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H.H. AMIR DISSOLVES KUWAIT'S PARLIAMENT, SUSPENDS SOME ARTICLES OF CONSTITUTION FOR NO MORE THAN FOUR YEARS

'I cannot remain silent towards turmoil'

- Amir affirms executive power
- Amir condemns threats, interference
- Amir warns against corruption
- Amir prioritizes security reform

KUWAIT CITY, May 11, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah ordered dissolving the National Assembly (Parliament) and suspending some Articles of the Constitution for no more than four years, pending "revision of the democratic process its entirety."

In an address to the nation on Friday evening, he said, "The State of Kuwait has undergone challenging times that left repercussions on all aspects of life and created negative reality."

"We, as entrusted with looking after this state and its people, had to offer counselling and guidance once and again in



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

order to get out of these conditions with least possible losses. "Unfortunately, we have faced some unimaginable, unbearable difficulties and impediments. Some people attempted resolutely to shut down every way out of the bitter reality. "We were left with no option other than taking this hard

Amiri Decree

BASED on the country's best interests, we decree the following:

Article One: Dissolving the National Assembly.

Article Two: Suspending Articles 51, 56 (paragraphs two and three), 71 (paragraph two), 79, 107, 174 and 181 of the Constitution for a period not exceeding four years, during which the democratic practice in the country will be reviewed and the findings of a study will be referred to us to take what we deem appropriate.

Article Three: The Amir and the Council of Ministers shall assume the powers granted to the National Assembly.

Article Four: Laws are issued by draft decree.

Article Five: The Prime Minister and ministers, each within his jurisdiction, must implement this Order, and it shall come into effect once published in the official Gazette.

decision to rescue the country and protect its higher national interests and resources of the nation," His Highness the Amir explained.

His Highness the Amir underscored that a democratic rule requires a great deal of organization of state authorities and

distribution of roles according to a clear vision for realizing the national objectives.

"This vision makes it inevitable for the legislative and executive authorities to work within specific controls and parameters," he said.

Affirming that those controls can never be breached or transgressed, His Highness the Amir said, the parameters of the Constitution govern the behavior of all powers and authorities of the state.

"We have noticed, a few days ago, some behavior and actions that ran counter to the stable rules of the Constitution," His Highness the Amir said, in reference to some MPs who threatened, and vowed grilling against, a minister who may be reinstated at their portfolio.

He also referred to some MPs who objected to the nomination of ministers to some portfolios, neglecting that selection of a prime minister or the cabinet members is a constitutional right to the Head of State exclusively.

"Transgressing the Constitution reached a point that could never be tolerated as it risked undermining the constitutional values and the democratic principles," His Highness the Amir said, noting that those principles had been accepted by everyone for a long time.

"Some people went as far as interfering into the powers of the Amir including his right to select his crown prince," he said, reminding that this is clearly his own right exclusively.

His Highness the Amir added that once a crown prince is handpicked by the Amir, the other authorities of state can play their roles as specified by the Constitution.

His Highness the Amir referred to the sources of national wealth which must not be neglected or used in a way that depletes them and disrupts the interests of the nation through proposals that waste public money and do not achieve the public interest. His Highness the Amir added that these proposals should serve national economy within the framework of the development plan.

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Opinion

O people of Kuwait, we are in front of a leader who is determined to reform and be a pioneer

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

IN Islamic literature, Friday is one of the most beloved days for Almighty Allah. It is known to have an hour when supplications are guaranteed to be accepted by the Lord above.

The day before yesterday was a decisive Friday as far as the speech of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad-Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is concerned. It ended the hijacking of the State by the absurdity that prevailed for 32 years; during which we heard nothing but empty noises, absurd disputes and conflicts that did not provide anything beneficial for development.

All of this was being done for the sake of personal interests, which led to decline of the economy, closure of the country and increased squandering of public funds, as if it were the cave of Ali Baba and a thousand thieves.

This is because they made laws that, at the outset, were out of concern for society; but inwardly, they were working towards the adoption of laws to rule minds. At some point, they were seen guardians or visionary leaders, as the society is composed of people who have been polluted by ego and are fixated with having power at any cost.

Anyone who opposed these people, demanded that these laws be amended, that the legislative system be modernized to serve the country or that the Constitution be amended for the better would be punished and subjected to the harshest curses. It is as if the text they wrote or the Constitution, is divine and it is forbidden to think about amending it.

For 32 years, the country lived under legislative chaos based on reform in various ways, but not to serve the State and the Kuwaitis.

People were complaining about the situation that the country has reached. This is a phenomenon that the country witnessed for the first time, not even in the two previous instances of suspending some articles of the Constitution. It was completely different from what we witnessed in recent months -- in terms of the absurdity that was deflating the country.

All of this was not part of the Constitution, which was drawn up by Kuwaitis keen on putting the State among the ranks of modern states in all fields, and to obtain leadership in the region.

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Photo shows the entrance to Kuwait's National Assembly building. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah ordered dissolution of Parliament and temporary suspension of some constitutional articles for democratic process review.

Photo by Samer Shiker

Israel orders new evacuations in Rafah

Kuwait hails UNGA vote for Palestine UN membership

KUWAIT CITY, May 11, (Agencies): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcomed the resolution passed by the UN General Assembly on Friday to back Palestine bid for full UN membership and call on the UN Security Council to reconsider its stance on this issue.

The State of Kuwait has always called on the UNSC to grant the State of Palestine a full membership in the United Nations, the Ministry said in a press statement tonight.

Reminding the international community of their legal and historical responsibility for reaching a fair and durable settlement to Palestine cause, the Ministry urged providing international protection to the Palestinian people and restoring their legitimate rights, including the right to establish an independent state within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Earlier, the UN General Assembly passed by 143 votes against nine, with 25 abstentions, a draft resolution, backing Palestine bid for full UN membership.

Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council Jassem Al-Budaiwi welcomed the resolution passed by the UN General Assembly on Friday to support Palestine bid for full UN membership and call on the UN Security Council to reconsider its previous stance on this issue.

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Kuwait-Bahrain ties deep-rooted: official

MANAMA, May 11, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Ambassador Sheikh Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Sabah commended Friday the fraternal, historic and deep-rooted relations between Kuwait and Bahrain.

Speaking to KUNA at the end of her accompanying delegation's visit to Bahrain, Sheikh Jawaher said the tour is part of enhancing relations between the two countries, and deepening and boosting mutual cooperation in all fields, in implementation of the wise directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa.



KUNA photo Undersecretary of Cabinet Affairs and Deputy Chairman of the Bahrain National Human Rights Committee receives Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Ambassador Sheikh Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Sabah.

NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a telephone call early on Saturday from President of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan.

The UAE President Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed has affirmed that the UAE stands with Kuwait with respect of all measures and decisions it has taken to maintain its stability. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Friday a cable of condolences to Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa over the demise of Sheikh Abdullah bin Salman bin Khaled Al-Khalifa. In the cable, His Highness the Amir expressed his heartfelt sympathy over the death of Sheikh Abdullah, head of military office of King Hamad, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. (KUNA)

40,000 MoE staff fail to submit credentials

Details Page 2

IMF lauds CBK

Kuwait's economy to shrink by 1.4%: IMF

KUWAIT CITY, May 11, (KUNA): The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced on Thursday that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimated real economic activity in Kuwait had fallen by 2.2 percent in 2023.

A press release by the CBK revealed that number came from the IMF report following their delegation's visit to Kuwait from April 30 to May seventh, which came to convey preliminary findings.

It indicated that the IMF said the oil sector contracted by 4.3 percent due to an OPEC+ production quota cut in May, and the non-oil sector expanding by only 0.8 percent amid subdued domestic demand growth.

The IMF delegation added that the economy "is projected to contract by a further 1.4 percent in 2024, with oil production falling by another 4.3 percent due to the OPEC+ quota cut in January. The non-oil sector is expected to expand by 2.0 percent as domestic demand growth picks up, compared to 3.6 percent average growth for the GCC."

The IMF report commended the CBK for its measures, saying "Given prudent financial regulation and supervision by the CBK, banks have maintained strong capital and liquidity buffers, while their profitability has rebounded from pandemic lows, and non-performing loans remain low and well provisioned for. It is crucial to preserve the CBK's independence in implementing its mandate."

"Financial stability has been maintained in spite of tighter financial conditions. Growth in credit to the nonfinancial private sector continued to fall in 2023, to only 1.8 percent as bank lending rates rose in response to gradual policy rate hikes by the CBK broadly in line with global monetary policy tightening which helped control inflation," stated the IMF report.

Telecom debtors excluded

Guidelines for debt payment campaign

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: The Al-Jarida daily has learned that the committee overseeing debtor support, led by Abdulaziz Sari, Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs, has put in place certain guidelines and criteria for the inclusion of citizens in the debt payment campaign, which was launched last Ramadan, reports Al-Anba daily.

A key decision was made to exclude debtors from telecommunications companies from the campaign, following a legal opinion from the Ministry of Awqaf stating that their inclusion was not permissible, as their debts were considered a form of "luxury" unlike other debts.

Consequently, enforceable civil court rulings were issued against them, leading to measures such as salary withholdings, vehicle seizures, and travel bans.

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Prayer Timings

Fajr	03:30	Asr	15:20
Sunrise ..	04:59	Maghrib ..	18:30
Zohr	11:44	Isha	19:56

Local

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

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Ho, relatively humid over coastal areas and partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southerly wind to southeasterly wind, with speeds of 15-45 km/h with a chance for scattered rain and a

Weather

chance for rising dust over open areas.

By Night: Mild and partly cloudy with light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speeds of 10-38 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	38	28
Kuwait Airport	39	22
Abdaly	39	22
Jahra	39	25
Salmiyah	35	26
Nuwaisib	35	22
Wafra	39	21

Schengen visa exemption for Kuwaitis remains goal: Koistinen

'Europe, Kuwait, world deeply concerned about Palestinian tragedy'

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: Foreign Affairs Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya participated in the annual celebration of Europe Day, which was held in the presence of heads of mission of the European Union member states and members of diplomatic missions accredited in Kuwait.

In a press statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs pointed out this is a celebration of the close and friendly relations between the State of Kuwait and friendly European countries, as well as a dedication to the fruitful progress between the two sides in various fields of cooperation.

The ministry stated that this occasion is also an expression of the common aspiration to push these relations to broader horizons and achieve all the common goals of both parties.

Meanwhile, European Union (EU) Ambassador to Kuwait Anne Koistinen expressed happiness that the EU granted Kuwaitis preferential rules related to the Schengen visa; as they are granted multiple-entry visas valid for five years. She stressed that the goal is still Schengen visa exemption for Kuwaitis.



Tabboub



Koistinen

She also expressed gratitude to the Kuwaiti government, especially the ministry, for its exceptional cooperation over the past five years. She affirmed that their partnership has flourished, enabling them to lay a solid foundation for continued success and prosperity under the wise leadership of HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

She revealed they have exerted joint efforts to cooperate in many fields, such as vital projects, including the green transformation, renewable energy and empowerment of women, in accordance with the sustainable development goals of the United Nations (UN). She also cited joint initiatives in different sectors like youth, academic, investment and human rights.

While the EU maintains its position as Kuwait's second largest trading partner, a lot of potential has yet to be explored for further cooperation. The EU is committed to strengthening partnership with Kuwait in order to achieve common goals, as it remains a close and reliable partner for the implementation of Kuwait Vision 2035, Koistinen added.

Talking about Europe Day, she said: "Our celebration of Europe Day on May 9 is my first as Ambassador of the European Union to Kuwait. I am happy to say that Kuwait and its people have overwhelmed me with the warm welcome, in addition to the sincere desire to strengthen relations in order to develop long-term partnerships between the European Union and Kuwait."

She disclosed that the people in Europe, Kuwait and around the world are deeply concerned about the tragedy of the Palestinians in Gaza. She asserted that Kuwait, the EU and other like-minded partners are working hard to address the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza.

She added the EU strongly believes in the need to give hope to the Palestinians, so "we

continue to support UNRWA in addition to our firm commitment to the two-State solution. We should not forget the suffering of other vulnerable people in the region and beyond."

She then expressed her gratitude to the embassies of 16 European Union member states in Kuwait for working with the EU delegation in highlighting the spirit of "Team Europe" through various events and activities to celebrate Europe Month in Kuwait.

On the other hand, Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tabboub confirmed in a press statement, on the sidelines of the event, the position of some EU countries in terms of announcing recognition of the State of Palestine, as well as condemning what is happening in Gaza and as the position of some countries to stand with the occupying entity. He pointed out the European countries are divided in this regard as some of them fully support Israel; while others like Spain, Netherlands, Belgium, Malta, Norway and Slovenia have announced their intention to recognize the State of Palestine. With a Palestinian State before the European elections, this will support talks about peace and

the possibility of reaching the two-State solution, through which Palestine will have a supportive force at the international level, he added.

On Israel's occupation of Rafah crossing, he asserted this occupation is unacceptable. "The Rafah borders with Egypt are Egyptian-Palestinian borders. We cannot, in any way, accept that there will be an Israeli occupation. I believe this is contrary to the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. Therefore, this matter is outrightly rejected. We hold the United States of America responsible for everything that will happen, from the occupation until this moment," he stressed.

Regarding Israel's dissatisfaction with American President Joe Biden after stopping an arms deal, Tabboub stated that "the lesson is in the ending."

On the 'Export' Team, he explained that this team was named as such based on the study on the Palestinian economy and its needs. He revealed this project is funded by the British government and in order to open the Kuwaiti markets, which are considered among the most important markets for Palestine.

He went on to say: "A British ambassador and I took the initiative to bring this team to Kuwait and hold meetings with Kuwaiti officials in the private and government sectors. One of these meetings was with the Minister of Commerce, Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Investment Promotion Authority and others."

He also cited the submission of an explanation on the economic situation in Palestine. "This project has been in place for more than 10 years and covers the West Bank and Gaza. After the Israeli aggression on Gaza, it has begun to cover the West Bank, as a result of the major decline in the Palestinian economy and the regional economy in general. It is necessary to work on this issue," he concluded.



Top and above: Some guests at the event.

Photos by Leah Qurtal

'Amir speech roadmap to light'

'Next step ... development without hindrances'

By Muhammad Al-Musleh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: The speech of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is a roadmap for the political path; as it carries wisdom, foresight and outstanding experiences regarding the events taking place on the local scene, says academician and journalist Dr. Aayed Al-Manna.

In a statement to the daily, Al-Manna pointed out that His Highness the Amir is keen on upholding constitutional guarantees, especially since the defects he mentioned previously require treatment and correction.

He stated that the current constitutional imbalances, which His Highness referred to, necessitate finding mechanisms to ensure they are not repeated in the future. He said the next stage will contribute to accelerating development aspects without obstacles, bidding, clashes and disruption.

He added that His Highness the Amir also talked about the widespread corruption, hoping all problems will be eliminated and that the stage set by His Highness will be sufficient for correction and to open a new page for a better Kuwait.

Meanwhile, Fareeh Al-Enezi, another journalist, asserted that His Highness' speech is a beacon guiding the nation towards the right path; thereby, eradicating anxiety and increasing reassurance and stability among citizens.

Al-Enezi affirmed that the sublime speech of His Highness the Amir touched on the concerns of the nation and it is like a compass through which the captain guides his ship towards the safe shore.

He pointed out that the local political arena witnessed conflicts that had a negative impact on the entire Kuwaiti society, indicating the citizen looks forward to a prosperous future for Kuwait. He believes His Highness' speech expressed the concerns of the Kuwaiti people, as it revealed the challenges that Kuwait is currently facing. He said His Highness has a long experience that confirms his knowledge of many matters in a way that supports and illuminates the development plans the citizens have been aspiring for.

HH Amir move gets widespread support from Kuwait clergymen

By Abdel Nasser Al-Aslami

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: The sheikhs (clerics) of Kuwait received the news on the dissolution of the National Assembly with this phrase, "hearing and obedience", through their accounts on social media platforms; affirming their acceptance, respect and appreciation for the speech of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah while stressing the need to rally around the political leadership in good and bad times.

Secretary of the Supreme Committee for Promoting Moderation in the Council of Ministers and Director of the Center for Promoting Moderation at the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs Dr. Abdullah Al-Sharika said: "We adhere to this divine command. We submit to laws, regulations and constitutions of the world. We ask Allah Almighty to protect Kuwait's leadership and people and to unite the word of its people for good."

Imam and preacher in Wararat Al-Awqaf Sheikh Dr. Farhan Obaid Al-Shammari stressed that "obedience to the ruler is a divine law, a prophetic approach, a Salafist approach, rational logic, a security duty, national stability and religious texts, not emotional slogans. Praise Allah, for whom the people of Kuwait addressed this night to the ruler with advice and prayers. They rally around their leadership without incitement, threats or distraction."

Associate Professor in the Department of Jurisprudence and Sharia Policy at the College of Sharia and Islamic Studies Dr. Mutlaq Al-Jasser stated: "I ask Allah to grant our Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad success in doing what he loves and is pleased with, and

to follow his example of righteousness and piety. One of the foundations of the Sunnis and the community is to listen and obey with kindness to those whom Allah has entrusted us with. Our law calls for wisdom and good preaching. We ask Allah to make the outcome of matters good and to establish for this blessed country a rational platform in which the people of obedience and righteousness are honored and the people of disobedience and corruption are humiliated."

Dr. Muhammad Dhawi Al-Usaimi stressed that "we owe it to Allah not to remove the hand of obedience from those whom He has entrusted us with, so there is no incitement, threat or distraction. Yes to advice, supplication, calm and tranquility. O Allah, guide our guardian, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, towards what you love and are pleased with, and take him to the foreground of righteousness and piety, and prepare for him a lining of goodness, and avert from him the lining of evil."

Legal advisor and arbitrator on family reform Dr. Khaled Al-Sultan disclosed: "I am certain that this move is good for the country and the people. HH the Amir knows the country's highest interests. Dissolving the National Assembly does not mean cessation of life. We will continue to give to Kuwait, regardless of its position, as it is greater than the assemblies, people and entities."

Sheikh Dr. Muhammad Al-Ajmi asserted: "The authentic and logical transmission necessitates adhering to the community of Muslims and their Imam, as well as unifying the word and taking care of the highest interests of the nation. There is no room for trembling, division of ranks and division of the word."

Resignations en masse raise 'suspicions'

Over 40,000 MoE staff fail to submit academic certs

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: A significant exodus from the scrutiny of educational credentials is underway, with approximately 40,000 employees across all sectors of the Ministry failing to furnish their educational qualifications. This development, shrouded in uncertainty and suspicion regarding the underlying motives, has been disclosed by reliable sources within the Ministry of Education, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The failure to comply stems from a directive issued by the Civil Service Commission last February, mandating the submission of comprehensive educational records for all Ministry employees who acquired qualifications beyond high school from January 1, 2000, onwards, irrespective of nationality. Speculation among employees suggests a surge in resignations prompted by apprehensions surrounding the scrutiny of certificates and potential repercussions for those found to have misrepresented their qualifications. However, authorities emphasize that the Ministry, in collaboration with the Civil Service Commission, is poised to take necessary action against non-compliant individuals.

In response to the non-submission of qualifications, the Ministry of Education

has initiated a thorough examination process. Each employee's academic credentials are being meticulously reviewed, and those who have yet to provide their qualifications are being contacted through respective sectors and departments. Individuals are being afforded the opportunity to explain their failure to comply, despite extensions and ample opportunities to submit their data via the Ministry's website.

Without exception, all employees holding qualifications beyond high school since January 2000, including bachelor's, graduate diplomas, master's, and doctorates, have been urged to furnish their certificates. This comprehensive review, mandated by the Civil Service Commission, encompasses all categories of higher education credentials.

Furthermore, the Ministry, in conjunction with the Civil Service Commission, is actively engaged in scrutinizing certificates suspected of being falsified. This concerted effort forms part of broader governmental initiatives aimed at verifying the academic qualifications of public sector employees and identifying fraudulent documentation.



Dr. Al-Manna

Health guidelines for Hajj pilgrims

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: The Ministry of Health has provided some general instructions for Hajj pilgrims this year, reports Al-Anba daily.

The ministry has established health guidelines for the upcoming Hajj season (1445 AH - 2024 AD) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. These guidelines include the following:

■ Hajj pilgrims must receive the meningococcal vaccine (ACW135Y) and other recommended vaccines such as the influenza vaccine, pneumococcal vaccine and Covid-19 vaccine. It is important to note that all vaccines used in Kuwait are approved by the Saudi Ministry of Health.

Before leaving the country, Hajj and Umrah pilgrims should ensure that they have completed the required vaccinations at one

of the preventive health clinics in primary health care centers at least 10 days prior to their travel date. These vaccinations can be obtained from 41 preventive health sites located in primary health care centers and hospitals across the country.

■ It is essential to bring all vaccination certificates while traveling.

■ Pilgrims must adhere to the preventive instructions issued by the Saudi health authorities.

■ If one is suffering from a chronic disease such as diabetes or heart disease, it is important to consult the treating physician before traveling to ensure the stability of health condition. He should also bring an ample supply of necessary medications and treatments, ensuring that they are stored correctly.

Excessive 'grillings' significant factor in dissolution move

By Raed Youssef

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: The suspension of some articles of the Constitution as per the Amiri Decree is related to legislation and oversight undertaken by the National Assembly; while articles relating to rights, duties, freedoms, and the executive and judicial powers shall continue, says Law Professor at Kuwait University and constitutional expert Dr. Muhammad Al-Faili.

He pointed out that the Amiri order linked the suspension to a review period

through a technical committee that will present ideas only, as the committee is not the one concerned with the amendment whose mechanism was regulated by the Constitution. He pointed out that a general referendum on the amendment may be held or presented to Parliament at the end of the review period.

He stressed that the fears of political forces in the past hindered amending the Constitution, such as the fear of entering a maze that might affect freedoms despite the fact that the Constitution itself provides for review and amendment.

He explained the suspension of some articles of the Constitution is not the first, as it happened twice -- in the years 1976 and 1985. "We hope this will be the third and permanent," he asserted.

He added this happened due to accumulations and repercussions, indicating that the excessive handling of the interpellation was perhaps the most significant factor, especially after 10 members announced their intention to grill one of the ministers before his appointment, which is considered an infringement on the Constitution.

He stated that, as a citizen, he sees some are tired of the constitutional game, which has become absurd for some parliamentarians, and that the players were deliberately doing this, perhaps to make people disbelieve in democracy. "This is just a hypothesis, but in any case, it left a negative impact on some," he clarified.

He affirmed that the democratic process is a safety valve for everyone in Kuwait, and there is faith and conviction that popular participation is in the conscience and what will happen is a reconsideration of the political organization.

Citizens are afraid...there is 'no security or reassurance'

"THE CONSTITUTION stipulates in Chapter TWO and Article 8 thereof: "The state shall safeguard the foundations of society, and shall guarantee security, tranquility, and equal opportunities for citizens." But the citizen does not feel secure, and does not live his life with reassurance and peace of mind because the conditions around him portend fear and anxiety," columnist Dr. Bahija Behbehani wrote for Al-Qabas daily.

"There is also no equality of opportunity among citizens, as some occupy senior positions with high financial benefits, while another who holds the same qualifications only finds a job that provides him 25% of the salary drawn by his colleague, and that is -- only -- because his colleague has a parachute that lands him to the highest positions?"

"Crimes of various kinds are repeated daily, and the nation is exposed to unaccounted financial waste from many aspects, and there are no government measures to stop the manipulation of public money, protect it, or provide a helping hand." There are many reasons for a citizen's feeling of fear and insecurity in his country, the first of which is the spread of corruption in many government institutions, such as 'underserving' nationalities, embezzlement, parachute appointments, fake academic certificates and promotions, and finally the continuity of some Ministry of Education employees receiving their salaries although they longer are entitled to receive these salaries from the ministry, and even some of whom have left since 2018. "Isn't this a clear violation and transgression that depletes the state's public funds? Officials responsible for completing procedures for disbursing state funds for personal interests must be punished. What about other ministries in the state? Are there also those who do not adhere to official working hours and whose salaries are paid from public funds and who are kept secret?" Is there a great source of concern among citizens about the spread of psychotropic substances, due to their fear for their children from becoming addicted to them, or for fear of the addicts' crimes and their exposure to their families?" As an example: The Criminal Security Sector (General Administration for Narcotics Control) was recently able to arrest 18 suspects in 15 cases, and they were in possession of about 20 kilograms of various narcotic substances (chemicals, shabu, hashish, marijuana, cocaine, and heroin) and 11,800 pills of psychotropic substances. And unlicensed firearms and ammunition and sums of money from the proceeds of the sale!

"Who was the citizen involved in bringing these psychotropic substances and weapons into the country? Then who were the ones who bought it and to whom did they sell it? Why does the government not announce the names of the citizens who committed this grave crime against the nation and its citizens? What is their goal in supplying it other than destroying the security and safety of the nation?"

"In addition to vehicle thefts, fuel theft, etc., without fear and without fear of the law being applied to them, so why does the government not strike with an iron hand so that the citizen feels safe?"

