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## Gov't implements Amir's vision for just, safe, sustainable Kuwait: PM

— Details Page 2 —

# PM stresses citizen welfare in gov't-parliament cooperation

Ten candidates enter fray on eighth day

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

**KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Ten citizens (all men) on Monday filed their candidacy for the upcoming parliamentary election.**

The total number of candidates has reached 204 including six women. The 10 candidates who registered on the eighth day are as follows:  
**Second Constituency:** two (Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanim and Mishal Saleh Al-Merri)  
**Fourth Constituency:** five (Khalifa Mohammad Al-Khalifa, Abdulaziz Saleh Abbas, Fawaz Thamer Al-Mutairi, Hadi Malouh Al-Majedi and Yaqoub Mohammad Jawhar.  
**Fifth Constituency:** three (Ahmed Mohammad, Abdulmuhsen Ali Akbar and Mohammad Abdulamir Husain)  
In a press statement after filing his candidacy, former MP and National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanim said the corrupt parties mislead the public by hurling false accusa-

tions at others. He neither confirmed nor denied the speculation that he will run for the speakership, indicating every MP has the right to stand for such election.

Asked to comment on the adjournment of parliamentary sessions because of the absence of the government, Al-Ghanim clarified that he adopted this procedure as he believes it is in line with the Constitution and the National Assembly Law. He added this procedure was adopted by all the successive speakers and deputy speakers. He made clear that it is his honor to serve the people whether as a lawmaker or speaker.

Fourth Constituency candidate Dr Fawaz Al Jadeed disclosed that he followed up the programs and ideas of other candidates, but they did not tackle the real concerns of the citizens. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah said Sunday the efforts to improve the citizens' standards of living must be given precedence in the cooperation between government and the coming National Assembly (parliament).

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PM Diwan photo  
His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah addresses a group of newly appointed diplomats on Sunday. — See Page 2

Sports Day lauded

### Ministers extend Ramadan wishes

**KUWAIT CITY, March 11, (KUNA):** The Cabinet held its weekly session on Monday at Seif Palace under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

Following the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereedah Al-Mousherji said the ministers, at the onset of the session, addressed congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the gracious Kuwaiti people and the residents of the country on the advent of the holy month of Ramadan.

The ministers expressed good wishes on the occasion to the Arab and Muslim nations and hoped that the dear homeland would enjoy lasting blessings, safety and prosperity.

The ministers lauded the Public Sports Authority for organizing Kuwait Sports Day on Saturday on Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah bridge under sponsorship and with attendance of His Highness the

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PM Diwan photo  
The weekly session of the Council of Ministers is underway, presided over by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

Hunger worsening in Gaza ... cease-fire talks at standstill

## Saudi King expresses sorrow for Palestinian plight in Ramadan

**RIYADH, March 11, (Agencies):** "As we witness the arrival of Ramadan this year, our hearts are heavy with sorrow for the ongoing suffering of our Palestinian brothers facing relentless aggression," Saudi Arabia King Salman bin Abdulziz Al-Saud said Sunday.

Marking the occasion of the advent of the holy month of Ramadan, King Salman made the remarks, conveyed by Minister of Media Salman bin Yousef Al-Dossary, to Saudi citizens, residents of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Muslims worldwide.

Quoted by Saudi Press agency (SPA), King Salman added, "we call upon the international community to uphold its responsibilities to put an end to these heinous crimes and ensure the establishment of safe humanitarian and relief corridors."

In his speech, King Salman said they "extend our congratulations on the arrival of the month of Ramadan, expressing gratitude to Allah for its blessed advent."

"We supplicate Allah the Almighty, by His grace and generosity, to accept us among those who fast and perform the night prayers, with faith and seeking His reward," King Salman added.

"Our hearts are filled with deep gratitude to Allah as we contemplate the blessings bestowed upon the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," the Saudi leader added.

"We also extend our congratulations to our brave soldiers stationed on the borders and frontiers. Their unwavering dedication, alongside all members of the military and security sectors, safeguards our nation.

We are equally grateful to those who tirelessly serve in various state sectors, putting the betterment of our country above all else.

May this blessed month be filled with goodness and peace for the Islamic nation and the entire world," King Salman added.

Meanwhile, Palestinians began fasting for Rama-



Palestinians buy food for a pre-dawn meal before fasting during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in Rafah, Gaza Strip, March 10, 2024. (AP)

dan on Monday as the Muslim holy month arrived with cease-fire talks at a standstill, hunger worsening across the Gaza Strip and no end in sight to the five-month-old war between Israel and Hamas.

Prayers were held outside amid the rubble of demolished buildings late Sunday. Some people hung fairy lights and decorations in packed tent camps, and a video from a U.N.-school-turned-shelter showed children dancing and spraying foam as a man sang into a loudspeaker.

But there was little to celebrate after five months of war that has killed over 30,000 Palestinians and left much of Gaza in ruins. Families would ordinarily break the daily fast with holiday feasts, but even where food is available, there is little beyond canned goods and the prices are too high for many.

"You don't see anyone with joy in their eyes," said Sabah al-Hendi, who was shopping for food on Sunday in the southernmost city of Rafah. "Every family is sad. Every family has a martyr."

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## Cash withdrawals still a trend despite digital payment push

**KUWAIT CITY, March 11:** Despite the surge in digital payments and the government's efforts to promote electronic transactions, cash withdrawals remain significant in Kuwait, raising questions about the reasons behind this trend. While online and point-of-sale payments have increased, ATM withdrawals still constitute a substantial portion of total transactions, reports Al-Rai daily.

During 2023, financial payment withdrawals reached approximately 45.795 billion dinars, marking an 8.5% growth compared to 2022. Despite a slight decrease in ATM withdrawals, they accounted for about 23.5% of total transactions, totaling 10.722 billion dinars. Point-of-sale transactions reached 17.519 billion dinars, while website payments saw a significant jump to 17.553 billion dinars.

Government efforts to reduce cash transactions, such as halting cash payments for real estate transactions and pharmacy purchases over 10 dinars, aim to

curb money laundering. However, factors like rising household spending due to inflation and a significant portion of the workforce without bank accounts contribute to the persistence of cash transactions.

Additionally, the black market plays a significant role in cash withdrawals, particularly in money transfers and illicit activities like drug trafficking. Despite regulatory measures to combat money laundering, some individuals prefer cash transactions to avoid scrutiny.

While Kuwait excels in financial digitization compared to other Gulf countries, reducing cash transactions remains challenging. Globally, digital payments are expected to reach \$11.95 trillion by 2025, indicating a global shift away from cash.

While countries like Sweden have successfully reduced cash usage, Kuwait continues to grapple with the persistence of cash transactions, highlighting the need for further efforts to promote electronic payments.

## Kuwaiti doctors perform critical surgeries in Gaza

**GAZA, March 11, (KUNA):** A team of doctors from the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) had performed on Sunday critical surgeries at Kuwait Specialized Hospital and Gaza European Hospital.

Anesthesia Consultant Dr. Mohammad Shamsah said in a statement to KUNA that the medical team in the Gaza European Hospital managed to save one Palestinian life, injured by an Israeli raid in Khan Younes, southern Gaza Strip.

Dr. Shamsah added that Orthopedic Surgeon Consultant Dr. Hussein



A team of Kuwaiti doctors from the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) in Gaza.



KUNA photos

### Ramadan Timings

Iftar ..... Tuesday ..... 17:55  
Imsak ..... Wednesday ..... 04:38

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## Prayer Timings

Fajr ..... 04:44 Asr ..... 15:21  
 Sunrise .. 06:03 Maghrib .. 17:54  
 Zohr ..... 11:58 Isha ..... 19:10

# Local

## Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

**By Day:** Warm with light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 12-38 km/h.  
**By Night:** Rather cold with light

## Weather

to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 12-32 km/h.	Abdaly	28	19
	Jahra	29	19
<b>Station</b>	<b>Max Exp</b>	<b>Min Rec</b>	
Kuwait City	27	21	19
Kuwait Airport	28	20	20
			18

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

## HH the Amir is 'captain of the ship': PM

'Carry nation to brighter future'; Newly-appointed diplomats congratulated



Top and above: Pictures taken at the event.

PM Diwan photos

**KUWAIT CITY, March 11, (KUNA):** His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah on Sunday, addressing a fresh batch of new diplomats, said "Ahead of you are many missions to take on, then sail off to a brighter future for Kuwait."

Praising Almighty Allah for a leadership that believes in its 'sons and daughters' potential, His Highness the Premier stressed that the 1962 Constitution was the offspring of such belief.

The ceremony at Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute saw the graduation of 8th and 9th batches, with Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya, his deputy Sheikh Jarah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and senior ministry officials attending.

The government, noted Sheikh Dr. Mohammad, is working on manifesting, on the ground, vision of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah of a "just, safe and sustainable" country, with His Highness as "captain of the ship."

Hence were His Highness's recent visits to GCC countries that held historic, geographic and strategic inevitabilities, noted the prime minister while highlighting the economy dossier among member states as well.

Minister Al-Yahya congratulated the newly appointed diplomats on joining the diplomatic corps.

Al-Yahya witnessed oath-taking of 19 diplomats who were promoted to the diplomatic and consular corps under Article 21/1962 after their completion of the training and academic program at the Diplomatic Institute.

The Minister expressed his trust in the new diplomats' qualifications, hoping they would dedicate their careers to the benefit and representation of Kuwait and its people abroad.

He advised them to abide by the set rules and laws, national values, and basic principles of Kuwait's diplomacy, explaining that they might encounter potential challenges on their diplomatic journeys especially during the current global and regional unrest.

Al-Yahya reiterated his well wishes and success to the new diplomats under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

### 'Spirit of Ramadan'

## 1,800 mosques received worshipers for 'Tarawih'

**KUWAIT CITY, March 11:** Mosques are the spirit of the holy month of Ramadan — the month of faith and worship, when the houses of Allah become a destination for fasting, standing, ascetic and worshipping people, reports Al-Qabas daily.

With the advent of the holy month, the country's mosques fully prepared for the month of faith; hence, spiritual atmosphere prevailed in more than 1,800 mosques in various governorates. These mosques were decorated and prepared to receive crowds of worshipers for Tarawih and other prayers during the holy month, which is characterized by a spiritual atmosphere and reverence of faith.

The daily observed the efforts and work of the Ministry of Endowments, which began early. The preparations and activities to welcome the holy month included a number of measures aimed at providing all means of comfort and safety for visitors of the Houses of Allah of all groups and ages.

The mosques were maintained inside and out, in addition to daily cleaning of bathrooms, ablutions and audio equipment, implementing safety measures for worshipers, ensuring all safety conditions are met, and addressing all complaints received last year to prevent their recurrence this year. No mosque was opened whose maintenance had not been completed in order to guarantee the safety of worshipers.

The women's prayer halls and outdoor courtyards are fully equipped, in addition to the presence of regular maintenance teams 24 hours a day.

With regard to controlling the collection of donations and beggars during the holy month; the ministry, in cooperation with other concerned authorities, adopted a mechanism aimed at regulating donations, as well as preventing begging, sympathizing with beggars, sleeping in the mosques during prayer times. There is also a mechanism for protecting the cars of worshipers and regulating traffic movement around the mosques where there are many worshipers.

The ministry arranged various activities including advocacy programs and cultural activities in mosques; such as fatwa councils, public lectures, scientific courses, Sharia lessons, thoughts on faith, and broadcasting faith programs on its websites and other means of communication.

With regard to the arrangements for Iftar, the ministry prepared Iftar banquets outside the mosques this year, while Ramadan centers were allocated in each governorate according to their needs. It organized Ramadan retreats, focusing on instilling national values and rejecting sedition and drugs.

Moreover, emergency centers were allocated to receive complaints and suggestions from worshipers through WhatsApp or the hotline throughout the day, and resolve them immediately. Qur'ans, chairs, water, incense, juice, dates and many other needs of worshippers have been provided.



Tarawih prayers in progress.

## Kuwait PM receives societies at Bayan Palace



HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah pictured with one of the societies.

**KUWAIT CITY, March 11, (KUNA):** His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah received, Sunday, a multitude of Kuwaiti association and institution representatives at Bayan Palace.

He received chairs and members of Kuwait Insurance Federation, Kuwait Fishermen Union, Kuwait Transpar-

ency Society, workers Union of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET), and Kuwait University faculty.

His Highness the Prime Minister and his guests discussed numerous local topics, praising the ideas put forward by specialists that would benefit Kuwait and its citizens.

### 'Positive response expected on visas'

## 'Pakistan, Kuwait relations on upturn'

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, March 11:** The Ambassador of Pakistan to Kuwait Malik Muhammad Farooq says the relationship between Kuwait and Pakistan is distinguished, and is witnessing a new phase under the leadership of the two countries.

In a press statement issued on the sidelines of a dinner party he held in honor of Pakistani Quran reciter Syed Sadaqat Ali, the ambassador affirmed that there will be fruitful cooperation in the future in a number of sectors.

He said, "We held discussions with the Kuwait Investment Authority to expand its investments in our country. We welcome the private sector, as Pakistan is a large and promising market".

The ambassador highlighted the importance of cooperation with Kuwait in the field of food security, considering it a very important sector.

He stressed that there are a number of companies interested in this aspect, in addition to interest in other sectors such as renewable energy.

Ambassador Farooq referred to the visit of the Prime Minister of Pakistan to Kuwait, which resulted in the signing of seven agreements in a number of fields, most of which are related to food security and the provision of agricultural materials, as well as in the field of electricity and solar energy.

He indicated that his country has established a special council for investment promotion and provision of facilities to investors, adding that his country seeks to enhance investments in five areas, including food security, energy, and information technology.

Concerning the visa problems and the continued placement of Pakistan on the blacklist even after visas were opened to other nationalities, Ambassador Farooq said, "We aspire to support and promote Pakistan as a country friendly to Kuwait. We are talking with the Kuwaiti side in this regard. We believe that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is a great supporter and encourager of our country. I am sure you will notice positive changes in the near future."



Malik Farooq

### 8 Arab nations see moon

## Deputy PM congratulates Amir as Ramadan starts

**KUWAIT CITY, March 11, (KUNA):** Kuwait Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the advent of Ramadan.

Ministry of Defense (MoD) said on Sunday in a press release, that Minister of Defense conveyed congratulations to His Highness the Amir on behalf of MoD's servicemen and civilians on the advent of Ramadan.

Minister of Defense also sent a cable of congratulations to His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah on advent of Ramadan.

In the cable, he wished His Highness the Prime Minister wellness and the nation security and stability under His Highness the Amir's wise leadership.

### Info Minister

Minister of Information and Culture Abdul-Rahman Al-Mutairi expressed sincere greetings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah on the start of the holy month of Ramadan.

The minister also congratulated the citizens and expatriate residents in Kuwait as well as the entire Muslim nation on the holy occasion, voicing hope that Allah the Almighty would accept their good deeds.

### KUNA congratulates

Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) extends its warmest congratulations and blessings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and to His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, and to honorable citizens and residents on the holy month of Ramadan.

### 8 Arab nations start Ramadan

The moon-sighting authorities in the Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine confirmed seeing the crescent moon of the holy month of Ramadan of the Hijri year 1445 on Sunday evening, thus starting fasting as of tomorrow (Monday).

Earlier this evening Kuwait's Moon-Sighting Committee announced that Monday would mark the first day of the blessed month.

On the other hand, the religious authorities of Oman and Jordan said they did not sight the crescent moon this evening, and thereby the fasting month of Ramadan would start on Tuesday.

## 30 charities collecting donations in Ramadan

**KUWAIT CITY, March 11:** Assistant Undersecretary for the Social Development Sector in the Ministry of Social Affairs Dr Khaled Al-Ajmi revealed that 30 charitable organizations are contributing to the fundraising project during the month of Ramadan, reports Al-Anba daily.

Regarding the approved mechanisms, Al-Ajmi revealed that donations are collected through electronic collection devices (K-Net and L-Net), in the headquarters of charitable organizations, or through bank deductions. He said seven teams in the governorates and a social media monitoring team are closely following up the fundraising program.

He added there are special Iftar forms for those who are fasting and food basket projects that are filled on the website for charitable work, specifying the day and location in which the Iftar will be held or the food baskets will be distributed; with the immediate approval of the Charitable Societies and Foundations Department.

He stressed that monitoring and follow-up are carried out electronically, as violations are entered directly through the website for charitable work and carried out through the special application on the website. About the outcome of charitable work, Al-Ajmi indicated that the organization must submit weekly reports on the outcome of its work; while the teams will submit their comments directly through the application or call the attention of participating charities.

# diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

## 'Let us back govt's reform plan, as corruption, nepotism rise'

Indeed, the clarion call for reform has resounded, with eminent state dignitaries aboard the train of change, steadfast in their mission to combat the pervasive tendrils of corruption ensnaring our state institutions," columnist **Yaqoub Yousef Al-Omar** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"The egregious pillaging of public funds, once condemned by all, now brazenly persists, with some wielding influence to orchestrate nepotistic appointments, appointing kin to positions for which they lack requisite expertise, while deserving candidates languish in obscurity.



Yaqoub Al-Omar

"This disturbing trend extends to audacious calls for the naturalization of non-citizens, threatening the very fabric of our national identity and cohesion.

"Additionally, the proliferation of imposters both domestically and abroad exacerbates our woes, notwithstanding the meticulous records maintained by Mr. Saleh Al-Fadala. His exhaustive efforts warrant empowerment to address this entrenched issue, which has festered for decades.

"Moreover, the insidious embezzlement of public coffers by unscrupulous officials demands swift and decisive action. Only through the appointment of competent stewards and the stringent enforcement of punitive measures can we begin to stem this tide of malfeasance.

"Yet, amidst these trials, we find solace in the abundance of righteous souls who uphold integrity and reverence for the divine. Kuwait, a nation born of noble virtues, holds within its ranks countless individuals committed to righteousness.

"As the momentum for reform gains traction, we must not forget the plight of our junior employees and retirees, whose meager pensions fail to meet the demands of an increasingly challenging existence.

"Let us rally behind our government's commitment to reform, guided by the vision of His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, a beacon of leadership and stewardship.

"May his reign continue to bring prosperity and blessing upon our beloved Kuwait and its devoted citizens."

**Also:**

"Kuwait's neutrality remains a vital topic, particularly amidst the ongoing crises and fluctuations in the Middle East region, characterized by almost constant instability. Kuwait's commitment to neutrality isn't merely a response to temporary circumstances but rather a longstanding approach that has ensured its security, stability, and safety," columnist **Saad Fahd Al-Mojil** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"Dating back to its inception in 1613, Kuwait has embraced neutrality as a core principle, leveraging its unique demographic, political, and maritime geography to abstain from entanglement in regional conflicts. This stance has facilitated its evolution into a commercial hub in the northern Gulf, serving as a crucial port for both the Arabian Peninsula and Mesopotamia.

"While Kuwait has largely adhered to neutrality, exceptions have occurred, such as during the Iran-Iraq war. Departing from its usual stance led to the invasion by Saddam Hussein's regime, resulting in significant political, military, and security repercussions that continue to affect the region.

"Maintaining neutrality isn't synonymous with weakness; instead, it represents a strategic vision and anticipation of potential repercussions. Neutrality underscores an independent policy that prioritizes stability over alignment with belligerent parties, reflecting a position of strength rather than passivity.

"In today's geopolitical landscape, marked by significant shifts akin to those post-World War II, Kuwait's neutrality is more crucial than ever. Amid attempts to vilify certain countries and depict them as adversaries, Kuwait's steadfast neutrality remains imperative to preserve regional stability.

"Renowned international relations expert Khattar Abu Diab has aptly described Kuwait as the "diplomatic dean of the Arabs," highlighting its role as a cautious mediator seeking to foster reasoned dialogue. Kuwait's mediation efforts, spanning conflicts between Egypt and Saudi Arabia in Yemen, South Yemen and Oman, and Pakistan and Bangladesh in the 1970s, underscore the efficacy of its neutral stance in diplomacy.

"Ultimately, Kuwait's neutrality isn't just a diplomatic posture; it's a cornerstone of its security, stability, and sovereignty, cementing its status as a preeminent diplomatic player in the region."

"At the time of writing this article on Friday, March 8, 2024, four female candidates had officially registered for the parliamentary elections, leaving room for potential surprises as additional female candidates may step forward at the eleventh hour," columnist **Hassan Ali Karam** wrote for

**Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Historically, women have faced challenges in participating in both national and local elections, except for the initial elections following the recognition of their right to engage in political activities. Despite an initial surge of enthusiasm among nominated and elected women to assert their presence in politics with remarkable efficiency and experience, this momentum gradually waned. Sadly, skepticism and distrust towards women's representative capabilities emerged, leading to a regrettable sentiment that women were turning against each other.

"Regrettably, there is a misguided notion propagated by some that women are inherently detrimental to one another, yet the true culprits behind such sentiments are often women themselves. This anti-women narrative has gained traction, undermining women's confidence and trust in one another. Some have even gone to extremes, advocating for measures such as providing pensions to non-working women and enforcing gender segregation in government institutions, universities, and schools.

"Such developments could have been mitigated had the government taken a firmer stance against these anti-women trends and supported women's participation in politics. However, following these setbacks, the role of women in the political arena has significantly diminished. Currently, there is only one female minister in the government, and the council lacks any female representation.

"The primary challenge lies not with women or the government but with a narrow-minded religious authority that espouses unilateral interpretations. These closed-minded individuals refuse to acknowledge alternative viewpoints, hindering progress and the flourishing of diverse opinions.

"Women's involvement in politics is essential for societal progress, as it encompasses various aspects of life, including political, social, and economic affairs. Restricting women to domestic roles is unjustified, considering their capabilities and contributions to various fields.

"Despite some timid recognition by the government, women's potential remains largely untapped, with token appointments to certain ministries that are traditionally associated with femininity. The government should actively seek to include highly educated and accomplished women in positions of authority.

"Voters must prioritize competence over gender, ethnicity, or sectarian affiliations when selecting candidates. Kuwait still lags behind in many areas, and limiting women based on outdated prejudices only hampers progress for the entire nation, not just women.

