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CHILDREN OF KUWAITI WOMEN GET 10-YEAR RESIDENCY UNDER NEW LAW

Kuwait eyes salary-tied residency fees

Hefty fines and jail time for recruiter, expat offenders

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: Assistant Undersecretary for Residency and Citizenship Affairs at the Ministry of Interior Major General Ali Al-Adwani says the new foreign residency law was introduced to keep pace with evolving developments and changes, especially since the previous law had been in effect for over six decades without any major amendments other than a few articles.

In an interview with the "60 Minutes Program", he highlighted the main provisions of the new law, including changes to the residency periods for certain groups, such as the children of Kuwaiti women, as the law now grants them a ten-year residency.

Major General Al-Adwani explained that the residency of children of Kuwaiti women can be renewed for a similar period, with exemption from fees, provided they have not obtained Kuwaiti citizenship under Article 8 of the Nationality Law. The law also exempts these children from losing their residency if they are outside the country for more than six months for medical treatment or educational purposes.

He highlighted the instructions from senior leadership to open the country and facilitate processes for everyone, but stressed that there must be accountability.

Major General Al-Adwani explained that there have been no violations since the introduction of the family visit visa in March, except for four cases in which individuals and their sponsors were deported.

The duration of the family visa has been extended to three months, and the concerned minister now has the authority to amend and determine the fees.

The new foreign residency law, issued by an Amiri decree on November 28, aims to address the shortcomings and loopholes of the previous law. The law provides justice to migrant workers, combats visa trading by tightening penalties, regulates the relationship between employees and employers, and specifies the rights and obligations of both parties.

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Committee announces Kuwaiti citizenship revocation of 3,043

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12, (KUNA): The Supreme Committee on Kuwaiti citizenship announced on Thursday the stripping of 3,043 citizenships with the matter referred to the Cabinet.

This came during a meeting for the commission chaired by First Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-

Sabah.

A statement by the Interior Ministry revealed that 164 individuals had their article one of the citizenship law stripped of due to fraud, 16 people -- also through fraud -- had their article seven of the citizenship law stripped of, while the 2,863 individuals had their article eight citizenship taken due to having the nationalities of 54.

Mild temps set tone for Kuwait's weekend



A stunning view of Kuwait City showcasing the grandeur of Al Shaheed Park Phase 3, a captivating addition to the city's skyline.

Photo by Rezk Tawfiq

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12, (KUNA): Kuwait's Meteorological Department has predicted moderate weather conditions for the weekend, with daytime temperatures remaining pleasant and cooler temperatures expected at night. Acting Director Dharar Al-Ali informed KUNA that the country is currently experiencing the effects of a shallow low-pressure system, which is gradually weakening, allowing a high-pressure system to move in.

On Friday, the weather is expected to be warm and partly cloudy, with southerly to southeasterly winds blowing at light to moderate speeds of 12 to 35 km/h. Maximum temperatures are forecasted to range between 24 and 26 degrees Celsius, with wave heights in the sea reaching between 1 and 4 feet.

As night falls on Friday, temperatures will drop to cool or cold levels, with minimums expected between 8 and 12 degrees Celsius. Winds will shift to southeasterly and northwesterly at speeds of 12 to 32 km/h, while sea conditions will remain light to moderate with waves between 2 and 4 feet.

Looking ahead to Saturday, moderate weather is anticipated with northwesterly winds blowing at speeds of 12 to 45 km/h, potentially raising dust in exposed areas.

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US greenlights Foreign Military Sale worth \$300 mln to Kuwait

WASHINGTON, Dec 12: The US Department of Defense announced that the State Department has approved a \$300 million Foreign Military Sale (FMS) to Kuwait, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The deal encompasses maintenance, repair, support services and military equipment aimed at enhancing the operational readiness of Kuwait's armed forces.

The primary contractors for this agreement include BAE Systems, Leonardo DRS, L3 Harris Technologies, Northrop Grumman and RTX Corporation.

According to the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, the purchase includes joint and specialized tools, material handling equipment, spare parts, hydraulic systems and fuel pumps.

The agreement also supports the operation and maintenance of facilities and the overhaul of AGT1500 engines as part of the Integrated Engine Overhaul Program.

Kuwait's armed forces will use the support to maintain various military vehicles, including M1A2 and M1A2K Abrams main battle tanks; M88A1 and M88A2 Hercules recovery vehicles; M577A2 and M577A3 command transporters and the M113A1, M113A2 and M113A3 armored personnel carriers.

The Gulf Defense Security Agency emphasized that the sale would not affect US defense readiness nor significantly alter the military balance in the Middle East. It reaffirmed Kuwait's status as a major non-NATO ally.



2 UN-Habitat plants trees marking 125 years of Kuwait-UK ties



3 KFF conducts evacuation drill at stadium for 'Gulf Zain Cup'



8 'Tamakan' 6 kicks off with the strategic sponsorship of NBK



9 Khaleeji Zain 26 trophy tour kicks off at Zain HQ in Shuwaikh



11 Sundance 2025 unveils diverse films and powerful docs

Milestone in patient safety

RFID system streamlines blood donation efforts: Dr Al-Awadhi

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi announced the launch of an electronic system for recording the attendance, departure, and periodic leaves of the Ministry of Health's 70,000 employees via smartphones from January 5.

In a press statement issued on the sidelines of the launch of the Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) system at the Sheikhha Salwa Stem Cell Center in Sabah Health Zone, Dr. Al-Awadhi affirmed the ministry's keenness for a clear digital transformation plan, marking a major shift in the country's health services.

He highlighted the importance of digital transformation in streamlining transactions and enhancing service delivery, which improves the ministry's performance.

Dr. Al-Awadhi said the electronic system for correspondence between health zones and central departments has been in use for about two weeks. He highlighted the ongoing efforts to digitize information systems, update old files, and create new electronic records, all of which reflects the ministry's keenness to advance health services.

Blood Transfusion

During his opening speech to launch the Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) system, Dr. Al-Awadhi explained that it is a pioneering project in the field of healthcare services. It represents a milestone in enhancing patient safety and

improving service quality in line with the ministry's vision, the national health strategy, and the country's development plan.

The system also represents a major advancement in managing blood transfusions and their derivatives, enabling accurate tracking from donor to recipient, enhancing confidence in blood product safety and reducing human errors related to patient identification or blood type mismatches. This automated process improves patient safety and the overall quality of healthcare services.

The integration of this technology into the Central Blood Bank and its eight branches, as well as external donation campaigns is aimed to ensure efficient distribution and accurate management of the national blood supply.

The system enhances operational efficiency by providing an updated database for quicker responses to emergencies, accelerating the examination process and tracking of blood bags, saving time, and maximizing efficiency.

In addition, Director of the Blood Transfusion Services Department Dr. Reem Al-Radwan revealed that the department collected approximately 90,000 blood bags in 2024, and produced more than 215,000 products of various blood components, including platelets and blood plasma, to meet the clinical needs of cancer patients, thalassemia patients, accident victims, and those with bleeding conditions.

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The Minister of Health receives a briefing on the functionality of the new system.

News watch

KUWAIT CITY: The CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, **Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah**, on Thursday said that future of the oil-gas industry largely rests on co-habitation capacity with rapid technological development.

Sheikh Nawaf was speaking in the inaugural statement of a conference organized by the KPC in collaboration with Google Cloud, focused on artificial intelligence.

Working according to the digital transformation strategy and being aware of the AI potentials contribute to uplifting the level of efficiency and boosting performance in the oil sector, he said.

The KPC and its subsidiary companies are fully ready to attain the highest degrees of innovation and authenticity for sake of realizing its broad strategies, the CEO stated. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: Teams of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and World Bank came together in Kuwait to look into the fresh reforms of the latter's 2024 program aiming at improving Kuwait's ranking in the business environment improvement program.

During the meeting, held on Wednesday, the teams reviewed all electronic systems based on cutting-edge technology for the management, operation and maintenance of the ministry's assets, mainly geographical information system (GIS), unified communication systems and outage management, the ministry said in a press release. (KUNA)

ANKARA: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), in cooperation with the Turkish Red Crescent, opened on Thursday a kitchen for those affected by the **Turkiye-Syria 2023** quake that hit province of Adiyaman, southeast Türkiye.

Speaking to KUNA after the opening of the 1,067 square meters kitchen, KRCS Deputy Chairman **Dr. Nasser Al-Tannak** said that the two-story facility has the capacity to serve 15,000 people daily.

He revealed that the project cost around USD 800,000, noting that the funding fully came from the KRCS.

On his part, Adiyaman city governor **Dr. Osman Varol** expressed gratitude to Kuwait for its support of the people of Adiyaman, affirming that the facility was essential to serve those affected by the 2023 quake. (KUNA)

Governorates' expanded role fuels new era of development

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12, (KUNA): Driven by the state of Kuwait's pursuit of development and sovereign directives of expediting achievements, the Cabinet issued decree 151 for the year 2024 broadening role of governorates, and ensuring more active contribution.

Back in the 1960s Kuwait had been administratively divided into three governorates; Kuwait City, Hawally and Al-Ahmadi. In the year 1979 Al-Jahra became the fourth governorate, followed by Al-Farwaniya in 1988 and Mubarak Al-Kabeer in 1999.

Throughout the years, decrees have been issued to better allocate governors' tasks, duties and specializations, as they are considered representatives of the executive authority and an asset to facilitating services.

Decree 151, issued in September 4, assigned each governorate a council headed by its governor. The decree tasked concerned ministers with coordinating with governorates' in nominating ministry representatives to become council members, while governors are tasked with organizing workflow and mechanisms.

This allows governors a more active role in overseeing policy implementation, following up on projects, and contributing to providing better services in all governorates.

As governorates are a connecting point between citizens and government bodies, the cabinet issued a decision charging ministers with coordinating with governorates to pinpoint citizens' needs and requirements.

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Namaa opens new Gaza refugee camp

UNGA demands immediate ceasefire

NEW YORK, Dec 12, (Agencies): The U.N. General Assembly overwhelmingly approved resolutions demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and backing the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees that Israel has moved to ban.

The votes in the 193-nation world body were 158-9, with 13 abstentions to demand a ceasefire now and 159-9 with 11 abstentions in support of the agency known as UNRWA.

The votes culminated two days of speeches overwhelmingly calling for

an end to the 14-month war between Israel and the militant Hamas group and demanding access throughout Gaza to address the growing humanitarian catastrophe.

Israel and its close ally, the United States, were in a tiny minority speaking and voting against the resolutions. Other opposing both resolutions included Argentina, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay and Tonga.

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New refugee camp to house 200 families.

KUNA photo

Prayer Timings

Fajr	05:08	Asr	14:32
Sunrise	06:33	Maghrib	16:51
Zohr	11:42	Isha	18:12

Local

Expected Weather for the Next 24 hours

By Day: Warm and partly cloudy with light to moderate southerly wind to southeasterly wind, with speed of 12 - 35 km/h

By Night: Rather cold to cold and partly cloudy with light to moder-

Weather

rate southeasterly wind changing to northwesterly wind later on, with speed of 12 - 38 km/h.

Station **Max Exp** **Min Rec**

Kuwait City 24 13

Kuwait Airport 23 09

Abdaly 24 10

Bubyan 23 10

Jahra 25 12

Failaka Island 24 13

Salmiyah 23 17

Ahmadi 24 10

Jal Aliyah 23 09

Nuwaish 25 12

'Kuwait for all'; media role vital to foster unity

'Shun personal desires over national interests, work for identity'

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12, (KUNA): The forum "National Identity and Strengthening Citizenship Principles in Kuwaiti Society" held two discussions on Wednesday, focusing on the role of media in enhancing national identity and the impact of political and legal issues on national unity and citizenship.

The first session, titled "The Role of Media in Strengthening National Identity and Citizenship Principles," was chaired by Editor-in-Chief of Al-Rai newspaper Waleed Al-Jassim who emphasized that a variety of identities within society creates a beautiful mosaic, as long as no single identity dominates, ensuring national stability.

Al-Jassim highlighted the media's responsibility in fostering national identity while respecting individual differences and preserving the state's identity, and also discussed the rise of a universal human identity through social media, questioning its potential risks.

Meanwhile, former Minister of Information Sami Al-Nisf warned against



Sami Al-Nisf

prioritizing personal desires over national interests and stressed the importance of reinforcing national identity for coexistence among citizens.

Al-Nisf discussed the crucial role of professional media in enhancing national identity, emphasizing the country's achievements, and advancing the values that build nations.

On his side, Professor of Mass Communication at Kuwait University Dr. Khaled Al-Qahs explained that each generation interacts with media differently, noting that the current generation, heavily involved with digital technology and social media, requires targeted communication to strengthen national identity through these platforms.

He also outlined various types of digital citizenship, such as digital consumption, participation in decision-making, and political activity, mentioning both the benefits and challenges of digital citizenship, including security risks and the spread of fake news.

The second session, titled "Political and Legal Issues and their Impact on National Unity and Citizenship Principles," was chaired by Professor of Political Science at Kuwait University Dr. Abdullah Al-Ghanim.

He underscored the complexity of national identity and its importance to everyone, underlining the role of forums like this in shaping youth perspectives for a stronger nation.

Next, Professor of Public Law at Kuwait University Dr. Mohammad Al-Fiali discussed national identity as a psychological concept requiring a legal foundation, emphasizing the connection between law, rights, and citizenship, and explaining that law binds identity to human frameworks, protecting it from dangers.

As for the Professor of International Relations Dr. Ghanim Al-Najjar, he pointed out that national unity is closely linked to national identity, with Kuwait facilitating the formation of both.

