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**11** Boursa Kuwait achieves net profit of KD 15.80m for 2023

**16** Haaland 'shuts mouths' as Man City close on Liverpool

**كل عام و الكويت بخير**  
KUWAIT NATIONAL & LIBERATION DAY  
25 - 26  
SUPPLEMENT INSIDE

## Election commission law suspended

Govt issues new election law decree • Rehabilitated convicts can contest polls

**PM chairs financial panel; Deputy PM submits disclosure**

KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah chaired on Wednesday a meeting of the ministerial economic affairs committee with the attendance of several ministers and senior officials of the ministry of finance, Public Institution for Social Security, Civil Service Commission and Public Authority of Manpower.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah submitted his financial disclosure statement to the Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) at the authority's headquarters on Wednesday. The ministry of defense said in a press statement that this came in accordance with law no. 2 of 2016 regarding the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Authority. — KUNA



By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The government issued a decree law suspending the election commission law for seven months and reissued the old elections law in a bid to facilitate holding the snap polls within the next two months. The dissolved National Assembly had issued the election commission law to appoint an independent authority to oversee parliamentary elections as part of political reforms.

But the government said that it was not possible to appoint judges to lead the commission as required by the suspended law within a short time. As a result, it was not possible to implement the election commission law, and accordingly it was suspended until October 1, 2024.

In order to hold the snap polls within the stipulated two months of dissolving the National Assembly on February 15, the government issued a new elections law which is very similar to the law that was effective before the election commission law.

The law allows people who were convicted of serious crimes and crimes offending HH the Amir, but who were later rehabilitated, to run in the 2024 elections. This would allow some former prominent opposition members and some other politicians to contest the polls. But those who were convicted but were not rehabilitated will remain barred from



**NEWS IN BRIEF**

**ETA simplifies UK travel**

KUWAIT: Starting from today, Feb 22, 2024, citizens of Kuwait, GCC and Jordan can obtain an Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) to travel to the UK. Once obtained, the ETA allows multiple short trips (up to six months at a time) to the UK over two years or until the passport used for the application expires, whichever comes sooner.

**15 killed in Philippines crash**

MANILA: Fifteen people were killed Wednesday after a truck plummeted down a ravine in the central Philippines. The vehicle was carrying people on their way to a livestock market on Negros island. Of the 17 people onboard, only one passenger and the driver survived, who was found drenched in motor oil in the wreck at the bottom of the ravine at least 50 m below the road. — AFP

**Zionists behind Iran sabotage**

TEHRAN: Iran said Wednesday the Zionist entity was behind twin sabotage attacks against gas pipelines that disrupted supplies in at least three provinces last week. The Feb 14 explosions hit pipelines in the cities of Safashahr in the southern province of Fars and Borujen in the southwestern province of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari. — AFP

**Lanka repays Iran with tea**

COLOMBO: Cash-strapped Sri Lanka said Wednesday it had exported tea worth \$20 million to Iran to partially repay its \$251 million oil debts, with Colombo saying Tehran's visiting foreign minister had expressed "satisfaction" at the deal. The barter deal allows sanctions-hit Iran to avoid having to use up scarce hard currency to pay for imports of popular tea. It also allowed Sri Lanka to pay with tea, as the country was short of foreign currency. — AFP

**Kuwait regrets truce veto as hunger grips Gaza, deaths spiral**

KUWAIT/GAZA: Kuwait regretted Wednesday the renewed use of the veto at the UN Security Council (UNSC) on a draft resolution submitted by Algeria on behalf of the Arab group, calling for a Gaza ceasefire and cessation of the brutal aggression launched by Zionist occupation forces against the disarmed Palestinian people for over four months.

In a statement, the Kuwaiti foreign ministry reiterated the country's support for an immediate and complete ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, warning of the consequences of the continued deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the territory and the incessant bloodshed of Palestinian civilians.

It reaffirmed that the Security Council's failure to adopt the draft resolution regrettably reflects the size of challenges the international community is facing, something that necessitates a swift move to address it in order to ensure that the Security Council can do its basic duties of safeguarding international security and peace.

Continued on Page 9



**US against ordering Zionists out; ICJ to hear Kuwait's plea**

THE HAGUE: The United States told the UN's top court on Wednesday that the Zionist entity should not be legally forced to withdraw from occupied Palestinian territory without security guarantees. The International Court of Justice is holding a week of hearings after a request from the United Nations, with an unprecedented 52 countries giving their views on the Zionist entity's occupation.

Kuwait is set to deliver its plea before the ICJ, the ministry of foreign affairs said. The plea will be given before the United Nations' top court by Kuwait's Ambassador to The Hague Ali Al-Thefeeri, its permanent representative to the UN Tariq Al-Bannai and Assistant Foreign Minister for Legal Affairs and Minister Plenipotentiary Tahani Al-Nasser, according to a ministry statement on Wednesday. Kuwait had previously submitted a "written plea" to the ICJ as part of global efforts to back the "rights of the Palestinian people", added the statement, underlining the measure as a testament to Kuwait's "unflinching stance" towards Palestinian statehood rights.

Most speakers have demanded that the Zionist entity end its occupation, which came after a six-day Arab-Zionist war in 1967, but Washington came to its ally's defense at the court. "The court should not find that (the Zionist entity's) is legally obligated to immediately and unconditionally withdraw from occupied territory," said Richard Visek, legal advisor at the US State Department.

"Any movement towards (the Zionist entity's) withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza requires consideration of (the Zionist entity's) very real security needs," he argued. "We were all reminded of those security needs on October 7," he said, referring to the Hamas attacks that sparked the current conflict. The UN has asked the ICJ to hand down an "advisory opinion" on the "legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of (the Zionist entity) in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem."

The court will probably deliver its opinion before the end of the year, but it is not binding on anyone. Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad Al-Maliki told reporters after the US statement: "I expected much more. I didn't hear anything new." Washington has been insisting that the Zionist-Palestinian conflict be addressed in "other fora and not here", Maliki said. "Well, we tried other fora for the last 75 years and we confronted the US veto and the US hegemony over decision-making processes within the UN sys-





# Embassies send congratulatory messages

## UK Embassy



**Belinda Lewis**  
UK's Ambassador

I would like to wish His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and all those who are celebrating a very happy 63rd National Day and 33rd Liberation Day. This year is a special one in the UK and Kuwait's history as we celebrate a century and a quarter of partnership and reflect with pride on all we have achieved together, including our collaboration to defend Kuwait's sovereignty and territorial integrity during the First Gulf War. I hope everyone is able to enjoy the long weekend and spend quality time with their loved ones.

## Netherlands Embassy



**Laurens Westhoff**  
Netherlands' Ambassador

On the 63rd National Day and 33rd Liberation Day of Kuwait, I extend my heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to the Kuwaiti leadership, government, and people. It is with pleasure to announce that in 2024, the Netherlands and Kuwait are marking the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between them. I am confident that through collaborative and intensified efforts, the enduring friendly relations and cooperation, both on a bilateral and multilateral level, between our nations will continue to prosper in the years ahead. This progress will be in the best interest of our respective populations, as well as contribute to regional and global peace, stability, and sustainable development cooperation.

## Mexico Embassy



**Eduardo Patricio Haller**  
Mexico's Ambassador

The Embassy of Mexico has the honor to extend the heartfelt congratulations and best wishes on this auspicious occasion of the 63rd National Day and 33rd Liberation Day to Kuwait's Amir His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Prime Minister, the government and people of Kuwait.

Throughout history, the nations of Mexico and Kuwait have shared a bond characterized by warmth and productive collaboration. Kuwait has every reason to celebrate its progress and accomplishments since achieving independence. The nation stands as a paragon of stability and economic development, and it is my hope that it remains a bastion of calm and prosperity in its area. I am hopeful that the already strong ties of friendship and cooperation between our countries will only deepen, leading to greater mutual benefits for both our people.

Both Mexico and Kuwait are nations that deeply cherish peace and actively promote it both within their borders and internationally. Their commitment to fostering a peaceful global environment is evident in their diplomatic endeavors and participation in peacekeeping missions. These countries understand the transformative power of peace in creating a safer, more prosperous world for future generations.

By advocating for dialogue and understanding in conflict resolution, Mexico and Kuwait exemplify their dedication to the ideals of harmony and cooperation. Their joint efforts in various international forums to encourage peace and stability underscore a shared vision that transcends cultural and geographic differences, making a convincing case for their role as pillars of peace in the international community. Wishing the friendly Kuwaiti people continued progress and prosperity.

## India Embassy



**Dr Adarsh Swaika**  
India's Ambassador

On behalf of the government and people of India, particularly the Indian community in Kuwait, I extend my warm greetings to the leadership, the government, and the people of Kuwait on the happy occasion of National Day and Liberation Day of Kuwait. I take this opportunity to convey my best wishes for the continued good health and personal well-being of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

Our excellent bilateral relationship extends beyond the centuries-old historical and cultural linkages that encompass political, trade, economic and vibrant people-to-people ties. The relationship is evolving into a multi-faceted partnership. India remains committed to working closely with Kuwait in enhancing our bilateral cooperation in all spheres. I thank our Kuwaiti friends for all the love, warmth and care they extend to the Indian community in Kuwait. Let the joyous occasions of National and Liberation Days of Kuwait be a harbinger of continued peace, progress and prosperity of the people of the State of Kuwait.

## Palestine Embassy



**Rami Tahboub**  
Palestine's Ambassador

On behalf of the Palestinian community in Kuwait and the Embassy of Palestine, I am privileged to convey our sincerest congratulations and well wishes to the Amir His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, as well as to the esteemed Kuwaiti populace, on the auspicious occasions of Independence Day and Liberation Day.

I express my deep reverence, respect, and affection for Kuwait, its people, and its unwavering support for Arab and humanitarian causes. Kuwait has long been a stalwart advocate for the Palestinian cause, demonstrating steadfast solidarity amidst the ongoing challenges faced by the Palestinian people, particularly in the face of relentless aggression and occupation. May the Almighty preserve Kuwait, protect His Highness the Amir, and bestow upon the beloved Kuwait the blessings of security, stability, prosperity, and well-being.

## Turkey Embassy



**Tuba Nur Sonmez**  
Turkey's Ambassador

On behalf of the embassy and Turkish community in Kuwait, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the leadership, government, and people of Kuwait on the 63rd National Day and 33rd Liberation anniversary. We honor the resilience and sacrifices of the Kuwaiti people in defending their sovereignty. Reflecting our shared history and respect, the Turkish Embassy was one of the last to evacuate following the invasion, and our diplomats returned to Kuwait promptly in March 1991, shortly after its liberation.

We wish Kuwait continued prosperity, security, and remarkable achievements. Turkey and Kuwait enjoy a deep friendship and strong partnership, thriving in trade, investment, energy, defense, and culture. As we celebrate 60 years of diplomatic ties, we are committed to further strengthening our relationship for regional peace and prosperity. Our community in Kuwait proudly shares in the celebrations of Kuwait's National Day and Liberation Day. May Allah bless the Amir His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah with good health, happiness, and longevity. Congratulations to the people of Kuwait on this joyous occasion.

## Russia Embassy



**Vladimir Zheltov**  
Russia's Ambassador

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Amir of Kuwait, the government and the people of friendly Kuwait on the occasion of the 63rd Anniversary of the National Day and the 33rd Anniversary of the Liberation Day. Our bilateral relations started back in 1963 shortly after Kuwait had gained its independence. Against the then geopolitical realities, your country became the first Gulf state to establish diplomatic ties with the USSR. During the tragic events in 1990-1991 our country stood by Kuwait's side. Nowadays our relations continue to develop in various fields. Russia and Kuwait have common interests and desire to further promote the political dialogue, economic and humanitarian cooperation. More and more Kuwaitis visit Russia where they enjoy a warm welcome even during cold winters. We view "Hala February" annual celebrations as an amazing tradition of the Kuwaiti people which demonstrates love for their country, a gem of the Arabian Gulf. And it gives me pleasure to congratulate all Kuwaitis on the occasion of the National and Liberation Days with our best wishes for continued progress and prosperity.

## Sierra Leone Embassy



**Haja Ishata Thomas**  
Sierra Leone's Ambassador

In observance of the celebrations marking the 63rd National Day and 33rd Liberation Day of Kuwait on 25th and 26th February 2024, respectively, let me on behalf of the president of Sierra Leone Dr. Julius Maada Bio, the government and people of Sierra Leone and on my own personal behalf, convey to the Amir His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the government and people of Kuwait, warmest felicitations, on the historic and momentous occasions.

On this remarkable occasion, I wish to also seize the opportunity to congratulate Kuwait on its massive nationwide infrastructure development, including putting sound micro-economic measures; amidst the global economic meltdown as well as security measures in response to the numerous security challenges, particularly in the Middle East and the wider world.

Accordingly, Kuwait has been an embodiment of peace, stability, and economic growth within the GCC countries. It is my fervent hope that the friendly relations between our two sisterly countries will continue to further strengthen for the mutual benefit of our two peoples and countries. I pray that Allah continue to bestow peace and security, love and prosperity upon Kuwait.

## Iran Embassy



**Mohammad Toutouchi**  
Iran's Ambassador

I extend warm congratulations to the Kuwaiti people as they celebrate the National and Liberation Days. These festivities mark the onset of a promising new era under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. With the dawn of this new government, there is hope for strengthened ties between Iran and Kuwait, fostering a relationship founded on mutual respect and cooperation. As we join in the celebrations, we earnestly pray for the prosperity and unity of our neighboring nations, envisioning a future where the bonds between our Muslim countries continue to flourish for the betterment of our shared Islamic community.

## Germany Embassy



**Hans-Christian von Reibnitz**  
Germany's Ambassador

Each year in February, Kuwait marks its National Day - back-to-back with its Day of Liberation. On behalf of the German Embassy, I would like to take this auspicious occasion to congratulate the leadership of Kuwait HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and all people of Kuwait. Kuwait can look back with great pride on 63 years of stunning development. A modern, wealthy state has emerged on the shores of a once remote fishing community - providing prosperity and security not only for its own citizens but for millions of other people as well. There were dark hours, too: Freedom and prosperity came under attack in 1990 and the country's very existence was at stake. An international alliance of countries repelled the aggression and Kuwait was reborn, literally from the ashes.

The painful pictures of those months are etched into our collective memory. We remember your sacrifices on Liberation Day - on February 26. Kuwait's best traditions are beautifully reflected in the colors of your national flag: Prosperous and peaceful on the one hand - yet also willing to protect and defend, as a trusted ally and friend. Today, the German Embassy stands with you in mutual respect and admiration. With our congratulations on your national twin anniversaries we extend our best wishes for a prosperous, peaceful and inspiring future.

## South Korea Embassy



**Chung Byung-ha**  
South Korea's Ambassador

On behalf of the government and the people of the Republic of Korea, I have the honor to convey my warmest congratulations and best wishes to the government and the friendly people of Kuwait on the occasion of the 63rd anniversary of the National Day and the 33rd anniversary of the Liberation Day of Kuwait. I wish them joyous celebrations. I also wish to take this opportunity to convey my warmest congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on his accession to power. I sincerely wish His Highness every success in his leadership as well as good health and prosperity.

I am confident that His Highness' noble and wise leadership will lead Kuwait into a much more prosperous and promising future. The Republic of Korea holds its relationship with Kuwait in the highest regard. In particular, the year 2024 is an important milestone in our relationship as it marks the 45th anniversary of the diplomatic relations as well as 60th anniversary of energy cooperation between our two nations. I believe that our unwavering trust and ever deepening friendship will be further strengthened in the decades to come. I wish His Highness the Amir good health and success, and the friendly Kuwaiti people continued progress and prosperity. Happy National Day and a happy Liberation Day to all.

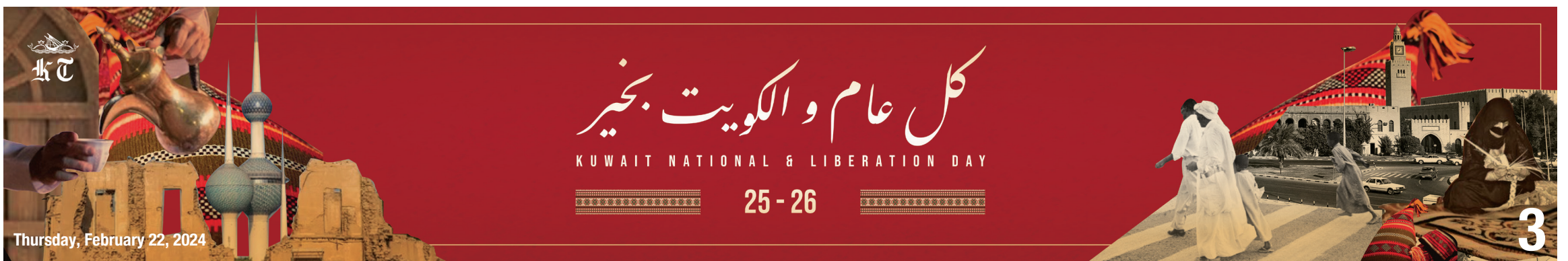
## Bangladesh Embassy



**Major General Md Ashikuzzaman (Rtd)**  
Bangladesh's Ambassador

On behalf of the people and the government of Bangladesh, I would like to extend to the brotherly people and the government of Kuwait our heartiest congratulation and warm greetings on the auspicious occasion of the 63rd National Day and 33rd Liberation Day of Kuwait. The existing bond of fraternal relations between our two countries is a matter of great satisfaction for us and it will surely be strengthened in depth and dimension in the coming years by prudent leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina. I believe that both our countries have the potential to further consolidate these relations through more interactions for mutual benefit of our two countries. I wish continued peace, progress and prosperity to the brotherly people of Kuwait.





# Kuwait reforms pick up pace; workplan eyes diversification

Private sector to play pivotal role • Blueprint to push digital transformation

By Sajeev K Peter

**K**uwait has set a five-year work plan in motion aiming at accelerating the pace of country's economic reforms and pushing its digital transformation drive. The Cabinet has drafted a development blueprint for 2024-2028 that eyes diversification of the country's income sources by focusing on non-oil sector growth and infrastructure development in which private sector is expected to play a pivotal role.

As Kuwait celebrates its National and Liberation Days, citizens and residents are quite upbeat about the new workplan, which is expected to positively impact the lives of the people in the country. While officially presenting the government's development blueprint in the National Assembly on Feb 6, 2024, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah stated: "We are receiving a new era full of determination, optimism and national responsibility. We will work hard as a Council and government to enhance constructive cooperation and redouble efforts in serving the country to embody the hopes and aspirations of citizens." The government presented its plan under the title, 'A Just, Safe and Sustainable Homeland', acknowledging "the pivotal goal of economic reform in Kuwait" which is essential to achieve a structural balance in the national economy. It seeks to amend the existing law on partnership between the public and private sectors and diversify its sources of income. This in turn is expected to generate more job opportunities for nationals.

#### Digital ecosystem

"The new government workplan can support Kuwait's digital transformation program and help speed up the country's transition into a digital economy," Dr Anwar Al-Harbi, Chief Technology Officer at the Central Agency for Infor-

mation Technology (CAIT), Kuwait, told Kuwait Times. The government, while factoring in the changing landscape of digital technology across the world, proposes to open research centers for cybersecurity and artificial intelligence to support the digital economy in the country.