"Having a female representative in Abdullah Al-Salem Hall adds a valuable political and social dynamic, helping to ease tensions and mitigate conflicts during sessions.

"Moving forward, let us hope for better opportunities for women in the next phase. Their roles extend far beyond domestic duties, and their contributions to society should be fully recognized and appreciated."

"Marathons and increments... The 'rational' government succeeded in holding the great sports marathon and marketed it well, but it failed miserably in approving increments with the entry of the holy month. Rather, it failed miserably in marketing its achievements or what it intends to accomplish!" columnist **Talal Al-Saeed** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"It is clear that the 'rational' government believes the marathon is more important than the increments. Whoever is waiting for the approval of the increments must accept that the government ignores his demands. Accept that in the spirit of sportsmanship. Participate in the marathon to acquire the sportsmanship spirit, such that he accepts defeat like he accepts victory!

"We must have a sporting spirit as the government wants, and not as we, those demanding for increments and devoid of sportsmanship, want. We promised good news when the National Assembly was dissolved. We said the government would approve the increments after the dissolution, so this achievement would be recorded under its name, but it was satisfied with the marathon!

"It seems that the path to achievement is difficult for this government, just like its predecessors. All of our problems remain without a solution, there is no single achievement or a project that has started implementation and we are waiting for its end!

"Perhaps, one of the most important demands is to repair all the country's streets after the dilapidated roads claimed lives and severely damaged properties. Even Jaber Bridge, on which the government marathon was held, is in urgent need of repaving!

"Let the 'rational' government allow us to remind it that the real marathon is the marathon of improving living conditions, which the citizen is impatiently waiting for. The marathon of improving services is in second place. As for controlling prices, we have no hope for it, because it has become clear for us beyond doubt that the merchants are much stronger than the marathon government... Good!"

— **Compiled by PFX Fernandes**

## MoJ real estate auctions yield 7.8% hike: report

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Throughout February, the Ministry of Justice conducted a series of real estate auctions resulting in the sale of 10 residential properties, two investment properties, and an apartment, fetching a total of 9.26 million dinars, reports **Al-Jarida** daily.

This marked a 7.8 percent increase from the initial value of 8.59 million dinars.

The residential properties sold during the auctions totaled 7.19 million dinars, reflecting an 8.9 percent increase compared to the initial value of 6.60 million dinars.

Notable sales included a house in the Mansouriyah area, spanning 750 square meters, which sold for 1.05 million dinars, marking a 17.9 percent increase from the initial price of 890 thousand dinars.

Additionally, a house in the Al-Mangaf area, covering 400 square meters, fetched 495 thousand dinars, a 12.5 percent increase from the initial price of 440 thousand dinars.

Similarly, a house in the Jaber Al Ali area, with an area of 400 square meters, was sold for 294 thousand dinars, marking an 8.8 percent increase from the initial price of 270 thousand dinars. Another significant sale was a house in the Rawda area, sold for 1.01 million dinars, a 6.8 percent increase from the initial price of 750 thousand dinars.



KUNA photo

The village set up in the Yemeni desert.

## Kuwait funds village for orphans

ADEN, March 11, (KUNA): Kuwait's Society for Humanitarian Action has opened a village called Jaoula, in the Yemeni governorate of Lahj, in Tuban district, that consists of 20 housing units, a school, a health center, and a water project, with the aim of distributing livelihoods to people in need, ongoing for the 9th year.

The Springs of Goodness Foundation has announced a project involving the construction of housing units, a school, a health center, a mosque, and an integrated water project. The project includes a rehabilita-

tion, submersible pumping system, and solar systems for all village facilities.

Deputy Governor of Lahj, Awad Al-Salahi, expressed gratitude to the State of Kuwait, its leadership, government, and people for their support and projects that touche people's lives.

He affirmed that the project aims to provide a safe haven and housing for orphans living in harsh conditions in Lahj, with the local authority promising to provide necessary support to ensure the success of the project and improve living conditions.

# Statements issued by Gulf leaders put at rest 'Durra' issue: minister

Kuwait pledges total support for Palestine: Al-Yahya

**KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Against the backdrop of Iranian allegations, the most recent of which were made by the Iranian presidential assistant regarding "ownership of the Durra field," in response Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya stressed that the joint Gulf statements that were issued during the recent tours of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries have resolved their position on the "Durra Field," reports Al-Qabas daily.**

Regarding developments in Palestine, the Foreign Minister reiterated Kuwait's absolute support for the Palestinian cause, noting that "providing aid to the Palestinian people is the top concern of the political leadership, and we continue to stand with the brothers in Gaza in facing the repercussions of the crisis they are going through."



Al-Yahya

He pointed out that the Palestinian issue occupied a prominent place during his last tour, "We met with foreign ministers and officials in several countries and sought to convince them of the necessity of reconsidering the decisions to freeze the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), and they promised to support the organization again, and some countries will resume their support for the agency soon."

Al-Yahya reiterated Kuwait's position calling for an immediate halt to the Israeli aggression against Gaza, providing international protection for the Palestinian people, ensuring the entry of relief and basic aid to the residents of the Gaza Strip, and preventing any attempts at forced dis-

## Radical maintenance of roads on cards

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: The Ministry of Public Works has unveiled its plan to offer a package of contracts and tenders for the radical maintenance of roads in various governorates to local, Gulf and foreign companies; indicating the specified period for implementing the contracts is within 1,095 days, reports **Al-Qabas** daily.

The ministry enumerated the works covered by these contracts as follows:

1. General maintenance of roads and squares, small construction works, emergency and urgent works, miscellaneous works, small supplementary works for asphalt or tiles, etc.
2. General maintenance work and the construction of pressure and gravity lines and their accessories in the sanitary sewage network. This includes cleaning, photography, opening of seals, replacing damaged lines or creating new lines, in addition to connecting government buildings or residential plots to sanitary sewers, as well as emergency and urgent works in various locations.

3. Maintenance, replacement, and reconstruction of sewers, cleaning inside and outside the sewers, and constructing rainwater sewer lines.
4. Maintenance, supply and installation of road and traffic signs of all types and shapes. It includes maintenance, supply and installation of safety barriers and road side grilles.
5. Maintenance and planning for paving surface of roads and parking lots, and placing prominent, reflective ground traffic signs on the asphalt for all types and shapes of roads. It includes installing plastic poles and reflective signs on barriers.
6. Radical maintenance work for agricultural areas and their branches and annexes.
7. Maintenance work on all external and border roads in the southern part of the country.

The ministry added these contracts include the maintenance of Salmi Road; with the aim of developing highway infrastructure and safety systems, asphalt maintenance for highways, and repairing potholes and bridge expansion joints.

## MoI, GTD duty timings in Ramadan

By **Munif Naif**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: The General Traffic Department (GTD) announced that the official working hours during the month of Ramadan in all its departments in the six governorates are from 10:00 am until 4:00 pm.

In a press statement issued yesterday, the department stated that the work timings of the technical inspection departments in all governorates and the technical inspection companies are also the same. The work timings of the testing depart-

ments in all the governorates is from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm.

Regarding the ban on trucks, the department clarified that the ban is from 8:30 am to 10:30 pm, and then from 12:30 pm to 3:00 pm.

Meanwhile, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Lieutenant General Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf issued a circular regarding the working hours in the ministry's sectors based on the Civil Service Commission's decision concerning the official working hours in government agencies during Ramadan. The official working hours are from 10:00 am to 2:30 pm.

placement of the Palestinian people.

Al-Yahya stated that Kuwait is keen to contribute in support of the humanitarian agency's projects for the relief of Palestinian refugees in

the occupied Palestinian territories, noting the solidarity of Kuwait's leadership, government and people with the brothers to obtain their full legitimate rights.



Brig Gen Nawaf Al-Hayan

Gulf Traffic Week ends

## 23,000 traffic violations blocks lifted: Al-Hayan

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Brigadier General Nawaf Al-Hayan, Director of the Traffic Awareness Department at the General Traffic Department, revealed that 23,000 traffic violation blocks were lifted and fines for about 2,000 violations were collected during Gulf Traffic Week which was held under the theme 'Your Life is Trust', and concluded with various activities aimed at promoting traffic safety, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

Al-Hayan stated that the Unified Gulf Traffic Week saw the receipt of feedback from citizens and residents, along with the dissemination of traffic instructions during exhibitions held at the Avenues and Al-Khairan malls.

He emphasized the department's commitment to educating the public, highlighting initiatives such as visits to patients involved in accidents, lectures at Kuwait University, and dedicated exhibitions attended by approximately 30,000 individuals.

Al-Hayan expressed gratitude to citizens and residents for their cooperation in adhering to traffic laws and helping reduce accidents.

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FEBRUARY  
National Day  
الكويت KUWAIT

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LONG LIVE INDO-KUWAIT FRIENDSHIP  
MUGHAL MAHAL

Dr Swaika calls on Kuwait's Minister of Oil Dr Al-Ateeqi

# Indian ambassador sends greetings on the advent of Ramadan

## MoE mulls new subject with aim to foster patriotic values in students

'Info Ministry' to launch new digital platform in May

**KUWAIT CITY, March 11, (KUNA):** The Minister of Education, and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Adel Al-Adwani directed the formation of a committee to establish a new subject called "National Education," aimed at fostering patriotic values among students.



Dr Al-Adwani



Al-Azmi

The ministry said in a press statement Sunday that Al-Adwani decided to form a committee comprising specialized personnel tasked with identifying the grades intended to teach this subject to students. The committee will develop a curriculum and teaching plan for "National Education" for each grade level according to set standards, the ministry added.

Meanwhile, Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information for Media Services and New Media Sector, Saad Al-Azmi announced Sunday the launch of the new digital platform (51) next May 12, which will integrate all of the ministry's content digitally.

Al-Azmi's statement came during a press conference held to announce the details of the platform and its launch, which will coincide with the anniversary of the launch of Kuwait Radio on May 12, 1951, in cooperation with Fasttelco.

He stressed that the team will persist in their efforts until the upcoming launch, ensuring diverse content, including Ramadan programs, on Kuwait TV's digital platform until the transition to the new platform (51), whose goal is to embrace modern media technologies.

Al-Azmi described the platform as a gateway to innovative digital content, transcending traditional methods and offering effortless access to television and radio content. It enables users to enjoy timeless archival pieces and live broadcasts of all Kuwait TV channels and radio stations.

**Adherence**

Emphasizing its family-friendly design, he highlighted adherence to Ministry of Information regulations and the platform's reflection of Kuwaiti cultural values and creativity in media, art, awareness, sports, and drama. It serves Kuwaiti media history and authenticity.

He pointed out the platform's significance in maximizing the state's financial resources for the Ministry of Information through private sector collaboration. It is projected to generate a substantial return of KD 5,050 million over five years, along with 10 percent of net advertising profits and subscriptions. Additionally, the ministry will retain ownership of its archive and trademark, ensuring control over platform content.

On her part, Nouf Al-Mashaan, representing Fasttelco, emphasized the significance of collaboration between the private and government sectors in advancing services. Leveraging their technical expertise and infrastructure, she highlighted their leadership position in delivering an unparalleled media experience.

Al-Mashaan noted that their project opens doors to Kuwait's rich visual and audio archive, accessible worldwide, promoting not only Kuwait's history and culture but also the Arabic language.

She expressed pride in cooperating with the Ministry of Information and other government agencies, underscoring their commitment to exploring opportunities for a prosperous media future aligned with a common vision.

Engineer Issa Dharyan, Director of Engineering Communications at the Ministry of Information and Deputy Chairman of the Coordination Committee for the Ministry of Information Digital Platform, said the launch of this platform has become imperative due to the abundance of media materials, some of which are beneficial while others spread ideas unsuitable for society.

Dharyan highlighted that the Platform (51) digital platform, leveraging the Ministry of Information's rich cultural heritage and extensive media expertise, will offer secure, purposeful media content embedded with ethical values and crafted to appeal to various demographics based on age and interests.

He emphasized the platform's embodiment of genuine community partnership between the government and private sectors, enriching television, radio, and electronic media content while staying abreast of rapid developments in digital and modern media.

On the advent of holy month of Ramadan, the Indian Ambassador to Kuwait, HE Dr Adarsh Swaika has extended his heartfelt wishes of Ramadan Mubarak to everyone and prays for health, safety, and prosperity of all. "I extend my warmest regards to the leadership of the State of Kuwait, our dear Kuwaiti friends, and the entire Indian community in Kuwait, as well as to our fellow Indians back home," the press release issued by the Indian Embassy said.



Indian Ambassador with Minister Dr Al-Ateeqi.

Ramadan epitomizes, the Indian envoy said, a time for introspection, patience, gratitude, love, humility, and self-discipline. It serves as a gentle reminder of our duty to serve the less fortunate and marginalized members of society. Moreover, it underscores the principles of equality and compassion, fostering a collective commitment to the betterment of our communities.

In India, with its rich tapestry of diverse religions and cultures, Ramadan holds special significance as the month showcases the vibrant mosaic of our nation, which is home to the world's second-largest Muslim population. It is revered as a time of great auspiciousness, showcasing India's ethos of unity in diversity, where individuals from varied socio-cultural and religious backgrounds coexist harmoniously.

May this sacred month of Ramadan be abundant in kindness, harmony, and compassion, strengthening the bonds of unity across all strata of society. Once again, I extend my warmest Ramadan Mubarak wishes to all our dear friends in Kuwait and beloved brothers and sisters from India. Ramadan Kareem!

The Indian Ambassador Dr Swaika called on Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil HE Dr Imad Mohammad Abdulaziz Al-Ateeqi.

The Indian envoy apprised the minister of the strong bilateral cooperation in hydrocarbons and good possibilities of cooperation in upstream and downstream sectors.

## Kuwait's IICO offers scholarship funding to students in Malaysia

**KUALA LAMPUR, March 11, (KUNA):** The Kuwaiti-based International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) offered funding for students in need studying in Arabic merit schools in Malaysia as part of 'My Right to Learn' project.

In a statement, the Development and Human Relief Society (INSAN) in Malaysia, which is implementing the project and is registered in Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said, Monday, that the project was funding hundreds of students in seven different Arabic schools across Malaysia.

The statement added that 'My Right to Learn' project included more than 3,000 students that participated in various activities and honored the top achievers with prizes and scholarships in the closing ceremony.

In a previously recorded speech, IICO Deputy General Director Ibrahim Al-Bader affirmed the importance of funding such projects that helps provide educational opportunities to students, which aligns with the organization's strategies.

### List of Temporary Debts of Al-Farabi Investment Co.

Based on the bankruptcy judge's decision dated 28 / 12 / 2023 , in application No. 239 / 2023, bankruptcy adjudication was made to appoint Rabea Saad Al Muhanna as the trustee in bankruptcy for Al-Farabi Investment Co. The trustee in bankruptcy has summoned creditors to submit their claims. After verifying all debts, the trustee in bankruptcy has compiled the following list of amounts that, in her view, can be accepted or disposed of as follows:

First: Debts that the trustee in bankruptcy deems acceptable	
<b>a. Public Institutions and Organizations</b>	
1 Murabha Payable - Kuwait Industrial Bank	1,958,611.521
2 KFAS liability	10,000.062
<b>b. Other payables</b>	
1 Kuwait and Middle East Financial and Investment Company – KMEFIC	15,079,260.274
<b>c. Staff Claims</b>	
1 Al-sayed Mahmoud Al-qulali	52,719.647
2 Abdul-Aziz Saud Al-Tayyar	38,592.820
3 Hani Adeeab Al-Ghawas	27,181.131
4 Madeline George Aftimos	7,808.669
5 Bader Ahmed Al-Mansour	6,887.748
<b>Total : 17,181,061.872</b>	

Only KD Seventeen Million One Hundred Eighty One Thousands Sixty One Kuwaiti Dinar and 872 Fils.

Second: Debts that the bankruptcy trustee deems to be excluded because they are recorded in the financial statements without supporting documents and their owners have not submitted a request to include them in her records.

1 Murabah Account - Al Sayer Group	50,000.000
2 Al Sherief lawyer	33,470.400
3 Al Oula Law Abdul Hadi & Partners	24,000.000
4 Daleel International Co.	15,880.000
5 ADNAN ALAJEEL & WALEED ALTATTAN - Law & Legal Consultants	7,500.000
6 Al-Saif Advocates & Legal Consultants	5,404.500
7 Real Estate Investment Co. «Dar Al Awadi»	5,344.330
8 Rodle	3,750.000
9 Kuwait clearing Co.	3,642.000
10 Gulf Insurance Co.	3,566.698
11 Arabi Holding Co.	3,161.815
12 KPMG Consultancy	2,375.000
13 National Creativity	1,875.000
14 Al Mashora & Alraya for Financial Consulting	1,750.000
15 Al Waha Auditing office	1,100.000
16 Al-Khat Printing Press Co.	480.000
17 ALHayat logistics - store rent	280.000
18 Xerox Al Amanah Industries	283.824
19 Aramex Kuwait	22.080
20 Quick Services Co.	93.600
21 Al Lewa Al Jadeed Bookshop	41.000
22 Gulf International Company - KEMS W.L.L Zajil	164.520
23 Faraj Mohamed Al-Faraj	250.000
24 Ehab Dawoud	13,931.151
25 Noura Rashid Al Manaa'i	7,080.550
26 Khalid Al Gharaballi	8,876.710
27 Salah Al Maousherji	252,121.766
28 FAZAL JIFRI	1,165.877
29 Eyhab Al Qahwaji	4,482.693
<b>Total : 452,093.514</b>	

Only Four Hundred Fifty Two Thousand Ninety Three Kuwaiti Dinar and 514 Fils.

**Note: As per the Article No. 111 of the Law 71 of 2020, Bankruptcy Law**

The debtor and any creditor, even if his name is not included in the list of debts, have the right to submit a grievance to the bankruptcy administration against the debts included in the list within a period of ten days from the date of announcing the list, and the bankruptcy court is empowered to make a decision on such grievances.

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## LOCAL

## Fr Zakaria sends Ramadan greetings to Kuwait leadership

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Father Yassa Zakaria, the pastor of the Coptic Catholic Cathedral in Kuwait, conveyed heartfelt congratulations and blessings to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, on the auspicious occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, reports Al-Jarida daily.

In a press statement, Father Zakaria also extended his best wishes to the wise government led by Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Dr. Moham-

mad Al-Sabah, praying for the restoration of blessings and prosperity to all the people of Kuwait under their leadership.

Reflecting on the significance of this Ramadan coinciding with the fortieth fast, Father Zakaria emphasized the importance of unity in offering prayers and supplications for the country and its people. He expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Interior and its dedicated personnel for ensuring the safety and security of mosques, enabling

worshippers to observe their rituals in peace during these sacred days.

Father Zakaria expressed hopes for the revival of Kuwait's economy and prosperity under the leadership of His Highness the Amir and Prime Minister, invoking divine blessings upon Kuwait, as well as upon the Arab and Islamic nations. He concluded with a heartfelt wish for goodness, security, and prosperity to prevail in Kuwait and for all inhabitants of the cherished land to be blessed with love and abundance.

## PM stresses

Continued from Page 1

"The government planned for cooperation with the outgoing parliament on this matter but unfortunately the parliament was dissolved for transgressing the Sovereign status, which is known to everybody," he said.

His Highness the Prime Minister made the press remarks after attending the graduation ceremony of the eighth and ninth batches of Saud N. Al-Sabah Kuwait Diplomatic Institute.

The government will pursue its efforts to improve the standards of living of the citizens materially and morally through enhancing their confidence that the state is serious in addressing all forms of corruption and crimes, he pointed out.

Regarding the material aspect, the government studied with the technical departments the plans for providing soft loans, and improving the benefits of pensioners in collaboration with the Public Institution for Social Security, His Highness the Prime Minister revealed.

The consultations resulted in positive attitude to regulation of soft loans that will benefit pensioners and ensure sustainability of sovereign funds, he said.

"We arrived at a conclusion that a draft legislation on this issue will be tabled to the upcoming National Assembly soon after being elected in the coming weeks," His Highness the Prime Minister added.

## Ministers extend

Continued from Page 1

prime minister, ministers, ambassadors of sisterly and friendly states, in addition to citizens and residents of all ages as well as citizens of special needs.

They hailed the event's activities, namely the marathon, the bike race, and group games, affirming necessity of sports to all and their positive impact on human health.

The Cabinet expressed gratitude to the Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Minister of State for Communications Dawoud Maarefi, personnel of the PSA and all the authorities that took part in the sports event.

Meanwhile, the ministers were briefed about recommendations by the ministerial committee for educational, health and youth affairs regarding the buildings and the historic sites and decided to assign the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters to speed up implementing its plans for renovating the historic locations and turn them into tourist and cultural attractions.

The ministers examined recommendations of the ministerial committee of legal affairs regarding the treaties and memoranda of understanding between the State of Kuwait and a number of sisterly and friendly states, aimed at bolstering the bilateral relations and mutual cooperation with these countries in various spheres.

## Kuwaiti doctors

Continued from Page 1

Al-Quwaian and Surgery Consultant Dr. Mohammad Haider succeeded in saving the life of an injured man upon his arrival to the Gaza European Hospital.

He noted that the team immediately took the injured to the operating room and performing an amputation of the right foot and correction of fractures in the left.

Urology Consultant Dr. Faisal Al-Hajri said in a statement to KUNA that one surgery was conducted for the first time in the Gaza Strip inside Kuwait Specialized Hospital, which included taking a patch from the mouth to create a new urinary tract for a man in his 50s who suffered from urinary tract infections.

Dr. Al-Hajri added that more than 50 patients have been waiting a long time to be treated in light of the lack of medical capabilities in hospitals due to the ongoing war in the Strip.

He stressed that there is a significant shortage of medical personnel and supplies and called for support from Gaza's health systems.

The delegation of the KRCS left on Sunday evening after performing 23 surgical operations on wounded and sick Palestinians in Kuwait Specialized Hospital and Gaza European Hospital.

## Saudi King

Continued from Page 1

The United States, Qatar and Egypt had hoped to broker a cease-fire ahead of the normally joyous month of dawn-to-dusk fasting that would include the release of dozens of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners, and the entry of a large amount of humanitarian aid, but the talks stalled last week.