He referenced a study showing high levels of security in Kuwait, stating that justice, equality, and equal opportunities positively strengthen national identity.

The forum, which started on Tuesday, was organized by the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies Center at Kuwait University, the Women's Institute for Development and Peace, and the National Unity Promotion Team at the Cabinet, and concluded today at the university's Shuwaikh campus.

KISR offers plans to confront urban areas ecological crises

Dust storms, heavy rainfall major challenges: Al-Enezi

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12, (KUNA): Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) has proposed solutions to confront the environmental crises facing urban areas in Kuwait through a study titled "Crisis Management and Decision Support for Sustainable Smart Cities."

Engineer Dana Al-Enezi, from KISR's Environment and Life Sciences Research Center, explained to KUNA Thursday that the study was presented at the recent International Conference on

Smart Management and Innovation for Sustainable Cities.

The study, which involved Dr. Ali Al-Dousari, Dr. Abdullah Al-Enezi, Dr. Ahmad Hassan from Matrouh University in Egypt, and specialist Ahood Al-Enezi from the Ministry of Health, proposes an integrated decision-support and early warning system to enhance environmental risk management strategies, she said.

Key solutions presented include installing sensors in rainwater drainage networks to detect flood-prone areas early, applying earthquake-resistant building standards in northern and southern Kuwait, and using remote sensing and satellite technologies to monitor environmental changes, she explained.

The study also recommends de-

veloping a comprehensive database that combines spatial, geotechnical, geological, topographical, environmental data and other information, she noted.

The main goal of the study is to guide efforts toward building smart, sustainable cities that can adapt to the desert environment while balancing urban expansion with environmental preservation, she said, highlighting the need for comprehensive strategies to confront climate change, strengthen infrastructure, and ensure sustainable development for future generations.

Al-Enezi also noted that the study examined the impact of environmental crises such as dust storms, floods, and earthquakes on property prices across various governorates.

The data revealed that Ahmadi

was the most affected, with property prices falling despite it having the highest sales during the study period, she mentioned.

The study analyzed 3,415 property records, filtering them to obtain precise data on 2,814 sold properties, showing that weak infrastructure, poor facility management in some southern areas, and recurring environmental crises significantly impacted the real estate market, she added.

Regarding the impact of environmental crises on quality of life and urban development, Al-Enezi emphasized that dust storms and heavy rainfall present major challenges to the country's environment and infrastructure, necessitating stronger urban development plans to tackle these challenges.



KUNA photo

Minister of Social Affairs and Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila meets Omani Minister of Social Development Dr. Laila Al-Najjar.

Kuwait, Oman seek boost in ties

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12, (KUNA): Minister of Social Affairs and Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila met Wednesday with Omani Minister of Social Development Dr. Laila Al-Najjar to discuss enhancing joint cooperation.

In a press statement, the Ministry of Social Affairs said the meeting is part of ongoing efforts to exchange expertise and

strengthen coordination between the two sides in the field of social development, to improve social programs and services.

Minister Al-Huwaila said the visit aims to review Kuwait's initiatives and programs that serve targeted societal groups, emphasizing the importance of fostering mutual cooperation to share expertise in these fields.

Selected students to be under strict monitoring

Minister nods postgraduate programs at US universities

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal issued a ministerial decision for approving new postgraduate programs at accredited American universities. This initiative aims to enhance the quality of higher education and expand academic opportunities for Kuwaiti students in new specializations that are in line with the labor market and the needs of sustainable development.

The decision includes the approval of several new master's and doctoral programs at prestigious universities in the United States, based on recommendations from the National Authority for Academic

Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education.

The decision stipulates that students accepted into these programs will be closely monitored to ensure their adherence to the specified study plans, with performance evaluated in line with systems approved by the National Authority for Academic Accreditation.

The Ministry of Higher Education's relevant authorities will oversee the implementation of this decision and coordinate with accredited universities to ensure the regular progress of the academic process. This decision will be effective immediately from the date of issuance.

The decision called on students wishing to apply for these programs to ensure they meet all academic requirements and register within the

specified deadlines. Student registration and enrollment will be tracked through the ministry's approved electronic system.

The ministry stressed the importance of applicants contacting the relevant authorities to obtain accurate information and complete the registration procedures.

Specializations, Accredited Universities, and Programs:

■ Master of Social Work: University of Kentucky

■ Master of Biomedical Informatics: Arizona State University - Tempe

■ PhD in Biomedical & Health Informatics: University of Washington - Seattle

■ PhD in Environmental Health Sciences: University of Arizona

'Only for eligible persons'

KPC announces new housing grant regulations for workers

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: Sheikh Nawaf Al-Saud Al-Sabah, CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), addressed the CEOs of the corporation's affiliated oil companies regarding the newly issued decision on the controls and conditions for disbursing the monthly housing grant to employees.

A copy of the decision, obtained by Al-Seyassah, outlines several key amendments and provisions:

Amendment to Clause (74) of Article (4) -- The area of residential property owned by

employees who have reached the age of majority (21 years) and are eligible for the housing grant will now be capped at 250 square meters, an increase from the previous limit of 200 square meters.

In cases where employees own property within this amended size, the housing grant will cease one and a half years after the date of ownership.

Amendment to Clause (114) of Article (4) -- The new decision prohibits the ownership of any residential or investment property, either fully or jointly, exceeding 250 square meters.

Creation of Article (8) -- A new provision has been introduced concerning Kuwaiti workers in the joint Khafji operations, though further details on this provision were not disclosed.

This decision aims to streamline the housing grant distribution and ensure that the housing benefits are allocated to those who meet specific criteria.



Sheikh Nawaf

PADA calls for immediate biometric fingerprinting

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The Public Authority for Disabilities Affairs has called on individuals with disabilities and their caregivers to complete biometric fingerprinting as a matter of urgency, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Acting Director General Wafa'a Al-Muhanna announced that the initiative is part of efforts to comply with directives from the Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah.

In a press statement, Al-Muhanna emphasized the need for biometric registration to ensure uninterrupted access to the services and benefits provided by the Authority.

Individuals are advised to complete the procedure within one month at designated centers operated by the Ministry of Interior.

Failure to adhere to the biometric fingerprinting requirement could result in legal action, highlighting the importance of prompt compliance. The process is designed to enhance the efficiency and security of the services offered to persons with disabilities.

This measure is part of broader efforts to streamline service delivery and ensure the well-being of individuals with disabilities in Kuwait.

Wonderful way to celebrate 'versary: Lewis

UN-Habitat plants trees marking 125 years of Kuwait-UK ties



KUNA photo
British ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis planting a tree in the presence of KOC officials and employees.

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FM hosts Al-Sumait award winners

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12, (KUNA): Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya, chairman of the Board of Trustees of Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Sumait Award for African Development, received on Thursday the award's winners.

The honorees were Dr. Cathrine Nakalembe, in the category of education and food security, representative of the African Agricultural Technology Foundation

and the International CAMFED Organization.

The two sides, during the meeting, explored the winners' efforts in providing ideal programs, studies and effective projects in the realms of education and food security in the African continent.

Minister Abdullah expressed appreciation for the efforts, exerted for attaining the award goals.

diwaniya

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Syria needs to turn over new leaf, shun extremism, unite

“SHAKESPEARE’S timeless tragedy Macbeth tells the story of a knight whose unbridled ambition and thirst for power led him to commit heinous acts. Driven by greed, Macbeth murdered the king of Scotland to seize the throne, ruling with tyranny and paranoia.” columnist **Ahmad Yaqoub Baqer** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

“His descent into dictatorship saw him destroy his enemies and alienate his allies, leaving him isolated as those who once supported him turned against him. Ultimately, his reign ended in betrayal and downfall, a fate that has echoed throughout history.



Ahmad Baqer

“Similar patterns can be seen in the lives of many fallen leaders, from Charles I of England and Louis XVI of France to Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines, the Shah of Iran, Saddam Hussein, Muammar Gaddafi and most recently, Bashar al-Assad in Syria.

“These rulers shared a disregard for differing opinions, clinging to power with brutal dictatorship. They silenced dissent, rejected advice, oppressed their people and ruled with a ferocity that alienated even their closest supporters. In each case, their unwillingness to share power or heed alternative viewpoints sealed their fate, leading to their eventual downfall.

“In Syria’s case, the consequences have been particularly devastating. Years of conflict and division have left the nation vulnerable to foreign intervention and internal strife.

“Had Bashar al-Assad chosen to engage with his people, listen to dissenting voices and involve citizens in governance, Syria might have preserved its unity and Assad could have maintained a position of leadership. Instead, his refusal to share power and his violent suppression of opposition led to widespread suffering and the fragmentation of the nation.

“Today, as the revolution in Syria claims victory, it is crucial for its leaders to learn from the mistakes of the past. The unity and stability of the country depend on inclusivity, the rejection of extremism and the active participation of all factions in rebuilding and governance.

“Ahmad al-Sharaa (also known as ‘Abu Muhammad al-Julani’), one of the revolution’s leaders, has pledged to prioritize these principles, vowing to uphold Syria’s unity and keep chaos and extremism at bay.

“History teaches us that no government can sustain itself without listening to opposing views and fostering dialogue through legitimate, peaceful channels.

“For the stability and prosperity of any nation, it is essential for leaders to embrace sincere advice, adhere to justice and avoid silencing dissent. Likewise, dissenting voices must express their opinions constructively and within the bounds of law and order.

“Ultimately, the greatest guidance for governance lies in the principles of justice, mercy and consultation, as prescribed in divine teachings.

“By embodying these principles, nations can achieve stability, justice and unity, avoiding the tragedies of tyranny and its inevitable collapse.”

Also:

“Have you ever considered setting your phone aside and limiting your time on social media? Doing so could help you reconnect with those around you and spend more meaningful moments with your family -- your children, parents, or loved ones,” columnist **Abdul Aziz Al-Kandari** wrote for **Al-Rai** daily.

“You might rediscover a deeper sense of life creeping into your soul. After all, what’s the point of sitting with family or friends if everyone is glued to their phones, endlessly scrolling through social media?”

“This habit robs us of the present moment, distancing us from genuine connections and quietly wasting our lives without us even realizing it.

“In today’s world, many people have become addicted to their smartphones, a dependency that could lead to long-term physical and mental health issues.

“According to specialists, excessive use of phones contributes to problems like neck and back strain, obesity and even a decline in mental sharpness. Dr. Walid Fathi highlights a troubling disparity in our region: ‘In the Arab world, we watch the West in using technology for entertainment, yet in educational institutions, its use lags at just 3 percent compared to 16 percent globally. A new type of addiction has emerged, encapsulated by the slogan: ‘I shop, therefore I exist’.”

“This addiction to social media is growing at an alarming rate. Studies show that individuals now spend an average of at least six hours a day online, with some exceeding that figure. This unprecedented usage has even influenced language trends.

“The Oxford University Press recently declared ‘brain rot’ as the word of the year for 2024, noting its usage rose by 230 percent over the previous year.

“Defined as the decline of mental sharpness due to over-consumption of

trivial content, the ‘brain rot’ reflects the tangible risks of our increasingly virtual lives.

“Dr. Elena Toroni, a psychologist, explains: ‘Brain rot describes the mental fog that follows prolonged exposure to repetitive, low-quality content -- like hours of scrolling through social media or binge-watching shows. It leaves you feeling mentally drained and unfulfilled.’

“The American Psychiatric Association has recognized ‘Internet addiction’ as a psychological disorder akin to substance addictions, with symptoms resembling those caused by drugs or alcohol. Those affected often experience compulsive use, withdrawal symptoms and a lack of fulfillment, pointing to the serious implications of unchecked social media usage.

“To combat this modern affliction, it is vital to set boundaries. Allocate specific times for phone use and resist the urge to be constantly online.

“At work, focus on tasks rather than social media. At home, prioritize conversations and interactions with loved ones instead of letting your phone steal those precious moments.

“Replace aimless browsing with more fulfilling activities, such as reading books, pursuing hobbies, or engaging in meaningful discussions.

“Additionally, plan your social media use with clear goals, focusing on topics that provide long-term benefits rather than instant gratification.

“By regaining control of how we use technology, we can preserve the joy of genuine connections, enrich our minds and reclaim the beauty of life’s fleeting moments.”

“The Arab world has witnessed some of the most oppressive open prisons in modern history. Among them, the most harrowing examples are in the precious land of Palestine, where Gaza and the West Bank operate as the largest open prisons under the ‘Detention Camps’ system,” columnist **Dr. Mohammad Al-Moqatei** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

“In Gaza, over two million Palestinians are confined under a brutal siege. This daily reality includes genocide, slow killing through deprivation of essentials, arrest, torture, home demolitions and bombings.

“The siege cuts off electricity, water and healthcare, leaving no avenue for escape or relief. This relentless oppression reduces life to a cycle of inevitable suffering and death.

“The West Bank fares no better, with its people besieged by armed Zionist gangs. These forces execute systematic displacement and annihilation with unwavering arrogance, backed by blatant American support and a coalition of European powers -- including Germany, Britain, France and Italy -- eager to supply the tools of destruction.

“Yet, amidst this oppression, the steadfastness of the Palestinian people and their resilient resistance remain a beacon of hope.

“Their struggle is a testament to the unyielding spirit of humanity against tyranny and their courage ensures that the Zionist state’s prisons and policies will one day crumble.

“This struggle is not confined to Palestine. The Arab world has seen the fall of regimes that mirrored this inhumanity. On December 6 and 7, another oppressive regime -- the Syrian Baathist regime led by the tyrant Assad -- collapsed.