Also:

"The trend of recent weeks in America and Europe is the saying "You are anti-Semitic!" The peaceful demonstrators, including students and faculty members at universities in America and Europe, were arrested and accused by their official authorities of anti-Semitism, because of their objection to the crimes of the Zionists against the Palestinian people," columnist Dr. Muhammad Hussein Al-Dalal wrote for Al-Qabas daily.

"South Africa was accused of anti-Semitism, for prosecuting the occupying entity before the International Court for its crimes in Gaza and the entire Palestinian territories." Indeed, the Zionists accused the International Court of anti-Semitism for its judicial handling of the events in Gaza, and in Germany, the theater artist Dieter Hallervorden was accused of anti-Semitism, after he recited a poem in support of the Palestinian people entitled "Gaza... Gaza." "At the beginning of the war on Gaza, the media of the occupying Zionist entity accused businessman Elon Musk, owner of the Luc Melenchon, a former candidate for the French presidency, was accused of anti-Semitism due to his statements in which he said: 'What Netanyahu is doing with the people of Gaza now is not legitimate. It is not legitimate self-defense, but rather ethnic genocide'."

"Also accused was Craig Mokhiber, director of the New York Office of the Commission United Nations Human Rights Affairs, has condemned anti-Semitism for protesting the organization's inability to stop the genocide in Gaza, and examples of human rights violations in relation to anti-Semitism are long in this regard. So what is the story of anti-Semitism? What is its connection with the Jews and the occupying entity? "Since the 19th century AD in Europe, the word Semitic has been associated with the Jews as a religion and a social component. The Jews claim that they are descendants of Shem, the son of the Prophet Noah, peace be upon him, according to what was stated in their religious texts." Therefore, they are an ancient Semitic race that is distinguished from other races, and must

be respected and defended and protect them from forms of persecution or abuse. Global Zionism and the Jewish lobby in America and Europe have worked to spread this thought and root it globally, by accusing those who stand against them or criticize their positions of anti-Semitism." Forms of defending the Semitism of Jews and Zionists have included issuing international legislation that protects them, and taking legal measures against all who criticize them, even if that is through scientific research and studies, and intense media action to spread an international mental image of this special race, which must be sanctified and protected.

"The idea of Jewish Semitism has faced very widespread criticism from a scientific and realistic standpoint. Ethnologists believe that assuming that the Jews descended from the lineage of Shem, the son of the Prophet Noah, peace be upon him, and that they were among those who spoke one of the Semitic languages, then, according to what ethnologists say: Where then are the Arabs, Assyrians, and Phoenicians, who are descended from same origin, and they also speak Semitic languages?" Why are other peoples of Semitic descent, including the Palestinians, excluded from being considered Semites who must be respected and their Semitic race must be defended? Rather, scientifically this racial discrimination against the Jews and their Semitic race has been criticized because it excludes other races and races that descended from the sons of the Prophet Noah, peace be upon him, and included many European, African, and Asian peoples.

"The most prominent practical criticism of the idea of Semitism or a special, distinct race was when European societies confronted Hitler's Germany in World War II, when he claimed the superiority and distinction of the Aryan German race from other peoples." Indeed, Western countries as a whole were criticized for their policy of racial discrimination against African peoples, and the distinction of race (White over other races) and because of that unjust discrimination, the international community in the last century ended up issuing international charters, approved by the majority of the international community, opposing the idea of racial discrimination based on gender or race, which are still in effect to this day.

"The policy of double standards, pursued by successive American administrations and a number of European countries, to protect the crimes of the occupying Zionist entity in Palestine under the pretext of protecting the Semites, is in itself a crime against humanity, and a clear violation of the human rights conventions, which shocked the international community with the necessity of acting upon them.

"Human dignity is an inherent principle in Islam, regardless of origin, gender, or social reference, and it is only distinguished by piety and good deeds.

"The lie of Semitism to the Jews and Zionism and the make-up of Zionist deception cannot be covered or beautified by the unjust protection that America and a number of European countries provide to Zionist war criminals." Certainly, the magic has turned against the magician. The more the unjust argument of so-called Semitism is used to protect the Zionists, the greater in return, there is global support for the Palestinian people. The criminal has been exposed and his ugly face has been exposed, and he must fall in the end."

"Regulating the labor market ... The 'manpower' intends to regulate the labor market. May Allah bless their faces, if they are honest!" columnist Talal Al-Saeed wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"They said they will start by linking work permits with academic and experience certificates. Here is the source of the affliction and disease. They have forgotten that their colleagues in higher education are still fighting against the forged certificates, which some citizens obtained by 'shaking the dinar'. Shops are still issuing fake certificates. Every time a shop is closed, another opens, until there is no longer trust in all the certificates issued by certain countries.

"This also applies to experience certificates, which are now sold by kilo! Perhaps, the members of committees that will be formed to scrutinize documents have obtained certificates from those countries, except those who obtained Allah's mercy!

"The reality is that you will not be able to control or liquidate them, or even audit their academic certificates and the multiplied experience certificates that they bring with them. If the concerned authority wants to organize the labor market, it must change the direction of recruitment and shift to the Asian continent completely and in all specializations for at least five years. After this period, it should assess the situation and we will see the difference.

"The other important matter is the speed of ending the contracts of those who called themselves 'advisors', until they became a reality and everything fell into their hands. Only their instructions were implemented, so government routine was embodied in its ugliest forms among us. We turned into a bureaucratic State on our own free will, after they came to us with their contract and embodied the meaning of backwardness in our government agencies. Their real job is to pull the country back and to combat the development of government performance. Even in electronic government, they have created loopholes that make the presence of the expatriate advisor a necessity!"

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes

Hunt launched

Thieves hit police station, vandalize telecom tower

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: The Deputy Public Prosecutor has instructed Criminal Evidences Department to dispatch technicians to a communications tower in Al-Salmi to remove any traces left behind by unidentified thieves, reports Al-Anba daily.

The Deputy Public Prosecutor for Criminal Security affairs has filed a case under the title 'felony', following 'theft and vandalism' at the Taima police station.

The Prosecution is overseeing the arrest of the accused individuals responsible for damaging the company's communications tower.

The company has estimated the stolen items to be valued at 3,500 dinars, with additional damage caused by the perpetrators inside the tower amounting to thousands more.

According to a security source, a lawyer acting as the legal representative of a telecommunications company reported that a tower owned by the company Salmi, Kilo 26, was targeted by thieves.

The perpetrators broke the lock to gain entry into the tower, forced open the transformer door, and proceeded to steal various items including 14 power batteries, a solar panel, a 5G router for signal transmission, a static chip, 2 electrical switches, 4 copper ground cables, copper clips, spare parts, and wires for operating cameras from the tower, collectively valued at 3,500 dinars.



Work begins on tunnel road.

Road shut for now

Repair work begins on underpass after hiatus

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: The Public Authority for Roads and Land Transport said that, under the guidance and follow-up of the Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs, Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, repair work has begun on the underpass located at the intersection of Khalid Yousef Al-Marzouq Road (Second Ring Road) with Gamal Abdel Nasser Road, after it stopped several years ago, reports Al-Anba daily.

On the other hand, the authority stated that, in cooperation with the General Traffic Department, it will conduct a temporary diversion on the Fifth Ring Road in both directions (the intersection of the Fifth with Ibn Al-Qasim Street) from Saturday morning, May 11, until the morning of next Thursday, May 16, from 2 am to 5 am.

The authority also announced that, in cooperation with the General Traffic Department, it had completely closed temporarily the Jamal Abdel Nasser Road underpass towards Kuwait City for 48 hours and implemented a temporary traffic diversion for the necessary repairs to the tunnel, from dawn on Friday until dawn tomorrow, Sunday to complete repair work.

The Authority also announced the opening of the new underpass on Ibrahim Al-Muzain Street at dawn Saturday in both directions between the intersections of King Faisal Street and Damascus Street in the South Surra area.

House turned into huge liquor-producing facility

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: The Ahmadi detectives raided a local liquor manufacturing facility, believed to be the biggest in 2024, in the Umm Al-Haiman, reports Al-Anba daily.

During the operation, four expatriates have been arrested and the seized items included 214 large barrels containing intoxicating substances, 8 distillation equipment, 400 bottles of alcohol ready for sale, 500 bags of manufacturing materials, and 1,600 empty bottles intended for packaging.

The investigation was initiated following a tip-off received by the Abdullah and Ali Sabah Al-Salem Investigation Office.

According to reports, the suspects have confessed to renting an entire house for 650 dinars and utilizing it for over a year for the manufacture of alcohol. The source further revealed that all areas of the house, including bathrooms and kitchens, were repurposed as manufacturing and storage facilities.

4 yrs 'illegal' arrested

'Citizen not an imposter, officer report baseless'

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: Investigations by Hawalli detectives concluded that the report of a patrol officer about a citizen impersonating a security man was baseless, reports Al-Anba daily.

The patrol officer from the General Traffic Department in the Interior Ministry accused a citizen of impersonating a security man. This happened after the patrol officer stopped a taxi for violating traffic regulations. The officer then asked the citizen, who was inside the taxi, to present his identification card. The citizen told the officer that he forgot to bring his civil identification card, so he presented a security badge.

During interrogation, the citizen denied impersonating a security man. He explained that he is a former soldier in the Ministry of Interior, indicating the patrol officer repeatedly asked him to present proof of his identification and threatened to detain him if he fails to do so, thus, he had no option but to present his old badge.

"4 years 'illegal' nabbed: An expatriate who entered the country illegally 51 months ago was apprehended by security patrols, reports Al-Anba daily.

A police patrol in Jahra Industrial Area stopped a 45-year-old individual who failed to provide any proof of legal entry. Consequently, he was taken to the police station, where it was discovered that he had no official records.

When questioned about his illegal entry, he claimed that he had been smuggled into Kuwait in a truck from a neighboring country. When asked about the date of his entry, he stated that it had been four years and three months ago. As a result, appropriate measures are being taken and he will be handed over to the relevant authority.

In another development, the Ministry of Interior announced that the Criminal Security Sector has apprehended two individuals who were caught on video stealing electricity cables. The video had been circulating on social media platforms. The necessary legal procedures are being taken against them, in preparation for their deportation.



KUNA photo
Chief of Staff of Kuwait's Armed Forces Lt. Gen. Bandar Al-Muzain visits the logistics and supply authority.

'Logistic, supply authority supports Kuwait's army'

KUWAIT CITY, May 11, (KUNA): Chief of Staff of Kuwait's Armed Forces Lt. Gen. Bandar Al-Muzain affirmed that the logistic and supply authority has played a pivotal role in backing the army and enhancing readiness in a way that provides facilitations and basics for its units.

Paying an inspection visit to some army units, including logistics and supply authority and the command of defense against weapons of mass destruction, Al-Muzain stressed the need of removing any obstacles before operations and duties, said a press statement issued by the General Staff quoting Al-Muzain as saying.

Al-Muzain lauded the authority and the command for their efforts and duties, calling for keeping ready and reaching desired levels.

He wished success to the two units' personnel in their duties, under the wise

leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.

Al-Muzain listened to a detailed presentation on the applied measures and the latest duties and missions carried out by the command as well as training programs approved in preparing and rehabilitating personnel to deal with different events and incidents.

He also was briefed on the most important technical specifications of the "Fox" armored reconnaissance vehicle, which is equipped with the latest technologies and systems used for disinfection and sterilization that detect chemical, biological and radiological risks.

Al-Muzain was received by assistant chief of staff of the authority Major General Dr. Engineer Salah Nasser and assistant commander of the command Brigadier General Hamid Obaid.

7-man gang under probe

MEW systems hacked, electricity bills altered

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: Sources within the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy disclosed that the investigation into a seven-member gang's infiltration of the Ministry's computer systems and subsequent manipulation of bills values after official working hours has been sent to the Public Funds Prosecution, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The purpose of this referral is to ascertain the extent of the financial losses incurred through this illicit activity and to initiate steps to recover the misappropriated state funds.

The daily quoting sources said, following the conclusion of investigations by the Public Prosecution, the case file was passed on to the Cybercrimes Prosecution before reaching the Public Funds Prosecution.

The latter is tasked with assessing the tampered bill amounts and identifying the beneficiaries of this tampering to facilitate the recovery of misused funds. Investigations have revealed that the system breach was likely facilitated by an insider at the Ministry who collaborated with the gang and possessed sufficient training to manipulate the system.

In response to this breach, the Ministry of Electricity has implemented stringent measures to limit the number of author-

ized personnel with access to the system. Moreover, the issuance of large bills with significant financial implications is now restricted to heads of customer service offices exclusively.

Last August, the Ministry of Electricity unveiled the tampering incident, prompting an investigation by the Electronic Crimes Department following a complaint lodged by the Ministry.

Upon inspection of the Ministry's premises and electronic systems, it was discovered that unauthorized users, including individuals not affiliated with the Ministry, had accessed the system, indicating security vulnerabilities that had been exploited. Subsequent monitoring and surveillance efforts confirmed the system breach, leading to the referral of the case to the Public Prosecution for further inquiry.

In another development, a joint team from the Ministries of Electricity and Works conducted a site visit to sections of the new T2 airport project. This project will incorporate the installation of solar panels to generate 17 megawatts of energy from renewable sources.

The team affirmed that the solar panel project will adhere to specified locations and meet requisite standards, with the energy generated contributing to the operational efficiency of the airport project by alleviating electrical loads.



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Advancing early recovery solutions for Gaza's humanitarian needs

Kuwait hosts 9th effective partnership for better humanitarian action confab

KUWAIT CITY, May 11, (KUNA): The Kuwait-based International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) will host on Sunday the ninth conference for effective partnership and information sharing for better humanitarian action.

In a press statement, IICO Chairman Abdullah Al-Maatouq said Thursday that the IICO coordinated with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for the conference to enhance response to humanitarian needs in the besieged Gaza Strip, Al-Maatouq added in a press statement.

The one-day conference, to be held under the patronage of His Highness the Prime Minister and attended by Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, aims to assess the reality of humanitarian needs in the Strip, and mobilize efforts of humanitarian organizations to manage sustainable humanitarian intervention, and offer initiatives and solutions to meet these needs and share common expertise in the Early Recovery (ER).

Kuwait and its charities have been supporting Palestinian people and showing solidarity with their fair cause over 75 years, he noted. The event includes some sessions covering humanitarian crisis in the Strip, means of delivering aid, civilians' protection and the need of expanding response as well as the repercussions of forced displacement and ways of getting basic needs.

The conference will touch upon humanitarian response to life-saving intervention, such as relief and shelter acts, health, education, empowerment, assessment of social and economic impact of the war in Gaza, the initial results of meeting post-disaster needs, and how to pave the way for Early Recovery.

There would be international humanitarian initiatives during the conference's closing session to enhance humanitarian intervention and the ER in the Strip, he stated. The conference will feature a number of government and UN agencies, and international and charitable organizations, as well as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Medical Aid for Palestinians, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society and others.

MoCI provides KD 64 mln support to Kuwaiti citizens during Jan-Feb

CSC explains study abroad policy amid market demand

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: During January and February this year, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry provided substantial support for Kuwaiti citizens totaling around 64 million dinars, covering various materials including construction supplies and basic food items, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The majority of the support, approximately 42.4 million dinars, was allocated to citizens eligible for housing support, particularly for construction materials.

Additionally, about 19.3 million dinars were allocated for basic food supplies, and around 2 million dinars were dedicated to milk and children's nutrients.

The ministry's data revealed that the total number of beneficiaries of this support, including Kuwaiti citizens, GCC residents in Kuwait, stateless individuals (bedoun), and registered domestic workers, stood at approximately 2.1 million by the end of February. Interestingly, this number showed a decrease of about 100,000 beneficiaries compared to the same period last year.

Government sources explained that this decline was a result of the ministry's efforts to audit and clean up beneficiary records. This process involved removing ineligible categories such as deceased individuals and workers with expired residency permits.

Moreover, the ministry collaborated with other government agencies, including the Ministry of Interior and the Kuwait Supply Company, to ensure that only eligible individuals receive support. For example, support for domestic workers is contingent upon their presence on their sponsor's civil card. If a sponsor is not listed on the ration card, the support is canceled.

Suspension

Additionally, cooperation with the Public Authority for Civil Information led to the suspension of subsidized rations for citizens who were deceased or whose civil cards had expired. This initiative aimed to prevent the disbursement of rations to ineligible individuals, such as deceased citizens or departed domestic workers, thereby reducing unnecessary costs and ensuring support reaches those who truly need it.

Meanwhile, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) has clarified that it determines the number of employees sent abroad to obtain doctorate, master's or bachelor's degrees or diploma; based on the budget allocated by the Ministry of Finance with the approval of the concerned employers, reports Al-Anba daily.

This is in response to a question about the reasons why the CSC does not send employees abroad to continue their studies in line with the actual need of the labor market to address the shortage of manpower with certain specializations. The CSC pointed out that approving the number of such employees depends on the budget allotted by the Ministry of Finance, in addition to obtaining approval from the concerned employer whenever an employee is sent abroad to study or on official mission.

Meanwhile, sources stressed that despite this; the CSC allows Kuwaitis employed in any ministry or government agency to complete their studies in some rare specializations. In this case, the CSC shoulders the salaries, allowances, tuition fees and airline tickets for these employees and their children, sources revealed.

On the type of specializations, sources cited nursing and educational specializations that the country still needs; on the condition that upon completion of studies, the concerned employees must continue working in the government sector for a period similar to the duration of their studies.

7 new schools to open: The Ministry of Education has completed preparations for the opening of seven new schools in Al-Mutlaa Residential City, reports Al-Anba daily.

Jahra Educational District has announced that the academic and administrative staff who want to transfer to the new schools can submit their transfer request until May 30.

According to the district, the academic and administrative employees in its main office or those in Jahra schools (all levels including kindergarten) can submit their transfer online through this link <https://forms.office.com/r/FYIKuVT7d7>. It underscored the need to complete all the requirements through the link to avoid exclusion of the application.



Pavilion of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters at the exhibition. KUNA photo

Int'l exhibition to run until May 18

NCCAL represents Kuwait culture at 'Doha book fair'

DOHA, May 11, (KUNA): The National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters is taking part in the 33rd edition of Doha International Book Fair to highlight the cultural and literary aspects of the State of Kuwait, NCCAL's representative Khalifa Al-Rabbah said.

"The book fair provides us with a change to promote cultural exchanges with other participants in the event," he told KUNA on the sidelines of the opening ceremony on Thursday. He noted that the book fair also sheds light on the exemplary relations between Kuwait and Qatar.

All publications of the NCCAL, including "the world culture," "global creativity" and the chain of "world of knowledge," are on display at the book fair being organized by Qatar's Ministry of Culture, he added.

Opened on Thursday, the book fair lasts until May 18 with 515 publishers from 42 countries participating.

The program of events accompanying the Doha International Book Fair includes a group of workshops in various cultural, social and professional fields, in addition to a photo exhibition under the title "Read" in the Qatar Photography Centre's pavilion.

Among the activities, the exhibition presents a variety of seminars, lectures and poetry evenings, in addition to performances of the play "Caracalla" from Lebanon and a play organized by the Center for Theater Affairs. The exhibition also pays special attention to children's activities through the "Children's Oasis", which opens the horizons for children to learn, think, and create in an attractive entertainment way through several interactive activities.

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A group photo of those in charge of the admission campaign. Al-Jarida photo

University launches admission campaign

Abdullah Al-Salem University has initiated its first indicative admission campaign for the academic year 2024/2025 under the banner "Your Perfect Choice for a Distinguished Future," reports Al-Jarida daily.

The campaign kick-started at the Avenues Mall and Dr Moudi Al-Hamoud, Chairperson of the University's Founding Board of Directors, Dr. Adel Al-Husseinan, Secretary of the University's Founding Board of Directors, and Professor Dr. Ahmed Al-Hanyan, a member of the founding Board of Directors, were present at the event.

The campaign garnered significant attention on its inaugural day, with representatives from the Admissions Department and the Public Relations and Communication Department on hand to address inquiries from prospective students.

The graduating students interested in joining the university were provided guidance while Al-Hamoud highlighted the university's unique specializations, which complement existing fields in Kuwait and align with global advancements and labor market demands.

Dr. Al-Husseinan expressed his satisfaction with the launch of the guidance campaign, which aims to attract both male and female high school students, saying it serves to familiarize them with the university, its admission criteria, and enrollment rates.

He emphasized that the campaign serves as an educational awareness initiative, acquainting students with the university's specializations that mirror real-world market needs. Additionally, it aims to address queries and guide students seeking admission to the university.

Proposal eyes study on rainfall before allocation of new cities

By Inas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff
KUWAIT CITY, May 11: Municipal Council member Abdullatif Al-Daei has presented a proposal to conduct a study on rainfall before allocating new cities, especially the residential cities.

This is to determine the impact of floods on the areas to be allocated and to know the measures that must be taken to reduce their impact and ensure the sustainability of urban projects, provided that this is done in coordination with the concerned authorities.

Al-Da'i pointed out in the preamble to his proposal that floods resulting from rain are considered one of the most important challenges that new cities are facing, specifically the residential cities, as they pose a threat to the safety of residents and infrastructure if they are not dealt with in advance.

It also leads to significant material losses due to the large size of wasted land that allocated to create rainwater collection basins; hence, the importance of proper planning for new cities and protecting them from disasters.

Meanwhile, member Alia Al-Farsi also submitted a proposal to regulate public water coolers (way water or public standpipe) and food refrigerators based on Article One of Ministerial Resolution No. 30/2021 regarding the list of licenses for the occupancy of public roads, squares and sidewalks.

The article states: "It is not permissible to occupy public roads, squares and sidewalks without a license from Kuwait Municipality."

In her proposal, Al-Farsi called for setting regulations on the installation of water coolers and food refrigerators by choosing three designs for way water coolers that are compatible with the climate and environment of the State of Kuwait in terms of materials, colors and design.

This includes the donor's identification plate, if any, in addition to specifying the locations of way water coolers and food refrigerators within the spaces designated for mosques, central markets or any other entity determined by the Municipality, provided that they do not impede car and pedestrian traffic in coordination with all relevant State agencies.

She stressed the necessity of obtaining a license for all way water coolers and food refrigerators from the competent department in the Municipality; because it is considered a component of Article One on the list of occupancies on public roads, squares and sidewalks.

In addition, a waste container should be installed near every site where the Municipality licenses water coolers and food refrigerators. The container's specifications should be appropriate for this type of activity.

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120 top international figures representing major institutions participate

Development leaders discuss blended finance at Arab-DAC Dialogue '24

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: At the conclusion of the "2024 Arab-DAC Dialogue on Development" on Tuesday in Kuwait, participants welcomed the proposal of a Strategic Arab-DAC Partnership on Blended Finance for Sustainable Development. The goal of the collaboration is to increase the amount of development funding that is available and to ensure that it is used effectively by strengthening processes and building capacity to better use, adapt, and optimize existing blended finance instruments and bonds.

In their closing statement, the participants said: "Participants reiterated the benefits of using triangular co-operation as a modality, which can help to strengthen trust among partners. The discussions centered on the importance of promoting more evidence-based dialogue at the national level with governments of partner countries and other local actors. Observing that the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) and its continuous monitoring round might be used more proactively as a vital platform for communication and information in addition to other resources."

Organized by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the "2024 Arab-DAC Dialogue on Development" was held May 6-7, 2024, and featured 120 prominent international figures representing major international institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, OPEC, and the G20 Development Working Group. The dialogue is designed

to promote global solidarity and multilateral cooperation by enhancing the scale and quality of development financing and achieving more effective collaborative outcomes.

The conference featured notable participation from the Arab Coordination Group institutions, which include four Gulf national development funds: the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, the Saudi Development Fund, the Abu Dhabi Development Fund, and the Qatar Development Fund. Additionally, six regional institutions are involved: the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the Islamic Development Bank, the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID), the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, the Arab Gulf Programme for Development (AGFUND), and the Arab Monetary Fund.

Participation

The conference also saw participation from the European Union, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the International Finance Corporation, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the African Development Bank Group, the Middle East Council on Global Affairs, the Camões Institute for Cooperation and Language, Earthna: Center for a Sustainable Future (a Qatar Foundation initiative for education, science, and community development), and the North Ameri-

can Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD).

In his opening remarks, Mr. Bader Alsaad, Director General/Chairman of the Board of Directors, Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (Head of Arab Coordination Group), said: "This meeting takes place at a time when the global financial landscape is changing dramatically because of protracted global crises, rapid technology innovation, and geopolitical developments. These shifts have significant consequences for international and regional financial institutions as they work to achieve their mandates for sustainable development."

Challenges

Mr. Al-Saad added: "The MENA region faces additional challenges because of escalating geopolitical instabilities, most notably in Gaza, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. The slow progress in achieving SDGs in this region has caused substantial gaps in technology, climate resilience, water and food security, and institutional development. More importantly, the region faces a major obstacle to private sector-led growth, which has resulted in limited job creation."

In his remarks Mr. Carsten Staur, Chair of the OECD Development Assistance Committee emphasized that: "DAC members greatly value the co-operation with our Arab partners, and this Dialogue is key to an open exchange of views and to learn from each other not least in areas of blended finance and development effectiveness."