Hamas is demanding guarantees that any such agreement will lead to an end to the war, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to continue the offensive until "total victory" against the militant group and the release of all the remaining hostages.

The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking around 250 hostage. Hamas is still believed to be holding around 100 captives and the remains of 30 others following an exchange last year.

The war has driven around 80% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million people from their homes and pushed hundreds of thousands to the brink of famine. Health officials say at least 20 people, mostly children, have died from malnutrition and dehydration in northern Gaza.

Israeli forces have largely sealed off the north since October, and aid groups say Israeli restrictions, ongoing hostilities and the breakdown of law and order have made it nearly impossible to safely deliver desperately needed food in much of the territory.

Israel has meanwhile vowed to expand its offensive to the southern city of Rafah, where half of Gaza's population has sought refuge, without saying where civilians would go to escape the onslaught. President Joe Biden has said an attack on Rafah would be a "red line" for him, but that the United States would continue to provide military aid to Israel.

## Pharmacists' concerns grow as licensing decision nears expiry

'Planned open sit-in unlikely to occur'

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Reports have been circulating about a group of pharmacists planning an open sit-in at the Ministry of Health headquarters in the coming days to protest the ongoing decision regarding the timing of granting licenses to private pharmacies. However, health sources have indicated that the sit-in is unlikely to occur due to the imminent expiry of the decision's term.

They explained that the decision of the Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi to stop granting licenses to private pharmacies was issued at the beginning of January. More than two months have passed, which means the time period for its implementation will end in 20 days, as the duration of the decision is only three months.

The decision included new licenses only, as there were reports that the minister had approved the renewal of licenses for existing private pharmacies during the last period. This means the existing private pharmacies can continue and the suspension is only for new licenses only.

On the other hand, a number of pharmacists expressed their concern about the possibility of the decision being extended before it expires at the end of March.

They stressed that the recent health decisions were taken into consideration, and need further scrutiny and review.

The pharmacists stressed the importance of organizing the work of pharmacies in the private sector in a way that keeps pace with developments in pharmaceutical services and contributes to reducing the burden on the services provided by the ministry.

They said the decision to suspend licenses, as well as the decision issued earlier to close some private pharmacies, had negatively harmed the interests of citizens and pharmaceutical services as a whole, and cost the state budget exorbitant amounts of money in compensation cases.



Award winning photo by Mohammed Al-Kanderi.

KUNA photo

## Kuwaiti photographer wins AUTM best travel photo '24

BERLIN, March 11, (KUNA): The Arab Union for Tourism Media (AUTM) announced on Sunday that Kuwaiti photographer Mohammad Al-Kanderi shared the travel photo of the year 2024 for his "Wadi Durbat" photo which was featured in an article published by Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), with Iraq's Hikmat Al-Ayashi.

Al-Kanderi, who works at KUNA as an editor, saw his win in the Berlin International Tourism Trade (ITB), one of the biggest global travel fairs, for his publication dubbed (Wadi Durbat ... for the picturesque nature of Salalah).

This year's competition saw 16 participants from the Arab world, said

AUTM's board in a statement, and awards were given in various categories like, best travel report, best travel short video and best travel photo.

A judging committee was formed to evaluate the submissions by the contenders, some of the criteria include accuracy of information, influence, promoting tourism in Arab countries and more.



Al-Kanderi

'Embassy takes new measures'

## Chinese envoy woos Kuwaiti tourists

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei confirmed that the Chinese Embassy intends to open a window of communication between the Chinese and Kuwaiti peoples through diverse cultural experiences and delicious Chinese cuisine in a bid to renew traditional friendship and enhance mutual understanding between them; stressing the importance of introducing the Kuwaiti people to Chinese culture and developing diplomacy through culture, communication and friendship between peoples, reports Al-Qabas daily.

During the opening of the Chinese Culture and Food Festival at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center recently, Jianwei said: "We witnessed a huge turnout of attendees who showed their interest in Chinese food and music. This reflects the ancient Chinese civilization and the depth of distinguished

relations between the two countries, especially after the successful visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to China last September."

Affirming that the Chinese government welcomes more foreign tourists, he revealed the Chinese Embassy in Kuwait has taken new measures to facilitate the travel of Kuwaitis to his country. He expressed happiness over the remarkable increase in the number of Kuwaiti tourists who visited China, indicating their number reached thousands last year.

He added: "There are four flights a week from Kuwait to China. We welcome more Kuwaiti tourists to China, as our country is rich in culture, resources and a variety of halal cuisine. The Chinese people are hospitable and generous. Our Kuwaiti friends feel safe in China and this is very important."

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Aramco Gulf Operations Company Limited ("AGOC") and Kuwait Gulf Oil Company (K.S.C.) ("KGOC"), (Al Khafji Joint Operations) invites intending bidders to participate for the **Tender No.: HT818CB23 - Operation and Housekeeping Services.**

Each intending bidder may purchase the tender documents upon payment of **Saudi Riyals Four Thousand (SR 4,000) or Kuwaiti Dinars Three Hundred and Twenty (KD 320) only** which is non-refundable by visiting our Contracts Department at Al-Khafji, Saudi Arabia, or KGOC's Kuwait Office located in Al-Ahmadi, Tender & Contracts Section. The bidder may visit our KJO website: [www.kjo.com.sa](http://www.kjo.com.sa) and follows the path; E- Services □ Tendering □ Contractors □ Ongoing Tenders to review part of tender documents, before purchasing.

The sale of Tender Documents will be effective from **Mar. 12, 2024, until 10:00 AM, Mar. 26, 2024.**

A Pre-Tender meeting will be held at the **Auditorium, "Office Park" Building,** at Al-Khafji Joint Operations, Saudi Arabia, **at 10:30 AM local time on Mar. 26, 2024. Attending the Pre-Tender Meeting is Mandatory.**

Bidders shall also have such experiences as being active for at least five (5) years in the field of Housekeeping Services and should have executed at least one (1) contract for Operation and Housekeeping Service which included providing more than fifty (50) persons for a contract period not less than one (1) year and which must not be less than United States Dollar Four Million (US\$ 4,000,000.00) in value.

Bidders shall be required to provide an irrevocable bank guarantee ("Bid Bond") from a bank in Saudi Arabia or Kuwait, in the amount of **United States Dollars One Hundred Thousand (US\$100,000.00) only,** to warrant the bid proposal. Such bank guarantee shall be on behalf of the bidder himself and valid for (120) days from the closing date of the tender, **any bid proposal received without the said bank guarantee will be rejected.**

The bid proposal shall be delivered by hand-delivery or thru courier service to the Contracts Department in Al-Khafji Joint Operations, Al-Khafji, Saudi Arabia on or before the closing date **14:00 Hours, Monday, Apr. 29, 2024** of the time stipulated in the tender document.

For more Information please contact

Tel. No.: +966 (13) 765 5147

E- Mail: [ctdadmin@kjo.com.sa](mailto:ctdadmin@kjo.com.sa)

Website: [www.kjo.com.sa](http://www.kjo.com.sa)

## عمليات الخفجي المشتركة



AL-KHAFJI JOINT OPERATIONS

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Aramco Gulf Operations Company Limited ("AGOC") and Kuwait Gulf Oil Company (K.S.C.) ("KGOC"), (Al-Khafji Joint Operations) invites intending bidders to participate for the **Tender No.: HT817MS23 - Provision of Materials to KJO Hospital.**

Each intending bidder may purchase the tender documents upon payment of **Saudi Riyals Four Thousand (SR 4,000) or Kuwaiti Dinars Three Hundred and Twenty (KD 320) only** which is non-refundable by visiting our Contracts Department at Al-Khafji, Saudi Arabia, or KGOC's Kuwait Office located in Al-Ahmadi, Tender & Contracts Section. The bidder may visit our KJO website: [www.kjo.com.sa](http://www.kjo.com.sa) and follows the path; E- Services □ Tendering □ Contractors □ Ongoing Tenders to review part of tender documents, before purchasing.

The sale of Tender Documents will be effective from **Mar. 12, 2024, until 10:00 AM, Mar. 25, 2024.**

A Pre-Tender meeting will be held at Medical Services Dept., (MSD), at Al-Khafji Joint Operations, Saudi Arabia, **at 10:00 AM local time on Mar. 25, 2024. Attending the Pre-Tender Meeting is Mandatory.**

Bidders shall have at least Five (5) years of experience in the Provision of Material Contracts (Pharmaceuticals, Laboratory Reagents, Medical Consumables, and Minor Instruments) including manpower with a minimum project value of not less than United States Dollars Twenty Million (US \$ 20 million) which shall not be less than US \$ Four (4) million Per Year, otherwise the bidder will not be ACCEPTABLE and technically disqualified for this Tender.

Bidders shall be required to provide an irrevocable bank guarantee ("Bid Bond") from a bank in Saudi Arabia or Kuwait, in the amount of **United States Dollars Two Hundred Thousand (US\$200,000.00) only,** to warrant the bid proposal. Such bank guarantee shall be on behalf of the bidder himself and valid for (120) days from the closing date of the tender, **any bid proposal received without the said bank guarantee will be rejected.**

The bid proposal shall be delivered by hand-delivery or thru courier service to the Contracts Department in Al-Khafji Joint Operations, Al-Khafji, Saudi Arabia on or before the closing date **14:00 Hours, Monday, Apr. 22, 2024** of the time stipulated in the tender document.

For more Information please contact

Tel. No.: +966 (13) 765 5147

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Website: [www.kjo.com.sa](http://www.kjo.com.sa)

## World News Roundup

## Europe

## Kate's photo retracted

## Center right 'wins' in Portuguese elections

MADRID, March 11, (Agencies): Portuguese center right party, the Democratic Alliance, won legislative elections by thin margin against the left-leaning Socialist Party. Chief of Socialist Party Pedro Nuno Santos conceded defeat saying that his party will now lead the opposition.

The national TV reported this after 99 percent of the votes were accounted for last Sunday night.

The Democratic Alliance, led by Luis Montenegro, got 29.5 percent of the votes, taking up 79 seats in the 230-seat Parliament, while Santos' Socialist Party won 28.7 percent of the vote, taking 77 seats.

Parliamentary representation of far right Chega party multiplied as it went from 12 seats in 2022 to 48 this current elections, around 18.1 percent of total votes.

Final results are yet to be announced as votes of some 1.5 million Portuguese people abroad are yet to be accounted for.

This year's parliamentary elections marked historic growth with participation rate of 51.96 percent.

Socialist Prime Minister Antonio Costa resigned last November amid corruption allegations.



Costa

Antonio Costa resigned last November amid corruption allegations.

□ □ □

**'Image appeared manipulated':** The first official photo of Kate, the Princess of Wales, since her abdominal surgery nearly two months ago was issued Sunday after weeks of speculation about her whereabouts.

But The Associated Press and other news agencies later retracted it from publication because it appeared to have been manipulated, fueling more conjecture.

The photo of Kate in a chair surrounded by her three children was credited to her husband, William, Prince of Wales and heir to the throne, and was said to have been taken earlier in the week in Windsor.

"Thank you for your kind wishes and continued support over the last two months," Kate said on social media. "Wishing everyone a Happy Mother's Day."

AP initially published the photo, which was issued by Kensington Palace. While there was no suggestion the photo was fake, AP retracted it because closer inspection revealed the source had manipulated the image in a way that did not meet AP's photo standards. For instance, the photo shows an inconsistency in the alignment of Princess Charlotte's left hand.

The Kensington Palace media office is not open on weekends and a voicemail left for a spokesperson was not immediately returned.

The release of the photo followed weeks of gossip on social media about what had happened to Kate since she left a hospital Jan. 29 after a nearly two-week stay following planned surgery. She hadn't been seen publicly since Christmas Day.

The royal family has been under more scrutiny than usual in recent weeks, because both Kate and King Charles III can't carry out their usual public duties due to health problems.

□ □ □

**London police arrests driver:** A driver who plowed a car into the gates of Buckingham Palace has been arrested on suspicion of criminal damage, London police said Sunday.

The crash early Saturday wasn't considered terrorism-related and no one was injured, the Metropolitan Police force said.

The driver was arrested by armed officers and held under the Mental Health Act after being taken to a hospital. He has since been released on bail.

Metal fencing was placed in front of the entrance to the palace and the gates were boarded up Sunday as tourists strolled past in the rain.

Police said they were investigating the circumstances of the crash.

□ □ □

**34 bodies removed from funeral home:** Nearly three dozen bodies were removed from a funeral home in northern England, and a man and woman were arrested Sunday on suspicion of fraud and preventing a lawful burial, police said.

Humbly Grove Police announced the developments after five days of investigation at three branches of Legacy Funeral Directors in Hull and East Yorkshire. Assistant Chief Constable Thom McLoughlin said 34 bodies had been taken to a mortuary in Hull for identification.

A 46-year-old man and 23-year-old woman, whose identities weren't disclosed by authorities, were arrested on suspicion of preventing a lawful and decent burial, fraud by false representation and fraud by abuse of position.

No other details were available about the nature of the suspected crimes.

In the US there have been several sensational cases of funeral home operators being arrested after dozens of bodies and cremated remains were found on their properties.

□ □ □

**5 cross-country skiers found dead:** Five cross-country skiers have been found dead after going missing over the weekend near Switzerland's famed Matterhorn, Swiss police said Monday.

Rescue authorities announced a search in difficult weather conditions Sunday for six skiers missing. The group set off Saturday on a route between the resort town of Zermatt, at the foot of the Matterhorn, and the village of Arolla, near the border with Italy.

A crew of three rescuers and a mountain police team deployed near the Dent Blanche, or White Tooth, cabin found the bodies of five of the skiers.

A search was continuing for the sixth person. The nationalities or other identity details of the victims were not immediately identified.

□ □ □

**Irish prime minister concedes defeat:** Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar conceded defeat Saturday as two constitutional amendments he supported that would have broadened the definition of family and removed language about a woman's role at home were headed toward rejection in early vote tallies.

Varadkar, who pushed the vote to enshrine gender equality in the constitution by removing "very old-fashioned language" and trying to recognize the realities of modern family life, said it was clear the amendments were "defeated comprehensively on a respectable turnout."

"It was our responsibility to convince the majority of people to vote 'yes' and we clearly failed to do so," Varadkar said.



A dog walker passes Kensington Palace in London on Jan 6, 2023. The first official photo of Kate, the Princess of Wales, since she underwent abdominal surgery nearly two months earlier, was pulled from circulation by The Associated Press and several other news organizations on March 10 because the image appeared to have been manipulated. Inset: In this photo issued by the Royal Household on March 11, Britain's King Charles III records the King's Commonwealth message, which was filmed in the White Drawing Room at Windsor Castle, Windsor, England in Feb. 2024. The King has pledged to continue to serve the Commonwealth 'to the best of my ability', in his annual address to the family of nations. (AP)



West Virginia state Sen Patricia Rucker, poses in her office at the Capitol in Charleston, W.Va., on Jan 25. West Virginia has the least amount of female state legislators. (AP)



Thoemmes



Campbell

## America

**5 dead in 'murder-suicide':** Honolulu police said Sunday they were investigating what appears to be the murder-suicide of a family, including three children, at a Manoa home.

Police first arrived at the home at 8:30 am but left after no one answered the door. Lt Deena Thoemmes said during a news conference Sunday afternoon. She explained the initial call was from an anonymous person and police had no cause to enter the home.

Officers returned at 9:15 am after receiving another call and were able to speak with a caller. Upon entering the residence, they found four people who had been fatally stabbed and appeared to be a wife and three children aged 10, 12 and 17. The husband also was found dead.

A preliminary investigation showed the husband fatally stabbed his wife and children, Thoemmes said. She added the husband's cause of death was under investigation when asked whether he stabbed himself.

The ages of the adults was not immediately known. The medical examiner's office will release the identifications of the deceased.

There was no history of domestic calls to the residence and police did not have a motive for the killings, Thoemmes said.

Witnesses reported there had been an argument in the home early Sunday morning, police said. (AP)

□ □ □

**Arkansas shooting kills 3:** Three people were killed and several others injured early Sunday when a shooting broke out at a private party in Arkansas, police said.

Officers found multiple gunshot victims when they arrived at the scene near Jonesboro's downtown area around 5 am, Jonesboro police said in a Facebook post.

A man and woman, who police said were acquaintances of the shooter, were killed, police said. They added that the shooter also died. Another woman, who was also an acquaintance of the shooter, was injured.

Three other people who had no relationship to the shooter were injured. A fifth person was also taken to the hospital with injuries sustained in the shooting, police said Sunday afternoon.

## Politics

## Female representation remains low in statehouses

## Youth activist groups jointly endorse Biden

WASHINGTON, March 11, (AP): Jack Lobel is a college sophomore who will be voting in his first presidential election this fall, casting a ballot for Joe Biden.

At 19, he's six-plus decades Biden's junior, which isn't lost on him. But Lobel is spokesperson for Voters of Tomorrow, one of 15 youth organizations that announced Monday that they are jointly endorsing the reelection of the oldest president in US history - defying polls consistently showing voter concerns about the 81-year-old Biden's age.

"If age were really a concern we would not see this much energy around these groups," said Lobel, an urban studies major in New York. As he worked on hammering out the joint endorsement this week he was also writing a paper for his American urban politics class and taking a midterm in his voting and political behavior class.

"President Biden comes before midterms and exams and papers," Lobel said, only half-joking.

The joint endorsement is meant as a show of political strength for Biden, who would be 86 by the end of the second term he's seeking - after Super Tuesday all but cemented a November rematch of the 2020 election between him and former President Donald Trump.

## Serve

The groups' affinity for the president is little surprise given that young people tend to be more left-leaning than many other voting blocs. Still, it may soften the blow of many voters' concerns about Biden's age. A recent Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research survey found that 63% of Americans believe Biden lacks mental capability to serve effectively as president, though 57% felt similar about Trump, who is 77.

In the first ad of a \$30-million, post-Super-Tuesday, swing-state advertising blitz, Biden makes no excuses for his age, but says he's been more effective

as president than Trump was.

"Young voters are critical to President Biden's winning coalition and together, we will defeat Donald Trump and continue to build a future that works for every single American," said Biden's reelection campaign manager, Julie Chavez Rodriguez, in a statement first shared with The Associated Press.

Joining Voters of Tomorrow formally supporting Biden is NextGen PAC, Planned Parenthood Action Fund, Blue Future, Jr. Newtown Action Alliance, Path to Progress, Students Demand Action, Team ENOUGH, Voices of Gen-Z and Dream for America. They are doing so with more traditional, party-aligned youth organizations, the Young Democrats of America, College Democrats of America, Democratic Youth Coalition, Grassroots Dems HQ and High School Democrats of America.

Monday's announcement follows similar joint endorsements the Biden campaign received last year from labor unions, environmental activists, abortion rights advocates and gun safety proponents - and some of the endorsing youth organizations are affiliated with groups that already backed the president in previously.

## Cycle

The president's campaign said that the earlier endorsements were the first of their kind to be made jointly and so early in the cycle. Monday's announcement is coming later, but still gives young supporters eight months to mobilize behind Biden now that it's clear he'll face Trump in November.

Trump and top Republicans have blasted Biden as being too old to handle a second term. A Super PAC backing the former president released an ad bluntly declaring, "If Biden wins, can he even survive till 2029?" That's despite Trump making gaffes himself lately, including suggesting he's running against Barack Obama.

But Aalayah Eastmond, a survivor of the 2018 Parkland school shooting in Florida and co-founder of Team

ENOUGH, said Biden's age wasn't a consideration in the endorsement given that "our only concern is whether we go forward or backward on one of the most pressing issues of our time."

"What's most important to America's youth is having a president who listens to our concerns and knows how to deliver on solutions that improve our lives," Eastmond said.

The activist groups plan to pool resources to hire hundreds of young organizers, mobilize affiliates and chapters on 1,000-plus campuses and at state and local levels, and make more than 155 million direct voter contacts via phone calls, texts or in person, Lobel said.

## Also:

**CHARLESTON, W.Va.:** Democrat Kayla Young and Republican Patricia Rucker frequently clash on abortion rights and just about everything else in West Virginia's Legislature, but they agree on one thing: Too few of their colleagues are women, and it's hurting the state.

"There are exceptions to every single rule, but I think in general, men do kind of see this as their field," said Rucker, part of the GOP's Senate supermajority that passed one of the nation's strictest abortion bans while Young - the lone Democratic woman elected to the House - opposed it.

Nearly 130 years since the first three women were elected to state legislative offices in the U.S., women remain massively underrepresented in state legislatures.

In 10 states, women make up less than 25% of their state legislatures, according to Rutgers' Center for American Women in Politics. West Virginia is at the very bottom of that list, having just 16 women in its 134-member Legislature, or just under 12%. That's compared with Nevada, where women occupy just over 60% of state legislative seats. Similar low numbers can be found in the nearby southern states of Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee and Louisiana.

Police and other emergency responders converged on the site in Bath County after the crash occurred about 3 p.m.

A state police spokesman told The Associated Press that the plane caught fire on impact. Investigators were working to confirm the origin of the flight and where it was flying to. Sgt. Rick Garletts said by email Sunday evening.

"Small crash site, everything is burnt, meaning the tail numbers are unidentifiable," Garletts said, adding state police were working with the Federal Aviation Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board to try to identify the flight details and the occupants. (AP)

□ □ □

**Suspect dies in shootout:** A suspect in a weekend shooting that killed two people and injured another at a North Carolina home died in a shootout with deputies hours afterward outside another home, a sheriff said Sunday. In a social media post, Iredell County Sheriff Darren Campbell said that Justin Michael Strawser was wearing a bulletproof vest and firing at deputies when he was killed in the shootout Saturday outside a home in Mooresville. The deputies and four minor children inside the home with Strawser weren't hurt, he added.

Deputies had responded to a call about shots fired at a different Mooresville home, where they discovered two dead people inside the house and someone critically injured on the back porch. All three were found restrained and bound, and the third was taken to the hospital with life-threatening injuries, the sheriff said. (AP)



Luis Montenegro, leader of the center-right Democratic Alliance, delivers a speech to supporters claiming victory in Portugal's election, in Lisbon on March 11. (AP)

Lat/Am

Mexican student dies

Leaders in Haiti use gangs to gain power

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, March 11, (AP): Haiti's prime minister **Ariel Henry** was last seen in Puerto Rico, negotiating his return to a homeland gripped by violence and controlled by heavily armed gangsters. With his fate in the air and the situation in Haiti deteriorating by the day, the world has been left to wonder whether the country will fully descend into anarchy or whether some semblance of order will be restored.