"We need to take into consideration many factors for a proper digital transformation such as IT governance, increased use of online services like Sahel app, enhanced deployment of AI in government apps, etc in order to improve user experience and ensure customer satisfaction. The digital transformation platform must cover the entire spectrum of the society, including businesses and the education and healthcare sectors," Dr Al-Harbi said, adding that CAIT would support the government programs to advance digital transformation initiative. While expanding the country's digital ecosystem and infrastructure, both government and Parliament must take into consideration the United Nations E-Government Development Index (EGDI) and Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) as references for the better future of Kuwait's digital economy, he added.

#### Resilient

Kuwait's economy remained resilient despite global headwinds and sustained its growth trajectory over the last few years. However, the country's oil production cuts in tune with OPEC+ decision to balance the market and prevent further oil stock builds have marginally impacted the growth. IMF official Jihad Azour said recently that Kuwait's economy will contract by 0.1 percent in 2024 due to oil production cuts, but will expand by 4.2 percent in 2025 as "these production cuts unwind". According to NBK, Kuwait's oil output in Q1 2024 will fall by 135,000 barrels per day (bpd) to 2.41 million bpd.

#### Inflation under check

As countries across the world battle spiraling inflation

and a cost-of-living crisis due to geopolitical reasons, the Kuwaiti government seeks to rein in inflation, as evident in the workplan, by ensuring price stability especially of essential goods and revisit its policy on public sector wages. The government also intends to open new hospitals and health centers to address the growing healthcare needs of the country.

Setting a 100-day deadline, the government has also identified several projects that can be executed within the timeframe. "This workplan appears to be a realistic roadmap for an all-round development of the country where the private sector gets a major role to play. It seeks to take into account the aspirations and expectations of the entire nation," said Ibrahim Mustafa, an economic expert who works in a local bank. He said the new initiative will put the country's critical infrastructure projects back on track and help push the country's economic diversification plans.

#### Infrastructure

Although infrastructure development has been one of the key themes of the country's 'New Kuwait' 2035 vision, several core projects got bogged down by COVID-induced stumbling blocks that lingered for more than two years. The country, aspiring to secure a position among top 35 countries in the world by 2035 in all development indicators, has completed some of its key infrastructure projects, while some are on track for completion. In accordance with the workplan, Kuwait's long-pending infrastructure projects, envisioned to transform Kuwait into a regional financial hub, will get a new momentum. According to experts, such megaprojects can enhance Kuwait's brand image and give it a favorable international visibility.

In July 2023, the government unveiled its four-year program to implement 107 projects spanning all sectors of the country. The government also proposes to conduct a study on the financial, economic and technical feasibility

of a railway link between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, a project that has been hanging for some time. The country is collaborating with other five GCC countries for the Gulf rail project, which is expected to transform the country's transportation landscape. Simultaneously, Kuwait is working on its own national railroad system and \$3.25 billion has been earmarked for the project.

Kuwait has earmarked \$160 billion to develop three major islands off the northwestern coast of the country – Boubyan, Warba and Failaka – as well as the small islands of Maskan and Aouha. Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, being built on Boubyan island, will be one of the largest and most sustainable ports in the Middle East and will help the country establish a leading shipping hub. The mega project is jointly funded by Kuwait and China as part of Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative.

Kuwait's International Airport Terminal 2, which is nearing completion now, is expected to handle up to 50 million passengers per year on completion of its third phase. Terminal 2, expected to be completed this year, will turn Kuwait into an aviation hub as envisioned in its 2035 vision.

Kuwait's Al-Zour oil refinery became fully operational in March last year after commissioning the third and last distillation unit. The launching of the third unit by the state-owned Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) is expected to boost the country's refining capacity to 615,000 barrels per day.

The new workplan puts forth a list of 22 legislations essential to lay the foundation for the economic transformation. Many crucial reforms have been included in the blueprint that cover amendment of the Import and Export Law, draft law on electronic commerce, amendment of the Industry Law and plan to launch a digital platform for companies for facilitating commercial licenses.



**KUWAIT CITY, Kuwait** – On the occasion of Kuwait's 63rd National Day and 33rd Liberation Day, HongQi Alghanim, an Alghanim Industries company and part of the Kutayba Alghanim Group, has unveiled "Ode to the Homeland – انشودة الأوطان", a stirring musical tribute that has swiftly captivated hearts across the nation and beyond. This piece, soulfully performed by the talented Kuwaiti artist Abdulaziz Al-Mesbah, has achieved a remarkable milestone, amassing over one million views on YouTube within 72 hours of its release.

With lyrics penned by the acclaimed Kuwaiti novelist Saud Alsanousi, the song draws deep inspiration from Kuwait's national anthem, reflecting the nation's enduring spirit and vibrant beauty. The compositional brilliance of Dr. Ah-

mad Alsalehi and the collaborative efforts of Khalid Nouri in arrangement and Walid Al Sultan in mixing, have elevated the song to a masterpiece of patriotic expression. The music video, directed by the visionary Khalid Al-Rayes, is a cinematic love letter to Kuwait, showcasing the nation's rich heritage and unwavering resilience through carefully chosen visuals that span from the bustling streets of Kuwait City to the tranquil expanse of the desert.

Adnan Eidan, General Manager at HongQi Alghanim, expressed the sentiment behind the project: "This project is more than a song; it's a testament to the profound connection we, as Kuwaitis, share with our country. From the outset, our vision was to create a piece that embodies

the national spirit and showcases Kuwait's beauty in every note and frame. We believe it will resonate deeply with our audience, drawing on the meaningful lyrics inspired by our national anthem and the harmonious melody reminiscent of the patriotic operettas that are a staple of Kuwait's national day celebrations. This musical gift is HongQi Alghanim's homage to the people of Kuwait, a symbol of our rich heritage and a beacon of hope for our future."

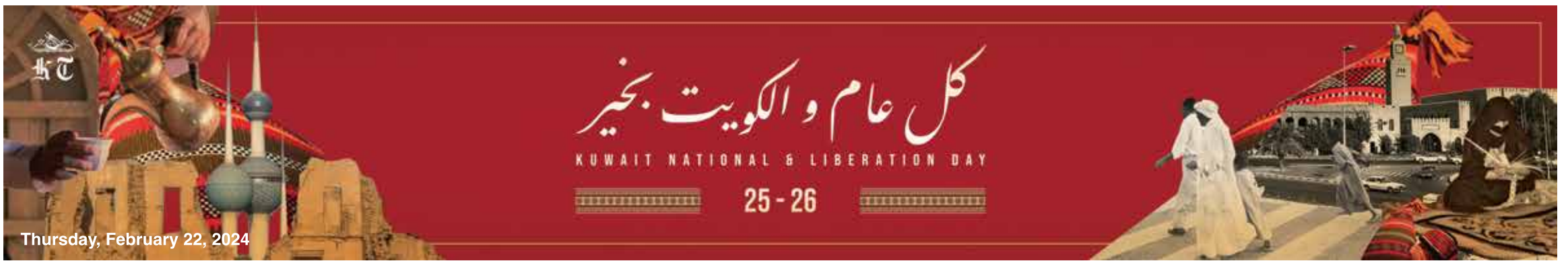
The success of "Ode to the Homeland" is a direct result of the collaborative effort of a dedicated team of professionals. The breathtaking aerial visuals captured by Ammar Aljeraiwi, the artistic direction and styling by Musaed Almutairi, the meticulous casting by Nawaf Rakan, the vibrant

color grading by Ahmad Aljundi, and the seamless production management by Abdulrahman Alanzi, together with the invaluable contributions of Assistant Directors Leila Almutawa and Baqer Ahmed, Steadicam Operator Alwaleed Miqdad, Assistant Camera and Focus Puller Jaafar Hussein, Film Producer Ahmed Anwar, and Director of Photography Sadeq Mohammed, have collectively created a memorable tribute to Kuwait's national spirit.

As Kuwait celebrates these significant days, "Ode to the Homeland" stands as a heartfelt gift from HongQi Alghanim to its people, inviting everyone to reflect on our shared journey, honor our heritage, and look forward with anticipation to our bright future.







Thursday, February 22, 2024

By Ghadeer Ghloum & Chidi Emmanuel

Over the years, Kuwait has emerged as an international destination for expatriates seeking exciting and lucrative opportunities. With its thriving economy, modern infrastructure, cultural diversity and welcoming atmosphere, Kuwait has become an oasis that appeals to expatriates from around the world. Kuwait Times explored the reasons behind the growing attraction of expatriates towards Kuwait, highlighting its economic prospects, cultural enrichment and quality of life.

**Tax-free income, safety, multiculturalism some of the reasons expats choose to stay**

"Many people are here because Kuwait is safe and family-oriented. It is relatively tax-free and life is easier here compared to other countries. One of the primary reasons expatriates flock to Kuwait is its flourishing economy. The country's robust oil industry has been the backbone of its economic growth for decades, attracting individuals looking to tap into lucrative employment opportunities," Ahmed Amr, an Egyptian expat, told Kuwait Times.

"It is safe here unlike other Middle East countries. Kuwait offers a tax-free income, making it an enticing prospect for those seeking financial advancement and security. Moreover, Kuwait's stable economy offers a chance for both personal and professional growth. Although



Kuwait City's skyscrapers stand tall against the cloudy sky.

there are fewer opportunities for career development to support the aspirations of expatriates, Kuwait is still better than other nations in the region," Ahmed's friend Ayman Omar said.

Moreso, Kuwait's multicultural and religiously diverse environment is another compelling draw for expatriates. The country embraces diversity and provides an inclusive society where individuals from different backgrounds coexist harmoniously. "Unlike other nations in the region, Kuwait gives a unique opportunity to expatriates. I was surprised to see the huge number of Christians in Kuwait. The Catholic, Evangelical, Coptic, etc churches are always filled to the brim on Fridays and Sundays. The country's cultural and religious offerings ensure expatriates can experience a truly enriching lifestyle," Anne Charlie, an African expat, explained.

Despite the frustration of

being away from home, many expatriates choose to stay in Kuwait for several reasons. For Sousy, an Indian human resources manager working in the private sector, it is about the generous compensation packages that come with job offers. "Many companies in Kuwait offer good and attractive compensation packages to expats. The exchange rates and the incentives encourage many people who seek better financial stability to come to Kuwait," she noted.

Zainab Ibrahim, a Lebanese physical exercise coach, emphasized the safety and security benefits that Kuwait offers. She said Kuwait is considered a safe country, which makes it a favorite destination for expats who have families. "Thankfully, Kuwait has a stable political environment and strong security measures, which provide a sense of security and peace of mind for families. Also, Kuwait's geographical

position is very near to my home, Lebanon, which makes it one of my personal favorite options," Ibrahim said.

#### Vibrant community

Mohammed Hussain, an Australian operations manager at a private company, told Kuwait Times that he planned to stay in Kuwait for only two years, but the multiple opportunities he is finding in Kuwait encouraged him to extend his stay. "Kuwait's labor law stipulates that expat workers are entitled to end-of-service benefits upon completion of their contract, providing a financial cushion when they decide to leave Kuwait or retire. This, along with many other things, allows individuals the opportunity to establish a

good life, making Kuwait a destination for expats," he said.

Hussain further elaborated on the fact that Kuwait has a vibrant expat community, which provides social support for newcomers and helps ease the transition into a new country, as they can participate in various social activities, join clubs and organizations and make friends to a reasonable extent.

#### Low crime rate

Kuwait boasts a high quality of life that is attractive to expatriates. The country offers a safe, clean and modern environment coupled with basic infrastructure. Over the years, Kuwait has witnessed infrastructural development that resulted in improved transportation networks, state-

of-the-art shopping malls, excellent leisure facilities and luxurious accommodation options. Expatriates can enjoy a comfortable and convenient lifestyle.

"Kuwait has a low crime rate and is renowned as very peaceful. Unlike in the West, gun violence and other criminal activities are rare (in Kuwait). There are social events that foster stronger ties between expatriates and Kuwaiti nationals. Furthermore, Kuwait's high-quality infrastructure, safety and modern amenities ensure an enjoyable standard of living. This and more make expatriates choose Kuwait as their second home," Henry Daniels, a British expat, said.



This file photo shows people fishing on a pier at sunset in Kuwait City.

## Diversity: A valuable asset for Kuwait's economic growth

By Ahmad Jabr

Kuwait is witnessing a period of optimism with the appointment of His Highness Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah as prime minister, who is spearheading an economy-driven approach focused on diversifying sources of income and giving a bigger platform for the private sector to lead the charge for development. Investment in the human capital is one of the main topics highlighted in the new government program, signaling an understanding of what Kuwait needs to focus on as it searches for non-oil alternatives to drive the economy.

Kuwait's economy has gone through various changes throughout the country's history, even predating the discovery of oil when the state was an important hub for international trade, linking southeast Asia to the Middle East and Europe. Its unique system of governance combined with its diverse population coming from various parts of the region seeking stability that survived numerous conflicts and ordeals.

The discovery of oil served as a turning point that transformed Kuwait's trade-based economy into one which relied on natural resources to fuel the state's business boom. As important as oil has been in providing financial support for the state's development, the human capital, Kuwait's true valuable asset, has played a historically crucial role in keeping Kuwait running like a well-oiled machine.

It was no coincidence that Kuwait's economic boom following the discovery of oil coincided with a boom in various other aspects, such as poli-

tics, culture, arts and sports. Throughout the period between the discovery of oil and the Iraqi Invasion, Kuwait pioneered in almost all fields, becoming a regional hub years before its peers in the Gulf became so.

And much like those years, Kuwait remains vibrant with an abundance of talent and untapped potential today. If we take sports as one example, Kuwaiti athletes have excelled at regional and international competitions in recent years, grabbing several accolades while competing at the highest level despite lacking the same level of government support that their peers in other Gulf countries enjoy.

Kuwait finds itself at a critical juncture today, but luckily, it has lessons from its rich history that can help the state navigate its way through hardships and into progress. One of the most important lessons to learn from is how migrant workers worked hand-in-hand with national manpower to contribute to the country's development throughout the years. To understand how important this lesson is for Kuwait today,

we need to look no further than at our neighbors, including the UAE which had long ago realized that its expatriate community can be an asset that helps drive economic development plans – something that Kuwait itself had applied during the state's early modernization years.

As Kuwait embarks on a new and ambitious business-oriented strategy, the time has come for a shift in policy away from viewing the expatriate community as a burden and 'demographic imbalance' as a hindrance to development. The state must implement strategies and plans that take advantage of the great benefits that its diverse population can bring. The challenges of the future are numerous, especially with the current technological and AI revolution. Kuwait already has the human capital that can help it tackle those challenges. But there is no need for Kuwaitis to go on this journey alone; imagine the possibilities if we all work together for the Kuwait of tomorrow.

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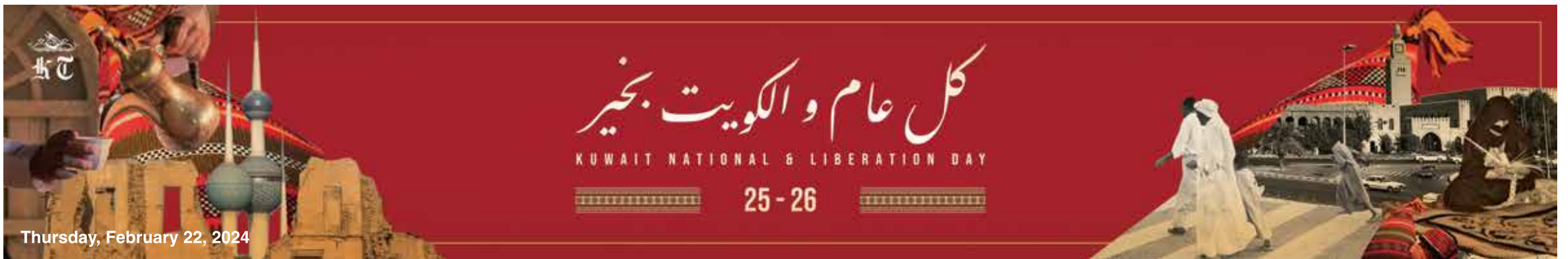
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# CLEAR VISION, UNIQUE CONCEPT KEY FOR BOOMING BUSINESS IN KUWAIT

By Passant Hisham

**D**riven by frustration with the nine-to-five job, including lack of desired wages, flexibility and slow career development, all possibly topped up by a toxic manager and unhealthy working environment, many individuals in Kuwait are compelled to break free from their office jobs to start their entrepreneurial journey. However, it is a misconception that making this shift will certainly bring with it the comfort and ease that full-time employees have long waited for. According to Essam Shukair, a business consultant, "almost 80 to 90 percent of small businesses fail in their first five years due to the absence of the skills and sufficient planning that are required to operate this business."

These percentages reflect a negative phenomenon that affects the country's economy. Based on official data issued by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), small and medium enterprises in Kuwait only constitute three percent of the GDP and contribute to 23 percent of formal employment. These rates are very low compared to developed economies, according to the paper.

ing despite the challenges that one might face along the way. It encourages creativity and eases the process of gaining the necessary knowledge and expertise relevant to the field, regardless of the money, time and effort it takes.

Furthermore, he said market research is a crucial step, which happens through studying the field of the business, understanding customers' needs and analyzing how competitors address those needs. This approach helps to come up with a viable business idea that fills the market gap and promises to generate high profit, he explained.

A popular example that combines creativity and the ability to fulfill a market gap is starting a food truck in Kuwait. The rising trend of food trucks, which is inspired by Western countries, perfectly caters to consumer behavior in Kuwait through a non-traditional approach that is convenient for the young target audience. With much lower capital requirements and operating expenses compared to traditional restaurants, this business idea presents an attractive opportunity for entrepreneurs seeking high profit margins. According to a behavioral analyst at a restaurant chain industry, Allie Tetreault, such unique business ideas have a greater chance of success than other traditional concepts.



Essam Shukair

## Steps for success

Shukair outlined three main factors that help any business succeed: Passion, market research and planning. He started by referring to passion as an essential ingredient, as it provides the drive to keep go-

Absence of skills, planning cause nearly 90% of small businesses to fail in first 5 years: Expert



Lastly comes the planning process, which starts with having a clear vision for the business over the next five years, Shukair said. He also emphasized the importance of self-analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses and areas in need of improvement to align with the envisioned goals.

## Required skills

After understanding what makes a successful business, Shukair stressed the importance of acquiring entrepreneurial skills and having good business ethics. He explained that

providing the promised quality and being transparent with customers is what makes or breaks a business.

In addition, he referred to three main skills that no business can survive without: Sales and marketing, excellent customer service and financial literacy. Along with this, one must have a business-oriented personality through adopting soft skills, such as decision-making in times of crisis, good communication with both customers and team members, flexibility and ability to constantly adapt to market changes and needs, he said.

## Sources for funding

Shukair referred to the Industrial Bank of Kuwait (IBK) as one of the best financing options for a range of projects, spanning from small-scale ventures to medium and long-term enterprises. IBK provides a variety of benefits and deals tailored to different business needs, as its main purpose is to support young entrepreneurs, combat unemployment and foster additional job opportunities.

Overall, such services aim to contribute meaningfully to Kuwait's national economy. Based on a research study quoted in

a local paper, there is a huge need for more initiatives from the government to support and finance startups and small businesses, initially to diversify the country's investments portfolio and overcome the limitation of only relying on oil and gas as the country's only source of revenue. Additionally, the study acknowledged Kuwait's financial capability to finance thousands of these businesses away from the limited concept of fast-food chains and coffee shops.