Mr. Staur added: "This Dialogue is taking place at a time when development cooperation is put to the test with high pressures on concessional finance, and I look forward to the important discussions ahead of us in the next two days."

This year's dialogue is crucial as it precedes several major international conferences, such as the Future Summit, COP-29 Climate Summit, and the Financing for Development Conference (FFD-4). It provides a platform for aligning priorities and coordinating efforts. This is critically important amid a global atmosphere of uncertainty marked by ongoing crises, including the escalating impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, economic volatility, financial imbalances, and increasing violence—all of which threaten progress toward achieving sustainable development goals, including the UN 2030 Agenda.

The focus of the "2024 Arab-DAC Dialogue on Development" is on broadening the scope and improving the quality of development finance and cooperation by addressing two main topics: financing sustainable development in a changing context, and collaborating for better results and partnerships. As influential actors in international development, Arab providers and DAC members aim to contribute to a renewed spirit of global solidarity and multilateralism. They aim to enhance the scale and quality of development financing and achieve better collaborative outcomes amid increasing demands

and human and livelihood needs, thereby ensuring desired stability on both economic and social levels.

Since its establishment in 1975, the Arab Coordination Group has provided developmental aid, covering all economic and social sectors and contributing to debt issues resolution. Many countries across the world have benefited from this aid, with a cumulative total reaching approximately \$286 billion by the end of 2023. This aid has supported 22 Arab countries, 44 African countries, 34 Asian countries, 30 Latin American countries, and 37 other countries, in addition to numerous regional institutions and organizations.

Since 2011, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) has collaborated with the Arab providers, and the institutions of the Arab Coordination Group, which includes Gulf national development funds and regional organizations. This partnership focuses on discussing development issues and exchanging expertise to effectively implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Countries such as Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates participate in DAC meetings and actively engage in its various activities. Recently, many institutions from the Arab Coordination Group, notably the Islamic Development Bank and the OPEC Fund for International Development, have increased their involvement in the DAC.

0 people

Continued from Page 1

However, what happened after that was those who came after were among the most disappointing people. They neither followed in the footsteps of their forefathers nor behaved with the authentic morals that Kuwaitis have been nurtured with for nearly 400 years.

Instead, they began working to bend everything to their interests, such that idiocy prevailed, instead of work. Addressing the people of Kuwait, His Highness said: "The unhealthy atmosphere that the country experienced in previous years led to the spread of corruption, which reached most State facilities. It rather reached the security and economic institutions, and even affected the justice facility, which is a refuge for people to preserve their rights and freedoms, so that it will always remain a beacon of light, a protector of rights and a guardian of freedoms."

Therefore, the overwhelming support for the measures taken by His Highness indicated that they were more than necessary to get the country out of its predicament.

It was also an honest adjustment to the path of the State, which must rise from its decline. Behind the states that rose were decisive and determined leaders. Such a leader could not see the shovels of demolition striking everywhere.

Indeed, renaissance sometimes calls for painful treatment. This is the recipe followed by all the great leaders who help their nation at all times, leading their countries with determination and firmness.

That is why we say to His Highness the Amir: "Now your people feel that our country has a wise leader. Today, we feel that the country's affairs are calming down, as long as it is reformed. If you take office, then the evil ones will not be obeyed."

"Our Amir, may Almighty Allah bless your decision, which came after patience and long consideration. From your speech, we feel that our country is facing peace and security, and may Almighty Allah protect you to continue your path in preserving the security and prosperity of Kuwait."

"May Allah bless your orders and decisions. You have heard, O the Merciful One, the voice of your people and their groaning after they have been inflicted with wounds. This is why today is a day of joy for all the measures you have taken."

Yes, the Kuwaitis were complaining about their guardian, who was forbearing to the point that some adventurers described him as weak, and that making room for reform within institutions would mean more chaos and infringement on the measures taken.

That is why the right, painful treatment was necessary, and that is why for the first time, we are facing a ruler who has the determination to implement reforms, whatever the cost.

'I cannot

Continued from Page 1

The unhealthy atmosphere Kuwait faced in the past years encouraged the spread of corruption that affected most of the State's facilities, and rather reached unfortunately economic and security institutions, His Highness the Amir said.

His Highness the Amir elaborated that corruption even affected justice, which is the resort of people to get their rights and freedom, adding that "we are very sure that judiciary will purify itself by its sincere men and the help of Allah."

All people should know that no one is above law, and those who got illegally some of public funds will be punished whatever his/her position is, he noted.

"I will not allow by no means that democracy will be exploited to destroy the state as the interest of Kuwaitis which are above all is honesty that we should protect and preserve," His Highness the Amir stressed.

His Highness the Amir also referred to behavior of some governments that overlooked grave violations due to parliamentary pressure or unsuccessful efforts that have negative impacts on public interest, vowing that he would not allow such violations under any circumstances.

His Highness the Amir underlined the utmost importance of security, say-

ing that "we would pay much attention to achieve this goal by re-considering the laws of social security."

He pointed to the national file and those who obtained illegally Kuwaiti citizenships.

His Highness the Amir said that the state would work on two main pillars: Security and judiciary, noting that such negative phenomena will not remain and be re-considered by reliable people, in line with a well-studied plan.

His Highness the Amir finally said frankly that respecting security men is part of the respect of regime, affirming that "I will not allow by no means to touch their prestige and respect while performing their official duties."

His Highness the Amir noted that the Kuwaiti people, the founders of democracy, were keen to find a Constitution that would serve the interests of the nation and protect the rights and freedoms of the people, and "we did not find in past discussions in the Constitution Assembly or in the councils that followed anything but the pinnacle of respect in their speech."

"In addition to the sophisticated practices of the constitutional means available to them in the right place or at the right time, but today, we witnessed the opposite of all that, there is a severe misuse of these means and in the style of speech that does not match with the customs and traditions of Kuwaiti people," he said.

"Therefore, Abdullah Al-Salem Hall, instead of being a place for practicing true and sound democracy, has become a stage for all that is unaccustomed and undesirable or acceptable in terms of words."

"Such practices and expressions, did not stop at this point, but rather went beyond the use of the constitutional right to interrogation in every opportunity small or big, which wasted the true value of this right as a sophisticated tool for accountability and legislation."

"The Constitution did not approve such tool of interrogation, but rather it was stipulated to be a means of reform and correcting any distortions, if any. Otherwise, this fine tool lost its value and the reasons for its determination."

"It is our duty to declare our rejection of all these practices and develop a solution to them in a way that ends them so that Abdullah Al-Salem Hall goes back to its place as a symbol of democracy."

"Which appreciates and respects elders and listens to other points of view, not being an arena for unacceptable verbal battles or unconstitutional practices that are outside the scope of logic and reason," His Highness the Amir went on.

His Highness the Amir said the turmoil in the country's political scene has reached a stage that "I cannot remain silent towards it as it is our duty to take all necessary measures aimed to achieve the highest interest of the country."

"I would like to refer to what happened over the past days. After naming the premier and tasking him to form a new government, communication was conducted with some MPs to ensure the participation of some of them in forming the government in abidance by the Article 56 of the Constitution."

"Despite this, and in order to make time available to form the government, we have issued the Decree No. 67 of 2024 adjourning the meetings of the National Assembly of the 18th legislative term to May 14, Tuesday, in implementation of the Article 106 of the Constitution to start a new phase of positive cooperation between the executive and legislative authorities and joint action to achieve desired reform, and to meet aspirations and hopes of citizens hoping for a better and brighter future" His Highness the Amir elaborated.

However, all these attempts failed due to repercussions that led to the incompleteness of forming the government in light of some acts of MPs towards forming the government that include conditions and dedications, His Highness the Amir said.

The Constitution as a progressive document that responds to the requirements and changes of life finds its outlet through harmony with the social, political, economic, legal and moral conditions in society, he said.

The Constitution must be compatible with the new conditions to absorb them to be its outlet in order to continue as a tool that governs the reality of society and its formations, he stated.

His Highness the Amir went to say that if all outlets are closed, the Constitution would not be able to carry out its desired role that people and its leader-

ship want.

"In this case, it becomes necessary for us to intervene to correct the path, address distortions and fill shortcomings revealed by the practical application of the provisions of the Constitution over the past 62 years without amendment, especially the historic path from which the Kuwaiti Constitution derived its articles and provisions were either totally cancelled or had several amendments to respond to changes," he noted.

The Kuwaiti Constitution allowed amendments and its provisions were reconsidered after five years of implementation, and this indicates the prudence of the members of the Constitution Assembly, he noted.

"Therefore, we decided to dissolve the National Assembly and suspend some constitutional articles for no more than four years," His Highness the Amir explained.

"During this period, all aspects of the democratic process will be studied and the outcomes of the study will be tabled to us for revision. We then will take whatever decisions we might deem appropriate," he added.

His Highness the Amir paid tribute to the founding fathers who laid the foundations of amity and fraternity among people from all walks of life, from civil servants to tradesmen, in the service of the homeland.

He called on the new generation to follow the tradition of their forefathers in acting and behaving decently to restore harmony among all segments of the society.

His Highness the Amir prayed for Allah, the Almighty, to help all sons of Kuwait to work for its prosperity and welfare of the dear homeland.

Guidelines for

Continued from Page 1

According to sources within the committee, one of their visions is to exclude debtors who benefited from the campaign last year and had their debts paid off.

This decision aims to uphold the principle of equal opportunity and ensure broader citizen participation in the campaign.

These beneficiaries were individuals sentenced in the year 2022. Additionally, it has been decided that only debts below a certain ceiling, anticipated to range between 5 and 7 thousand dinars, based on the number of debtors registered with the Ministry of Justice, will be eligible for partial disbursement.

The sources reiterated that the process for paying off debtors' debts will not require applicants to visit any government agency, including the Ministry of Affairs, or submit any paperwork or documents. Beneficiaries' names will automatically be included in the list managed by the General Administration of Implementation at the Ministry of Justice.

Kuwait hails

Continued from Page 1

"The fact that the resolution was approved by 143 UN member states signals growing support to, and strong belief in, the right of the State of Palestine to full membership in the UN," he said in a press release tonight.

Al-Budaiwi reaffirmed the GCC support to Palestine question and the efforts aiming to end the Israeli occupation and establish the independent state of Palestine within the borders of 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital city under the relevant UN resolutions and the Arab peace initiative.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas welcomed Friday the UN General Assembly's vote, with a sweeping majority, on granting Palestine's state as a full member.

Speaking in a press statement issued by Palestine news agency (Wafa), Abbas said Palestine, in light of this voting, would continue its endeavors to get full UN membership, by a Security Council resolution, calling on the countries that did not recognize Palestine's state to take the same step.

The UN resolution will support endeavors of Palestine's state at the UN Security Council to re-vote on full membership, he said.

He called on the US Administration to retreat from supporting the Israeli occupation's interest and to respect the will of countries and peoples for rights, freedom and vote in favor of full UN membership for Palestine's state.

PAAET 'reopens' several programs for admissions

SAB approves smart meter contract

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: Dr. Hassan Al-Fajjam, Director General of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET), has announced the revival of several previously closed programs for admissions, reports Al-Jarida daily.

These include the kindergarten specialization at the College of Basic Education and the emergency medical technician program at the College of Health Sciences.

Speaking at the annual honoring ceremony of the Higher Institute of Communications and Navigation for the training year 2023-2024, Dr. Al-Fajjam emphasized the authority's commitment to expanding capacity in nursing education to meet the demands of the healthcare sector.

He highlighted the dynamic nature of "applied" programs, underscoring the authority's objective of broadening employment opportunities, particularly within the private sector. Dr. Al-Fajjam commended the accomplishments of the Higher Institute of Communications and Navigation, emphasizing its pivotal role in providing employment opportunities across various sectors of the country.

Deputy Director for the Training Sector, Sayed Al-Tabtabai, disclosed plans for introducing six new programs in the upcoming admission cycle, pending approval from the Civil Service Commission. Notably, four of these programs are tailored to meet the needs of state ministries such as Interior, Foreign Affairs, and Fire Services, reflecting a strategic alignment with the evolving labor market.

Meanwhile, Abbas Al-Sammak, Director of the Higher Institute of Communications and Navigation, reiterated the institute's enduring commitment to excellence, spanning over 58 years.

He affirmed the institute's dedication to nurturing skilled national technical professionals to serve in both public and private sectors, in alignment with the objectives outlined in the 1982 law establishing the "Applied School." This ongoing pursuit of academic and training excellence remains pivotal in advancing Kuwait's prosperity.

Smart meter contract: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy has obtained approval from the State Audit Bureau (SAB) to award the smart meter contract (second phase) to a telecommunications company that offered the lowest price for the supply, installation and maintenance of 500,000 smart electricity meters, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources confirmed that the ministry is currently preparing to sign the

contract with the winning company to begin supplying and inspecting to complete installation operations in various sectors; especially those excluded from the first phase, most notably the private housing sector.

Sources stressed that the ministry is keen on replacing mechanical meters with smart meters, considering the advantages of using smart meters for both the customers and the ministry. Sources disclosed the most important advantage is reducing energy bills as the customer is immediately notified about his consumption through the smart meter, which is designed to show the customer the volume of his

consumption accurately in order to avoid unjustified consumption.

Sources added the smart meters contribute to eliminating human errors in reading mechanical meters; in addition to rationalizing spending and controlling consumption through the prepaid meters, which enable customers to rationalize spending based on their budget.

Sources revealed the smart meters instantaneously send warnings to the control and maintenance team in case of malfunction, with the ability to connect or cut off power remotely in case of maintenance or accumulation of unpaid bills.



Al-Baghli and Al-Enezi honor one of the students.

'Academic year 2023/2024'

Al-Baghli Foundation for Righteous Son honors 'outstanding' students

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: The Ibrahim Taher Al-Baghli Foundation for the Righteous Son celebrated its twelfth edition by honoring outstanding male and female students for the academic year 2023/2024, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The event was organized under the patronage of Dr. Adel Al-Adwani, Minister of Education, Higher Education, and Scientific Research, Maryam Al-Enezi, Assistant Undersecretary for Development Affairs and Activities at the Ministry of Education, who represented the ceremony's sponsor and expressed delight in recognizing the distinguished students.

She emphasized the ministry's commitment to promoting values such as honoring parents and caring for the elderly, underscoring the significance of community partnership in this endeavor.

In her address, Al-Enezi commended the Ibrahim Taher Al-Baghli

Foundation for its efforts in instilling educational values derived from religious teachings, constitutional principles, and Arab cultural heritage. She expressed gratitude to civil society institutions for their contributions to educational, cultural, and social activities benefiting students.

Raed Al-Baghli, Vice Chairman of Al-Mabarrah's Board of Directors, delivered a speech on behalf of his father, acknowledging the honor of sponsoring the award. He highlighted Al-Mabarrah's commitment to supporting charitable projects since its inception in 2007, underscoring the organization's dedication to social, humanitarian, voluntary, and educational initiatives in Kuwait.

Al-Baghli expressed gratitude to Ali Hassan, Chairman of the Supreme Committee for the Award, and all the heads and members of the working groups involved in the initiative.

UNRWA premises

On Thursday Kuwait's Foreign Ministry expressed condemnation of the flagrant and deliberate attack by a group of criminal settlers on the UNRWA premises in the occupied Jerusalem under the watchful eyes of the Israeli occupation security forces.

In a press statement, the ministry denounced this criminal approach of the occupation against defenseless civilians and humanitarian workers.

It added that Kuwait urges the UN Security Council and the international community to act to bring to an end these systematic Israeli violations and disregard of all laws and norms as well as disrespect of the international agencies.

Meanwhile, Israel ordered new evacuations in Gaza's southern city of Rafah on Saturday, forcing tens of thousands more people to move as it prepares to expand its operation and adding that it is also moving into an area in northern

Gaza where Hamas has regrouped.

Israel has now evacuated the eastern third of Rafah, pushing the operation to the edges of the heavily populated central area, although Israel's move into the city has so far been short of the full-scale invasion that it planned.

The order comes in the face of heavy international opposition and criticism. U.S. President Joe Biden has already said he will not provide offensive weapons to Israel for Rafah, and on Friday the U.S. said there was "reasonable" evidence that Israel had breached international law protecting civilians in the way it conducted its war against Hamas - the strongest statement that the Biden administration has yet made on the matter.

The United Nations and other agencies have warned for weeks that an Israeli assault on Rafah, which borders Egypt near the main aid entry points, would cripple humanitarian operations and cause a disastrous surge in civilian casualties.

World News Roundup

Europe

'Kate's doing well'

Putin 'reappoints' his prime minister

MOSCOW, May 11, (AP): Russian President Vladimir Putin reappointed **Mikhail Mishustin** as the country's prime minister on Friday, a widely anticipated move to keep on a technocrat who has maintained a low political profile.

Mishustin and other technocrats in the Cabinet have been credited with maintaining a relatively stable economic performance despite bruising Western sanctions for Russia's role in Ukraine. Most other Cabinet members are expected to keep their jobs, though the fate of Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu appeared uncertain.

In line with Russian law, Mishustin, 58, who held the job for the past four years, submitted his Cabinet's resignation on Tuesday when Putin began his fifth presidential term at a glittering Kremlin inauguration.

Mishustin, the former head of Russia's tax service, steered clear of political statements and avoided media interviews during his previous tenure.

During Friday's meeting with Putin, he assured the president that "there will be no breaks in the government's work" and pledged to "ensure continuity on all national goals."

"We will do everything for the development of our economy to justify people's trust," Mishustin said.

Hours after Putin submitted Mishustin's candidacy to the lower house, the State Duma, lawmakers vetted it at a quickly organized session.

Under the constitutional changes approved in 2020, the lower house approves the candidacy of the prime minister, who then submits Cabinet members for approval.



Mishustin

Bus accident kills 7 in Russia: A bus veered off a bridge and plunged into a river on Friday in St Petersburg, Russia's second-largest city, killing seven people, officials said.

The Investigative Committee, Russia's top criminal investigations body, reported the death toll. It did not state how many others were injured, but the emergency ministry earlier said that six people removed from the bus were in critical or serious condition.

Russian news reports said there were 15 people on the city bus when it broke through a barrier and plunged into the Moika River in central St. Petersburg. Six of those who were onboard climbed out of the water on their own.

A surveillance video released by the Russian media showed the bus driving fast, making a sharp turn onto the bridge and colliding with another vehicle before breaking through the barrier and falling into the water.

Russia claims capture of villages: Russian forces have captured five villages as part of a renewed ground assault in Ukraine's northeast, the country's Defense Ministry said Saturday.

Ukrainian journalists reported Friday that Russian troops took the villages of Borysivka, Ohirtseve, Pylina and Strilecha, all of which lie in a militarily contested "grey zone" on the border of Ukraine's Kharkiv region and Russia.

Russian officials said they had also captured another village, Pletnivka, in a renewed attack on the region that Ukrainian authorities said forced more than 1,700 civilians to flee.

Artillery, mortar, and aerial bombardments hit more than 30 different towns and villages, killing at least three people and injuring five others, said Kharkiv Gov. Oleh Syniehubov.

Tusk vows to strengthen security: Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk on Saturday traveled to the country's border with Belarus, which is also the European Union's external border with the autocratic state, and pledged to do more to strengthen security along its entire eastern frontier.

Tusk accused Belarus, Russia's ally, of intensifying what he called a "hybrid war" against the West by encouraging migrants to try to cross into the EU. He vowed that Poland would spare no expense on its border security.

"I know that there are more and more illegal crossings every day," Tusk told reporters at the border, where he met with Polish Army soldiers, Border Guard officers and police.

Malta's deputy PM resigns: Malta's deputy prime minister resigned Friday, and ended his European Commission bid, after he was charged with fraud in a hospital scandal roiling the Mediterranean island nation.

In his resignation letter, Chris Fearné denied wrongdoing but said he must put Malta before everything else.

In the letter, he asked Prime Minister Robert Abela to withdraw his candidacy to be Malta's candidate for the European Commission.

"I want to be clear, I am taking this step not because I have any doubts on my innocence, but because it is the right thing to do," Fearné wrote.

Thousands of protesters in Armenia: Thousands of protesters in Armenia angered by the government's decision to hand over control of some border villages to Azerbaijan demonstrated on Friday in the center of the Armenian capital for a second day to demand the resignation of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

The rally in Yerevan ended in the evening without incident, but the high-ranking Armenian Apostolic Church cleric who is leading the protests vowed that they would continue.

Armenia said in April that it would cede control of some border areas to Azerbaijan. That decision followed the lightning military campaign in September in which Azerbaijan's military forced ethnic Armenian separatist authorities in the Karabakh region to capitulate.

William says Kate's 'doing well': Prince William on Friday offered a positive assessment of his wife's health, a hospital administrator said, in one of the royal's few comments about Kate's condition since she announced that she was undergoing treatment for cancer.

William was on a solo tour of St Mary's Community Hospital on the Isles of Scilly, an archipelago off the Cornish coast in southwestern England. He traveled there to break ground for a new building that will include inpatient treatment beds and a maternity suite.



The New Hampshire statehouse is pictured, June 2, 2019, in Concord. Democrat Maggie Goodlander, a former senior White House aide with deep political connections, is running for Congress in her home state of New Hampshire. In a campaign announcement on May 9, she said she's running to take on bullies like right wing judges, extreme politicians and big corporations. (AP)

Politics

Barron won't be serving as Fla delegate

Kennedy challenges Trump to debate

COLUMBIA, SC, May 11, (AP): Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has challenged Donald Trump to a head-to-head debate for when both address a Libertarian convention later this month, a move that comes as the presumptive GOP nominee has ramped up both criticism of Kennedy's independent bid and demands that President Joe Biden meet him on a debate stage.

Arguing that he is "drawing a lot of voters from your former supporters," Kennedy said to Trump in an open letter posted to X that the Libertarian convention provides "perfect neutral territory for you and me to have a debate where you can defend your record for your wavering supporters."

Trump has been bullish in calling on Biden to debate him ahead of the November general election but has shied away from other rivals' previous debate entreaties. Trump skipped the 2024 GOP primary debates, saying it was unnecessary because voters know him and his record.

Kennedy, who last year challenged Biden for the Democratic nomination before launching an independent bid, has argued that his relatively strong showing in a few national polls gives his candidacy heft. Polls during the 2016 presidential campaign regularly put libertarian Gary Johnson's support in the high single or low double digits, but he ultimately received only about 3% of the vote nationwide.

In the open letter to Trump, Kennedy said their debate could "show the American public that at least two of the major candidates aren't afraid to debate each other." Kennedy wrote that convention organizers "are game for us to use our time there to bring the American people the debate they deserve!"

Spokespeople for the Trump campaign and the Libertarian Party did not immediately return messages seeking comment on Kennedy's debate challenge.

Also:

MIAMI: Former US president **Donald Trump's** youngest son, **Barron Trump**, won't be serving as a Florida delegate to the Republican National

Convention after all, his mother's office said Friday.

"While Barron is honored to have been chosen as a delegate by the Florida Republican Party, he regrettably declines to participate due to prior commitments," Melania Trump's office said.

Republican Party of Florida chairman **Evan Power** had said Wednesday that the 18-year-old high school senior would serve as one of 41 at-large delegates from Florida to the national gathering, where the GOP is set to officially nominate his father as its presidential candidate for the November general election.

CONCORD, NH: Democrat **Maggie Goodlander**, a former senior White House aide with deep political connections, announced on Thursday that she's running for Congress in her home state of New Hampshire.

Goodlander, who is married to President **Joe Biden's** national security adviser, **Jake Sullivan**, is the third Democrat to enter the race to succeed U.S. Rep. **Annie Kuster**, a fellow Democrat who announced in March that she would not seek a seventh term in the state's 2nd Congressional District. At least five Republicans also have announced their candidacies to represent the district, which stretches along the western half of the state and includes Concord and Nashua.

Goodlander, 37, grew up in Nashua and recently moved back there from Washington, where she worked in the Justice Department as a top antitrust official and as counsel to Attorney General Merrick Garland before moving to the White House chief of staff's office earlier this year. Previously, she served as an intelligence officer in the Navy Reserve and taught constitutional law at the University of New Hampshire and Dartmouth College.

York City mayor had been warned twice not to discuss "fallacies of the November 2020 election."

"And I get a text from him last night, and I get a text from him this morning that he refuses to talk about it," the Republican businessman, who has fundraised for Donald Trump, told the newspaper.

As Trump's personal attorney, Giuliani was a key figure in the former president's attempts to overturn the 2020 election results and remain in office. (AP)

Theft suspect survives gunfire: A man who crashed a stolen police vehicle, survived gunfire from 11 police officers and then drove off and crashed another police cruiser - all while wearing handcuffs in a hospital gown - is in no mental capacity to appear before a judge right now, his lawyer said Friday.

The chaotic chain of events involving at least five law enforcement agencies began when Gary Porter, already wanted on a felony theft warrant, was discovered passed out in a chicken coop on Monday, arrested and taken to a hospital for evaluation, police said.