“This regime’s legacy includes countless prisons and torture chambers like Saydnaya, where thousands were executed, buried alive, or subjected to unimaginable cruelty.

“The fall of this regime exposed its collaboration with Zionist interests and its atrocities, such as mass hangings and the establishment of human slaughterhouses. Its alignment with the Persian Magi and Hezbollah further underscored its betrayal of Arab causes.

“Yet, the revolutionaries’ resilience ensured that the regime fell and Syria moved toward freedom, albeit with challenges remaining.

“The Arab world must ask: How many more prisons like Saydnaya exist across the region? These bastions of injustice are destined to collapse, as history and divine justice have shown time and again.

“The Zionist entity, its Western allies and the oppressive regimes that serve their interests aim to reshape the region under the guise of the ‘New Middle East.’

“However, their conspiracies will fail. The divine promise reassures us: ‘And these days We alternate among the people that God may make evident those who believe and take from among you witnesses.’

“The dawn of liberation is near, as the tables of oppression turn. The fall of unjust regimes, whether in Palestine, Syria or beyond marks a new chapter of freedom, resilience and victory for the oppressed.

“This narrative is a call to action and hope for a brighter future, where the shackles of oppression are broken and the dignity of humanity is restored.”

— **Compiled by PFX Fernandes**

Father, man go to jail for life in sexual assault of kith & kin

Air cargo finds drugs hidden in gift items

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The Criminal Court, headed by Counselor Nasser Al-Badr, sentenced a father to life imprisonment for raping his daughter and her relative, in collaboration with another man who tricked the victim into having sex with him, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The court also handed the same punishment to the other man.

Attorney Adhbi Al-Kandari, the representative of the victim’s mother, said “We preferred to remain silent during the case’s hearing before the Criminal Court due to our

absolute confidence in the integrity of the judiciary and our refusal to drop our client’s complaint so that the verdict of the judiciary will serve as a lesson to others who do not take heed.

Late last August, the Public Prosecution had ordered the pretrial detention of three Kuwaiti citizens, accusing one of them (the father) of raping his daughter in collaboration with another defendant in raping her.

The Public Prosecution also accused her relative of kidnapping her by trickery and of participating with the third defendant in raping her and having sex with her by force and trickery.

Drugs in gift items: Air cargo customs officers seized one kilogram of the narcotic substance referred to locally as “shabu” that was hidden inside clay-based gift items. The seized items were referred to the competent authority for investigations, reports Al-Seyassah .

According to the General Administration of Customs, the air cargo customs team identified a suspicious shipment that arrived from a European country and was labeled as clay gift items. Upon inspection, they discovered the narcotic substance hidden inside the items. The shipment was subsequently handed over to the relevant authorities for necessary action.

Ex-MP case adjourned

10-year jail, KD 6m fine upheld in KD15m scam

By **Jaber Al-Hamoud**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The Court of Cassation, chaired by Counselor Khaled Al-Omara, upheld the verdict of the lower court in the embezzlement case involving 15 million dinars from funds allocated for overseas medical treatment.

The court sentenced the first defendant, an Egyptian and the director of a travel agency to 10 years in prison and fined him 6 million dinars.

The second defendant, a Kuwaiti citizen and former official in the Ministry of Health, was sentenced to 7 years in prison (currently incarcerated pending the case) and fined 300,000 dinars for facilitating the embezzlement.

The Ministry of Health, through its representatives during the Public Prosecution’s investigations, confirmed that the first defendant, leveraging the absence of a health office in a European country, had issued fake invoices related to medical treatments and hotel reservations for Kuwaiti citizens.

This fraudulent scheme enabled him to embezzle over 15 million dinars.

Case adjourned: The Criminal Court has decided to postpone the case filed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs against former MP Saleh Al-Mulla to January 8, 2025, for further review.

This came following the denial issued in court by Al-Mulla against all allegations that he insulted the Palestinian president in tweets posted on the X platform, which were linked to the ongoing events in Palestine.



Road paving under progress in Farwaniya. Al-Seyassah photo

Al-Mishaan leads effort

Radical ‘road repairs’ initiated in Farwaniya

By **Mohammad Ghanem**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The Ministry of Public Works, under the guidance of Minister Dr. Noura Al-Mishaan, has commenced comprehensive road maintenance in Farwaniya Governorate, starting with the Abdullah Al-Mubarak area. This initiative is part of the ministry’s new contracts aimed at overhauling highways and internal roads across Kuwait’s six governorates. A total of 18 major road maintenance projects are included in this nationwide effort.

Teams from the Ministry have begun inspecting and carrying out essential repairs in Abdullah Al-Mubarak. Initial work involves cleaning rainwater drainage systems to prepare for the rainy season and prevent water accumulation, which could disrupt traffic.

Minister Al-Mishaan emphasized that these efforts align with the recommendations of His Highness the Prime Minister, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah. This initiative reflects the government’s commitment to maintaining and improving the country’s infrastructure.

The maintenance efforts in Farwaniya will prioritize the most damaged areas before addressing less affected regions. To ensure quality and adherence to technical standards, the Ministry has formed a specialized committee to supervise the work. Supervising engineers have been carefully selected through rigorous testing and evaluations.

Al-Mishaan highlighted the importance of collaboration between work teams and the public to address any pending issues and expedite the completion of all tasks. She urged strict compliance with approved technical specifications and adherence to the planned schedule.

In her statement, Al-Mishaan called on residents of affected areas to exercise patience and cooperate with authorities, especially as road closures are expected during the maintenance period. She reaffirmed the government’s focus on road maintenance as a critical component of national development, praising the support of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince.

This initiative contributes to Kuwait’s broader vision of achieving advanced infrastructure as part of the “New Kuwait 2035” development plan.

Khaled Al-Suwaifan, the Secretary of the Kuwait Lawyers Association, announced that over 70 percent of the goals outlined in the “Lawyer Vision 2025” initiative have been successfully completed, marking a significant and unprecedented achievement, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a recent statement, Al-Suwaifan revealed that the association’s Ordinary General Assembly had approved its financial and administrative report, which highlighted the many accomplishments achieved through this vision.

Since its inception in 2019, the “Lawyer Vision 2025” has focused on enhancing the legal profession and serving its members.

The association has made remarkable progress, with 152 centers and committees actively working across the country.



Kuwait Fire Force officials discussing preparations for the evacuation drill. KFF photo

Security checks in full swing

KFF conducts evacuation drill at stadium for ‘Gulf Zain Cup’

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) conducted a comprehensive evacuation exercise at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium on Wednesday evening. The drill was carried out in coordination with the Civil Defense, Special Forces, and included the participation of volunteers and stadium workers. This initiative is part of the preparations for the upcoming Gulf Zain Cup (26).

The exercise was organized by the General Fire Force Committee in collaboration with relevant authorities to enhance readiness and efficiency in emergency response. The focus was on refining evacuation methods and safety protocols to ensure the well-being of all attendees during the tournament and its associated events.

The drill successfully achieved its objectives, demonstrating the team’s preparedness to manage any potential incidents and ensure a safe environment for the Gulf Zain Cup (26).

The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) has announced the formation of a committee tasked with ensuring the security and safety arrangements for the Gulf Zain Cup (26) Football Championship in Kuwait, which will begin on December 21 and run until January 3, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The committee will also be responsible for securing the stadiums, sports facilities and the accommodations of the participating teams and sports delegations.

Brigadier General Abdul Aziz Al Ban-

nai, head of the committee, stated in a press release that the committee’s formation followed direct instructions from the head of the force, Major General Talal Al Roumi.

He emphasized that all necessary precautions and preparations had been taken to ensure the safe conduct of the tournament in cooperation with all relevant parties.

Al Bannai explained that the committee had focused on securing key systems such as fire safety, alarm systems, ventilation and special equipment, in addition to the distribution of security points and mechanisms.

They have also implemented safety requirements to ensure the protection of everyone involved. He also mentioned that the General Fire Force had trained several volunteers on using fire extinguishers and that their members would be present in the stadium’s operations room to manage the event alongside the relevant authorities.

Security points will also be set up at the events taking place at the ‘Marooj’ complex to ensure the safety of visitors.

Al Bannai stressed that the Kuwait Fire Force was fully prepared to respond to any emergency around the clock, ensuring the safety of the fans and guests attending the event.

The force is committed to supporting efforts to ensure Kuwait’s hosting of this significant sporting event is a success and to present the country in the best light for the guests from the participating sister nations.



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HH Amir congratulates Kenya on National Day

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Thursday a cable to President of Kenya Dr. William Samoei Ruto, congratulating him on his country's National Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished President Ruto good health and wellness, and further progress and prosperity for Kenya and its friendly people.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent on Thursday a cable to President of Kenya Dr. William Samoei Ruto, congratulating him on his country's National Day, and wishing him good health and wellness.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent on Thursday a cable to President of Kenya Dr. William Samoei Ruto, congratulating him on his country's National Day.



Zakat House delegation during its meeting with His Excellency the Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to Malaysia, Rashid Mohammed Al-Saleh.

Zakat House delegation concludes Malaysia visit

A delegation from Kuwait's Zakat House, led by Acting Manager for Foreign Activities Abdulrahman El-Terkeit, concluded a five-day visit to Malaysia on Wednesday aimed at strengthening joint cooperation in the humanitarian field.

In a statement to KUNA, El-Terkeit expressed gratitude for the charitable efforts observed in Malaysia, affirming the Zakat House's commitment to supporting such initiatives in line with the State of Kuwait's humanitarian mission.



Zakat House delegation during its visit to the Mufti of the Federal States of Malaysia, Dr. Luqman bin Abdullah.

According to the statement, the Kuwaiti delegation met with the Islamic preacher of the Federal Territories Luqman bin Abdullah who provided an overview of the charitable activities carried out by Malaysian organizations.

Furthermore, the delegation met with Kuwaiti Ambassador to Malaysia, Rashed Al-Saleh, and presented an overview of the Zakat House's activities and programs conducted in Malaysia. (KUNA)

Council tackles tourism challenges

Kuwait continues to prioritize support and growth of SMEs

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information, Dr. Nasser Muhaisen, emphasized Kuwait's commitment to supporting and promoting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism sector, in line with its efforts to achieve sustainable development, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This statement was made during his participation in the 27th session of the Arab Ministerial Council for Tourism, where he represented the Minister of Information, Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi.

Dr. Muhaisen pointed out that the tourism sector plays a vital role in the economy of Arab countries. He reiterated Kuwait's support for enhancing the joint Arab efforts to develop tourism, backing various development projects in the sector and maximizing the benefits of tourism organizations across the Arab region.



KUNA photo

Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information, Dr. Nasser Muhaisen, during his participation in the 27th session of the Arab Ministerial Council for Tourism.

During the session, the Ministerial Council discussed several key proposals and recommendations raised at the Council's Executive Office meeting held the day before, where Kuwait took on the role of Deputy Chairman.

Shuwaikh, Jableh plans advance

Key items deferred for study

By Inaas Awadh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The Capital Committee of the Municipal Council approved two out of nine items on its agenda during its tenth meeting of the third session, chaired by Dr. Hassan Kamal, on Wednesday.

The approved items include:

1. The request submitted by the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters regarding the Jableh Cultural Project.
2. The request from the Public Authority for Industry to add the activity of car showrooms (A1.04) in Shuwaikh Industrial 1, Block 1, Sector 5.
3. The request submitted by the Vice Chair of the Municipal Council Khaled Al-Mutairi,

and members Dr. Hassan Kamal, Ismail Behbehani, Abdullah Al-Enezi, Nasser Al-Jadaan, and Fahad Musaed Al-Abdul Jader,

regarding the continued closure of traffic at the intersection of Abdul Razzaq Gateway, along with a recommendation to expedite the implementation of the Gateway Tunnel Development and Beautification Project, and provide a safe pedestrian crossing at the intersection in coordination with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Public Works.

The committee rejected the letter from the Director General of Kuwait Municipality regarding the Injaz Market project.

It referred two items to the executive body for further study:

□ The decision to allocate the building for the headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

□ The letter from the Al-Omar Al-Mutawa family regarding the work of the Al-Omar family diwaniya in Daiya.

The committee retained two items on its agenda:

1. The request from the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy to use an administrative building located in Shuwaikh Industrial 2, with an invitation from the Ministry of Electricity and Water, the Ministry of Health, and the Environment Public Authority.

2. The proposal to carry out the project for dividing plot No. 42 in Bneid Al-Gar Block 2, with an invitation from the Capital Municipality.



Dr. Kamal

South Sabah Al-Ahmad hits 38.66% completion

PAHW surpasses completion goals

By Mohammed Al-Enezi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: According to a recent statistic, the completion rates of infrastructure project contracts affiliated with the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) are ahead of the scheduled timeline.

The statistic highlighted the achievement of remarkable progress in infrastructure projects in South Sabah Al-Ahmad and South Saad Al-Abdullah, with actual completion rates surpassing the specified contractual targets as of the end of November.

The South Sabah Al-Ahmad project, in particular, showed substantial development, with the actual completion rate reaching 38.66 percent, compared to the contractual rate of 24.49 percent. This indicates a progress rate exceeding the contractual target by 14.17 percent, and reflects intensified efforts to accelerate the work.

Also, the completion rate for the South Saad Al-Abdullah project reached 13 percent, surpassing the contractual rate of 4.3 percent, with the actual progress exceeding the expected rate by 8.7 percent, which is more than double the anticipated target.

In this context, the Deputy Director General for Public Relations and Development Affairs and official spokesperson for PAHW Omar Al-Ruwaih stated that the engineering and technical teams are closely monitoring the implementation of infrastructure contracts, public buildings, and houses in various projects in the north and south of the country.