By Sahar Moussa

**K**uwait Towers are considered a landmark and symbol of modern Kuwait. The towers were given the name "Kuwait Towers" or in Arabic "Abraj Al-Kuwait". It is a must-visit destination for residents and tourists as the huge spheres hung on pointed towers have become a symbol for Kuwait City. Here are a few tips and information about the history and significance of this remarkable place in case you decide to pay it a visit.

## History

Kuwait Towers were designed by the Danish architect Malene Bjorn and inaugurated on February 26, 1977. Officially unveiled on March 1, 1979, the towers were closed for maintenance from March 2012 till March 8, 2016 with a massive fireworks festival commemorating the re-opening.

## Design and Construction

The project is composed of three towers — two towers are used as water containers and the third is a lighting pole. The tallest is 180 meters high and contains a 4,500-cubic-meters water reservoir, a restaurant, and a rotating observatory.

The second tower is 140 meters high and is used only as a water reservoir. The spheres are covered with enameled plates of steel painted in a color scheme of blues, greens, and greys in harmony with the traditional ornamental forms of the gulf architecture of the past, creating a brilliant impression in daylight and a light spectacle at night. Water is contained in a sculptural form that imitates the traditional Arabian perfume containers.

## Restaurants at Kuwait Towers

There are two restaurants and a lounge in the restaurant sphere, which is divided into two floors. The first is called 'Horizon'

## Must-visit Kuwait Towers combine heritage, modernity



— an open buffet and is located on the top floor of the sphere — and the second is Amimoto, a Japanese restaurant on the 82nd floor. There is a breakfast open buffet where children below four years of age can eat for free.

## The Viewing Sphere

This sphere is located in the top-most part of the Kuwait Towers. It's split into two floors with the top floor having a rotating platform and a small food stand. You can find two coin-operated binoculars for those who are interested in seeing things closely. At the viewing deck, there is a small food stand that has drinks, a few cold sandwiches, soft serve ice cream and popcorn.

## Location and timing

The Kuwait Towers are located on the seashore on the Arabian Gulf Street in Sharq district. If you are visiting the revolving or viewing sphere, the entrance fee is KD 3 per person. No entrance fee is charged for children below four years of age. The viewing sphere is open from 8:00 am to 11:00 pm. It is a very exciting experience to visit Kuwait Towers, especially if you've never been there. You will feel that you are at the top of the world and you will enjoy the beautiful view of the sea and the modern skyscrapers.



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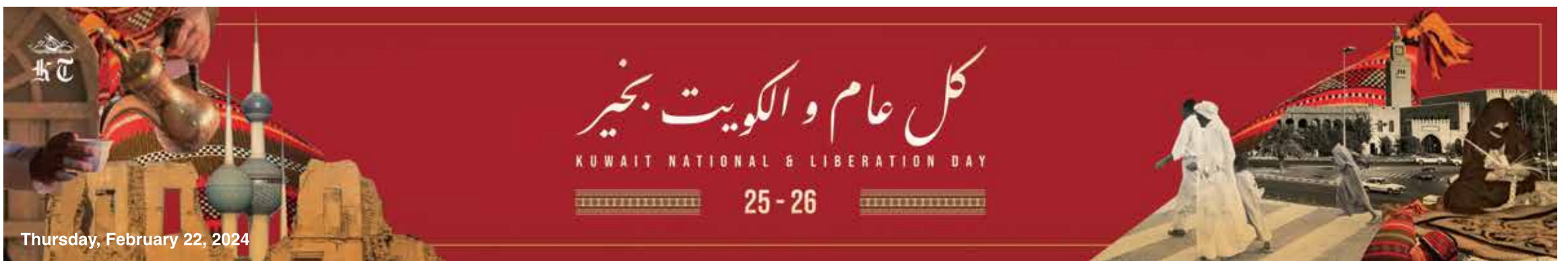
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Thursday, February 22, 2024



Students carry flags and photos of the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and the late Father Amir Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah sometime in the 1970s-1980s.



**1981**  
Military horsemen ride their horses during a National Day showcase.

# Kuwait shines during national celebrations over the years

By Passant Hisham and Faten Omar

**K**uwait is gearing up to celebrate its 63rd National Day and 33rd anniversary of liberation next week. Over the years, the festivities surrounding Kuwait's National and Liberation Days have undergone significant evolution, transitioning from traditional parades and community gatherings to more modern celebrations. To gain insights into this evolution, Kuwait Times interviewed citizens and residents from different generations.

**Modern Celebrations: Water and foam battles**

Joory, a 22-year-old Kuwaiti, shared her recent experiences with Kuwait Times, vividly describing the lively festivities of Kuwait's National Day. She painted a picture of Gulf Street adorned with cars decked out in decorations and stick-

Beyond the water battles, families also peacefully gather for picnics on the grass, enjoying the celebratory vibes and the cool breeze. Joory recalled that before being banned in 2011, foam battles were also a part of the festivities.

Joory's mother, May, 40, reminisced about her teenage years when

parades taking place across the country, describing a grand ship with wheels traversing Kuwait carrying singers who performed national songs. Classic convertible cars adorned with flags were a common sight, with people proudly displaying their patriotism.

"People used to join the festival by

actually match the flag of Kuwait!"

Lulwa Fadhli, aged 62, reflected on a time when National Day celebrations were both entertaining and educational. She recalled active participation from governmental institutions in organizing events aimed at educating children about the nation's history. Fadhli

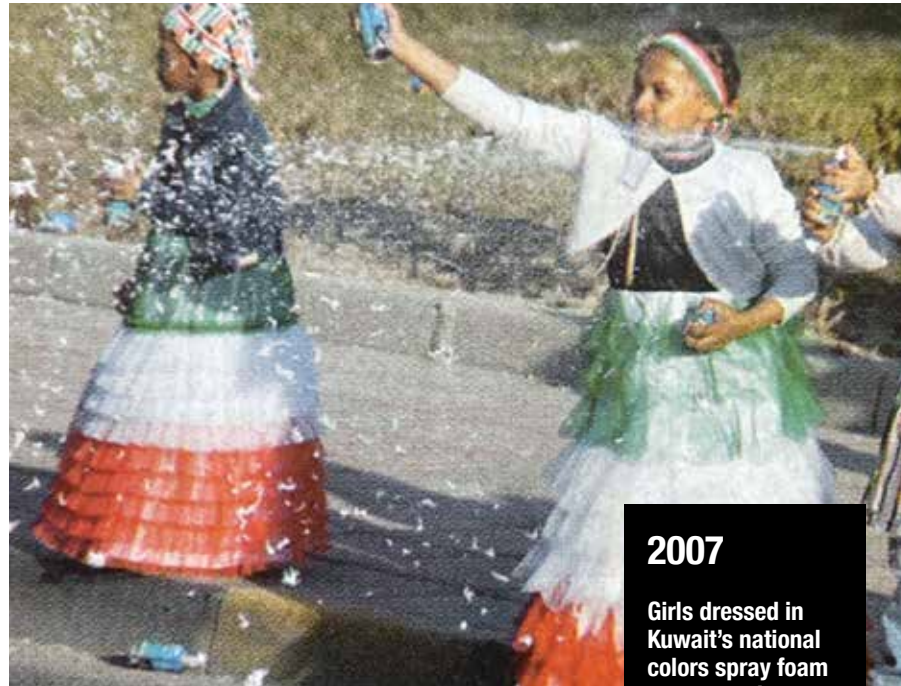
figure in the festivities, leaving a void in the celebration's charm.

In 1985, the Flag Square emerged as the focal point for these celebrations, standing by the seashore and boasting the tallest flagpole in Kuwait at 36 meters. The Flag Square became synonymous with the country's patriotic fervor, symbolizing the significance of the occasion and the enduring spirit of Kuwaiti identity.

A look through Kuwait Times' archives shows how the celebrations evolved in the 2000s to provide an opportunity for different nations to express cultural pride, inviting troupes from various countries around the world to showcase their arts, including displays of folk music and bedouin art by Kuwaiti bands, dance performances by Egyptian bands and dabke dances by Lebanese folklore groups, alongside participation from troupes from Yemen, Uzbekistan, Europe and beyond.



**2007**  
Men perform traditional Ardah as part of the National Day celebrations.



**2007**  
Girls dressed in Kuwait's national colors spray foam on passersby.

**Earlier in History: Grand street parades and carnivals**

In earlier years, National Day celebrations in Kuwait were vibrant events held along the Arabian Gulf Street. According to Kuwait Times' archives and other local papers, National Day celebrations, dating back to 1962, initially featured grand parades and carnivals, without recent elements such as foam and water battles. The parades aimed to entertain the public through a blend of military, artistic and entertainment shows in the streets. Participants from diverse backgrounds, including male and female school students, popular bands, private organizations, large companies and government ministries, showcased their pride and devotion to the country through these performances.

ers, displaying giant national flags. Drivers and passengers proudly play loud music, creating a festive atmosphere.

Joory noted that the celebration isn't exclusive to Kuwaiti citizens — visitors from GCC countries also participate, displaying national pride quotes on their cars. She highlighted the water battles that unfold between people on the sidewalk armed with water guns and balloons and the slowly moving cars, whose passengers are ready to open their windows and engage in playful water fights. (Water guns and balloons have been banned this year).

she participated in similar celebrations. She recalled joining parades along Gulf Street, where foam was used instead of water guns before the ban. May also reflected on a different era from her childhood when the celebrations focused more on military shows organized by the government.

**Vibrant festivities of the '80s and '90s**

Abdulrahim Ahmad, 68, shared nostalgic memories of the vibrant National Day celebrations in Kuwait during the '80s and '90s. He recalled lively pa-

showing off their classic convertible cars. In each car, you would find five people with their flags," Ahmad said, remembering walking with friends along with these cars, waving flags and singing, and how the festivities would end when everyone got tired.

As the festivities reached their peak, illuminated houses adorned with colorful lights added to the festive atmosphere, symbolizing the unity and spirit of the Kuwaiti people. "I remember that citizens and residents used to decorate their houses with colorful lights. Although the colors did not ex-

remembered taking her children to various competitions hosted by restaurants, companies and Kuwait TV.

"Salem Al-Mubarak Street stands out vividly in my memory as a bustling hub of celebrations, attracting celebrities from around the world to partake in competitions and cultural displays," she said. Fadhli recalled the vibrant atmosphere with people donning costumes, entertaining children and hosting lively shows in the street, creating unforgettable moments of joy and camaraderie. But she rued the absence of the Hala February mascot, a once-prominent



**2016**  
Children spray water on cars in front of Kuwait's National Assembly.



**1970s-1980s**  
Young children perform the dabke during the celebration.



**1979**  
Students ride a float as they participate in a celebratory parade. archives.

— Photos from the Kuwait Times print



## Local

# Qatar's newspapers highlight Amir's visit

## Officials discuss ties, Zionist war

DOHA: Headlines of Qatari newspapers highlighted on Wednesday the state visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Qatar on Tuesday. Qatari Newspaper headlines, editorials, and coverage expressed the great welcome to this visit and the close relations between the two brotherly countries, covering the reception and the long history of Kuwaiti-Qatari relations. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visited Qatar on a state visit on Tuesday, during which he met with the Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani.

### Officials discuss ties

In another development, Kuwaiti Assistant to Minister of Foreign Affairs for Human Rights Ambassador Sheikh Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah discussed bilateral relations with Qatari Minister of State for International Cooperation and ways to boost cooperation between the two nations. A statement from the Qatari Foreign Ministry said that the two met and discussed the latest developments in Gaza and the humanitarian crisis facing the Palestinians.

The Qatari Minister expressed gratitude for Kuwait's dedicated efforts and support for Gaza and the Palestinians, acknowledging the relief initiatives provided by Kuwait. In return, the Kuwaiti official praised



Qatar for its staunch efforts to deescalate the situation in Gaza and called for an immediate ceasefire. She also extended appreciation to Qatar for hosting a coordination meeting among government leaders responsible for human rights in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Furthermore, the Kuwaiti official congratulated Qatar on winning the Asian Cup in 2023. — KUNA

## Kuwait, Qatar camaraderie stands as paradigm of ties

DOHA: The collective wisdom of Kuwait and Qatar's respective political leaders has given impetus to the already exceptional ties shared between the two Gulf Arab neighbors. Relations between Kuwait and Doha are based on common goals and ambitions, in addition to their shared desire to bring national development plans to fruition, while the history of bilateral ties has been dotted with notable instances of proximity.

A case in point would be an initiative taken by Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani to name a major road that crisscrosses the capital Doha after Kuwait's late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in a token of appreciation for the latter's legacy and the memory he left behind. Bilateral relations have made palpable progress as of late, chiefly through an increase in bilateral trade and economic cooperation, while security and military ties have also been propelled to greater levels, thanks in part to more frequent joint initiatives.

As part of efforts to keep bilateral relations on an upward trajectory, a joint higher committee was formed in 2002 with the ultimate aim of keeping the "camaraderie" between the two Gulf Arab countries intact, an initiative that was instrumental in ratcheting up bilateral trade, which skyrocketed to nearly one billion dollars in 2018, according to Doha's commerce chamber chief, Sheikh Khalifa bin Jassim Al-Thani.

He cited a growing number of Kuwait-based firms that have dabbled into the Qatari market, revealing that some 635 of these companies are jointly owned by Kuwait and Doha, all of which operate across numerous fields, the official added. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is due for a state visit to Doha on Tuesday as part of a wider tour of the Gulf Arab region, which has already taken him to Oman and Bahrain. — KUNA

## National Minors Festival kicks off

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Under the auspices of Faisal Saeed Al-Ghareeb, Minister of Justice, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Chairman of the Public Authority for Minors Affairs, the authority organized its annual celebration of national holidays under the slogan "National Minors Festival" on Wednesday. Ghareeb stressed on the importance of celebrating the anniversaries of national and liberation of Kuwait, as it serves as a reminder of the sacrifices made by the people of Kuwait to obtain their country's freedom and independence and reclaim their land.

He pointed out the significance of developing recreational activities and events of the authority to enhance communication between the authority, its minors, those covered by care, and its employees, in addition to promoting the spirit of belonging and revival of national events. Ghareeb explained that such cherished occasions, which include the participation of the authority's children, enhance their knowledge of Kuwaiti customs and traditions, ancestral professions and ancient traditional crafts, in addition to developing their creative skills and their ability to participate in activities and events.

The Acting Director General of the Authority Hamad Al-Barjas told Kuwait Times that over the years, the authority has been keen on orga-



One of the shows that were featured in the event.

nizing a variety of events that benefit the children of the authority from different aspects, whether educational, cultural or social. "We are always eager to invest in such occasions to meet with the families of minors and exchange points of views related to their interests. This ensures they embark on an effective educational journey and emerge as productive role models for society," he remarked.

Barjas added that the event featured many activities and various shows, including the participation of all age groups with the aim of reviving Kuwait's heritage and customs, while enhancing its visual identity. The colors of the event were inspired by the state flag,

resonating with the spirit of national heritage, he said. Speaking to Kuwait Times, Tamader Al-Omar, head of the social and educational department at the authority, emphasized the authority's ongoing commitment to involving its children in every significant occasion in Kuwait. This dedication is particularly crucial, because the authority views minors as one of society's most essential groups, deserving of collective care and attention, she noted. Omar elaborated that holding such events is aligned with the authority's primary objectives, which prioritize comprehensive support for these children, encompassing financial, social and recreational aspects.



Faisal Saeed Al-Ghareeb, Minister of Justice, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs talks to one of the children.



The Acting Director-General of the Authority, Eng Hamad Al-Barjas poses for a photo with children.

## EU, Kuwait exchange best practices on women's empowerment

KUWAIT: In line with the European Union's (EU's) long-standing commitment to women's economic empowerment worldwide, the EU Delegation to Kuwait recently organized a series of activities on 19 and 20 February aiming at exchanging best practices on how to increase women's participation in senior leadership roles in the private sector.

These activities were organized in cooperation with the Gulf Bank, Bursa Kuwait, Women Research and Studies Center at Kuwait University and Kuwait Women's Economic Empowerment Platform (KWEPP). The EU Delegation also held a mentorship workshop for a group of Kuwaiti leading women from various fields to discuss and learn the tools and necessary knowledge to excel in their careers, navigate challenges and achieve success.

Hedwige Nuyens, Chair of the European Women on Boards, an organization advocating for greater gender diversity on boards, spoke at Gulf Bank's flagship program "Lead The Way" about women's participation in the financial sector and how to ensure greater diversity at senior leadership positions. Nuyens also participated in a high-level event hosted at Bursa Kuwait, where she discussed issues such as gender diversity and inclusion, as well as best practices from the EU on environmental, social, and governance criteria in the private sector. The EU also exchanged with co-founders and members of the KWEPP.

Addressing Kuwaiti partners, the EU Ambassador to Kuwait, Anne Koistinen said: "The European

Union is strongly committed to working with all actors of the Kuwaiti society to bolster cooperation on issues related to gender equality and women's empowerment. This round of events builds on the success of a long list of projects, which we have implemented with our Kuwaiti partners both in the public and private sector, and we look forward to continue exchanging our experiences to further advance a shared objective of women's economic empowerment both in Kuwait and in Europe."

Dr. Lubna Al-Kazi, Professor at Kuwait University, founder and director of the Women's Research and Studies Center said: "There has been a successful partnership between the European Union and Kuwait on women's economic empowerment for the

past few years. We have exchanged best practices and received training for leading Kuwaiti women in the private sector. This is a good example how European Union works jointly with Kuwait's private sector in achieving Kuwait's National Development Plan's objective to increase women in leadership positions." Noura Al-Abdulkareem, Head of Markets Sector at Bursa Kuwait further added: "Committed to advancing women's economic empowerment since its inception, Bursa Kuwait has prioritized financial literacy as a core component of its corporate sustainability strategy.

We take pride in organizing events like this, as part of our ongoing efforts to elevate awareness concerning this crucial matter within the Kuwaiti

capital market and the broader community. Our sincere gratitude extends to Anne Koistinen and Hedwige Nuyens for their invaluable contributions to the success of this enlightening event. We look forward to further collaborations in the future as we continue to champion initiatives that align with our commitment to foster a long-lasting positive change."

"As we continue our journey towards fostering diversity, inclusion, and women leadership, we were honored at Gulf Bank to have Nuyens as a guest speaker in our "Lead The Way" Podcast under the title: "Own Your Career". During the Podcast, Nuyens shared her valuable experiences with our female emerging leaders. We are a firm believer in the power of sharing inspiring stories to derive the future for women's empowerment in Kuwait.

At Gulf Bank, we remain dedicated to fostering diversity within our workforce, particularly in support of women's leadership at the executive management and C-suite", added Salma AlHajjaj, General Manager - Human Resources - Gulf Bank. Following the "Lead The Way" podcast, Gulf Bank hosted a networking lunch for the Kuwait Women Economic Empowerment Platform (KWEPP) founding members dedicated to welcoming Anne Koistinen, Ambassador of the European Union to Kuwait and Hedwige Nuyens.

