams appears unsteady on her feet and she has trouble walking without assistance. Her emotions fluctuate between sweet to suddenly irritable to belligerent to weepy or frustrated. Many times the former talk show host admits to drinking. "I love vodka," Wil-

liams, 59, says in the first episode.

She has been public about her cocaine addiction and lived in a "sober house" in 2019. Each time someone brings up her drinking on camera, Williams ends the conversation.

In April 2023, the film crew followed Williams to **Miami** to visit her son Kevin, Jr. and other family. During the trip, Williams' son



Williams



Willis

told the filmmakers that his mother suffers from a form of dementia caused by alcohol.

"We didn't find out the diagnosis until **Kevin Jr.** shared that with us," said **Brie Bryant**, Lifetime's senior vice president of non-scripted programming.

After returning from Miami, the crew arrived at Williams' apartment to find her sobbing in her bed,

seemingly inebriated. This was the tipping point - Hanson was filmed speaking with Williams' manager, **Will Selby**, about her condition, before they stopped filming Williams altogether. Shortly after she was placed in a treatment facility by her guardianship.

"We questioned all the time, 'Should we be here? Should we not? How can we tell this story

sensitively?" It touched all of us deeply. It really did," Hanson said.

The project was intended to be a follow-up to Lifetime's 2021 "Wendy Williams: What a Mess!" documentary and biopic "Wendy Williams: The Movie." Bryant said both the network and Williams enjoyed their partnership and agreed to film Williams' next chapter. (AP)

Features

ARABIC TIMES

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 2024

People & Places



Dior



Dior



Dior



Dior



Dior

Fashion

PARIS: Sculptural figures resembling cane warriors, clad in billowing dresses that evoked skeletal forms, stood sentinel on Dior's runway Tuesday, presenting a visual metaphor for the protection of vanishing cultures. The display marked another chapter in **Maria Grazia Chiuri's** ongoing fusion of fashion and fine art at Paris Fashion Week.

Celebrities including **Jennifer Lawrence**, **Maisie Williams**, **Elizabeth Debicki** and **Natalie Portman** were among the audience, captivated by a collection that revisited the 1960s and the genesis of ready-to-wear at Dior. As described by the fashion house, this era was a pivotal moment "when fashion left the atelier to conquer the world."

Here are some highlights of Tuesday's Fall-Winter 2024 displays:

The cane frame sculptural decor by **Mumbai-based artist Shakuntala Kulkarni** made for a dramatic armor-like backdrop for designs that celebrated the freedom and empowerment of ready-to-wear clothes for the modern woman. The collection revisited the 1960s with a fresh, contemporary lens.

The collection's footwear, with its buckled, strappy knee-high boots, directly mirrored the cane ceiling's latticework, while elsewhere, garments paid tribute to the 60s' iconic nipped waists and A-line silhouettes. Yet, Chiuri skillfully infused these retro elements with a modern twist, incorporating sportswear styles with round-shouldered coats that exuded a minimalist feel.

Scarves, a recurring favorite of Chiuri's, were ubiquitous for fall, and were in the program notes heralded as "protective, enveloping, and embellishing as required" for a free and worldly woman.

Among the collection's highlights was a voluminous black crossover coat with an Asian influence, cinched at the waist and paired with a funky, studded black leather beret, standing out as a testament to Chiuri's

innovative historic fusion. Echoing the color palette of **Marc Bohan**, Dior's designer in the 1960s, the collection dazzled in white, orange, pink and neon green, with makeup tones to match. Exquisite pieces crafted in double cashmere and gabardine spanned little dresses, pants, coats, jackets and skirts, boldly cut above the knee, marking a chic, pared-down approach.

Dior's recent showcase was a deep dive into the annals of style history, offering guests a meticulously crafted lesson in the evolution of ready-to-wear.

At the show's heart, the Miss Dior logo took center stage, elegantly emblazoned across an array of dresses, skirts and coats, each a testament to the brand's rich heritage. The house provided attendees with detailed notes on the origins of ready-to-wear, spotlighting Dior's pioneering role in the movement. Following **Chloe's**



Dior



Dior



Dior



Dior



Dior



Dior

footsteps, arguably the first recognized ready-to-wear brand established in 1952, Dior unveiled its inaugural ready-to-wear line under **Bohan's** creative stewardship in the 1960s. This initiative marked a significant chapter in fashion and democratized luxury wear.

