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A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Once again ... consequences of carrying 'dual citizenship'

"WE stand at the precipice of a new council, mindful of the perils of duplication that have previously threatened our nation's core interests. The past council's failure to uphold our supreme interests led to its dissolution, underscoring the urgency of addressing the issue of duplication among council members," columnist **Dr. Saud Mohammad Al-Asfour** wrote for Al-Qabas daily.



Dr. Al-Asfour

"We do not question the past council's composition, but rather emphasize the necessity for stringent scrutiny of candidates to prevent the infiltration of duplicity. Priority must be given to ensuring that candidates for both current and future councils are free from any allegiance to other nations, as dual citizenship poses a risk of conflicting loyalties.

"Those who willingly hold citizenship of another country or conceal their lack of eligibility for Kuwaiti citizenship must be disqualified from the National Assembly. Dual allegiance undermines the ability to make impartial decisions in matters concerning both nations, necessitating the revocation of Kuwaiti citizenship to uphold national security.

"Obtaining citizenship through fraudulent means violates Kuwaiti law and undermines its integrity. Individuals knowingly engaging in such acts must face immediate consequences, including the revocation of citizenship, to uphold the sanctity of the law.

"Legislative councils serve as guardians of national interests and cannot tolerate compromises or divided loyalties. Removing individuals with dual citizenship from these councils is imperative to safeguard Kuwait's sovereignty and ensure unwavering dedication to its people.

"Granting privileges of Kuwaiti citizenship to dual nationals creates a loophole that must be closed. Individuals and their associates may exploit their dual status for personal gain, undermining the integrity of the citizenship process.

"The Central Agency for Addressing the Situations of Illegal Residents, led by Dr Saleh Al-Fadala, plays a crucial role in identifying and exposing individuals with dual citizenship. Empowering this agency to detect and address instances of duplicity is essential to preserving our national identity.

"Urgent action is needed to scrutinize candidates for council candidacy and verify their eligibility to represent Kuwait. It is imperative to ensure that council members are solely committed to serving the interests of Kuwait and its citizens."

Also:

"Stories of China and Kuwait" deserves to be a reference for knowing this relationship that extends from 1971 to the present day, 35 authors belonging to various sectors, whose articles contain accurate stories about friendship and relations between the two countries. When we say that there is a Chinese community in Kuwait is not news, but for a Kuwaiti citizen to go to live and settle in China, this is news, and what I found in the book "Stories of China and Kuwait" deserves to be a reference for knowing this relationship extending from 1971 to our days. 35 authors belonging to various sectors, their articles contain accurate stories about friendship and relations between the two countries," columnist **Hamza Alyan** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"What I found in the book will provide also for the readers valuable and detailed information about events and personalities that contributed to building a bridge of cooperation, Chinese and Kuwaiti stories, and the idea of a book that is really interesting to read, narrated within the framework of a series of books published under the title "We and You" in the Arabic language.

"Dr. Hussein Al-Moussawi tells the story of his love for China after he became satisfied with his studies of its history and future. He decided to move and immigrate there with his children, when he submitted his resignation from the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, which was in 1998, and to work as a university professor specializing in engineering and the English language, and he bought a house for himself in the capital, Beijing (Jianwei District) and then opened a commercial office related to the manufacture of agricultural equipment, fertilizers, textile trade and electrical appliances.

"China offers 5 scholarships to Kuwait and there are students studying in its universities. The Chinese-Arab friendship goes deep into history, as the overland Silk Road and the maritime Spice Road linked China with the Arab countries since ancient times. Among the most famous ambassadors of friendship are "Gan Ying" and "Ibn Battuta." Today, 22 Arab countries establish diplomatic and cultural relations that took place over the years from 1956 to 1990.

"There are great differences between Kuwait and China, in terms of area, population, social system, and culture, but they have commonalities, which is their adherence to the five principles of peaceful co-existence as a basis for developing relations, understanding, and mutual support.

"China declared its opposition to the annexation and invasion of Kuwait and asked Iraq to withdraw its forces without conditions and restore the independence and unity of Kuwait. During the invasion in 1990, there were a total

of 5,000 Chinese workers in Kuwait belonging to 13 companies.

"They were removed in batches and in cooperation with the Chinese embassies in Kuwait, Baghdad and Jordan. Negotiations to establish diplomatic relations began on March 12, 1971 between the heads of the two delegations (Rashid Abdulaziz Al-Rashed and Gong Dafu).

"On March 22, 1971, after signing the statement establishing relations, Kuwait informed the Taiwan Embassy in writing of this matter, and then the Undersecretary of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that the government had abandoned maintaining diplomatic relations with it.

"At the end of July 1971, the first Chinese ambassador to Kuwait left Beijing and presented his credentials to Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Saleem Al-Sabah. You read Chinese testimonies about Iraq's occupation of Kuwait, how Chinese nationals were evacuated under the flames of war, and memories of the Chinese oil firefighting team that participated in extinguishing Well No. 168 in the Burgan field in 1991.

"The first cooperation between the Kuwait Fund for Development and China was in 1982 by providing a loan to finance a cement factory. Until 2014, the total number of projects reached 37 worth about 952 million US dollars.

"Thus, Kuwait is the Arab country that provides China with preferential loans. In the book, there is a testimony by Mrs. Aisha Al-Ghais, wife of the Kuwaiti Ambassador to China, Faisal Al-Ghais, about her time of work there and her impressions and experiences recorded by a Chinese researcher who conducted an interview with her, entitled 'A Caring Heart Across Borders'.

"Cultural and educational aspects and more than half a century of relations between the two countries, Kuwait is the first Gulf country to establish diplomatic relations with China, and the first initiator at the Arab and Gulf levels to sign the Belt and Road Project, which was launched by the Chinese President in 2013."

"Ramadan is a month of worship, not for political marketing... Do we have the month of Ramadan, the month of goodness, about which the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said: "When Ramadan comes, the gates of Paradise are opened, the gates of Hell are closed, and the devils are chained?" Instead of competing in worship and to win obedience, some compete to achieve personal interests," columnist **Hamad Salem Al-Meri** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"After opening the door for candidacy for membership in the National Assembly, and setting the date for the election in the last 10 days of the month of Ramadan, many of the candidates and their supporters are busy in political marketing -- either by whispering and slandering against the government, or by challenging the opponents, without us hearing or seeing a program or real electoral potential for these candidates.

"As is the custom of these people, they preoccupy themselves, and with them the Kuwaiti street, with their political conflicts, so the hostile records are repeated in every election (Al-Mariya - Al-Mahash - Frob Al-Astabal - Al-Rabbi), and other terms that the Kuwaiti citizen is tired of, as he watches the neighboring countries compete in development, construction and the advancement of their peoples. In all fields, we are still fighting among ourselves to achieve imaginary gains under the slogan of 'democracy and freedom of opinion.'

"The next election will be in the last 10 days of the blessed month of Ramadan, which the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's prayers and peace be upon him) used to receive with diligence in obedience, as it includes the Night of Power, about which Allah said: "To afflict the Quraysh (1) to accustom them to the journey of winter and summer (2) so that they may worship the Lord of this House. (3) Who fed them from hunger and made them safe from fear (4)."

"Instead of being preoccupied with worship and anticipating this great night to win it, some people are preoccupied with political conflicts and verbal exchanges on media channels and social media, either to protect the members of the tribe or sect, or in defense of the party, which would earn them a great reward, and to no avail desired for the country.

"For decades, we have gone from election to election, and the country as it is, has not changed for the better. Unfortunately, corruption has spread and development has been hampered.

"Fraternal advice to the Kuwaiti people: Give up following the political conflicts and verbal exchanges between the candidates. Do not get carried away by it, and be busy with worship and drawing closer to Allah through all kinds of obedience in this holy month. By Allah, some of us will leave this life, and running after the legislative chair will not benefit them. Rather, they will wish that they took advantage of the opportunity of Ramadan to win the pleasure of the Most Gracious.

"This election, like others in the past, will not change the reality of Kuwait at all, because winning the legislative seat will be based either on a tribal, sectarian or partisan basis, or with the support of merchants.

"Some of them will be tools for the struggle of influential people outside the legislature. The political conflict that is causing the country's stagnation and disrupting its development will not stop... I ask Allah to protect Kuwait and its people."