"The networking lunch created a great opportunity to exchange experiences and explore opportunities on various aspects related to women's empowerment in the private sector and creating an inclusive and diverse professional landscape in Kuwait." Al-Hajjaj concluded. "These series of engagements build on a familiarization trip of 12 Kuwaiti leading women to Brussels for open exchanges with key European institutions, European women leaders and advocates that took place in September 2023.



Anne Koistinen, Ambassador of the European Union to Kuwait and Hedwige Nuyens, Chair of European Women on Boards pose for a group photo with Gulf Bank employees at the "Own Your Career" podcast under "Lead the Way" Program at Gulf Bank.





Beijing issues alert as temperatures plunge

## Russia vs the West: Is Putin winning?

Page 9

Page 10



RENNES: Farmers' union Jeunes Agriculteurs (JA) members deposit soil in front of the prefecture of Rennes, western France, on February 21, 2024, to demand real government announcements ahead of the Salon de l'Agriculture starting on February, 24 2024. — AFP

# Farmers' protests choke Europe

## Farmers dump produce, block roads

MADRID: Hundreds of tractors rolled into Madrid Wednesday for fresh protests by Spanish farmers angered by what they say is unfair competition, with similar moves taking place in France, Poland and Greece. Spain's Union of Unions syndicate rallied farmers at the crack of dawn, demanding fair product prices and competition with non-EU importers, AFP reporters said. "We have to protest in Madrid, because that's where everyone is," said Jose Angel Lopez, a farmer who travelled from Pancorbo, more than 300 kilometers north of Madrid. "We have to upset things a bit," he said.

Spanish farmers and livestock breeders have been protesting since February 1 for product prices to cover their production costs, and for non-EU imports to face the same regulations they do, top union representative Luis Cortes told TVE public television. A string of measures announced last week by

Spain's left-wing government did not go far enough to address the problems, Cortes said.

Spanish farmers are part of a wider movement that has seen roads blocked in France, Germany, Italy, Poland and Greece, among other countries. French farmers dumped produce and blocked roads Wednesday, setting a de facto deadline for the government to meet their demands before they resume wider protests. France's Prime Minister Gabriel Attal has so far failed to appease the farmer's grievances, which — as elsewhere — include low incomes, tight environmental rules and competition from cheaper non-EU imports.

But agricultural unions last month did halt crippling nationwide protests following promises of government reform. In Greece, thousands of farmers demanded financial aid to end their four-week showdown, with the government saying it has no more

funds to help. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said the demonstration would be useful to persuade the European Union to change its agriculture policies. "This is leverage for me as well, when I go to Brussels to negotiate," he told Star TV on Monday.

Ties between Warsaw and Kyiv continue to sour as Polish police said Wednesday they were investigating a pro-Putin banner at a farmer protest against unfair competition from neighboring Ukraine. Farmers in southern Poland unfurled a banner reading "Putin, get Ukraine, Brussels and our government in order" along with a Soviet flag fixed to a tractor. Poland said Wednesday the pro-Putin slogans were "possibly" influenced by Russia. The European Commission made several concessions in recent weeks after farmers across Europe blamed the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the EU's upcoming "Green Deal" for their problems. — AFP

## Indian farmers resume protest push as talks fail

PATIALA: Thousands of Indian farmers riding tractors attempted to resume their push towards New Delhi on Wednesday after failing to reach a deal with the government on their demands for higher crop prices. The protest hopes to successfully replicate the year-long siege of highways into the capital that pressured Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government into abandoning its agricultural reform plans in 2021. Police have kept a miles-long column of farmers atop agricultural machinery at bay since last week near the small village of Shambhu, several hours' drive north of their intended destination.

Protesters again started down efforts to disperse them with tear gas barrages and have vowed to push through a fearsome blockade of metal spikes and concrete barricades erected to halt their progress. "We assure you that we will break the barriers," farmer Jagmohan Singh, 45, told

AFP. "Once we break it, we will only stop again in Delhi." Anticipating a fresh effort to push past their roadblocks, police dropped tear gas on the roadside protest encampment from drones flying overhead.

Farmers responded by distributing goggles and trying to bring down the aircraft by targeting them with slingshots and flying kites to obstruct their flight paths. They have also brought bulldozers and excavators to the protest site, with the intention of charging through police barricades at an opportune moment. Police in Haryana state warned owners not to provide the protesters with earthmovers, saying that they would be held criminally liable if the vehicles harmed officers.

### Negotiations break down

Farm unions are demanding a law to set a minimum price on all crops, expanding a government scheme that already exists for staples including rice and wheat. They have also demanded other concessions including the waiving of loans and universal pensions for farmers aged 60 and above. Protesters temporarily paused their procession last week to await the outcome of negotiations between government ministers and unions. They remained camped



PATIALA: Farmers cover their faces with cloth and glasses as they disperse after police fired teargas to prevent them from marching towards New Delhi during a protest demanding minimum crop prices on February 21, 2024. — AFP

on the roadside, sustaining themselves at community kitchens, but announced their "March to Delhi" campaign would resume after several rounds of talks failed to reach a breakthrough. Farm leader Jagjit Singh

Dallewal told the Press Trust of India news agency Monday that the latest government proposal — to expand price guarantees to some but not all crops — was "not in the interest of farmers". — AFP

## Insurance offers hope to drought-hit Somalis

MOGADISHU: A record drought wiped out nearly half of Iido Abdikarin Abdille's herd in northern Somalia, but a livestock insurance program is helping to ease the financial burden on pastoralists like her. Since her father's death in 2010, the 34-year-old has taken on the responsibility of looking after her unwell mother as well as her own two children in Somalia's Puntland state. The Horn of Africa nation is only just beginning to emerge from the worst drought in four decades that left millions of people hungry across East Africa.

"We rely on livestock and if the animal becomes weak

as happens during the droughts... you cannot even milk the animal because it has nothing to feed on," Abdille told AFP, recalling how she lost dozens of goats since 2020. The drought pushed thousands of Somalis to the brink of famine and left pastoralists especially vulnerable to economic ruin.

It swallowed up their key livestock assets, forcing families to give up their way of life and migrate to urban centers. But a recently launched World Bank-backed project, the Index-Based Livestock Insurance (IBLI), aims to protect the community against drought shocks by offering payouts when herders lose animals to climate disasters. Participants receive compensation in exchange for a contribution that is proportionate to the size of their herd.

Abdille is among 40,000 Somalis who have registered for the scheme since August 2022, and has already received a \$50 payout. "This money will be useful for sustaining our lives and that of the animals because we will manage to buy

foliage and water during droughts to save our animals," she said. "This is the first time a program like this which benefits Somali pastoralists has been implemented in the country," said Muusa Ali Mahamad, communications director at Salaam Somali Bank, one of the project's backers.

Abdifatah Jama Hassan, another pastoralist based in Puntland, said many of his compatriots were being compelled to migrate to cities in search of work because of failed rainy seasons. "There are recurring droughts in our country and the climate is unpredictable, so the traditional way of pastoralist life is no longer sustainable," he told AFP. The 43-year-old was initially reluctant to sign up to the scheme because he struggled to understand it. "This is a completely new thing to Somali pastoralists, but we can already feel the benefits we get in return outweigh the small amount of money we pay for the policy," he said. — AFP

## FBI informant 'got false info from Russia'

WASHINGTON: An FBI informant charged with lying about US President Joe Biden and his son told investigators he received information about Hunter Biden from Russian intelligence associates, prosecutors said Tuesday in a court filing. Alexander Smirnov, 43, a dual US and Zionist national, was arrested last week and indicted for fabricating claims that Biden's son demanded multi-million-dollar bribes from Ukrainian firm Burisma — on whose board he was serving at the time — to protect it from an investigation when Biden was vice president.

"The misinformation he is spreading is not confined to 2020. He is actively peddling new lies that could impact US elections after meeting with Russian intelligence officials in November," special counsel David Weiss and other prosecutors said in a filing to US District Court of Nevada. The fallout of Smirnov's false accusation about the Bidens "and fabricated information continue to be felt to this day," they said.

The indictment undermines the impeachment effort against Biden being put together by congressional Republicans, who had touted Smirnov's evidence as proof the Bidens were collectively involved in a criminal enterprise. The claim that Hunter Biden leveraged his father's name for personal gain has been central to a Republican narrative, pushed heavily by Donald Trump, that Joe Biden is corrupt.

A grand jury indictment filed in federal court last week said that for at least a decade Smirnov was acting as a "confidential human source" for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, providing his handler with information to be used in criminal investigations. The latest filing appears to suggest that officials connected to Russia's intelligence operation have sought to plant dirt on the Bidens ahead of the 2024 election. "During his custodial interview on February 14, Smirnov admitted that officials associated with Russian intelligence were involved in passing a story about (Hunter Biden)," prosecutors said.

Last week's indictment says that in June 2020, Smirnov told his US handler for the first time about meetings he claimed had taken place four or five years earlier in which executives from Burisma said they had hired Hunter Biden to "protect us, through his dad, from all kinds of problems." He told the FBI the executives said "they had specifically paid \$5 million each to Joe Biden and Hunter Biden so that Hunter Biden would 'take care of all those issues through his dad.'"

The document says this refers to a criminal investigation being conducted by the then-Ukrainian prosecutor general into Burisma. The account was repeated in the Tuesday filing, which said: "The events the Defendant first reported to the handler in June 2020 were fabrications." Smirnov transformed his routine and unextraordinary business contacts with Burisma in 2017 and later into bribery allegations against (Joe Biden)... after expressing bias against (Biden) and his candidacy." — AFP



International

Operations cancelled as South Korean doctors' strike grows

More than 8,800 doctors quit

SEOUL: Pregnant women had C-sections cancelled and cancer treatments were postponed Wednesday as the number of South Korean trainee doctors to walk off the job over proposed reforms swelled, officials and local reports said.

Seoul says the reforms are essential, citing the country's low doctor numbers and rapidly ageing population, but doctors claim the changes will hurt service provision and education quality.

Park said Wednesday that 7,813 trainee doctors had not shown up for work — an almost five-fold increase from the first day of the action Monday — despite the government ordering many of them to return to their hospitals.

South Korea's general hospitals rely heavily on trainees for emergency operations and surgeries, and local reports said cancer patients and expectant mothers needing C-sections had seen procedures cancelled or delayed, with scores of cases causing "damage", Park said.

patient in his 50s from Daegu, said that his chemotherapy had been postponed without clear future dates due to the current situation, even though the cancer has spread to his lungs and liver.

"When there is no one to trust and rely on other than doctors, it seems excessive to handle things in this manner." A group of patients with severe illnesses, including cancer and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), said they were enduring "terribly painful days".

On Wednesday, a group of physicians who practice in Gyeonggi Province staged a protest in central Seoul. They wore red headbands that read "(We) fiercely oppose the expansion of medical school admissions" and held banners stating "Stop populist healthcare policies pushed by socialist leftist scholars and bureaucrats".

'Neglected'

Junior doctors say the new medical education reforms are the final straw in a profession where they already struggle with tough working conditions. "Despite working more than 80 hours a week and receiving compensation at minimum wage level, trainee doctors have been neglected by the govern-

what set him apart from other media organizations. "It's these facts that distinguishes him - not his political opinions." In written submissions, the US legal team argued that the UK courts had already made "an emphatic rejection of the... attempts to characterize the allegations he faces in the United States as merely routine journalism or merely assisting a whistleblower".

'World watching'

These hearings could be his last chance to fight extradition in Britain's courts after a years-long battle. The judges will not deliver their ruling immediately after the hearings, but at a later date which is yet to be announced. They will decide whether to grant him another full appeal hearing.

"We have two big days ahead," she told supporters outside court Tuesday. "We don't know what to expect, but you're here because the world is watching. They just cannot get away with this. Julian needs his freedom and we all need the truth."

Major media organizations, press freedom advocates and the Australian parliament have all denounced the prosecution under the 1917 Espionage Act, which has never been used over the publishing of classified information.

US lawyers urge UK's court to reject Assange appeal bid

LONDON: Lawyers for the United States on Wednesday urged a UK court to block a last-ditch bid by Julian Assange to appeal his extradition there to face espionage charges.

On the first of two days of evidence before two High Court judges, the Australian's lawyers argued Tuesday those previous decisions contained "errors of law". The US charges against him were "political", they insisted: he was being prosecuted "for engaging in ordinary journalistic practice of obtaining and publishing classified information".

Assange's actions 'unprecedented'

But on Wednesday, Clair Dobbin, for the US government, told the court that the prosecution was "based on the rule of law and evidence". Assange actions were "unprecedented", she argued. He "indiscriminately and knowingly published to the world the names of individuals who acted as sources of information to the United States," she said.

Kuwait regrets truce veto as...

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, heavy fighting rocked besieged Gaza on Wednesday as aid agencies warned of looming famine and new talks were held in Cairo towards a Zionist-Hamas ceasefire and hostage release deal.

Global concern has spiraled over the high civilian death toll and dire humanitarian crisis in the war. Combat and chaos again stalled the sporadic aid deliveries for desperate civilians in Gaza, where the UN has warned the population of 2.4 million is on the brink of famine and could face an "explosion" of child deaths.

More Zionist strikes continued to pound Gaza, leaving 103 people dead during the night, according to the health ministry in the territory, which put the overall death toll at 29,313.

Particular concern has centered on the packed city of Rafah, where 1.4 million people now live in crowded shelters and makeshift tents, fearing attack by nearby Zionist ground troops.

The Zionist entity has heavily bombed Gaza since and launched a ground invasion that has seen troops and tanks push through from the north towards the south, leaving vast swathes entirely destroyed and many people struggling to find basic supplies.

The case is separate from a high-profile case brought by Pretoria against the Zionist entity for alleged genocide during its current offensive in Gaza.

it has started to use medical cotton, gauze and lab coats to sew makeshift diapers, each made by hand — but warned their capacity is far from enough to meet the demand. "I don't have money to provide food, so how can I provide diapers for her?"

Concern also remained high around Nasser Hospital in the heavily-bombarded southern city of Khan Yunis, where the World Health Organization has called the devastation "incredible".

As the bloodiest ever Gaza war has continued into a fifth month, the Zionist entity has faced a growing international chorus of criticism. Colombian President Gustavo Petro accused the Zionist entity of "genocide" after Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva had compared the Gaza campaign to the Holocaust.

ambassador to the Netherlands told the court that the Zionist entity's policies were "more extreme" than the apartheid black South Africans suffered before 1994.

The case is separate from a high-profile case brought by Pretoria against the Zionist entity for alleged genocide during its current offensive in Gaza.



SEOUL: Doctors hold placards reading 'Stop populist medical policy!' during a rally to protest against the government's plan to raise the annual enrolment quota at medical schools, near the presidential office in Seoul on February 21, 2024. — AFP

ment until now," the Korean Intern Resident Association said in a statement.

The over-reliance on trainee doctors in the current healthcare system was not reasonable or fair, they added, claiming the government was treating them as if they were "criminals".

Russia vs the West: Is Putin winning?



LONDON: Supporters of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange listen as his wife Stella Assange (unseen) makes a speech outside The Royal Courts of Justice, on February 21, 2024. — AFP

Assange and others at WikiLeaks recruited and agreed with hackers to conduct "one of the largest compromises of classified information" in US history.

A UK district judge previously blocked his extradition, but the High Court reversed the decision on appeal in 2021 after Washington vowed not to imprison him in its most extreme prison, "ADX Florence".

Nurses Association wrote in a social media post.

Kim Jae-heon, the secretary general of an NGO advocating for free medical care, which also includes some medical doctors as members, said the trainee doctors' mass resignation "lacks justification".

Paris: Former US President George W Bush believed he had a 'sense of his soul'.

PARIS: Former US President George W Bush believed he had a "sense of his soul". British ex-premier Tony Blair thought he deserved a place at the "top table".

But that approach was blown apart two years ago on February 24, 2022, when Putin ordered the invasion of Ukraine, consigning to a distant past images such as that of the smiling Russian leader bounding up the steps of Macron's Mediterranean Fort de Bregancon residence in August 2019 bearing flowers for the French leader's wife Brigitte.

In a symbolic gain for Moscow, the eastern Ukrainian town of Avdiivka fell to Russian troops last week after months of battle. And in a devastating blow to the Russian opposition, Putin's top critic Alexei Navalny died in his Arctic prison last week.

Advertisement for KIPCO (Kuwait Projects Company) featuring the logo and text: 'CONDOLENCES The Management and Staff of Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) wish to offer their heartfelt condolences to Mr. Durga Prasad on the sad demise of his Mother May her soul rest in peace and may God grant comfort and strength to the bereaved family members'

US against ordering...

Continued from Page 1

between the Zionist entity and the Palestinians, said the occupation was "a continued violation of international law".

occupation are clear and there can be no peace, no stability, no prosperity without upholding the rule of law," foreign ministry legal advisor Jasmine Moussa said.

The hearings began Monday with three hours of testimony from Palestinian officials, who accused the Zionist occupiers of running a system of "colonialism and apartheid".



## International

# China issues highest weather alert as temperatures plunge

## Beijing shivers in snowy conditions

**BEIJING:** Severe weather warnings were in place across swathes of China on Wednesday as temperatures plummeted across the south and Beijing shivered in snowy conditions. Authorities renewed an orange alert - the highest in the country's three-tier system - warning that average temperatures could fall by six to 12 degrees Celsius by Friday in the south, where they are currently around zero degrees C (32 degrees Fahrenheit). In some areas, temperatures could plunge by more than 20 degrees C, the National Meteorological Center (NMC) said on social media.

State news agency Xinhua said the NMC had "called on local governments to take precautions against the cold weather, advised the public to keep warm, and called for necessary measures to protect crops and aquatic products". In Beijing, where temperatures hovered around freezing on Wednesday, residents awoke to find the capital

blanketed in white following overnight snowfall.

Traffic slowed to a crawl on the city's highways, while snow-dusted pavements proved treacherous for commuters and cyclists. Municipal authorities said up to 4.1 centimeters of snow had fallen in some suburban areas and issued a warning over icy roads. "It is recommended that residents... stagger their travel, use public buses and subways, drive their own cars slowly and pay attention to safety," the city government said in an online statement Tuesday evening.