Saint Laurent's indoor display was a spectacle of shadow and light, draw-

ing an illustrious crowd that included **Lily Collins**, **Diane Kruger**, **Olivia Wilde**, **Zoe Saldana** and **Kate Moss**. Navigating the near pitch-black venue,

soundtrack and the lingering scents of perfume underscored it.

Designer **Anthony Vaccarello** took his sensuality to new heights this season. The collection featured skin-tight, sheer silks in subtle, powdery palettes that meticulously outlined the models' forms, reminiscent of an "X-ray." Inspired by the iconic "naked" gown **Marilyn Monroe** wore on her last public appearance, a signature for the storied house, it made for a provocative yet elegant statement where fabric seemed to melt into the skin. Contrasting this sex appeal, silk caps added

a contradictory layer of covering, mystery, and class to the ensembles - alongside the allure of the gleaming statement earrings.

The show's mood was further accentuated by the addition of large, black patent leather coats, introducing a rich textural contrast that broodingly mirrored the runway's glossy, oil-slick surface.

This collection is one of **Vaccarello's** most memorable thus far, striking a skillful balance between revealing and concealing. Crepe georgette suits draped softly over the skin alongside marabou feather coats that billowed with a timeless, ethereal weight.

This fall showed that **Vaccarello** is a designer in evolution, demonstrating his adeptness at weaving the house's historical elegance with contemporary flair.

Fashion magazine **Vogue** is setting the stage for a celebration of fashion and sports with a special show to herald the upcoming Paris Olympics. Under the leadership of Editor-in-Chief **Anna Wintour**, the fashion magazine announced it will host a unique gathering of **France's** premier luxury brands on June 23, coinciding with International Olympic Day and setting the scene for the Games beginning just over a month later.

The "Paris (fashion show) will be a tribute to the Olympic Games," **Wintour** said in a statement. "It's a dream to make the Place Vendôme **Vogue** World's home - I can't think of a setting that better captures the city's rich history and glamour." This event will mark a significant moment, celebrating 100 years of French fashion alongside the spirit of the Olympics, as Paris last welcomed the Games in 1924. (AP)

PARIS

Style

The Conversation

New research suggests challenging goals can head it off

Mental fatigue has psychological triggers

By Matthew Robison
University of Texas at Arlington

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



Do you ever feel spaced, distracted and worn down toward the end of a long work-related task - especially if that task is entirely a mental one? For over a century, psychologists have been trying to determine whether mental fatigue is fundamentally similar to physical fatigue or whether it is governed by different processes.

Some researchers have argued that exerting mental effort depletes a limited supply of energy - the same way physical exertion fatigues muscles. The brain consumes energy in the form of glucose, which can run low.

Other researchers see mental fatigue as more of a psychological phenomenon. Mind-wandering means the current mental effort is not being sufficiently rewarded - or opportunities to do other, more enjoyable activities are being lost.

My colleagues and I have been trying to resolve this question. Our research suggests mental fatigue is in large part a psychological phenomenon - but one that can be modified by setting goals.

We began by reviewing the science related to mental fatigue.

Psychologists in the World War II era studied why soldiers monitoring radar were losing focus during their shifts. Psychologist Norman Mackworth designed the "clock test," in which military participants were asked to watch a large "clock" on a wall for up to two hours. The second hand ticked at regular intervals. But rarely and unpredictably, it would jump twice the usual distance. The task was to detect those tiny variations.

Within the first 30 minutes, the subjects' performance dropped dramatically - and then continued to decline more gradually. Psychologists named the necessary mental focus "vigilance" - and concluded it was fundamentally limited in humans.

Vigilance

Decades of research since has confirmed that vigilance is difficult to maintain, even over brief intervals. In studies, people report feeling stressed and fatigued following even a brief vigilance task. In 2021, one study even showed a reduction of blood flow through the brain during vigilance.

My colleagues and I wondered: Are all forms of mental work like vigilance? Surely, there are instances where people can engage with mental work without feeling fatigued. We decided to study whether goal-setting could improve mental focus and ran three experiments to test this idea.

In the first experiment, we showed 108 under-

graduate students at the University of Oregon a screen with four empty white boxes against a gray background. Every one to three seconds, an X appeared in one of the four boxes. Their task was to indicate where that symbol appeared as quickly as possible. After each response, the participant was given feedback about both their accuracy and their speed, such as "Correct! Reaction time = 400 milliseconds."

Periodically during the 26-minute test, we also asked participants to rank their mental state as task-focused, distracted or mind-wandering. This gave us data about how they felt, in addition to how they did.