— **Compiled by PFX Fernandes**



Minister of Public Works Noura Al-Mishaan, project engineers visiting the site

Minister restarts 'Darwaza' project after 5 yrs

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: More than five years after the closure of the Darwaza Al-Abdul Razzaq Intersection, Minister of Public Works Noura Al-Mishaan has breathed new life into the area with the announcement that work at this vital junction has resumed, reports Al-Qabas daily.

By doing this, the Minister has emphasized the significance of Darwaza Al-Abdul Razzaq as a vital area. During her visit to area, she declared the commencement of work in adherence to the directives of the Council of Ministers.

She further stated that repair works have already com-

menced to ensure the facility's safety and enhance its longevity.

Moreover, she unveiled a comprehensive plan aimed at road repairs and infrastructure modernization across the country.

The Ministry of Works has entered into two contracts in the Capital Governorate and published 18 notices in the Official Gazette pertaining to road repairs, with 6 under the Roads Authority and 12 under the Ministry of Works, all aimed at preserving the integrity of the nation's roads.

Camping till before 'Eid'

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Official sources have disclosed to Al-Rai that the Environment Public Authority has officially agreed to extend the camping period until the conclusion of the holy month of Ramadan. This decision follows coordination with relevant authorities, including the Kuwait Municipality, reports Al-Rai daily.

The rationale behind this extension is attributed to the favorable weather conditions and the commitment of the majority of campers to environmental regulations, fostering the opportunity to revel in nature while ensuring its preservation. This extension aligns with the Ramadan ambience, further enhancing the experience for campers.

Last Friday, Al-Rai reported that the spring camps committee unanimously endorsed the request for an extension from citizens, outdoor enthusiasts, and campsite proprietors. Subsequently, the municipality reached out to the Environment Public Authority for their input on extending the camping season until the end of Ramadan, replacing the initial end date of March 15.

CSC starts implementation of order on examining academic certificates

Decision covers Kuwaitis, expats working in public sector

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: **The Civil Service Commission (CSC) has started implementing the directive of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Saleem Al-Sabah to examine the academic certificates of State employees, reports Al-Qabas daily quoting a government source.**

The source told the daily that the decision covers all State employees -- citizens and expatriates -- who obtained post-secondary certificates from the beginning of 2000 till date, and that the examination will not be limited to one party.

The source said the CSC has informed all government agencies and public institutions about the need to submit the academic certificates of their employees, along with the equivalencies; in preparation for examining the equivalencies and academic certificates to ensure their validity.

Explained

He explained that the government agencies, including the ministries of Education and Endowments, and other bodies have informed their employees in this regard; calling on other entities to take the same measure. He added that uploading academic certificates and their equivalencies on the automated system is just an initial step, affirming more steps will follow later to examine the certificates.

The source indicated that the first step is

examining the certificates obtained outside the country. "If the employee's certificate has no equivalency as per the procedures followed by the Ministry of Higher Education, the ministry will be asked to take measures to ensure the validity of the certificate by addressing the cultural offices and the university from which the certificate was obtained and then issue the equivalency. If the certificate has an equivalency, the ministry will be asked to verify its validity," the source added.

Certificates

He pointed out that the easiest certificates to examine are those obtained in Kuwait, so they will be left for the final stage and the higher education institutions in the country will be asked to ensure their authenticity.

He stressed that the examination procedures require a great deal of time and effort, and that the authorities must quickly provide the CSC with the required data, so it can take measures to verify the authenticity of the certificates.

Regarding the legal procedures in proving the invalidity of a certificate, the sources said the procedures include referral to the Public Prosecution and holding the certificate holder accountable.

The source explained that the issue of fake and forged certificates is not urgent, as the war waged by the ministry against the so-called 'education shops' started early, with the suspension of many suspicious universities in a number of countries like the Philippines and others during the terms of two former ministers of Education -- Dr Moudhi Al-Hamoud and Nouriya Al-Sabeeh. However, the issue reached its peak in 2018 when then Minister

of Education and Higher Education Dr Hamid Al-Azmi submitted hundreds of forged certificates to the prosecution. This facilitated the process of examining the certificates that is currently taking place, as certain procedures must be followed, including the complete Kuwaitization of the equivalency management in 2018 and the establishment of a list of equivalencies in 2019, which served as a barrier to counterfeiters, the source narrated.

The source also revealed that the committees in government agencies started examining academic certificates at the time, but this was halted during the Corona crisis. Since 2018, ministry has adopted the idea of the establishment of an automatic number for each issued equivalency, which serves as a reference and identifier for the equivalence on the ministry's website and allows the entities that receive the certificate to verify its authenticity by entering the automated number on the site. Therefore, the equivalencies issued after this date will be easier to obtain, review and examine, the source added.

Prohibits

The source also underscored the need to implement law number 78/2019, which prohibits the use of non-equivalent academic certificates, indicating many public sector employees have non-equivalent certificates due to the failure to activate the law.

The source pointed out that updating the lists of universities accredited by the ministry contributed to stopping many suspicions of forged, fictitious and weak certificates; especially after reducing the number of accredited universities in Egypt to only seven and in Jordan to only five universities.

Fashionista appeal rejected

Court acquits test cheat facilitators after appeal

By Jaber Al-Hamoud
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The Court of Appeals, presided over by Judge Abdul Rahman Al Darmi, overturned the verdict issued by a lower court which sentenced a Kuwaiti man and a Kuwaiti woman to two-year imprisonment each, and an expatriate man and an expatriate woman to six-month imprisonment each for leaking question papers of high school exams, and for laundering KD 308,000. The court instead acquitted them of all charges.

It also upheld the acquittal of a citizen of leaking question papers in another case.

Previously, investigations by the police had revealed the involvement of others and the role of each accused in leaking the question papers of the high school exams, as well as the amount of money that went into their bank accounts illegally as a result of their crime.

Appeal rejected: The Court of Appeals presided over by Judge Salem Al-Asousi rejected the appeal submitted by the fashionista Fatima Al-Moumen against the verdict issued by a lower court which sentenced her for three-year imprisonment for causing a major traffic accident on Al-Sour Street in Capital Governorate.

The court also upheld the withdrawal of her driver's license for one year on charges of manslaughter, crossing a red signal, and driving above the allowed speed limit.

It is noteworthy that the accident occurred at dawn on Thursday, August 24, 2023, at the intersection of the Soor Street and King Fahad bin Abdulaziz Road in Kuwait, which resulted in the death of two people and injuries to two others.

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Kuwaiti woman plays pivotal role in social dev: Sheikh Firas

Minister addresses 68th UN Commission on Status of Women

NEW YORK, March 14, (KUNA): Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Sheikh Firas Saud Al-Malik Al-Sabah said the Kuwaiti woman played a central role in the development and protection of society at times of peace and war.

In his address to the 68th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women at the UN General Assembly hall on Wednesday, Sheikh Firas said the Kuwaiti woman proved to be influential in all aspects of life thanks to the care and protection she enjoys under the Constitution of the State of Kuwait.

"The Constitution recognizes the important role of women in social, economic and political development and bans all forms of discrimination against women.

"Laying the basic principles of freedom, justice and equality for the society, the Constitution provides against discrimination based on gender, religious or linguistic considerations," the minister pointed out.



KUNA photo
Sheikh Firas Saud addresses the 68th Session of UN Commission on the Status of Women.

The State of Kuwait, out of belief in these constitutional principles, has always been keen on empowering women in the political, economic, social, artistic and sports areas, through adoption of relevant legislation and joining UN conventions.

Kuwait has advanced by 10 positions on the Global Gender Gap Index 2023 of the World Economic Forum, which benchmarks the national gender gaps on economic, political, education, and health-based criteria, Sheikh Firas went on.

"Kuwait has also advanced from 123rd to 61st ranking on the Women Peace and Security Index (WPS Index) of Georgetown University's Institute for Women, Peace and Security, which signals the political, economic and social environments conducive to women empowerment in the country.

"Women in Kuwait now account for 41 percent of the leading positions at the Central Bank of Kuwait, 26 percent of leading position in the banking sector and 35 percent of the workforce at Kuwait banks," he added.

The legislation in Kuwait provide for protection of women against violence, the minister noted, praising the partnership between the Kuwaiti government and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in this effort to improve the status of women.