It's easy to blame this latest spasm of violence in the West's first free Black republic on longstanding poverty, the legacy of colonialism, widespread deforestation, and European and US interference.

However, a series of experts told The Associated Press that the most important immediate cause is more recent: Haitian rulers' increasing dependence on street gangs.



Henry

Haiti hasn't had a standing army or a well-funded and robust national police force for decades.

United Nations and American interventions have come and gone. Without a solid tradition of honest political institutions, Haitian leaders have been using armed civilians as tools for exercising power.

Now, the state has grown fatally weak and gangs are stepping in to take its place.

Gang leaders, surreally, hold news conferences. And many see them as future stakeholders in negotiations over the country's future.

A 1990s embargo was imposed after the military overthrew President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The embargo and the international isolation devastated the country's small middle class, said Michael Deibert, author of "Notes From the Last Testament: The Struggle for Haiti," and "Haiti Will Not Perish: A Recent History."

Importation

After a US-backed UN force pushed out the coup's leaders in 1994, a World Bank-sponsored structural adjustment led to the importation of rice from the US and devastated rural agricultural society, Deibert said.

Boys without work flooded into Port-au-Prince and joined gangs. Politicians started using them as a cheap armed wing. Aristide, a priest-turned-politician, gained notoriety for using gangsters.

In December 2001, police official Guy Philippe attacked the National Palace in an attempted coup and Aristide called on the gangsters to rise from the slums, Deibert said.

"It wasn't the police defending their government's Palais National," remembered Deibert, who was there. "It was thousands of armed civilians."

"Now, you have these different politicians that have been collaborating with these gangs for years, and ... it blew up in their face," he continued.

Many of the gangs retreated in the face of MINUSTAH, a UN force established in 2004.

Rene Preval, the only democratically elected president to win and complete two terms in a country notorious for political upheaval, took a hard line on the gangs, giving them the choice to "disarm or be killed," said Robert Fatton, professor of government and foreign affairs at the University of Virginia.

After his presidency, subsequent leaders were at best easy on the gangs and at worst tied to them, he said.

Fatton said every key actor in Haitian society had their gangs, noting that the current situation isn't unique, but that it has deteriorated at a faster pace.

"For the last three years, the gangs started to gain autonomy. And now they are a power unto themselves," he said, likening them to a "mini-Mafia state."

Reached

"The autonomy of the gangs has reached a critical point. It is why they are capable now of imposing certain conditions on the government itself," Fatton said.

"Those who created the gangs created a monster. And now the monster may not be totally in charge, but it has the capacity to block any kind of solution," he said.

The gangs, along with many Haitian politicians and business people, earn money from an illicit brew of "taxes" gleaned through extortion, kidnappings, and drugs and weapons smuggling, Fatton said.

"There are all kinds criminal networks in the area," he said.

After Preval, gangs, politicians and business people extracted every dollar they could, said Francois Pierre-Louis, a professor of political science at Queens College at The City University of New York.

"It was open house for gangs, drugs, the country, basically ... became a narco-trafficking state," he said. "Basically, the gangs got empowered, and not only they got empowered, they had state protection, politicians protecting them."

Meanwhile, the U.S. military said Sunday that it had flown in forces to beef up security at the US Embassy in Haiti and allow nonessential personnel to leave.

The aircraft flew to the embassy compound, the U.S. Southern Command said, meaning that the effort involved helicopters. It was careful to point out that "no Haitians were on board the military aircraft." That seemed aimed at quashing any speculation that senior government officials might be leaving as the gang attacks in Haiti worsen.

Also:

**MEXICO CITY:** A student from a rural Mexican teachers' college where 43 youths disappeared in 2014 has died in a confrontation with police, officials said Friday.

Prosecutors in the southern state of Guerrero said the confrontation occurred late Thursday on a roadway near the Ayotzinapa teachers' college.

Sources at the college said the dead student, and another who was wounded, were attacked by police.

But state police said the students were armed and opened fire on officers after police tried to pull over the vehicle they were riding in because it was reported stolen. Prosecutors said drugs and a gun were found in the vehicle.

Federal officials said five buses and trucks apparently came from the teachers' college to protest after the confrontation, and the occupants set two state police patrol vehicles afire. Several of those protesters were arrested.

The under-funded radical rural teachers' colleges in Mexico have a decades-long tradition of violent protests and clashing with police.

When the 43 male students from the Ayotzinapa school were abducted in 2014, they had been hijacking passenger buses which they were going to use to travel to a protest.



A screen grab shows Chinese President Xi Jinping as leaders and delegates stand for national anthem during the closing session of the National People's Congress (NPC) at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 11. (AP)

Asia

Japan marks 13 years since tsunami disaster

China's congress ends with show of unity

BEIJING, March 11, (AP): China's national legislature wrapped up its annual session Monday with the usual show of near-unanimous support for plans designed to carry out ruling Communist Party leader Xi Jinping's vision for the nation.

The weeklong event, replete with meetings carefully scripted to allow no surprises, has highlighted how China's politics have become ever more calibrated to elevate Xi.

Monday's agenda lacked the usual closing news conference by the premier, the party's No. 2 leader. The news conference has been held most years since 1988 and was the one time when journalists could directly question a top Chinese leader.

The decision to scrap it emphasizes Premier Li Qiang's relatively weak status. His predecessors played a much larger role in leading key economic policies such as modernizing state companies, coping with economic crises and leading housing reforms that transformed China into a nation of homeowners.

The nearly 3,000-member National People's Congress approved a revised State Council law that directs China's version of the cabinet to follow Xi's vision. The vote was 2,883 to eight, with nine abstentions. Other measures passed by similarly wide margins. The most nays were recorded for the annual report of the supreme court, which was approved by a 2,834 to 44 vote.

Urged

In brief closing remarks, Zhao Leji, the legislature's top official, urged the people to unite more closely under the Communist Party's leadership "with comrade Xi Jinping at its core."

The party leaders who run the State Council used to have a much freer hand in setting economic policy, Neil Thomas, a Chinese politics fellow at the Asia Society Policy Institute, said in an emailed comment.

"Xi has been astonishingly successful in consolidating his personal hold over the party, which has allowed him to become the key decisionmaker in all policy domains," he said.

As the party champions innovation and self-reliance in technology to build a modern, wealthy economy, it is leaning heavily on more overtly communist ideology that harkens to past eras. Xi has fortified the party's role across the spectrum, from culture and education to corporate management and economic planning.

"Greater centralization of power has

arguably helped Xi to improve central government effectiveness," Thomas said, "but the benefits may be outweighed by the costs of stifling political discussion, disincentivizing local innovation and more sudden policy shifts."

Along with following the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought and other party directives, developing "new quality productive forces" - a term coined by Xi last September - emerged as a catchphrase at this year's congress.

The term suggests a prioritizing of science and technology as China confronts trade sanctions and curbs on access to advanced know-how in computer chips and other areas that the U.S. and other countries deem to be national security risks.

Dismissed

On the diplomatic front, China kept Wang Yi as foreign minister. He had stepped back into the post last summer after his successor, Qin Gang, was abruptly dismissed without explanation after a half-year on the job.

Analysts thought the Communist Party might use the annual congress to appoint a new foreign minister and close the book on an unusual spate of political mishaps last year that also saw the firing of a new defense minister after a few months on the job.

The Organic Law of the State Council was revised for the first time since its adoption in 1982. The revision calls for the State Council to "uphold the leadership of the Communist Party of China." It also adds the governor of China's central bank to the body.

Echoing words seen in just about every proposal, law or speech made in China these days, it spells out that China's highest governing officials must adhere to the party's guiding ideology, which refers back to Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought and culminates in Xi's philosophy on "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era."

Alfred Wu, an expert on Chinese governance at the National University of Singapore, said the revision institutionalizes previously made changes, making it harder to reverse them. He described the congress as a "one-man show" that shows Xi's determination to create a system in which the party leads on policy, diminishing the role of the State Council and the legislature.

"His determination is very clear," Wu said. "He is willing to change everything."

During this year's congress, many

provincial meetings were opened to the media for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic, though they were carefully scripted with prepared remarks and none of the spontaneity once glimpsed in decades past.

The contrast with polarized politics in the US and robust debate in other democracies could not be more stark: China's political rituals, void of any overt dissent, put unity above all.

Marching orders endorsed by the congress include calls to ensure national security and social stability at a time when job losses and underpayment of wages have sparked a growing number of protests.

Also:

**TOKYO:** Japan on Monday marked 13 years since a massive earthquake and tsunami hit the country's northern coasts. Nearly 20,000 people died, whole towns were wiped out and the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant was destroyed, creating deep fears of radiation that linger today. As the nation observes the anniversary, AP explains what is happening now at the plant and in neighboring areas. A magnitude 9.0 earthquake struck on March 11, 2011, causing a tsunami that battered northern coastal towns in Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima prefectures. The tsunami, which topped 15 meters (50 feet) in some areas, also slammed into the nuclear plant, destroying its power supply and fuel cooling systems, and causing meltdowns at reactors No. 1, 2 and 3.

Hydrogen explosions caused massive radiation leaks and contamination in the area.

The operator, Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, says that the tsunami couldn't have been anticipated. Government and independent investigations and some court decisions have said the accident was the result of human error, safety negligence, lax oversight by regulators and collusion. Japan has since introduced stricter safety standards and at one point shifted to a nuclear energy phaseout. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's government reversed that policy and has accelerated restarts of workable reactors to maintain nuclear power as a main source of Japan's power supply.

A deadly Jan. 1 earthquake in Japan's north-central region destroyed many homes and roads but didn't damage an idled nuclear power plant. Even so, it caused worry that current evacuation plans that solely focus on radiation leaks could be unworkable.



A police officer guards the entrance of the US embassy in Port-au-Prince, Haiti on March 10. The US military said Sunday that it had flown in forces to enhance security at the delegation and allow nonessential personnel to leave. (AP)



Migwi



Ruto

Africa

**3 militia members killed:** The Somali National Army and international partners carried out an operation, Monday, which killed three militants in the Lower Shabelle region.

The operations targeted a militant group as they were planning a terrorist operation, Somali National News Agency (SONNA) said.

The Somali army launched military operations to pursue terrorist militias, resulting in heavy losses among the terrorists. (KUNA)

**9 dead after eating sea turtle:** Eight children and an adult died after eating sea turtle meat on Pemba Island in the Zanzibar archipelago and 78 other people were hospitalized, authorities said Saturday.

Sea turtle meat is considered a delicacy by Zanzibar's people even though it periodically results in deaths from chelonitoxism, a type of food poisoning.

The adult who died late Friday was the mother of one of the children who succumbed earlier, said the Mkoani District medical officer, DrHaji Bakari. He said the turtle meat was consumed Tuesday.

Bakari told The Associated Press that laboratory tests had confirmed all the victims had eaten sea turtle meat.

Authorities in Zanzibar, which is a semi-autonomous region of the East African nation of Tanzania, sent a disaster management team led by Hamza Hassan Juma, who urged people to avoid consuming sea turtles.

In November 2021, seven people, including a 3-year-old, died on Pemba after eating turtle meat while three others were hospitalized. (AP)

**Kenyan activists on a mission:** Njeri Migwi's phone buzzes incessantly. Phone calls and messages keep coming in from women seeking help to escape life-threatening situations. A mother and her remaining child are looking for a place to stay after her partner allegedly raped and killed her two other children, including a 6-month old.

Moments later, someone calls looking to help a woman who has been nearly beaten to death.

"Sometimes I feel like I am the government, because I'm doing the work that they should be doing," says Migwi, 43, the co-founder of a community-based organization called Usikimye, which means "Don't be silent" in Swahili. The organization helps women escape violent relationships, puts them up in safe houses and counsels them on how to rebuild their lives.

Migwi is on the front lines of a war against a silent epidemic of gender-based

violence in Kenya, where almost 60 women have been killed since the beginning of the year, according to the government.

She says her work supporting and pro-

tecting survivors of gender-based violence feels like a drop in the ocean compared to the floodgate of victims seeking help daily.

Only in January of this year, Migwi says, 32

women were victims of femicide, defined by the United Nations as "the intentional killing with a gender-related motivation."

"What would the government do if 32 women were killed by a disease in a month? It would declare it a national disaster," Migwi said.

Kenya's Demographic and Health Survey of 2023 found that more than 11 million women - or 20% of the population - have experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner during their lives, with 2.8 million of those women having experienced this type of violence in the last 12 months. Kenya's president is William Ruto.

Odipo Dev, a Kenyan research firm, says at least 500 women in Kenya were killed because of their gender from January 2016 to December 2023.

Migwi, a survivor of domestic violence herself, says she co-founded Usikimye in 2019 to rescue and assist Kenyan women who are silent victims of gender-based violence and who feel helpless and trapped in violent relationships.

She says that nothing would have prepared her then for the avalanche of cases of violence against women she deals with on a daily basis, particularly in the low-income area where she set up the organization's offices.

Soon after setting up shop in Soweto, one of the most violent neighborhoods in Kenya's capital, Nairobi, Migwi realized that many cases of violence against women go unreported to the police. (AP)



Ambulances leave Auckland International Airport in Auckland, New Zealand on March 11. At least 50 people were injured Monday by what officials described as a "strong movement" on a Chilean plane traveling from Sydney to Auckland, New Zealand. LATAM Airlines said in a statement that there was "a technical event during the flight which caused a strong movement." It did not elaborate on what happened. (AP)

## CBK bonds

The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK Bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KWD (240) million for (3) months with Rate of Return (4.375%).

## gold prices surge to record high amid global economic uncertainty

Gold prices experienced a remarkable surge to unprecedented heights, hitting \$2,179 per ounce by the end of last week's trading, marking a substantial 4 percent increase, as reported by Al-Qabas daily. This surge was underlined by a specialized report released by Kuwaiti company Dar Al-Sabaek, which indicated that gold had nearly reached \$2,200 per ounce mid-week. The surge was driven by strong anticipations of a forthcoming reduction in US interest rates and the imminent cessation

of the US Federal Reserve's financial tightening policies. The report highlighted that escalating tensions in the Middle East, particularly military activities in the Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandab Strait, have also contributed to the boost in gold prices. This environment led many investors and speculators to seek refuge in the precious metal as a hedge against global trade risks. Furthermore, gold futures contracts for April delivery witnessed a significant in-

crease of 0.95 percent, reaching a new peak of \$2,185 per ounce. This coincided with the stabilization of the US dollar's exchange rate against major currencies and a decrease in 10-year Treasury bond yields to 4 percent. The Federal Reserve's indication last week of an impending end to the era of financial tightening by June has further enhanced the appeal of investment assets, particularly gold, according to the report. Analysts are closely monitoring reports

scheduled for release this week, including inflation rates, the performance of the American retail market, the consumer confidence index, and industrial production figures. All these factors are anticipated to directly impact gold trading in the foreseeable future. On the domestic front, Dar Al-Sabaek's report revealed that the price of 24 karat gold per gram reached 21.350 dinars (approximately \$65), while 22 karat gold per gram stood at 19.590 dinars (around \$60).

## Market Movements

11-03-2024

Change Closing pts

Change	Closing pts	Change	Closing pts
SAUDI	- Tadawul	-62.90	12,555.72
UAE	- DFM	-4.98	4,248.10
JAPAN	- Nikkei 225	-868.45	38,820.49
PHILIPPINES	- PSEI	-69.97	6,872.24
PAKISTAN	- KSE 100	-91.15	65,754.19

# Business

## Al Mansouriya and Al Adan branches achieve '6-Star Branch' title

# ABK recognizes outstanding performance in 2023 'Rising Branch' program

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) has continued its commitment to promoting excellence and professional development among its employees. The 'Rising Branch' program, designed to reward exceptional performance and elevate customer service standards, recently celebrated the exceptional achievements of employees at the Al Mansouriya and Al Adan branches.

On this occasion, Loai Muqames, CEO-Kuwait, and Johair Marafi, General Manager of Retail Banking at ABK, visited the branches to congratulate employees on achieving the coveted '6-Star Branch' title for their outstanding performance in 2023. The accolade was based on specific criteria, including exceptional customer service, customer satisfaction, and contributions to the Bank's competitive position in the market.

Commenting on this achievement, Muqames underscored the Bank's commitment to appreciating and enhancing the skills of its employees, stating, "We are keen on expressing our gratitude to our employees and firmly believe they are an essential element to our success. I would like to congratulate our valued employees for their dedication and strive to develop both their skills and the Bank's offerings."

On her part, Marafi emphasized the significance of recognizing and rewarding exceptional performance, stating, "The Rising Branch program aims to provide services that exceed customer expectations and to acknowledge and reward employees with outstanding performance. The Al Mansouriya and Al Adan branch teams have done a fantastic job and I encourage everyone to continue to go the extra mile."

ABK remains dedicated to investing in employee development through various training programs, awareness seminars, and exclusive partner collaborations. The Bank's commitment to recognizing and motivating its employees serves to elevate customer service standards and maintain its competitive edge in the banking sector.

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

Across the region, the Bank offers individuals and corporates the convenience of comprehensive banking and financial services in the Egyptian market through ABK-Egypt's network of 48 branches.

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

ABK is a strong supporter of Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait



Mr. Loai Muqames CEO-Kuwait at ABK



Ms. Johair Marafi, General Manager of Retail Banking at ABK

**Loai Muqames:** We firmly believe our employees are an essential element to our success

**Johair Marafi:** The teams have done a fantastic job and I encourage everyone to continue to go the extra mile



Al Mansouriya Branch



Al Adan Branch

# Kuwait's reserve assets hit lowest level since November

Annual increase noted in securities abroad

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Kuwait's official reserve assets witnessed a 3.59% annual decline, amounting to 532 billion dinars (\$1.736 billion) by the end of January 2024, marking the lowest level since November, reports Al-Rai daily.

According to monthly data from the Central Bank of Kuwait, the value of reserve assets in January stood at 14,279 billion dinars (\$46.609 billion), down from 14,811 billion dinars (\$48.345 billion) in the same period of 2023.

Monthly statistics indicate a 2.33% decrease compared to December 2023, when reserves were at 14.62 billion dinars (\$47.722 billion). It's worth noting that these reserves exclude external assets held by the General Investment Authority, which surged to \$923.45 billion, up from \$803 billion in July 2023.

Official reserves encompass external assets under the control of monetary authorities, utilized to meet balance of payments financing needs or intervene in exchange markets.

The annual performance was affected as foreign currency and deposits abroad dropped by 3.89% to 12.645 billion dinars in January 2024, compared to 13.157 billion dinars the previous year.

Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) declined by 1.12% to 1.325 billion dinars, whereas the reserve position with the International Monetary Fund decreased by 4.30% to 224.6 million dinars. The gold reserve remained stable at 31.7 million dinars,

## Foreign assets boost Kuwaiti banks' growth

# Kuwaiti banks' assets reach KD 87.15 bln at January end

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Local banks and their branches inside Kuwait recorded assets totaling 87.15 billion dinars at the end of last January, compared to 85.53 billion dinars in the same month of 2023, with a growth rate of 1.9% annually, equivalent to 1.62 billion dinars (\$5.3 billion), reports Al-Qabas daily.

The monthly statistics issued by the Central Bank of Kuwait attributed the annual growth mainly to three reasons -- foreign assets balances increased by 2.22 billion dinars, by 9.7%, to 25.14 billion dinars; growth in demands on the private sector by 1.03 billion dinars, by 2.3%, to 45.24 billion dinars and demands on public institutions increased in January by 2.6%, amounting to 0.09 billion dinars, at 3.69 billion dinars.

Meanwhile, there has been a notable decrease in various aspects of Kuwait's local interbank market, with deposit balances declining by 24.8%, loans to banks dropping by approximately 20.4%, and demands on both the government and the Central Bank decreasing by 15.2% and 9.5%, respectively. Additionally, other assets saw a decline of 4.9%.

representing assets held by the Central Monetary Authority.

Meanwhile, despite the monthly stability of securities abroad at

However, the statistics reveal contrasting trends in certain sectors. Demand on the private sector, a key component of bank assets, constituted 51.9% of total bank assets during the specified period.

Moreover, there was a significant increase of 28.9% in foreign assets, attributed to rises in foreign investments and credit facilities to non-residents by 13.9% and 20.4%, respectively. Loans to foreign banks also experienced growth, increasing by 8.3%, while other assets expanded by 15.5%; the balance of deposits with foreign banks decreased by 2.1%.

In a related development, data points to a notable surge in the net foreign assets of local banks, which increased by 26.3%, amounting to 2.66 billion dinars, reaching 12.76 billion dinars by the end of January 2024. This increase is primarily attributed to a 9.7% rise in the balance of foreign assets, reaching 2.22 billion dinars, coupled with a 3.4% decrease in the balance of foreign liabilities, which decreased by 0.44 billion dinars.

51.5 million dinars, there was an 8.65% annual increase from January 2023, when it stood at 47.4 million dinars.

## Development of commercial complex in Mutlaa

# Kuwait Finance House is lead financier of the KD 100 mln Beyout Plus project

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has participated as a lead financier of Beyout Plus project, a KD 100 mn complex with a commercial area of 250,000 square meters, located in Mutlaa Residential City.

The project, which has been signed between Mutlaa Homes Real Estate, the investment arm of Beyout Plus Investment Holding Group, and the Public Authority for Housing Welfare, offers a great investment opportunity in the development, financing, operation, management, and maintenance of Beyout Plus complex. It also caters to the needs of new homeowners in Mutlaa Residential City by providing spaces for exhibitions, retail shops, storage, worker housing, and logistics services.

General Manager Corporate Banking at KFH, Yousef Almutawa said that providing financing for a major housing welfare project demonstrates KFH's commitment to supporting Kuwait's development plans and reflects its national, economic, and societal roles as the largest bank in the country and the second-largest Islamic bank globally.