We randomly gave half of them a specific goal: Keep their reaction times under 400 milliseconds while staying as accurate as possible. We gave no goal to the other half.

Our results were mixed. People who were given a goal did not experience as many slow reaction times, but having goals didn't increase their top speed. It also didn't change how often people reported feeling distracted.

Experiment

We decided to tweak the test for our second experiment. Again, we randomly assigned a goal to half of the 112 fresh participants and no goal to the other half. But this time, as the experiment progressed, we increased the difficulty of the goal from a 450-millisecond reaction time to 400 milliseconds and then to 350 by the final block. Setting these harder-over-time goals had a huge effect on performance.

Compared with the participants assigned a set goal in the first experiment, the participants assigned increasingly more difficult goals in the second experiment had faster reaction times by an average of 45 milliseconds - about a 10% improvement. Participants in the second experiment also reported fewer instances of mind-wandering and showed no slowing of reaction times throughout the experiment. In other words, they showed no signs of mental fatigue. And we didn't have to make the task easier. In fact, we made it harder.

Our first two experiments were conducted online because of shutdowns related to COVID-19. Our third study - a repeat of our second study - was conducted in person. We got the same results.

These findings, combined with other recent work we've conducted, have changed the way my colleagues and I consider mental fatigue. It's clear that when people strive for specific and hard-to-reach goals, they report feeling more motivated and they do not report feeling as drained by mental work. If you're wondering how to implement these findings in your life, make simple, direct and specific goals for yourself. Mark when you complete the goals - the feedback can help you keep going. If you're feeling particularly drained, take short breaks. Even brief rests of less than two minutes can restore capacity for mental work. (AP)



Robison



Held by college sumo wrestlers, a couple of babies compete during Naki Sumo or Crying Baby Contest at Sensoji Buddhist temple in Tokyo, on April 26, 2014. The number of babies born in Japan last year fell for an eighth straight year to a new low, government data showed Tuesday, Feb. 27, 2024, and a top official said it was critical for the country to reverse the trend in the coming half-dozen years. (AP)

Newborns in Japan are at a new low, while fewer couples marry

Officials urge urgent measures to reverse trend

TOKYO, Feb 28, (AP): The number of babies born in Japan last year fell for an eighth straight year to a new low, government data showed Tuesday, and a top official said it was critical for the country to reverse the trend in the coming half-dozen years.

The 758,631 babies born in Japan in 2023 were a 5.1% decline from the previous year, according to the Health and Welfare Ministry. It was the lowest number of births since Japan started compiling the statistics in 1899.

The number of marriages fell by 5.9% to 489,281 couples, falling below a half-million for the first time in 90 years - one of the key reasons for the declining births. Out-of-wedlock births are rare in Japan because of family values based on a paternalistic tradition.

Surveys show that many younger Japanese balk at marrying or having families, discouraged by bleak job prospects, the high cost of living that rises at a faster pace than salaries and corporate cultures that are not compatible with having both parents work. Crying babies and children playing outside are increasingly considered a nuisance, and many young parents say they often feel isolated.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshiyuki Suga told reporters Tuesday that the ongoing declining birth rate is at "critical state."

"The period over the next six years or so until 2030s, when the younger population will start declining rapidly, will be the last chance we may be able to reverse the trend," he said. "There is no time to waste."

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has called the low births "the biggest crisis Japan faces," and put forward a package of measures that have included more support and subsidies mostly for childbirth, children and

their families.

But experts say they doubt whether the government's efforts will be effective because so far they have largely focused on people who already are married or already are planning to have children, while not adequately addressing a growing population of young people who are reluctant to go that far.

The number of births has been falling since 50 years ago, when it peaked at about 2.1 million. The decline to an annual number below 760,000 has happened faster than earlier projections predicting that would happen by 2035.

Japan's population of more than 125 million is projected to fall by about 30% to 87 million by 2070, with four out of every 10 people at age 65 or older. A shrinking and aging population has big implications for the economy and for national security as the country seeks to fortify its military to counter China's increasingly assertive territorial ambitions.