Braving the cold temperatures in the capital's historic Forbidden City, visitors - some in traditional costumes - marveled at the picturesque snowfall. "I am very happy to be here. This snow scene and the dragon lanterns give me a sense of prosperity," Long Yan, a 55-year-old tourist from southwestern Sichuan province, told AFP. "Auspicious snow signifies a bountiful year. This snow is a beautiful omen," she said. — AFP



BEIJING: A man rents a bicycle covered in snow in Beijing on February 21, 2024. — AFP

## News in Brief

### 5 charred bodies found

**ACAPULCO:** Five charred bodies were found Tuesday in a remote village in the southern Mexican state of Guerrero after reports of a confrontation between suspected criminals, local authorities said. The state prosecutor's office said on social media that police, soldiers and forensic experts went to the mountain community of Las Tunas to verify the reports. "They located the bodies of five burned people," the office said, noting the victims had not been identified. The bodies were transferred to the state forensic medical service. Local news outlets published images of a presumed confrontation between criminals that took place on Monday and left several dead. Given the difficulties in communication and accessing the area, the prosecutor's office requested the support of federal forces in launching their investigation. Las Tunas is part of the municipality of San Miguel Totolapan, where in October 2020 an attack by a criminal group on the local city hall left 20 dead, including the mayor. — AFP

### 2 die as bridge collapses

**THE HAGUE:** At least two people died and two more were injured when a bridge under construction collapsed in the Netherlands on Wednesday, Dutch officials said. "An industrial accident occurred while building a bridge. Unfortunately, this resulted in two fatalities. Two people are injured," the regional safety authority wrote on X, formerly Twitter. Earlier, the authority had said that part of the bridge, under construction in Lochem, in the east of the country, had collapsed. They had initially given a toll of four injured, three of them seriously. It is not clear whether the two dead were part of that original toll. A reporter at the scene, from local newspaper De Stentor, said workmen had been hoisting bridge arches when the accident occurred. "Suddenly there was a huge bang," the reporter said. "The entire arch started to swing. Then the whole thing fell down. We saw two construction workers fall down." — AFP

### Cuban speaker in Kenya

**NAIROBI:** Cuba's parliament speaker is visiting Nairobi in a bid to uncover the fate of two Cuban doctors abducted in Kenya by Somalia-based jihadists almost five years ago, its foreign ministry said. The mission by Esteban Lazo comes after the Al-Shabaab Islamist militant group claimed that the two doctors had been killed in a US air strike in Somalia last week. Lazo "has travelled to Kenya in order to engage in urgent procedures with the highest authorities of that country", Cuba's foreign ministry said in a statement published on Tuesday. He is "searching for cooperation and clarification", following the reports about the deaths of Assel Herrera Correa and Landy Rodriguez Hernandez, who were kidnapped on April 12, 2019, it said. The foreign ministry was also establishing contacts with the Somali government "and addressed the US government via diplomatic channels on Sunday, February 18, asking for further clarification, and is still awaiting a response", it said. — AFP

## Beijing crushing Tibetans: Exiled political leader

**DHARAMSALA:** As Tibetans prepare to mark 65 years since a failed uprising against Chinese rule and questions loom over the Dalai Lama's successor, the diaspora's elected leader said Beijing is crushing his people. Tibetans on March 10 will commemorate the 1959 uprising against Chinese forces that led the future Nobel laureate - and thousands of his followers - to cross snowy Himalayan passes into neighbouring India and set up a government in exile.

But the anniversary has also put the question of who will succeed the ageing Dalai Lama into sharp focus, with the choice likely to spark a controversial geopolitical contest. The charismatic spiritual leader already stepped down as his people's political head in 2011, passing the baton of secular power to a government chosen democratically by some 130,000 Tibetans across the world.

Penpa Tsering, born in India in 1967, was elected in 2021 as its second-ever leader, or sikyong. "If you look at the policies of the Chinese government today, they're squeezing us - like a python squeezing us out of our breath slowly," Tsering told AFP in an interview at the office of the Tibetan government in exile in India. "That's why we are dying a slow death." Tibet - ruled with an iron fist by China since the 1950s - was historically an independent country, but Beijing maintains its long-held position that "Tibet is part of China".

## Pakistan parties reach power-sharing deal as Khan loyalists left out

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan's two dynastic parties have reached a power-sharing agreement that will return Shehbaz Sharif to the premiership, leaving out politicians loyal to jailed former leader Imran Khan despite them winning the most seats in this month's vote. The army-backed Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) said they had settled days of negotiations on securing a majority to form a coalition government that will also include several smaller parties, after the

February 8 polls returned no clear winner.

Candidates loyal to Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party won the most seats but were forced to stand as independents following a sweeping crackdown on the party in the lead-up to the election, which was marred by allegations of vote rigging. The proposed new government looks much the same as the shaky coalition that combined to oust Khan in a no-confidence vote in 2022, when Sharif became prime minister for the first time. On the streets of the capital Islamabad, some were skeptical of what the new government had to offer. "Establishing a (coalition) government hasn't proved beneficial in the past," said retired 67-year-old Saeed Asmat.

"Each time they formed a government, inflation skyrocketed, making it difficult for the poor to survive," he added. "What actions will they take now?" The deal was

announced at a late-night press conference in Islamabad, announcing Asif Ali Zardari, the husband of assassinated former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, as president. "The Pakistan Peoples Party and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz have attained the numbers and we will form a government," said PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the son of Zardari and Bhutto.

"We are hopeful that Shehbaz Sharif will soon become the prime minister of the country and the whole of Pakistan should pray that the government should be successful," Bhutto Zardari, who was foreign minister under Sharif in the last government which dissolved in August ahead of elections, said ministerial portfolios had been agreed and would be announced in the coming days. The National Assembly must convene by February 29, when the coalition can be formally approved. — AFP

## Pakistan's upcoming coalition government: The main players

**ISLAMABAD:** After a split-verdict in Pakistan's general election this month, a broad alliance of parties have agreed to form a coalition government. The arrangement mirrors the one that ousted Imran Khan back in 2022 - kickstarting two years of political chaos which saw his party survive a crackdown to deliver surprise success at the polls. Here is a look at the main players:

### The Sharif Clan

The Sharifs are one of the two families who have ruled Pakistan for decades, and were expected to claim victory in the February 8 polls with the backing of the powerful military establishment. Their Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) will be the senior coalition partner and, according to a deal announced late Tuesday, Shehbaz Sharif will be the prime minister. In the run-up to the election, his elder brother Nawaz - a three-time former prime minister - returned from self-imposed exile in the UK and was touted as the candidate for premier. Dubbed the "Lion of Punjab", the PML-N puppetmaster is often draped in a Gucci scarf and yet admired by supporters for his approachable "man of the soil" demeanour.

The 74-year-old was sidelined from the 2018 election which carried Khan to power with the military's blessing. His return was seen as a sign that his relationship with the top brass was mended. But with weak election results, the task of leading has been handed to 72-year-old Shehbaz - considered a softer personality, a better mediator and more pliable to military influence. Shehbaz, who is a cancer survivor and often appears in public sporting a facemask, was prime minister in the coalition ousting Khan. But analysts say Nawaz will be the "power behind the throne".

### The Bhutto dynasty

The Bhuttos - hailing from the lineage of assassinated ex-prime minister Benazir Bhutto - have agreed their Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) will be junior coalition partners, alongside several smaller parties. They have secured in return the largely ceremonial role of president for Asif Ali Zardari, Benazir's widow and an ex-president nicknamed "Mr 10 percent" -



ISLAMABAD: Omar Ayub Khan (4th right), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party's nominee for prime minister speaks as Gohar Ali Khan (3rd left seated), PTI's chairman and barrister with Sahibzada Muhammad Hamid Raza (3rd right), leader of the political group Sunni Ittehad Council watches during a press conference following their coalition in Islamabad. — AFP

the alleged cut he took on government contracts. The 68-year-old last came to power on a sympathy vote after Benazir's killing and was twice jailed on charges related to corruption, drug smuggling and murder - although he never faced trial.

His floppy-haired son Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, 35, is the PPP leader and was foreign minister in the coalition which ousted Khan two years ago. But analysts predict Zardari will use it to steer the PPP, ostensibly helmed by his son, as it participates in a coalition facing a host of tough economic choices. Ministerial roles for the new government have yet to be announced but the National Assembly must convene by February 29, when the coalition can be formed.

### Khan's 'independents'

Khan sat out the election in jail whilst his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party was barred from campaigning, with leaders rounded up and candidates forced to run as independents. Despite the crackdown

at the hands of the military establishment Khan fell out with, candidates loyal to PTI took more seats than any other party - but not enough to form a government.

PTI claim the ballot was subject to widespread rigging denying them a majority government, with a cover-up managed by a mobile internet outage on polling day and a massive delay in results. When former cricket star Khan, 71, was ousted in 2022 his lawmakers withdrew from parliament in protest over a no-confidence motion that he said was a US-backed conspiracy.

But this time independents loyal to PTI have allied with fringe party the Sunni Ittehad Council, which they hope will allow them to claim a quota of seats reserved for women and minorities. If approved by the election commission, the party says it could attempt to form a government with chief organizer Omar Ayub Khan their candidate for prime minister. But like the Sharifs and the Bhuttos, the real power of the party will remain with a man behind the scenes - in this case, Imran Khan who is serving several lengthy prison sentences. — AFP



DHARAMSALA: Penpa Tsering, a sikyong or leader of the Tibetan government-in-exile, speaks during an interview with AFP in his office. — AFP

said. "So I chide my Chinese friends, saying: 'You are waiting for this Dalai Lama to die. You are not concerned about the living 14th, but you are more concerned about the yet to come 15th - because you know that if you can control the Dalai Lama, you can control the Tibetan people.'"

Tsering stressed he had no immediate concerns. "Let us see whether His Holiness the Dalai Lama out-

lives the Communist Party, or the Communist Party outlives His Holiness," he added. "Even this morning, His Holiness was saying: 'I have not lost one of my teeth. I'll live long.' So let's see." Tsering sometimes travels to the mountainous Indian border to stare across to the homeland he has never visited, he said, to "fulfill my emotional needs". — AFP

### 'Control the Tibetan people'

Tsering believes the spiritual leader still has decades to live. "His Holiness keeps saying that 'I will live up to 113,'" he



## Business

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2024

# Boursa Kuwait achieves a net profit of KD 15.80m for 2023

## The Board of Directors proposes cash dividends of 74 fils per share

**KUWAIT:** Boursa Kuwait Securities Company (K.P.S.C.) (BOURSA) recorded a net profit of KD 15.80 million for the financial year ended Dec 31, 2023. Total operating revenues of KD 30.68 million were also recorded over the same year. Meanwhile, operating profit for the 2023 financial year came in at KD 18.27 million, while the company's earnings per share came in at 78.68 fils for the financial year ended Dec 31, 2023. Additionally, consolidated assets came in at approximately KD 118.89 million as of Dec 31, 2023, while shareholder equity (attributable to equity holders of the parent company) came in at KD 64.23 million as of Dec 31, 2023.

Given these results, Boursa Kuwait's Board of Directors proposed the distribution of cash dividends of 74 fils per share for the financial year ended December 31, 2023, which is approximately 94 percent of the company's net profit. The proposed distribution of cash dividends is subject to approval by the Annual General Assembly as well as approval from the relevant regulatory authorities.

Commenting on the results, Chairman Hamad Mishari Al-Humaidhi said: "Boursa Kuwait's results for 2023 are a testament to the company's strong operational model, as we displayed efficiency and agility in navigating the year, which was characterized by economic challenges and geopolitical tensions that affected capital markets across the region and around the world, including the Kuwaiti capital market. The company recorded a net profit of KD 15.80 million for the year ended on Dec 31, 2023, and continued working with its partners to achieve its strategic objectives to develop a strong and efficient financial market with liquidity and transparency, adopting best-in-class standards and practices and solidifying our role as a leading contributor to the diversification of the Kuwaiti economy and a key cog in the state's plans to transform into a cultural, financial and investment pioneer in the region."

Al-Humaidhi added, "The company continued to implement its societal and environmental initiatives, aligned with its Corporate Sustainability (CS) pillars and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Throughout the past year, Boursa Kuwait leveraged its extensive networks and resources to support its various stakeholders and maintained its illustrious record of honors and accolades in the field of sustainability. The company's iconic building received the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold certification from the United States Green Buildings Council (USGBC). Global Finance also recognized the company for its Outstanding Financial Leadership in Sustain-

ing Communities - Middle East 2023 and Outstanding Leadership in Sustainability Transparency - Middle East 2023 as well as winning the award for Best Sustainable Corporate Governance 2023 - Kuwait from 'The European'."

"On behalf of myself and my fellow Board members, I would like to express our profound gratitude and appreciation to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, for his unwavering support in ensuring the stability and prosperity of the Kuwaiti economy. I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude to our Board of Directors, the Executive Management team, and Boursa Kuwait's dedicated employees, whose hard work and commitment enabled the company to navigate the turbulent financial landscape of 2023 and accomplish our goals. Appreciation is also extended to the Capital Markets Authority, Kuwait Clearing Company, and all market participants for their roles in elevating the Kuwaiti capital market. I would also like to express my thanks to our esteemed shareholders for their unwavering trust and support in the company and its strategic goals to establish Boursa Kuwait as a prominent stock exchange in the region," he concluded.

Boursa Kuwait was able to chart a successful course for the Kuwaiti capital market and its participants, as the company was able to overcome the turbulent conditions that adversely affected the capital market through the diversification of its operating revenues and the marked improvement to its non-operating income, which increased from KD 2.44 million in 2022 to KD 4.43 million in 2023 due to the company's efficient and closely integrated operations.

Chief Executive Officer Mohammad Saud Al-Osaimi also commented on the results, "The company showcased remarkable agility in dealing with the volatility of the financial scene in 2023 thanks to its robust operational model which allowed Boursa Kuwait to gain prominence as one of the best stock exchanges in the region and the Kuwaiti capital market to cement itself as an attractive investment destination for the world. The Kuwaiti stock exchange once again proved that it could adapt to all obstacles and conditions by adopting best-in-class standards and practices for its services and products and supporting the capital market's infrastructure to gain the confidence of its issuers, investors and all stakeholders."

Al-Osaimi added that Boursa Kuwait continues to expand its products and services, increase market efficiency and facilitate access to it, as well as improve its transparency, liquidity and the governance of all its participants. "I would like to thank the esteemed members of our



Boursa Kuwait Chairman  
Hamad Mishari Al-Humaidhi



Boursa Kuwait CEO  
Mohammad Saud Al-Osaimi

Total operating revenues came in at KD 30.68 million while operating profit came in at KD 18.27 million

Board of Directors for their unwavering support of our strategy and operations and extend my deepest gratitude to my fellow Executive Management team colleagues and all employees. I would also like to thank the Capital Markets Authority, Kuwait Clearing Company and all our partners in the Kuwaiti capital market for their cooperation and support, which played pivotal parts in the development of our market and its success," he concluded. Throughout the past year, Boursa Kuwait continued to develop the market's infrastructure with its subsidiary, Kuwait Clearing Company (KCC), as the two entities conducted a series of stress tests for the central clearing counterparty (CCP) system to ensure that financial brokerage firms can fulfill its settlement requirements with the Central Bank of Kuwait and local banks. The CCP will then pave the way for the launch of several products.

Additionally, as part of its efforts to support the Kuwaiti capital market and improve its status in the international investment community, Boursa Kuwait and KCC collaborated with Jefferies Financial Group, a world-renowned global investment banking and capital markets institution, to organize a non-deal roadshow in London. The roadshow presented Boursa Kuwait and KCC with a unique opportunity to engage in one-on-one discussions with prominent investment management firms and advisors.

The aim was to shed light on the Kuwaiti capital market's latest updates, its investment opportunities and the latest products and services it has to offer to institutional investors. The roadshow also allowed the companies to exchange ideas

and viewpoints and share feedback about their perception of the Kuwaiti capital market and how to ease their access to it.

Based on these roadshows and visits, the capital market apparatus introduced a series of enhancements and features that met the requirements of institutional investors and facilitated investor access to the market, including same-day NIN account opening for foreign clients, an updated design for custodian migration and movement, and a partial rejection facility to give investors more control over their obligations. An updated eAGM system that provides international access was also launched, while KCC submitted a Securities Lending and Borrowing (SLB) study to the Capital Markets Authority (CMA) based on comments from the international community. These features are unique in the region and have helped increase the efficiency and transparency of the Kuwaiti capital market.

Throughout the year, Boursa Kuwait organized a series of Corporate Days with prominent financial organizations, which saw the participation of over 20 listed companies including the exchange. A total of over 200 meetings between the listed companies and over 80 representatives from world-renowned financial asset management firms, investment companies, sovereign wealth funds and advisors resulted in these institutional investors gaining an in-depth understanding of the companies' financial health and business outlook as well as the benefits and opportunities of investing in the Kuwaiti capital market.

Boursa Kuwait also launched an initiative in 2023 that empowers licensed Kuwaiti investment companies to build re-

lationships and exchange knowledge and expertise with world-renowned financial institutions, as the company believes that these companies play a pivotal role in the advancement of the market. This initiative also allows companies to utilize new products and services to develop their business strategies and operations.

The first installment of this initiative was organized in collaboration with HSBC, the British-based multinational investment bank and one of the largest banks in Europe, and held in the bank's regional headquarters in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates. Boursa Kuwait's "Financial Asset Managers' Day" brought together representatives from eight licensed Kuwaiti investment companies with the Markets and Securities Services Desk at HSBC (HSBC MSS), allowing the exploration of areas of interest, business opportunities, and potential collaborations that benefit investors from both parties.

Total market capitalization for the Kuwaiti capital market came in at KD 40.26 billion in 2023, while total international value turnover made up 12 percent of the total value traded in the Kuwaiti capital market. Meanwhile, institutional investor activity increased from 61 percent of total value turnover in 2022 to 65 percent in 2023, an increase of around 6.5 percent.

The "Premier" Market posted a total capitalization of KD 31.82 billion, with almost 22.57 billion shares traded at a value of KD 8.21 billion on over 1.55 million trades, while the "Main" Market posted a total capitalization of KD 8.44 billion, with over 16.86 billion shares traded at a value of over KD 2.16 billion on approximately 830,000 trades during 2023.

Boursa Kuwait has been a key driver in the development of the Kuwaiti capital market and the diversification of the national economy. Since its establishment, the company has been dedicated to building a reputable exchange founded on efficiency and transparency, fostering a liquid capital market and developing an advanced exchange platform through a comprehensive set of reforms and enhancements that has allowed it to compete at an international level. The company has rolled out numerous market reforms and new initiatives as part of its comprehensive multi-phase Market Development (MD) plans over the past few years.

Boursa Kuwait also serves as a catalyst and trailblazer for Kuwait's privatization drive. The company was among the first Kuwaiti government entities to successfully undergo privatization and was one of the first stock exchanges in the Middle East to list, self-listing on the "Premier" Market in 2020.

## Oman to become a global green hydrogen producer, exporter

**MUSCAT:** Oman is racing time to keep abreast of the global transition to renewable energy and climate, having already taken significant steps by finishing the review of relevant regulatory and legal frameworks. Oman's 2040 vision is primarily based on leading world green energy producers and exporters by targeting the production of one million tons of green hydrogen per year by 2030 and eight million tons by 2050.

Oman, which is now a fossil-fuel-producing country, has allocated plots of land spanning 50,000 kilometers for investment in renewable energy and green hydrogen projects, with estimated investments to hit 140 billion dollars by 2050. The sultanate abounds in great potential for green hydrogen production, chiefly solar energy and wind energy, extended onshore land, industrial harbors near production areas, and long experience in fuel production and exportation, not to mention political and social stability and manpower.

Unquestionably, all these capabilities would put this Gulf country on track to be a powerhouse of green hydrogen production and exportation. In August 2021, the Omani Ministry of Energy and Minerals launched a national green hydrogen alliance known as "Hi Fly" to place the Sultanate of Oman on the map for developing the production and usage of clean hydrogen. The alliance includes 13 main entities from the public and private sectors that would work to support and facilitate the pro-



Najla Al-Jamali

duction, transportation, local utilization, and exportation of clean hydrogen.

On March 13, 2022, Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tareq instructed fast-track measures to regulate the green hydrogen sector, set out necessary legal frameworks and policies, allocate appropriate locations, and establish a clean energy agency and a

green hydrogen development company. Oman has taken it upon itself to reduce emissions and reach carbon neutrality, which means a balance between emitting carbon and absorbing carbon emissions from carbon sinks, by 2050 only as part of Gulf commitments towards a growing global transition to clean energy.