Paris Police Chief Mike Dailey then took him to jail, and had stepped out of the pickup truck to escort him inside when Porter somehow slipped his handcuffs from behind his back, moved into the driver's seat and drove off. The chief jumped onto the truck's running board to try to stop him, but was thrown to the ground, authorities said. (AP)



Britain's Prince William, the Prince of Wales, known as the Duke of Cornwall when in Cornwall, reacts during a visit to St Mary's Harbour, the maritime gateway to the Isles of Scilly, England, to meet representatives from local businesses operating in the area on May 10. (AP)



DeSantis



Giuliani

America

Storms kill 1 in Calif.: Powerful storms packing hurricane-force winds killed at least one woman Friday in Florida as a week of deadly severe weather continued in the South, where uprooted trees crashed onto homes and knocked out electricity to thousands in several states.

City officials in Tallahassee said wind gusts of 80 to 100 mph (128 to 161 kph), speeds that exceed hurricane intensity, were reported in Florida's capital city. Images posted on social media showed mangled metal and other debris from damaged buildings littering some areas.

Florida Gov **Ron DeSantis** on Friday issued an executive order declaring a state of emergency for 12 counties in the northern part of the state affected by the storm.

A statement on the Tallahassee government's website said crews were scrambling to repair 100 broken power poles while half the homes and businesses were left without electricity in a city of 200,000 people. It said the National Weather Service was assessing paths of three potential tornadoes. (AP)

3 suspects in shooting held: Three suspects have been arrested in connection with a March shooting by masked men at a party in rural central California that killed four people and left seven others wounded, officials said Friday.

The three people were arrested on multiple gang-related charges and included one juvenile, Monterey County Sheriff Tina Nieto said Friday. They face four counts of murder, four counts of criminal conspiracy to commit murder and seven counts of attempted murder.

Officials said a group of men in masks got out of a car and opened fire at an outdoor party in King's City, a community of about 14,000 in southern Salinas Valley farm country, and then sped off.

Police declined to state whether they had identified a motive or provide other details about what happened, saying the investigation is ongoing. (AP)

WABC Radio suspends Giuliani: **Rudy Giuliani** was suspended Friday from WABC radio and his daily show canceled over what the station called his repeated

violation of a ban on discussing discredited 2020 election claims. Giuliani said the station's ban is overly broad and "a clear violation of free speech."

Giuliani issued a statement saying he had heard of WABC radio owner John Catsimatis' decision through "a leak" to The New York Times. Catsimatis confirmed his decision in a text message to The Associated Press.

Giuliani "left me no option," Catsimatis told the Times, saying that the former New



A mother gives a kiss to her child during a Mother's Day celebration event at the Metropolis shopping mall in Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada, on May 9. The Mother's Day falls on May 12 this year. (Xinhua)

Lat/Am

Mexico candidate slips

Panama's Mulino to close migrant route

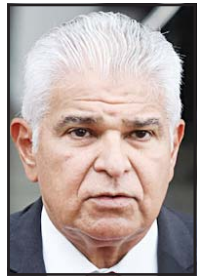
PANAMA CITY, May 11, (AP) — Panama is on the verge of a dramatic change to its immigration policy that could reverberate from the dense Darien jungle to the US border.

President-elect José Raúl Mulino says he will shut down a migration route used by more than 500,000 people last year. Until now, Panama has helped speedily bus the migrants across its territory so they can continue their journey north.

Whether Mulino is able to reduce migration through a sparsely populated region with little government presence remains to be seen, experts say.

"Panama and our Darien are not a transit route. It is our border," Mulino said after his victory with 34% of the vote in Sunday's election was formalized Thursday evening.

As he had suggested during his campaign, the 64-year-old lawyer and former security minister said he would try to end "the Darien odyssey that does not have a reason to exist."



Mulino

The migrant route through the narrow isthmus grew exponentially in popularity in recent years with the help of organized crime in Colombia, making it an affordable, if dangerous, land route for hundreds of thousands.

It grew as countries like Mexico, under pressure from the US government, imposed visa restrictions on various nationalities including Venezuelans and just this week Peruvians in an attempt to stop migrants flying into the country just to continue on to the US border.

But masses of people took the challenge and set out on foot through the jungle-clad Colombian-Panamanian border. A crossing that initially could take a week or more eventually was whittled down to two or three days as the path became more established and entrepreneurial locals established a range of support services.

It remains a risky route, however. Reports of sexual assaults have continued to rise, some migrants are killed by bandits in robberies and others drown trying to cross rushing rivers.

Mexico's candidate slips: Mexico's ruling party presidential candidate slipped up during a campaign speech Friday and said President Andrés Manuel López Obrador was motivated by "personal ambition," but later acknowledged the phrase "could be misinterpreted." In Mexico it is used to describe a desire for personal economic gain.

Former Mexico City mayor Claudia Sheinbaum holds a comfortable polling lead ahead of the June 2 elections and has sought to link her candidacy to López Obrador, who founded her Morena party. He is by far the more popular of the two politicians, and Sheinbaum has pledged to follow his policies.

So it was all the more surprising when she said Friday that "we are not going to reach the presidency like Andrés Manuel López Obrador did, out of personal ambition."

She later corrected herself, posting a statement on her social media accounts saying: "Upon finishing my speech in Baja California Sur, a colleague told me there was a phrase that could be misinterpreted ... It's obvious President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has transformed our country without personal ambitions."

Mother's Day march in Mexico: Hundreds of mothers of missing people, relatives and activists marched in protest through downtown Mexico City Friday to mark a sad commemoration of Mother's Day.

The marchers, angry over what they say is the government's lack of interest in investigating the disappearances of Mexico's over 100,000 missing people, chanted slogans like "Where are they, our children, where are they?" They carried massive banners that, in some cases, showed nearly 100 photos of missing people.

The Mother's Day march comes just days after officials managed to find the bodies of three foreigners less than a week after they went missing in Baja California state, while many Mexican mothers have been searching for the sons and daughters for years, and even decades.

"Because they are foreigners, those boys' country put the pressure on to look for them and they found them," said Maria del Carmen Ayala Vargas, who has been looking for almost three years for any trace of her son, Iván Pastrana Ayala, who was abducted in the Gulf coast state of Veracruz in 2021.

Peru prez brother, lawyer held: Peruvian authorities arrested President Dina Boluarte's brother and her lawyer Friday over influence-peddling accusations, a day after the South American country's government disbanded a police unit that assisted prosecutors in investigating the president's inner circle.

A judge signed off on the arrests, according to a copy of the warrant obtained by The Associated Press. The document accuses the president's sibling of working to appoint government officials in exchange for money and an agreement to gather signatures to register a political party.

The developments mark the latest step in mounting pressure on Boluarte, who became president in December 2022 when she replaced then-president Pedro Castillo. He was dismissed by Parliament and is now imprisoned while being investigated for alleged corruption and rebellion.

The warrant also granted the prosecutors' request to keep both men incommunicado for 10 days, a legal maneuver that authorities typically reserve for cases they deem highly serious.

Brazil flooding forecast to worsen: More heavy rain is forecast for Brazil's already flooded Rio Grande do Sul state, where many of those remaining are poor people with limited ability to move to less dangerous areas.

More than 15 centimeters (nearly 6 inches) of rain could fall over the weekend, according to the Friday afternoon bulletin from Brazil's national meteorology institute. It said there is also a high likelihood that winds will intensify and water levels rise in the Patos lagoon next to the state capital, Porto Alegre, and the surrounding area.

Carlos Sampaio, 62, lives in a low-income community next to soccer club Gremio's stadium in Porto Alegre. His two-story home doubles as a sports bar.



A train wagon that collided with another stands on the rails in Buenos Aires, Argentina on May 10. Inset: Paramedics transport injured commuters after two trains collided in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Friday. (AP)

Train in central Buenos Aires strikes boxcar on the track, injuring dozens

At least 90 people were injured in Argentina's capital when a passenger train struck an empty boxcar on the tracks and derailed Friday, authorities said, a rare collision that fueled questions about basic safety.

The train was on its way from Buenos Aires to the northern suburbs when it derailed around 10:30 a.m. on a bridge in the trendy neighborhood of Pal-

ermo, safety officials said.

While it was not immediately clear why the idled boxcar had been on the bridge, Argentina's railway union said several meters (yards) of copper cable used to carry power along the tracks had been stolen from the railway, disabling the signaling system intended to prevent such accidents.

Union leaders fiercely opposed to libertarian

President Javier Milei's economic austerity blamed the government for its failure to invest in public infrastructure.

"We have been demanding for 10 days that the stolen signaling cables be repaired," rail union leader Omar Maturano told the country's independent Radio Con Vos station. "The government said there was no money for spare parts." (AP)



Rescue personnel search the site of a building collapse in George, South Africa, on May 9. Hope was fading on May 10 for dozens of construction workers buried for days in the rubble of a building that collapsed in South Africa as the death toll rose to 12 and more than 40 remained missing. (AP)



Deby



Fiqi

Africa

Chad military ruler wins poll: Chad's election committee on Friday declared the military ruler Mahamat Deby as the winner of the country's presidential elections held on Monday.

General Deby won 61.3 percent of the vote, while his closest rival, Prime Minister Succes Masra, won 18.53 percent, the committee announced in initial vote results.

The vote watchdog is expected to announce the final results on May 21 once election challenges are over.

Masra had earlier declared that he had won the race in the first round of voting, and that victory had been stolen "from the people."

Prime Minister Masra claimed victory in a live broadcast on Facebook, and called on his supporters and security forces to oppose what he said was an attempt by General Deby to "steal the victory from the people." (KUNA)

'Terminate UN political mission': Somalia is asking the United Nations to terminate its political mission in the country, which has been assisting the government to bring peace and stability in the face of attacks by the al-Qaeda-linked extremist group al-Shabab.

In a letter to the Security Council and Secretary-General Antonio Guterres obtained Friday by The Associated Press, Somali Foreign Minister Ahmed Moalim Fiqi said the decision followed "a thorough consideration of our strategic priorities."

The current mandate of the mission, known as UNSOM, expires Oct 31 and Fiqi asked for "the swift conclusion of the necessary procedures for the termination of the mission by the end of the mandate."

The UN mission has worked closely with African Union peacekeepers, whose current transitional mission, ATMIS, has been scaling back its presence and is expected to turn over security responsibilities to Somali forces at the end of the year. (AP)

Gunmen abduct 9 students: At least

Asia

Japan defense chief urges higher security

Kim supervises test of rocket launcher

SEOUL, South Korea, May 11, (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un supervised another test firing of a new multiple rocket launch system the country plans to deploy to its forces starting this year, state media said Saturday, part of its move to bolster its lineup of weapons targeting South Korean population centers.

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said Friday's test confirmed the "advantage and destructive power" of the 240-millimeter multiple rocket launcher and its guided shells. The agency said the system, which the North already tested twice this year, will be deployed to combat units from 2024 to 2026 to replace older weapons.

North Korea in recent months has maintained an accelerated pace in weapons testing as it expands its military capabilities while diplomacy with the United States and South Korea remains stalled. Experts say Kim's goal is to eventually pressure the United States into accepting the idea of the North as a nuclear power and negotiating economic and security concessions from a position of strength.

Targets

North Korea has focused on artillery systems in recent weeks. Its testing activities included salvo launches of 600-mm multiple rocket launchers in April that state media described as a simulated nuclear counterattack against enemy targets.

The North also this year conducted various cruise missile tests and flight-tested what it described as a solid-fuel intermediate range missile with hypersonic warhead capabilities. Experts say it is designed to reach remote US targets in the Pacific, including the military hub of Guam.

Following Friday's test, Kim issued instructions to maximize the production of the 240-mm multiple rocket launchers and their guided shells, which he said would bring a "significant change" to the combat capabilities of his forces, the North Korean news agency said.

While North Korean artillery sys-

tems are designed to target South Korea's capital area, which is home to half of that country's 51 million people, South Korean military officials also suspect the North's recent tests are aimed at examining weapons it plans to export to Russia.

US and South Korean officials have accused the North of providing artillery shells, missiles and other military equipment to Russia to help extend its warfighting in Ukraine.

Kim in recent months has attempted to boost the visibility of his ties with Moscow and Beijing as he tries to break out of diplomatic isolation and insert himself into a united front against Washington.

Also:

MANILA, Philippines: A top Philippine security official demanded Friday the immediate expulsion of Chinese diplomats allegedly behind a reported leak of a phone conversation between one of the diplomats and a Filipino admiral about South China Sea disputes that have strained diplomatic ties.

National Security Adviser Eduardo Ano said he was backing a call by the Philippine defense chief for Manila's foreign office to take actions against Chinese embassy individuals in Manila "who claim to have recorded an alleged phone conversation between a Chinese diplomat and a military official" in violation of Philippine laws and international diplomatic protocols.

Two Manila newspapers cited a Chinese Embassy source as saying that in a recorded call with a Chinese diplomat in January, a Filipino admiral agreed to a new way of transporting supplies to a Philippine-occupied shoal in the disputed waters. It required Manila to notify Beijing for such offshore missions and promise not to bring construction materials.

"Those individuals in the Chinese Embassy responsible for violating Philippine laws and the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and those responsible for these malign influence and interference operations must be removed from the country immediately," Ano said in a strongly

worded statement.

"The Chinese Embassy's repeated acts of engaging in and dissemination of disinformation, misinformation, and mal-information - now releasing spurious transcripts or recordings of purported conversations between officials of the host country - should not be allowed to pass unchallenged or without serious penalty," Ano said.

It was not immediately clear from Ano's statement if Philippine authorities had verified the news reports or if the phone conversation really took place. The Department of Foreign Affairs did not say if it was considering Ano's call.

The Chinese government and its embassy in Manila have not confirmed the news reports nor denied them.

TOKYO: Japan's defense chief Friday called for the bolstering of its anti-drone capability after a drone footage posted on Chinese social media showed a Japanese aircraft carrier docked at a restricted navy port west of Tokyo. Defense Minister Minoru Kihara called it a serious security threat.

Kihara's acknowledgement of the vulnerability comes more than a month after a video filmed by a drone showed JS Izumo, one of two Japanese helicopter carriers, being retrofitted to carry stealth fighters to strengthen Japan's counter-strike capability in the face of China's assertive military actions in the Indo-Pacific.

The footage, also showing plants, buildings and other facility at the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force's Yokosuka naval base was posted on a Chinese social media site in March, prompting investigation by ministry officials. The footage has also been posted on other platforms such as X.

"After the video analysis we have reached a conclusion that the footage was most likely filmed by a flying drone," Kihara told reporters.

"We are taking the findings extremely seriously," the minister added.

"If drones harm defense facilities, it could cause serious disruptions to the defense of our country."

nine students have been abducted by gunmen during a late-night raid on their school in northern Nigeria's Kogi state, authorities said Friday, the third such ab-

duction amid rampant kidnappings targeting schools in the conflict-hit region this year.

The assailants invaded the Confluence



Performers stage a puppet show 'De La Fontaine' in Wuhan, central China's Hubei Province on May 5. (Xinhua)

University of Science and Technology in Kogi state, which neighbors the nation's capital, Abuja, and whisked away the students from their classrooms before security forces could arrive, according to Kogi Commissioner for Information Kingsley Femi Fanwo.

The state has "activated the security architecture to track the kidnappers and ensure the abducted students are rescued and the abductors apprehended," Fanwo added. (AP)

Bombings death toll 35: The death toll in the bombings of two camps for displaced people in eastern Congo last week rose to at least 35 Friday, with an additional two in very critical condition, a local official told The Associated Press.

Eric Bwanapuwa, a lawmaker who represents Goma, the provincial capital of North Kivu state, where the attacks took place, provided the updated figure in an interview Friday.

The Congolese army and a rebel group known as M23 have blamed each other for the bombings at the Mugunga and Lac Vert displacement camps in eastern Congo.

The US State Department accused M23 and the army of neighboring Rwanda. (AP)

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts		
PAKISTAN	-	+413.08	73,110.63	DUBAI	-	-6.70	4,173.04
BRITAIN	-	+52.41	8,433.76	PHILIPPINES	-	-30.53	6,511.93
EUROPE	-	+30.67	5,085.08				



Salma Al-Hajjaj and Najla Al-Eisa receive the two awards from the Meed Magazine.

Bank secures two awards from MEED magazine

Gulf Bank excels in Diversity, Inclusion and Women Empowerment Initiatives

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: In recognition of its pioneering role in executing initiatives that promote diversity and inclusion within the bank and externally, Gulf Bank was honored by MEED magazine with two prestigious awards: The "Best Implementation of Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives" and the "Best Initiative for Women in Business" award for the Middle East and North Africa region. The awards were presented at a grand ceremony in Dubai, last week.

On this occasion, Salma Al-Hajjaj, the General Manager of Human Resources at Gulf Bank, said upon receiving the award: "We are delighted that Gulf Bank has been honored with this prestigious award. It represents the culmination of our dedicated efforts to uphold the principles of sustainability, and to establish a work environment enriched with diversity and inclusion, guaranteeing equal opportunities for everyone."

She continued, "We are convinced that fostering a culture of diversity and inclusion not only boosts the bank's positive reputation, but also enhances performance, and supports the development, creativity, and innovation of our employees. It strengthens their relationships and encourages the exchange of ideas and experiences. Empowering women, youth, and individuals with special needs is also fundamental to our strategy and aligns with our vision for Kuwait."

Al-Hajjaj also emphasized, "We firmly believe that creating a fair work environment not only fosters greater success for the bank, but also cultivates a healthier work culture for all, thereby enhancing its esteemed position as a top choice for employment in the Kuwaiti financial sector."

Al-Hajjaj mentioned that the award encourages the bank to persist in its exceptional efforts to empower women, noting a rise in the percentage of female leaders from 10% to 30% over the past decade, while women now make up about 42% of the bank's total workforce. She highlighted that Gulf Bank was one of the first in Kuwait to sign the United Nations principles for empowering women, and was the first Kuwaiti bank to eliminate all forms of discrimination between its female and male employees, achieving complete equality in employment benefits.

She stressed the need to persist in empowering women to narrow the gender gap, noting that such efforts boost institutional productivity, strengthen the national economy, and increase the Gross Domestic Product. She further stated, "We recognize the critical role of women in economic growth and in upholding sustainability principles, which aligns with the bank's strategy and Kuwait's vision."

Fair Work Environment

Upon receiving the "Best Initiative for Women in Business"

award, Ms. Najla Al-Eisa, the Deputy General Manager and Chief Marketing Officer of Gulf Bank, expressed her joy over the bank's accomplishment. She noted that the award signifies the success of the extensive efforts the bank has invested in this field.

She pointed out that the bank is fully committed to women's empowerment at all levels, addressing the significant challenges that women face in society. This commitment is demonstrated by organizing the annual "Lead the Way" conference, which brings together representatives from the government, the private sector, and non-profit organizations. Additionally, the bank organizes a monthly "WOW Diwaniya" gathering to address internal challenges and strongly focuses on the training and professional development of women; aiming to support their career advancement and leadership opportunities.

Al-Eisa mentioned that Gulf Bank firmly believes that establishing a fair work environment contributes to greater success for the bank, fosters a healthier work culture for everyone, and enhances its prestigious status as one of the top employment destinations in the Kuwaiti financial sector.

She continued, "It is important to note that this recognition is just one of several prestigious awards Gulf Bank has received. Notably, we were awarded the 'Excellence in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion' at the Middle East and North Africa Human Resources Management Summit 2023, which took place in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The summit brought together leading experts and professionals from the Human Resources sector, representing some of the region's most distinguished companies and financial institutions."

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.

'Weyay' awarded Best Digital Bank

NBK bags 6 prestigious banking excellence awards from MEED

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has received 6 prestigious awards from MEED international magazine within its MENA Banking Excellence Awards for 2024. The accolades come in recognition of its excellence in consumer banking and enhancing customer digital experience through innovative solutions, as well as achievements in sustainable investment and delivering market-leading wealth management services through NBK Wealth.

Excellence in retail banking and digital innovation

The awards won by NBK during the annual ceremony organized by MEED in Dubai included: Best Retail Bank - Kuwait (NBK), Best Digital Bank - Kuwait (Weyay). The bank also received two awards for Best Innovation Programme in MENA, and Excellence in Sustainable Investment in MENA for NBK Academy, whereas NBK Wealth was awarded MENA Fund Manager of the Year.

On the other hand, Mr. Mohamed Al-Othman, CEO - Consumer and Digital Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait was named MENA Retail Banker of the Year for the third year in a row.

These awards are a testament to NBK's leadership locally and regionally and its pioneering innovative digital achievements and catering to customers' banking needs by introducing top-notch banking services and advanced payment solutions, making the name "NBK" associated with everything new in digital banking products and services in Kuwait and across the MENA region.

Al-Othman MENA Retail Banker of the Year

Naming Al-Othman as MENA Retail Banker of the Year reaffirms his pivotal role, along with Consumer Banking Group team in attaining these achievements and providing a comprehensive digital banking experience that not only meets customers' needs, but exceeds their expectations.

This award recognizes exceptional leadership and dedication to providing the best banking services, in addition to constantly working to set ambitious goals and implement innovative strategies that have not only had a significant impact on NBK customers, but also on the Kuwaiti and regional banking landscape. It also highlights the long-term impact of Al-Othman's contributions as a role model for banking leaders who are driving progress and innovation in the industry in the region.

As for Best Digital Bank award won by Weyay Bank, the first digital bank in Kuwait, it recognizes the exception-



Al-Othman and Al-Kharafi with the NBK team during the bank's awards ceremony.

al growth seen by the bank in digital banking services since its launch in 2021, strengthening its position as a local pioneer in this area through unwavering endeavors to introduce new innovative banking products. It also reflects its instrumental role in providing advanced services which cater to the evolving needs and lifestyle of the digital-native generation, through a wide range of digital banking products and services.

Excellence in Sustainable Investment

On the sustainability front, NBK received the award of Excellence in Sustainable Investment in MENA for NBK Academy program which boasts a legacy of success for 16 years. The Academy was launched with the aim of qualifying Kuwaiti fresh university graduates to join the banking sector by providing them with the best-in-class training programs developed in cooperation with leading international institutions and universities to meet the demands of the labor market.

Founded in 1957, MEED is a leading magazine focused on economic and business news and intelligence related to the Middle East. In partnership with leading financial services publications Retail Banker International and Private Banker International, both issued by GlobalData, MEED introduces MENA Banking Excellence Awards to celebrate the best-in-class banking and financial services institutions and individuals for their innovative offering and commitment to customer excellence.

NBK Wealth MENA Fund Manager of the Year

NBK Wealth made a special presence at the MEED Awards ceremony this year by securing the coveted award

of MENA Fund Manager of the Year. NBK Wealth recently unveiled its brand identity as the largest local and regional wealth management group with AUM exceeding US\$ 20 billion. It also strengthened its global footprint with an extensive network of comprehensive operations spanning 9 cities across 5 countries worldwide.

NBK Wealth provides clients with numerous unique advantages, ensuring them an unmatched experience. This encompasses personalized services customized to meet their specific needs and financial objectives, delivered by a dedicated team of over 125 investment professionals and traders, in addition to 75 relationship managers.

NBK Wealth provides distinctive services such as asset management, brokerage, lending, deposits, and a range of customized and innovative solutions tailored for high-net-worth individuals and institutional clients, thus contributing to strengthening the Group's diversification endeavors.

This prestigious award underscores not just NBK Wealth's dedication to exceptional investment performance, but also its unwavering commitment to exceeding client expectations on every level. The group prioritizes fostering strong, long-term relationships with each client, built on a foundation of trust, transparency, and a deep understanding of their unique financial aspirations.

As NBK Wealth celebrates this remarkable achievement, the group remains steadfast in its commitment to continuous development. The team is committed to staying at the forefront of the wealth management industry, continuously innovating and adapting its strategies to meet the evolving needs of its clients in a dynamic and ever-changing financial landscape.

Recognition for exceptional leadership

Boubyan Bank CEO Al-Majed named 'MENA CEO of the Year' by MEED

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: MEED, the internationally renowned publication, has named Boubyan Bank's Vice-Chairman & Group Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Adel Abdul Wahab Al-Majed, as "MENA CEO of the Year", in recognition of his exceptional leadership and significant contributions to the growth of the banking industry over the past years. This came as a part of its 2024 MENA excellence awards.

Al-Majed received the award in a special ceremony held by the institution in Dubai in the presence of Boubyan Bank's CEO - Private, Consumer, and Digital Banking, Mr. Abdullah Al-Tuwaijri, Mr. Ahmed Al-Fahad, General Manager and Secretary to the Board of Boubyan Bank, and a group of elite bankers, economists, and leaders from various economic sectors to recognize the institutions that won the awards at the Middle East level.

Al-Majed is an example of leading Kuwaiti bankers, who succeeded over more than four decades in making a clear mark in the banking business, and who has had outstanding achievements that contributed to the growth and reinforcement of the banking industry ever since joining the National Bank of Kuwait wherein he came up through the ranks until he assumed the position of the Deputy CEO of the bank before joining Boubyan Bank in 2009 to embark upon a new journey marked with many successes.