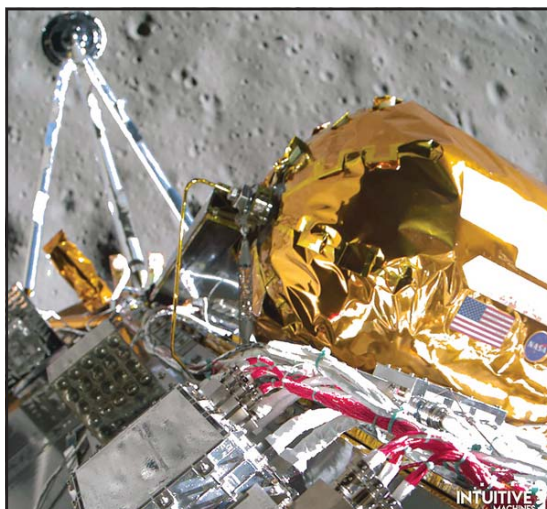
EU legislature backs major plan to meet climate goals

STRASBOURG, France, Feb 28, (AP): The European Union's legislature has approved a watered-down plan to better protect nature and fight climate change in the 27-nation bloc, despite opposition from the biggest party in parliament and fierce protests from the farming community.

The plan is a key part of the EU's vaunted European Green Deal that seeks to establish the world's most ambitious climate and biodiversity targets and make the bloc the global point of reference on all climate issues. Yet the Nature Restoration plan has had an extremely rough ride through the EU's complicated approval process and only a watered down version will now proceed to a final vote among the EU member states, where it is expected to pass easily.

The bill was adopted by a 329-275 vote with 24 abstentions, bigger margin than expected after the center-right Christian Democratic European People's Party of Commission President Ursula von der Leyen decided to vote against.

"Today is an important day for Europe, as we move from protecting and conserving nature to restoring it," said Socialist S&D legislator César Luena, who led the bill through parliament. "The new law will also help us to fulfil many of our international environmental commitments."



This image provided by Intuitive Machines on Tuesday, Feb. 27, 2024 shows its Odysseus lunar lander over the south pole region of the Moon. The toppled lunar lander is still beaming back pictures of the moon, as its nears the final hours of its life. The photos were taken shortly before last Thursday's touchdown. (AP)

Lunar lander expected to cease operations

Sideways moon landing cuts mission short

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., Feb 28, (AP): A private lunar lander is expected to cease operations Tuesday, its mission cut short after landing sideways near the south pole of the moon.

Intuitive Machines, the Houston company that built and flew the spacecraft, said Monday it will continue to collect data until sunlight no longer shines on the solar panels. Based on the position of Earth and the moon, officials expect that to happen Tuesday morning. That's two to three days short of what NASA and other customers had been counting on.

The lander, named Odysseus, is the first U.S. spacecraft to land on the moon in more than 50 years, carrying experiments for NASA, the

main sponsor. But it came in too fast last Thursday and the foot of one of its six legs caught on the surface, causing it to tumble over, according to company officials.

Based on photos from NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter flying overhead, Odysseus landed within a mile or so (1.5 kilometers) of its intended target near the Malapert A crater, just 185 miles or so (300 kilometers) from the moon's south pole.

According to NASA, the lander ended up in a small, degraded crater with a 12-degree slope. That's the closest a spacecraft has ever come to the south pole, an area of interest because of suspected frozen water in the permanently shadowed craters there.

NASA, which plans to land astronauts in this region in the next few years, paid Intuitive Machines \$118 million to deliver six experiments to the surface. Other customers also had items on board.

Instead of landing upright, the 14-foot (4.3-meter) Odysseus ended up on its side, hampering communication with Earth. Japan's lander ended up on the wrong side, too, just last month.

Only five countries have landed successfully on the moon. Intuitive Machines became the first private business to join the elite group. Another U.S. company gave it a try last month, but didn't make it to the moon because of a fuel leak. Both U.S. business hold NASA contracts for more moon landings.

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SPORTS



Semedo is challenged for the ball during Borgan and Al Arabi match.

Borgan Club striving for third against Oman as Al-Arabi & Al-Deir battle for group supremacy

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

DOHA, Feb 28: The inaugural handball team of Borgan Club has completed its preliminary round matches in the Gulf Cup Winners Club Championship's 40th edition, currently hosted by Al Arabi Club in Doha.

The tournament will run until March 5, with Borgan set to face Oman at 4 pm today in the Lusail Hall as part of the final round.

The third and concluding match within the same group will follow at six in the evening, featuring Al-Arabi of Qatar and Al-Deir of Bahrain.

Having faced defeats in its previous two matches against Al-Deir and Al-Arabi, Borgan has been

eliminated from contention for the Gulf title.

Today's match against Oman will determine the third-place team, which will then compete against the fourth-placed team in the consolation rounds on the upcoming Sunday.