Partnership discussed

Social Affairs minister meets ESCWA chief on cooperation

NEW YORK, March 14, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Sheikh Firas Saud Al-Malik Al-Sabah met Executive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia Rola Dashti on Wednesday to discuss the partnership between the State of Kuwait and the ESCWA.

The meeting took place at Kuwait's Permanent Mission to the UN on the sidelines of the 68th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

The discussions dealt with issues of common concern, including the project to assess the economic cost of violence against women, the social protection project and the efforts to improve Kuwait's record.

Sheikh Firas, who leads Kuwait's delegation to the ongoing session of the UN Commission, praised the ESCWA cooperation in sharing information with Kuwait and serving the common interests.

He noted that his ministry and the Supreme Council of the Family Affairs work together for providing social protection for women and empower them economically.

The ministry and the council encourage women to engage in micro-enterprises and provide them with the necessary production requirements, he pointed out.

On her part, Dashti underscored the significance of cooperation with both



KUNA photo
Kuwait's Minister Sheikh Firas Saud with Rola Dashti.

government bodies to improve the efficacy of the labor market and build the capacity of female workers.

On a separate occasion, Sheikh Firas hosted Algerian Minister of National Solidarity, Family and Women's Affairs Kaouthar Krikou who leads her country's delegation to the session of the UN Commission.

They discussed the prospects of the cooperation in the social affairs, with emphasis on the efforts to improve the status of women.

KISR presents studies on dust impact at Riyadh confab

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) participated in the Second International Conference on Sustainability Development and Innovation held at Prince Sultan University in Riyadh, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The conference aimed to raise awareness about sustainability and encourage the transition towards a more sustainable future. Engineer Dana Al-Enezi and Dr. Ali Al-Dosari from KISR presented two scientific papers focusing on the effects of dust on residential areas in Kuwait and its impact on engineering projects. They collaborated with architect Al-Anoud Al-Anazi from the Kuwait

Municipality and Dr. Hassan Dashti from the Meteorology Department at the General Administration of Civil Aviation.

Given that sand and dust storms pose significant weather hazards affecting air quality, especially in Kuwait, which is prone to such storms, these studies aim to understand the impact of dust on urban areas' quality of life and engineering projects' progress. They also seek to develop appropriate solutions to mitigate these impacts.

In the first study, over 200 questionnaires were distributed to citizens and residents in various residential areas. The results revealed that half of the population sample suffered

from asthma and dust allergies, highlighting the severity of the issue. In the second study, questionnaires were distributed to various engineering sectors, both governmental and private. The findings indicated that dust storms adversely affected the health and performance of workers, leading to delays in construction schedules.

These studies provide valuable insights that can support decision-makers in addressing the challenges posed by dust storms, ultimately contributing to the development of effective solutions and strategies to mitigate their impact on both public health and engineering projects.

'... a time for togetherness'

Kuwait's Ramadan atmosphere charms ambassadors, diplomats

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Ambassadors and diplomats live the atmosphere of Ramadan and its rituals with the people of Kuwait, as they also prepared for the holy month with much passion to enjoy its customs, traditions, wonderful atmosphere of faith, and the cherished gatherings and visits, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Many of these ambassadors confirmed to the daily that Ramadan in Kuwait has special rituals and a distinctive flavor, with a spiritual atmosphere and family gatherings that are cherished by everyone. They usually wait for the breaking of fast to bask in the Ramadan family atmosphere.

They believe that the most important aspect distinguishing the holy month in Kuwait from other months is the traditional customs and traditions representing a part of the Kuwaiti culture, referring to the commonalities between Kuwait and their countries.

Asked if they prepared for the holy month, some of them revealed that their preparations included decorating the house with Ramadan decorations and lanterns, and preparing dates and meals to distribute to the needy during the holy month. They stressed that helping the needy is one of the most prominent social aspects of the holy month.

The diplomats did not hide their great admiration for the Kuwaiti atmosphere of Ramadan, stressing their keenness and interest in visiting offices to communicate with people and hear about their concerns.

British Ambassador Belinda Lewis disclosed this is her third Ramadan in Kuwait and she expects it to be just as special as it was in previous years. She said the Ramadan atmosphere in her home is not different from others, as she also decorated her home and its balcony with beautiful lanterns and lights bearing the shape of the star and crescent, in addition to preparing many dates to welcome this holy month. She also celebrated 'Quraysh' with the embassy team.

Amazed

Lewis told the daily: "Personally, I am always amazed by the extent of the social atmosphere experienced in the month of Ramadan in Kuwait, so my team and I are keen on visiting many diwanis during the holy month, which is an excellent opportunity to understand the topics that are on people's minds and to meet people we have not seen for a while. I look forward to iftar meals and ghabqas and to wearing the beautiful heritage armor that I acquired during my time here in Kuwait."

Regarding the similarities in the Ramadan atmosphere between her country and Kuwait, she said: "The United Kingdom is home to about four million Muslims, so the month of Ramadan is an important time throughout Britain as well. Many Londoners hope that the beautiful Ramadan illuminations -- such as the silver and gold moon, stars and lanterns -- will return to Central London in the West End. Communities and local councils are also busy during the month of Ramadan, planning Eid celebrations. Family-friendly Eid festivals are being planned in many cities in the United Kingdom, with entertainment exhibitions, music, speakers, food booths and Holy Quran competitions. There are preparations to organize a large Eid festival in Medan, Trafalgar on April 20 with singing, dancing, crafts and delicious food."

Every year during Ramadan, Canadian Ambassador Aliya Mawani and her son prepare a calendar that includes good deeds in the holy month -- from helping a friend to calling distant grandparents and family members to check on them, and doing household chores. She ensures that various

Ramadan events are on her calendar, in addition to preparing her 'dara'. "I love the tradition of distributing Ramadan 'nugsat', so my work team and I prepare them with a Canadian touch," she disclosed.

Togetherness

She believes that Ramadan in Kuwait is a time for togetherness, an active month and includes unique traditions compared to other countries where she lived the same month. "My team and I enjoyed the 'Quraysh' meal before Ramadan. Now, I look forward to attending diwanis and ghabqas, which are a great way to communicate with each other -- Kuwaitis and people from all over the world, in addition to attending women's gatherings," she narrated.

Regarding the Ramadan atmosphere in her country and the similarities with Kuwait, Mawani pointed out that "diversity is the core of our identity as Canadians -- from culture and ethnicity to language and religion. Canada is home to more than 1.8 million Muslims who have traditions from all over the world. This diversity affects how we celebrate and experience Ramadan. Some people focus on prayer and self-reflection, others focus on charitable work such as providing meals to the needy, and some focus on building bridges of understanding with other religious communities. The Ramadan table in Canada does not differ much from Kuwait. It is as diverse as the Canadians themselves, as most people start their breakfast with dates, then move on to eating soup and salads, then dishes that contain protein -- from tagine to dal to biryani to curry and barbecues depending on what is part of each family's tradition and what is local."

She concluded that most people prefer to eat a snack, but not too much to avoid wasting it. "Canadians like to do food gatherings for breakfast, where each guest brings a dish that they enjoy and is special to them to share," she added.

The Ramadan rituals of Spanish Ambassador Miguel Moro Aguilar do not differ from other diplomats. This is his fourth Ramadan in Kuwait, wishing to experience the good traditions and live the beautiful atmosphere of the holy month among good friends by visiting some diwanis and ghabqas, in addition to organizing some events himself.

Gatherings

He asserted that the warm family gatherings and the community's dedication and generosity in helping the needy are the most important aspects he likes about this holy month, indicating he prefers to go walking in the area where he lives whenever possible, in addition to swimming and padel with friends.

He said: "Many Spanish Muslims who live among us in Spain celebrate the holy month while observing many traditions, fasting during the day and gathering all families and friends at home to break the fast together in a very friendly and festive atmosphere."

This is the second Ramadan for Turkish Ambassador Tuba Nur Sönmez. She affirmed that the Ramadan atmosphere in her country is not different from Kuwait, where the moment of breaking the fast is a cherished occasion in which families, friends and neighbors come together to share a meal that symbolizes unity and gratitude.

"Traditional tents throughout Kuwait also serve a delicious array of dishes, reminiscent of Turkish breakfast tables. The scent of saffron-soaked rice, tender lamb and sweet pastries fills the air, inviting everyone to share in the communal spirit, just like in Turkey."