Almutawa added that KFH is committed to supporting added-value projects that meet the needs of the growing population. The Beyout Plus project contributes to driving the economy in Kuwait, creating job opportunities, supporting urban development, and promoting partnerships between public and private sectors in line with Kuwait Vision 2035.

Almutawa stressed the importance of continuing efforts to finance and support local companies in line with their needs, plans, and projects, promoting the economy and sustainable development. He added that KFH remains committed to financing de-



General Manager Corporate Banking at KFH, Yousef Almutawa



CEO of Beyout Investment Holding Group, Eng. Abdulrahman Al-Khanna

**Almutawa:** Providing financing for such projects reflects KFH's leading role in supporting development plans

**Al-Khanna:** KFH provides its support to complete the project on time

velopment projects in accordance with the applicable credit rules and approved procedures.

Meanwhile, CEO of Beyout Investment Holding Group, Eng. Abdulrahman Al-Khanna praised KFH's pioneering role and financing contribution, which will support the company's efforts to complete the project within the deadline expected by the end of 2026.

Al-Khanna explained that the Beyout Plus project includes more

than 100 showrooms and offices, about 300 housing units for workers, many parking lots, in addition to storage spaces with an area of more than 30,000 square meters. The project also provides integrated logistics services, including transportation, storage and distribution services.

He indicated that the project would boost the position of Mutlaa City as an important commercial and economic center in Kuwait.

## Significant increase in stock market liquidity

# Kuwait's collective investment systems see 5.4% surge in assets, hits KD 2.44 bln by Jan

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: At the end of last January, assets managed within collective investment systems experienced a notable increase of 5.4 percent, reaching a total value of 2.44 billion dinars, compared to 2.31 billion dinars in December, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Statistics from the Capital Markets Authority revealed a 7.04 percent increase in the total assets of Islamic Sharia-compliant systems, reaching 989.53 thousand dinars, while traditional investment systems saw a 4.3 percent increase, totaling 1.45 billion dinars.

Money market collective investment systems held

the largest share, representing 48.13 percent of licensed systems, with traditional systems accounting for 549.97 thousand dinars and Islamic ones for 625.95 thousand dinars. Securities collective investment systems followed, comprising 41.1 percent of the total assets, with traditional securities at 831.71 thousand dinars and Islamic systems at 173.05 thousand dinars.

Real estate collective investment systems accounted for 4.5 percent of total assets, with 111.37 thousand dinars, while REIT funds represented 2.4 percent at 59.74 thousand dinars. Debt instruments comprised 1.85 per-

cent with about 45.3 thousand dinars.

Existing collective investment systems for holding systems totaled 24.61 thousand dinars, about 1 percent of the total, while private equity assets amounted to 4.63 thousand dinars, representing 0.18 percent.

Contractual collective investment systems represented approximately 0.67 percent, totaling 16.5 thousand dinars.

Market indices showed positive growth, with the Premier Market Index up 6.5 percent, the Main Market Index up 7.2 percent, the General Market Index up 6.6 percent, and the Main Market 50 Index up 7.9 percent.

Absolute liquidity in the stock market increased significantly to about 1.478 billion dinars, up 67.2 percent from December, with an average daily trading value of approximately 67.2 million dinars, a 29.2 percent increase.

The concentration of liquidity in the first market was notable, receiving 66.8 percent of the stock market's liquidity, with the main market receiving 33.2 percent. Comparing liquidity distribution between the first and main markets showed progress in the main market's share for January 2024 compared to 2023, indicating higher liquidity concentration levels.



## BUSINESS

## India signs trade accord with 4 European nations for \$100b investment

India signed a trade agreement with Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland on Sunday that includes a commitment of \$100 billion in investments and creating 1 million direct jobs in India in the next 15 years.

India committed to reducing import tariffs on industrial products from the four European countries that comprise the European Free Trade Association, or EFTA.

"The landmark agreement between India and EFTA is set to bring significant economic benefits, such as better integrated and more resilient supply chains, new opportunities for businesses and individuals on both sides leading to increased trade and investment flows, job creation, and economic growth," an EFTA communique said.

India's Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal

said India for the first time had signed an agreement with an important economic bloc in Europe. India is also working on trade pacts with Britain and the European Union.

The agreement includes trade in goods and services, investment promotion and co-operation, intellectual property, government procurement, trade and sustainable development, and dispute settlement. It will

provide a window for Indian exporters to access European and global markets, Goyal said in a statement.

The agreement was signed in New Delhi by Goyal, his Swiss counterpart Guy Parmelin, Iceland's Foreign Minister Bjarni Benediktsson, Liechtenstein's Foreign Minister Dominique Hasler, and Norway's Trade and Industry Minister Jan Christian Vestre. (AP)



A laborer carries a sack of vegetables in Lucknow, capital of northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, Thursday, Feb. 29 2024. (AP)

## GDP grew in Oct-Dec at an annual pace of 0.4%

## Japan's economy avoids recession by growing in 2023 final quarter

TOKYO, March 11, (AP) — Japan's economy managed to grow in the fourth quarter of last year, averting a recession, according to revised government data released Monday that had previously shown a contraction.

Real gross domestic product, or GDP, grew in October-December at an annual pace of 0.4% instead of a contraction of 0.4%,

according to the Cabinet Office.

Real GDP is a measure of the value of a nation's products and services. The annual rate measures what would have happened if the quarterly rate lasted a year.

The revision reflects an improvement in private capital investment. It also means Japan avoided sinking into a technical



A sushi chef prepares a plate at the Toyosu Market Monday, Jan. 29, 2024, in Tokyo. (AP)

recession, generally defined as two straight quarters of contraction.

The growth rate for the whole year stood unchanged at 1.9%. Japan's economy grew 0.1% in the final quarter of last year from the previous quarter.

Expectations are mixed on what the latest data might mean ahead of Bank of Japan policy

board meetings. Some expect the central bank to start raising interest rates this month or next month. Japan has so far stuck to a super-easy monetary policy.

The data show consumer spending remains weak as wage growth dulls, inflation sets hold in previously deflation-struck Japan and the yen continues to weaken against the U.S. dollar.

"The results also highlight the sluggishness of private consumption, reflecting a decline in purchasing power. Private consumption is likely to remain weak," S&P Global Market Intelligence said in an analysis.

The GDP revision had been expected because of recent data showing robust capital expenditures.



People shop for beef at a butchery in Algiers, Algeria, Sunday, Feb. 18, 2024. Algeria is importing massive amounts of beef and lamb to confront an explosion in demand for meat expected throughout the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, hoping to stabilize prices as the country's economy continues to struggle. The oil-rich North African nation is among countries working to import food and fuel, hoping to meet the requirements of Algerians preparing nightly feasts as their families break their sunrise-to-sunset fasts. (AP)

## Bid to meet high demand

## Excitement and skepticism meet Algeria's decision to import beef

ALGIERS, Algeria, March 11, (AP) — Algeria is importing massive amounts of beef and lamb to confront an explosion in demand for meat expected throughout the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, hoping to stabilize prices as the country's economy continues to struggle.

The oil-rich North African nation is among countries working to import food and fuel, hoping to meet the requirements of Algerians preparing nightly feasts as their families break their sunrise-to-sunset fasts.

For Algerians flocking to new imported meat stores staffed by butchers in white coats, the arrival of beef from as far away as Australia has raised both excitement and skepticism.

"The opening of stores like this one is a breath of fresh air for those who can't afford to buy local meat. As you've seen, the product is of high quality, and so much the better," retired teacher Rabah Belahouane said after waiting in line at a new store for 30 minutes.

By importing food products, Algeria hopes to avoid skyrocketing prices affecting those who can't afford locally sourced red meat. Such inflation plagued the country as recently as last year when the onion supply couldn't keep up with demand. Neighboring Tunisia plans to import bananas from Egypt while Mali plans to accept donated fuel from Russia.

For Algeria, the decision to import 100,000 tons of red meat this Ramadan reverses a previous policy banning the import of the products. That policy was designed to help bolster domestic

producers but has sparked pushback as the price of local meat spiked.

"It's the president's decision to reopen imports to permit ordinary citizens to be able to eat meat at a reasonable price and not have to put up with butchers who sell local beef, albeit of higher quality, at impossible prices," Algeria's Commerce Minister Tayeb Zitouni said last week.

The import plan comes as meat prices remain high relative to the median income and minimum wage in Algeria which has struggled to tame inflation and rising cost of living.

Butchers understand that their prices present challenges for consumers nationwide but disagree with officials like Zitouni who blame them.

"Local meat is expensive. It's unfortunately become a luxury product, but that isn't butchers' fault or reason to unfairly single them out," said Salim Lamari, the 40-year-old owner of a family butchery east of Algiers.

He said that butchers depended on livestock farmers who had to raise their prices amid drought and spikes in the price of animal feed.

The crisis led Algeria - where politicians have long been skeptical of imports - to grant new import licenses to private businesses and the state entities governing the meat industry.

The country has expanded existing contracts with meat suppliers in Argentina and begun importing from Brazil, Spain, Italy, Ireland, Russia and Australia as the first week of Ramadan begins.

The meat has been vacuum-packed and shipped to be distributed nationwide in refrigerated vehicles.

## Transport minister blasts call

## The union for Germany's train drivers calls for another strike

BERLIN, March 11, (AP) — A union representing many of Germany's train drivers has called for another strike in a long and bitter dispute with the state-owned main railway operator over working hours and pay, drawing sharp criticism from the country's transport minister.

The GDL union called on drivers of Deutsche Bahn's passenger trains to walk out for 24 hours starting at 2 a.m. (0100 GMT), Tuesday. Meanwhile, drivers of freight trains will walk off the job from 6 p.m. (1700 GMT) Monday.

The walkout was announced on Sunday evening, in keeping with a union announcement last week that it would no longer give a 48-hour notice before striking. It follows a 1 1/2-day walkout last week.

The main sticking point in the dispute that has dragged on for months

is GDL's demand for working hours to be reduced from 38 to 35 hours per week without a pay cut.

In several weeks of talks between the two sides, moderators suggested a reduction from 38 to 36 hours by 2028, but details of their proposal didn't satisfy GDL. The union demanded a new offer by Sunday evening, which wasn't forthcoming.

Transport Minister Volker Wissing told the Bild newspaper that "striking instead of negotiating is irresponsible." He pressed GDL to resume talks and said formal arbitration proceedings must be launched.

GDL chairman Claus Weselsky "is oversteering the mark further and further," Wissing added.

Private operators run some regional train services in Germany, unaffected by the dispute with Deutsche Bahn.

DUBAI, March 11: The latest Economic Insight report for the Middle East, commissioned by ICAEW and compiled by Oxford Economics, projects a slowdown in 2024 as oil production cuts persist. The GCC growth forecast has been revised down to 2.7% from 3.9% three months ago, while non energy-sectors are expected to drive growth in Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Despite the energy sector exerting downward pressure on GCC economic growth, robust non-energy performance is expected to offset some of the impact. However, disruptions in shipping routes through the Red Sea and Suez Canal have pushed up freight and raw material costs, suggesting possible loss of momentum in the coming months.

GDP growth projections for Saudi Arabia and the UAE have been revised to 2.1% and 4.4%, respectively, down from 4.4% and 4.8% three months ago. These adjustments reflect strong non-oil economy and the gradual easing of oil cuts from Q3. Recent data for Q4 2023 shows a 3.7% y/y decline in Saudi GDP, following a 4.4% contraction in Q3. Meanwhile, the UAE's non-oil GDP is estimated to have expanded by 5.6% in 2023, driving overall GDP growth of 3%.

The sharp decline in GCC oil output last year, resulting from the introduction of oil cuts, set a very low baseline. Even with the OPEC+ group's voluntary extension of output cuts through Q2, the regional energy sector is poised for growth this year. The report forecasts a cumulative expansion of the energy sectors by 1.3%, a notable turnaround from last year's 5.7% decline. In Saudi Arabia, specifically, oil activities are expected to grow by 0.7% this year after a 9.5% y/y plunge in 2023.

Non-energy sectors in the GCC are positioned to continue benefiting from government and private investment. Saudi Arabia is pushing forward with Vision 2030 by directing funds into mega and large projects and turning its attention to Expo 2030 and the FIFA World Cup 2034. Investment activity is expected to be strong in the UAE too as plans around 'We the UAE 2031', Dubai Economic Agenda D33, and other strategies are implemented. Meanwhile, Qatar's plans for LNG capacity expansion in the latter part of this decade are expected to have a positive medium-term impact.

Hanadi Khalife, Head of Middle East, ICAEW, said: "Despite the GCC economic outlook facing mounting headwinds from the war in Gaza and disruptions in Red Sea trade, we are encouraged by the resilience of non-energy sectors to drive recovery. The UAE and Saudi Arabia's unwavering commitment to diversifying their economies away from oil and meeting ambitious vision deadlines, speaks volumes about their pragmatic and fiscally prudent approach. Initiatives such as the Kingdom's bond sales abroad to address fiscal deficits and the UAE's removal from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list will enhance both countries' reputations and help attract more foreign direct

KSA, UAE economies stand strong: ICAEW

## 'GCC economic growth dampened by oil cuts'



Delegates wearing ethnic minority costumes wait for the closing session of the National People's Congress held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Monday, March 11, 2024. (AP)

## China's stocks trade higher as curtains drawn on annual parliamentary meeting

HONG KONG, March 11, (AP) — Chinese stocks ended Monday with gains on Monday as the country's national legislature ended its annual meeting.

The Hang Seng Index added 1.3% to 16,570.86, again led by the tech index, which surged by 2.7%. Among gainers, JD.com jumped 6.6% to 98.75 Hong Kong dollars, E-commerce giant Alibaba Group Holding gained 2%, and Tencent was 3.2% higher.

Elsewhere in China, the Shanghai Composite Index fluctuated between small gains and losses during morning trading and closed at 3,068.46 by the end of the trading day with a 0.7% gain. The smaller market in Shenzhen rose 2.3%.

China's consumer price index, the CPI, rebounded by 0.7% in February and reached its highest level in 11 months, driven by a surge in consumption during the holiday season, according to data from China's sta-

tistics bureau over the weekend.

Meanwhile, the producer price index, which measures the change in the selling prices received by domestic producers for their output, declined by 2.7% year-on-year, extending a downward trend that's lasted for 17 consecutive months.

"Deflation remains a significant concern among investors regarding China's economic landscape," said Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management.

He said that beyond increased government spending, it is evident that the economy requires structural reforms to encourage citizens to spend rather than save.

EV stocks advanced following data from China Association of Automobile Manufacturers, which said that the production and sales of EVs increased year-on-year by 28.2% and 29.4% in the first two months of 2024, with market share reaching 30%.

Hong Kong-listed electric-vehicle maker NIO added 4.1%, and BYD

surged 4.7%.

Property shares were down after authorities signaled that struggling real estate developers may not receive significant bailouts, despite systemic risks from the ongoing debt crisis.

"Regarding severely insolvent and financially unsustainable real estate companies, bankruptcies should be handled according to legal procedures, and reorganizations should be carried out as required," Housing and Urban-Rural Development Minister Ni Hong said at a press conference Saturday. "Any actions that harm the interests of the public will be vigorously investigated and those responsible will be held accountable in accordance with the law."

China's property sector accounts for nearly a third of the country's economic activity, and the substantial decline in tax revenues from property sales is further burdening the financial system.



Scott Livermore — ICAEW Economic Advisor and Chief Economist and Managing Director at Oxford Economics.

investment.

Scott Livermore, ICAEW Economic Advisor, and Chief Economist and Managing Director, Oxford Economics Middle East, said: "The Middle East faces escalating pres-



Hanadi Khalife — Head of Middle East

signals market confidence in the Kingdom's creditworthiness. This issuance covers about half of the year's projected borrowing needs as the government continues spending on diversification projects."

The tourism sector will remain key to both Saudi and UAE growth agendas with Dubai International Airport welcoming 86.9mn passengers last year, above pre-pandemic numbers, and the Kingdom's airports welcoming 106.2mn visitors last year, up 12% on 2022.

The report also predicts GCC inflation to hover around 2.5%, primarily driven by housing costs. Positive trends in inflation have eased concerns of additional rate hikes by the Federal Reserve and GCC central banks. The first cut is expected to come in Q2, with interest rates gradually declining thereafter. Looser monetary policy will help stimulate regional credit growth and momentum in the real estate sector, supporting domestic investment.

## Fifth stage of initiative aims to distribute reusable bags

# Gulf Bank launches 'A Step Towards Change' initiative in partnership with Al-Rawda, Hawally Cooperative Society

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Following the specified timeline, Gulf Bank has launched the "A Step Towards Change" environmental sustainability initiative, aimed at shifting societal habits by promoting the use of reusable bags, in partnership with Al-Rawda and Hawally Cooperative Society. Over the course of a week, the initiative involves distributing around 20,000 reusable bags at Mishref co-op, accompanied by various informative events.

Gulf Bank had earlier revealed the timetable for executing the initiative within the participating Co-ops, which include Al-Dahiya and Al-Mansouriah, Al-Shamiya and Al-Shuwaikh, Al-Rawda and Hawally, Kaifan, and Mishref.

On this occasion, Mr. Fahad Al-Sharah, Assistant Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, stated: "We are pleased at Gulf Bank to have partnered with Al-Rawda and Hawally Co-op for the fifth stage of our environmental sustainability initiative, 'A Step Towards Change,' which has been widely embraced and positively received by the members of the Cooperative Societies that have implemented it."

He continued, saying: "Our primary objective is to instigate a change in behavior within society, and we are working closely with Mishref Co-op to achieve this. Through the distribution of reusable bags and encouraging customers to reduce their plastic consumption, we hope to make significant progress."

Al-Sharah conveyed optimism that this initiative would actively contribute to shaping government decisions and laws, compelling both institutions and individuals to minimize plastic usage.

He further emphasized that this initiative is part of Gulf Bank's annual commitment to implement various initiatives aimed at reinforcing the principles of environmental sustainability within the community. Gulf Bank believes that the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, and they found it fitting to initiate this program with selected major Co-ops in Kuwait. Around 100,000 reusable bags will be distributed to the selected Co-ops, marking the first step towards changing behavior, and becoming an integral part of their daily lives.



Fahad Al-Sharah and Abdul Mohsen Al-Nassar from Gulf Bank in a photo with Al Rawda and Hawalli Association officials.

He added, "This initiative is rooted in Gulf Bank's 2025 strategy, with the goal of establishing principles of environmental, social, and governance sustainability. It aligns with the country's environmental strategy under the vision of 'New Kuwait 2035,' as well as legislation related to the environment, laws safeguarding the environment, resource conservation, pollution reduction, environmental safety, ecosystem rehabilitation, biodiversity protection, waste management efficiency improvement, utilization of renewable energy,

and building and developing national capabilities in environmental work."

Mr. Omar Al-Ansari, a board member of Al-Rawda and Hawally Co-op, expressed his pleasure in partnering with Gulf Bank for the 'Step Towards Change' initiative, emphasizing their commitment to fostering a societal shift towards reducing plastic consumption. He highlighted the alignment between Gulf Bank's initiative and the cooperative society's environmental protection endeavors. Additionally, he stressed the introduction of a "Fast

Track" service by the Co-op for shareholders, who use reusable bags, with the intention of encouraging their ongoing usage.

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.

## Encouraging community engagement and solidarity in Kuwait

# NBK's Ramadan Social Program 2024: Revitalizing interactive initiatives

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) revealed its annual 'Doing Good Deeds' program during the Holy month of Ramadan. For more than 30 years, the program comprises a series of activities and events aimed at encouraging community engagement and solidarity and charity in Kuwait.

NBK's Head of Corporate Communications, Manal Al Mattar, said that NBK's "Do Good Deeds in Ramadan" philanthropic drive, initiated by NBK since more than three decades, is leveraging interactive approaches this year.

The program comprised a series of activities and initiatives aimed at encouraging community engagement and solidarity in Kuwait. "NBK hopes to encourage a greater sense of responsibility during the holy month", Al Mattar noted.

NBK Ramadan Social Program 2024 includes distribution of Iftar meals via special convoys that will tour round different areas in the country.

NBK staff volunteers have already finalized all necessary arrangements for Ramadan. NBK staff volunteers will manage and supervise the distribution process and tours arrangements.

Dates and water will be offered to fasters at the iftar time. NBK volunteers from different branches will be distributing the boxes of dates and water to fasters to avoid traffic accidents during iftar.

NBK will be launching a group



Manal Al Mattar, NBK's Head of Corporate Communications

of fun activities throughout the holy month including Dama and tennis Tournaments in addition to organizing Gergean events for children.

NBK and Omniya will collaborate during Ramadan to collect empty plastic bottles in different mosques in Kuwait city. This initiative will save hundreds of cubic meters in Kuwait's landfills and save the environment knowing that plastic takes hundred years to degrade in landfills.

NBK volunteers along with the Kuwait Fire Force team will distribute safety kit that included a fire extinguisher, fire alarm and first aid support ensuring that they adhere to regulations for safety.

## Bank unveils exciting prizes for lucky customers

# Warba announces the weekly Sunbula, monthly Bloom, Sunbula Kids winners

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Warba Bank - the best bank in banking services for the corporate sector and banking services for the investment sector in Kuwait - announced the winners of the weekly Sunbula, monthly Sunbula kids and Bloom draws. The Bank will continue to make weekly draws for 10 winners for the Sunbula account and 5 for the monthly Bloom draws in the presence of a representative of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Warba Bank employees.

As for the lucky customers for the weekly Sunbula draw, 10 winners were chosen from Warba Bank's customers, each of whom received 1,000 Kuwaiti dinars. The winners are: Mrs. Hanan Ibrahim Muhammad Barjas, Mr. Saud Abdulaziz Buhaimed, Mrs. Fayza Farhan Sayyah Al-Anazi, Mr. Naif Mubarak Obaid Al-Otaibi, Mr. Misfer Hussein Ali Al-Ajmi, Mr. Ahmed Ibrahim Freej Al-Farij, Mr. Muhammad Abdulghani Bassiouni, and Mrs. Noura Fahd Fuhaid Al-Ajmi, Mr. Qutaiba Muhammad Al-Khalidi, and Mr. Abdulaziz Mufreh.