MEED congratulated Mr. Adel Al-Majed on this well-deserved achievement owing to his prominent and key role in the successful journey of Boubyan Group, where he - along with his special team - led the transformation up to the success which made Boubyan a banking example to follow in Islamic banking in general, and financial and banking institutions in particular.

They stated that the most unique thing about that prestigious award won by Al-Majed was being given for the first time ever to the most prominent and top visionary CEOs, with the ability to effect a significant change not only institution-wise but also across the MENA banking scene as a whole.

On his part, Mr. Al-Majed commented as he accepted the award: "I would like to thank everyone for this recognition. I am proud and grate-



Al-Majed receiving the award.

ful for receiving this award, which crowns the efforts of a journey that extends for over 40 years of ongoing and ceaseless work in facing and overcoming challenges, up to where we stand right now."

He went on to add: "I would like to seize this opportunity to thank all my colleagues who accompanied me throughout this extended journey, and all those who contributed to this achievement, as well as many other achievements that placed Boubyan in the lead of the banking business. Any excellence or success is mainly attributed to the professional team and the sincere efforts exerted to achieve success."

Factors of Success and Excellence

Al-Majed's journey with Boubyan Bank since he moved from the National Bank of Kuwait back in 2009 is considered an example of domestic success stories. Back then, Boubyan Bank was at the bottom of the table of local banks in terms of financial and economic indicators. Following which, Boubyan Bank witnessed major transformations and cemented its leadership position among the top 3 banks in Kuwait, and it ranks even first in some key indicators and market shares.

Despite all the challenges faced by Al-Majed and his team, a new strategy was developed that focused on core banking, and bringing up a new spirit to the bank's employees based on innovating in order to upgrade the bank's services, in addition to the

importance of introducing cutting-edge banking solutions that meet the demands of both retail and corporate customers in line with analytics, studies, and ideas, regardless of all potential challenges towards translation of all those into real solutions that meet customers' needs.

Excellence in Customer Service

Ever since the first day of the bank's transformation journey in 2009, Boubyan's management has always been working to improve the quality of services and products to improve and enrich a banking experience that meets the needs of customers and becomes part of their lifestyle, which led the bank to be in the lead of customer service in Kuwait as it has been named 2023's "Best Islamic Bank in Customer Service" for the 14th year in a row since 2010 by Service Hero, the consumer-driven customer satisfaction index, making the bank a leading franchise in the banking industry, by following a tailored path that reinforces customer satisfaction levels, leading to receiving a 96% customer-satisfaction score among all Islamic and conventional local banks.

Key Financial Indicators' Growth

Under the leadership of Al-Majed and the executive team of the Group, Boubyan managed to have many repeated successes that pushed the bank's figures to record levels, thus making the bank a unique example among banks in Kuwait and the region. In numbers and over the past 10 years alone, the bank's assets grew

from ~USD 7.1 billion (KD 2.2 billion) to ~USD 27.4 billion now (KD 8.4 billion). Moreover, over the past 5 years the operating profits grew from USD 270.0 million (KD 83.0 million) to ~USD 349.7 million (KD 107.5 million), while the bank's share of Islamic financing grew from 8.55% to 11.67%, and its share of deposits grew from 8.13% to 11.30%.

Expansion Regionally and Internationally

Coinciding with its 20th anniversary, Boubyan has become a group now comprising of 3 banks (Boubyan Bank, The Bank of London and the Middle East, and Nomo Bank "the Group's digital arm"), in addition to another 3 companies, namely, Boubyan Takaful Insurance Company, Boubyan Capital Investment Company, and Boubyan National), to continue Boubyan's strategy towards domestic and international expansion.

Furthermore, and as a part of its regional expansion, Boubyan established a subsidiary of BLME in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in addition to BLME's headquarters in London and Dubai, and Boubyan now owns 71% of BLME's shares.

In line with the strategic approach aiming to reinforce the global presence of Boubyan Bank with focus on digital banking services, Nomo was established as a sustainable brand in Kuwait and the UK as the world's first Islamic digital bank. Nomo succeeded in doing so as it serves as a platform for Sharia-compliant digital services and solutions, which is on track to penetrate GCC markets with steady steps towards further expansion.

Shaping the Digital Future

Boubyan Bank's digital transformation strategy gained a significant momentum, being a real and living example for succeeding in being highly competitive regionally and internationally in digital services and in encouraging innovation and sustainable digital growth towards accelerating transformation and making financial transactions more convenient, thus enabling Boubyan to be in the forefront of the digital banking scene, globally, regionally, and domestically, evidenced by retaining the award for the World's Best Islamic Digital Bank by Global Finance for 9 years in a row.

Other Voices

Hybrid cars gain momentum

US increases taxes on Chinese electric cars

By Kamel Al-Harami
Independent Oil Analyst

The United States of America (USA) is increasing taxes on imported Chinese electric vehicles, as it threatens its car industry. Globally, the new vehicles are currently not favored, as there is still concern about traditional fuel cars remaining with us for years to come.



Al-Harami

Instead of solely relying on electric cars and facing logistical obstacles such as the lack of electric cars charging stations in certain areas, there has been a sudden turn towards hybrid cars. This is because they can run on gasoline, diesel and electric power. This is in addition to the fact that they are more expensive than regular vehicles.

It is a fact that oil and gas will continue to be with us. Some major European oil companies are even reconsidering their long-term strategy and returning to oil, just like the rest of the major American oil companies. It seems there is still life for fossil

fuels beyond the 2030s.

Executives from major car companies like General Motors, Ford, Hyundai and Nissan are now expressing support for dual-fuel cars rather than solely electric vehicles. The current investments are being made in hybrid vehicles, which offer the option of using both types of fuel. Availability of sufficient electric car charging stations needs to be ensured.

Electric car sales in the USA slowed down last year, and the industry in Europe had to offer discounts to attract buyers, as they began to realize this shift in buyer attitude towards electric cars became apparent.

Switching to a dual fuel system is the only option, while the final decision on what type of vehicle to buy should be left to the future car buyers.

The threat posed by Chinese cheap electric cars, along with being the biggest consumer market, is itself a challenge for the global vehicle industry.

Therefore, relying on a single source of fuel to power vehicles is a thing of the past. The future lies in hybrid cars, and the motor industry is realizing this fact. It should follow the Chinese path all the way.



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Standard Chartered Bank to fund green Chinese firms

NAIROBI, May 11. (Xinhua): Standard Chartered Bank is keen to provide significant financing to Chinese firms that uphold green ethos to expand their footprint in Africa, an executive said on Friday.

There is a growing demand on the continent for sustainable consumption and production technologies to achieve a climate-resilient future for local communities, said Richard Li, the head of wealth and retail banking at Standard Char-

tered Bank China, in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya.

"I can see opportunities and capabilities we can bring in as Standard Chartered Bank to support our clients to respond to this trend between China and Kenya that will accelerate the green transition in Africa," Li said.

He added that the multinational lender will also assist Chinese companies in leveraging their involvement in the Africa-China trade corridor to boost the conti-

nent's capacity to produce green products to meet the growing market demand.

"We will also respond to the new trend where goods that were previously made in China are now made in Kenya," Li said.

Economic experts have noted that Kenya needs to accelerate its green transformation efforts to respond to the effects of climate change, such as the recent raging floods that have killed more than 260 people in the country.

British economy rebounds strongly in first quarter

The British economy bounced back strongly in the first three months of the year, bringing to an end to what economists termed a "technical recession", official figures showed Friday.

The Office for National Statistics said the economy grew by 0.6% in the first quarter from the previous three-month period, with broad-based strength across the crucial services sector in particular.

The increase was higher than the 0.4% predicted by economists

and the strongest since the fourth quarter of 2021 when the economy was rebounding following the sharp contraction during the coronavirus pandemic.

It comes after two quarters of modest declines, which in the U.K. is defined as a recession.

Despite the quarterly increase, the British economy has barely grown over the past year. It has been hobbled by interest rates at 16-year highs of 5.25%.

There was hope Thursday that

they may be on the way down soon. Bank of England Gov. Andrew Bailey indicated that a rate cut may be on the cards in June if inflation continues to trend downwards.

The Bank of England, like the U.S. Fed and other central banks around the world, raised interest rates aggressively in late 2021 from near zero to counter price rises first stoked by supply chain issues during the coronavirus pandemic and then by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. (AP)



Bank representatives receiving awards.



Celebrating the award of the best bank for customer protection and combating fraud in Kuwait.



Receiving the award for the best retail bank in Egypt.

Al Sumait: We are honored to be recognized for our commitment to setting industry benchmarks

ABK shines at MENA Banking Excellence Awards 2024 – MEED

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) Group proudly announced its outstanding achievements at the prestigious MENA Banking Excellence Awards 2024 hosted by MEED. The ceremony took place at Kempinski The Boulevard in Dubai, where ABK won two significant accolades symbolizing excellence and innovation in the banking sector.

Group Strength

ABK's notable wins include Excellence in Customer Protection/Fraud Control (Kuwait), recognizing the Bank's unwavering commitment to safeguarding its customers' interests and maintaining robust fraud control measures. The second was the noteworthy Best Retail Bank – Egypt award, acknowledging ABK's unparalleled dedication to providing top-notch retail banking services and solutions in Egypt.

These awards underscore ABK's relentless pursuit of excellence, innovation, and customer-centricity. They epitomize the Bank's strong performance, solidifying its reputation as a leader in the banking industry.



Abdulla Al Sumait – Acting Group Chief Executive Officer

Several ABK representatives attended the celebratory event that brought together diverse and distinguished companies in a celebration of excellence and success.

Expressing his pride in ABK's achievements, Abdulla Al Sumait, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer, said, "These awards reflect our unwavering dedication to innovation and customer protection. We are honored to be recognized for our commitment to setting industry benchmarks."

Customer Security and Centricity

Al Sumait emphasized the significance of the Customer Protection/Fraud Control award, stating, "This accolade reaffirms ABK's proactive approach to prioritizing our customers and ensuring the highest standards of security and fraud prevention."

He further stated that winning this title comes along with the Bank's continuous support of the Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association's 'Let's Be Aware' banking awareness campaign.

This includes publishing informative content on its website and social media platforms to protect and educate customers, while alerting them to the importance of avoiding various forms of fraud.

Al Sumait also highlighted the importance of the Best Retail Bank award, emphasizing, "This is a testament to ABK's strong regional operations and our relentless focus on delivering unparalleled retail banking services in Egypt, underscoring our commitment to customer satisfaction."

He underscored ABK-Egypt's ongoing efforts in delivering worthwhile products and services that meet customers' evolving needs. This is in addition to its expansion efforts to serve the country across various governorates.

As ABK celebrates these accolades, the Bank reaffirms its commitment to

Gross profit amounts to KD 13.4 million

General Assembly meeting of KIC approved 40% cash dividends for 2023

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: The Ordinary General Assembly of Kuwait Insurance Company met on Thursday, May 9th, 2024 and approved all agenda items, including, the distribution of cash dividends to the shareholders at a rate of 40%, i.e. Forty fils per share.

The gross profit during the year amounted to KD 13.4 million (USD 43.5 million) compared to KD 12.4 million (USD 40.3 million) last year, which was the profit after excluding the exceptional non-recurring profits amounting to KD 31.7 million (USD 103 million) which resulted due to the swap of Ahli United Bank shares held by KIC into Kuwait Finance House shares, after the acquisition in the year 2022.

The Net profit amounted to KD 12.1 million (USD 39.3 million) with Earnings Per Share of Fils 65.61 (US Cents 21) after deducting the realized gain from sale of investments during the year 2023 amounting to KD 1.3 million (USD 4.2 million), which will be transferred directly to the retained earnings.

The Gross Written Premium this year amounted to KD 61.9 million (USD 201 million), compared to KD 50.5 million (USD 163.9 million) last year which



The Annual General Assembly Meeting of Kuwait Insurance Company in progress.

shows an increase of KD 11.4 million (USD 37 million), equal to 22.6%.

Earned premiums amounted to KD 53.8 million (USD 175 million) for this year, compared to KD 50.7 million (USD 165 million) which shows an

increase of KD 3.1 million (USD 10.1 million) equal to 6.1%.

Operating profit amounted to KD 11.4 million (USD 37 million) compared to KD 6.1 million (USD 19.8 million), which shows an increase of KD 5.3 million (USD 17.2 million), equal to 87%, because of the increase in earned premiums and due to the stability in the cost of insurance and reinsurance.

Retained earnings amounted to KD 80.5 million (USD 261.4 million) during the year 2023, compared to KD 75 million (USD 243.5 million) last year, which shows an increase of KD 5.5 million (USD 17.9 million), equal to 7.33%.

Mr. Sami Sharif, Chief Executive Officer, stated that we have achieved these operating results as a part of fulfilling our obligations towards shareholders and customers and we continue to follow a conservative policy with our continued success in managing the challenges facing us. In pursuit of diversifying the products and services that we provide to customers, Kuwait Insurance Company acquired 81.5% of the National Takaful Insurance company during the fourth quarter of 2023, which

will provide Takaful Insurance services.

Mr. Sami Sharif mentioned that in addition to the sales and profits, this year was also full of other accomplishments, such as, the reaffirmation of our company's credit ratings from AM Best and Moody's credit rating agencies with an A- (Excellent) and A3 respectively, both with a stable outlook and we have taken progressive steps towards geographical expansion, outside Kuwait.

Aiming to focus on the importance of corporate social responsibility, the company is keen in investing and developing the staff by providing training and enrolling them for educational programs, which will develop them in providing insurance services to organizations, individuals, and stakeholders. With this step, they not only serve the interests of the society but also of the State of Kuwait.

We still look forward to accomplishing a lot in the coming years and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed in achieving our goals, including the Board of Directors, the shareholders, and the company's employees.

China's powerhouse kindles new quality productive forces

SHANGHAI, May 11, (Xinhua): Located around the mid-point of China's coastline, the Yangtze River Delta is one of the country's most economically vibrant regions, having achieved what can be considered quintessential highly-integrated development.

For over a millennium, the word "paradise" has been used to describe the landscape and prosperity of this region. However, the region's development in the new era has surpassed even the most poetic and vivid imaginations of ancient residents.

The delta, encompassing the provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui, as well as the Shanghai Municipality, accounted for nearly a quarter of China's gross domestic product in 2023, despite occupying just 4 percent of the country's total land area.

Underpinning the region's steady and positive trend is strong impetus rooted in coordinated scientific and technological innovation. From resource sharing and scientific research cooperation to industrial linkage, the construction of a science and technology innovation community in the delta is currently accelerating.

The Yangtze River Delta region remains rooted in its profound industrial history, while its strong innovation capability is today lending fresh steam to the development of new quality productive forces in this industrial powerhouse.

Innovating together

Located in the Qingspu District of Shanghai, the R&D center of Guochuang Huaxin (Shanghai) Technology Development Co., Ltd. is a hive of activity. Various drawings, prototypes, testing furnaces and experimental materials are neatly arranged as staff members diligently work on the application of microwave zinc-removal technology for steel dust.

In just over two months, this processing technology could find its way into a new factory in the city of Danyang, in neighboring Jiangsu Province.

US debt tops \$34 trl, but a commission to address it appears dead in Congress

Many Dems and left-leaning groups oppose the panel

FTX exchange proposes recovery plan

Cryptocurrency market faces decline amid global tensions

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: The cryptocurrency market witnessed a decline, dampening investor sentiment amidst global geopolitical tensions, potential monetary tightening in the United States, and subdued inflows into Bitcoin funds traded in the American market, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Bitcoin, the leading cryptocurrency by market value, experienced a 1.86 percent drop to \$61,064.30, marking its most significant consecutive loss since October. Ethereum followed suit, dipping by 0.86 percent to \$2,972.15, while Ripple fell by 1.56 percent to

51.26 cents. The overall cryptocurrency market cap has plunged by over 17 percent since Bitcoin's peak in mid-March, totaling \$2.26 trillion, reflecting a 1.59 percent decrease in the past 24 hours alone, as per CoinMarketCap and Bloomberg estimates.

CC Data, a digital asset data provider, reported a decline in cryptocurrency trading volume for April, the first in seven months. The total trading volume in both spot and derivatives markets fell by 43.8 percent to \$6.58 trillion compared to the previous month's record of \$9.12 trillion.

Meanwhile, FTX, a collapsed cryp-

tocurrency exchange, announced its recovery and proposed a reorganization plan to fully repay most of its creditors. The plan, subject to US court approval, aims to settle disputes with government stakeholders and private individuals without protracted legal battles, as reported by CNN and Al Arabiya Business.

FTX's tumultuous journey began with its collapse in November 2022, triggering upheaval in the cryptocurrency world. Former CEO Sam Bankman-Fried resigned amidst allegations of fraud and conspiracy, resulting in

a 25-year prison sentence in March 2024.

John J. Ray assumed CEO responsibilities, navigating the company through bankruptcy. Despite facing significant challenges, Ray expressed optimism, stating, "We are pleased to propose a Chapter 11 plan that ensures full repayment, including interest, to non-governmental creditors." FTX revealed the recovery of assets valued between \$14.5 and \$16.3 billion, with approval potentially enabling 98 percent of creditors to receive approximately 118 percent of their allowed claims.

"I'm disappointed that we haven't got as much momentum as I thought we would," said Rep. Jodey Arrington, the Republican chairman of the House Budget Committee. "The speaker supported it, endorsed it from the outset. But I think there are some outside groups that have weighed in, that have said that this is a backdoor way to raise taxes, and it scared some of my Republican colleagues."

Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., sponsor of the debt commission bill in the Senate, was even more pessimistic. "No one seems to care," Manchin said. "It's a shame, \$34.6 trillion in debt. No one cares about it."

The debt commission legislation, modeled after previous efforts, would create a 16-member panel to recommend steps that could be taken to balance the federal budget at the earliest reasonable date and improve the long-term fiscal health of Medicare and Social Security. The commission would have 16 members - 12 from Congress, evenly divided by party, and four outside experts without voting power. The GOP-controlled House Budget Committee advanced the bill in a 22-12 vote.

The fiscal realities that would face any commission are well documented and center to a large extent on Social Security and Medicare, which con-

sume an ever-growing share of the federal budget, and interest payments on the nation's debt.

For Social Security, the reserves for the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund will run out in 2033. At that point, the program will have enough tax revenue coming in to pay about 79% of scheduled benefits. For Medicare, the trust fund covering inpatient hospital stays, hospice care and stays at skilled nursing facilities has sufficient funds to pay full benefits until 2036. At that point, 11% spending cuts would be required to match incoming revenue.

The last fiscal commission over a

decade ago - chaired by Erskine Bowles and Alan Simpson - recommended \$4 trillion in deficit reduction over the course of a decade through a combination of tax increases and painful spending cuts. But the 11-7 vote in favor of the package was not enough to force Congress to consider it back in 2010.

Supporters of a new debt panel noted that they modeled their bill on something that has succeeded in the past - commissions to consolidate the nation's military bases. The new commission would work under a similar structure with the legislation requiring each chamber to vote on its final proposal expeditiously.

Faisal Bader Al Sayer, Chairman delivers the keynote during the event

ALSAYER Group holds remarkable ceremony to commemorate 70th year anniversary

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: A grand celebration was recently held to mark the 70th anniversary of Al-Sayer Group in Al Yasmin Ballroom at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel - Kuwait. The event reflected the remarkable success story of the Group dating back to 1954. It has been a journey spanning seven decades of achievements and successes facing several obstacles and challenges. The foundation of the business was laid by Mr. Naser Mohamed Al-Sayer and his brother Mr. Bader Mohamed Al-Sayer with a big dream that was enhanced by an insight into the future, ambitious steps, and unlimited passion.

The first milestone was in the AlQibla area as the first Toyota showroom in Kuwait and was part of the Mohammed Naser Al-Sayer family home. Since the very beginning of that journey, the wheel of development and innovation has been continuous, as the pioneers of automotive sector in Kuwait with Japanese brand Toyota, followed by Lexus, and of course service centers and spare parts outlets, then, sectors of car rental, animal feed, tires, heavy equipment, oil and paint, insurance, and others. During the past 10 years, the group began further expanding and investing in new areas such as real-estate, education, and healthcare.

The commemorative ceremony witnessed distinguished and unprecedented attendance that included: Diplomats, Officials from Ministries, Government agencies and institutions, team of principals representing brands, and senior Management from press and media. The ceremony was also attended by high-level delegation from Toyota Motor Corporation.

Mr. Faisal Bader Al Sayer - Chairman of ALSAYER Group, Mr. Musaed Bader Al Sayer - Vice Chairman, Mr. Mubarak Naser Al Sayer - Chief Executive Officer, and Mr. Mohamed Naser Al Sayer - Board Member accompanied by members of the Al Sayer family and members of the se-

nior management of ALSAYER Group received the VIPs and guests of the ceremony at the entrance of the hall with a special atmosphere of hospitality and welcome.

On this occasion, Mr. Faisal Bader Al Sayer said: "First, we ask God Almighty to protect our beloved country Kuwait and protect the leader of the nation, His Highness the Emir Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who leads us to safety and takes us to new horizons of glory and prosperity. We belong to this beautiful land of Kuwait and are an integral part of the fabric of its authentic society. We will not hesitate to support the economic development in the country by contributing to the growth in the private sector. We are confident and certain that the future is more beautiful, and that Kuwait is coming to stages of comprehensive renaissance, growth and prosperity in various fields."

"On this occasion dear to all our hearts, I would like to thank our valued customers, ministries, government agencies, business partners, banks, insurance companies, leasing, press and media. Thank you to our brand representatives who have shared our success for many years" added Faisal Al Sayer.

According to a top Toyota Executive: "Allow me to congratulate you on the 70th anniversary of ALSAYER Group and for its significant contribution to Toyota's success over the past 70 years. I would like to mention how the founder of Naser Mohamed Al Sayer spent more than 45 hours traveling through several countries to reach Japan, from where our 70-year relationship began, the second longest partnership in the world."

The ceremony included the screening of 3 documentaries about Al-Sayer that keep pace with the stages of the Group's development reflecting its 3 core pillars: "Heritage - Leadership - Growth". Towards the end of the ceremony, the attendees witnessed a special entertainment before the dinner banquet.



Photos from the ceremony event

What's On



Photos from the event.

LuLu Hypermarket brings a taste of the tropics with Mango Mania

LuLu Hypermarket launched the eagerly awaited annual 'Mango Mania' extravaganza at all its outlets across Kuwait. The week-long event, which ran from May 8-14, was inaugurated on May 9 at the LuLu Hypermarket Fahaheel by Indian Ambassador H.E. Adarsh Swaika, accompanied by Counsellor Mr. Sanjay K. Muluka, along with LuLu Group International, Chairman and Managing Director M.A. Yusuf Ali, in the presence of top management of LuLu Kuwait and a large gathering of shoppers and well-wishers.

All of LuLu's outlets were adorned with a mind-boggling variety of over 50 mango types sourced from seven different countries. Customers were swept away by amazing price discounts on the king of fruits, including the ever-popular Alphonso, Badami, Mallika, Thotapuri, and Rajapuri from In-

dia, and the famous Galpatur varieties from Yemen.

But the sweetness did not stop there. The Mango King's tropical reign showered the customers with a delicious selection of mango-inspired delights, including fresh refreshing mango juices and smoothies. Shoppers were further indulged with decadent mango halwa and payasam, while exploring a world of savory treats like mango snacks, curries, salads, and pickles. For those with a sweeter tooth, the Mango Mania offered a range of mousse cakes, tarts, trifles, muffins, pastries, and even Swiss rolls made from succulent mangoes.

Mango Mania was more than a rush of sweetness, it had a rush of thrill to offer as well. It was a full-fledged family fun fest with customers capturing their sweetest moments at the selfie booth and unleashing their creativity

with the mango cut-out displays. Customers had their mango knowledge put to the test with themed games and puzzles, while children had the opportunity to celebrate the king of fruits with the exciting kids' mango cake decoration competition.

From the vibrant displays of sun-kissed and succulent mangoes to the aroma of freshly squeezed juices, and the playful echoes of children's laughter during the cake decorating competition, Mango Mania was a feast for all senses. With bellies full and hearts brimming with sweet memories, Kuwait bid farewell to what has become a much-anticipated annual tradition in the country's shopping calendars. The event once again underlined LuLu Hypermarket's abiding resolve to provide customers with the best of what the world offers, at the most competitive prices.

Bank participates in UAE Investment Meet

KFH demonstrates leadership in financing development projects

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in the UAE Companies Investment Meet titled "Unlocking Kuwait's Potential." This participation affirms KFH's commitment to supporting economic growth while solidifying its leadership role in financing strategic development projects through its diverse range of financing services and solutions.

The two-day event was sponsored and attended by Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister of Commerce and Industry Abdullah Hamad Al-Jouan, KDIPA's Director General Sheikh Dr. Meshal Jaber Al Sabah, UAE Ambassador Dr. Matar Al-Neyadi, and UAE's Minister of Foreign Trade Dr. Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi.

Economic

A large audience of economic leaders and officials from both Kuwait and the UAE attended the event, with the participation of 20 significant Emirati companies from both the private and public sectors.