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Bank strives to confirm leadership in social responsibility, sustainable development

KFH launches 'Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan' program

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: As part of its commitment to social responsibility and community service, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) launched the "Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan" program for 2024. The program is packed with community initiatives, diverse volunteer campaigns, and daily interaction with the public.

Iftar and Ramadan Basket

KFH Deputy General Manager Public Relations and Media, Yousef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh, said that KFH strives to include all segments of society in its Ramadan program to further establish its reputation in volunteer work, social responsibility, and sustainable development.

He added "KFH started its "Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan" program with KFH Volunteer Team that distributed Iftar meals at various locations across several Kuwaiti governorates, expanding the campaign's reach. KFH volunteer team distributed Iftar snacks to drivers during Maghrib prayers. This initiative, conducted in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, aimed to ensure drivers reached home safely by encouraging them to avoid speeding. Furthermore, KFH partnered with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society to distribute Ramadan baskets. This collaboration not only strengthened the volunteer spirit but also helped instill the concept of giving within the community."

Al-Ruwaieh pointed out that beyond food distribution, the program embraces



Yousef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh

a variety of community initiatives. These include sports and youth activities, Qurra'aBaitik, daily interaction with the public, Gergean events, and awareness videos. The videos are produced in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, Kuwait Fire Force, nutritionists, and doctors.

The program also offers hospitality services for prayers in mosques and shares iftar meals with various entities working during iftar time.

Sports and health activities
Al-Ruwaieh said that KFH Ramadan program offers a variety of sports and health activities during Ramadan. These include the V-Fit Virtual Walking Challenge, held in collaboration with the V-Thru App. This challenge encourages participants to walk in Al Shaheed Park and the Avenues Mall before iftar.

He added that KFH is co-organizing

a sports event for men and women with Circuit+ at Al Hamra Mall. Additionally, it co-organizes another sport event in the Arena Challenge at 360. For KFH staff, the program includes the Employees Indoor Football Championship and the first-ever US penalty shootout tournament.

In collaboration with Kuwaiti Chef Faisal Al-Nashmi, KFH offered a cooking workshop for female customers and employees.

Gergean Events

Al-Ruwaieh explained that in its "Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan" program, KFH will host several Gergean celebrations for children at various locations. These events aim to bring joy to children while also preserving Kuwaiti heritage.

The program features various competitions and prizes designed to boost interaction and engagement with the public and customers through KFH's social media platforms. These competitions will offer valuable prizes for both customers and employees.

"Qurra'aBaitik" Competition

Al-Ruwaieh said that KFH continues its annual tradition of organizing the "Qurra'aBaitik" Ramadan competition for the tenth consecutive year, drawing a larger crowd each year. Additionally, KFH has released a Holy Quran application for iOS and Android devices, which has seen a surge in users and offers exclusive benefits.



Baytak Volunteer Team distributes Ramadan baskets in cooperation with the Kuwaiti Red Crescent.



KFH Volunteer Team distributes Iftar meals for fasting people



Initiative comes back for 17th year with 42k meals served throughout Holy Month

Zain's Iftar Hall welcomes worshippers daily at Grand Mosque



Ali Shadad and Hamad Al MUSAIBEEH with Zain's volunteers and Grand Mosque officials.



Initiative serves worshippers daily.



Zain's Iftar Hall at the Grand Mosque.

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Zain announced the launch of its annual Iftar initiative to serve fasting individuals during the Holy Month of Ramadan, which comes back in its 17th year, this time in strategic partnership with the Grand Mosque of Kuwait. The company receives worshippers daily at the Mosque's main tent as part of its annual social campaign, Zain Alshuhoor, with a total of 42,000 meals served throughout the entire month.

The initiative's kick-off was attended by Grand Mosque Administration Director Ali Shadad, Zain Kuwait Corporate Relations Department Manager Hamad Al MUSAIBEEH, Zain and Grand Mosque officials, and members of the Zain Alshuhoor volunteer team.

Zain's Iftar initiative, which comes back for the 17th year, is a main pillar of Zain's annual social program during the Holy Month. Meals are served daily at the Grand Mosque's main tent, along with meals distributed through trucks across Kuwait in strategic partnership with the Kuwait Food Bank. The total number of meals served via both partners reaches 42,000 for the entire month.

The Iftar initiative is directly supervised and organized by Zain's team. In addition, members of the Zain Alshuhoor volunteer team – that consists of Zain employees from across the

company's divisions and departments – support the initiative, reflecting the Zain family's commitment to bring about positive social impact in the community.

The strategic partnership between Zain and the Grand Mosque not only encompasses the Iftar meals initiative, but also extends to many other programs and contributions that last throughout the Holy Month. These contributions include hospitality services for worshippers during the last ten days of Ramadan, Zain's Holy Quran Recital competition, and the Zain employees Holy Quran Recital competition.

This year, six of Zain's strategic community partners from both the public and private sectors join its annual Ramadan social campaign, Zain Alshuhoor. The campaign features a wide range of humanitarian, charitable, social, religious, health, and sports programs that continue throughout the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Zain Alshuhoor is one of Kuwait's biggest and most successful community programs during the Holy Month. Every year, the company introduces a bigger, renewed version of the campaign that expands upon the previous year in its initiatives and programs. The campaign strives to share the blessings of this much-cherished month with the entire Kuwaiti people.

As part of bank's committed support to entrepreneurs and SMEs

KIB concludes sponsorship of final round of Food Buzz

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: In continued efforts to support Kuwait's entrepreneurs as well as small and medium enterprise (SMEs) owners, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) concluded its sponsorship of the final round of the 7th edition of Food Buzz Festival – Kuwait's iconic food and beverage (F&B) annual festival. The final round took place between March 5 and 6 at Al Hamra Tower. KIB's strategic sponsorship and continued support of the festival come as part of the Bank's far-reaching social responsibility program.

Commenting on the Bank's



Marwa Marafie, Manager of Marketing and Corporate Communication at KIB

participation in Food Buzz, Marwa Marafie, Manager of

Marketing and Corporate Communications at KIB, said: "We are delighted to continue supporting Food Buzz this year and we highly encourage members of our community to visit the upcoming edition of the festival. We are truly proud of the success Food Buzz has achieved in the previous years and the latest edition. Our support of and participation in events such as Food Buzz stems directly from our faith in the capacity of Kuwait's entrepreneurs and SME owners who continue to contribute to the flourishing of our domestic economy, elevating the markets they

operate in."

As part of their participation in the Graish edition of the festival, KIB's representatives and members of the direct sales team continued to be present on-ground at the Bank's dedicated booth, engaging the crowd in fun activities, in addition to conversations about sustainability and eco-friendly practices as well as banking and financial literacy. This comes as part of the Bank's ongoing support for the "Let's Be Aware" (Diraya) campaign – launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) with the unanimous support of all Kuwaiti banks. The KIB booth also encouraged visitors to embrace sustainability in their daily lives.

It is worth noting the KIB is a longstanding patron of entrepreneurship and SME success in Kuwait, for the high value that they add to the market, economy, and members of the community. In line with this belief, the Bank launched its flagship entrepreneurship hub, KIB Mubader Center, which offers a comprehensive suite of services, resources, and tools for aspiring entrepreneurs, enabling them to take confident and faster strides toward business success.



Alfouz flyer

ABK announces Mohammad Yaqoub Boshehri as winner of the Alfouz KD10,000 weekly draw prize

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced Mohammad Yaqoub Boshehri as the KD10,000 Alfouz weekly draw winner on Monday, 11th March 2024, whereby the draw was held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

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

The account also retains its hallmark mega annual draw of a KD5,000 monthly salary for ten

years. Furthermore, the Bank now offers customers an increased opportunity to win for every KD10 as opposed to KD100 previously.

ABK encourages everyone to open an Alfouz draw account and/or increase their balances to have more chances in winning in the upcoming weekly draw winner announcement, which will take place on Monday, 18th March 2024. The higher the deposits, the higher the chances to win.

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



KIB at Food Buzz

'Headshot' offers raw exploration of teenage girl boxers' psyches

By Ann Levin

Rita Bullwinkel knows a thing or two about the human body and the abuse it can take. In an interview with *The Paris Review*, the author, who played water polo in college, talked about the beating her body took for a sport few people care about.

"My nose and all of my fingers have been broken. One time, when I was 16, I vomited for two days straight because of a full-force kick I took directly to the stomach."