HANDBALL

In the meantime, Al-Arabi and Al-Deir are slated to clash, deciding the first and second positions within the group after both teams secured their spots in the semi-finals during the previous round.

As it stands, Al-Arabi leads the group standings with 4 points, edging out Al-Deir in second place based on goal difference.

Borgan is in third place, while Oman sits in fourth place without any points.

Sameh Al-Hajri, the manager of Kuwait Club, emphasized that "Al-Abyad's" participation in the tournament is geared towards defending the title won last year against the Bahraini team on their home turf. Al-Hajri expressed ambitious goals, citing the unwavering support from the club's board of directors, led by Khaled Al-Ghanem.

He further stated that Kuwait Club faces numerous upcoming obligations this season, including the Super Cup, the League Championship, and the Al-Itihad Diamonds locally, in addition to external commitments. Adequate preparation for each tournament is deemed crucial by Al-Hajri.

Haaland scores 5 in City 'rout' of Luton in FA Cup

Newcastle avoid a potential upset at Blackburn

LONDON, Feb 28, (AP): Erling Haaland looks determined to make up for lost time.

The Norway striker scored five goals to power Manchester City into the quarterfinals of the FA Cup in a 6-2 win against Luton.

It was his eighth hat trick in a season-and-a-half with City and the second time he has scored five in a single game for the club.

Perhaps more significantly, it was evidence that Haaland is fully back up to speed after recently returning from a foot injury that ruled him out for more than a month between December and January.

"My fitness is getting back to its best finally," he said. "I feel good. It's an amazing feeling."

Haaland had scored only three goals in seven appearances since making his comeback on Jan. 31.

By his remarkable standards, that represented a relative drought, but he looked back to his devastating best at Kenilworth Road with a first-half hat trick and two more after the break. Four of those goals came from assists by Kevin De Bruyne, who has also missed large parts of the season through injury.

SOCCER

"It's a pleasure playing with him," Haaland said. "I think we know what we both want from each other, we look at each other and it clicks well."

Mateo Kovacic added a sixth for City, while Jordan Clark struck twice for Luton.

Haaland was denied a possible double hat trick when he was replaced by Julian Alvarez in the 77th minute. It was the second time City manager Pep Guardiola substituted the striker after scoring five goals, having taken him off during the 7-0 rout of RB Leipzig in the Champions League last year.

Haaland now has 27 goals in all competitions for the season after scoring 52 in his first year at the club.

His performance and linkup play with De Bruyne will also fuel the belief City can emulate last season's treble of trophies when it won the Premier League title, FA Cup and Champions League.

"We're coming. Exciting times (are) ahead," Haaland said.

The forward completed his hat trick after 40 minutes, having opened the scoring in the third and adding a second in the 18th.

Clark pulled one back for Luton in the 45th and made it 3-2 with another seven minutes after halftime.

But Haaland quickly extended City's lead with further goals in the 55th and 58th.

Kovacic completed the scoring with a long range effort in the 72nd.

Newcastle avoided a potential upset at Blackburn but needed penalties to overcome the second-division team.

Goalkeeper Martin Dubravka pushed away Dominic Hyam's spot kick at the end of the shootout to secure a 4-3 win on penalties after the game had finished 1-1 through extra time.

Anthony Gordon fired Newcastle ahead in the 71st at Ewood Park, but the lead only lasted eight minutes when Sammie Szmodics leveled for Blackburn.

Saudi-backed Newcastle has endured a troubled season in the league and currently sits 10th in the standings after a fourth-place finish last year.

But victory over Blackburn means it is still in contention to win its first piece of major domestic silverware since the FA Cup in 1955.

Abdul Fatawu fired Leicester to a 1-0 win over Premier League team Bournemouth with a stunning extra time goal.

Substitute Fatawu struck in the 105th - curling a shot into the top corner from the edge of the area.

Leicester won the Cup in 2021



Blackburn's Sammie Szmodics (left), scores his side's opening goal during the English FA Cup fifth round soccer match between Blackburn Rovers and Newcastle, at Ewood Park stadium, in Blackburn. (AP)

'We want to move forward with the goal of winning a gold medal'

Japan defeat North Korea to qualify for Paris Olympics

TOKYO, Feb 28, (AP): Japan defeated North Korea 2-1 on Wednesday to reach the women's soccer tournament at the upcoming Paris Olympics. But not without a tiny bit of VAR controversy.

The first match in the two-game series to determine one of Asia's two qualifiers ended in a 0-0 draw on Saturday in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Japan had three clear standout players who helped book its tickets for Paris.