During his speech at the event, KFH Deputy General Manager for Corporate Banking and Syndication, Nasser Alshaya, emphasized that "KFH is one of the most preferred and trusted institutions in the Kuwaiti banking sector for corporate finance. The bank has the largest market share in financing SMEs: robust capital base, high solvency, and strong credit rating as well as a wide diverse, flexible and efficient Sharia-compliant financing solutions."

"Following the successful merger project with AUB, KFH's experience has deepened and diversified. The Bank currently operates in 12 countries, boasting a large international network of 640 branches," added Alshaya.

He noted that KFH holds the distinction of being the first Islamic bank in Germany and the first



Nasser Alshaya

licensed under Malaysia's Banking Act. Furthermore, KFH is the second largest Islamic financier in Turkey. With a presence spanning across Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, KFH demonstrates a strong global footprint.

Alshaya also highlighted KFH's pioneering role in financing local development projects. Notably, KFH financed the largest terminal construction project at Kuwait Airport in collaboration with the Turkish construction company, Limak Holding.

In the Oil and Gas industry, Alshaya highlighted KFH's leadership in the Islamic financing market and its participation in the largest financing deal denominated in Kuwaiti Dinar, for Kuwait Petroleum Corporation and its subsidiaries. This deal included both the clean fuel project and

the Liquefied Natural Gas Facility project.

He added that KFH contributed over USD 2 billion in financing through various regional deals. He further emphasized that KFH's leadership in Islamic finance stems from its values-driven approach, which translates into a professional and disciplined operational model. This significant contribution reflects KFH's belief in the crucial role played by the corporate sector and mega projects in driving economic development.

Transformation

"Digital transformation has become a hallmark of KFH, allowing us to introduce several services, including KFH online for corporates," said Alshaya. "This digital service allows corporate customers to submit financing requests online, which facilitates KFH's ability to easily contact the customer and assess project feasibility."

He explained that KFH's role extends beyond simply financing projects and companies. The Bank acts as a project partner and advisor as well, further enhancing its standing by sharing expertise and providing advisory services to customers when needed. KFH offers comprehensive financing solutions across various project sectors, with a particular focus on petrochemicals, oil and gas, water and energy, renewable energy, and infrastructure.

The financing solutions KFH offers include debts restructuring, project long term financing, asset securitization, Sukuk issuance in addition to other modes of financing that cater to the different needs of projects and companies.

Alshaya concluded: "Thanks to KFH's experience in the financing market and extended relations with regional and international banks, KFH is, without doubt, the ideal lead arranger of syndicated financing deals. I affirm KFH's commitment to finance various projects across different sectors."



H.E. Minister of Information and Culture, Abdulrahman Al Mutairi and Nawaf Algharabally with Zain team.



Algharabally speaking at the panel discussion.

Firm partners with Arab Media Forum

5G, AI innovations drive reliance on data – Zain

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: Zain announced the continuation of its Strategic Partnership with the Arab Media Forum, which came this year in its 19th edition at the Four Seasons Hotel titled, Future Intelligence. The event came under the patronage of H.H. the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammed Sabah Al Salem Al Sabah and featured some of the Arab World's top media personalities and executives.

The opening ceremony was attended by the representative of the event's patron, H.E. Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al Mutairi, Zain Kuwait CEO Nawaf Algharabally, Arab Media Forum Secretary General Madhi Al Khamees, along with ministers, diplomats, media personalities, and business executives.

The Forum featured a special panel discussion titled Media and Technology, which was joined by Zain Kuwait CEO Nawaf Algharabally, Regional General Manager at Google Ghassan Kosta, and Digital Economy Center Chairman Hani Al Ghufaili from KSA. The session was moderated by Omani media personality Youssef Al Hoti.

Future

During the panel, Algharabally spoke about innovations like 5G and artificial intelligence, and how they are set to spearhead the future of technology. He said that future generations will look back at the era we live in today as a time of great change, as the world transformed from one that relies on machines, to one that relies on data.

The CEO noted how innovations like 5G/5.5G, AI, Machine Learning, Big Data, FinTech, drones, and more have reshaped the world around us. He pointed out that Zain has invested in building a robust infrastructure that leverages on the huge potential of such innovations to lead Kuwait's digital transformation journey.

Algharabally also said that, in essence, AI combines automation with the capacity to learn from data and experiences, then adapt its behavior accordingly. Ultimately, this will make the applications and machines we rely on today much more intelligent within the next few years, something that many people anticipate with fear. In the end, technology impacts everything around us, including our jobs, businesses, and even the media.

Productive

On the other hand, Algharabally explained that others dispel such fears, reasoning that AI is merely a tool that can manage and produce results to improve upon human action. When properly used, AI is a supporting tool that employers can utilize to stimulate efficiency and create a more productive workplace environment.

He also said that technology played a significant role in shaping today's media ecosystem, where huge amounts of information flow easier than ever before and with unprecedented access at the hands of everyone. This, naturally, necessitated that media organizations implement radical changes in the forms and methods of publishing content.

Zain's strategic partnership with the Arab Media Forum extends throughout the past 11 years to further reflect the company's strong belief in the significant role media plays within the community. By supporting the event, Zain strives to contribute to shouldering the local and regional media industries.

This year, the Arab Media Forum featured 13 insightful panel discussions joined by high-profile guests from across the Arab world, including media and information ministers, owners and executives of Arab media institutions, media personalities, journalists, authors, and more.



Group photo of the stc team with students participating in the workshop.

Innovative workshops foster creativity, empower students

stc, Injaz host workshop for 6th grade students

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, organized a workshop for 6th grade students at the Kuwait English School in collaboration with Injaz Kuwait, a non-profit non-governmental organization that inspires and prepares young people for the global economy. Titled "Junior Icamp", the workshop was held as part of stc's educational 'upgrade' initiative, which aims to support and empower the younger generation through various programs and initiatives that prepare them for the future.

The "Junior Icamp" workshop, launched in a collaboration between stc and Injaz Kuwait, was designed to challenge students into using their creativity and innovative thinking in various ways. Over 60 students from the Kuwait English School participated in the initiative, which took place at the school's premises, where they were requested to use their creativity and out of the box thinking to develop unique project ideas. Through its role, stc provided the students with valuable insights and constructive guidance to enhance their ideas. The Company also participated in the judging panel where the best ideas were selected and recognized. Prizes were distrib-

uted to the top winners by stc in recognition of the students' hard work, effort and creativity.

stc's unwavering commitment to the community and the younger generation in Kuwait is witnessed through its diverse array of initiatives organized under its comprehensive CSR program, particularly the educational 'upgrade' initiative. As a pioneer in the telecom, digital transformation and ICT sector, stc has consistently focused on empowering the youth by providing innovative platforms and opportunities that bridge the gap between academic learning and practical application.

Skills

Over the years, stc has sponsored numerous workshops, seminars, and collaborations, such as the recent partnership with Injaz Kuwait, to foster creative thinking and problem-solving skills amongst the younger generation. Through these activities, stc aims to equip the younger generation with the skills and knowledge to contribute effectively to the local economy, while reinforcing its role as a pivotal supporter of community development.

Commenting on the workshop, Danah AlJasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc, said, "We are proud to partner with Injaz Kuwait to host this unique workshop at Kuwait Eng-

lish School that encourages students to utilize their creativity to come up with innovate ideas. At stc, we highly value the importance of creativity and innovation in shaping the future of our community and youth alike. By fostering an environment that encourages exploration and growth, we aim to inspire a generation that will become proactive and contributing members within their community."

Al Jasem added, "stc would like to extend its gratitude to Injaz Kuwait for organizing this initiative and to Kuwait English School for engaging their students in this empowering workshop. Following our comprehensive CSR program, stc will continue to contribute in launching and sponsoring activities and initiatives that support Kuwaiti youths in several fields through strategic partnerships with institutions from the government and private sectors, including INJAZ Kuwait, with the aim of leaving a broader positive impact on society. Through these collaborative efforts, our goal is to continue providing meaningful and sustainable initiatives on a regular basis to develop the capabilities of the younger generation, enhance their skills, nurture future leaders, and enable them to thrive in every aspect of life. We are committed to providing targeted programs directed at youth, nurturing talents, and supporting the aspirations of the Kuwaiti youth generation in several fields"

Dutch contestant kicked out of Eurovision hours before final

MALMO, Sweden, May 11, (AP) — It's time for many people to don sequins and spangles - and for others to pick up protest banners and Palestinian flags - for Saturday's final of the 68th Eurovision Song Contest.

The competition that pits nations against one another for pop music glory is reaching its conclusion in the Swedish city of Malmo, with Croatia and Switzerland among those tipped to take the trophy, and Israel at the center of a political storm.

Hours before the final, Dutch contestant Joost Klein was dramatically booted out by organizers over a backstage incident. He had failed to perform at two dress rehearsals on Friday, and contest organizer the European Broadcasting Union said it was investigating an "incident."

The EBU said Swedish police were investigating "a complaint made by a female member of the production crew" and it would not be appropriate for Klein to participate while the legal process was underway. Though rumors had been flying the incident was connected to Israel's delegation, organizers said the incident "did not involve any other performer or delegation member."

Though the contest's motto is "united by music," this year's event has attracted large protests from Palestinians and their supporters, who say Israel should be excluded because of its conduct of the war against Hamas.

Thousands of people are expected to march for the second time this week through Sweden's third-largest city, which has a large Muslim population, to demand a boycott of Israel and a cease-fire in the seven-month war. In Finland, a group of about 40 protesters stormed the headquarters of public broadcaster YLE on Saturday morning, demanding it

withdraw from the song contest because of Israel's participation. Several miles (kilometers) from central Malmo at the Malmo Arena, 25 acts - narrowed from 37 entrants by two semi-final runoffs - are due to perform three-minute songs in front of a live audience of thousands and an estimated 180 million viewers around the world.

It all makes for a messy climax to an event that draws both adoration and derision with its campy, kitschy ethos and passion for pop.

Dean Vuletic, an expert on the history of the contest, says that despite this year's divisions, "there is no other cultural event which brings Europeans together quite like Eurovision does."

Nostalgia

"Just this moment where everyone is watching the same television show, which is being broadcast live across 37 countries - that's something very special."

This year's entries range from emotional to eccentric. They include the goofy 1990s nostalgia of Finland's Windows95man, who emerges from a giant onstage egg wearing very little clothing. Ireland's Bambie Thug summons witchy spirits onstage and has brought a scream coach to Malmo, while Spain's Nebulossa boldly reclaims a term used as a slur on women in "Zorra."

The favorites include Swiss singer Nemo - who would be the first nonbinary Eurovision winner if their operatic song "The Code" tops the voting - and Croatia's Baby Lasagna. His song "Rim Tim Tagi Dim" is a rollicking rock number that tackles the issue of young Croats leaving the country in search of a better life.

Vuletic says that despite the contest's reputation for disposable bub-

blegum pop, Eurovision often tackles "political and social issues such as feminism, European integration, gender identity."

"And I think they're the very interesting songs to look out for, especially because they're the most highly ranked by the bookies," he said.

Sometimes, though, songs run afoul of the contest's ban on openly "political" statements. Eurovision organizers told Israel to change the original title of its song, "October Rain" - an apparent reference to the Oct. 7 Hamas attack that killed about 1,200 Israelis and triggered the Gaza war.

Israeli singer Eden Golan has shot up the odds since performing the power ballad, now titled "Hurricane," in Thursday's semifinal. Golan faced some booing at dress rehearsals, but was voted into the final by viewers around the world.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu praised 20-year-old Golan for performing despite "contending with an ugly wave of anti-Semitism."

Protesters argue that Israel should not be allowed to take part amid a war that has killed almost 35,000 Palestinians.

"I don't think they should be a part of it at all because they are committing crimes against humanity," said local resident Lorenzo Mayr, who attended a demonstration on Thursday.

The competing musicians are feeling the pressure, inundated with messages and abuse on social media and unable to speak out because of the contest rules. Italy's contestant, Angelina Mango, made a statement by walking into the Eurovision media center on Friday and performing John Lennon's "Imagine" as dozens of journalists gathered around her.

Music

Variety

Features

ARABIC TIMES

SUNDAY, MAY 12, 2024



This image released by Netflix shows Brooke Shields and Benjamin Bratt in a scene from 'Mother of the Bride.' (AP)

Film

Destination wedding delusion

Shields, Bratt elevate 'Mother of the Bride'

By Lindsey Bahr

LOS ANGELES: Sean "Diddy" Combs on Friday asked a federal judge to dismiss a lawsuit alleging that he and two co-defendants raped a 17-year-old girl in a New York recording studio in 2003, saying it was a "false and hideous claim" that was filed too late under the law.

The legal move is the latest piece of pushback from the 54-year-old hip-hop mogul and his legal team after he was subjected to several similar lawsuits and a subsequent criminal sex-trafficking investigation.

"Mr. Combs and his companies categorically deny Plaintiff's decades-old tale against them, which has caused incalculable damage to their reputations and business standing before any evidence has been presented," says the filing, which also names Combs-owned corporations as defendants. "Plaintiff cannot allege what day or time of year the alleged incident occurred, but miraculously remembers other salacious details, despite her alleged incapacitated condition."

The lawsuit was filed in December and amended in March by the woman who now lives in Canada whose name wasn't disclosed in the court filing. She said she was in 11th grade at a high school in a Detroit suburb in 2003, when Harvey Pierre, then the president of Combs' Bad Boy Entertainment record label, flew her to New York on a private jet and took her to a recording studio, where she was given drugs and alcohol until she was incapable of consenting to sex. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Sam Rubin, a beloved entertainment anchor and reporter for KTLA in Los Angeles who was on a first-name basis with Hollywood's top stars, has died. He was 64.

The station announced that he died unexpectedly on Friday. No cause was released.

Rubin joined the station's morning news team in 1991. He conducted upbeat live interviews with actors and musicians from behind the anchor desk and was a mainstay at premiere red carpets and movie junkets. His final interview was with Jane Seymour on Thursday.

Seymour joined Tom Hanks, Viola Davis, Ben Stiller, Guillermo del Toro, Kiefer Sutherland, Octavia Spencer and other Hollywood figures in mourning Rubin on social media.

Romantic comedies are in a destination wedding rut. Perhaps it's a collective post-COVID wanderlust kicking in, or, more cynically, some combination of tax credits and a place producers want to spend time. But between "Ticket to Paradise," "Anyone But You," "Shotgun Wedding" and now Netflix's "Mother of the Bride," the conceit is starting to curdle.

The problem is bigger than the setting, of course. There's only so much heavy lifting a picturesque location, photogenic bodies and enviable resort outfits can do to make up for a lame story. Also, the appeal of an out-of-reach travelogue is limited in this age of influencers living wildly extravagant lifestyles around the clock on Instagram and TikTok (not to mention the sharp ways "White Lotus" has skewered and luxuriated in those worlds).

"Mother of the Bride," now streaming on Netflix, wonders what might happen if you find out a few days before the wedding that your kid (Miranda Cosgrove) is marrying the offspring of the guy who broke your heart. That's what happens to Brooke Shields' Lana. She arrives in Phuket, Thailand, for her daughter's wedding, meets the groom (Sean Teale), turns around and sees that his father is her college ex, Will (Benjamin Bratt). Barely a minute passes before they both fall into a pond.

Later, she'll walk in on him emerging from the shower, hit him in a sensitive spot playing pickleball and, after they've made some progress, overhear the wrong conversation at the wrong time. This is a movie that is adhering to some kind of romantic comedy checklist, but whose ingredients add up to very little in the end.

Our tolerance for a silly set-up in a romantic comedy is usually pretty generous if we're given a clever, charming script and authentic emotions. Just think of how ridiculous so many of the greats sound on paper, from "Sabrina" to "Sleepless in Seattle"? Is it fair to compare "Mother of the Bride" to Nora Ephron and Billy Wilder? Maybe not, but it never hurts to be aware of a North Star, which veterans like screenwriter

Robin Bernheim Burger and director Mark Waters no doubt are. Just look at the title. This movie even has a romantic foil in a younger doctor (Chad Michael Murray) who is smitten with Lana, which can't help but remind of Keanu Reeves in Nancy Meyers' "Something's Gotta Give."

But this is so wildly contrived from the start that you never get to that moment where you're enjoying it enough to stop asking questions, like did Lana ever google Will in the 20 years they've been apart and find out that he's a wildly rich and successful businessman?

Lifestyle

Or why would a major corporation offer an intern who has a barely maintained lifestyle Instagram that she started freshman year of college "six figures" to help promote their luxury hotels? Why are we supposed to root for these young people with seemingly infinite resources (one of their wedding presents in a multimillion Tribeca loft) who agree to get married in a month because a brand asks them to? Maybe more fundamentally, did the kids and a wedding have to be involved in this story at all? Does it make the idea of Will and Lana getting back together too weird to be fun? Couldn't they have simply run into one another at a resort?

I won't go so far as to say that "Mother of the Bride" feels like an AI creation but it does feel at least a little stitched together from pieces of other romantic comedies of varying quality. Why cast a capable comedian like Rachel Harris as the best friend only to have her say lines like "Is he on the menu"? Or give Wilson Cruz so little to do as Will's brother?

And it's a shame, too, because Shields and Bratt came ready to play, to fall in the pond and be minimally clothed for comedy's sake. There must be a new generation of romantic comedy writers and directors who grew up on Ephron and Meyers out there and are ready to give us something that's commercial and glossy but also smart and fun to revisit (ahem, remember "Set It Up"?). Maybe they just need to be given a shot.

"Even if I was on my 85th interview that day, I was always happy to see Sam. Even if HE was on his 85th interview that day, he always brought genuine kindness, curiosity and an outside the box question," Ryan Reynolds posted on X.

"There was no one more enthusiastic about his job than Sam Rubin. I've known Sam for most



Combs



Rubin

of my career, and he had a light in his eyes every early morning as he started his daily work," Jamie Lee Curtis wrote on Instagram. (AP)

NEW YORK: James "Jim" Simons, a renowned mathematician and pioneering investor who built a fortune on Wall Street and then

became one of the nation's biggest philanthropists, has died at age 86.

The charitable foundation that Simons co-founded with his wife, Marilyn, announced that Simons died Friday in New York. No cause of death was given.

"Jim was an exceptional leader who did transformative work in mathematics and developed a

world-leading investment company," Simons Foundation President David Spergel said in a post on the foundation's website. "Together with Marilyn Simons, the current Simons Foundation board chair, Jim created an organization that has already had enormous impact in mathematics, basic science and our understanding of autism." (AP)

"Mother of the Bride," a Netflix release streaming Thursday, is rated TV-PG. Running time: 90 minutes. One and a half stars out of four.

Also:

ROME: The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced a \$500 million fundraising campaign Friday to ensure long-term, global support for its Oscar prizes, museum and educational programming in view of its 100th anniversary in 2028.

Academy officials announced the campaign at a press conference in Rome alongside the leadership of Cinecitta, the Italian public film company behind many of Italy's Oscar-winning movies. The aim was to underscore the global thrust of the Academy's initiative.

Academy CEO Bill Kramer said the first \$100 million of the campaign had already been secured. Academy officials thanked longtime supporter Rolex and the Dorchester Collection, which manages hotels owned by Dorchester Group Ltd., a subsidiary of Brunei's sovereign wealth fund, Brunei Investment Agency.

The press conference was held at the Dorchester's swank Hotel Eden, located just off Rome's Via Veneto.

BEIJING: American sci-fi "Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes" topped the Chinese mainland's daily box office chart on Friday, data from the China Movie Data Information Network showed.

The film, directed by Wes Ball and written by Josh Friedman, grossed over 20.49 million yuan (about 2.89 million U.S. dollars) on the first day of screening.

It was followed by the Chinese comedy "The Last Frenzy," which raked in over 12.25 million yuan on the day.

Hong Kong action crime thriller "Twilight of the Warriors: Walled In," came in third with nearly 12.09 million yuan of daily box office sales.

The Chinese mainland's box office revenue totaled 57.62 million yuan on Friday. (Agencies)

Researchers unveil promising compound against COVID-19

Countries struggle to draft 'pandemic treaty' to avoid future crises

GENEVA, May 11, (Agencies): After the coronavirus pandemic triggered once-unthinkable lockdowns, upended economies and killed millions, leaders at the World Health Organization and worldwide vowed to do better in the future. Years later, countries are still struggling to come up with an agreed-upon plan for how the world might respond to the next global outbreak.

A ninth and final round of talks involving governments, advocacy groups and others to finalize a "pandemic treaty" was scheduled to end Friday. The accord's aim: guidelines for how the WHO's 194 member countries might stop future pandemics and better share scarce resources. But experts warn there are virtually no consequences for countries that don't comply.

WHO's countries asked the U.N. health agency to oversee talks for a pandemic agreement in 2021. Envoys have been working long hours in recent weeks to prepare a draft ahead of a self-imposed deadline later this month: ratification of the accord at WHO's annual meeting. But deep divisions could derail it.

U.S. Republican senators wrote a letter to the Biden administration last week critical of the draft for focusing on issues like "shredding intellectual property rights" and "supercharging the WHO." They urged Biden not to sign off.

Accord

Britain's department of health said it would only agree to an accord if it was "firmly in the U.K. national interest and respects national sovereignty."

And many developing countries say it's unfair that they might be expected to provide virus samples to help develop vaccines and treatments, but then be unable to afford them.

"This pandemic treaty is a very high-minded pursuit, but it doesn't take political realities into account," said Sara Davies, a professor of international relations at Griffith University in Australia.

For example, the accord is attempting to address the gap that occurred

between COVID-19 vaccines in rich and poorer countries, which WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said amounted to "a catastrophic moral failure."

The draft says WHO should get 20% of the production of pandemic-related products like tests, treatments and vaccines and urges countries to disclose their deals with private companies.

"There's no mechanism within WHO to make life really difficult for any countries that decide not to act in accordance with the treaty," Davies said.

Agreement

Adam Kamradt-Scott, a global health expert at Harvard University, said that similar to the global climate agreements, the draft pandemic treaty would at least provide a new forum for countries to try to hold each other to account, where governments will have to explain what measures they've taken.

The pandemic treaty "is not about anyone telling the government of a country what it can do and what it cannot do," said Roland Driess, co-chair of WHO's negotiating board for the agreement.

There are legally binding obligations under the International Health Regulations, including quickly reporting dangerous new outbreaks. But those have been flouted repeatedly, including by African countries during Ebola outbreaks and China in the early stages of COVID-19.

Suerie Moon, co-director of the Global Health Center at Geneva's Graduate Institute, said it was critical to determine the expected role of WHO during a pandemic and how outbreaks might be stopped before spreading globally.

"If we fail to seize this window of opportunity which is closing... we'll be just as vulnerable as we were in 2019," she warned.

Some countries appear to be moving on their own to ensure cooperation from others in the next pandemic. Last month, President Joe Biden's administration said it would help 50 countries respond to new outbreaks

and prevent global spread, giving the country leverage should it need critical information or materials in the future.

Yuanqiong Hu, a senior legal and policy adviser at Doctors without Borders, said it's unclear what might be different in the next pandemic, but hoped that focusing attention on some of the glaring errors that emerged in COVID-19 might help.

"We will mostly have to rely on countries to do better," she said. "That is worrisome."

Also:

HELSINKI: The University of Oulu in Finland, in collaboration with the University of Kansas and McDaniel College in the United States, has developed a compound that effectively inhibits the replication of the virus behind COVID-19.

The study unveils a potential breakthrough in combating COVID-19 and potentially other coronavirus infections, said the University of Oulu in a press release published on Wednesday.

The compound named MDOLL-0229 targets a specific part of SARS-CoV-2's protein, which allows the virus to evade the cell's defense mechanisms and multiply in human cells.

Lari Lehtio, the main author of the research article and professor of protein and structural biology at the University of Oulu, has been doing pioneering work with his colleagues in protein research for 13 years.

In the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the research team led by Lehtio began to develop compounds that inhibit the activity of the virus.

The study shows that the newly developed compound has the potential to protect against COVID-19 and other emerging coronaviruses.

However, the development of the actual medicine may still take years, as further development and clinical trials are time-consuming, said the university in the press release.

The study was recently published in the Journal of Medicinal Chemistry.

Solar storm hits Earth

China constructs gigantic space 'weather' monitoring telescope

HOHHOT, May 11, (Agencies): China's first gigantic radio telescope dedicated to observing interplanetary scintillation phenomena passed its technical testing process on Friday.

The telescope, located in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, will be applied to monitor interplanetary space weather on a daily basis to provide high-quality data for both China's and international space

weather forecasting.

Radio waves radiated from compact celestial objects outside the Milky Way can be scattered by the irregular micro-structures of solar wind turbulence as they propagate through interplanetary space, resulting in random fluctuations in the radio flux observed on Earth. Such a phenomenon is called interplanetary scintillation.

Notably, interplanetary scintillation can be used to track interplanetary propagation caused by solar storms.

"Monitoring interplanetary scintillation can be useful for the reconstruction of the three-dimensional structure of a large-scale solar wind, which is helpful in revealing the correlation between solar eruptive activities and geospace environment changes," said Yan Yihua, a researcher from the National Space Science Center (NSSC) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

The development of the above-mentioned telescope project was led by the NSSC, and this telescope is one of the key facilities within the mega-framework of the Phase-2 Meridian Space Weather Monitoring Project in China.