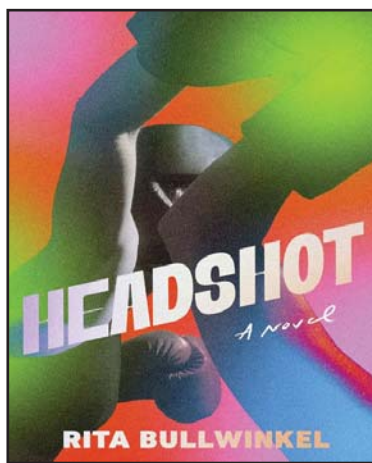
Bullwinkel brings that intimate knowledge of bodies in competition to her debut novel, "Headshot," which takes place in Reno, Nevada, over two sweltering days

in July as eight teenage girls vie for the Daughters of America Cup at Bob's Boxing Palace, a faded, dusty gym that is far from palatial.

Andi is haunted by thoughts of a 4-year-old boy who drowned in a swimming pool when she was on duty as a lifeguard. Artemis, whose older sisters excelled at boxing, too, worries about not living up to the family legacy.

Bullwinkel gives us "headshots" of the other girls, too, each with her own weird obsessions and dreams.

Andi may be fixated on the child's corpse but she is also thinking about a boy lifeguard she wants to kiss. One moment Arte-



This cover image released by Viking shows "Headshot" by Rita Bullwinkel. (AP)

mis hates Andi, "this sorry zit-ridden girl;" the next, she wants to be friends.

Bullwinkel's rhythmic, muscular prose matches the visceral, sometimes stomach-churning material — vicious hits to the face and body, "Andi's nose feeling like cornflakes" after Artemis's glove lands between her eyeballs.

Stylistically, she takes risks. Though the story unfolds over just the 48 hours of the tournament, the omniscient narrator projects into the future to imagine the girls' fates.

She is clear-eyed, un sentimental. When Artemis is 60, she will not be able to hold a cup of tea because her fingers have been broken so many

times. "Her injury... will not be some battle relic, but, rather, a sorry, pathetic disability."

In 2018, Bullwinkel made a splash in the literary world when she published "Belly Up," a collection of short stories with grotesque, surreal plot twists. One reviewer described it as full of "squirmy pleasures."

Her new work continues in that vein with dark scenes and characters that can be difficult to read.

Yet it also feels important because she gives agency to a group of girls who might not otherwise be seen and shows them to us in the full flush of youth, striving for recognition and glory. (AP)

Books

Variety



This image released by PBS shows Domhnall Gleeson, left, and Andrea Riseborough in a scene from Masterpiece series "Alice & Jack," premiering Sunday March 17 on PBS. (AP)

Television

PBS series dares to question romance myths

'Alice & Jack' offers realistic take on love

NEW YORK, March 14, (AP) — Like most kids, Victor Levin was raised on fairy tales — and still resents it. Those stories in books, movies and TV that inevitably ended up with everyone happily ever after — and they seemed dishonest.

"It's nonsense," says the writer-producer. "We human beings are deeply flawed creatures, and sometimes from the best of intentions, we make grotesque mistakes and hurt each other. This is the nature of being human and this is the nature of love. It's messy."

Levin is ready to prove his point with the powerful new six-part PBS "Masterpiece" series, "Alice & Jack," which traces a modern couple spending years in the messy, giddy, crazy push-pull of love.

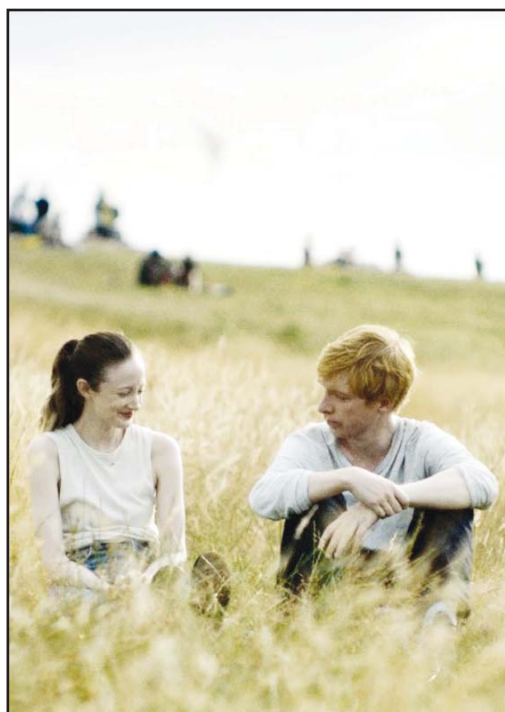
"This is a very valuable emotion that can do great things. It can also hurt people, but it can do great, great things. Let's not take it for granted," says Levin, who previously worked on the series "Mad Men" and "Mad About You."

"Alice & Jack," which starts airing Sunday, stars Andrea Riseborough and Domhnall Gleeson as they come together, fall apart and reunite, through marriages to others, births and death. Their gravitational pull remains.

"They really leave a huge mess in their wake, but they also are clearly meant to be connected for the time that they're on this earth," says Riseborough. "I think that, in of itself, is something that's very hopeful and something that I really identified with — the imperfect nature of love."

Alice and Jack don't exactly meet-cute. They connect on a dating app and their first date is at a pub. They go back to her place, but in the morning he is bluntly told to leave. "I'll call you?" he offers. "Thank you, but if it's OK with you, I'd rather you didn't," she responds.

Time and circumstances seem to conspire against this pair. "You're like the incarnation of everything I've ever wanted," she tells him. Yet she's not ready, still having to process a dark childhood. Years later, he chooses to get married to another woman. "We



This image released by PBS shows Domhnall Gleeson, left, and Andrea Riseborough in a scene from Masterpiece series "Alice & Jack," premiering Sunday March 17 on PBS. (AP)

throw away our blessings at our peril," he tells her.

Levin says it's taken decades for him to create a project that tries to answer the question: Are the forces that bring us together stronger than the ones that would tear us apart?

"Ultimately, I am not smart enough to know any answers. But maybe every now and then I ask the right question. And so my job, as I see it, is to give you something to think about after you shut the TV

off," he says.

"Alice & Jack" takes place in London but Levin originally intended it to be set in New York City. "I would like to think that it could be in any city, with any two people," he says.

His choice of the actors wasn't negotiable, however. Levin is a huge fan of Riseborough and Gleeson and waited for both to be available to do "Alice & Jack." He adored their acting but also their ability to listen.

"I knew that a lot of this story was going to be told on reactions. That is to say, not just the person who's speaking, but also the person who is receiving the information," Levin says. "You are learning as much from the person who is listening as you are from the person who is speaking."

With Riseborough and Gleeson, he had two fine actors who also happened to have been paired up in the past onscreen — they were partners in "Never Let Me Go" and brother and sister in "Shadow Dancer."

"So I had great speakers, great listeners, great talents, great brains, by the way," says Levin. "Just intellectually brilliant people — emotionally high IQs, comedically high IQ, dramatically high IQ. I mean, that's winning the lottery for a writer."

Levin lured each actor with finished scripts for the first and last episodes and a sketch map for where he wanted to go in between. The writer then used the actors' idiosyncrasies and put them into the characters as he finished the project. "He injected us into the story," Riseborough says.

Levin hopes "Alice & Jack" can spark conversations among viewers about romantic love but also other forms of love — like fraternal, familial and parental.

"We are living in a very troubled world and if you can say for a second, 'Let's talk about love and what it means and how we can show it respect and treasure it, not ask too much of it, but ask a lot of it, understand what it is and how valuable it is' — if we can have that conversation for a second, I think that can only be helpful."

LOS ANGELES: Singer Kelly Clarkson and NFL legend Peyton Manning will bring a new flavor to NBC Universal's upcoming Paris Olympics coverage this summer.

Clarkson and Manning are expected to join Mike Tirico to host the opening ceremony to host the opening ceremony, the network announced Tuesday night. The ceremony's live coverage will air July 26 on NBC and Peacock at noon ET.

"I'm extremely honored to have a front row seat," said Manning, a Pro Football Hall of Famer who won two Super Bowls during his 18 seasons in the NFL. He is now the co-host of "Monday Night Football" with Peyton and Eli with his brother and former NFL quarterback Eli Manning.

Clarkson is a three-time Grammy and multi-Emmy winner through her NBC talk show "The Kelly Clarkson Show." She also hosted the NFL Honors last year.