The sultanate has also taken tangible steps towards the reduction of fossil fuel consumption by means of promoting solar and wind energy projects with a view to capitalizing on nice weather conditions and appropriate geographical nature. The International Energy Agency (IEA) predicted the sultanate to become the world's sixth-largest hydrogen exporter by 2030 and the biggest in the Middle Eastern market. Based on its high-quality renewable energy resources and vast tracts of available land, Oman aims to produce at least one million tons of renewable hydrogen a year by 2030, up to 3.75 million tons by 2040, and up to 8.5 million tons by 2050, according to a recent report.

The 2040 hydrogen target would represent 80 percent of Oman's current liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports in energy-equivalent terms, while achieving the 2050 target would almost double them, it said. Achieving its targets and using one-third of renewable hydrogen for domestic uses would significantly contribute to Oman's clean energy transition, said the IAE, listing the benefits as reducing domestic use of natural gas by three billion cubic meters a year and avoiding seven million tons of carbon dioxide emissions.

In this context, Najla Al-Jamali, Chief Executive of Alternative Energy at OQ, a global integrated energy company, said renewable energy projects contribute to attaining economic diversification goals through the balance in energy sources by cutting reliance upon fossil fuel and natural gas as main sources of national income. She said there are joint projects between the sultanate and the State of Kuwait, including an ammonia production project in Al-Wusta Governorate, in partnership with Shell Global, Kuwait's EnerTech Holding Company, and InterContinental Energy Company.

EnerTech Holding Company, a fully owned subsidiary of Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), runs investments in the energy, clean technology, recycling, water, waste management, and renewable energy sectors, while OQ, together with global partners, invests in three mega-green hydrogen projects valued at over 15 billion dollars, she added. OQ also seeks to explore opportunities for investment in green hydrogen-based industries and supports local renewable energy companies by entrusting them with environmental studies and geographical and soil surveys. Green hydrogen is produced using emissions-free renewable power sources like wind, solar, and hydropower to separate hydrogen from water. — KUNA

## Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan down 48.6%

**TOKYO:** Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan in January narrowed 48.6 percent from a year earlier to JPY 56.8 billion (\$377 million), down for the first time in two months, due to slow exports, government data showed Wednesday. However, Kuwait stayed in black ink with Japan for 16 years on a monthly basis, as exports still outpaced imports in value, the Finance Ministry said in a preliminary report. Overall exports from Kuwait to Japan plunged 44.8 percent year-on-year to JPY 69.9 billion (\$464 million), the first decline in two months.

Imports from Japan also fell 18.9 percent to JPY 13.1 billion (\$86 million), the first fall in two months. The Middle East's trade surplus with Japan also narrowed 21.0 percent to JPY 797.8 billion (\$5.3 billion) last month, with Japan-bound exports from the region sliding 14.1 percent from a year earlier, it said. Crude oil, refined products, liquefied natural gas (LNG), and other natural resources, which accounted for 95.2 percent of the region's total exports to Japan, shrank 14.5 percent.

The region's overall imports from Japan grew 16.6 percent on robust demand for automobiles, machinery, manufactured goods, and electrical machinery. Japan's global trade balance returned to deficit in January, marking the first red ink in two months at JPY 1.8 trillion (\$11.7 billion). Exports increased 11.9 percent from the year before, buoyed by shipments of vehicles, semiconductor production, and auto parts. Imports dropped 9.6 percent on lower energy bills, especially coal and LNG. China remained Japan's biggest trade partner, followed by the US. The trade data are measured on a customs-cleared basis before adjustment for seasonal factors. — KUNA



## Business

# Gulf Bank opens first eco-friendly branch in Sabah Al-Ahmad city

## Opening in the presence of Ahmadi governor and bank's executive management

- Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled: The Gulf Bank branch located in Sabah Al-Ahmad Residential City enhances the banking system.
- We appreciate Gulf Bank's endeavors to enhance its presence and broaden its services to a larger customer base across Kuwait.

- Mohammad Al-Qattan: We plan to transform our branch network into environmentally friendly facilities, aligning them with the new brand identity.
- All newly-constructed and refurbished branches strive to offer a more unique customer experience while embracing the self-service concept.



Gulf Bank inaugurates its first environmentally friendly branch in Sabah Al-Ahmad city in the presence of Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Waleed Khaled Mandani, Mohammed Al-Qattan and various executives from the bank's leadership team.



A group photo of Gulf Bank's executive management officials in front of the new branch.

**KUWAIT:** As part of its ongoing efforts to promote sustainability principles, Gulf Bank launched its first environmentally friendly branch in Sabah Al-Ahmad city. This branch, the initial one bearing the bank's new identity independently, was unveiled in the esteemed presence of Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, the Governor of Al-Ahmadi, acting CEO of Gulf Bank, Waleed Khaled Mandani, General Manager of Consumer Banking, Mohammad Al-Qattan, and various executives from the bank's leadership team.

During his attendance at the opening of Gulf Bank's latest branch in Sabah Al-Ahmad Residential City, Sheikh Fawaz Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah praised the exemplary standard of Kuwait's banking sector and the commitment to establishing new branches across Kuwait, with a particular focus on Al-Ahmadi governorate. This expansion enhances the banking and financial services framework in the governorates, especially in emerging residential areas, thus making services more accessible, and alleviating the load on residents.

The governor expressed optimism regarding the possibility of numerous local and international banks opening additional branches in Al-Ahmadi Governorate. He highlighted the area's unique economic, commercial, and tourism attractions, stemming from its expansive territory, dense population, and evolving urban infrastructure.

Al-Khaled conveyed appreciation to the Chair-

man of the Board of Directors and the staff of Gulf Bank for their collaborative efforts in successfully setting up the new branch in Sabah Al-Ahmad Residential City. He conveyed his best wishes for their ongoing success, as well as for the Kuwaiti private sector, in keeping pace with global advancements in the banking industry.

Introducing a new identity for the branches, Mohammad Al-Qattan, General Manager of Consumer Banking, said: "We are delighted today to open the first environmentally friendly branch, paving the way for the transformation of our branch network into eco-friendly facilities. These branches will be designed in accordance with the new branch identity, based on an ongoing plan and schedule. This aligns with our leading role in promoting sustainability principles, and our proactive involvement in transitioning towards a sustainable, low-carbon economy, in line with our 2025 strategy and Kuwait Vision 2035. Al-Qattan emphasized that the Sabah Al-Ahmad branch leads the way as the first environmentally sustainable branch among the Bank's independent branches, and aligns with the new branch identity. Additionally, he noted that the Al-Fanar branch was the first among the bank's branches located in commercial complexes to adopt the refreshed appearance, presenting a unique experience for our customers with its vibrant new design.

He emphasized that the new and refurbished

branches embrace the self-service concept, enabling customers to manage the majority of their transactions independently. This can be done either through the designated self-service area equipped with tablets or via ATMs and Interactive Teller Machines (ITMs), accessible 24/7, seven days a week. He further stated, "At Gulf Bank, we operate with a defined strategy focused on enhancing the customer experience, be it through our mobile banking application, recognized as the simplest, fastest, and most efficient in the banking industry, or through branch visits and ATM services. Additionally, we continuously upgrade our customer service center and interactive voice response system." Gulf Bank is committed to providing exceptional banking services to customers 24/7 through various channels, including the website, the mobile app, call center, social media platforms, and ATMs. Additionally, its branches are conveniently located across various areas to serve customers effectively.

### Contemporary design

Furthermore, Al-Qattan emphasized the environmentally friendly features of the new branch, alongside its contemporary design and advanced banking services. They have incorporated state-of-the-art technologies to improve customer service, aligning with current trends in the global banking industry. Moreover, the Sabah Al-Ahmad branch stands out

for its unique design, prioritizing customer comfort, convenience, and efficiency, all while adhering to green building standards. These standards prioritize reducing electricity consumption, utilizing solar panels as a key energy source, implementing sensor technology for energy efficiency, and providing facilities for charging electric vehicles.

Al-Qattan concluded by emphasizing the special consideration given to ensuring accessibility for individuals with disabilities. This includes installing elevators for easy access to all floors and providing a safe deposit box room accessible by wheelchairs.

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.

### News in Brief

#### Singapore payouts to retain nurses

**SINGAPORE:** Singapore will pay nurses a bonus of up to SGD\$100,000 to encourage them to stay in the public health system as the city-state deals with a staff shortage and a rapidly ageing society. About 29,000 nurses will be eligible for the payout, including foreign nurses who have worked in the country for four years, Health Minister Ong Ye Kung said Tuesday. "We want to support our nurses to do a good job," Ong said. Ong said COVID-19 had exacerbated the nursing shortage in Singapore, with a higher than usual number of foreign nurses leaving during the pandemic. — AFP

#### Australia supermarket boss resigns

**SYDNEY:** The CEO of Australia's largest supermarket chain announced Wednesday that he will step down from the post and retire, after what local media described as a "car crash" interview over high food prices. Woolworths executive Brad Banducci said he would resign this September after eight years at the helm of the chain. Australia's biggest food retailers are under fierce pressure from customers who are angry at high food prices and accuse the chains of price gouging and holding a virtual duopoly. An investigation by Australian public broadcaster ABC found the Coles and Woolworths chains now control 65 percent of the grocery market and ALDI controls just 10 percent. — AFP

#### JAL 'subs cheated on driving tests'

**TOKYO:** Japan's two biggest airlines admitted that subsidiaries allowed employees to cheat on written driving exams, according to a statement and local media, the latest embarrassing episode for the country's aviation sector. Japan Airlines (JAL) said that 11 employees from two of its subsidiaries "engaged in the malpractice of answering questions while looking at textbooks" between 2022 and 2024. Their driving permits have been returned to authorities, JAL said, adding that five test supervisors were also involved in the cheating. Bloomberg reported that the workers who cheated had driven baggage cars and catering vehicles at Tokyo's Haneda Airport. — AFP



Indian Embassy Counselor (Commerce) Sanjay K. Muluksa, Talal Al-Mutairi, Humood Al-Jabri, Khalid Al-Ruwais alongside other guests during the inauguration of LuLu Express Fresh Market in Abbasiya.



## Freshness redefined with launch of LuLu Express Fresh Market in Abbasiya

**KUWAIT:** The opening of the latest LuLu Express Fresh Market in Abbasiya on Feb 21 drew enthusiastic crowds eager to experience the elevated grocery shopping that the brand defines through its stores. Marking the brand's 16th store in the country, the event was inaugurated by the Indian Embassy Counselor (Commerce) Sanjay K. Muluksa, Talal Al-Mutairi, Humood Al-Jabri, Khalid Al-Ruwais alongside other distinguished guests. Also present on the occasion from the LuLu Hypermarket Management were Mohamed Haris, LuLu Kuwait Director, Sreejith, LuLu Kuwait Regional Director and other officials.

Spread over a total area of 9,000 square feet,

## HSBC announces 'record profit' of \$30.3bn in 2023

**HONG KONG:** HSBC said Wednesday it achieved "record profit" in 2023 as pre-tax gains soared by nearly 80 percent, with the banking giant also announcing further share buybacks. The Asia-focused lender and its peers have been buoyed by rising interest rates for more than a year, but are bracing for greater economic uncertainties in 2024.

The bank generates most of its revenue in Asia and has spent several years pivoting to the region, vowing to develop its wealth business and target

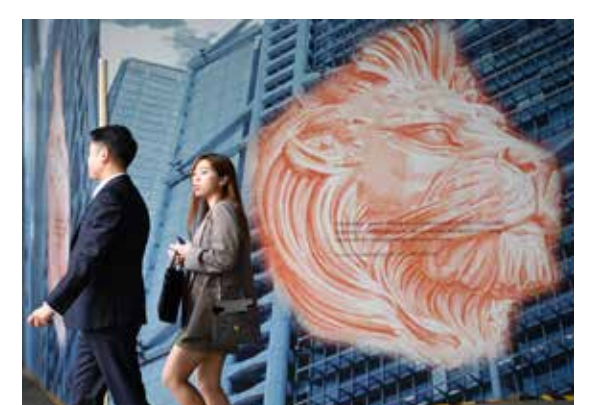
the modern streamlined interior with its premium ambience provided a welcome respite from the ordinary grocery store experience, offering a sophisticated yet user-friendly environment for everyday shopping needs.

Convenience and hygiene were paramount, with well-organized aisles and a clean atmosphere ensuring a comfortable and safe shopping experience. Ample and easily accessible parking facilities added to the convenience provided to shoppers.

But the true star of the show was the diverse and premium product selection offered at the store. From fresh to frozen grocery essentials, to succulent meat, premium seafood, and fresh produce, as well as a chilled and dairy section that showcased an array of tantalizing products, and a frozen delights section that offered quick meal options. In addition, the market offered a curated selection of top quality products that included a wide range of freshly roasted delights and indulgent confectionery, and a variety of non-food



items, including health and beauty products. The successful launch of the LuLu Express Fresh Market in Abbasiya highlights the brand's commitment to meet and exceed the evolving needs of customers. The innovative market offers a unique and elevated grocery shopping experience, proving to be a welcome addition to the neighborhood and setting a new standard for convenience and fresh food selection.



HONG KONG: People walk outside the headquarters of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited (HSBC) in Hong Kong on Feb 21, 2024. — AFP

fast-growing markets. Despite bumper profits, HSBC noted the effects of China's slower-than-expected economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic as well as heightened geopolitical tensions. The firm reported pre-tax profits of \$30.3 billion, up from \$17.1 billion the year before, in a statement to the Hong Kong stock exchange. Profit after tax increased by \$8.3 billion, to \$24.6 billion, while revenue rose by 30 percent to \$66.1 billion. "Our record profit performance in 2023 enabled us to reward our shareholders with our highest full-year dividend since 2008," said chief executive Noel Quinn.

"This reflected four years of hard work and the strength of our balance sheet in a higher interest rate environment." The bank said Wednesday that it would initiate a share buyback of up to \$2 billion, following the announcement last year of three share buybacks totalling \$7 billion. — AFP



## Business

# Weyay Bank unveils Jeel Card, the first of its kind for kids

## For 8 to 14-year-old kids with intuitive features tailored for both kids and parents

**KUWAIT:** Weyay, Kuwait's first digital bank, proudly introduces the Jeel Card, a pioneering innovation designed to transform the financial experience of 8- to 14-year-olds within the Weyay app. With the Jeel Card, children embark on a journey of financial empowerment, supported by intuitive features tailored for both kids and parents. For parents, the Jeel Card represents the ideal tool to introduce children to the world of finance in a safe and controlled manner. With instant onboarding and a hassle-free digital sign-up process, parents can quickly and effortlessly set up accounts for their children, ensuring a seamless experience from the start. Our secure authorization process prioritizes parental control and peace of mind, while comprehensive transaction monitoring enables effortless tracking of children's spending habits.

The Jeel Card embodies simplicity and autonomy for children, fostering financial responsibility from an early age. Young users enjoy ownership and control over their finances, facilitated by a sleek and user-friendly app interface. Integrating seamlessly with e-wallets such as Apple Pay, the Jeel Card offers swift and convenient payments on the go, enhancing accessibility and ease of use.

Personalization is at the heart of the Jeel Card



Amal Al-Duwaisan

experience, with three vibrant color options — yellow, pink, and blue — allowing children to express their individuality and style. This focus on personal preference puts children in the driver's seat of their financial journey, fostering a sense of ownership and pride in their financial decisions.

During the card launch event, Amal Al-Duwaisan, Deputy Head at Weyay Bank by the National Bank of Kuwait, mentioned, "we are proud to launch the first-of-its-kind debit card for children aged 8 to 14 years old. The Jeel card puts empowerment in the parents' hands as they have unparalleled control and security, instantly freezing spending with a simple tap. It also prioritizes safety with its numberless design, eliminating visible card numbers to enhance security in every transaction."

Weyay is committed to revolutionizing the banking experience, offering innovative solutions that empower individuals of all ages to achieve financial



well-being. Through cutting-edge technology and a dedication to user-centric design, Weyay continues to shape the future of finance.

The Jeel Card transcends traditional banking solutions by empowering children with financial responsibility while providing parents with the tools to guide and monitor their progress. With Jeel, families embrace the future of banking, confident in their children's ability to navigate the world of money responsibly. Since its inception as Kuwait's first digital bank in 2021, Weyay has created a forward-looking concept, by combining technology with a dynamic design for a seamless



and comprehensive banking experience, while relentlessly striving to develop new products and services to serve the needs of its customers.

Within a short period since launch, Weyay widely captured the interest of GenZ-ers to open new accounts in a simple and fully digital process without any of the usual paperwork. The bank also received many accolades including the "Outstanding Innovation in Mobile Banking" Award in Global Finance's annual Innovators Awards for 2022.



Abdulla Al-Sumait and Loai Muqames cut the ribbon to officially inaugurate the new branch.



Abdulla Al-Sumait, Loai Muqames, Johair Marafi, Afrah Al-Arbash and the bank's team.

## ABK launches state-of-the-art Al-Jabriya branch

**KUWAIT:** Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is proud to announce the revamp of its Al-Jabriya branch, further cementing its dedication to providing its customers with convenient and innovative banking solutions. The grand opening was attended by Abdulla Al-Sumait, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer; Loai Muqames, CEO-Kuwait; and Johair Marafi, General Manager of Retail Banking, among other members of the Bank's Executive Management.

ABK has also allocated a section in the new Al-Jabriya branch to serve its Private Banking customers, ensuring the highest levels of privacy and meeting all their needs according to the highest

standards of excellence in the banking sector. This initiative is a testament to ABK's commitment to modernity and customer-centric designs. On this occasion, Muqames expressed his enthusiasm, stating, "The Al-Jabriya branch reflects our unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional banking and meeting the evolving needs of our customers. We are excited to introduce a space that embodies convenience, aesthetics, and technological advancement."

He continued, "This initiative aligns with our effort to provide accessible banking services complemented by sophistication. We aspire for our customers to continue to experience our commitment to convenience and excellence firsthand."

Adding to this, Marafi conveyed her content, stating, "The integration of design and technology in our new branch showcases our dedication to serving our customers in a comfortable and forward-thinking environment. We are thrilled to continue to deliver exceptional customer service." Revamping the Al-Jabriya branch plays a significant role in

enhancing ABK's banking experience. Through its well-thought elements, the modern and welcoming atmosphere contributes to a positive customer journey, making banking transactions more pleasant and engaging. By creating an inviting space, ABK expressed its desire to strengthen brand loyalty, foster trust, and make banking more accessible.

Furthermore, the integration of digital technology into the new branch is a strategic move to enhance convenience and efficiency. With interactive displays and self-service options, the Bank offers streamlined options, reducing waiting times and offering the flexibility to manage transactions independently. This milestone marks ABK's ongoing endeavor to build and maintain its brand image, solidifying its commitment to enhancing customers' banking experiences across the country. The Al-Jabriya branch is part of the Bank's continuous mission to provide cutting edge banking solutions, improve service quality, and elevate the overall customer journey overtime.



## Al-Rashed International Shipping Co celebrates National, Liberation days

**KUWAIT:** Al-Rashed International Shipping Company, a prominent player in Kuwait's shipping industry, celebrated the nation's National Day and Liberation Day with grandeur and enthusiasm. The festivities, organized to honor Kuwait's rich heritage and commemorate its independence, included a series of events aimed at engaging employees and fostering a sense of pride and camaraderie.