In a press statement issued yesterday, he stressed that work is progressing on the infrastructure and main roads within the South Saad Al-Abdullah City project, with the work rate exceeding 13 percent by the

end of last month.

Regarding the East Sabah Al-Ahmad project, which includes 1,184 houses, Al-Ruwaih explained that the project is nearing completion. The first contract, involving 587 houses, has been fully completed, with an actual completion rate of 100 percent. The second contract of the project reached a completion rate of 91.64 percent as of the end of last month. Work is ongoing to finalize the project and hand over the completed sections to the engineering teams overseeing it.

Regarding the ongoing construction of public buildings, Al-Ruwaih said PAHW is currently working on the completion of 124 public buildings, including 68 in Al-Mutlaa City.

He said, "PAHW is also progressing with the remaining public buildings in the South Abdullah Al-Mubarak project, which includes 31 public buildings, along with seven buildings in the eastern part of Sabah Al-Ahmad and 15 buildings in Sabah Al-Ahmad City. One building is being constructed in Jaber Al-Ahmad City, Saad Al-Abdullah, and South Khaitan each."

Al-Ruwaih revealed that PAHW signed six contracts in the past month, starting with the contract for the construction, completion, and maintenance of 1,568 houses and public buildings. This includes works for asphalt surface layers, supply and installation of low-pressure and medium-pressure cables, and street lighting works in sector BP-1 of the affordable housing project.

He added that a contract was signed for the construction, completion, and maintenance of 1,777 houses and public buildings, as well as works for asphalt surface layers, supply and installation of low-pressure and medium-pressure cables, and street lighting works in sector BP-3 of the affordable housing project.



Kuwait Relief completes the rehabilitation and furnishing of two schools in southern Yemen.

Kuwait Society for Relief revives two schools in southern Yemen

ADEN, Dec 12, (KUNA): The Kuwait Society for Relief opened Wednesday two schools in the governorates of Taiz and Lahj in southern Yemen, after renovating and furnishing them as part of the "Kuwait by Your Side" campaign, which has been ongoing for the ninth year in a row.

The society office in Yemen noted in a press release that it has completed the rehabilitation of Tur Al-Baha in the Governorate

of Lahj and Al-Nahda Secondary School in the Directorate of Al-Shamaytayn in the Governorate of Taiz, which are among the schools built by Kuwait in the seventies and eighties of the last century.

The statement added that the society has completely revamped the two schools, providing them with school and administrative furniture and science laboratories, including a solar energy system to Al-Farouq School and providing a dormitory for teachers.



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Kuwait eyes

Continued from Page 1

The law, which is set to be implemented within six months from its publication in the official gazette, comprises 36 articles in seven chapters. It includes amendments and updates to several articles that serve the interests of both citizens and residents.

Kuwait is not isolated from the global community, and there are international organizations that monitor the handling of human trafficking issues. From this perspective, some provisions of the new law were created to align and comply with international standards.

The new residency law allows foreigners to obtain regular residence in Kuwait for a period not exceeding five years. The law also introduces new incentives and privileges for foreign investors. Property owners in Kuwait are entitled to a ten-year residence, as determined by a decision issued by the Council of Ministers. Foreign investors can be granted a 15-year residence to encourage investment. Also, the duration of the family visit visa has been extended to three months.

Major General Al-Adwani indicated that Article 17 of the new law stipulates that all fees related to residency, renewals, and entry visas will be determined by a decision from the Minister of Interior.

He explained that the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah has directed the formation of a committee to study the fees to ensure they are consistent with residents' incomes and the type of service provided.

He said it is unreasonable for a Kuwaiti citizen to pay KD 70 or KD 80 to enter certain countries, while citizens of those countries are not required to pay any fees upon entering Kuwait.

Major General Al-Adwani explained that the law imposes severe penalties on those who facilitate the recruitment of expatriates. It specifically prohibits visa trading by exploiting recruitment or facilitating entry visas, residence permits, or renewals in exchange for financial sums or benefits. This applies irrespective of whether the recruitment or renewal is for real, fictitious, or alleged employment, or if it is for employing expatriates for the recruiters themselves or for others without a license or in violation of the provisions of the labor law in the private sector or the domestic labor law.

The law also prohibits employers or recruiters from employing expatriates for purposes other than their original recruitment or from enabling or facilitating their work for others without a license from the Ministry of Interior. It also forbids employers from refusing to pay an expatriate's dues without justification.

Moreover, the law prohibits expatriates from working for others without the permission of their government employer or the competent authorities. It is also illegal for anyone to shelter or employ an expatriate, irrespective of whether their residency is valid or expired, or to house them if they do not have valid residency in the country.

The law stipulates the cancellation of the license of any company that brings in a foreign worker. Any official, if proven to be involved in residency trafficking or have employed a foreigner for purposes other than their original recruitment, will face imprisonment for between three years and five years, and/or a fine ranging from KD 5,000 to KD 10,000. The fine is multiplied by the number of violating expatriates, and the penalty is doubled if the offender is a public employee acting within the scope of their job. In the case of repeat offenses, the penalty will be doubled. Anyone who obtains a work permit in exchange for money, a benefit, or a promise of either will face imprisonment for up to one year and/or a fine not exceeding KD 1,000.

The Minister of Interior has the authority to deport a foreigner, even if they hold a valid residence permit, if they do not have a legitimate source of income, is in violation of Article 19, which prohibits the employer from using them for purposes other than their original recruitment, or if the minister deems their deportation necessary for the public interest, public security, or public morals.

A new domestic worker can now be brought in after four months, instead of six months, after leaving the country. Previously, the sponsor was not allowed to cancel the worker's residency until after six months.

Major General Al-Adwani stressed the importance of requiring the sponsor to prove payment of the domestic worker's salary and other dues to ensure the protection of both parties' rights.

He revealed the ongoing updates to the Kuwait Visa website, which will significantly enhance the process of issuing all types of visas online, in accordance with the established conditions.

Major General Al-Adwani highlighted the government's commitment to digitally transform all services related to residency affairs.

He highlighted the inclusion of strict legal penalties in the new residency law with the aim of reducing violations.

Major General Al-Adwani urged all citizens and residents to adhere to the law to avoid legal repercussions.

Governorates' expanded

Continued from Page 1

This also allows for enabling governorate authority over government entities, permitting effective supervision and monitoring of performance.

Each governor is to study and examine needs and projects of their governorate, as well as offer suggestions enabling accomplishment of duties.

These newly adopted policies sponsor sense of creativity and innovation through putting forth initiatives, and promoting major transformations.

The role of governors is not exclusive to economic development but extends to social development as well.

Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and State Minister for Residential Affairs Dr. Mahmoud Bushehri, issued decision tasking Al-Ahmadi governor Sheikh Homoud Jaber Al-Sabah with heading higher committee for green initiatives, in cooperation with public and private sector concerned bodies.

In April of 2024, an Amiri decree was issued appointing five governors for Al-Farwaniya, Kuwait City, Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Al-Ahmadi and Al-Jahraa. Lately, field visits have been conducted to look closely at ongoing projects, and ascertain requirements for enhancing and expediting projects.

Governors' specialities of overseeing state facilities, implementation of laws and allowing for active supervision, makes them a cornerstone to diagnosing issues and putting forth initiatives.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmadi Al-Sabah has affirmed that Kuwait is entering an era of progress and accomplishment, benefiting all citizens.

Mild temps

Continued from Page 1

Maximum temperatures are projected to be between 20 and 22 degrees Celsius, with sea waves increasing to between 2 and 6 feet.

Saturday night will see cooler conditions as well, with minimum temperatures ranging from 6 to 9 degrees Celsius. Northwesterly winds will continue at light to moderate speeds of 8 to 40 km/h, while the sea remains light to moderate with waves rising between 2 and 6 feet.

RFID system

Continued from Page 1

She emphasized that the introduction of RFID technology reflects the Ministry of Health's commitment to adopting the latest technological advancements as part of its comprehensive digital transformation.

Dr. Al-Radwan pointed out that global studies, particularly from advanced countries like the United States and Germany, have proven the effectiveness of this technology in improving the safety of blood transfusion operations, which reflects the ministry's leading position in this field.

She clarified that the system works by embedding RFID chips on blood bags to encrypt basic tracking data, enabling accurate monitoring of blood supplies during storage and transportation to hospitals.

Dr. Al-Radwan stressed that this technology is a vital step in improving blood inventory management, meeting national needs efficiently, and enhancing the health system's ability to cope with the growing demands driven by the expansion of the healthcare system.

UNGA demands

Continued from Page 1

While Security Council resolutions are legally binding, General Assembly resolutions are not, though they do reflect world opinion. There are no vetoes in the assembly.

The Palestinians and their supporters went to the General Assembly after the U.S. vetoed a Security Council resolution on Nov. 20 demanding an immediate Gaza ceasefire. It was supported by the council's 14 other members but the U.S. objected that it was not linked to an immediate release of hostages taken by Hamas militants during their attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, which triggered the war.

The Palestinian U.N. Ambassador Riyad Mansour expressed gratitude for the overwhelming support for both resolutions Wednesday, saying the votes "reflect the resolve and the determination of the international community."

"We will keep knocking on the doors of the Security Council and the General Assembly until we see an immediate and unconditional ceasefire put in place and until we see humanitarian assistance being distributed at scale in all corners of the Gaza Strip," he said.

Elsewhere, Namaa Charity of Kuwait's Social Reform Society opened a new camp to house 200 families affected by rain in north Gaza on Thursday, in cooperation with Palestine's Wafaa Capacity Building and Microfinance.

In a statement to KUNA, Wafaa chairman Muhaissen Atawneh said the camp comes as an immediate response to the deteriorating humanitarian conditions in the strip, as thousands of displaced Palestinians are in need of shelter after their tents were damaged by rain.

The camp will shelter families that were forcefully displaced by Israeli occupation force, said Atawneh, adding that the camp is fully equipped with essential items and water supplies.

This project is part of Namaa's "Be Their Support" campaign to provide winter essentials to Gaza residents, Syrian refugees and Yemen, he noted.

Meanwhile, at least 38 Palestinians were killed in Israeli airstrikes on different areas of the Gaza Strip, Palestinian medical and security sources said Thursday.

At least 10 people, including children and women, were killed in an Israeli airstrike on a residential building on al-Jalaa street in Gaza City, Mahmoud Basal, spokesperson for the Civil Defense in Gaza, told Xinhua.

In the al-Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, 15 Palestinians were killed in an Israeli airstrike on a house for displaced people, according to a brief statement issued by the Al-Awda Hospital.

Palestinian security sources told Xinhua that Israeli warplanes targeted a house with at least one missile west of al-Nuseirat, resulting in casualties. According to the sources, the house was completely destroyed and leveled to the ground.

The Israeli army has not commented on these raids yet.

In addition, an Israeli airstrike killed 13 people while they were guarding some aid trucks west of Rafah city in southern Gaza, according to a statement issued by the European Hospital.

Local eyewitnesses told Xinhua that warplanes targeted a convoy transporting aid to Gaza, killing at least 13 people and wounding dozens of others, who were later taken to hospital.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said in a statement on Thursday that it conducted overnight "precise strikes" on armed Hamas militants gathering at two different meeting points in southern Gaza, who "operated on the humanitarian corridor" there.

"The strike was intended to ensure the safe delivery of humanitarian aid to civilians in the Gaza Strip," it claimed.

Israel has been launching a large-scale offensive against Hamas in the Gaza Strip to retaliate against a Hamas rampage through the southern Israeli border on Oct. 7, 2023, during which about 1,200 people were killed and about 250 taken hostage.

The Palestinian death toll from ongoing Israeli attacks in Gaza has risen to 44,835, Gaza-based health authorities said in a statement on Thursday.

Ceremony set for Dec 18

Al-Baghli Foundation names 2024 honorees

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The Ibrahim Taher Al-Baghli Foundation for the Pious Son revealed the names of 49 winners in the 18th edition of the Al-Baghli Award for the Pious Son and announced 27 virtuous Kuwaiti figures for 2024.

The honorees will be celebrated at the closing ceremony on December 18, under the patronage and attendance of Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah, Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs.

At a press conference, the Foundation's Chairman and sponsor of the award, Ibrahim Al-Baghli, expressed his joy at the continued success of the initiative, which has grown into a significant responsibility in promoting voluntary, humanitarian and charitable efforts.

Humanitarian

He highlighted the Foundation's commitment to social and humanitarian work, emphasizing its benefit to all segments of society. Al-Baghli also announced the introduction of a new Arabic Calligraphy Competition for the Pious Son, which will be added to the award's categories in its 19th edition next year.

Ali Hassan, Chairman of the Supreme Committee of the Award, reiterated the award's mission to inspire creative talents and honor individuals who contribute meaningfully to the development of civil society.

He underscored the importance of voluntary and humanitarian work in overcoming societal challenges.

For the 2024 competition, a total of 401 participants competed across nine categories for the title.

24 general practitioners trained

DDI advances diabetes care

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI) recently organized an advanced workshop focusing on diabetic retinopathy and other complications associated with diabetes, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The workshop, held over two days, was attended by 24 general practitioners from primary healthcare centers across the Ministry of Health.

The institute highlighted that diabetic retinopathy, a common complication in dia-

betic patients, occurs when elevated blood sugar levels damage the blood vessels in the retina at the back of the eye. If left untreated, this condition can lead to vision loss.

The institute expressed its commitment to enhancing ophthalmology services and improving patient care.

By hosting such workshops, Dasman aims to contribute significantly to advancing treatment services and raising the proficiency of healthcare professionals in managing diabetic complications.