Japan won the silver medal in the 2012 Olympics but has never won gold in the women's tournament. North Ko-

rea last competed in women's soccer at the 2012 Olympics but has never won a medal.

"We want to move forward with the goal of winning a gold medal," Japan coach Futoshi Ikeda said.

SOCCER

Ikeda coached the Japanese women in the 2023 World Cup and saw them lose in the quarterfinals to Sweden.

Hana Takahashi scored in the 26th, but it was Japanese goalkeeper Ayaka Yamashita who scrambled

late in the first half to stop a shot that was millimeters from crossing over the line.

Aoba Fujino put the match away with a header in the 76th to give Japan its second.

North Korea's Kim Hye Yong scored in the 80th, chipping the ball over keeper Yamashita as she came off her line.

North Korea coach Ri Yu Il wiped away tears, apologizing for the loss to thousands of fans - most reported to be of North Korean descent - who live in Japan but were cheering for the away team.

"To all the supporters who sent us

their voices and gave us instructions, we are very sorry we were not able to bring you a good result," he said speaking in Korean, stopping frequently to gather himself.

Japan had much of the possession in the first half with North Korea playing the long ball and counter-attack. And then Japan withstood North Korean pressure in the first 20 minutes of the second half as the visitors looked for the equalizer.

Takahashi gave Japan a 1-0 lead after her team had much of the early possession. She tapped in a close-range shot after teammate Mina Tanaka's header was deflected off the crossbar by North Korean goalkeeper Pak Ju Mi, the ball falling for Takahashi to score.

North Korea came close to scoring in 44th when Choe Kum Ok's shot was stopped on the line by Japanese keeper Yamashita. VAR - video assistant referee - was not being used in the match but television replays seemed to show the entire ball had not crossed the line.

North Korea coach Ri did not say if he thought the ball had crossed the line - although he hinted at it, knowing that incident probably changed the tone of the game.

"I think it would be better if VAR were introduced in order to make fair decisions," Ri said. "I think it would have been helpful."

North Korea skipped the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 and blamed the pandemic. This angered the International Olympic Committee, which also banned the country from the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing but has allowed them to return to Paris.



Manchester City's Erling Haaland celebrates after scoring his side's second goal during the FA Cup 5th round soccer match between Luton Town and Manchester City at the Kenilworth Road Stadium in Luton, England. (AP)

but has slumped since then and was relegated to the second division last season. It is aiming to bounce straight back up and showed its credentials with the win at Bournemouth.

Japan winger Kaoru Mitoma is expected to miss the rest of the season for English club Brighton because of a back injury.

Brighton manager Roberto De Zerbi said that Mitoma was set to be out for two or three months.

"Finished (for) the season," said De Zerbi, who was speaking ahead of Brighton's FA Cup match at Wolverhampton on Wednesday.

Brighton has been drawn to play Roma in the Europa League's round of 16 and is in seventh place in the Premier League as the team bids to qualify for European competition for a second straight season.

Mitoma has recently returned from playing in the Asian Cup and has also missed a chunk of the season because of an ankle injury.

"It's a bad, bad situation," De Zerbi said.



Japan's Kiko Seike (left), kicks the ball in an attempt to score as North Korea's goalkeeper Pak Ju Mi dives in to save the ball during the final qualifier for the Paris Olympic women's football tournament at the National Stadium in Tokyo. (AP)



Williams driver Logan Sargeant of the US steers his car for a Formula One pre season test at the Bahrain International Circuit in Sakhir, Bahrain. (AP)

Sports

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Sargeant heads into 2nd F1 season stronger, hopes to deliver for Williams

Bahrain International Circuit celebrates two decades of racing legacy

MANAMA, Feb 28, (Agencies): Bahrain International Circuit Marks 20 Years of Formula 1 Excellence with the Slogan '20 Years of a Modern Classic'

The Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) gears up for the 2024 Formula 1 season, celebrating two decades of racing prowess from February 29 to March 2. The Formula 1 Grand Prix, a premier event in single-seat racing, takes center stage as BIC hosts a series of events and promotions, featuring enticing prizes that captivate a global audience.

Streets in Bahrain are adorned with banners and the rallying cry of racing in anticipation of the Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix (Formula 1). BIC continues its impressive track record with the Bahrain Grand Prix, unfolding on a 5.4 km-long circuit where drivers navigate 57 laps of intense competition.