As for the customers who were lucky during the monthly Sunbula kids draw for children, 7 winners were announced from Warba Bank

customers, and they are: Mrs. Bas-sama Ahmed Riyadh Khazal, Mrs. Fatima Mufarreh Matar Butti, Mrs. Souad Falah Khaled Al-Azmi, Mr. Ibrahim Abdulrahman Al-Daribi, Mr. Sultan Abdulhamid Al-Sha-iji, Mr. Abdulaziz Ali Jaber Al-Marri, Mr. Qamar Nasser Faisal Al-Rasheed.

Warba Bank also congratulates the winners of the "Monthly Student Reward" draw for Bloom customers, who are: Mrs. Dana Fayeze Faleh Al-Azmi, Mr. Othman Aladdin Mohammad, Mrs. Dima Eid Saleh Al-Shammari, Mrs. Maryam Khaled Jassim Al-Jubran, Mr. Abdullatif Ahmed Al-Ghanim.

Warba Bank singles the "Bloom" customer segment with a unique digital banking experience that lives up to their ambitions and aspirations. It presents them with a private banking application-- the first of its kind not only in Kuwait, Rather, in the entire

region-- inspired by social media applications in terms of design, interface, browsing methods and color choices, which targets young people.

Meanwhile, the Sunbula account is the perfect choice for all those who wish to save money and achieve great financial returns on their balances at the same time; in addition to multiple opportunities to win cash prizes throughout the year.

With regards to the conditions for winning the Sunbula, Mr. Ahmed M. Al-mutawa Director Region Retail Banking Group states: "Only 100 KD is required to enter the weekly Sunbula draws and other major draws, whereby the customer still gets one chance per every 10 KD in the account, and the chances are calculated according to the lowest balance in the account during a month. Therefore, a full month must have passed in the account to qualify

for the weekly draw, and two full months for the major draws to calculate the opportunities. There are no restrictions or limits for withdrawal and deposit, the higher the deposited amount, the greater the customer's chances of winning".

Notably, Warba Bank launched its latest Customer Onboarding banking solution in accordance with the terms of its ambitious five-year strategy, this will enable non-Warba Bank customers to apply for opening an account in an easy digital way through the bank's website without the need to visit any of the bank's branches, and within only five minutes - through the new and unique automated system used to enable this service - new customers will be able to complete the request to open an account at any time and any place.

It is worth mentioning that Warba Bank is one of the banks that achieved great successes in a short period of time, as it occupied a leading position in the field of digital Islamic banking services for individuals, and it is one of the most local banks in terms of the number of shareholders, and these are among the most prominent elements that make the bank close to all members of society.



Ahmed Al Mutawa, Director Region Retail Banking Group states.



Group photo from the event.

# IEI Kuwait Chapter conducts Family Day

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Family Day was recently conducted by the Institution of Engineers India (IEI), Kuwait Chapter. The event took place at Wafra Private Farm, and approximately 75 individuals at-

tended. The day featured a variety of games for both children and adults, accompanied by attractive prizes. The program commenced at 9 AM and concluded with a campfire at 6 PM.

All Kuwait Chapter engineers

actively engaged with their families throughout the event. The Executive Committee (EC) members expressed their gratitude to all the participants, organizers and sponsors in the closing remarks.



Families actively engaged throughout the event.



# Arabian blades ... Tradition steeped in history, beyond gender norms

By Kholood Al-Enezi

Since olden times Arabian blades signified chivalry and bravery and were used to fend off attackers and protect oneself from harm. Nowadays, the steeped history of the Arabian blade continues to be appreciated throughout the region and particularly in the Gulf with many of still produced by blade-smiths regardless of gender. On this subject, KUNA explored the process of making swords, daggers, and knives in the Kingdom of Bahrain, which to this day is forged by skillful and talented hands. Blade manufacturing in Bahrain dates back to around 1783, said Zohour Al-Sayegh, a woman blade-smith who inherited the craft from her ancestors, told KUNA. Al-Sayegh affirmed that blades played a



Golden color knives adorned with interesting designs and textiles. KUNA photo

huge part in the history of the region as well as the tradition built around it, and these days, blades adorn households throughout the Gulf region in remembrance of the glorious past. Matters such as the weight of the persons and their stature dictated how a blade was forged, she indicated, noting that Arabian blades were used in the current times in celebrations whether they were weddings, national occasions, or other festivities. Al-Sayegh revealed that there were protocols and social considerations governing the forging of blades, noting that in wedding celebrations, blades for the grooms should be made differently from the ones made for in-laws, friends, acquaintances and family members. Some blades were meant to be held with the left hand so that the right one might be extend-

ed in a gesture of peace, said Al-Sayegh providing further insight into the social intricacies of the profession. The Arabian sword, for instance, is unique in design from the hilt to the tip of the blade and it rarely gets confused with other types of blades from across the globe, she pointed out. She said that blades usually weighed between six to eight kilograms, noting that some types of swords signified the rank of a swordsman back in the olden days. On the process itself, Al-Sayegh indicated that sword-making took around three to four months of hard work and mastery depending of the type of blade produced. In regards to daggers and knives, the blade-smith said that men and women used to carry such weapons for daily usage and event protection. (KUNA)

Culture

Variety



Robert Downey Jr., winner of the award for best performance by an actor in a supporting role for "Oppenheimer," from left, Da'Vine Joy Randolph, winner of the award for best performance by an actress in a supporting role for "The Holdovers," Emma Stone, winner of the award for best performance by an actress in a leading role for "Poor Things," and Cillian Murphy, winner of the award for best performance by an actor in a leading role for "Oppenheimer," pose in the press room at the Oscars on Sunday, March 10, 2024, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)

Film

Nolan finally claims best director

## 'Oppenheimer' shatters records at Oscars

LOS ANGELES, March 11, (AP): "Oppenheimer," a solemn three-hour biopic that became an unlikely billion-dollar box-office sensation, was crowned best picture at a 96th Academy Awards that doubled as a coronation for Christopher Nolan. After passing over arguably Hollywood's foremost big-screen auteur for years, the Oscars made up for lost time by heaping seven awards on Nolan's blockbuster biopic, including best actor for Cillian Murphy, best supporting actor for Robert Downey Jr. and best director for Nolan. In anointing "Oppenheimer," the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences did something it hasn't done for more than a decade: hand its top prize to a widely seen, big-budget studio film. In a film industry where a cape, dinosaur or Tom Cruise has often been a requirement for such box office, "Oppenheimer" brought droves of moviegoers to theaters with a complex, fission-filled drama about J. Robert Oppenheimer and the creation of the atomic bomb. "For better or worse, we're all living in Oppenheimer's world," said Murphy in his acceptance speech. "I'd like to dedicate this to the peacemakers." As a film heavy with unease for human capacity for mass destruction, "Oppenheimer" also emerged - even over its partner in cultural phenomenon, "Barbie" - as a fittingly foreboding film for times rife with cataclysm, man-made or not. Sunday's Oscars at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles unfolded against the backdrop of wars in Gaza and Ukraine, and with a potentially momentous U.S. election on the horizon. Awards for the documentary winner, "20 Days in Mariupol," and best international film, "The Zone of Interest," brought geopolitics into the Oscar spotlight. The most closely watched contest went to Emma Stone, who won best actress for her performance as Bella Baxter in "Poor Things." In what was seen as the night's most nail-biting category, Stone won over Lily Gladstone of "Killers of the Flower Moon." Gladstone would have become the first Native American to win an Academy Award. Instead, Oscar voters couldn't resist the full-bodied extremes of Stone's "Poor Things" performance. The win for Stone, her second best actress Oscar following her 2017 win for "La La Land," confirmed the 35-year-

old as arguably the preeminent big-screen actress of her generation. The list of women to win best actress two or more times is illustrious, including Katharine Hepburn, Frances McDormand, Ingrid Bergman and Bette Davis. "Oh, boy, this is really overwhelming," said Stone, who fought back tears and a broken dress during her speech. Sunday's broadcast had razzle dazzle, including a sprawling song-and-dance rendition of the "Barbie" hit "I'm Just Ken" by Ryan Gosling, with an assist on guitar by Slash and a sea of Kens who swarmed the stage. But protest and politics intruded on an election-year Academy Awards. Late during the show, host Jimmy Kimmel read a critical social media post from former president Donald Trump. "Thank you for watching," said Kimmel. "Isn't it past your jail time?" Nolan has had many movies in the Oscar mix before, including "Inception," "Dunkirk" and "The Dark Knight." But his win Sunday for direction is the first Academy Award for the 53-year-old filmmaker. Addressing the crowd, Nolan noted cinema is just over a hundred years old. "Imagine being there 100 years into painting or theater," said Nolan, who shared the best-picture award with Emma Thomas, his wife and producer. "We don't know where this incredible journey is going from here. But to know that you think that I'm a meaningful part of it means the world to me." Downey, nominated twice before (for "Chaplin" and "Tropic Thunder"), also notched his first Oscar, crowning the illustrious second act of his up-and-down career. "I'd like to thank my terrible childhood and the academy, in that order," said Downey, the son of filmmaker Robert Downey Sr. "Barbie," last year's biggest box-office hit with more than \$1.4 billion in ticket sales, ultimately won just one award: best song (sorry, Ken) for Billie Eilish and Finneas' "What Was I Made For?" It's their second Oscar, two years after winning for their James Bond theme, "No Time to Die." Protests over Israel's war in Gaza snarled traffic around the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles, slowing

stars' arrival on the red carpet and turning the Oscar attention toward the ongoing conflict. Some protesters shouted "Shame!" at those trying to reach the awards. Jonathan Glazer, the British filmmaker whose chilling Auschwitz drama "The Zone of Interest" won best international film, drew connections between the dehumanization depicted in his film and today. "Right now, we stand here as men who refute their Jewishness and the Holocaust being hijacked by an occupation which has led to conflict for so many innocent people, whether the victims of October 7th in Israel, or the the ongoing attack on Gaza, all the victims, this dehumanization, how do we resist?" A year after "Navalny" won the same award, Mstyslav Chernov's "20 Days in Mariupol," a harrowing chronicle of the early days of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, won best documentary. The win, a first for The Associated Press and PBS' "Frontline," came as the war in Ukraine passed the two-year mark with no signs of abating. Chernov, the Ukrainian filmmaker and AP journalist whose hometown was bombed the day he learned of his Oscar nomination, spoke forcefully about Russia's invasion. "This is the first Oscar in Ukrainian history, and I'm honored," said Chernov. "Probably I will be the first director on this stage to say I wish I'd never made this film. I wish to be able to exchange this (for) Russia never attacking Ukraine." In the early going, Yorgos Lanthimos' Frankenstein-riff "Poor Things" ran away with three prizes for its sumptuous craft, including awards for production design, makeup and hairstyling and costume design. "Poor Things" fared second best to "Oppenheimer," with a total of four awards. Kimmel, hosting the ABC telecast for the fourth time, opened the awards with an monologue that emphasized Hollywood as "a union town" following 2023's actor and writer strikes, drew a standing ovation for bringing out teamsters and behind-the-scenes workers - who are now entering their own labor negotiations. The night's first award was one of its most predictable: Da'Vine Joy Randolph for best supporting actress, for her performance in Alexander Payne's "The Holdovers." An emotional Randolph was accompanied to the stage by her "Holdovers" co-star Paul Giamatti.

Features

ARAB TIMES, TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 2024

LOS ANGELES: There is a whole other show that happens offscreen at the Oscars that the home audience doesn't see on television. Here's what The Associated Press saw that the cameras did not capture. Things got off to a late start, about 6 minutes behind schedule and not everyone made their way to their seats by the start of the show. Among the last seated around 7:06 pm EDT were **Martin Scorsese**, **Margot Robbie** and **Ryan Gosling**. **Carey Mulligan** missed the moving cutoff though and spent **Jimmy Kimmel's** opening monologue and the supporting actress prize standing off to the side, but she had husband **Marcus Mumford** there to keep her company. At the first commercial break people bolted out of their seats to find their friends. **Emma Stone** immediately found her longtime friend **Jennifer Lawrence** and the two ran out the clock laughing and gesticulating wildly as their husbands looked on. **Greta Gerwig** beelined to **Robbie** and **America Ferrera**, all in good spirits after the supporting actress prize went to **Da'Vine Joy Randolph**. And yes, **Mulligan** and **Mumford** finally found their seats. Emma Stone was out in the lobby bar with a glass of champagne in hand when "Poor Things" won best production design. She yelped out and jumped up and down and attentively watched the speech. She then turned to **Florence Pugh**, standing nearby and the two talked animatedly about Pugh's "sprinkled dress." All of a sudden, Pugh laughed and looked up at the monitor to see an almost naked **John Cena**. "Oooh it's because he looks like the Oscar!" A few seconds later "Poor Things" also won for costume design and Stone jumped and screamed again. "I'm missing all of them," she cried. "It's not OK, it's bad, I'm going home." Out in the lobby Gerwig had a fan who wanted to talk to her about something very specific: **Ann Roth's** "Barbie" cameo. "I want you to know how much that meant to me," said academy board member **Eduardo Castro**, who's in the costume designers branch. Roth, 92, played the woman on the bench in "Barbie," a bit that

Kimmel even mimicked in his opening. She's a two-time Oscar winner for "The English Patient" and "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom." Castro, whose credits include "Ugly Betty" and "Bride and Prejudice," said he considers Roth a mentor. "She's special," Gerwig said. "She said 'Greta I don't know if I can do it, I can't do it! Just give



Kimmel



Stone

me a martini." Castro laughed: "She loves a martini." By that point Gerwig's husband **Noah Baumbach** had made his way to her and they made their way to the bar. (They did not, however, order martinis.) About a half hour before Gosling turned the Oscars into a wildly fun concert for a few pre-

vious minutes, the Kens were out in the lobby warming up. Clad in cowboy hats, some were stretching, some running in place, and all were finding their Kenegy. During the performance, the Dolby Theatre took on the feel of a Taylor Swift concert, with everyone in the room standing and breaking into spontaneous, joyous dance. And the biggest fan in the room was

Gerwig, who was given her own personal Ken right up in her face. During the commercial break **Mark Ronson** found his way to Gerwig, Robbie and a crowd of admirers. The whole room was buzzing long after the performance, Ronson maybe most of all - he went back to his seat proudly donning his pink Ken shirt, which he wore for the rest of the show. (AP)



Emma Stone - Louis Vuitton



Hailee Steinfeld - Elie Saab



Da'Vine Joy Randolph - Louis



Jennifer Lawrence - Dior



Melissa McCarthy - Ami Paris



Gabrielle Union - Carolina Herrera

## Red carpet standouts Ferrera shines in Barbie pink

NEW YORK, March 11, (AP): America Ferrera bid a fond awards season farewell to "Barbie" on the Oscars red carpet Sunday in a stunning, sparkly Atelier Versace gown in the film's signature pink, while Rita Moreno wore a huge smile and a statement black gown from Badgley Mischka.

"America Ferrera did bombshell right and gave us the cool Barbie pink moment we needed this whole time, aka it didn't smack us over the head," said Brooke Bobb, fashion news director for Harper's Bazaar.

Hollywood's big night in Los Angeles included few fashion risks, with many sticking to classic silhouettes, black and other standard colors. Others offered an under-the-sea-vibe in soft sea-foam colors with mermaid crystals and shell-like designs.

Emma Stone was in the sea camp in a soft pastel strapless look with a faint shell pattern in mint and a wide peplum at the waist. It was Louis Vuitton. Hailee Steinfeld in Elie Saab was also sea-like in sheer ethereal blue-green with wings attached at the wrist. Lupita Nyong'o was sea-adjacent in feathers and sequins by Armani Privé.

Moreno, at 92, waved to photographers as she showed off her pleated taffeta and velvet gown. Brittany Snow offered a refreshing show of color in a bright strapless custom Mōnot dress paired with a statement choker.

Cynthia Erivo, in custom Louis Vuitton, shut down the carpet in emerald green lamb leather, dinosaur-like spikes along the back of a large-shouldered jacket. Emily Blunt and hubby John Krasinski matched in off-white, she in Schiaparelli couture with shoulders that floated above her body, that extended silhouette touch a mini-trend of the night.

Anya Taylor-Joy was full shell in a Dior Haute Couture strapless look in a sparkly scallop design.

Da'Vine Roy Randolph, on the top of her fashion game this awards season, wore an A-line pale blue tulle gown from Louis Vuitton with oversized sleeves embellished with tulle fringe. Ariana Grande also went big in a puffy pink gown that also had huge sleeves on a matching coat.

InStyle beauty director Lauren Valenti lauded Randolph's effort. "I loved Da'Vine's beauty homage to Mae West, which featured cat eyes, glossy lined lips and va-va-voom side-swept blonde waves," she said.

Lavender had a moment on a few. So did Billie Eilish in a Chanel schoolgirl look with a black jacket, pattern skirt, white socks and black Mary Janes. She and others on the carpet wore red pins supporting a cease-fire in Gaza.

"This year in general, the power of the red carpet was driven by women whose confidence felt utterly authentic and not like an exercise in branding," Bobb said. "Embracing personal style really is the only way to land on the best-dressed list these days."

The "Godzilla Minus One" group, meanwhile, showed up carrying toy monsters.

Many men stuck to black in tuxedos and other looks, including a fashion star of the awards season, Colman Domingo in a double-breasted tuxedo look, a custom Louis Vuitton, paired with cowboy boots and a jewel at the center of his bow tie. He wore a pinkie ring that once belonged to the man behind his "Rustin" character, Bayard Rustin, as he has throughout awards season.

"I wanted to shine like a diamond" he told E! "I'm having a great time."

Speaking of gems, Lily Gladstone won the jewelry game. She paired her midnight blue velvet gown with a Bulgari necklace in white gold with turquoise touches and blue oval tanzanite at the center.



America Ferrera - Atelier Ver



Rita Moreno - Badgley Mischka



Lupita Nyong'o - Armani



Cynthia Erivo - Louis Vuitton



Emily Blunt - Schiaparelli



Billie Eilish - Chanel



Anya Taylor-Joy - Dior



Lily Gladstone - Gucci



Sandra Huller - Curran



Erika Alexander - Christian Siriano



Vanessa Hudgens - Vera Wang



Ariana Grande - Giambattista Valli



Danielle Brooks - Dolce & Gabbana



Zendaya - Armani Privé



Eva Longoria - Tamara Ralph

Style

## Legislators grapple with the fate of Connecticut's bug ambassador

## Students lobby to dethrone state insect, voraciously predatory praying mantis

Battle over vaccination policies

## West Virginia lawmakers passes bill allowing student exemptions

CHARLESTON, W.Va., March 11, (AP) West Virginia's GOP-controlled state Legislature voted Saturday to allow some students who don't attend traditional public schools to be exempt from state vaccination requirements that have long been held up as among the most strict in the country.

The bill was approved despite the objections of Republican Senate Health and Human Resources Chair Mike Maroney, a trained doctor, who called the bill "an embarrassment" and said he believed lawmakers were harming the state.



Maroney

"I took an oath to do no harm. There's zero chance I can vote for this bill," Maroney said before the bill passed the Senate 18-12. The House already approved a version of the bill in February and swiftly approved the Senate bill on Saturday, the last day of the state's 60-day legislative session.

"It's a bad bill for West Virginia, it's a step backward. There's no question, no question there will be negative effects," Maroney said. He added, "It's an embarrassment for me to be a part of it, it should be an embarrassment to everybody."

West Virginia, with some of the lowest life expectancy rates in the U.S. and a quarter of all children living in poverty, is one of only two states, along with California, that don't permit nonmedical exemptions to vaccinations as a condition for school entry.

Mississippi had the same policy until July, when a judge allowed people to start citing religious beliefs to seek exemptions from state-mandated vaccinations that children must receive before attending day care or school.

The new proposed vaccine law in West Virginia, which now heads to the desk of Republican Gov. Jim Justice, allows virtual public school students to be exempt and for private and parochial schools to institute their own policies either exempting students or not.

All students participating in West Virginia school activities that result in competition, including but not limited to sports, still need to be vaccinated.

The bill stipulates parents can't sue private schools and school owners, administrators, boards and staffers for deciding whether to allow exemptions or not, as long as the school provides families with a notice for parents to sign acknowledging the policy annually and upon enrollment.

"I personally do not urge passage, but your health committee urged passage of this bill," Maroney said before introducing the bill in the Senate.

The bill's original intent, as introduced in the state House of Delegates, was to eliminate vaccine requirements for students in public virtual schools. It was expanded in a House committee to allow private schools to set their own vaccination standards, unless a student participates in sanctioned athletics.

The bill also created a religious exemption for any child whose parents or guardians present a letter stating the child cannot be vaccinated for religious reasons. That was taken out in the Senate.

HARTFORD, Conn., March 11, (AP) When it comes to state insects, most states honor beloved and benign bugs, like butterflies, honey bees and ladybugs. Connecticut has designated a voracious predator as its bug-to-be-most-proud-of for decades, but its reign could soon come to an end.

The European "praying" mantis, recognized by its raptorial forelegs and known for catching and eating the occasional bumble bee and butterfly along with all kinds of other insects, has been awaiting its prey from atop Connecticut's pedestal since 1977, after a group of kids in Vernon proposed it to lawmakers.

Now legislators have been confronted by more schoolchildren - two groups of them - who submitted dueling proposals to replace the mantis, with either the Autumn Meadowhawk Dragonfly or the Spring Azure Butterfly. And unlike the mantis, which was introduced to the state in the 1890s to help farmers combat pests, both are native to Connecticut and therefore important to the state's environment, the students argued.

"By having a non-native European praying mantis as our state insect, we are overlooking the thousands of native insects that are present in Connecticut's ecosystem," Katherine Boye Williams, 16, a junior at the Watkinson School in Hartford, told a legislative committee on Friday.

Williams said it's "been a source of irritation" that the praying mantis gets all the glory, and she hopes greater attention paid to natives like the Spring Azure Butterfly will spark more interest in protecting the state's environment.