ABK announces Muneerah Hasan Dashti as Alfouz KD 10,000 weekly draw winner

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is excited to announce Muneerah Hasan Dashti as the winner of the Alfouz KD 10,000 weekly draw on Monday, 9 December 2024. The draw took place in the presence of a Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative, ensuring transparency.

From the highly coveted mega annual draw of a KD 5,000 monthly salary for 10 years to its KD 10,000 weekly prize, the account has attracted significant attention in the Kuwaiti market. Based on the account's great success, ABK decided to go above and beyond to reward customer loyalty.

With a KD 100,000 quarterly draw, in addition to an exciting KD 20,000 monthly draw, the Alfouz account continues to surpass expectations and deliver even more customer satisfaction.

To top it off, ABK has simplified the ability to open the account and win! Customers can enter the draws and get extra entry chances for every KD 10 deposited. The more you save, the higher your chance to be the next Alfouz winner!

ABK encourages everyone to open an Al-



Alfouz winners flyer

fouz draw account or increase their balance to participate in the upcoming draw, which is scheduled to take place on Monday, 16 December 2024.

Open an Alfouz account today and enjoy increased opportunities to win the lifestyle you've been waiting for!

To learn more about the Alfouz account and its range of exciting draws and prizes, please follow ABK's Instagram account @ abk_kuwait, visit ahli.com, contact Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 or visit one of the Bank's branches across Kuwait.

Ministry of Commerce and Industry



RECALL INFORMATION



HONDA ODYSSEY J (RC-1)
Model 2017 & 2018 & 2019

RECALL REASON

Defective fuel pump impeller that could lead to engine stalling while driving and prevent the engine from restarting.

REMEDY

Visit Honda AIGHanim service center aftersales department to take necessary action.

CONTACT

Please visit Honda AIGHanim from 22 November 2024 or book an appointment by contacting the customer service center 1822777.

This Recall is run pursuant to articles (42,43,44,45,46,47and48)of no.(27/2015) issuing the executive by laws no.(39/2014)on Consumer Protection

Ministry of Commerce and Industry



RECALL INFORMATION



NISSAN - 370 Z - MODEL 2023 - 2024

RECALL REASON

In some vehicles of the above models, The pop-up hood may not operate properly in certain pedestrian collision scenarios, due to the bumper harness connectors for the pedestrian detection sensors being switched.

REMEDY

Refer to the Nissan service center to do the required.

CONTACT

Please contact Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al Babbain Co. Starting from Sunday 15th December.

Or book an appointment through calling the customer service at 1804888

This summons was organized in accordance with Law Articles (48, 47, 46, 45, 44, 43, 42) of the Ministerial Resolution No. (27/2015) issuing the executive regulations of Law No. (39/2014) regarding consumer protection.

Ministry of Commerce and Industry



RECALL INFORMATION



HONDA ODYSSEY (RL6)
Model 2018 & 2019 & 2020

RECALL REASON

Defective fuel pump impeller that could lead to engine stalling while driving and prevent the engine from restarting.

REMEDY

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US president pardons 39 Americans convicted of nonviolent crimes

Biden commutes roughly 1,500 sentences in biggest single-day act of clemency

WASHINGTON, Dec 12, (AP): US President Joe Biden is commuting the sentences of roughly 1,500 people who were released from prison and placed on home confinement during the coronavirus pandemic and is pardoning 39 Americans convicted of nonviolent crimes. It's the largest single-day act of clemency in modern history.

The commutations announced Thursday are for people who have served out home confinement sentences for at least one year after they were released. Prisons were uniquely bad for spreading the virus and some inmates were released in part to stop the spread. At one point, 1 in 5 prisoners had COVID-19, according to a tally kept by The Associated Press.

Biden said he would be taking more steps in the weeks ahead and would continue to review clemency petitions. The second largest single-day act of clemency was by Barack Obama, with 330, shortly before leaving office in 2017.

"America was built on the promise

of possibility and second chances," Biden said in a statement. "As president, I have the great privilege of extending mercy to people who have demonstrated remorse and rehabilitation, restoring opportunity for Americans to participate in daily life and contribute to their communities, and taking steps to remove sentencing disparities for non-violent offenders, especially those convicted of drug offenses."

The clemency follows a broad pardon for his son Hunter, who was prosecuted for gun and tax crimes. Biden is under pressure from advocacy groups to pardon broad swaths of people, including those on federal death row, before the Trump administration takes over in January. He's also weighing whether to issue pre-emptive pardons to those who investigated Trump's effort to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election and are facing possible retribution when he takes office.

Those pardoned Thursday had been convicted of nonviolent crimes such as drug offenses and turned their



US President Joe Biden speaks at the White House Conference on Women's Health Research from the East Room of the White House in Washington on Dec 11. (AP)

lives around, White House lawyers said. They include a woman who led emergency response teams during natural disasters; a church deacon

who has worked as an addiction counselor and youth counselor; a doctoral student in molecular biosciences; and a decorated military veteran.

The president had previously issued 122 commutations and 21 other pardons. He's also broadly pardoned those convicted of use and simple possession of marijuana on federal lands and in the District of Columbia, and pardoned former U.S. service members convicted of violating a now-repealed military ban on consensual gay sex.

Rep. Jim McGovern, D-Mass., and 34 other lawmakers are urging the president to pardon environmental and human rights lawyer Steven Donziger, who was imprisoned or under house arrest for three years because of a contempt of court charge related to his work representing Indigenous farmers in a lawsuit against Chevron.

Others are advocating for Biden to commute the sentences of federal death row prisoners. His attorney general, Merrick Garland, paused federal executions. Biden had said on the campaign trail in 2020 that he wanted to end the death penalty but he never did, and now, with Trump coming back into office, it's likely executions will resume. During his

first term, Trump presided over an unprecedented number of federal executions, carried out during the height of the pandemic.

More pardons are coming before Biden leaves office on Jan. 20, but it's not clear whether he'll take action to guard against possible prosecution by Trump, an untested use of the power. The president has been taking the idea seriously and has been thinking about it for as much as six months - before the presidential election - but has been concerned about the precedent it would set, according to people familiar with the matter who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss internal discussions.

But those who received the pardons would have to accept them. New California Sen. Adam Schiff, who was the chairman of the congressional committee that investigated the violent Jan. 6 insurrection, said such a pardon from Biden would be "unnecessary," and that the president shouldn't be spending his waning days in office worrying about this.



Water is dropped onto the Franklin Fire by helicopter on Dec 11, in Malibu, Calif. (AP)

Cool temps to help crew battle blaze

Cooler temperatures, calmer winds and a chance of rainfall in Southern California this week are forecast to help firefighters as they battle a wind-driven blaze in steep, rugged terrain that's driven thousands, including celebrities, from their homes in Malibu. The weather improved so much Wednesday that meteorologists said all red flag warnings, which indicate conditions for high fire danger and the notorious Santa Ana winds, were discontinued. The conditions allowed firefighters to have "a lot of success" despite the nearly inaccessible terrain, CalFire Assistant Chief Dusty Martin said.

Still, some 20,000 residents remained under evacuation orders

and warnings Wednesday evening from the blaze, dubbed the Franklin Fire, which was only 7% contained over 6 square miles (16 square kilometers).

It's unclear how the blaze started. Officials said nine structures had been destroyed and at least six others had been damaged, though crews had only surveyed about 25% of the affected area, said Deputy Chief Albert Yanagisawa of the Los Angeles County Fire Department.

Much of the devastation occurred in Malibu, a community of about 10,000 people on the western edge of Los Angeles known for its stunning bluffs and Zuma Beach, which features in many Hollywood films. (AP)

Trump, Biden teams insist working hand in glove on foreign crises

WASHINGTON, Dec 12, (AP): Donald Trump doesn't think much of Joe Biden's foreign policy record. The Republican president-elect frequently casts the outgoing Democratic president as a feckless leader who shredded American credibility around the world during his four-year term.

But a funny thing happened on Trump's way back to the White House: The Biden and Trump national security teams have come to an understanding that they have no choice but to work together as



Trump

conflicts in Gaza, Syria and Ukraine have left a significant swath of the world on a knife's edge.

It's not clear how much common ground those teams have found as they navigate crises that threaten to cause more global upheaval as Trump prepares to settle back into the White House on Jan. 20, 2025.

"There is a deep conviction on the part of the incoming national security team that we are dealing with ... and on our part, directed from President Biden, that it is our job, on behalf of the American people, to make sure this is a smooth transition," Biden's national security adviser Jake Sul-

ivan said during a weekend appearance at a forum in California. "And we are committed to discharging that duty as relentlessly and faithfully as we possibly can."

To be certain, Trump and his allies haven't let up on their criticism of Biden, putting the blame squarely on the shoulders of Biden and Democrats for the series of crises around the globe.

The president-elect says Biden is responsible for the wars in Gaza and Ukraine, arguing that policies under his watch led to Hamas and Russia becoming emboldened. And shortly before Syria's Bashar al-Assad's government collapsed last week, Trump blamed Biden's old boss, former President Barack Obama, for failing to enforce his own "red line" in 2013 after Assad deployed chemical weapons that killed hundreds of civilians, and laying the groundwork for Islamic militants to establish a beachhead in the country.

But amid the hectoring of Biden, Trump team officials acknowledge that the Biden White House has worked diligently to keep Trump's circle apprised and help ensure there is a smooth hand-off on national security matters.

"For our adversaries out there that think this is a time of opportunity that they can play one administration off the other, they're wrong, and we are - we are hand in glove," Mike Waltz, Trump's pick for national security adviser, said in a Fox News interview last month. "We are one team with the United States in this transition."



A man walks a dog as light rain falls during a winter storm on Dec 11, in Concord, NH. (AP)

E.Coast storm makes mess at resorts

A storm that swept up the East Coast delivered a blow to New England, packing powerful gusts that knocked out power along with a deluge of rain and warming temperatures that washed away snow and dampened ski resorts.

An atmospheric river transported moisture northward from the tropics and brought heavy rain. Utility workers were deployed to handle power outages after winds were projected to peak overnight into Thursday.

In Maine, nearly 57,000 customers had lost power as of Wednesday night, according to power outage maps. In Massachusetts, nearly 8,000 people were without power.

A deepening low pressure sys-

tem was responsible for winds that lashed the region, said Derek Schroeter, a forecaster with the National Weather Service.

Forecasters were concerned about bombogenesis, or a "bomb cyclone," marked by a rapid intensification over a 24-hour period.

"Is that what they're calling it?" said Jen Roberts, co-owner of Onion River Outdoors sporting goods store in Montpelier, Vermont. She lamented that a five-day stretch of snowfall that lured ski customers into the store was being washed away, underscoring the region's fickle weather. "But you know, this is New England. We know this is what happens." (AP)

EU lets Bulgaria, Romania fully integrate into Europe's ID-check free travel zone

BRUSSELS, Dec 12, (AP): European Union ministers on Thursday agreed to let Bulgaria and Romania fully integrate into Europe's ID-check free travel zone, known as the Schengen area, by lifting land border controls from next year, the EU's Hungarian presidency said.

Bulgaria and Romania joined the Schengen area in March after years of negotiations, providing free access for travelers arriving in both countries by air or sea.

However, land border checks remained in place due to opposition,

chiefly from Austria, over concerns that the two countries were not doing enough to prevent migrants from entering without authorization.

"Interior ministers have just adopted a decision to lift internal land border controls with and between Bulgaria and Romania," the Hungarian presidency posted on X. "A great victory for Bulgaria, Romania, and all of Europe!" Land border checks will end from Jan. 1.

Romania's Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu said the decision would be a "major benefit" to his country's economy and enable "faster journeys home

for the millions of Romanians" living and traveling within the Schengen area.

Freedom of movement is central to European integration. More than 420 million people live in the Schengen area, and their freedom to move across borders helps businesses and tourism to flourish.

Romanian President Klaus Iohannis called it a "natural and necessary step" that will significantly reduce wait times at borders, lower logistical costs for businesses, and raise attractiveness to foreign investors.

"Schengen membership has been a strategic objective for our country," he said in a statement. "Over time, there have been numerous obstacles, despite Romania's technical readiness to meet Schengen standards for many years."

He added that Romania would "continue to act responsibly to protect and strengthen the EU's external borders" to manage illegal migration.

The Schengen Area was established in 1985. Before Bulgaria and Romania's partial admission, it was comprised of 23 of the 27 EU member countries, along with Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. Around 3.5 million people cross an internal border each day.

It's one of the main achievements of the European project. It started as an intergovernmental project between five EU countries - France, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, and has gradually expanded to become the largest free travel area in the world.



Lawmakers gather at the National Assembly on Jan 30 in Paris. (AP)

Bid to restore France's stability

Macron seeks political deal to name PM

PARIS, Dec 12, (AP): French President Emmanuel Macron is seeking a political deal that would allow him to both name a new prime minister and "guarantee the stability of the country," following the resignation of ousted Prime Minister Michel Barnier, a spokesperson for the outgoing government said Wednesday.

Maud Bregeon, the spokesperson, said Macron insisted there was at the moment no "broader" political alliance than the current one between his centrist allies and conservatives from The Republicans party, which does not have a majority at parliament. She was relaying comments made by Macron during a weekly Cabinet meeting.

Last week, the French president vowed to stay in office until the end of his term, due in 2027. The move followed a historic no-confidence vote prompted by budget disputes in the National Assembly left France without a functioning government.

Barnier's government has been tasked with handling cur-

rent affairs pending the appointment of a new prime minister.

Two options are still being considered by Macron, Bregeon reported.