Interplanetary scintillation observation can help reduce or avoid the harmful impact of disastrous space weather events on aviation, aerospace, communications, navigation and grid operation.

An unusually strong solar storm hitting Earth produced stunning displays of color in the skies across the Northern Hemisphere early Saturday, with no immediate reports of disruptions to power and communications.

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issued a rare severe geomagnetic storm warning when a solar outburst reached Earth on Friday afternoon, hours sooner than anticipated. The effects of the Northern Lights, which were prominently on display in Britain, were due to last through the weekend and possibly into next week.

Phenomenon

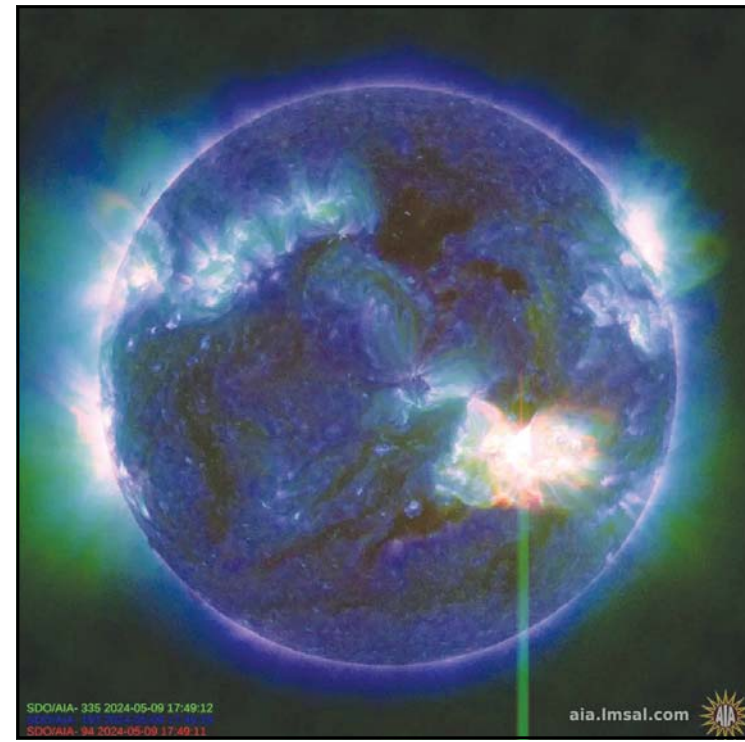
Many in the UK shared phone snaps of the lights on social media early Saturday, with the phenomenon seen as far south as London and southern England.

There were sightings "from top to tail across the country," said Chris Snell, a meteorologist at the Met Office, Britain's weather agency. He added that the office received photos and information from other European locations including Prague and Barcelona.

NOAA alerted operators of power plants and spacecraft in orbit, as well as the Federal Emergency Management Agency, to take precautions.

"For most people here on planet Earth, they won't have to do anything," said Rob Steenburgh, a scientist with NOAA's Space Weather Prediction Center.

The storm could produce northern lights as far south in the U.S. as Alabama and Northern California, NOAA said. But it was hard to predict and experts stressed it would not be the dramatic curtains of color normally associated with the northern lights, but more like splashes of greenish hues.



This image provided by NASA shows a solar flare, as seen in the bright flash in the lower right, captured by NASA's Solar Dynamics Observatory on May 9. (AP)

FAST finds gas-rich galaxies

Glassy materials in lunar soil hold molecular water

BEIJING, May 11, (Xinhua): A team of Chinese scientists has discovered that glassy materials within the lunar soil samples, which were brought back by the country's Chang'e-5 lunar exploration mission, contain hydroxyl and molecular water generated from a variety of sources.

The study published on Saturday in the journal Science Advances revealed that the glass in the lunar soil created by meteorites or micrometeorites impacts is the primary carrier of molecular water in lunar soil.

The researchers from the Institute of Geochemistry under the Chinese Academy of Sciences analyzed nearly 100 samples of impact glass collected during the Chang'e-5 mission and identified 12 grains that were found to contain hydroxyl and molecular water.

The water was found to have originated from multiple potential sources including proton implantation from solar wind, the delivery of water-rich meteorites or micrometeorites, and water native to the Moon, according to the study.

Notably, the primary contributor to this water is solar wind implantation, highlighting its significant role in the formation of lunar water.

The findings could help researchers understand the sources and storage pathways for water during the development of terrestrial planets, said Tang Hong, the paper's corresponding au-

thor. Meanwhile, Chinese scientists have discovered an abundance of gas-rich galaxies in the distant universe, using the Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical radio Telescope (FAST) in southwest China's Guizhou Province.

The research result has been published online in The Astrophysical Journal Letters on Friday.

According to the study, the newly discovered galaxies, whose radio wave emissions have taken almost the age of the solar system to reach the earth, contain similar or more atomic hydrogen gas than the tens of thousands of galaxies previously surveyed with other radio telescopes.

Xi Hongwei from the National Astronomical Observatories under the Chinese Academy of Sciences (NAOC), the lead author, together with his colleagues from Australia, the United States and Russia, revealed the properties of six new high-redshift galaxies in the study.

The new high-redshift galaxy sample provides the opportunity to better investigate the evolution of cool gas in galaxies, said the paper. "A larger sample size in the future will allow us to refine our knowledge of the formation and evolution of galaxies."

Hydrogen is the most common element in the universe. In its neutral form, it is abundant in spiral galaxies such as the Milky Way.

Experts warn about risks to babies

UK facing whooping cough outbreak

LONDON, May 11, (Xinhua): Whooping cough is potentially fatal to babies who become infected, many British experts have warned amid what may be the country's biggest outbreak of the disease in decades. Five deaths were reported among infants who developed the disease in England between January and March.

According to the latest data published by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), cases of whooping cough continue to increase, with 1,319 confirmed in March. This brings the total number of confirmed cases during the first quarter of 2024 to 2,793.

However, the true number of cases is likely to be much higher, since mild cases of whooping cough are easily confused with other respiratory illnesses in the early stages of infection, said The Guardian newspaper.

Experts are warning that the United Kingdom (UK) could be facing its biggest outbreak in 40 years unless urgent action is taken. Parents were also urged to look out for symptoms in their children, including a runny nose, sore throat and a "whooping" noise when coughing, and to seek

medical help if these occur.

"As a disease, whooping cough is as infectious as measles, and more infectious than COVID-19," said Dr Michael Head, senior research fellow in Global Health at the University of Southampton. The new data illustrates the seriousness of the disease, he said, given that it can be fatal for babies.

Transmission

"Whooping cough can have a very long infectious period of around 2-3 weeks, i.e. the period of time when an infected individual is able to transmit the bacteria to others," he said, providing "plenty of opportunities for people to mix, transmission to occur, and for there to be an infection of a vulnerable individual, such as a baby."

Known as pertussis, or the "100-day cough," the infection is a cyclical disease which peaks every three to five years. The last cyclical increase occurred in 2016.

"What we are currently seeing is very high case numbers, certainly higher than the 2016 peak, based on the projections so far in the first three months, and very much in line - and potentially even higher - than what we saw during our 2012 peak year,

particularly in very young babies," Dr Gayatri Amirthalingam, a consultant epidemiologist at the UKHSA, told The Guardian.

According to UKHSA, the number of confirmed cases in infants under 3 months, who are at most risk of severe disease and too young to be fully vaccinated, peaked at 407 cases in the earlier 2012 outbreak. This number then fell after the introduction of maternal vaccination.

Half of the cases so far this year have been among the under-15s, with the highest rates in babies under three months old. The five babies who died this year were all under three months old. These are the first deaths since 2019.

Other parts of the UK and Europe are also seeing a rising number of cases.

Vaccination remains the best defense. In the UK, this is given through a "six-in-one" combined jab at eight, 12 and 16 weeks of age, which also protects against other diseases such as tetanus and polio. This is followed by a pre-school booster at age three.

However, "a drop in vaccination coverage will be a key factor contributing to this rise in cases of whooping cough," said Dr Head.

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Fast bowler Amir receives visa and will join Pakistan in Dublin for 2 T20s

Ireland beat Pakistan in a T20 for the first time

DUBLIN, May 11, (AP): Curtis Campher ran a leg bye off the penultimate ball for Ireland to stun Pakistan by five wickets in a Twenty20.

In their first T20 matchup since 2009, and just a month out from meeting again in the T20 World Cup, the Irish scored 183-5 in reply to Pakistan's 182-6.

CRICKET

Ireland set up its first T20 win over Pakistan by bowling well and fielding brilliantly. The home side engineered two run outs, and Campher and Barry McCarthy made two brilliant catches in the deep.

Fast bowler Craig Young conceded only 27 runs and dug out Babar Azam and Azam Khan in the same over as Pakistan got crucially bogged down in the middle overs.

Babar's 43-ball 57 and opener Saim Ayub's 29-ball 45 launched the visitors and Iftikhar Ahmed gave them a

boost at the death with an unbeaten 37, including 17 in the last over.

But Ireland, coming off a 2-1 series loss to Afghanistan, was undeterred. "We were happy to chase 180," captain Paul Stirling said.

Opener Andy Balbirnie anchored the Irish with 77 off 55 balls including 10 boundaries.

Balbirnie and Harry Tector, 36 runs, took Ireland past 100. When Balbirnie was bowled by a Shaheen Shah Afridi full toss in the 19th over, Ireland needed 16 more runs from eight balls.

Campher knocked them off with 15 from seven balls.

The second of their three T20s is on Sunday.

Pakistan fast bowler Mohammad Amir received a visa to travel to Ireland but not in time to be available for the opening Twenty20 in Dublin.

Amir joined the team on Friday and is available for the two other T20s on Sunday and Tuesday, the Pakistan Cricket Board said.

Gill and Sudharsan tons send Gujarat to vital win over Chennai in IPL

AHMEDABAD, India, May 11, (AP): Centuries by Shubman Gill and opening partner Sai Sudharsan spearheaded Gujarat Titans to a 35-run win over Chennai Super Kings in the Indian Premier League.

CRICKET

Captain Gill, left out of India's T20 World Cup squad, made 104 off 55 balls and left-hander Sudharsan was equal to the task in raising his maiden IPL hundred with a splendid 103 off 51 balls.

Their total of 231-3 was briefly challenged while Daryl Mitchell (63) and Moeen Ali (56) were batting, but Chennai fell short at 196-8.

Medium-pace Mohit Sharma dismissed both half-century-makers in his 3-31.

Chennai's loss tightened up the race to the playoffs. Chennai remained in

the fourth and last playoff spot while Gujarat was just outside but needs to



Gujarat Titans' captain Shubman Gill plays a shot during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Gujarat Titans and Chennai Super Kings in Ahmedabad, India. (AP)

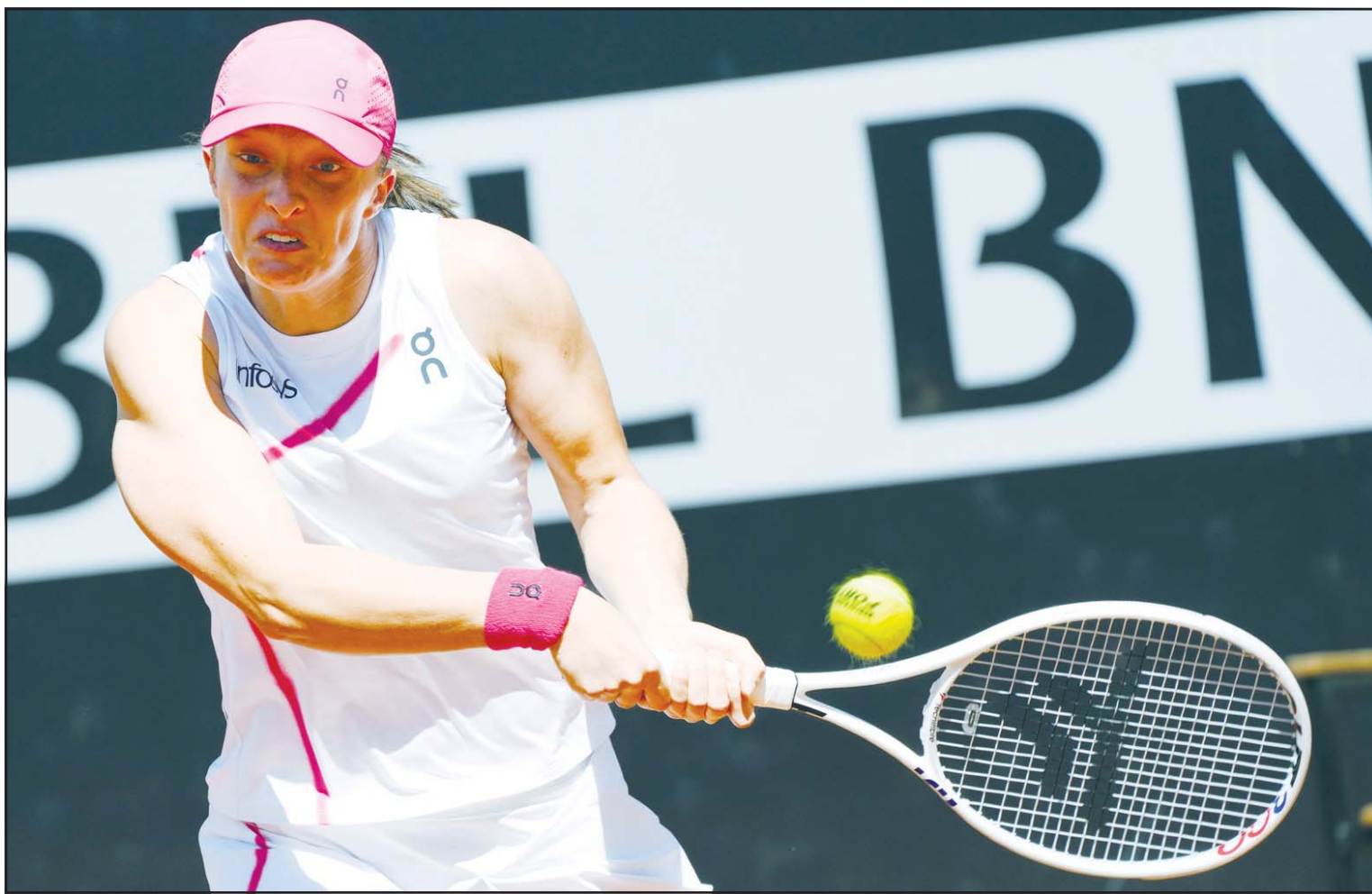
wins its last two matches by big margins to drastically improve its net run rate.

Chennai sorely missed its frontline injured pacer Matheesha Pathirana and departed Mustafizur Rahman as Gill and Sudharsan paced the Gujarat innings.

Except for Shardul Thakur, who conceded only 25 runs, the other Chennai bowlers couldn't stem the flow. Fast bowler Simarjeet Singh, in his second game of the season, was smashed for 60 off his four overs and Ravindra Jadeja was taken out of the attack after conceding 29 off his two overs of left-arm spin.

Both Gujarat openers reached their centuries off 50 balls and raised the joint-highest first wicket stand of 210 runs in IPL history. Chennai recovered briefly in the death overs and conceded just one boundary in the last three overs.

Nadal beaten by Hurkacz



Iga Swiatek, of Poland, returns the ball to Yulia Putintseva, of Kazakhstan, during their match at the Italian Open tennis tournament in Rome. (AP)

Badoa rallies past Shnaider

ROME, May 11, (AP): There was no doubting Rafael Nadal's commitment and desire during his first meeting with a top-10 player in 1½ years.

Nadal's surgically repaired hip and his 37-year-old legs just didn't provide him with the necessary means to be competitive enough on Saturday as ninth-ranked Hubert Hurkacz overpowered the 22-time Grand Slam champion on the Spaniard's beloved clay for a 6-1, 6-3 victory in the third round of the Italian Open.

TENNIS

Nadal, who is still regaining his fitness after missing nearly all of 2023 with a hip injury that required surgery, appeared slow at times and lacked the lucidness to finish off points.

Twice in the first set, Nadal missed drop shot attempts to hand Hurkacz breaks of his serve.

Then early in the second set, Nadal lacked oomph on a backhand volley, allowing Hurkacz to reply with a forehand up the line that clipped the net and landed in for another break.

On the changeovers, Nadal sat hunched over, sweat dripping from his headband and deep in thought for solutions that he couldn't find.

Now, Nadal will need to dig deeper on the practice court if wants to be competitive one last time at the French Open, where he is the record 14-time champion. Roland Garros starts on May 26.

Nadal has indicated this will be his final season on tour and fans inside Campo Centrale tried to encourage the record 10-time Rome champion with chants of "Ole Ole, Ra-fa, Ra-fa."

Nadal hadn't faced a top-10 player since beating No. 4 Casper Ruud at the 2022 ATP Finals.

Meanwhile, top-ranked Novak Djokovic said he was "fine" after accidentally getting knocked on the head by a water bottle while signing autographs after his opening win on Friday.

But Djokovic wasn't taking any further chances when he showed up at the Foro Italico for practice on Saturday, putting on a biking helmet when he met with fans again.

Second-ranked Jannik Sinner and third-ranked Carlos Alcaraz both withdrew before the tournament because of injuries.

In the women's tournament, top-ranked Iga Swiatek beat Yulia Putintseva 6-3, 6-4 for her eighth consecutive win.

Swiatek trailed 4-1 in the second set but then won five straight games after saving four break points to hold for 2-4.

"I needed to get my focus together," Swiatek said. "I know that I can play good tennis because I did it in the first set. So I just wanted to come back to being solid and really work for the points, because, she's really changing the rhythm, so it's not easy to play

against her."

Having won the Madrid Open last week, Swiatek is attempting to become the first woman to win the "dirt double" since Serena Williams in 2013. She's already a two-time Rome champion.

Nadal was Swiatek's role model. "He's a huge inspiration," Swiatek said. "He's basically the only idol I ever had in my life. So it's great that he's back to play some tennis."

Also, Paula Badoa rallied past Diana Shnaider 5-7, 6-4, 6-4 to reach the fourth round at a WTA 1000 event for the first time since her quarterfinal appearance in Rome last year.

Hurkacz will next face 25th-seeded Tomas Etcheverry, who eliminated Thiago Seyboth Wild 6-3, 7-5.

Also advancing was 21st-seeded Nicolas Jarry, who saved seven set points in the second set to overcome Italy's Matteo Arnaldi and a partisan crowd with a 6-2, 7-6 (6) win.

Serbian qualifier Hamad Medjedovic beat 30th-seeded Alejandro Davidovich Fokina 7-6 (4), 6-4.

Djokovic took a little while to get

going in his first match in nearly a month.

He cleaned up his game after dropping his first two service games with some sloppy play, though, and completed a 6-3, 6-1 win over left-handed French qualifier Corentin Moutet in his opening match at the Italian Open on Friday.

"I haven't practiced with a lefty in a while, so it took me a little bit of time to adjust to the different rotation on the balls," Djokovic said. "The first four games were quite bad for me. ... But then I played well."

Djokovic later needed medical attention after accidentally getting knocked on the head by a water bottle while leaving the court.

A man was leaning over the railing to hand Djokovic a notebook for a signature and an aluminum-type water bottle fell out of his backpack and hit the top-ranked player on the top of his head.

"While leaving center court after his match, Novak Djokovic was hit on the head by a water bottle while signing autographs. He received medical attention and has already left the Foro Italico to return to his hotel. His condition is not a cause for concern," tournament organizers said in a statement.

Djokovic hadn't played since he lost to Casper Ruud in the Monte Carlo Masters semifinals on April 13. The 24-time Grand Slam champion is also without a title this year - the first time he's reached May without a trophy since 2018, when he was returning from a right elbow injury.

But Rome, where he's a six-time champion, is one of Djokovic's favorite tournaments. It's also where Djokovic is trying to step up his game on clay before attempting to defend his title at the French Open, which starts on May 26.

Djokovic produced 21 winners to Moutet's 13 and had 13 unforced errors to his opponent's 20. Showing a willingness to come forward, Djokovic also won 18 of 22 points at the net.

Auckland-based team takes top spot

Blues hold on to beat the Hurricanes 31-27

WELLINGTON, May 11, (AP): The Auckland-based Blues held on with their backs to their goal line after the fulltime siren to beat the Wellington-based Hurricanes 31-27 on Saturday in the match of the season in Super Rugby Pacific.

In a match between the longtime New Zealand rivals, the Hurricanes had the last attacking opportunity and battered the Blues' goal line in the final moments of a match between the first- and second-place teams after 12 of 15 regular-season rounds.

RUGBY

The second-place Blues finally won a defensive turnover and kicked the ball out of play to end the match almost four minutes after the full-time siren. They now move past the Hurricanes into first place and likely will hold that place which gives them home advantage throughout the playoffs.

"We often put a premium on defense and in tough times like that, that's when it counts," Blues captain Patrick Tuipulotu said. "We want to back our defense and trust it and fortunately it paid off in the end."

The biggest match of the season drew a daytime crowd of 26,000 to Auckland's Eden Park and live up to its billing. Fans were riveted by superb defense from both teams, lead changes, some contentious decisions and a constantly narrow margin between the teams.

Had the Hurricanes managed to score and to win, it would have been deserved as much as the Blues' win, such was the ferocity of the contest. The Hurricanes who already were depleted by injuries to key players lost three more before the start, including captain Billy Proctor and All Blacks prop Tyrel Lomax, the cornerstone of their scrum.

They came close to winning the match when scrumhalf T.J. Perenara scored the 64th try of his career in the 68th minute, putting the Hurricanes only a point behind the Blues and increasing his lead on Super Rugby's all-time try-scorers list.

But flyhalf Harry Plummer kicked a penalty soon after - his fifth goal from five attempts - to stretch the Blues' lead to four points and they just held on.

The Blues repeatedly chose to kick for touch on penalties during the match and were repelled by the Hurricanes' organized forward defense. With Plummer in such good kicking form and in hindsight, the Blues might have benefited from kicking for goal more often. Still, the Blues managed to



Harry McNulty of Ireland catches the ball during the men's World Rugby Sevens Series 2024 cup final between Ireland and New Zealand in Singapore. (AP)

find a way to win and the Hurricanes fell just short.

"Rugby's a cruel game," Hurricanes captain Brad Shields said. "It was pretty tense which is exactly what we expected. I think we let them into the game too early and the fact we managed to stay in it was good."

The Blues scored after only five minutes through center Bryce Heem but the Hurricanes struck back almost immediately with a try to Shields.

A try to fullback Cole Forbes put the Blues ahead 14-5 before a try to Hurricanes winger Josh Moorby cut the lead to 14-10 at halftime.

The Hurricanes took the lead with a try to backrower Peter Lakai early in the second half but the Blues rallied with a try to winger Mark Telea and led 21-17.

Jordie Barrett narrowed the lead to a point with a penalty but the Blues had their biggest lead at eight points after a contentious try to prop Angus Ta'avao who appeared to score in a double movement.

Perenara's try set up a thrilling finish.

"These are the games you want to be a part of," Tuipulotu said. "It was tough and a see-saw battle right down to the wire."

The Christchurch-based Crusaders' run of seven consecutive Super Rugby titles likely came to an end in Dunedin on Saturday when they lost 32-29 to the Highlanders.

The Crusaders have only two wins after 12 rounds and now have little chance of reaching the playoffs.



Sun Yingsha of China serves against her compatriot Wang Yidi during the women's singles semifinal at WTT Saudi Smash 2024 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. (Xinhua)

Change Name

I, SHAIK BASHA SAHEB (OLD NAME) R/O. D.NO.671-E, GMC BACK SIDE, RAJAMPET (T), (M), ANNAMAYYA (DT) A.P., HEREBY CHANGED MY NAME AS RAKKASI VENKATA KRISHNA REDDY (NEW NAME), SHAIK BASHA SAHEB AND RAKKASI VENKATA KRISHNA REDDY BOTH ARE SAME PERSON WITH TWO DIFFERENT NAMES. OUR AADHAAR NO. 449243058343 AND PASSPORT NO. M6255223.

China bags men's, women's doubles titles at the 2024 WTT Saudi Smash

JEDDAH, May 11, (Xinhua): Chinese pairs Chen Meng/Wang Manyu and Ma Long/Wang Chuqin dominated the doubles field by winning the women's and men's doubles titles respectively here, the seventh day of the 2024 WTT Saudi Smash.

Chen and Wang Manyu faced off against South Korean pair Jeon Ji-hee and Shin Yu-bin in the women's doubles final at King Abdullah Sports City, displaying excellent coordination and skill

and taking control early in the match.

Despite a tense scoreline in the third set, the Chinese duo used their stability on crucial points to secure a 3-0 victory (11-6, 11-6, 12-10), claiming China's second title of the tournament.

The men's doubles final followed, featuring Ma/Wang Chuqin against Japanese duo Hiroto Shinozuka and Shunsuke Togami. The Chinese pair needed only 26 minutes to dispatch their opponents 11-6,

11-5, 11-9.