According to the Smithsonian Institution, 48 states



Sue Katherine Boye Williams, 16, a junior at the Watkinson School in Hartford, Conn. and Chris Tracy, 19, a senior at the school, stand near an inlaid design of Connecticut's current State Insect, the European 'Praying' Mantis, on the door to a hearing room at Connecticut's Legislative Office Building in Hartford on March 8, 2024. (AP)

have officially designated State Insects, nearly all of them colorful or fuzzy, with notable exceptions such as New Mexico's Tarantula Hawk Wasp and South Carolina's state bug -- a cousin to Connecticut's and also not native to the U.S. -- the Carolina mantis.

Williams said her school's environmental coalition ultimately recommended the Spring Azure Butterfly after a long process that included debating the merits of multiple candidates recommended by entomologists, whittling the list down to two, reaching out to 100 other

schools, organizations and individuals for input, and ultimately collecting 1,189 votes for the tiny blue butterfly with roughly an inch-wide wingspan.

"The Spring Azure, like Connecticut, is energetic and small," she told lawmakers, and its colors even match the Connecticut state flag.

Representing the other bug contender during Friday's public hearing, state wildlife biologist Jane Seymour read a letter on behalf of students at Center Road School in Vernon, Conn. They extolled the virtues of the Autumn Meadowhawk Dragonfly, including how it eats mosquitoes and other biting bugs and how its flight has been studied for aeronautics purposes, including by Connecticut-based Sikorsky Aircraft.

"The Meadow Hawk Dragonfly is an interesting and beautiful creature that has been on this planet for 300 million years. That's more than the dinosaurs," the students wrote in the letter, noting their fears about how the insect's habitat is at risk.

Seymour supports the student-led efforts. Mantis religiosa can be a "voracious predator," she said, and it "ate everything" after it was introduced in the U.S.

Recognized for its habit of standing motionless on four hind legs while appearing to "pray" with its two forelegs, Mantis religiosa originated from northern Africa, southern Europe and parts of Asia and can now be found throughout Connecticut from early May or June until the weather turns cold, according to the state register and manual.

"Although it's a cool-looking insect, it's harmful to our native insects and it should be replaced," Seymour said.

## France's Macron announces legislation to allow 'aid in dying' under strict conditions

Monthslong legislative process will start in May

PARIS, March 11, (AP) French president Emmanuel Macron has announced new legislation to legalize "aid in dying" that will allow adults facing end-of-life illness to take lethal medication, a first in the country.

The move follows last year's report indicating that most French citizens support legalizing end-of-life options.

In an interview published Monday by French newspapers La Croix and Libera-

tion, Macron said the new bill will be restricted to adults suffering from an incurable illness who are expected to die in the "short or middle-term" and who are suffering "intractable" physical or psychological pain.

Macron said the law will offer "a possible path, in a determined situation, with precise criteria, where the medical decision is playing its role."

He gave the example of people with terminal cancer, some of whom until now have gone abroad to end their lives.

Only people aged 18 or above who are capable of forming their own views will be allowed to get in the process, meaning those with severe psychiatric conditions and neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer's disease won't be eligible, Macron specified.

Patients who seek to enter the process will need to reconfirm their choice after 48 hours and they should then receive an answer from a medical team within two weeks maximum, Macron said. A doctor will then deliver a prescription, valid for three months, for the lethal medication.

People will be able to take the medication at home, at a nursing home or at a health care facility, Macron said.

If their physical condition doesn't allow them to do it alone, they will be allowed to get help from someone of their choice or by a doctor or a nurse.

Macron said the new bill will refer to "aid in dying ... because it's simple and humane," rather than terms like euthanasia or medically assisted suicide.

Medically assisted suicide involves patients taking, of their own free will, a lethal drug or medication that has been prescribed by a doctor to those who meet certain criteria. Euthanasia involves doctors or other health practitioners giving patients who meet certain criteria a lethal injection at their own request.

Macron set no date for the legislation to be applied, saying it will first need to follow a months long legislative process that will start in May.

A 2016 French law provides that doctors can keep terminally ill patients sedated before death but stops short of allowing assisted suicide and euthanasia.

Some French patients travel to other European countries to seek further options. Assisted suicide is allowed in neighboring Switzerland as well as in Portugal. Euthanasia is currently legal in the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Spain under certain conditions.



France's President Emmanuel Macron attend a media conference ahead of a working lunch with Moldova's President Maia Sandu at the Elysee Palace in Paris, on March 7, 2024. (AP)

## FDA will take deeper look into safety of Lilly experimental Alzheimer drug

INDIANAPOLIS, March 11, (AP) Federal regulators put off a decision on whether to approve an Eli Lilly Alzheimer's drug by making an unusual request to have outside advisers look at the treatment.

Lilly had expected the Food and Drug Administration to decide on donanemab's approval by the end of the month. But the drugmaker said Friday that the agency now wants more information about its safety and effectiveness. No date has been set for the advisory committee meeting.

The FDA often asks committees to review drugs that are first in their class of treatments. Donanemab, if approved, would follow Eisai's Leqem-

bi, which was approved last year, and Biogen's Aduhelm.

Eli Lilly and Co. Executive Vice President Anne White said in a statement that the Indianapolis-based company remains confident in donanemab's potential and will work with the FDA.

The company said the agency wants to learn more from a pivotal study Lilly conducted on the drug.

The 18-month, late-stage study showed that patients taking donanemab declined about 22% more slowly in terms of memory and cognitive ability than those who received a dummy infusion. The delay amounted to about four to seven months.

## Discovery dating back over 1 million years

## Ancient stone tools found in Ukraine, rewrite early human history in Europe

WASHINGTON, March 11, (AP) Ancient stone tools found in western Ukraine may be the oldest known evidence of early human presence in Europe, according to research published Wednesday in the journal Nature.

The chipped stones, deliberately fashioned from volcanic rock, were excavated from a quarry in Korolevo in the 1970s. Archaeologists used new methods to date the layers of sedimentary rock surrounding the tools to more than 1 million years old.

"This is the earliest evidence of any type of human in Europe that is dated," said Mads Faur-schou Knudsen, a geophysicist at Aarhus University in Denmark and co-author of the new study.

He said it's not certain which early human ancestors fashioned the tools, but it may have been Homo erectus, the first species to walk upright and master the use of fire.

"We don't have fossil remains, so we can't be sure," said Roman Garba, an archaeologist at the Czech Academy of Sciences and



This photo provided by researcher Roman Garba shows a heavily weathered flake artifact at the Korolevo archaeological site in western Ukraine in August 2023. (AP)

co-author.

The chipped stone tools were likely used for cutting meat and

perhaps scraping animal hides, he said.

The researchers suggest the tools may be as old as 1.4 million years, but other experts say the study methodology suggests that they may be just over 1 million years old, placing them in roughly the same date range as other ancient tools unearthed in Spain.

The very earliest stone tools of this type were found in eastern Africa and date back to 2.8 million years ago, said Rick Potts, who directs the Smithsonian Institution's Human Origins Program.

The Ukraine site is significant because "it's the earliest site that far north," suggesting that the early humans who dispersed from Africa with these tools were able to survive in diverse environments.

"The oldest humans with this old stone tool technology were able to colonize everywhere from warm Iberia (Spain) to Ukraine, where it's at least seasonally very cold - that's an amazing level of adaptability," said Potts.

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## Buescher and Gibbs complete the podium

## Christopher Bell pulls out an emotional victory for Joe Gibbs Racing at Phoenix

AVONDALE, March 11, (AP): Christopher Bell and the rest of Joe Gibbs Racing have been through more than their share of heartbreak in the desert.

Owner Joe Gibbs' son, the team's vice chairman, died unexpectedly in Phoenix two years ago. Last fall, a broken brake rotor spoiled Bell's NASCAR Cup Series championship hopes in the Valley of the Sun.

Winning at Phoenix Raceway will never erase the anguish, but it's certainly another step in the healing process.

Bell surged into the lead when Martin Truex Jr. was forced to pit and then pulled away for an emotional NASCAR Cup Series win at Phoenix Raceway on Sunday.

"This one feels really good," Bell said. "You don't get cars like that very often, as you know. Just super, super proud to be on this 20 car."

JGR has been through a whirlwind of emotions in Phoenix.

In 2022, hours after Ty Gibbs won an Xfinity season championship for his grandfather's team, vice chairman Coy Gibbs was found dead in his hotel room. Ty's father was 49.

Bell and JGR returned to Phoenix Raceway in November as part of the championship four vying for the Cup Series title. Instead of mending emotions, the team left dejected after Bell's car broke early in the race.

Given another shot, Bell held his emotions in check and the crew gave him the fastest car on a perfect afternoon in the desert that ended with a massive celebration on victory lane.

"It is a little bit cathartic," Bell's crew chief Adam Stevens said.

Bell's win in the No. 20 Toyota also ended Chevrolet's perfect start to the season after winning the first three races. He is the eighth different winner in eight races at Phoenix Raceway's mile tri-oval.

Chris Buescher finished second after being wrecked 27 laps into last week's race in Las Vegas and Ty Gibbs was third for his career-best finish. Brad Keselowski and Ryan Blaney rounded out the top five.

"We had a rough go last week," Buescher said. "This was good to get everybody back to prove that we're in this together and we're going to win

one of these things as a team."

The Phoenix race marked the debut of NASCAR's new aerodynamics package for short tracks in hopes of producing more passing on tracks of a mile or less and road courses. Good-year also produced tires with thicker treads designed to retain heat and increase lap-time falloff.

## CAR RACING

Starting 13th, Bell took advantage of the changes, overcoming a slow pit stop to charge back to the front. Bell moved into the lead with 40 laps to go when leader Truex had to pit for fuel and tires.

Bell led the final 49 laps for his seventh career Cup Series victory - first since Homestead in October.

"I drove a rocket ship today," Bell said. "It just took off."

Truex and his crew made calculated gamble on lap 217, opting to stay out when most of the leaders went into the pits.

The JGR driver stayed in the lead,

hoping he would have enough fuel and his tires would hold out long enough to reach the checkered flag. Neither happened and Truex was forced to the pits. He finished seventh.

Pole sitter Denny Hamlin took advantage of having the first stall to twice take the lead out of the pits, but ran into trouble with about 100 laps left.

Trying to pass Reddick, Hamlin's No. 11 car got loose and he spun out, causing a caution that sent most of the cars to the pits. Hamlin dropped to 23rd after a pit stop and finished 11th.

"Just got in too deep and tried not to wreck him," Hamlin said. "Just ended up wrecking ourselves."

Austin Cindric had an early end to his day, a week after a spinout knocked him well back in the pack at Las Vegas.

Cindric completed six laps at Phoenix Raceway before being involved in a wreck with Austin Dillon and Derek Kraus. Dillon and Kraus were able to return to the track, but Cindric's car was damaged too much.

Cindric finished 29th at Las Vegas and was in contention at the Daytona



Christopher Bell does a burnout after his NASCAR Cup Series auto race win at Phoenix Raceway in Avondale, Ariz. (AP)

500 before getting caught up in a late wreck.

"I felt like I got hit twice," Cindric said. "I knew the 3 (Dillon) was on the inside, but I thought he would fall back

but he came back up. It's just a product of not qualifying well."

The Cup Series heads to Bristol Motor Speedway in Tennessee next weekend.



Kuwait Club players celebrate after winning the Super Cup.

## Kuwait Club win Handball Super Cup

## Kuwait unveils long-term development plan for national teams

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: The Kuwait Handball Association is outlining a comprehensive strategy to enhance the capabilities of our national teams across all age groups. This initiative involves collaborative efforts from the Federation's training staff, national teams, technical staff, and clubs. The primary goal is to cultivate robust teams capable of competing effectively in upcoming international tournaments.

Khaled Talib, the Treasurer of the Handball Association, affirmed this

commitment, stating, "We initiated the development of youth and junior teams during the Montenegro camp last August. This included a series of trial matches, providing valuable experience against European teams and friendly matches with the Saudi national team at Arena Mall."

Looking ahead, Taleb emphasized the continuation of the preparation journey during the upcoming summer. Despite acknowledging the challenges, he expressed confidence in the players' dedication to the Blue Jerseys and their ambitious pursuit of reaching the World Cup finals.

"We are actively pursuing participation in various external tournaments, including those in the Gulf and Arab regions. Plans for an external camp will be finalized later, preceding our involvement in the Asian Championship. The technical staff is focused on assembling players at different intervals to ensure consistent team performance," added Taleb.

In a separate development, the Kuwait Club handball team secured the Super Cup title in its fourth edition. "Al-Abyad" emerged victorious in the final match against Al-Qadisiya with a score of 40-35. Kazma claimed third

place by defeating Burgan 37-28 in the match determining third and fourth places.

Shabib Al-Hajri, the Vice President of the Handball Federation, along with Secretary Qayed Al-Adwani, Assistant Secretary Abdullah Al-Dhiyab, and Federation member Mubarak Al-Daihani, presented Kuwait with the Super Cup, awarded the silver medal to Al-Qadisiya, and honored Kazma with the bronze.

It is noteworthy that "Al-Kuwait" had previously secured the Super Cup title in the first and second editions, while Kazma claimed victory in the third edition.

## Tardy picks up her first victory on the LPGA Tour

## Scottie Scheffler rides a hot putter to win Bay Hill

ORLANDO, March 11, (AP): Scottie Scheffler made every important putt and closed with a 6-under 66 for a five-shot victory Sunday in the Arnold Palmer Invitational.

Already the best in golf from tee-to-green, Scheffler had a hot putter at Bay Hill and no one stood a chance. He built a three-shot lead at the turn and poured it on to deliver a bogey-free round and the best score of the final round by two shots.

The five-shot victory was the largest margin at Bay Hill since Tiger Woods in 2012.

Scheffler finished at 15-under 273 and won \$4 million from the \$20 million purse of this signature event. It was his seventh career win, all against some of the strongest fields. And it came a week before Scheffler defends his title at The Players Championship, which had been his last official PGA Tour win.

## GOLF

U.S. Open champion Wyndham Clark birdied the 18th for a 70 to finish alone in second. Shane Lowry, who started the final round tied with Scheffler, shot 72 and finished third.

Will Zalatoris had a 72 and tied for fourth, securing an exemption to the British Open this year.

Bailey Tardy picked up her first victory on the LPGA Tour, closing with a 7-under 65 for a four-shot victory over Sarah Schmelzel in the Blue Bay LPGA.

Tardy finished at 19-under 269. Schmelzel closed with a 69, while Ayaka Furue of Japan shot a 65 to finish five shots behind in third.

Tardy, who played college golf at Georgia, is the third player in the last 10 years to make Blue Bay her first LPGA victory, joining Gaby Lopez (2018) and Lee-Anne Pace (2014). Blue Bay returned to the LPGA sched-

## Leverkusen take another step toward first ever title

BERLIN, March 11, (AP): Xabi Alonso's Bayer Leverkusen took another step toward the club's first ever Bundesliga title with a 2-0 win over 10-man Wolfsburg. Goals from Nathan Tella and Florian Wirtz earned Leverkusen its 21st league win and stretched its German record unbeaten run to 36 games across all competitions this season. Leverkusen hasn't lost since a defeat to Bochum on the final day last season.

Wirtz sealed the win in the 86th minute to keep Leverkusen 10 points clear of 11-time defending champion Bayern Munich with nine rounds remaining.

"I think the fans certainly wanted more goals. But whether we win 6-0 or 7-0, three points are three points," Granit Xhaka said, alluding to Bayern's 8-1 rout of Mainz the day before. "Yeah, you could argue about goal difference, but I hope it won't be decided by goal difference in the end."

Wirtz had gone close when he struck the left post in the 22nd, one of Leverkusen's few chances as Wolfsburg

defended in numbers.

But the visitors were dealt a blow six minutes later when Moritz Jenz was sent off with his second yellow card for a late challenge on Patrik Schick.

Alex Grimaldo used his heel to get past a defender and then sent a precise cross for Tella to head in the opener in the 37th.

## SOCCER

It was Grimaldo's 13th assist across all competitions this season. The Spanish left back also has nine goals.

Leverkusen again dominated possession in the second half, albeit without creating clear chances against the visitors' stubborn defense until Wirtz finally sealed it with a volley in off the left post from Exequiel Palacios' cross.

ule this year for the first time since 2018.

Lydia Ko, who shared the 54-hole lead

with Tardy and Schmelzel, closed with a 71. A victory would have given Ko enough points for the LPGA Hall of Fame.



Scottie Scheffler holds the championship trophy after winning the Arnold Palmer Invitational golf tournament in Orlando, Fla. (AP)

## Davis 'bullies' Timberwolves

## 76ers hold Knicks to season lowest pt total

LOS ANGELES, March 11, (AP): Anthony Davis had 27 points, a season-high 25 rebounds and a career-high seven steals while leading the Los Angeles Lakers to a 120-109 victory over the short-handed Minnesota Timberwolves on Sunday night.

Davis added five assists and three blocked shots in one of the most prolific games of his decorated career. The nine-time All-Star feasted on a Minnesota lineup missing its top two big men and four regulars due to injuries, grabbing 21 rebounds in the second half alone and leading a 21-4 rally to begin the fourth quarter while the Lakers pulled away to their 12th win in 17 games.

"When we're out there having fun, everybody's confidence is high," Davis said. "When we're talking trash to the other team, we're holding each other accountable, and we're just playing the right way. We know what it takes. It's just about having the consistency of playing that way each and every night."

## BASKETBALL

Davis is only the eighth player since the 1982-83 season with at least 25 points, 25 rebounds and five assists in a game, according to Sportradar. Nikola Jokic did it last season, joining a short list that includes Charles Barkley and Kevin Garnett.

"Ten offensive rebounds is crazy," said Austin Reaves, who scored 19 points for Los Angeles. "I did feel any time we shot and missed, he was there to give us a second-chance opportunity with offensive rebounds, get himself to the line. The steals, I don't know. The steals are crazy. Seven steals is very, very impressive."

## 76ers 79, Knicks 73

In New York, Kelly Oubre Jr. had 18 points and 10 rebounds and the Philadelphia 76ers held the New York Knicks to the lowest point total in the NBA this season, winning 79-73 in the ugly opener of a two-game series.

Less than two months after Joel Embiid scored 70 points by himself to set a 76ers franchise record, it appeared for a while that neither team might get that many Sunday.

Philadelphia led 37-31 at halftime, the lowest-scoring first half in an NBA game since Portland led Detroit 34-31 on March 30, 2019, in a game the Pistons won 99-90. The scoring picked up in the second half, when the 76ers finally got enough contributions to snap a three-game losing streak. Buddy Hield had 16 points and Paul Reed added 13.

**Thunder 124, Grizzlies 93**  
In Oklahoma City, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 23 points and six assists in three quarters and Oklahoma City rolled past Memphis.

Rookie Cason Wallace scored a season-high 23 points. Josh Giddey had 16 points and 10 rebounds and Lu Dort scored 14 points and made all four of his 3-point tries for the Thunder. Oklahoma City won its third straight to stay at the top of the Western Conference standings.

The only bad news for the Thunder came when No. 2 scorer Jalen Williams left in the second quarter with a sprained right ankle and did not return. Coach Mark Daigneault offered no update after the game, saying the team would look at it in the morning.

## Pacers 111, Magic 97

In Orlando, Tyrese Haliburton and Pascal Siakam each scored 20 points and Indiana beat Orlando to close within a game of the Magic in the Eastern Conference standings.

T.J. McConnell and Obi Toppin each added 17 points for Indiana. Aaron Nesmith had 16.

Paolo Banchero had 19 points for Orlando. Cole Anthony added 16 and Wendell Carter had 13 points and 15 re-



Oklahoma City Thunder guard Josh Giddey, right, shoots over Memphis Grizzlies forward Jake LaRavia, in the first half of an NBA basketball game in Oklahoma City. (AP)

bounds. The Magic have dropped two in a row for the first time since Jan. 22-26.

## Rockets 112, Kings 104

In Sacramento, Fred VanVleet scored 22 points. Jalen Green added 19 and Houston beat Sacramento, but might have lost leading scorer Alperen Sengun to a right knee injury.

Sengun landed awkwardly while challenging a shot by the Kings' Domantas Sabonis with under a minute to play in the fourth. Rockets coach Ime Udoka said after the game that Sengun, who left the court in a wheelchair, was getting an X-ray and he would "know more shortly." ESPN reported that Sengun, averaging a career-high 21.2 points per game, will undergo an MRI on his right knee and ankle Monday.

## Bucks 124, Clippers 117

In Los Angeles, Damian Lillard scored 16 of his 35 points in the fourth quarter of Milwaukee's first victory on its California road trip, beating short-handed Los Angeles.

Lillard hit three of his seven 3-pointers during a stellar shooting display in the fourth, while Giannis Antetokounmpo had 34 points, 10 assists and seven rebounds as the Bucks rebounded from back-to-back losses to Golden State and the Lakers by outlasting the Clippers, who played without Kawhi Leonard and Paul George.

## Wizards 110, Heat 108

In Miami, Kyle Kuzma scored 32 points and Washington held on to beat Miami for its second win in a row after ending a 16-game skid.

Corey Kispert finished with 22 points. Deni Avdija added 16 and Tyus Jones had 12 points and 16 assists for the Wizards, who got their first road victory since Jan. 29, ending an eight-game skid away from home.

## Pelicans 116, Hawks 103

In Atlanta, Trey Murphy III had 28 points off the bench to help New Orleans complete a perfect three-game road trip with a win over Atlanta.

Zion Williamson had 27 points, six rebounds and seven assists for the Pelicans, who have won four straight overall and snapped the Hawks' three-game winning streak. Murphy was 6 for 13 from 3-point range and also had seven rebounds.

## Nets 120, Cavaliers 101

In Cleveland, Cam Thomas scored 29 points in 31 minutes. Mikal Bridges had 25 points and Brooklyn pulled away to beat injury-riddled Cleveland.

Dennis Schroder added 17 points and eight assists, and Nic Claxton had 16 points and 10 rebounds for Brooklyn, which built a 26-point lead midway through the fourth quarter.

Georges Niang scored 20 points and Jarrett Allen had 15 points and nine rebounds for Cleveland, which fell a half-game behind Milwaukee into third place in the Eastern Conference. Darius Garland had 14 points and five assists for the Cavaliers, who were without Donovan Mitchell (left knee), Evan Mobley (left ankle sprain), Max Strus (right knee strain) and Dean Wade (personal reasons).