The first one would be to find a way to "broaden the alliance," she said, implicitly suggesting some leftists could join the government in addition to centrists and conservatives. That could give the future government a majority in the assembly.

The other option would be to make a deal with opposition parties on the left so that they commit not to vote any no-confidence motion -- even though they would not be governing parties, Bregeon said.

Macron did not provide any firm deadline for naming a new prime minister, she said.

Since last week, Macron has held talks with politicians from the left and the right, including Socialist leaders who now appear as key in efforts to form a more stable government.

Scholz sets Germany on course for poll

BERLIN, Dec 12, (AP): Chancellor Olaf Scholz formally set Germany on course for an early election Wednesday by requesting a confidence vote in parliament next week.

Five weeks after his three-party governing coalition collapsed in a dispute over how to revitalize Germany's stagnant economy, Scholz's office said he had requested the confidence vote in parliament's lower house, or Bundestag, for Monday. The aim is to hold a parliamentary election on Feb. 23, seven months earlier than originally scheduled.

Scholz is expected to lose Monday's vote. His center-left Social Democrats hold 207 seats in the Bundestag and their remaining coalition partners, the environmentalist Greens, have 117. That leaves his government well short of a majority in the 733-seat chamber.



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, (right), and the faction leader of the German Christian Democratic party (CDU), Friedrich Merz, (right), shake hands before a questioning during a meeting of the German federal parliament, Bundestag, at the Reichstag building in Berlin, Germany on Dec 4. (AP)

America

Ex-representative Leach dies:

Former US rep Jim Leach, who served 30 years as a politician from eastern Iowa and later headed the National Endowment for the Humanities, died Wednesday. He was 82.

Leach, whose death was confirmed by an Iowa City funeral home, represented Iowa as a moderate Republican until 2006, when he was defeated by Democrat Dave Loebsack in a midterm cycle that gave Democrats control of the US House.

He was chair of the banking and foreign relations committees, and in 2002 he was among six Republicans, who then held the House majority, to

vote against a resolution authorizing the use of force in Iraq. The measure paved the way for the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, which Leach also opposed.

After leaving Congress, Leach endorsed then-Illinois Sen. Barack Obama, the Democratic nominee, for president in 2008 over his party's

nominee, Arizona Sen. John McCain, in part for Obama's opposition to the 2003 invasion - a decision he said wasn't easy. (AP)

Leach

Kobayashi found safe: Hannah Kobayashi, the missing Hawaii woman whose disappearance prompted a massive search and a missing persons investigation in Los Angeles, has been found safe, police said Wednesday.

Kobayashi vanished last month in Los Angeles. She missed her connecting flight and planned to explore the city the next day, but subsequent text messages to her family - and an inability to then reach her - alarmed them so much that they later reported her missing.

Other details about her disappearance, as well as where and how she was found, were not immediately available Wednesday, but police previously said she was "voluntarily missing" and had gone on her own will across the border into Mexico. (AP)

Cambodia PM vows to fight all forms of transnational crimes

PHNOM PENH, Dec 12, (Xinhua) — Cambodian Prime Minister **Hun Manet** on Thursday vowed to fight all forms of cross-border crimes and human trafficking, warning that perpetrators would face harsh punishment in accordance to the law.

Addressing more than 3,000 participants at the 18th National Day Against Human Trafficking in Phnom Penh, Manet said Cambodia had applied a zero-tolerance policy against human trafficking in all images.

"The royal government will continue to maintain its high commitment to combat all forms of transnational crimes, especially human trafficking, in order to promote the respect for human

rights," he said.

On Dec. 2, the Kandal Provincial Court in southern Cambodia sentenced each of 13 pregnant Filipino women to four years in jail for acting as surrogate mothers.

They were arrested in September and charged with attempted cross-border human trafficking as they carried babies for foreign clients and would sell them to a third person in exchange for money after the babies were born.

"They carried babies for foreign clients, with poverty as their reason," Manet said. "This was a human trafficking case, so we had to enforce the law against them in order to prevent such cases in the future."

Cambodia banned commercial surrogacy in November 2016, defining it as a form of human trafficking.

In August 2017, the Phnom Penh Municipal Court sentenced an Australian nurse to 18 months in prison for operating commercial surrogacy services in the kingdom.



Manet

Hong Kong court convicts 7 men of rioting during '19 protests

HONG KONG, Dec 12, (AP) — A Hong Kong judge on Thursday convicted seven people, including a pro-democracy former lawmaker, of rioting during mob violence at a subway station at the height of the city's anti-government protests in July 2019.

Prosecutors accused former legislator Lam Cheuk-ting and the six other defendants of provoking members of a group of about 100 men armed with wooden poles and metal rods who attacked protesters and bystanders at a train station. The men, all clad in white shirts, in contrast with the black worn by protesters, claimed to be protecting their homeland in Yuen Long, a residential district in Hong Kong's New Territories.

Dozens of people, including Lam, were injured in the violence, a key chapter that escalated the protest movement as the public criticized police for their delayed response. The landmark ruling could shape the city's historical narrative of the incident.

Judge Stanley Chan ruled that Lam was not acting as a mediator as he had claimed, but rather was trying to exploit the situation for political gain.

'Former lawmaker Lam not acting as mediator'



A pro-democracy lawmaker Lam Cheuk-ting, (center), gestures with five fingers, signifying the 'Five demands - not one less' as he is surrounded by riot police during a news conference to mark one-year anniversary of the Yuen Long subway attack at the subway station in Hong Kong on July 21, 2020. (AP)

He said Lam's words directed at the white-shirted men had "fanned the flames."

The seven defendants are expected

to be sentenced in February. Several members of the public sitting in the gallery cried after hearing the verdicts. Others waved at the defendants, with

one shouting to Lam, "Hang in there, Ting!" Lam appeared to be at ease.

The prosecution alleged the defendants had either berated the white-shirted men, used obscene hand gestures, hurled objects or shot jets of water at them with a hosepipe.

The defendants had pleaded not guilty to the rioting charge.

During the trial, Lam said he chose to go to Yuen Long because he hoped his then position as a lawmaker could pressure the police to act quickly. He said he could not leave the scene while fellow residents were in danger. Some defendants who targeted the white-shirted men with a hosepipe argued that they were just trying to stop the attackers from advancing.

Chan, the judge, rejected the arguments of some defendants that they acted in self-defense.

The 2019 protests were sparked by a proposed extradition law that would have allowed criminal suspects in Hong Kong to be sent to the mainland for trial. The government withdrew the bill, but the protesters widened their demands to include direct elections for the city's leaders and police accountability.

S.Korean opposition parties submit new motion to impeach president

Yoon defends martial law as act of governance, vows to 'fight to the end'

SEOUL, South Korea, Dec 12, (AP) — South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol defended his martial law decree as an act of governance and denied rebellion charges, vowing Thursday to "fight to the end" in response to attempts to impeach him and intensifying investigations into last week's dramatic move.

The main opposition Democratic Party quickly slammed Yoon's speech as "an expression of extreme delusion" and "false propaganda." Later Thursday, it and other opposition parties submitted a new impeachment motion against Yoon for a floor vote this weekend.

The opposition-controlled parliament also passed motions Thursday to impeach and suspend Yoon's police chief and justice minister over the imposition of martial law, escalating the pressure on Yoon's embattled government.

Yoon's short-lived Dec. 3 martial law declaration has generated political chaos and large protests calling for his ouster. The decree brought hundreds of armed troops who attempted to encircle parliament and raid the election commission, though no major violence or injuries occurred. Martial law lasted only six hours as Yoon was forced to lift it after the National Assembly unanimously voted it down.

In a televised speech Thursday, Yoon, a conservative, said he enacted martial law as a warning to the liberal Democratic Party. He called the party "a monster" and "anti-state forces"

that he said tried to use its legislative muscle to impeach top officials, undermined the government's budget bill for next year and sympathized with North Korea.

"I will fight to the end to prevent the forces and criminal groups that have been responsible for paralyzing the country's government and disrupting the nation's constitutional order from threatening the future of the Republic of Korea," Yoon said. "The opposition is now doing a sword dance of chaos, claiming that the declaration of martial law constitutes to an act of rebellion. But was it really?"

Yoon said martial law was an act of governance that cannot be the subject of investigations and doesn't amount to rebellion. He said the deployment of nearly 300 soldiers to the National Assembly was designed to maintain order, not dissolve or paralyze it.

Kim Min-seok, head of a Democratic Party task force, dismissed Yoon's statement as "an expression of extreme delusion" and "a declaration of war against the people." Kim accused the president of attempting to incite pro-Yoon riots by far-right forces. He said the Democratic Party will focus on getting the motion impeaching Yoon passed on Saturday.

It's unclear how Yoon's comments will affect his fate. Opposition parties hold 192 seats combined, eight votes short of a two-thirds majority of the 300 members of the National Assembly. The earlier attempt to impeach



Protesters stage a rally demanding South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's impeachment in Seoul, South Korea on Dec 12. The signs read 'Arrest the rebellion leader Yoon Suk Yeol.' (AP)

Yoon failed with most lawmakers from Yoon's governing People Power Party boycotting the vote.

Yoon's speech was expected to deepen a divide inside the PPP. When party chair Han Dong-hun, a critic of Yoon, called Yoon's statement "a confession of rebellion" during a party meeting, Yoon loyalists angrily jeered and called on Han to stop speaking.

Han has urged party members to vote in favor of Yoon's impeachment.

Opposition parties and even some PPP members say the martial law decree was unconstitutional. South Korean law allows the president to declare martial law during wartime or similar emergencies, and they said such a situation did not exist. They argue that

deploying troops to seal the National Assembly to suspend its political activities amounted to rebellion because the constitution doesn't give a president such rights in any situation.

The country's law enforcement authorities are investigating whether Yoon and others involved in imposing martial law committed rebellion, abuse of power and other crimes. A conviction for rebellion carries a maximum penalty of death.

The National Assembly on Thursday passed a bill that could introduce an independent counsel to investigate Yoon on rebellion charges without his approval. A bill it endorsed earlier this week on appointing an independent counsel requires Yoon's approval. The Justice Ministry on Monday placed an overseas travel ban on Yoon.

South Korean law gives a president immunity from prosecution while in office, except for allegations of rebellion or treason. This means that Yoon can be questioned and detained by investigative agencies over his martial law decree, but many observers doubt that authorities will forcefully detain him because of the potential for clashes with his presidential security service.

On Wednesday, Yoon's presidential security service didn't allow police to search the presidential office.

Yoon's statement was seen as an about-face. Last Saturday, he apologized over declaring martial law and said he wouldn't avoid responsibility

for it. He said he would leave it to his party to chart a course through the political turmoil, "including matters related to my term in office."

On Wednesday, Yoon's former defense minister, Kim Yong Hyun, was arrested on allegations of playing a key role in a rebellion and committing abuse of power. The national police chief, Cho Ji Ho, and the head of Seoul's metropolitan police have been detained while their actions of sending police forces to the National Assembly are investigated as a criminal matter.

The impeachment motion against Cho accuses him of committing rebellion and violating other laws by deploying police forces to the parliament after martial law was announced. The separate motion for Justice Minister Park Sung Jae accuses him of committing rebellion and violating other laws by deploying police forces to the parliament after martial law was announced. The separate motion for Justice Minister Park Sung Jae accuses him of committing rebellion and violating other laws by deploying police forces to the parliament after martial law was announced.

Kim, who resigned after martial law was lifted, is one of Yoon's close associates. He has been accused of recommending martial law to Yoon and sending troops to the National Assembly to block lawmakers from voting on it. He tried to kill himself in detention, but correctional officers stopped him and he was in stable condition, according to the Justice Ministry.

In his speech Thursday, Yoon said he had discussed imposing martial law only with Kim before he informed other top officials about it at a Cabinet meeting just before its declaration.



People shout slogans condemning reported attacks on Hindu and other minorities in Bangladesh during a protest near the Bangladesh diplomatic mission in New Delhi, India on Dec 10. (AP)

Tensions continue with India

Supporters of BNP hold protest march

DHAKA, Bangladesh, Dec 12, (AP) — Thousands of members of youth and student bodies belonging to the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) on Wednesday held a road march procession from Bangladesh's capital toward its eastern border with India to protest against an attack on a diplomatic mission earlier this month and alleged desecration of Bangladeshi flags in India.

They drove in cars to reach a border point at Akhaura in Brahmanbaria district to register their protest. Before starting for the border area, they rallied briefly in Dhaka where leaders criticized what they called "Indian aggression" against Bangladesh.

The party headed by former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has been protesting against the attack by a mob of Hindus in the northeastern Indian state of

Agartala on Dec. 2.

On the way to the border area, the entourage stopped at places where waiting supporters of Zia welcomed them and rallied briefly on Wednesday. Another rally will be held when the team reaches the border point.

Wednesday's protest came two days after the foreign secretaries of Bangladesh and India held bilateral meetings in Bangladesh's capital to defuse escalating tensions between the two neighbors.

It was the first high-profile diplomatic visit by an Indian official since the fall of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who is in exile in India, in August.

Bangladesh, which is predominantly Muslim, has accused a group of Hindus in India of attacking the Assistant High Commissioner's office at Agar-

tala and desecrating Bangladeshi flags in Kolkata in West Bengal state.

India said it regretted the attacks and pledged to take action against those responsible. Bangladesh's Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned the Indian High Commissioner and formally registered its protest.

Tensions between the two neighbors also spiked over the recent arrest of a Hindu leader in Bangladesh, currently run by the interim government led by Nobel Peace laureate Muhammad Yunus. India stopped issuing visas to Bangladeshis except for emergency medical purposes after Hasina's ouster, while many Indian nationals taking part in infrastructure projects left Bangladesh because of security threats.