In the post-match interview, Wang Chuqin expressed his happiness, saying, "I'm very happy to pair up with Ma Long once again. My first world championship title in doubles was won partnering with him, and I hope we can continue to cooperate more in the future." Ma humbly responded, "This is the first time Wang Chuqin and I have clinched a WTT men's doubles title together. He men-

tioned that five years ago I was guiding him, but now he's guiding me." In the women's singles semifinals, Chen faced a fierce battle against Japanese player Hina Hayata. Chen showed her excellent form, winning 11-9, 11-5, 11-10, 11-7 to set up a final showdown with teammate Sun Yingsha, who won a Chinese derby over Wang Yidi 4-1.

The men's singles semifinals between Lin Shidong and Wang Chuqin were

equally thrilling. Lin started strong, effectively handling Wang's powerful shots with his forehand loops and solid defense, taking the first two sets 11-8 each.

Wang Chuqin found his rhythm in the third set, narrowly taking it 11-8. He then capitalized on Lin's wavering focus to win the next two sets 11-9 and 11-4, overturning the match to lead 3-2. Lin pushed hard in the sixth set, winning 11-7 to force a decider.

Mexico leaves goalkeeper Ochoa out of squad

Neymar left off Brazil's squad for Copa America as 17-year-old Endrick included

RIO DE JANEIRO, May 11, (Xinhua): Neymar has been left out of Brazil's squad for the Copa America as he continues his recovery from a serious knee injury, the country's football confederation said.

Neymar has not played since suffering a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament and meniscus of his left knee in October and the 32-year-old was given little chance of being fit for the tournament in the United States, which begins on June 20.

Manchester United midfielder Casemiro and Tottenham Hotspur forward Richarlison also missed out, having struggled with poor form and injuries at their respective clubs.

As expected, manager Dorival Junior named Real Madrid-bound Palmeiras teenager Endrick in his 23-man squad.

The forward, who will join Real Madrid when he turns 18 in July, scored for Brazil in a 1-0 win over England at Wembley Stadium and in a 2-2 draw against Spain at the Santiago Bernabeu in March.

Brazil will begin their Copa America campaign against Costa Rica in Los Angeles on June 24 and will also meet Paraguay and Colombia in the group



Neymar

Al-Qadisiya eyes redemption against Al-Fahaheel

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: Al-Fahaheel will host Al-Qadisiya at 7:55 PM at Mohammed Al-Hamad Stadium, marking the conclusion of the seventh round of the championship group competitions in the Zain Premier League.

Tonight's match will be the sixth encounter between the two teams this season, with Al-Qadisiya emerging victorious in all previous encounters. It secured wins over Al-Fahaheel with scores of 3-0, 2-1, and 5-2 in the league, eliminated them from the Prince's Cup with a 2-1 victory, and also triumphed in the Crown Prince Cup with a 5-4 win on penalties following a 2-2 draw.

Currently occupying third place in the standings with 50 points, Al-Qadisiya is eager to bounce back after a draw against Al-Salmiya in the last round, which has slightly dampened its title aspirations, now trailing the leader Kuwait Club by 7 points.

Coach Muhammad Al-Mishaan is determined to uplift the

spirits of his players with a victory tonight, aiming to fine-tune the team's performance ahead of the Amir Cup final against Al-Salmiya on May 21st. However, he acknowledges the challenge posed by Al-Fahaheel, a team that has proven to be a formidable opponent to league leaders. On the flip side, Al-Fahaheel, currently fifth in the standings with 27 points, is keen to halt its recent string of losses in the last three rounds against Al-Kuwait, Al-Arabi, and Al-Salmiya, all ending with a 2-0 shoreline.

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Under the guidance of its Syrian coach, Firas Al-Khatib, Al-Fahaheel aims to secure a positive outcome tonight and stay in contention for the fourth-place spot. It hopes to capitalize on its opponent's current situation and secure its first victory over Al-Qadisiya this season, despite the absence of several key players due to injury.



A file photo of players in action.

stage.

Brazil squad: Goalkeepers: Alisson (Liverpool), Ederson (Manchester City) Bento (Athletico Paranaense) Defenders: Danilo (Juventus), Yan Couto (Girona), Guilherme Arana (Athletico Mineiro), Wendell (Porto), Beraldo (Paris Saint-Germain), Marquinhos (Paris Saint-Germain), Eder Militao (Real Madrid), Gabriel Magalhaes (Arsenal) Midfielders: Andreas Pereira (Fulham), Bruno Guimaraes (Newcastle), Douglas Luiz (Aston Villa), Joao Gomes (Wolverhampton), Lucas Paqueta (West Ham) Forwards: Endrick (Palmeiras), Evanilson (Porto),

Gabriel Martinelli (Arsenal), Raphinha (Barcelona), Savinho (Girona), Rodrigo (Real Madrid), Vinicius Junior (Real Madrid).

Mexico squad: Goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa has been left out of Mexico's squad for the upcoming Copa America in the United States, the country's football federation said on Friday.

The 38-year-old veteran of five World Cup campaigns paid the price for having lost his regular starting place at Italy's Salernitana, where his contract is due to expire next month.

Mexico's three goalkeepers for the tournament starting next month in the

United States will be Luis Malagon (America), Julio Gonzalez (Pumas) and Raul Rangel (Chivas).

"I spoke with him to let him know about my decision and reiterate that it doesn't mean he's out of the reckoning for the 2026 World Cup," Mexico manager Jaime Lozano told reporters.

"Right now we just want to watch other players but he's still in the frame." Fulham striker Raul Jimenez and PSV Eindhoven winger Hirving Lozano were also absent.

As expected, Lozano's 23-man squad includes West Ham midfielder Edson Alvarez, Porto defender Jorge

Sanchez and Feyenoord player Santiago Gimenez.

Mexico will open their Copa America campaign against Jamaica on June 22 before also meeting Venezuela and Ecuador in the group stage.

Mexico squad: Goalkeepers: Luis Malagon (America), Julio Gonzalez (Pumas), Raul Rangel (Chivas) Defenders: Jorge Sanchez (Porto), Israel Reyes (America), Brian Garcia (Toluca), Cesar Montes (Almeria), Victor Guzman (Monterrey), Alexis Pena (Necaxa), Johan Vazquez (Genoa), Jorge Orozco (Chivas), Gerardo Artega (Monterrey), Bryan Gonzalez

(Pachuca) Midfielders: Edson Alvarez (West Ham), Luis Romo (Monterrey), Jordan Carrillo (Santos), Erick Sanchez (Pachuca), Orbelin Pineda (AEK Athens), Roberto Alvarado (Chivas), Luis Chavez (Dynamo Moscow), Andres Montano (Mazatlan), Fernando Beltran (Chivas), Carlos Rodriguez (Cruz Azul).

Forwards: Marcelo Flores (Tigres), Cesar Huerta (Tigres), Julian Quinones (America), Guillermo Martinez (Pumas), Santiago Gimenez (Feyenoord), Alexis Vega (Toluca), Diego Lainez (Tigres), Uriel Antuna (Cruz Azul).

Nuggets bounce back with 'blowout' of Timberwolves



Denver Nuggets forward Michael Porter Jr. (1) goes up for a shot as Minnesota Timberwolves guard Anthony Edwards (5) defends during the first half of Game 3 of an NBA basketball second-round playoff series in Minneapolis. (AP)

Pacers trim Knicks advantage

MINNEAPOLIS, May 11, (AP): The Denver Nuggets were simply too determined, too experienced, too proud and too talented to let their flop in the first two games define this series against the surging Minnesota Timberwolves.

This is what defending NBA champions do - quiet a raucous crowd, embrace the boos and take the momentum right back.

Jamal Murray rebounded from a rough start to the Western Conference semifinals with 24 points to lead the Nuggets on a 117-90 romp Friday night in Game 3 that made the Timberwolves the last team in the NBA to lose this postseason.

Nikola Jokic, the three-time league MVP, had 24 points, 14 rebounds and nine assists, Michael Porter Jr. scored 21 points and the Nuggets sliced Minnesota's series lead to 2-1 on the strength of their 14-for-29 shooting from 3-point range.

BASKETBALL

Anthony Edwards had a quiet 19 points to lead the Wolves, who went just 10 for 32 from deep even with a 4-for-5 effort from Karl-Anthony Towns. They failed to get Towns (14 points) enough shots and played slower than they did in the first two games in Denver while falling behind by as many as 34 points.

The Nuggets became the 30th team in the history of the NBA playoffs to lose the first two games at home in a best-of-seven series. Five have rallied to win.

This was the step forward Denver badly needed, breaking the 100-point barrier for the first time in three games against Minnesota's NBA-best defense.

Mbappé confirms he will leave PSG ahead of expected move to Real

MARSEILLE, May 11, (Xinhua): Kylian Mbappe confirmed on Friday that he will leave French Ligue 1 club Paris Saint-Germain at the end of the season, without revealing his next destination.

But according to multiple media reports, he will join the La Liga powerhouses Real Madrid after the season ends.

"I wanted to announce to you all that it's my last year at Paris Saint-Germain. I will not extend and the adventure will come to an end in a few weeks," Mbappe said in a video posted on social media.

"I will play my last game at the Parc des Princes on Sunday."

The French international joined PSG on loan from Monaco in 2017 and officially signed with the capital-based side after the season ended for a transfer fee of 180 million euros.

Murray, who totaled just 25 points on 9-for-32 shooting with a minus-38 rating over the first two games, drew a \$100,000 fine from the NBA for chucking a heat pack onto the floor from the bench.

The Wolves got NBA Defensive

Player of the Year Rudy Gobert back on 9-for-32 shooting for the birth of his son, but the Nuggets zipped the ball around so well outside of the paint so well that his long arms were largely a nonfactor.

Gordon swished back-to-back

During his seven years with the team, Mbappe helped the club claim six league titles and three French Cup victories, making 306 appearances and scoring 255 goals, becoming the top scorer in the team's history.

"It's a lot of emotions, many years where I had the chance and the great honor to be a member of the biggest French

club, one of the best in the world," said the 26-year-old.

"It allowed me to arrive here, to have my first experience in a club with a lot of pressure, to grow as a player of course, by being alongside some of the best in history, some of the greatest champions," he added.

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"It allowed me to arrive here, to have my first experience in a club with a lot of pressure, to grow as a player of course, by being alongside some of the best in history, some of the greatest champions," he added.

3-pointers and Porter hit one on the next possession midway through the third quarter to make it 72-50 and thwart another mini-Wolves rally.

By early in the fourth, fans began to file out of their seats. Frustrated by the accumulation of calls against them on the night, Wolves reserves Nickeil Alexander-Walker and Kyle Anderson each were slapped with technical fouls during a timeout with 5:54 left for arguing with the officials.

Pacers 111, Knicks 106

In Indianapolis, Tyrese Haliburton limped slowly to the microphone with a bad ankle, a sore tailbone and a battered body.

He sure didn't look as though he was hurting in the waning moments of Game 3.

When Haliburton heard New York Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau calling for a double team, he swung the ball to Andrew Nembhard, who bobbled the pass momentarily before lining up a 31-foot, tiebreaking 3-pointer with 16 seconds to go, giving the Pacers a critical 111-106 victory in Game 3 of the Eastern Conference semifinals.



New York Knicks guard Jalen Brunson (11) drives past Indiana Pacers forward Aaron Nesmith (23) during the first half of Game 3 in an NBA basketball second-round playoff series in Indianapolis. (AP)

Sheikh Al-Badr meets Oly Council members to Boost Asian Aquatics

BANGKOK, May 11: Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr, President of the Kuwaiti and Asian Aquatics Federations, convened with Prince Faisal bin Al-Hussein, a member of the Olympic Council of Asia's Executive Council, and Prince Safri, brother of the Sultan of Brunei, alongside delegates from the Jordanian Olympic Committee and the Olympic Committee of the Sultanate of Brunei. This meeting took place during the Executive Office gathering of the Asian Olympic Games in Thailand.

The discussions revolved around bolstering and advancing aquatics on the Asian continent, with a focus on promotion and surmounting obstacles hindering civil federations. The aim was to ensure Asia's continued competitiveness in global aquatics



Officials pose for the camera.

championships through fruitful cooperation and strengthening ties between the Olympic Council of Asia and the Asian Aquatics Confederation.

Best of the Rest

Inter crush Frosinone: Inter Milan bounced back from the defeat to Sassuolo by humiliating Frosinone 5-0 away in Serie A, with top scorer Lautaro Martinez ending his goal drought.

Inter had clinched their 20th Serie A title with five rounds to spare but were stunned by Sassuolo 1-0 last round.

David Fratesi put the Nerazzurri ahead in the 19th minute through a counter-attack, before the Italian international set up another for Marko Arnautovic to double the lead on the hour mark.

Winter signing Tajon Buchanan netted his maiden goal with a curler in the 77th minute, before Lautaro scored his first Serie A goal since February, while Marcus Thuram put the icing on the cake with a solo run. (Xinhua)

Win for Nice, draw for Brest:

Brest missed a chance to cement a Champions League place next season after drawing at home with Reims 1-1 in the French league.

Brest has already guaranteed European football for the first time in its history, but remained in third place, three points ahead of Lille.

The top three qualify for the Champions League. Fourth-placed Lille has a game in hand.

Marshall Munetsi put Reims ahead when he stooped to head home an inviting cross after 25 minutes. Lilian Brassier equalized for Brest with a header in first half stoppage time.

Fifth-placed Nice is also in the fight for a Champion League place after a goal from Jeremie Boga gave it a 1-0 win over Le Havre.

Nice is four points behind Brest and one behind Lille. Friday's win was its fifth straight unbeaten match.

The result on France's south coast was a blow to the struggling Le Havre. A win would have ended its fears of relegation but, instead, it remained only three points above the relegation zone with one game left.

Metz was three points behind in the relegation playoff position but has a game in hand.

Guridi rescues point for Alaves: Jon Guridi scored deep in stoppage time for host Alaves to draw with Girona 2-2 in the Spanish league.

The header nine minutes in was the midfielder's second goal of the game and just his third in 33 starts this season.

"The reward of the last-minute goal is for all those chances that I have had this season and not scored," he said.

Alaves came into the match on the back of consecutive wins against Atletico Madrid, Celta de Vigo and Valencia but Eric Garcia put Girona 1-0 up with a header after just four minutes.

The home side leveled eight minutes later when Giuliano Simeone's precise cut back was converted by Guridi.

Yangel Herrera's magnificent finish two minutes before halftime made it 2-1.

Alaves was in 11th place, and Girona was in second, two points ahead of Barcelona, which has a game in hand. (AP)

Juniors make winning start:

Argentinos Juniors twice recovered from a goal down to clinch a 3-2 home win over Rosario Central on the opening night of Argentina's Primera Division season.

Agustin Modica gave the visitors an early lead before Francisco Alvarez equalized 15 minutes later at the Diego Maradona stadium in Buenos Aires.

Leo Heredia gifted Rosario Central their second goal by inadvertently turning the ball into his own net under pressure.

But the hosts persisted and drew level again through Alan Lescano, who converted from the penalty spot on the stroke of halftime. Luciano Gondou completed the turnaround when he thumped a 25-yard drive into the top left corner after combining with Lescano.

The result leaves Argentinos Juniors second in the 28-team standings, trailing Newell's Old Boys on goal difference. Rosario Central are 26th.

In other Argentine top flight matches on Friday, Instituto won 2-1 at Sarmiento and Newell's eased to a 2-0 home win over Platense. (Xinhua)

Celtic close in on league title: Celtic is on the cusp of a third straight Scottish league title.

A 2-1 victory over Rangers in the Old Firm derby on Saturday moved Celtic six points clear of its fierce Glasgow rival with two matches left.

Celtic can clinch the first silverware of Brendan Rodgers' second spell in charge by avoiding defeat at Kilmarnock on Wednesday, if Rangers does not drop points at home to Dundee on Tuesday.

A strike by Matt O'Riley and John Lundstram's own-goal gave Celtic a two-goal lead before Cyriel Dessers pulled a goal back for Rangers in the 40th, only for Lundstram to complete a miserable game on a personal level by receiving a red card for a foul on Alistair Johnston.



Celtic's Daizen Maeda crosses the ball, leading to an own goal scored by Rangers' John Lundstram, during the Scottish Premiership soccer match between Glasgow Rangers and Celtic Glasgow, at the Celtic Park, in Glasgow, Scotland. Celtic won 2-1. (AP)

Sports

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Al-Yarmouk players pose with club's officials.

Al-Failakawi 'hails' Yarmouk Club's promotion to Zain Premier League

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: Othman Al-Failakawi, Member of the Board of Directors and General Manager of Yarmouk Club, extended congratulations to the players of the first football team, as well as to the technical and medical staff, fellow board members, and club fans on the team's achievement of winning the Zain League First Division Shield and promotion to the Premier League. Additionally, he congratulated Al-Tadamon Club on securing second place and joining them in the Premier League.

Emphasizing the club's commitment to success, Al-Failakawi affirmed that the Board of Directors, led by club president Ahmed Al-Jarki, along with the technical and administrative staff,

will devise a comprehensive roadmap for the team in preparation for the upcoming season. Recognizing the unique challenges of competing in the Zain Premier League, he stressed the importance of mental and physical preparedness for the players.

Al-Failakawi praised the team's outstanding performance in their final league match against Al-Tadamon Club, where they secured a commendable 3-0 victory. He highlighted the team's accomplishment of earning the title of best attacking

line for scoring the most goals, along with securing the best defense line and goalkeeper, conceding the fewest goals throughout the First Division League.

SOCCER

Kazma secure third spot

Kuwait Club dominate Al-Qadisiya in 'opener'

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: The Kuwait Club dominated Al-Qadisiya 96 -69 in the opening game of the Basketball Premier League final at the Al-Itihad Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex. The series is best of five.

BASKETBALL

Meanwhile, Kazma secured the third spot in the league standings by defeating Al-Arabi with a 97-84 win. Notably, Travis Leslie of Kazma showcased stellar performance with 24 points and 11 rebounds, while Kendall Dickes led the scoring for Al-Arabi with 23 points.

Kuwait Club dominated from the start, asserting control with a 27-point lead in the first quarter. Al-Qadisiya, hampered by the absence of their American star Robert Lowry due to injury, struggled to keep pace, managing only 14 points. However, they improved in the second quarter, narrowing the gap to 37-23 by halftime, while Kuwait Club settled for 18 points.

The third quarter witnessed intense



Kuwait Club players goes for a basket as Al-Qadisiya players defend.

competition, with both teams trading blows. Effective substitutions by Al-Qadisiya's coach, Peter Schumers, propelled his team to a 71-62 lead by the quarter's end. However, Kuwait Club maintained its momentum in the final quarter, outscoring

Michelle Young (25 points) and Mohammed Adnan (21 points) shone for Kuwait Club, while Martic led the scoring for Al-Qadisiya with 33 points.

Watanabe nets the winner

Yokohama rally past Al-Ain in 1st leg of Asian CL final

YOKOHAMA, Japan, May 11, (AP): Yokohama F. Marinos came from behind to take a first-leg lead in the Asian Champions League final, defeating Al-Ain of the United Arab Emirates 2-1 on Saturday.

Kota Watanabe scored the winner in the 84th minute after Asahi Uenaka had headed the hosts back on level terms in the second half. Yokohama controlled most of the game at Nissan Stadium after conceding an early goal from Mohammed Al-Baloushi.

The second leg will take place at Al-Ain on May 25.

Al-Ain, the 2003 champion and beaten finalist in 2005 and 2016, started took the lead after just 12 minutes.

Tournament top scorer Soufiane Rahimi outpaced Eduardo outside the area and while the Moroccan was denied a 12th goal by goalkeeper William Popp, Al-Baloushi was on hand to bury the rebound.

The home fans were silenced again

on the half-hour mark when Matias Palacios put the ball in the net, but the Argentine midfielder was adjudged to have been offside after a video review.

Al-Ain coach Hernan Crespo had goalkeeper Khalid Eisa to thank at the break for keeping his team in the lead with several fine saves.

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The second half pressure from Yokohama finally paid off after 72 minutes. Yan Matheus crossed from the right and Uenaka climbed high at the far post to send a bouncing header past the diving Eisa.

With six minutes remaining, former Arsenal winger Ryo Miyaichi's shot from the left was guided in from close range at the near post by Watanabe. Although the strike was initially disallowed for offside, the goal was quickly given after a video review.

Man City go top of EPL

Gvardiol scores double

LONDON, May 11, (AP): Manchester City stayed in control of the Premier League title race by beating Fulham 4-0 on Saturday, with Josko Gvardiol scoring a double to add to his unlikely end-of-season haul of goals.

City extended its unbeaten run to 33 games in all competitions and only has to win its final two matches - at Tottenham on Tuesday and

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at home to West Ham on May 19 - to capture an unprecedented fourth straight English top-flight title.

Gvardiol, who has been playing out of position as an attacking left back, opened the scoring in the 13th minute by exchanging a one-two with Kevin De Bruyne before slotting home right-footed. He wrapped up the victory by sliding in to meet Bernardo Silva's cross with an effort that dribbled over the line in the 71st.

It took the Croatia international's tally to five goals in his last seven games. He hadn't scored once in his previous 32 matches for City.

Between Gvardiol's strikes, Phil Foden slotted home a finish off the post in the 59th to notch his 17th league goal of the season.

Julian Alvarez added a fourth in the sixth minute of stoppage time from the penalty spot after he was fouled by Issa Diop, who received a second yellow card for the challenge.

City climbed two points above Arsenal, which plays at Manchester United on Sunday in the first of its remaining two games.

Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag offered a defense of their worst season in decades Friday and argued the club owners will be sympathetic at the end of the campaign.

Kuwaiti athletes qualify for Peru World Championships

ISMAILIA, Egypt, May 11: The athletes representing Kuwait in the 20th Arab Youth Athletics Championships, held in Ismailia, northern Egypt, secured top positions in the tournament, earning qualification for the upcoming World Youth Championships in Peru this July.

Faisal Al-Dasam, head of the delegation and Treasurer of the Kuwait Athletics Federation, expressed his delight at the achievement of Kuwaiti athletes and their advancement to the global stage in Peru. He attributed this success to the unwavering support of Kuwait's leadership for its champions across various sporting events.

Al-Dasam also commended the strides made in Kuwaiti sports, highlighting the utilization of modern sports equipment and the engagement of top-tier experts to prepare athletes for regional and international competitions. He extended his gratitude to the Public Sports Authority for their steadfast support of Kuwaiti athletes in athletics, aiming to elevate Kuwait's presence on international podiums.



Kuwaiti athlete celebrates with the national flag.

Recognizing the pivotal role played by the technical staff, Al-Dasam emphasized their dedication

in nurturing Kuwaiti players both mentally and morally, fostering a culture of determination and excellence fitting of Kuwait's stature on the Arab, regional, and global levels.

Saad Al-Shammari, administrative director of the delegation, echoed the sentiment of joy over the victory, underscoring the significance of securing first places as a valuable addition to Kuwait's sporting achievements. He lauded

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the consistent support provided to all Kuwaiti teams participating in foreign tournaments.

Dr. Nasser Al-Jarallah, coach of the Kuwait national team, praised the exceptional performance displayed by all players in the Arab Youth Championship. He credited the Kuwait Athletics Federation and its members for their unwavering support and encouragement, pledging to strive for further accomplishments in future championships.

use 13 partnerships in center half, when they see we don't have a left full back, when we have so many injuries, they know that will have a negative impact on the results.

"And still we are fighting, and (have) a huge FA Cup final. We are very happy to be there. It can still be a highlight for this season. Of course we are not happy but we know the reasons why we are underperforming in the rankings. It's the injuries. No team will perform when you have so many injuries in key areas."

Ten Hag said he doesn't need a public vote of confidence from the owners: "I don't care if they do or they don't. I'm working on improving my team."

Bruno Fernandes and Scott McTominay have returned to training but United will be without Mason Mount for Sunday's game against Arsenal.

Ten Hag said Mount - an expensive offseason signing - "fell out (of

contention)" because of an unspecified injury.

The 25-year-old midfielder has made just 19 appearances for United in an injury-plagued season after joining from Chelsea. Mount played 80 minutes against Crystal Palace on Monday.

After Arsenal, United hosts Newcastle in midweek before the league season finale at Brighton. Then the FA Cup final, where United could secure a Europa League spot if it wins.

Mount has been "very unlucky" with injuries this season, Ten Hag said.

"The last four seasons, he (only) had a small issue in the end of his Chelsea career. Before that, he played almost all the games three seasons after each other, with three days turnaround, he always played. It's really bad luck what happened to him and he's a very good player and we really missed him across the season."



Al Ain's Bandar Al-Ahbabi and Yokohama F. Marinos' Yan Matheus vie for the ball during the first leg of the AFC Champions League final soccer match between Al Ain and Yokohama F. Marinos in Yokohama, Japan. (AP)



Manchester City's Phil Foden celebrates after scoring his side's second goal during the English Premier League soccer match between Fulham and Manchester City at the Craven Cottage Stadium in London. (AP)