"Kelly and I are both fans of the athletes and the opening ceremony of years past," Manning told *The Associated Press* in an interview Tuesday. "I think there'll be a lot of emotions for these athletes. I look forward to finding out those stories between now and July and maybe sharing that with the audience."

Manning said he'll be stepping out of his comfort zone of usually talking football, but Tirico believes he and Clarkson will do just fine. The trio will be positioned at the Trocadero near the ceremony's finish with views of the Seine River and Eiffel Tower.

"Our goal and desire is for Peyton and Kelly to be Peyton and Kelly. Just be who they are," said Tirico, who will host his fourth opening ceremony. "So many people have come to know, love and trust these two. Having them there as part of this really speaks to what this event is. It's under the umbrella of sports. The gathering is because of sports. But it's really a cultural celebration."

Organizers said the open-

ing ceremony of the Olympics along the Seine will be held during sunset. It's the first time an Olympic opening ceremony will be held outside a stadium setting, in line with the Paris organizers' motto: "Games Wide Open."

About 10,500 athletes will parade through the heart of the



Manning



Clarkson

French capital on boats on the Seine along a 6-kilometer (3.7-mile) route.

"Today" show hosts Savannah Guthrie and Hoda Kotb will be stationed together on a bridge along the route. They're expected to report on the pageantry of the ceremony as the athletes sail by.

Molly Solomon, executive producer and president of NBC Olympics Production, said each host will bring the best out of each other. She called them a "compelling combination."

"I'm excited about this whole team," said Solomon, who noted that Guthrie and Kotb will have the best seats during the opening

ceremony for their telecast.

"They're going to be taking in the athlete boat parade from one of the bridges, where all the fans will be watching," she said. "They're really going to contribute from a very unique perspective. They'll be watching the ceremony as the fans do. It'll be a great experience." (AP)

People & Places



Guitarist Nile Rodgers of Chic performs at the Jazz Festival of 5 Continents, in Marseille, southern France, July 20, 2013. (AP)

Music

Legends of beats

Rodgers and Salonen win Polar Music Prize

STOCKHOLM, March 14, (AP): Nile Rodgers, American songwriter and co-founder of the influential 1970s disco band Chic, and esteemed Finnish classical music composer and conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen won the 2024 Polar Music Prize on Tuesday.



Salonen

The Polar Music Prize is awarded annually to individuals, groups and institutions in recognition of exceptional music achievements. It was founded in 1989 by the late Stig Anderson, a Swedish publisher, lyricist and manager of ABBA, who established the record label Polar Music.

Rodgers and Salonen will each receive prize money of one million Swedish kroner (about \$95,000) in ceremonies in Stockholm on May 21.

The award panel said Tuesday of the American guitarist, composer and producer: "There are few in history, if any, who have composed dance music as sophisticated and subtly arranged as Nile Rodgers," who "turned disco and funk into an art" with his group Chic and songs like "Le Freak" and "Dance, Dance, Dance."

"In Nile Rodgers, we honor a ground-breaking pioneer whose legacy spans his work as co-founder of Chic and as record producer and creator behind so much of the world's greatest music," Marie Ledin, managing director of the Polar Music Prize, said in a statement. "Nile's impact in pop culture is incomparable and his timeless songs will continue to delight, uplift and inspire for many years to come," she said.

Among others, Rodgers has created songs for David Bowie, Diana Ross, Madonna, Daft Punk and Sister Sledge.

Innovator

Currently acting as the music director of the San Francisco Symphony and Conductor Laureate of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Esa-Pekka Salonen "is an innovator," Ledin said. "His artistic curiosity, creativity and forward-thinking approach to composing and conducting paves the way in classical music," she said. "He is a master of tone, perfectly balancing sound and emotion to produce and lead music that deeply moves the listener."

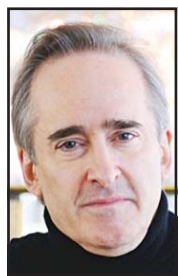
Salonen saw a breakthrough in 1983 when he conducted Mahler's Symphony No. 3 with the Philharmonia Orchestra in London.

The award panel praised Salonen's embrace of technological innovations, "not simply for the sake of experimentation, but as a way to help people discover great music in the constantly changing world of media."

During his long career, Salonen has also worked with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and he's a co-founder of the annual Baltic Sea Festival, one of Europe's leading classical music events taking place in Sweden.



This image released by Interscope Records shows 'Deeper Well' by Kacey Musgraves. (AP)



Conlon



Munn

Variety

LOS ANGELES: James Conlon will retire as music director of the Los Angeles Opera at the end of the 2025-26 season, ending a 20-year run that will have spanned half the company's history.

Conlon made the announcement Wednesday, five days before his 74th birthday. He will become conductor laureate in 2026-27 and intends to return to the LA Opera as a guest conductor.

"It will be my 20th anniversary as the music director. It will be the 40th anniversary of the company. We wanted to do that together," Conlon said in a telephone interview. "I am not retiring. I'm not stopping conducting. I have a lot of other activities I'm going to do. But I'm a certain age. I'm going to be 76 years old by then."

The LA Opera began performances in 1986 and Kent Nagano became principal conductor in 2001-02, then was promoted to music director in 2003. Conlon replaced him for 2006-07 and has led more than 460 performances in LA of 68 operas by 32 composers.

"He's made a titanic impact," company CEO Christopher Koelsch said. "It felt like the right time for generational change."

Conlon anticipates his performance total will reach 500 by the time he steps down.

"I want to devote myself more urgently to other things about American musical life that I think are bigger and more important than any individual orchestra or opera company and that is education, gaining back the audience," Conlon said. "I remember how things were in New York public school system when I grew up in the '50s and '60s. ... We all know that that disappeared a long time ago, and we are seeing the effects in the audience in our country. We didn't create this problem - orchestras, opera companies, chamber music series - but we have to fix it."

Conlon was principal conductor of the Rotterdam Philharmonic from 1983-91, general music director of Cologne, Germany, from 1989-2002, principal conductor of the Paris Opéra from 1995-2005 and principal conductor of the RAI National Symphony Orchestra in Italy from 2016-20. He also was music director of the Cincinnati May Festival from 1979-2016 and the Ravinia Festival, summer home of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, from

Music

'Deeper Well' unveils folk undertones

Musgraves charting new course

NEW YORK, March 14, (AP): Just over a decade ago, Kacey Musgraves emerged as a fresh new voice in country music - a mid-tempo storyteller with an incredible acuity both in her lyrics and in her instrumentation, knowing just when to pick up the harmonica, whistle a tune or break out the vocoder.

In the years and award-winning albums since, she's proven herself to be malleable: weaving disco-pop into her narratives where fitting (most memorably on "High Horse" from 2018's "Golden Hour," the love-forward release that earned her album of the year at the 2019 Grammys), recording in Spanish ("Gracias a la Vida" from 2021's divorce record, "star-crossed"), and most recently, recording a feature with Zach Bryan, which has become her first No. 1 hit (the sentimental "I Remember Everything," one of AP's picks for best of 2023). In 2024, it has led to "Deeper Well," a muted folk record with a warm kind of profundity.

The album opens with the '60s folk-inspired "Cardinal," a similar tone to its closer, "Nothing to be Scared Of" - acoustic guitars and Musgraves' open-hearted narratives delivered through her glassy vocal delivery. Much of the album follows the format, but with quite a few surprises.

Those looking for capital-C country through Musgraves' matured folk filter could skip to "The Architect," a mas-

terful acoustic rumination on a higher power. "Sometimes I look in the mirror and wish I could make a request/Could I pray it away? Am I shapeable clay? Or is this as good as it gets?," she asks.

On "Anime Eyes," Musgraves describes a "Miyazaki sky" and talks her way through a kaleidoscopic, psychedelic detour. "Lonely Millionaire" is a surprising near-reimagining of Atlanta rapper JID's "Kody Blu 31." Seriously: he received a songwriting credit for the song, she does not rap, and it's a weeper.

Evolution

For fans following Musgraves' career since the very beginning, "Deeper Well" is a noted evolution from "Folow Your Arrow," the celebratory country-as-heck LGBT+ anthem from her 2013 debut album "Same Trailer Different Park." But the spirit is the same: Musgraves has long pushed the boundaries of her formative genre - whether its touring with Willie Nelson and Katy Perry - or when she made sure her co-writers Brandy Clark and Shane McAnally took the stage when she won the Country Music Awards Song of the Year Award in 2014 for her first hit; it was the first time two openly gay people stood on the CMA stage for an award. That she chooses to move her needle, here, in a softer direction feels fitting.