Renowned for its quality meeting the highest international standards, BIC has garnered accolades such as the International Automobile Federation (FIA) recognition and the worldwide award for best advertising. Serving as the opening round in the new season calendar with 24 races, the F1 event kicks off with a test lap before the main race, prohibiting overtaking to maximize engine and brake performance.

MOTOR RACING

The audience can expect exhilarating moments from the starting line to the first turn, witnessing racers vying for the lead, with the risk of collisions in the tightly contested race. Each racer follows a meticulously planned strategy devised by their team after studying the circuit.

Racers undergo rigorous physical, mental, and psychological preparation, including specialized exercises for chest and neck muscles to endure the weight of the head and helmet. The demanding conditions inside the car, reaching temperatures of up to 50 degrees Celsius, lead to racers losing approximately three kilograms of weight per race due to heat generated from various sources.

Since 2004, Bahrain has proudly hosted the F1 Grand Prix, becoming the first country in the region to do so. From the introduction of the night race in 2014 to the thrilling opening season in 2021, the circuit has consistently delivered standout races.

In July 2023, F1 announced the 2024 calendar, with BIC, hailed as the 'home of motorsport in the Middle East,' commemorating its 20th anniversary with the F1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix as the season opener. The race, scheduled for Saturday evening, allows for logistical preparations for the subsequent race in Saudi Arabia, also set for a Saturday. The 2024 calendar comprises 24 races, concluding in Abu Dhabi on December 8.

Even before Logan Sargeant finished his rookie Formula 1 season, a set of expectations were given to the American on what he needed to do to keep his ride at Williams.

It still took until December for Williams to confirm Sargeant would get a second season. He was the last driver finalized for this year's 20-car grid.

But he enters the new season - it starts this weekend in Bahrain - already ahead of schedule.

"First and foremost, I've asked him to surprise the world in terms of his physical fitness, his approach and his performance," Williams team principal James Vowles said. "We've changed quite a bit with him across the winter period, his trainer is different, his training programs are completely different. You should see he's a much more confident person and he carries that well."

Sargeant delivered on Vowles' ask by adding a little more than 11 pounds to his frame during the offseason - muscle that should help the Floridian with car handling a year after he was consistently outperformed by teammate Alex Albon.

Sargeant scored just one point all of last year and it didn't come until the U.S. Grand Prix, five races before the end of the season. Albon, meanwhile, scored 27 points across the season and was ranked 13th in the final driver standings.

"I wasn't physically in the place I need to be and I've done everything I can to get on top of that. For example, I'm five kilos heavier than I was at the end of last year, and I feel much more healthy and much more ready to go," Sargeant said. "I feel like a different man, I feel like physically I am in the best shape I've ever been. And I believe in the condition I'm in now, and will continue to get to, will be simply just helping me feel more comfortable in the car and extract performance."

Sargeant is the first American to race in F1 since Alexander Rossi in 2015 and his underwhelming rookie season did little to build a fanbase in the lucrative United States market that hosted a series-high three races last year.

But Williams last year had a car that was difficult to drive and both he and Albon were forced to adapt. Albon believes this year's FW46 will be easier for Sargeant to handle.

"Logan will have that experience

Kazma clinch 4th Futsal Super Cup



Kazma players celebrate on the podium after winning the Futsal Super Cup.

Kuwait Club beaten

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: In a gripping showdown at the Kuwait Club Hall, Kazma Club clinched the Futsal Super Cup Championship for the 2023-2024 sports season, marking its fourth title in history. The intense match saw Kazma emerge victorious with a 4-3 win over Kuwait Club.

FUTSAL

Hayef Al-Mutairi, Vice President of the Football Association, and Salah Al-Qenaei, Secretary-General of the Federation, bestowed the championship cup upon Kazma and honored Kuwait Club as the worthy runner-up.

This historic 13th edition of the championship featured an exhilarating match that captivated the audience, showcasing the high level of play expected in a final. Kazma took an early lead in the first half with goals from Chris and Saleh Al-Fadhel, while Abdul-Rahman Al-Taweel scored Kuwait Club's first goal.

The second half saw Kazma extend its lead with a third goal by Manshel, but Kuwait Club fought back, narrowing the gap with two goals from Abdul Rahman Al-Taweel and Abdulaziz Burashid. In the end, Chris secured the

title for Kazma with the fourth goal. Kuwait Club, Al-Qadisiya, and Yarmouk clubs, each having won the title three times.