The celebrations kicked off with a spirited competition among the various departments of Al-Rashed International Shipping Company. Each department was tasked with adorning their workspaces in a manner that captured the essence and flavor of Kuwait. The competition inspired teams to unleash their creativity and patriotism, resulting in a breathtaking array of decorations that showcased Kuwait's cultural heritage and national pride. From the moment one stepped into the office premises, it was evident that the spirit of Kuwait was alive and vibrant. The hallways were adorned with Kuwaiti flags, traditional textiles, and images of iconic landmarks such as the Kuwait Towers and the Liberation Tower. Intricate displays featuring scenes from Kuwait's history and culture adorned the walls, while traditional music filled the air, transporting visitors to the heart of Kuwait's festivities.

A panel of esteemed judges, comprising senior management and distinguished guests, undertook the challenging task of evaluating the decorations.

Each department's display was meticulously scrutinized based on criteria such as creativity, adherence to the theme, and overall visual impact. The judges were impressed by the attention to detail and the innovative use of materials in bringing the spirit of Kuwait to life within the office space.

After much deliberation, the winners of the decoration competition were announced amidst much anticipation and excitement. The winning departments were lauded for their exceptional efforts in capturing the essence of Kuwait through their creative displays. Certificates of appreciation trophies and cash awards were presented to the winning teams, who basked in the glory of their achievements and the recognition bestowed upon them by their peers and management.

In addition to the decoration competition, Al-Rashed International Shipping Company organized a quiz competition focusing on the facts and history of Kuwait. Employees from across departments participated enthusiastically, putting their knowledge of Kuwait to the test. The quiz covered a range of topics, including Kuwait's founding, key historical events, notable landmarks, and cultural traditions.

The quiz competition served as an educational opportunity for employees to deepen their understanding of Kuwait's history and heritage. It also fostered a sense of camaraderie and teamwork as participants worked together to answer questions

and solve challenges. The competition was designed not only to entertain but also to promote knowledge and awareness among employees about the country they call home.

Addressing the staff the Chairman Basim Al-Rashed emphasized the significance of these historic occasions in Kuwait's journey. He highlighted the importance of unity, resilience, and patriotism shown by the expat employees, traits that are integral to a company's ethos. Ravi Warrior, the CEO reiterated the company's commitment to excellence and its role in contributing to Kuwait's progress. The CFO of the company, Pradeep Menon stressed the economic significance of the shipping industry in Kuwait and expressed pride in the company's contributions. Collectively, they commended employees for their hard work and dedication, underscoring the importance of teamwork in achieving success. They encouraged everyone to continue striving for excellence and to be proud ambassadors of Kuwait's heritage. In conclusion, they expressed gratitude for the opportunity to celebrate these significant milestones together as a company.

The Kuwait National Day and Liberation Day celebrations at Al-Rashed International Shipping Company were a testament to the company's commitment to honoring Kuwait's heritage and fostering a sense of pride and unity among its employees. The events, including the decoration competition and quiz competition, provided a platform for employees to showcase their creativity, knowledge, and patriotism. As the festivities concluded, employees left with cherished memories and a renewed sense of pride in their country and workplace.

## NBK mobile banking, the ultimate travel companion

**KUWAIT:** National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) always strives to enrich its digital banking services provided through the NBK Mobile Banking App by introducing new features and enhancements that are meticulously designed to meet customers' expectations and enable them to manage their accounts, and make more transactions easily and securely, anytime, anywhere, especially during the official holidays and travel seasons.

### Managing cards during travel

Customers can manage their debit, credit, and prepaid cards while traveling. They can inform the bank by selecting the cards they would like to use while being abroad.

### Report lost/stolen cards

Users can report/lost stolen cards with a click of a button via the App. Once the card has been reported, a replacement card will be issued automatically.

### Temporarily block/unblock credit cards

Users have the capability to easily block or unblock their credit cards using the App with just a few simple steps. The service is instant, safe, and available around the clock.



Mohammed Al-Dakheel

### Easier transfers

Transfers are made easier now, as customers don't need an OTP. Instead, they can authenticate with their password or biometrics (Face ID).

### FlexiPay

FlexiPay is available on the App providing eligible NBK Credit Cardholders with the flexibility to make payments for their in-store or online purchases, whether made locally or internationally.

### Quick Pay

Customers can use the enhanced service of Quick Pay to send links and receive money, anytime, even during the weekends and official holidays, and choose the preferred method of sharing the link.

### Transfer receipt

App users will get a transfer receipt after making transfers. They can also refer to the account statement, go to the transfer transaction, and get the transfer receipt.

### Manage registered devices

Users can manage their registered devices on NBK Mobile Banking through the App itself. They can add a device or delete it. For the safety and security of the customer, NBK is keen to limit the number of devices allowed to register for the service.

In addition, the bank has recently released new useful services and enhanced some so the transactions can go through easily including: applying for cards, loans, or increasing credit card limit prior to travel, displaying amount on hold for credit cards and accounts, finding currency exchange rates, in addition to the existing services such as increasing or amending monthly transfer limits, making bill payments, and much more.

Commenting on this, Mohammed Al-Dakheel, Head of Mobile Banking, Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait said: "Through NBK Mobile Banking App, we provide a full-fledged banking experience aiming to empower customers digitally and provide them with the latest and most advanced banking services."

"The NBK Mobile Banking App is well deservedly called the "Ultimate Companion" for NBK Customers. It is also considered the bank's main digital channel, which accounts for the major share of banking transactions with over 600,000 registered users and over 68 million transactions made through the App in 2023," he added. "During 2023, we introduced over 50 releases, each included a bundle of new services and enhancements. With the new interface and enhancements, the App has become more user-friendly, smarter, enabling users to make their transactions faster with less screens," he explained.



## Sports

# England back underfire Joe Root, Bairstow to keep India series alive

## Bumrah, injured Rahul out of fourth England Test

**RANCHI:** England are blocking out all "external noise" to help Joe Root and Jonny Bairstow hit form and keep the series alive against India in Friday's fourth Test in Ranchi. After England slumped to their second-worst defeat since 1934 in terms of runs in the third Test, Ben Stokes' side are 2-1 down and must win or draw to avoid losing the series with a game to spare.

England's attacking "Bazball" brand of cricket came under fire after the dismal 434-run Rajkot defeat, with the lack of runs for Root and Bairstow highlighted. Bairstow, whose rapid scoring in the middle order has been a key to England's attacking play, has 102 runs from six innings with a highest of 37.

"I'm not blind but he's done so well for us (in the past) and he's had such an impactful career," England coach Brendon McCullum said of Bairstow, who will win his 99th cap in Ranchi. "We've got to keep on giving him confidence and block out a lot of the external noise and keep him really present and focused on what he's trying to achieve, and I'm sure Jonny will come good."

Root's reverse scoop dismissal off Jasprit Bumrah on the third morning triggered a collapse from a strong position at 224-2 to 319 all out, handing India a crucial 126-run first-innings lead. Root, who has scored 11,493 runs in 138 Tests with 30 centuries, made just seven runs as England imploded to 122 all out in the second innings and never remotely threatened their 557 victory target.

"It's Joe Root, crickey," said McCullum as he batted away criticism of the former captain's lean spell. "I mean, seriously? The law of averages suggests he'll

fill his boots in the next two." All-rounder Stokes, who said he would play purely as a batsman in this series after recovering from knee surgery, could bowl in Ranchi in a badly needed boost for England.

"There's definitely a chance," vice-captain Ollie Pope told reporters on Wednesday. "He's not confirmed it even in the changing room, so we will see. He bowled at the batters today. See how he pulls up, and if that's good, hopefully we will see him with the ball in hand in the game."

### 'Put India under pressure'

England have won 14 out of 21 Tests since Stokes and McCullum took the reins in 2022. But since winning the first India Test in Hyderabad, Stokes has now lost back-to-back Tests for only the second time as captain. Australia won at Edgbaston and Lord's in the Ashes last year, but on that occasion England fought back to draw the series 2-2. "We'll turn the page and go quids-in again trying to put India under pressure," said a defiant McCullum.

"Hopefully in seven or eight days we'll be talking about how exciting it is to be heading into a decider." Rohit Sharma's India will rest pace spearhead Bumrah, the only seamer on either side to play in all three Tests so far, as India look to seal the series, but should otherwise have an unchanged side.

Batsman KL Rahul will miss his third straight Test with an injury he picked in the opener. Batting great Virat Kohli has sat out the series and announced the birth of his second child on Tuesday. Opener Yashasvi Jaiswal, 22, has dominated the series batting with two double centuries and 545 runs. England's Ben



**RAJKOT:** India's Jasprit Bumrah (R) successfully appeals for leg before wicket (LBW) against England's Zak Crawley during the fourth day of the third Test cricket match between India and England at the Miranjan Shah Stadium in Rajkot. — AFP

Duckett is next best on 288.

Sarfraz Khan made 62 and 68 not out in an impressive debut and was part of a destructive 172-run stand with Jaiswal in India's second innings. "When seniors like Virat or Bumrah are not there then ev-

eryone wants to make the best of the opportunity," batsman Shubman Gill told reporters.

Jaiswal needs 139 in his next innings to become the fourth-quickest batsman in history to 1,000 Test runs, and the fastest in 75 years. — AFP

### News in Brief

#### World champions to face Wales

**LONDON:** South Africa will return to action for the first time since they won last year's Rugby World Cup when they take on Wales at Twickenham Stadium on June 22, it was announced on Wednesday. The London ground, the home of English rugby, last staged a match between the two sides during the 2015 World Cup, when the Springboks won a tense quarter-final 23-19. South Africa, who faced New Zealand at Twickenham in a World Cup warm-up last year, play Ireland twice in July, in Pretoria and Durban, while Wales travel to Australia for a two-Test series. "We are thrilled to return to Twickenham in what will mark our first Test since the Rugby World Cup final in France," said South Africa coach Rassie Erasmus. He added: "We may be playing on foreign territory, but we enjoy fantastic support from the expat community in London and its surrounds, as we saw last year where most of the supporters donned green and gold, so we are really looking forward to the match." Wales coach Warren Gatland, whose side have lost their opening two Six Nations fixtures, said he was "excited about the fixture list". — AFP

#### AFC football chiefs condemned

**TOKYO:** Japan women's captain Saki Kumagai has criticized Asian football officials after the away leg of their tie against North Korea for a spot at the Paris Olympics was moved to Saudi Arabia days before the game. Kumagai said that the Asian Football Confederation "have a responsibility" to look after players after Saturday's match was switched from Pyongyang to Jeddah. Kumagai spoke to reporters in Japan on Tuesday as she was set to leave for Saudi Arabia, just a day after jetting in from her Italian club Roma. The 33-year-old said "this kind of thing can't happen", referring to the late notice the national team had been given. Japan's football association had reportedly asked the AFC to move the first leg from the North Korean capital Pyongyang over a lack of operational transparency and a scarcity of flights. Reports say the JFA did not receive confirmation that Saudi Arabia would be the new venue until Monday night, and the kick-off time and stadium have yet to be announced. "As players it's our job to prepare for the match but the organisers definitely have a responsibility to make sure we are in our best condition," added Kumagai. "This can't happen again." — AFP

#### Kohli announces birth of child

**NEW DELHI:** Virat Kohli has announced the birth of his second child, ending speculation over the reason for his absence from India's ongoing home Test series against England. Kohli said his wife, the Bollywood actress Anushka Sharma, delivered a baby boy last Thursday. The couple already have a daughter named Vamika. "With abundant happiness and our hearts full of love, we are pleased to inform everyone that on 15th February, we welcomed our baby boy Akaay and Vamika's little brother into this world," Kohli, 35, said on Instagram. "We seek your blessings and good wishes in this beautiful time in our lives. We request you to kindly respect our privacy at this time," he added late Tuesday. Star batsman Kohli, a hero in cricket-crazy India, had opted out of the five-match series against England citing personal reasons. The lack of detail led to intense speculation. — AFP

## David, Marsh propel Australia to thrilling T20 win over NZ

**WELLINGTON:** Tim David hit a four off the last ball to give Australia a nail-biting six-wicket victory over New Zealand in the first Twenty20 international in Wellington on Wednesday. Having been set 216 to win, Australia skipper Mitchell Marsh hammered 72 off 44 balls before batting partner David (31 not out) sealed a thrilling last-gasp victory.

"I thought we were done, to be honest," admitted the relieved Marsh. "Timmy David is extremely calm and had a lot of confidence in his ability towards the end. We are very lucky to have him. It was a great game of cricket." The three-match series is the last for both teams before the T20 World Cup in the United States and West Indies in June.

Rachin Ravindra had earlier put New Zealand in the driving seat by hitting 68 runs off 35 balls to claim his first half-century in the format as the hosts finished on 215-3. Marsh finished with best bowling figures of 1-21 before leading the charge with the bat, hitting seven sixes and two fours in his unbeat-



**WELLINGTON:** Australia's David Warner plays a shot during the first Twenty20 international cricket match between New Zealand and Australia at Sky Stadium in Wellington on February 21, 2024. — AFP

en knock. The captain steadied his side after they lost openers Travis Head and David Warner early on. Head went for 24, caught by Tim Southee off the bowling of Adam Milne. Veteran Warner followed for 32 in the sixth over, caught by Glenn Phillips.

title since his stunning Wimbledon triumph over Novak Djokovic last July.

Hopes that he could start turning things around in Rio — where he lifted the trophy in 2022 and finished runner-up to Britain's Cameron Norrie last year — were quickly dashed. He and 117th-ranked Brazilian Monteiro were two points into the match when Alcaraz's right foot stuck in the red clay surface at Jockey Club Brasileiro, where rain had delayed the start of play for three hours. Four of the day's tennis matches were postponed until Wednesday and the first players to take the court on Tuesday played in misty conditions.

### 'Those things happen'

That had cleared by the time Alcaraz and Monteiro squared off and Alcaraz said court conditions were not to blame. "Those things happen, even more so on clay," Alcaraz said. "It wasn't a problem with the court, I got hurt in a change of direction and that happens on this type of surface," added the Spaniard, who was slow to rise after taking a hard fall, limping to his chair and putting a towel over his face before the trainer arrived. Alcaraz's coach Juan Carlos Ferrero looked on with concern from the stands as Alcaraz, with a grimace and a slight limp, returned to action and won the opening game. But after dropping his serve in the second he opted not to continue.

"It's really sad to win in this way, because I know how hard every player works to be ready for

Having criticized New Zealand fans in the build-up, Warner blew kisses at the crowd as he was booed off the pitch. Marsh built a partnership of 42 for the third wicket with Glenn Maxwell, who was clean-bowled by Lockie Ferguson on 25 to leave Australia 111-3 after 10 overs.

New Zealand's fielding let them down in the 12th over as Southee missed a catch off Josh Inglis, then Phillips dropped Marsh next ball on the boundary. Inglis was dismissed with three overs left and Australia on 172-4 when he skied his shot to Ravindra at deep backward square leg. Inglis made 20.

The game went to the wire after New Zealand seamer Adam Milne was smashed for 19 runs in the penultimate over. Australia needed 15 from the last six balls, but David held his nerve by smashing a six before sending the final ball of the night to the boundary past a diving Phillips.

"I thought we didn't bowl too bad, but the power they possess all the way down is the reason why they are pretty good," New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner said of Australia. "We had a pretty good score, but we know they keep coming with the bat. The only way to stop them is to take wickets and we didn't really do that." The series moves to Auckland with the next two T20 internationals both to be played at Eden Park, on Friday and Sunday, before a two-Test series. — AFP



**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Spain's Carlos Alcaraz returns the ball to Brazil's Carlos Monteiro during the ATP 500 Rio Open tennis match in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP

a tournament of this magnitude," Monteiro said. "I just wish him a speedy recovery, that it's nothing serious or that it won't affect his season," added the 29-year-old left-hander, who improved to 2-0 against Alcaraz, whom he beat in the round of 16 of the Melbourne-1 in 2021. The injury comes with Italy's Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner closing in on Alcaraz's world number two ranking. Alcaraz leads Sinner — who won the Rotterdam title on Sunday — by just 535 points and has 1,000 points to defend next month at the prestigious hardcourt tournament in Indian Wells, California. — AFP

## Paris 2024: New era of corruption free Olympics?

**PARIS:** Ahead of the Paris Olympics in July and August, French prosecutors are working on four enquiries into possible wrongdoing, but are the investigations a sign of problems or of genuine efforts to tackle graft?

Andy Spalding, an academic and author who studies corruption in sporting "mega-events" such as the Olympics or the football World Cup, believes French authorities are showing they are serious about delivering a clean Games.

Three preliminary investigations are into possible favouritism in the awarding of around 20 contracts worth tens of millions of euros, while a fourth — revealed on February 6 by AFP — is scrutinizing the pay of chief organizer Tony Estanguet. In an interview with AFP, Spalding, a professor at the US-based University of Richmond School of Law, explained the troubled history of Olympic corruption and why he believes the Paris Games might spell the start of a "new era" of cleaner international sport.

Question: When did corruption in the Olympics first come to wide public attention?

"The Salt Lake City Winter Olympics in 2002 was the first time in which there was hard evidence of corruption that went public. Pre-2002, we know there's corruption. But we can't prove it and the world is largely resigned to corruption.

Then in the late 1990s, there's something sometimes called the "corruption eruption" — a period of time in which all of a sudden the world starts paying a lot of attention to corruption issues. There are new international conventions; there's an explosion of scholarship. There are scandals and resignations, new enforcement initiatives. What we saw in the ensuing Games was not just incidents of corruption, but systemic corruption. Russia with the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics was probably the most egregious example of this, where billions of dollars are estimated to have been embezzled in the course of the event."

Question: What has been the effect on the Olympics movement?

"The corruption scandals have damaged the International Olympic Committee brand enormously. That was most obvious in 2015 at the time of the awarding of the 2022 Winter Games, when the only credible candidate, China, was a country that had almost no winter sports tradition. Other countries just didn't want them because of the systemic corruption

and the cost overruns.

The IOC needs a sustainable business model, so they adopted reforms, attacking the two different components of corruption: one is the corruption at the IOC level, particularly with the executive committee, meaning they needed to reform the bidding process. Then the second step was addressing corruption at the host level: the organising committee, the municipality, the National Olympic Committee."

Question: Part of that approach is a new "anti-corruption clause" in the contract with the Olympics host city. What is this?

"France is the first country to be under an enforceable contractual obligation to adopt anti-corruption compliance programs. Nobody knows what it means yet, but starting with Paris, moving forward to the 2026 Winter Games and Los Angeles in 2028, we will have these contractual obligations each time.

You start with a contractual provision. The next step is to provide some guidance on what that means. Then we need operations and some enforcement for breach of contract. When all of those steps are completed, then the clause will mean something. When any convention or statute is adopted, there is a lag before enforcement. The statute that was the catalyst for global anti-corruption enforcement, the US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, was on the books for 25 years before we did anything with it." — AFP



Sports

# Arnautovic gives Inter Champions League advantage over Atletico

It is certainly one of the most important goals of my career: Arnautovic

**MILAN:** Marko Arnautovic gave Inter Milan a single-goal advantage in their Champions League last-16 tie with Atletico Madrid after netting the only goal in Tuesday's hard-fought 1-0 win. Austria striker Arnautovic replaced Marcus Thuram at half-time and rammed home Inter's winner with 11 minutes left at the San Siro after Jan Oblak failed to hold Lautaro Martinez's shot.