Protests were also held in parts of Hindu-majority India to denounce attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh.

ing complications resulting from a fall at home in October.

Doctors at the Sirio-Libanes hospital on Wednesday said Lula would undergo the second procedure on Thursday.

In a statement, they said that Lula "spent the day well," adding



Lula

Lat/Am

Lula to undergo procedure: Brazilian President **Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva** will undergo a new procedure on Thursday following up on an unplanned surgery earlier this week for a brain bleed, doctors said.

The minimally invasive procedure aims to stop persistent bleeding on the surface of the brain. On Tuesday, the 79-year-old leftist leader underwent surgery for a brain bleed after suffer-

Venezuela harassing opposition members sheltering at embassy in Caracas: Argentina

CARACAS, Venezuela, Dec 12, (AP) — Argentina's government on Wednesday accused its Venezuelan counterpart of continually harassing six members of the political opposition who have been sheltering for months in the Argentine diplomatic compound in the capital, Caracas.

It also urged the Organization of American States to pressure Venezuela to allow the safe departure of the six people to Argentina.

Argentine Foreign Minister Gerardo Werthein said the Venezuelan government is subjecting them to a "strategy of physical exhaustion" and "psychological terror" through prolonged harassment. The four men and two women have lived at the ambassador's residence since March to avoid arrest.

"The Venezuelan government has not only denied the safe passage that would allow their safe departure, but has adopted totally unacceptable harassment actions," Werthein said during a session of the OAS' permanent council. "The asylum seekers are subjected to water cuts, interruptions in electricity, restrictions on the entry of food and the constant presence of security forces in the vicinity of the diplomatic headquarters."

The group living at the ambassador's home includes the campaign manager and communications director of opposition powerhouse Maria Corina Machado. The government of President Javier Milei allowed them into the compound after authorities loyal to the ruling party issued warrants for their arrest, accusing them of promoting alleged acts of violence to destabilize the country.

Ethiopia and Somalia agree to hold talks

ANKARA, Turkey, Dec 12, (AP) — Ethiopia and Somalia have agreed to hold "technical talks" to resolve a dispute sparked by Ethiopia's deal with Somalia's breakaway region of Somaliland, according to a statement following talks in Turkey.

Turkey has been mediating between the two east African countries as tensions between them have simmered since Ethiopia signed a memorandum of understanding with Somaliland in January to lease land along its coastline to establish a marine force base. In return, Ethiopia would recognize Somaliland's independence, which Somalia says infringes on its sovereignty and territory.

A joint declaration was reached after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met separately with Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on Wednesday.



A police patrol car sits parked outside Argentina's embassy where some members of Venezuela's opposition are seeking asylum inside, in Caracas, Venezuela, July 31, 2024, three days after the contested presidential election. (AP)

Since late November, the group has denounced the constant presence outside the residence of Venezuelan intelligence service agents and police. It has also accused the government of cutting electricity and water services.

Venezuela's Minister of Interior Diosdado Cabello last week called the group's allegations a "farce."

Werthein, however, on Wednesday accused the Venezuelan government of violating international law that enshrines the right to asylum and the inviolability of diplomatic offices in any country. He urged the members of the

regional organization to act firmly or risk being judged by their inaction.

As time goes by, "the anguish and uncertainty for those seeking asylum increases," he said.

In August, Brazil accepted Argentina's request to guard the diplomatic compound in Caracas after Maduro's government expelled its diplomats following Venezuela's July presidential election. The vote's disputed results, which Venezuelan electoral authorities claimed favor Maduro, prompted Milei to declare that he would not recognize "another fraud."



A woman displays the Somaliland flag as people queue to cast their votes during the 2024 Somaliland presidential election at a polling station in Hargeisa, Somaliland, on Nov 13. (AP)

		Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts	
UAE	- DFMGI	+0.30	4,781.61	Philippines	- PSEI	-0.02	6,641.35
Pakistan	- KSE 100	+3.04	114,373.88	Saudi	- TASI	-0.41	12,099.33
Egypt	- EGX	+0.18	30,795.09				

Business

Organized by Creative Confidence over 10 weeks

'Tamakan' 6 kicks off with the strategic sponsorship of NBK

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The "Tamakan" training program for Kuwaiti fresh graduates organized by Creative Confidence has kicked off its sixth edition, with the strategic sponsorship of National Bank of Kuwait (NBK). The program underscores the bank's commitment to supporting all initiatives aiming to develop and empower the Kuwaiti youth and qualify them to take on leadership positions in the future.

Tamakan is an innovative training experience for Kuwaiti fresh graduates to achieve professional self-development in pursuit of emerging as active and efficient workforce and finding promising job opportunities in the private sector. It aims to develop the personal skills needed to become compelling candidates, in addition to motivating Kuwaiti youth to explore their potentials and energies. It also unleashes the creativity of young talent through workshops about creativity and innovation, design thinking, business model design, career exploration and innovative de-risking solutions.

The program runs for 10 weeks until February 18, 2025, during which NBK hosts the trainees at different departments and requires full-time commitment being a full-time job experience. It gives participants an exceptional opportunity to benefit from the expertise of NBK's executive management, through the open discussions held for participants with the bank's leaders who have extensive experience spanning long years in the banking industry. This allows them to benefit from these experiences for a successful and sustainable career.

During the kickoff ceremony of the program's sixth edition, which was held at NBK's headquarters in the presence of a group of executive leaders in the bank, Mr. Emad Al-Ablani, GM - Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait, said, "Our continued sponsorship and support of the "Tamakan" program reflects our belief



The executive management with Tamakan program trainees.

that the Kuwaiti youth are the cornerstone for achieving national progress in all sectors. Therefore, it is imperative to qualify and upskill them as they start their career journey."

"The program is a golden opportunity for Kuwaiti fresh graduates to acquire many skills and put theories and rules into action, in addition to developing personal and professional skills. Therefore, I urge the trainees to

make the most of this opportunity, so that they can reap the rewards of this experience by the end of the program and attain their desired career success," he noted.

On her part, Mrs. Rana Al-Rasheed, Chief of Strategy and People Development at Creative Confidence praised NBK's continuing sponsorship and support of the "Tamakan" program since its early launch. She mentioned

that the program has achieved remarkable success, as the number of graduates of the previous five editions exceeded 170 participants, who were able to efficiently navigate their way into the labor market, noting that some of them joined NBK to be part of the success story of this reputable banking institution.

"The selection of candidates for the sixth edition was very difficult, as

we received 960+ applications from Kuwaiti fresh graduates, which show successful the program is. In addition, the curriculum of "Tamakan" undergoes enhancement every year to employ innovative techniques in developing participants' skills, which positively reflects on their upcoming career," she added.

NBK's continuing sponsorship of this first of its kind program, which

Al-Ablani:

■ The Kuwaiti youth are the cornerstone for achieving national progress in all sectors

■ The program is a golden opportunity for graduates to augment their potential and develop personal and professional skills as they start their career journey

Al-Rasheed:

■ Tamakan 6 received 960+ applications, highlighting its remarkable success

■ The previous five editions graduated more than 170 trainees who were able to efficiently navigate their way into the labor market

received "The Social Work Pioneer Project Award" in the private commercial sector from the GCC Council of Ministers of Social Affairs and Labor in 2022, reflects its firm belief in the importance of nurturing the Kuwaiti youth by attracting and developing talents and providing all means of support to help them navigate their way confidently into the labor market.

It is worth mentioning that NBK is a key sponsor of different social initiatives that align with the goals of Kuwait National Development Plan and of Kuwait Vision 2035, in terms of driving growth and providing job opportunities for the Kuwaiti youth in the private sector, considering them Kuwait's most valuable resource, and the keystone for national development.

KOC to develop external works for Jurassic production facilities in Umm Al-Naqqa

Project slated for completion in the last quarter of 2026

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: According to well-informed oil sources, the Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) will start developing the external works for its Jurassic production facilities in Umm Al-Naqqa, with the development slated for completion in the last quarter of 2026.

They clarified that the executive management of KOC is following a systematic strategy to develop all oil and gas reservoirs and facilities, while ensuring that the renewal and development operations are carried out without disrupting production activities.

In a related context, the sources explained that the executive management of the Kuwait Gulf Oil Company (KGOC) signed a contract last week for the completion of the company's new main build-

ing in Ahmadi Governorate, after awarding the tender to a local company. The value of the contract is approximately KD 25 million.

KOC is intensifying its efforts to implement several projects after obtaining the approval of the Central Agency for Public Tenders. All future projects are aimed at increasing production in both the oil and gas sectors, as well as carrying out routine and periodic maintenance for all its oil fields.

KOC is working towards digital transformation for all its fields, and has made great progress in utilizing modern technology. It is also preparing for the Kuwaitization of its workforce to offer more opportunities for national cadres.

The company recently facilitated job transfers from KOC to KGOC, particularly in the joint Khafji Zone. The merger procedures between KOC and KGOC are progressing steadily through a calm and precise strategy, without rushing the process.

The success of merging the Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) with the Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC)

several months ago has motivated the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) to continue with the merger between KGOC and KOC by following the necessary procedures for this merger.

The project was initially proposed in 2016 after the completion of engineering designs, which took several years. The first contractor faced difficulties and was unable to complete the project, leading to the termination of the contract in 2021. Recently, the project was awarded to a local company.

The building area exceeds over 90,000 square meters, with several important factors taken into account in its design. These include compliance with environmental standards, a 30 percent reduction in electricity consumption, and water conservation measures. The new building is also designed with features that promote a positive work environment for employees.

The building consists of five floors, in addition to a service floor. The design blends modernity and preserves cultural heritage. There are gardens and well-designed administrative offices to create an aesthetically pleasing and functional workspace.

Boursa Kuwait closes session mixed with marginal gains

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait concluded Thursday's trading session with slight movements across most indices. The general index edged up 5.48 points, or 0.07 percent, closing at 7,331.01 points. Trading volume was robust, with 386.9 million shares exchanged through 19,798 cash transactions, valued at KD 71.8 million (USD 220 million).

The main market index rose 4.77 points, or 0.07 percent, to 6,672.14 points, with 285.5 million shares traded through 12,754 transactions, worth KD 36.3 million (USD 110.7

million). The premier market index also saw a modest increase of 5.94 points, or 0.08 percent, reaching 7,859.65 points, with 101.4 million shares traded through 7,044 transactions, valued at KD 35.4 million (USD 1,017.9 million).

In contrast, the Main 50 index experienced a slight decline, falling 7.55 points, or 0.12 percent, to close at 6,547.45 points. This index saw 102.9 million shares traded through 4,605 cash transactions, with a total value of KWD 13.9 million (approximately \$42.3 million).

Kuwait oil price up 53 cents to USD 72.81 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil went up by 53 cents to USD 72.81 per barrel (pb), compared with USD 72.28 pb the previous day, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on

Thursday.

At the global level, the Brent crude rose by USD 1.33 to USD 73.52 pb, the same occurred to the West Texas Intermediate, which went up by USD 1.70 to USD 70.29 pb.

Global oil demand growth forecast revised

'OPEC reference basket value drops'

VIENNA, Dec 12, (KUNA): In November, the OPEC Reference Basket (ORB) value dropped by \$1.47, or 2.0 percent, month-on-month (m-o-m), to average \$72.98/b, according to the OPEC secretariat general's latest regular report issued on Wednesday.

The ICE Brent front-month contract dropped by \$1.98, or 2.6 percent, m-o-m, to average \$73.40/b, while NYMEX WTI dropped by \$2.02, or 2.8 percent, m-o-m, to average \$69.54/b. (The ICE Brent Index represents the average price of trading in the prevailing North Sea physical market for the relevant delivery month.)

GME Oman front-month contract dropped by \$2.55, or 3.4 percent, m-o-m, to average \$72.48/b. The ICE Brent-NYMEX WTI first month spread remained little changed, widening marginally by 4¢/b, m-o-m, to average \$3.86/b. (GME is the premier international energy futures and commodities exchange in the Middle East.)

The forward curves of oil futures prices flattened further, with the nearest time spreads contracting but remaining in backwardation. Hedge funds and other money managers raised their net long positions but maintained a bearish stance on oil prices.

World Economy:

The world economic growth forecasts remain unchanged at 3.1 percent for 2024 and 3.0 percent for 2025. The US economic growth forecast for 2024 is revised up slightly to 2.8 percent, reflecting robust growth in 2H24. For 2025, the US growth forecast is also revised up slightly to 2.2 percent. Japan's growth forecast remains unchanged at 0.1 percent in 2024, but for 2025, it is revised up slightly to 1.0 percent. The Eurozone's economic growth forecasts for 2024 and 2025 remain unchanged at 0.8 percent, and 1.2 percent, respectively.

China's economic growth forecasts remain unchanged at 4.9 percent for 2024

and 4.7 percent for 2025. India's economic growth forecasts for 2024 and 2025 remain unchanged at 6.8 percent, and 6.3 percent, respectively. The economic growth forecast for Brazil is revised up slightly to 3.1 percent for 2024, but remains at 2.1 percent for 2025. Russia's economic growth forecasts remain unchanged at 3.5 percent for 2024 and 1.7 percent for 2025.

World Oil Demand:

The global oil demand growth forecast for 2024 is revised down by 210 tb/d from the previous months assessment to 1.6 mb/d, year-on-year (y-o-y). This minor adjustment is mainly due to updated data for 1Q24, 2Q24 and 3Q24. In the OECD, oil demand is expected to grow by around 0.1 mb/d, while non-OECD demand is forecast to expand by close to 1.5 mb/d in 2024. Global oil demand growth for 2025 is also revised down by 90 tb/d from the previous months assessment to 1.4 mb/d, y-o-y.