Sometimes, that means hyper-specific-

ic language of the current moment, like in the fingerpicking title track "Deeper Well." "My Saturn has returned/when I turned 27," she sings, referencing the popular astrological conceit that also appears on Ariana Grande's latest album, "eternal sunshine." "Everything started to change/Took a long time, but I learned." There's another line, "You've got dark energy," that feels more like a text message than an effective lyric - and runs the risk of dating itself the moment the listener hears it - but that, too, could be a tool. Here, Musgraves is interested in a kind of existential bloodletting, revealing the depths of her thoughts about love and death trickle out in gorgeous-sounding songs with sweet melodies.

Like in the standout "Dinner with Friends," her tear-jerkin' response to "The Sound of Music" classic "My Favorite Things," in which Musgraves, atop piano and acoustic guitar, sings about all of the things she loves - and will miss - "from the other side" of life.

"My home state of Texas/The sky there, the horses and dogs," she sings, "Intimate convos that go way into the night/The way that sun on my floor makes a pattern of light."

As a whole, "Deeper Well" is a soft-pedaled album, but also one that celebrates her humanity. It's a nice change of pace - arguably the best kind - one with some familiarity.

2005-15.

In LA, Conlon launched a Recovered Voices project to bring attention to works of composers suppressed by Nazi Germany, including Alexander Zemlin-sky's "Eine Florentinische Tragödie (A Florentine Tragedy)" and "Der Zwerg (The Dwarf)," Viktor Ullmann's "Der Zerbrochene Krug (The Broken Jug)," Walter Braunfels' "Die Vögel (The Birds),"

Franz Schreker's "Die Gezeichneten (The Stigmatized)." He plans to continue with the project in LA and elsewhere.

"Recovered Voices is a part of my life that goes beyond Los Angeles Opera and will continue, and you can be sure you'll see more of that in the future," Conlon said. "I will never live to see the end of that mission. It takes time. And it is an example of how easy it is for humanity to destroy and

how difficult it is to rebuild." (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Olivia Munn has revealed that she was diagnosed with breast cancer and underwent a double mastectomy, thanking her doctors and urging fans to calculate their own risk assessment.

"I'm lucky. We caught it with enough time that I had options. I want the same for any woman who might have to face this one day," the 43-year-old actor posted on Instagram on Wednesday with photos and a video of her being treated at a hospital.

Munn said she took a genetic test in February 2023 that checks for 90 different cancer genes and was negative for all. Even so, her doctor decided to calculate her Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Score and that "saved my life," Munn wrote.

Recording a high score, Munn got a biopsy, which found she had an aggressive form of cancer in both breasts. She had a double mastectomy 30 days after the biopsy and has had four surgeries in the past 10 months. She said she kept it private because "I needed to catch my breath and get through some of the hardest parts before sharing."

Munn thanked family and friends, especially her partner, comedian John Mulaney, "for being there before I went into each surgery and being there when I woke up, always placing framed photos of our little boy Malcolm so it would be the first thing I saw when I opened my eyes."

Munn was a correspondent on "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart" and her movie credits include "Magic Mike," "The Predator," "Office Christmas Party" and "X-Men: Apocalypse." (AP)



Model Naomi Campbell poses for photographers during a photocall to promote the upcoming exhibition 'Naomi: In Fashion' at the Victoria & Albert Museum celebrating her 40 years in fashion, at The Dorchester hotel, in London, Wednesday, March 13, 2024. (AP)

Reimagining workforce dynamics and economic realities

AI and humanity: Collaborative evolution or competitive strife?

By Ahmad Al-Hamili

KUWAIT CITY, March 14, (KUNA): Recent leaps in Artificial Intelligence (AI) have sparked serious discourse on whether or not this technology will soon replace human beings in various tasks and jobs.

For those touting human ingenuity and creativity, the old folktale of John Henry and the Railroad might provide inspiration.

The story has it that Henry -- an African American folk hero and railroad worker -- competed against a steam-powered drill, trying to prove that man was much faster and stronger than a machine. The legend concludes with him winning by sheer force and determination.

Many might argue the authenticity of the story, but one cannot deny that humans have the imagination and consciousness that no current technology could sincerely duplicate or imitate.

However, does the relationship between AI and humanity have to be one of competitiveness and rivalry, or might it be a synergistic relationship in line with other technological advancements in history, with infinite possibilities looming on the horizon?

"Applications of AI technology have several ramifications in politics and business, but the idea of 'creating content dynamically without involving human beings is a very traumatic change in the way we work.'" Bahrain's Ameen Altajer, CEO of the AI Company (INFINITEWARE), told KUNA in a series of interviews with experts and individuals tackling the topic at hand.

Altajer, whose company has been providing products and services to clients across the globe for more than 15 years, said that AI applications would have an effect on several sectors including media and news.



KUNA photo
AI, human ingenuity relation between Synergy, rivalry, infinite possibilities.

In corporate spaces, like banks, AI technology is being put to use to perform language-based tasks including drafting emails, this "takes a lot of the workload from human beings, so it has a lot of pros and cons," he said.

Asked if AI would be able to venture off without the involvement of humans, Altajer said that there was a level of "symbiosis" between the technology and humans; however, AI was not at that stage where it could develop a sense of

agency on its own without humans being in the picture.

AI could make decisions, affirmed the expert, adding that the concept of machine learning involves specifying inputs and outputs via algorithms and data to imitate decision-making by humans without the machine knowing the practical details of the process.

If prompted, AI -- through the machine learning process -- could distinguish between images of cats and dogs without really knowing the intricate details and differences of both species unless fed with more information, he explained.

"There is no agency ... no consciousness as far as we can understand and see," stated Altajer, but pointed out that AI, as a technology, would for sure change down the road.

On current uses of AI and Language Learning Models (LLM), he said that both technologies involve feeding a tremendous amount of data and text to provide convincing output that mimics humans.

Altajer did express fear when it came to involving AI and other similar technologies in making powerful decisions, asking "If we do not understand how those systems really work from the inside, are we okay with the idea of delegating the 'driving wheel' to them?"

In the case of information being implicitly biased, AI would be making decisions according to data regardless of circumstances, firing or hiring individuals, favoring certain races, hair colors, and whatnot if the data dictated so, he said.

Bringing the economy into the sphere of discussions, Mohammad Ramadan -- an economic researcher and columnist for the Kuwaiti Al-Qabas newspaper -- said that recent advancements in AI had increased its usage across the board.

"We see the usage in financial markets, trading, fraud detection, image recognition, military use, and self-driving cars," stated Ramadan about the vast utilization of AI.

On fears of AI taking over careers, Ramadan pointed out

that "Some people should be worried that AI will take their jobs, especially jobs that could be automated."

According to a July 29, 2023 report by McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) -- a 1990-established organization aiding in economic and business decision-making, "by 2030, activities that account for up to 30 percent of hours currently worked across the US economy could be automated -- a trend accelerated by generative AI".

Ramadan explained that the report's findings were not cause of plausible concern, indicating, "When the PC was invented" it had replaced the typing machines, other devices, or jobs that have been there and this is called structural unemployment where people lose their jobs due to market structure change."

On the solution to such possible unemployment, the expert said that people could adapt easily by gathering different sets of skills and knowledge creating new jobs and career paths.

Ramadan also spoke about the government's responsibilities towards the issue of AI, saying, "Government should not do anything expect regulating AI to be more, legally useable, Video generated by AI could be almost realistic, Voice could be realistic, Chatbots could act like humans, so we do not know how that thing could develop."

He indicated that various polls across the globe showed that a huge percentage of people feared that AI could be used fraudulently.

Ramadan asserted that AI and humans could coexist in the economic landscape; however, between 2023 and 2030 AI market size is projected to expand at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 37.3 percent, according to a report by the India-US-based market research and consulting company "Grand View Research", cited by several outlets, including Forbes.

Math, science, pies and more

What's Pi Day all about?

NORWALK, Connecticut, March 14, (AP): Math enthusiasts around the world, from college kids to rocket scientists, celebrate Pi Day on Thursday, which is March 14 or 3/14 - the first three digits of an infinite number with many practical uses.