David Marin, the futsal coach of Kazma Club, expressed his joy at the victory, acknowledging the tough competition from a formidable opponent. Marin highlighted the team's focus and determination in securing the title, especially when the score was tied at 3-3 minutes before the end of normal time.

Looking ahead to the league championship, Marin emphasized the team's commitment and efficient preparations. He noted that the journey is long, with knockout rounds scheduled for May, leaving all options open to vie for more titles in the ongoing season.

now into this year, I don't think it'll be so much of a learning curve for him," Albon said. "I personally believe that the car's going to be a bit easier to drive. Our car was very unique. I spent two years refining a very strange driving style, which for someone coming into the car for the first time, without any prior F1 experience, is difficult."

"It was very easy to overdrive the car. I think naturally the car's going to go towards him as in a bit less on a knife edge and more usable," Albon continued. "So I think what you're going to see is a guy with a lot more experience and a car that should be more usable and that will in itself bring performance."

Vowles agreed that this year's car should help both Albon and Sargeant as Williams tries to become competitive again.

"We should have a car that is more suited to both drivers," Vowles said. "I'm hoping that we've got rid of some of these really nasty effects from last year, but that will also make a platform for him where he should be able to grow much quicker than he did in 2023."

Vowles has also tried to relieve some of the pressure on Sargeant by



KUNA photo Bronze medalist Badr Al-Subaie.

Kuwait's Al-Subaie grabs diving bronze in Philippines

MANILA, Feb 28, (KUNA): Kuwaiti diver Bader Al-Subaie, representing the Kuwait National team, secured the first bronze medal at the 11th Asian Age Group Aquatics Championships on Wednesday in New Clark City, Philippines.

In a phone call with KUNA, Faisal Abu-Alhassan, Board Member of Kuwait Aquatics, highlighted the significance of this accomplishment in the premier continental competition. Al-Subaie clinched the third-place spot in the one-meter dive category for the 16-18 age group.

Abu-Alhassan emphasized that this achievement is noteworthy for Kuwait, considering the presence of elite athletes from around the world. He expressed the determination of

Kuwaiti athletes to achieve further success in the remaining days of the championship.

DIVING

The Board Member mentioned that while the tournament encompasses all Aquatics disciplines, Kuwait is currently participating solely in diving and swimming competitions. He noted Kuwait's recent success in the second Arab Aquatics Championship held in Doha, where the national team secured an impressive 11 medals across various events.

Saudi Arabia's PIF and the ATP tennis tour have 5-year sponsorship deal that includes rankings

RIYADH, Feb 28, (AP): Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund and the men's professional tennis tour have agreed to a five-year partnership that includes naming rights for the ATP rankings, the latest move by the kingdom into that sport and others.

The ATP already had a deal that placed its Next Gen ATP Finals - a tournament for players 21 and under - in Jeddah from 2023 through 2027. The arrangement announced Wednesday includes courtside branding for the PIF at the season-ending ATP Finals and tournaments in Indian Wells, California; Miami, Madrid and Beijing.

Pepperstone had sponsored the ATP rankings since 2022.

ATP chief executive Massimo Calvelli called the new agreement "a major moment for tennis," and the tour's announcement touted ways in which it hopes the sport will continue

to grow in Saudi Arabia.

The WTA women's tennis tour has been in negotiations to partner with Saudi Arabia, including possibly placing its season-ending WTA Finals there.

"As part of our plans to grow the value of women's tennis, we regularly speak to both existing and potential commercial partners about possible new forms of collaboration. While we don't rule anything out for the future, there is no new update at this time," a WTA spokesperson wrote in an email Wednesday.

TENNIS

Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova are among those who have urged the WTA to stay out of Saudi Arabia, while another former star player and Hall of Famer, equal rights pioneer

Billie Jean King, has advocated for engagement.

In January, 22-time Grand Slam champion Rafael Nadal was introduced as an ambassador for the Saudi Tennis Federation. This month, plans were announced for Nadal, Novak Djokovic and four other stars of men's tennis to participate in an exhibition event in Riyadh in October. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman clearly wants to diversify Saudi Arabia's economy and reduce its reliance on oil.

In recent years, Saudi Arabia has enacted wide-ranging social reforms, including granting women the right to drive and largely dismantling male guardianship laws that had allowed husbands and male relatives to control many aspects of women's lives. Men and women are still required to dress modestly, but the rules have been loosened and the once-feared religious police have been sidelined.



Andrey Rublev returns the ball to Arthur Cazaux of France during a match of the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Rublev won 6-4,6-4. (AP) — See Page 14