The 34-year-old turned jeers into deafening cheers with his goal, which came after a series of missed opportunities left home fans wondering whether Inter would get the win their performance deserved. His worst miss came just after the hour mark when he ballooned over a sitter, a dreadful finish which came before and after failed attempts to latch on to promising balls.

"It is certainly one of the most important goals of my career," said Arnautovic to Sky Sport. "In recent weeks I've missed a lot of chances. But the fans and the players showed they are behind me... It gave me the energy I needed to score the goal."

Arnautovic has had a hard time since returning to Inter on loan from Bologna

last summer and those misses further frustrated supporters. However, thanks to him Simone Inzaghi's side, who are nine points clear at the top of Serie A, take a slender lead to Madrid where they will face Atletico in the decisive second leg on March 13.

Atletico have been a more attacking proposition this season but retreated into the dogged defensive mode more representative of Diego Simeone's long reign in Spain. They could not keep Inter out and now have to overturn Tuesday's result in order to reach the quarter-finals. "We have to keep our heads up, there is one game left and we are going to do everything possible to get through," said Oblak to Movistar. "They had two or three chances when we weren't perfect and in a game like this you have to be perfect all the time."

**Arnautovic redeemed**

A cagey first half between two resolute teams left fans with little to shout about, with only a few pot shots getting supporters off their seats until the 36th minute, when Martinez saw his powerful header from Nicolo

Barella's cross saved by Oblak.

And moments later Martinez left Inter fans with their heads in their hands after uncharacteristically wasting a golden opportunity to open the scoring. Martinez was handed a clear chance after Marcus Thuram intercepted Rodrigo De Paul's wayward pass and burst towards Oblak's goal, only for the Argentina forward to scuff his effort off Jose Maria Gimenez.

Thuram then had a powerful effort of his own easily saved by Oblak as Inter finished the opening half in the ascendancy. However the France forward hurt his right thigh while taking that shot and he was replaced at half-time by match-winner Arnautovic, who three minutes after the break could not quite direct Federico Dimarco's teasing cross on target.

Samuel Lino, who curled a decent effort wide in the first half, wasted Atletico's best chance of the night in the 56th minute when he fluffed his finish from a tight angle after exchanging passes with Rodrigo De Paul.

And Arnautovic, who has had a hard time since his return, did himself no favours when he shot over the bar when it looked easier to score. But he was sub-



**MILAN:** Inter Milan's French forward #09 Marcus Thuram jumps for the ball during the UEFA Champions League last 16 first leg football match Inter Milan vs Atletico Madrid at the San Siro stadium in Milan. — AFP

merged by delighted teammates when he forced home the winner, which was just reward for a display which highlighted why Simeone said on Monday that Inter were one of the five best teams in Europe.

However the tight nature of the tie was evident when substitute Alvaro Morata headed wide when presented with a great chance to take Atletico back to Madrid level. — AFP

## Ratcliffe completes purchase of minority stake in Man Utd

**MANCHESTER:** British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe said becoming a co-owner of Manchester United is a "great honour" and "responsibility" after his purchase of a minority stake was finalised on Tuesday. The 71-year-old's investment, which will give him control of football operations at the 20-time English champions, was approved by the Premier League and English Football Association last week.

It was announced on December 24 last year that Ratcliffe had agreed to buy a 25 per cent stake in United from unpopular owners the Glazer family in a deal worth around £1.02 billion (\$1.3 billion). Following the completion of that deal, the founder of petrochemicals giant INEOS has

invested a further \$200 million to take his total stake to 27.7 per cent and will inject \$100 million more by the end of this year to enable investment in infrastructure at Old Trafford.

"This marks the completion of the transaction, but just the beginning of our journey to take Manchester United back to the top of English, European and world football, with world-class facilities for our fans," Ratcliffe said in a club statement.

"Work to achieve those objectives will accelerate from today." United have not won the Premier League since former manager Alex Ferguson retired in 2013 and last won the Champions League in 2008 as their fortunes on the field have deteriorated during the Glazers' reign.

The Americans have been deeply unpopular with supporters ever since a leveraged takeover of the club in 2005 saddled the club with hundreds of millions of dollars of debt. Joel Glazer, United's executive co-chairman, said: "I would like to welcome Sir Jim as co-owner and look forward to working closely with him and INEOS Sport to deliver a

bright future for Manchester United."

A boyhood United fan, Ratcliffe has already met with leading supporters' groups and local politicians as he charts a course to lead United back to the top on and off the field. Omar Berrada has been poached from local rivals and Premier League champions Manchester City to be the club's new CEO.

A pursuit of Newcastle's Dan Ashworth to be United's sporting director is also nearing completion as Ratcliffe aims to revolutionise the Red Devils' failing recruitment structure. A UEFA report last week revealed that United had the most expensive squad in history at the end of last season with a combined transfer cost of \$1.5 billion.

However, that investment has not reaped results on the field. United crashed out of the Champions League group stages earlier this season and sit sixth in the Premier League. The deal is just the latest of a portfolio of sports investments by Ratcliffe's INEOS, which has used its vast profits to fund a series of projects in football, cycling, Formula One, athletics and sailing. — AFP

## PSV rue chances as Malen earns CL draw for Dortmund

**EINDHOVEN:** PSV Eindhoven coach Peter Bosz was left rueing missed chances after his side squandered several opportunities in a 1-1 draw with Borussia Dortmund in the Champions League last-16 first-leg tie on Tuesday. "In the second half, we had loads of chances. It was a shame that we didn't score a second," Bosz told reporters after the game at the Philips Stadion.

Donyell Malen snatched a vital goal to earn the Bundesliga giants the away draw at his old club but wasteful PSV were left to wonder what could have been. The big question pre-match was which Borussia Dortmund would show up: the team that topped the Champions League 'Group of Death' or the outfit struggling for consistency in the Bundesliga?

And it was a cagey opening in an intimidating atmosphere in Eindhoven, the home fans letting off a volley of fireworks at kick-off. "We started very nervously, I think both sides were nervous in the first minutes," said Dortmund coach Edin Terzic.

When the smoke cleared, the hosts had the better of the opening exchanges, Mexico international winger Hirving Lozano causing the Dortmund defence headaches down the left. PSV midfielder Malik Tillman fluffed two grit-edged

chances in front of goal, once firing wide after a clever through-ball from veteran Dutch striker Luuk de Jong.

And the visitors punished PSV's profligacy, taking the lead against the run of play in the 24th minute when Malen squeezed a deflected shot into the top corner. Malen had been prolific for the Dutch giants, scoring 55 goals in all competitions in just 43 games, and chose not to celebrate in front of PSV's hardcore fans.

The misfiring Tillman somehow then contrived to miss another goal that looked easier to score, this time with a header right in front of goal. Then it was Belgian international winger Johan Bakayoko's turn to scuff a shot wide, with the home fans starting to wonder if it was going to be one of those nights as they went into the break 1-0 down.

**'We are unbeatable'**

PSV haven't lost at home all season and started the second half on the front foot. They were soon level. Tillman redeemed his earlier errors by winning a penalty in the 56th minute, which De Jong slotted calmly past Alexander Meyer.

Dortmund defenders were incensed at the penalty award, insisting veteran



**EINDHOVEN:** PSV's Dutch midfielder #22 Jerdy Schouten (L) and PSV's US midfielder #10 Malik Tillman (C-R) jump for the ball against Dortmund's German forward #14 Niclas Füllkrug (C) during the UEFA Champions League round of 16. — AFP

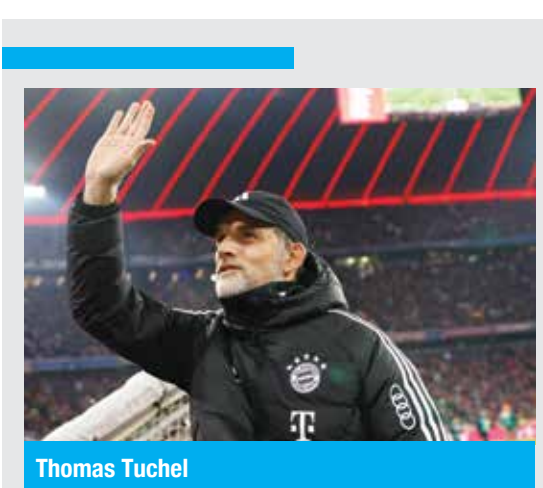
central defender Mats Hummels had nicked the ball before bringing down Tillman. Terzic described it as a "hard decision" and even Bosz acknowledged: "You could see from the reaction of the Dortmund players they didn't agree with it."

"Zero percent a penalty. Zero," Hummels himself told Prime Video after the game. "Tillman was laughing all over the place. Bakayoko was laughing himself to death. They were all grinning for minutes later."

The controversial equaliser opened the game up, with chances at both ends, a flick

by Dortmund's Marius Wolf forcing a sharp save from Walter Benitez in the PSV goal. With 15 minutes to go, Bakayoko danced through the Dortmund defence but failed to get any purchase on his shot — summing up the night for PSV.

PSV midfielder Joey Veerman said: "I think that we had the second half completely under control and in the first half we had big chances." "When you look at the whole game, we had better chances than Dortmund", he said, adding "I think that 1-1 is not all that bad a position" to take back to Dortmund. — AFP



Thomas Tuchel

## Amid torrid spell, Tuchel to leave at end of season

**MUNICH:** Bayern Munich said Wednesday they would part ways with manager Thomas Tuchel at the end of the season, as the reigning German champions struggled to stay in the Bundesliga title race. "We came to the decision to end our working relationship by mutual agreement in the summer," Bayern CEO Jan-Christian Dreesen said in a statement, following talks with Tuchel. The coach, whose contract was set to run through to 2025, would exit the club on June 30 this year. "Until then, I will of course continue to do everything I can with my coaching staff to achieve maximum success," Tuchel said in the statement.

Bayern would look for a "new footballing direction" under a different coach next season, CEO Dreesen said. Tuchel's preemptive dismissal comes after three straight defeats, including a painful 3-0 loss to league rivals Bayer Leverkusen. With 12 games left in the season, Bayern sit eight points behind Xabi Alonso's side, who have yet to lose during the campaign. Leverkusen are on an historic 32-game unbeaten streak in all competitions, equalling a record set by Hansi Flick's Bayern across the 2019-20 and 2020-21 seasons.

Following the loss to Leverkusen, Bayern slipped to a 1-0 defeat against Italian side Lazio in the Champions League round of 16 and a humiliating 3-2 loss to lowly Bochum in the league.

After the horror run of form, Tuchel admitted Bayern's chances of winning the Bundesliga title were "not so realistic". The manager brushed off talk that he might be immediately replaced, but his planned exit reflects the uncompromisingly high standards at the Bavarian giants. — AFP

# Classifieds

### Clinics & Hospitals

#### Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752

Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

#### Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300

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### Change of Name

**I, Nilan Krish** holder of Passport no V7778630 issued at Kuwait Indian permanent address 1 22 Mariyamman Koil street, Madur Post, Kallakurichi, Pin: 606206, Tamil Nadu, India. Now residing in Kuwait hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) Nilankrish and (surname) Balu. (# 5165 22/2/2024)

**I, IZZAT MANHA**, holder of Indian Passport No. V7783368 having permanent address Kerala, India 678506 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) IZZAT MANHA and (surname) ALAMEEN. (#5164 21/2/2024)

**I, ANAM LOGDE**, holder of Indian Passport No. T8757472 having permanent address at Adi, post: Kolmandla Tal: Mhasla, Di: Raigad, Maharashtra, pin: 402105, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) ANAM MUZAFFAR and (surname) LOGDE. (# 5163 21/2/2024)

### Required Immediately

#### Job 1: Network Engineer

**Qualifications required:**

- Bachelor's degree in EE, Information Systems, Computer Science, or similar degree.
- CCNA certification preferred.
- 2+ years of high-level technical experience in dynamic IT roles.
- Proficient in TCP/IP networking, network cabling, optics, and the use of related test equipment.

#### Job 2: IT Operations Engineer

**Qualifications required:**

- Bachelor's degree in EE, Information Systems, Computer Science, or similar degree.
- 2 years of experience with server operating systems.
- 1 year of experience in a data center environment.
- Competent in troubleshooting server hardware and basic network operations.
- Excellent communication skills and a grasp of data center hygiene, safety, and security
- Advanced skills in Linux Administration.

Candidates meeting the requirements should immediately send their CVs to the following Email address: **HR@gfac.com.kw**



## Haaland 'shuts mouths' as Man City close on Liverpool

City remain in the hunt to ever win four consecutive English top-flight titles



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Norwegian striker #09 Erling Haaland shoots and scores his team's first goal during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Brentford at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester. — AFP

MANCHESTER: Pep Guardiola said Erling Haaland had "shut the mouths" of his critics after scoring the only goal of a nervy 1-0 win for Manchester City over Brentford on Tuesday. Just two points separate the top three in a fascinating Premier League title race as City moved to within a point of leaders Liverpool, with third-placed Arsenal one point further back with 13 games to go.

Haaland was keen to make amends for a frustrating night in front of goal as City were held 1-1 at home by Chelsea on Saturday. The Norwegian has only recently returned from a two-month injury lay-off and Guardiola said he was also coping with the loss of his grandmother off the field. But Haaland was more like his old self in front of goal when he raced onto Julian Alvarez's pass to slot in his 22nd goal of the season 19 minutes from time. "Top strikers score a lot of goals. Don't criticize, he will shut your mouth. Sooner or later he is there," said Guardiola.

"He was out for two months, he lost his grandmother, it is not easy for a human being. "We spoke about the moment (missing chances against Chelsea),

and I realized this later, but he didn't say anything about the passing away of his grandmother."

Kevin De Bruyne was left on the bench for the entire match as Guardiola revealed he has "niggles" in his hamstring. The Belgian missed the first five months of the season due to a hamstring tear. De Bruyne's ingenuity was missed as City struggled to make their domination count despite enjoying nearly 70 percent possession and having 25 shots on goal.

The Bees were the last visiting side to win at the Etihad 14 months ago and had their chances to spring another huge surprise. Frank Onyeka failed to beat Ederson when one-on-one midway through the first half before Ivan Toney sent a dipping free-kick inches over the bar.

The vast majority of goalmouth action came at the other end. Oscar Bobb came closest to opening the scoring in the first half, on a rare start for the Norwegian youngster, when his effort was cleared off the line by Ben Mee. Bernardo Silva also headed a glorious chance wide as Thomas Frank's men held out until the break.

### Liverpool, Arsenal hopes dashed

Liverpool and Arsenal's hopes of a second unlikely gift from City in the title race in four days would have been raised by a quiet start to the second period. However, City remain well in the hunt to become the first side ever to win four consecutive English top-flight titles for a reason.

One slip by Brentford defender Kristoffer Ajer provided the moment Haaland had been waiting for as he galloped clear on goal and kept his composure to score for just the third time in his last eight games. "I'm incredibly proud. We didn't give much away until the goal - which is a slip," said Brentford boss Frank.

"I think they're good enough. They don't need that luck to get over the line!" City should have extended their advantage, especially as goal difference could yet prove decisive in the title race. Phil Foden scored a hat-trick when the sides met earlier this month in City's 3-1 win in west London. But the England international was denied twice late on by Flekken as the goalkeeper tipped over a blistering shot and then stood up well to block as Foden tried to go round him. — AFP

## Kewell leads Yokohama into Asian Champions League quarter-finals

YOKOHAMA: Harry Kewell led Japan's Yokohama F-Marininos into the Asian Champions League quarter-finals after beating Bangkok United 1-0 on Wednesday in his first home game in charge for a 3-2 aggregate win.

Brazilian Anderson Lopes converted a penalty in added time at the end of extra time to send Yokohama through to face China's Shandong Taishan in the last eight. Ulsan also advanced to the quarter-finals and will play fellow South Koreans Jeonbuk after beating Japan's Ventforet Kofu 2-1 for a 5-1 aggregate win.

Former Leeds and Liverpool forward Kewell left his job as a first-team coach at Scottish champions Celtic to take up the reins at Yokohama last month. He follows in the footsteps of fellow Australians Ange Postecoglou and Kevin Muscat, who both won the J-League title during recent stints at the club. Kewell won 58 caps for Australia, appearing at two World Cups and winning the 2005 Champions League with Liverpool. He has never reached the same heights as a manager in lower-league English football with Crawley Town, Notts County and Oldham.

He was sacked by fifth-tier Barnet in 2021 after failing to win in his first seven matches as manager. But he got his career in Japan off to a winning start on a cold, wet night in Yokohama. The two teams drew 2-2 in last week's first leg in Thailand and the return fixture in Japan was a cagey affair. Chances were few and far between on a bumpy pitch but Yokohama enjoyed the lion's share of possession.



YOKOHAMA: Yokohama's Anderson Lopes (C) scores the winning goal on a penalty kick during the AFC Champions League round of 16 football match between Thailand's Bangkok United and Japan's Yokohama F. Marininos in Yokohama. — AFP

Brazilian winger Elber went close with two efforts from distance in the first half. His compatriot Anderson Lopes went even closer in the 78th minute, only for Bangkok goalkeeper Patiwat Khammai to tip his curling shot onto the post.

But Lopes made no mistake from the spot when Yokohama were awarded a penalty deep into injury time at the end of extra time for a Bangkok handball. Ulsan joined Yokohama in the quarter-finals after beating Japanese second-division outfit Kofu.

Kim Ji-hyun scored early in the first half and Joo Min-kyu added another goal in the final minute at Tokyo's National Stadium. Kazushi Mitsuhiro scored a late consolation for Ventforet, who were appearing in the Champions League for the first time after winning Japan's domestic cup.

The result leaves Yokohama as the only Japanese side left in the competition. Japan's defending champions Urawa Red Diamonds were eliminated at the group stage. — AFP

## Son apologises for bust-up with team-mate Lee

SEOUL: Son Heung-min apologized on Wednesday for his role in a bust-up with South Korea team-mate Lee Kang-in at the Asian Cup and urged fans to forgive the Paris Saint-Germain player. South Korea were beaten 2-0 by Jordan at the tournament earlier this month and it later emerged that skipper Son had dislocated a finger in an altercation with Lee on the eve of the semi-final.

Both players released social media statements on Wednesday, with Tottenham's Son posting a picture of the pair together, smiling and with arms around each other's shoulders. The 23-year-old attacking midfielder Lee, who has been blamed by fans for the fracas and dunned by advertisers, said that he had travelled to London to apologize to Son in person.

Addressing the controversy publicly for the first time, Son wrote in a statement on Instagram: "I am sincerely sorry for causing trouble and will work harder to make the national team grow further." The incident at the Asian Cup reportedly happened after some younger players in the national squad, including rising star Lee, rushed through their meal so they could leave early to play table tennis. This displeased Son and some of the older players because meals on the eve of big games are traditionally seen as a time for bonding. As tension grew Lee tried to punch Son, local media reported. Lee's representatives denied a punch was thrown. — AFP



SEOUL: A woman walks past a television screen showing a news broadcast with a picture of Son Heung-min (L) and Lee Kang-in (R), at a railway station in Seoul on February 21, 2024. Son Heung-min apologized, for his role in a bust-up with South Korea team-mate Lee Kang-in at the Asian Cup. — AFP