Around the world many people will mark the day with a slice of pie - sweet, savory or even pizza.

Simply put, Pi is a mathematical constant that expresses the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter. It is part of many formulas used in physics, astronomy, engineering and other fields, dating back thousands of years to ancient Egypt, Babylon and China.

Pi Day itself dates to 1988, when physicist Larry Shaw began celebrations at the Exploratorium science museum in San Francisco. The holiday didn't really gain national recognition though until two decades later. In 2009, Congress designated every March 14 to be the big day - to hopefully spur more interest in math and science. Fittingly enough, the day is also Albert Einstein's birthday.

Here's a little more about the holiday's origin and how it's celebrated today.

Pi can calculate the circumference of a circle by measuring the diameter - the distance straight across the circle's middle - and multiplying that by the 3.14-plus number.

It is considered a constant number and it is also infinite, meaning it is mathematically irrational. Long before computers, historic scientists such as Isaac Newton spent many hours calculating decimal places by hand. Today, using sophisticated computers, researchers have come up with trillions of digits for pi, but there is no end.

It wasn't given its name until 1706, when Welsh mathematician William Jones began using the Greek symbol for the number.

Why that letter? It's the first Greek letter in the words "periphery" and "perimeter," and pi is the ratio of a circle's periphery - or circumference - to its diameter.

The number is key to accurately pointing an antenna toward a satellite. It helps figure out everything from the size of a massive cylinder needed in refinery equipment to the size of paper



A freshly decorated Key Lime pie rests on a counter in a busy bakery kitchen at Michele's pies, Wednesday, March 13, 2024, in Norwalk, Conn. (AP)

rolls used in printers.

Pi is also useful in determining the necessary scale of a tank that serves heating and air conditioning systems in buildings of various sizes.

NASA uses pi on a daily basis. It's key to calculating orbits, the positions of planets and other celestial bodies, elements of rocket propulsion, spacecraft communication and even the correct deployment of parachutes when a vehicle splashes down on Earth or lands on Mars.

Using just nine digits of pi, scientists say it can calculate the Earth's circumference so accurately it only errs by about a quarter of an inch (0.6 centimeters) for every 25,000 miles (about 40,000 kilometers).

Every year the San Francisco museum that coined the holiday organizes events, including a parade around a circular plaque, called the Pi Shrine, 3.14 times - and then, of course, festivities with lots of pie.

Around the country, many events now take place on college campuses. For example, Nova Southeastern University in Florida will hold a series of activities, including a game called "Mental Math Bingo" and event with free pizza (pies) - and for dessert, the requisite pie.

"Every year Pi Day provides us with a way to celebrate math, have some fun and recognize how important math is in all our lives," said Jason Gersham, chair of NSU's math department.

At Michele's Pies in Norwalk, Connecticut, manager Stephen Jarrett said it's one of their biggest days of the year.

Promising blood test for colon cancer sparks hope amidst screening options

Exploring pros and cons

SEATTLE, March 14, (AP): A blood test for colon cancer performed well in a study published Wednesday, offering a new kind of screening for a leading cause of cancer deaths.

The test looks for DNA fragments shed by tumor cells and precancerous growths. It's already for sale in the U.S. for \$895, but has not been approved by the Food and Drug Administration and most insurers do not cover it. The maker of the test, Guardant Health, anticipates an FDA decision this year.

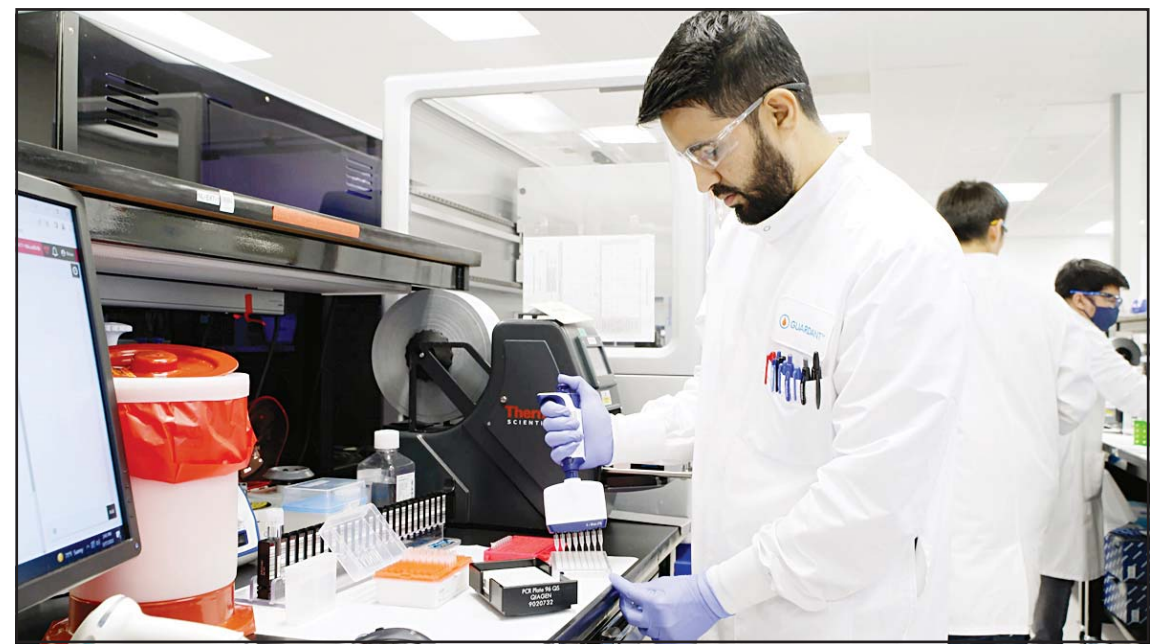
In the study, the test caught 83% of the cancers but very few of the precancerous growths found by colonoscopy, the gold standard for colon cancer screening. Besides spotting tumors, colonoscopies can prevent the disease by removing precancerous growths called polyps.

But some people avoid the exam because of the hassle of getting time off work or the day-ahead preparation that involves drinking a strong laxative to empty the bowels.

A convenient alternative is an annual stool test, where people send a stool sample to a lab for analysis.

"The best test is the one someone will actually complete," said Dr. Douglas Corley, chief research officer for Kaiser Permanente, Northern California, who was not involved in the study. "Giving people a choice increases the number of people who will get screened."

In the U.S., screening is recommended for healthy adults ages 45 to 75 at average risk for colon cancer. Frequency depends on the test: a routine colonoscopy is every 10 years. Screening is inching up but falls well short of the 80% of



Guardant Health runs the Shield (TM) blood test for colorectal cancer screening in its labs in Palo Alto and Redwood City, California. (AP)

age-eligible adults goal set by the American Cancer Society and other groups.

Guardant recommends testing with its blood test called Shield every three years. Like a stool test, the blood test requires a follow-up colonoscopy if there's an abnormal result, which could lead to more out-of-pocket costs.

The study, sponsored by Guardant and published in the New England Journal of Medicine, involved 7,861 people in the U.S. who had both a colonoscopy and a blood test.

While the blood test caught 83% of the cancers found by colonoscopy, it missed 17%. That's on par with stool-based tests.

There were also false alarms: For 10% of the people where the colonoscopy found nothing, the blood test

falsely indicated they might have colon cancer. That means a sizeable number of people would face the anxiety of follow-up colonoscopies.

The blood test is tuned to pick up the signature of colon cancer but more research is needed to determine if it might pick up other cancers as well and give misleading results, Corley said.

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States and the third worldwide. In the U.S., more than 153,000 new cases and 53,000 deaths from the disease are expected this year.

More screening should result in fewer cancer deaths, said study co-author Dr. William Grady of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center in Seattle and a paid member of Guardant's scientific advisory

board.

In a separate study published Wednesday in the same journal, an updated version of the Cologuard stool test, which also looks for DNA fragments, seemed to improve its performance on false alarms, possibly leading to fewer follow-up colonoscopies. That study, involving more than 20,000 people, was sponsored by Exact Sciences, maker of the test.

"The more options we have for our patients, the better," said Dr. Nabil Mansour of Baylor College of Medicine, who was not involved in either study. He'll continue to recommend a colonoscopy for his patients but "I'm excited there will be a pretty good blood test option available."

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