'Brazil challenged us in a different way'

## US win CONCACAF Women's Gold Cup



United States' Lindsey Horan holds the trophy alongside teammates after the United States defeated Brazil in the CONCACAF Gold Cup women's soccer tournament final match in San Diego. (AP)

SAN DIEGO, March 11, (AP): Lindsey Horan scored on a header in first-half stoppage time and the United States went on to beat Brazil 1-0 to win the CONCACAF Women's Gold Cup.

The United States lifted the trophy despite being stunned by a loss to Mexico in the group stage of the tournament. It was the first women's Gold Cup, created to bring teams in the region more meaningful competition.

"It was a difficult game. Brazil challenged us in a different way," Horan said. "I'm really, really proud of us finding a way to get a goal and finishing out the game and getting a trophy."

It was the fourth time that the United States faced Brazil in a tournament final. The Americans also won the previous three, including the 2004 and 2008 Olympics.

The game drew a sellout crowd of 31,528 to San Diego's Snapdragon Stadium, a record crowd for a CONCACAF women's match.

Horan scored just moments into stoppage time with a header off a well-placed lofted pass from Emily Fox. It was Horan's third goal of the tournament, her earlier goals were from the penalty spot.

Lynn Williams nearly scored a second for the United States in the 79th minute but the play was offside. Casey Krueger headed out a dangerous Brazilian cross in the final moments.

### SOCCER

Brazil outshot the United States 12-7 and at times appeared the more dominant team.

"It's not always pretty, and this was a game that we just grinded through," defender Crystal Dunn said. "We got the job done and that's the most important."

The United States was upset in the group stage of the tournament by a 2-0 loss to Mexico - just the second loss in the 43-game series.

The Americans rebounded with a 3-0 win over Colombia in the quarterfinals, before advancing to the final on penalties after a rain-soaked 2-2 draw with Canada in the semifinals.

"That was a crazy tournament, but finished strong," forward Alex Morgan said. "That's what mattered. So many players coming up big time."

Brazil, which was one of four CONMEBOL teams in the tournament, had won each of its five matches in the tournament, including a 3-0 victory over Mexico in the semifinals, scoring 15 goals.

The Brazilians allowed just two total goals in the team's first competitive tournament under coach Arthur Elias, who took over for Pia Sundhage after Brazil failed to get out of the group stage at summer's Women's World Cup.

"The American players are very strong physically speaking and I believe that we had a great performance during the game," Elias said through a translator after the game. "We had chances to score goals today. The U.S. had some strengths that we were able to stop, but they were very well prepared as well to play our team today."

Likewise, the United States was playing its first tournament under interim coach Twila Kilgore, who assumed her role after the U.S. parted ways with coach Vlatko Andonovski following the team's early exit from the World Cup.

The United States hired Emma Hayes as the team's coach, but she is concluding the season with Chelsea in the Women's Super League.

"I'm just so happy for the team," Kilgore said. "This is a team and a program that will always have attention and expectations on it. We always say that pressure is a privilege and it is, but it's another thing to walk the walk."

Both Brazil and the United States have qualified for this summer's Olympics in France.

## Australia complete series sweep with 'dramatic' victory over New Zealand

Carey's unbeaten 98 steals the show

CHRISTCHURCH, March 11, (AP): Wicketkeeper Alex Carey made an unbeaten 98 and shared a 140-run partnership with Mitch Marsh which guided Australia through various hazards to a three-wicket win over New Zealand in the second test at Christchurch, New Zealand and a 2-0 sweep of the series.

Throughout the day as the contest played out on a relatively mild fourth-day pitch, both sides had moments when they took control. But it was Marsh's innings of 80 and Carey's steady hand which guided Australia to victory.

Its total of 281-7 completed the 14th-highest successful fourth innings run chase in test history.

On the other side, New Zealand narrowly missed out on its first test win over Australia in New Zealand in 31 years. Its last win in Australia came in Hobart 13 years ago.

When Marsh was out, Australia needed 59 runs with four wickets in hand and when Mitchell Starc was out next ball, it needed 59 with three wickets and the match turned briefly in New

Zealand's favor.

But Carey kept Australia on track and added another 61 unbeaten runs with captain Pat Cummins who hit a four through cover for the winning runs and finished 32 not out.

Carey had strike on 97 with three runs needed and a chance to complete his century which would have been the first century of the match. But he gloved a single and Cummins ended the run chase a few balls later.

"I was happy with that," Carey said.

### CRICKET

"I didn't want to be on strike again. It was a great series and this match ebbed and flowed. We had our backs against the wall this morning, they came out and put us under the pump so it's nice to chase those runs down."

Australia started the fourth day one hour late after a heavy shower at 77-4 needing 202 runs to win the match while New Zealand needed six wickets. The tension in that scenario once again demonstrated the enduring fascination of the five-day game.

Rachin Ravindra dropped Marsh at point from the first ball of the second over of the day bowled by Tim Southee. Marsh was 28. On reflection, that may have been the moment New Zealand lost the game.



Australia's pose with their trophies after defeating New Zealand by three wickets in the second cricket test in Christchurch, New Zealand. (AP)

### Montreal secure 3-2 win at home

## Messi sidelined, Inter Miami suffer first loss of season

FORT LAUDERDALE, March 11, (AP): Lionel Messi wore street clothes and watched from a sideline box as Montreal took advantage of several Inter Miami defensive miscues to hand his team its first loss of the season - a 3-2 defeat at home. Messi did not play after previously being listed as questionable with a shin injury.

The injury happened in a 2-2 draw at Nashville in the CONCACAF Champions Cup last week. Messi went to contest a pass from Nashville's Lukas Macnaughton, who appeared to step on the 36-year-old's calf and cause his left ankle to twist. Trainers tended to Messi as he writhed in pain on the pitch in the 77th minute, but he remained in the match.

Messi left that match with a bruise, but head coach Gerardo "Tata" Martino said Sunday the team and Messi had previously agreed that he would rest against Montreal - no matter what happened at Nashville.

Martino has been tasked with finding ways to manage Messi's workload and recovery as he has played every minute of Inter Miami's first four games of the season. Resting the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner makes sense - Inter Miami will play two more games over the next six days. That's four games in a ten-day stretch. And Messi was called up to represent the Argentinian national team in a pair of Copa America warm-up matches on March 22 and 26. Inter Miami also has a match at New York on March 23.

"We all know Leo," Inter Miami assistant coach Javier Morales said



Ibrahim

during a media availability Saturday, "he's a player who wants to play every game. I think we will have a conversation with him, see how he is and try to decide what is best for him."

Luis Suarez and Sergio Busquets did not start Sunday but came on as second-half substitutes. Suarez, like

### SOCCER

Messi, had previously started all four of Inter Miami's games.

"They asked me ten days ago if we were going to do a rotation," Martino said curtly when asked about resting Messi, as well as the reasoning behind Sunday's lineup. "Today we did a rotation. There's no other answer." Leonard Campana scored the tying goal for Miami in the 71st minute after Montreal took a 1-0 lead early in the first half

## Quetta & Islamabad advance to playoffs in PSL; Kings eliminated

KARACHI, Pakistan, March 11, (AP): Quetta Gladiators finally sealed a playoff spot in Pakistan Super League cricket after four years as Mohammad Wasim pulled Shaheen Shah Afridi for a last-ball six and handed Lahore Qalandars a six-wicket defeat.

Two-time defending champion Lahore's disastrous season ended with only one win against Islamabad United in 10 league games. Fourth-place Quetta has 11 points and could still finish among the top two if it beats leader Multan Sultans in the final league game on Tuesday.

Quetta's win eliminated Karachi Kings (8 points) from the playoffs race



Islamabad United' Azam Khan attempts to take catch during the Pakistan Super League T20 cricket match between Islamabad United and Multan Sultans, in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. (AP)

### CRICKET

with Multan (12 points), Islamabad (11) and Peshawar Zalmi (11) also having advanced.

Opening batter Saud Shakeel anchored Quetta's run chase of 169-4 with an unbeaten 88 off 65 balls that included two successive boundaries against Afridi (2-41) in the final over before Wasim smacked Lahore's captain over mid-wicket for a winning six off the last ball.

Left-arm fast bowler Jahandad Khan (2-30) squeezed Quetta's chase in the first half of the innings with the wickets of Jason Roy (18) and skipper Rilee Rossouw (13) before Shakeel and Khawaja Nafay (26) put on a 70-run stand.

Earlier, Afridi hit 55 after promoting himself to No. 5 and Abdullah Shafique was 59 not out as Lahore made 166-4 after choosing to bat first.

Colin Munro and captain Shadab Khan led Islamabad's epic run-chase against Multan as the two-time former champions qualified for the playoffs in a high-scoring game at Rawalpindi.

Munro smashed 84 off 40 balls and Shadab added 54 off 31 before Imad Wasim made a crucial unbeaten 30 to propel Islamabad to 232-7 for a three-wicket win in its last league game.

Earlier, Usman Khan posted his second successive century in the tournament as his unbeaten 100 off 50 balls anchored Multan to 228-4 after Shadab chose to field.

Usman smashed 15 fours and three sixes and shared two solid half-century stands with Johnson Charles (42) and Iftikhar Ahmed (13).

### Kuwait Club face Al-Fahaheel

## Al-Qadisiya eye victory against Al-Salmiya in the league

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Al-Qadisiya and Al-Salmiya are set to kick off the championship group matches, known as the "League of Six, at 10:00 pm at Mohammed Al-Hamad Stadium in the initial round of the Zain Premier League competitions.

The tournament will continue tomorrow with two matches. The first will see Kuwait Club facing Al-Fahaheel, while the second will feature a clash between Al-Arabi and Al-Nasr.

Following this round, the competition will take a break as the national team gears up to face Qatar on March 21 and 26 in the third and fourth rounds of the initial group stage for the joint Asian qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup and the 2027 Asian Cup.

After concluding the eighteenth round of the league, Al-Kuwait, Al-Arabi, Al-Qadisiya, Al-Salmiya, Al-Nasr, and Al-Fahaheel will compete in the championship group "League of Six." Meanwhile, the "Avoid Relegation" group "League of Four" will include Kazma, Al-Shabab, Khaitan, and Al-Jahra.

Kuwait Club leads the standings with 43 points, followed by Al-Arabi with 42 points, Al-Qadisiya with 39 points in third place, Al-Salmiya with 24 points, tied with Al-Nasr in goal difference, and Al-Fahaheel in sixth place with 23

Overnight batsman Travis Head was out next ball, caught by Will Young at point off Southee, but Marsh's wicket was the critical one and when it escaped New Zealand there was a change in the match.

Marsh and Carey simply tried to bend the match to their will from then on. Both reached half centuries before lunch, Marsh from 54 balls and Carey from 60. Together they helped Australia add 97 runs from 19 overs in the morning session at rate of more than five runs per over.

Their innings were more impressive in context: both were under some pressure when they came to the crease.



Players jump for the ball during the Zain Premier League game

points.

In today's match, Al-Qadisiya aims to secure the maximum points to close the gap with the top two teams, enhancing its chances of contending for the ti-

tle that has eluded them since the 2015-2016 season. This match is crucial for Al-Qadisiya, seeking a second victory over Al-Salmiya this season after their previous encounters ended in a draw and a win for Al-Qadisiya.

### SOCCER

Notably, the two teams are set to face off in the final of His Highness the Amir's Cup, with the match date yet to be determined.

Al-Qadisiya's coach, Dr. Muhammad Al-Mashaan, relies heavily on his players' high morale following a significant victory over Al-Shabab in the last round. Despite the challenge, he acknowledges that today's match won't be easy, facing a team with nothing to lose, having lost their chances of competing for the title and playing without pressure.



Inter Miami midfielder Tomas Aviles, (left), heads the ball past CF Montreal midfielder Bryce Duke (10) during the first half of an MLS soccer match in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. (AP)



Jonas Hansen Vingegaard - Team Visma - Lease A Bike, the winner of the race, celebrates on the podium with the Trident Trophy after the 59th Tirreno - Adriatico 2024, Stage. (AP)

# Sports

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## Klopp and Guardiola serve up another EPL classic but Arsenal the big winners

Nottingham Forest's survival hopes dealt a blow

**LIVERPOOL, England, March 11, (AP):** Liverpool and Manchester City showed the Premier League what it will be missing when Jurgen Klopp walks away at the end of the season.

Anfield played host to a typically full-blooded, high octane clash of titans in the last English top-flight encounter between Klopp and Pep Guardiola before the Liverpool manager stands down.

No wonder Guardiola says he will sleep easier when his long-time rival is no longer standing in his way.

He likened Liverpool to a "tsunami" as the defending champions had to dig deep to survive long periods of pressure in the second half.

"They come from everywhere," Guardiola said after a 1-1 draw that kept second-place Liverpool one point ahead of City in third.

Arsenal ended the weekend top of the standings on goal difference, but the Londoners' 2-1 win at Brentford felt like a subplot in comparison to the latest and possibly last clash between Klopp and Guardiola.

John Stones gave City a first-half lead and Alexis Mac Allister leveled from the penalty spot after the break.

### SOCCER

That only told part of the story of a thrilling encounter, which saw Luis Diaz miss a big chance to fire Liverpool ahead and Phil Foden and Jeremy Doku hit the woodwork for City. In stoppage time, Klopp thought Liverpool should have been awarded a penalty for Doku's chest-high challenge on Mac Allister, only for VAR to dismiss appeals.

"Why would the guy in the VAR studio think that is not clear and obvious? What must you have for lunch if you think that is not clear and obvious?" Klopp said.

Perhaps Klopp is mellowing as he counts down his final days at Liverpool, but he preferred to focus on the performance of his rebuilt and injury-stricken team.

"For us, besides the result, the most important information is we are right there, we go the distance. Let's see what we get for it, but the boys fought so hard through everything to be there," he said. "Today I saw the best 53 minutes we had against Manchester City. It was exceptional and important as well that we learned that about ourselves."

It would be fascinating to see how this team could develop under Klopp, who has so quickly remolded Liverpool following the departure of key players like Sadio Mane, Jordan Henderson and Roberto Firmino.

Few expected him to mount a title challenge so soon, let alone compete on four fronts this season, with the League Cup already secured. Against the odds, his team is also still in contention for the Europa League and FA Cup.

A second league title of his reign is the priority and Liverpool showed it can go head-to-head with a City team that is defending last season's treble of trophies - the Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup.

Liverpool's 2020 title is the only thing that stopped City from completing a clean sweep of six straight triumphs under Guardiola from 2018.

Guardiola has repeatedly described Klopp's Liverpool as the biggest challenge of his coaching career and has edged him to the title by a single point on two occasions.

"He made us a better team, he made me a better manager. I wish he will be back soon, because football needs personalities like him," Guardiola said.

It is shaping up to be another fiercely contested title race and time will tell how important a point at Anfield was.

The added factor this year is a third contender in Arsenal and Guardiola is equally aware of the threat coming from Mikel Arteta as from Klopp.

"Arsenal last year came back and will stay for a long time because they are a young team with an exceptional manager," he said. "Still, there are



Liverpool's Virgil van Dijk, (left), and Manchester City's Erling Haaland jump for the ball during the English Premier League soccer match between Liverpool and Manchester City, at Anfield stadium in Liverpool, England. (AP)



Jannik Sinner, of Italy, returns a shot against Jan-Lennard Struff, of Germany, at the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament in Indian Wells, Calif. (AP)

10 games to go, 30 points to play for. One point difference. The important thing is still we are there after where we came from in previous seasons, still we are there."

Nottingham Forest's survival hopes were dealt a blow after Andrew Omobamidele's own-goal consigned the relegation-fighting team to a 1-0 loss at Brighton.

Forest, in 17th, is just three points above the drop zone and 18th-place Luton, which has a game in hand.

Luton drew 1-1 with Crystal Palace on Saturday thanks to Cauley Woodrow's equalizer in the sixth minute of stoppage time, which could be crucial in the battle to stay up.

Danny Ings scored in the first minute of stoppage time to deny Burnley a vital win and secure a 2-2 draw at the London Stadium.

Burnley had led 2-0 through David Datro Fofana and an own-goal by Konstantinos Mavropanos.

But thoughts of a first win since Dec. 23 were ended by a second-half fightback from West Ham with Lucas Paqueta scoring just after the break and Ings leveling.

Burnley at least moved off the foot of the table and above Sheffield United on goal difference.

Sheffield United had led 2-0 at Bournemouth on Saturday, but had to settle for a point after Enes Unal's stoppage time equalizer.

Bilbao move closer to Champions League places

## Real regain 7-point lead over Girona after routing Celta

MADRID, March 11, (AP) Real Madrid made peace with its fans with a comfortable win over Celta Vigo and reclaimed a seven-point lead at the top of the Spanish league.

Vinicius Junior scored his third goal in four games as Madrid eased to a 4-0 victory that followed consecutive draws that included a lackluster performance against Leipzig in the Champions League, which prompted jeers from the home crowd at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

Madrid had drawn four of its last seven matches in all competitions. It advanced to the quarterfinals of the Champions League on Wednesday despite a poor performance in a 1-1 draw against Leipzig.

Defender Antonio Rudiger set up two goals on Sunday, and Turkey international Arda Güler made his scoring debut with Madrid. The hosts got two own-goals.

### SOCCER

The victory maintained Madrid's cushion at the top after second-place Girona beat Osasuna 2-0 on Saturday and third-place Barcelona defeated Mallorca 1-0 on Friday. Barcelona, the defending champion, is eight points behind Madrid with 10 rounds left.

Madrid is unbeaten at the Bernabeu in 18 matches this season, with 15 wins and three draws. Its last home loss was in April 2023 against Villarreal. It is unbeaten in the league in 22 straight matches, since a 3-1 loss at Atletico Madrid.

Celta had only one attempt on target in what was its eighth straight loss to Madrid. Rafa Benítez's team sits just outside the relegation zone, two points from danger.

Vinicius opened the scoring from close range after a firm header by Rudiger in the 21st. Madrid added to the lead with own-goals by goalkeeper Vicente Guaita in the 79th and defender Carlos Domínguez in the 88th. Guaita's own-goal came after a firm header by Rudiger bounced off the crossbar and the goalkeeper's back.

The 19-year-old midfielder Güler, who replaced Vinicius in the 89th, scored his first goal for Madrid four minutes into stoppage time.

Vinicius again had a run-in with an

### Top-ranked Swiatek wins rematch with Noskova at Indian Wells

INDIAN WELLS, March 11, (AP) Iga Swiatek avenged her Australian Open ouster at the hands of Linda Noskova, beating the Czech teenager 6-4, 6-0 in the third round of the BNP Paribas Open.

Second-seeded Carlos Alcaraz and third-seeded Janik Sinner each advanced in straight sets in the men's draw, but fifth-seeded Andrey Rublev lost to No. 32 seed Jiri Lehecka 6-4, 6-4.

Swiatek advanced to the round of 16, where the top-ranked Polish star will face Yulia Putintseva of Kazakhstan. Putintseva beat Madison Keys 6-4, 6-1, part of a tough day for American singles players.

Francis Tiafoe lost 6-3, 6-3 to Stefanos Tsitsipas, and Katie Volynets was eliminated by Caroline Wozniacki 6-2, 4-6, 6-0. The final American on the court, Ben Shelton, did manage a pulsating 7-6, 3-6, 7-6 victory over Francisco Cerundolo. Shelton won the decisive tiebreaker 7-5.

The 16th-seeded Shelton advanced to face Sinner in the round of 16. The 11th-seeded Tsitsipas will face Lehecka.

Noskova beat Swiatek in three sets in Australia, becoming the first teen to beat a No. 1-ranked woman at that event in 25 years. The rematch was competitive for a set, but Swiatek eventually rolled to victory in just under 73 minutes.

"I made some mistakes at the beginning. I tried to

maybe play to finish the rallies too early," Swiatek said. "But I knew that if I'm going to try to stay consistent and make a little bit less mistakes, my chances may come."

Jasmine Paolini won another tight match against Anna Kalinskaya, 6-3, 3-6, 6-4. Paolini won the Dubai Championships two weeks ago, rallying to win a three-set final over Kalinskaya.

Alcaraz beat Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-2, 6-3, and Sinner ousted Jan Lennard Struff 6-3, 6-4.

### TENNIS

"I love playing here. I think it's called the fifth Grand Slam, and I know why," Alcaraz said. "I mean, the site is amazing, the courts, I mean, I feel here so peaceful that I think that tennis players, we are going to every tournament and we try to find, you know, that peace off the court, to feel calm, you know, and we find it here."

Alcaraz advances to face Fabian Marozsan, the Hungarian who beat him as a 135th-ranked qualifier at the Italian Open 10 months ago.

"After that match I really wanted to rematch that match against him," Alcaraz said. "I mean, he's playing great tennis. He is beating big guys. ... Yeah, I'm really looking forward to playing against him again."

opponent, shoving Óscar Mingueza to the ground after the Celta defender held the Brazil forward's jersey to stop a breakaway. Ancelotti had defended Vinicius during the week, saying he is "poorly treated."

Luka Modric, who hasn't played often as a starter this season, made his 350th appearance for Madrid.

The hosts were without England midfielder Jude Bellingham, who was serving the first of a two-game suspension.



Real Madrid's Rodrygo, (right), vies for the ball with Celta's Javier Manquillo during the Spanish La Liga soccer match between Real Madrid and Celta Vigo at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

sion.

Real Betis missed a chance to move into the European qualification places after losing 3-2 to Villarreal at home.

Sitting in seventh place, Betis has won only one of its last six matches in all competitions.

Villarreal moved to 11th place. Both teams played with 10 men after a red card was shown to Villarreal's Alberto Moreno and Betis' Chimy Ávila in the 70th.

Athletic Bilbao moved closer to the Champions League places with a 2-0 win at Las Palmas.

The victory moved the Basque Country club within two points of fourth-place Atletico Madrid, which lost 2-0 at Cadiz.

It was Athletic's first league win following a draw against Barcelona and a loss at Real Betis.

Rayo Vallecano's winless streak reached 10 matches in all competitions after a 1-0 loss at Alaves.

The setback left Rayo in 16th place, four points from the relegation zone.

Andoni Gorosabel scored a first-half winner for Alaves, which hadn't won in five consecutive league games.