OECD demand is expected to grow by 0.1 mb/d, y-o-y, in 2025, while demand in the non-OECD is forecast to expand by 1.3 mb/d.

World Oil Supply:

Non-DoC liquids supply (i.e. liquids supply from countries not participating in the DoC) is expected to grow by 1.3 mb/d, y-o-y, in 2024, revised up slightly from last months assessment. The main growth drivers are expected to be the US and Canada. For 2025, the non-DoC liquids supply growth forecast is expected to grow by 1.1 mb/d, y-o-y, unchanged from last month.

Growth is anticipated to be mainly driven by the US, Brazil, Canada, and Norway. Natural gas liquids (NGLs) and non-conventional liquids from countries participating in the DoC are forecast to grow by about 0.1 mb/d, y-o-y, in 2024 to average 8.3 mb/d, followed by an increase of about 80 tb/d, y-o-y, in 2025 to average 8.4 mb/d.



Photos from the event

Event described as timely

IMF-CEF, AFESD collaborate on driving employment and innovation in MENA

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The IMF-Middle East Center for Economics and Finance (CEF), in partnership with the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD), co-organized a high-level event titled "Unlocking the Region's Employment Potential in a Changing Global Economy: Challenges and the Path Forward." This hybrid event convened policy makers and experts from global and regional financial institutions. The audience comprised representatives from the public and private sectors, civil society, international organizations, the press, and the diplomatic community.

Ms. Amy Bell, from the Financial Times, moderated the event.

Mr. Paulo Drummond, Director of the CEF, opened the seminar, reiterating the IMF's continued support to help MENA countries in achieving high and sustained growth amidst a changing global economy. The seminar started with brief presentations. Mr. Ocampo (Columbia University and former Minister of Finance of Colombia) presented a structuralist perspective on growth, focusing on the development of export sectors while emphasizing the coordination of macroeconomic policies and

the financing of transformation strategies. Ms. Fazili (Roosevelt Institute and former Deputy Director of the National Economic Council) explored the strategic selection of advanced export sectors, including emerging opportunities in global supply chains, drawing insights from the U.S. experience. These presentations set the stage for an engaging panel discussion. Mr. Alhajraf (Columbia University's Center on Global Energy Policy and former Kuwaiti Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy) discussed the opportunities arising from the on-

going global energy transition. Mr. Nabi, (Economic Advisor at AFESD), underscored the critical need for long-term strategies to foster innovative entrepreneurship and develop relevant human capital. Messrs. Cherif and Has-anov (IMF) outlined the main features of a successful growth model tailored to the region that drives domestic innovation and high living standards.

Ms. Bell thanked the CEF and AFESD for co-organizing this timely event. She also thanked the presenters, panelists, and audience members for their insightful and lively discussions.

Countdown to the region's premier sports tournament begins

Khaleeji Zain 26 trophy tour kicks off at Zain HQ in Shuwaikh

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: As the countdown to the kick-off of Khaleeji Zain 26 (Arabian Gulf Cup) begins, Zain's headquarters in Shuwaikh hosted the original trophy and official ball of the tournament. This marked Zain as the first destination for the trophy tour in Kuwait ahead of the tournament's official kickoff on December 21.

The event was attended by Zain Group Chairman, Osama Al-Furaih, Vice Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, members of the Board of Directors and senior executives, the President of the Kuwait Football Association (KFA), Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, Kuwaiti football legend Saad Al-Houti, and the Director of Khaleeji Zain 26, Meshal Al-Subaie.

The Zain Innovation Campus (ZINC) displayed the original trophy and the official ball, offering Zain employees and their families the chance to take commemorative photos and create lasting memories ahead of the tournament's start.

The trophy tour includes several stops, such as Kuwait International Airport and the premises of various partners and sponsors. The next destination will be The Walk Mall tomorrow, Friday, December



Al-Furaih and Al-Kharafi with Al-Yousef, Al-Houti, Al-Subaie, and Board Members.

13, from 5 PM to 10 PM. The tour will also feature the trophy and ball at Zain's Fan Zone in Murouj on Thursday, December 19.

The current version of the Arabian Gulf Cup trophy is the sixth in the tournament's history. Qatar first introduced this design in 2004, making it the most frequent contributor to Gulf Cup designs (three times). The trophy is shaped

like an incense burner, crowned with a pearl, and wrapped with the traditional Gulf keffiyeh (shemagh and ghutra). A map of the Gulf is engraved on the trophy, symbolizing the unity of the Gulf people and nations.

The current trophy was crafted by the renowned Bertoni medal manufacturer in Italy, the company most famous for its production of

the FIFA World Cup trophy. Made of pure gold, the Khaleeji Zain 26 trophy it stands at a height of 47 cm.

Zain Group recently announced its role as the Title Partner of the tournament, now branded as Khaleeji Zain 26 for the second consecutive time. Kuwait will host this historic sporting event for the fifth time in its history, and Zain



The original trophy and official ball at Zain's HQ.

Highlights

- Attended by the Chairman and Board Members, KFA officials, and Kuwaiti football legends
- Next stop: The Walk Mall, tomorrow, Friday at 5 pm

warmly welcomes Gulf teams and delegations to this premier regional event.

Through this partnership, Zain is reaffirming its commitment to supporting major sporting events, enhancing Kuwait's position as a key player in regional sports, boosting the development of football among the youth.

This marks the second time the tournament will carry the Khaleeji Zain name, following the previous edition, Khaleeji Zain 25, held in Basra, Iraq, in 2022-23, which celebrated the tournament's silver jubilee. The 2022-23 edition saw Iraq win the championship, drawing a significant fan response.

US inflation 'ticked' up last month as some price pressures remain persistent

Consumer prices rose 2.7% in Nov

WASHINGTON, Dec 12, (AP): Fueled by pricier used cars, hotel rooms and groceries, inflation in the United States moved slightly higher last month in the latest sign that some price pressures remain elevated.

Consumer prices rose 2.7% in November from a year earlier, up from a yearly figure of 2.6% in October. Excluding volatile food and energy costs, so-called core prices increased 3.3%, the same as in the previous month. Measured month to month, prices climbed 0.3% from October to November, the biggest such increase since April. Core prices also rose 0.3% for a fourth straight month.

Wednesday's inflation figures from the Labor Department are the final major piece of data that Federal Reserve officials will consider before they meet next week to decide on interest rates. The relatively mild November increase won't likely be enough to discourage the officials from cutting their key rate by a quarter-point. The probability of a rate cut next week, as envisioned by Wall Street traders, rose to 98% after Wednesday's inflation report was released, according to futures pricing tracked by CME FedWatch.

"It's generally in the ballpark of what the Fed would like to see," said Jason Pride, chief investment strategist at Glenmede, a wealth management firm.

Though sharp increases for such items as groceries and hotel rooms increased overall inflation last month, those categories are often volatile. Pride noted that the cost of services, such as rents, car insurance, and airline fares, cooled in November.

Last week, Fed Chair Jerome Powell



A shopper looks at clothing on display in a Costco warehouse in Sheridan, Colo. (AP)

suggested that with the economy generally healthy, the Fed could reduce its key rate slowly.

"We're not quite there on inflation, but we're making progress," Powell said. "We can afford to be a little more cautious."

With the job market cooling, growth in Americans' paychecks has slowed from a nearly 6% annual pace in 2022 to about 4% now, a rate nearly consistent with inflation at the Fed's 2% target. Powell has said he doesn't think the current job market is a driver of higher prices.

Randy Carr, CEO of World Em-

blem, a maker of patches, labels and badges for companies, universities and law enforcement agencies, said he is providing smaller wage increases, in the 3% to 5% range, than his company did during the height of inflation.

"Things have kind of leveled off," he said.

Carr's customers, which include the company that makes UPS uniforms, generally won't accept price hikes much more than 2% a year. So World Emblem aims to offset the cost of its higher wages through greater efficiencies in manufacturing.

In September, the Fed slashed its benchmark rate, which affects many consumer and business loans, by a sizeable half-point. It followed that move with a quarter-point rate cut in November. Those cuts lowered the central bank's key rate to 4.6%, down from a four-decade high of 5.3%.

Though inflation is now way below its peak of 9.1% in June 2022, average prices are still about 20% higher than they were three years ago - a major source of public discontent that helped drive President-elect Donald Trump's victory over Vice President Kamala Harris in

Working paper presented

Dhaman: Ready to promote economic relations between Arab countries and France

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The Arab Investment & Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (Dhaman) underlined its readiness to promote economic relations between Arab countries and France through its various insurance, information and research services, noting the importance of economic relations between both sides and the magnitude of transactions, especially in trade, investment and finance fields.

In a working paper presented today at the fifth Arab-French Economic Summit held in the French capital, Paris, Dhaman revealed that mutual investments between both sides have exceeded \$128 billion over the past 22 years, i.e. between 2003 and 2024, as Arab-French trade reached \$67 billion in 2023, half of which with Arab Maghreb countries and 35% with Gulf countries.

The summit was co-organized by the Union of Arab Chambers and Arab-French Chamber of Commerce (CCFA) under the auspices of French President Emmanuel Macron. In its paper, Dhaman added that it is ready to insure French direct investment in Arab countries against such political risks as expropriation, currency inconvertibility and transfer restrictions, wars and civil disturbance, and governments' breach of contracts with businessmen, especially with the presence of 790 French companies that implemented over the past 22 years 1,364 projects in Arab countries with Capex of \$126 billion. The projects were concentrated, by activity, at a rate of 58% in the coal, oil, gas, and renewable energy sectors, and, by country, at a rate of 80% in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco, UAE, and Qatar, respectively.

Dhaman indicated its readiness to insure Arab exports to France and the region's imports of French capital and strategic goods, including the financing provided to them against the aforementioned political risks and such commercial risks as the importer's bankruptcy, insolvency and default.

Dhaman added that it would contribute to building partnerships between French and Arab banks to facilitate banking operations and finance mutual trade and investment deals under competitive terms.

The Corporation stated that it concluded a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for joint cooperation with the French export insurance company "BPI FRANCE" in May 2024, to en-

hance cooperation between both sides to provide more insurance facilities for Arab and French economic operators.

Dhaman explained in its paper that France has benefited from its insurance services in trading with Arab countries over the last six years, at a value of \$541 million as an insurance for French exports and their financing to Arab countries, and \$37 million in insurance for Arab exports and their financing to France. During 2024, approximately \$106 million was insured in terms of intra-Arab-French trade, with these figures being expected to double in the future.

It revealed that there are great opportunities for insurance in the French market, as new commitments from global agencies to insure French imports and foreign investments in France amounted to \$108 billion in 2023, especially with the expected growth of trade and investment transactions with the region, in light of the recently signed economic agreements with countries like Morocco, Qatar, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and Egypt.

The Corporation explained that Arab exports to France, which amounted to \$36 billion in 2023, could be further increased, especially since they represent 4.7% of overall French imports and 2.6% of overall Arab exports, over 75% of which include oil, gas, machinery, vehicles, clothing, vegetables and fruits. Morocco, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and UAE respectively accounted for 82% of the region's total exports to France.

Dhaman stated that it would continue to support Arab-French relations through its additional services besides insurance operations, namely research, information and specialized consulting for decision-makers of governments and business communities, including monitoring, analyzing and forecasting trade, investment, finance, insurance, sovereign rating changes, risk assessments and the investment and business climate in Arab countries.

Based in Kuwait, the Arab Investment & Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (Dhaman) was established in 1974. It comprises as members all Arab countries and four joint Arab financial institutions. It provides specialized insurance services against credit and political risks with a view to facilitating the inflow of foreign direct investments into Arab countries and promoting Arab exports and imports.

US hikes tariffs on imports of Chinese solar wafers, polysilicon and tungsten products

BANGKOK, Dec 12, (AP): The Biden administration plans to raise tariffs on solar wafers, polysilicon and some tungsten products from China to protect U.S. clean energy businesses.

The notice from the U.S. Trade Representative's office said tariffs on Chinese-made solar wafers and polysilicon will rise to 50% and duties on certain tungsten products will increase to 25%, effective on Jan. 1, following a review of Chinese trade practices.

"The tariff increases announced today will further blunt the harmful policies and practices by the People's Republic of China," USTR Katharine Tai said in a statement. "These actions will complement the domestic investments made under the Biden-Harris Administration to promote a clean energy economy, while increasing the resilience of critical supply chains."

Reports Thursday said U.S. and Chinese officials were meeting this week and next for trade talks ahead of the year's end.

Last week, Washington tightened restrictions on Chinese access to advanced semiconductor technology. Beijing responded by banning exports to the U.S. of certain critical minerals needed to make computer chips, such as gallium, germanium and antimony. It also stepped up its controls on graphite exports to the U.S.

China provides a very large share of most of those materials and the United States has been working to secure alternative sources in Africa and other parts of the world.

Tungsten is another strategically vital metal whose production is dominated by China. The U.S. does not produce it. It's used to make armaments and is also used in x-ray tubes and light bulb filaments, among other industrial applications.

After Beijing announced its ban on exporting gallium and the other materials to the United States, analysts said tungsten was another likely area where China might strike back.

Trade frictions have been escalating ahead of the inauguration of President-elect Donald Trump, who has vowed to impose 60% tariffs on Chinese goods, among other threats. President Joe Biden has said Trump's promise of broad tariffs on foreign imports would be a mistake.

His administration has kept in place tariffs that Trump imposed during his first term in office, in some cases raising them further, but says it has a more targeted approach.

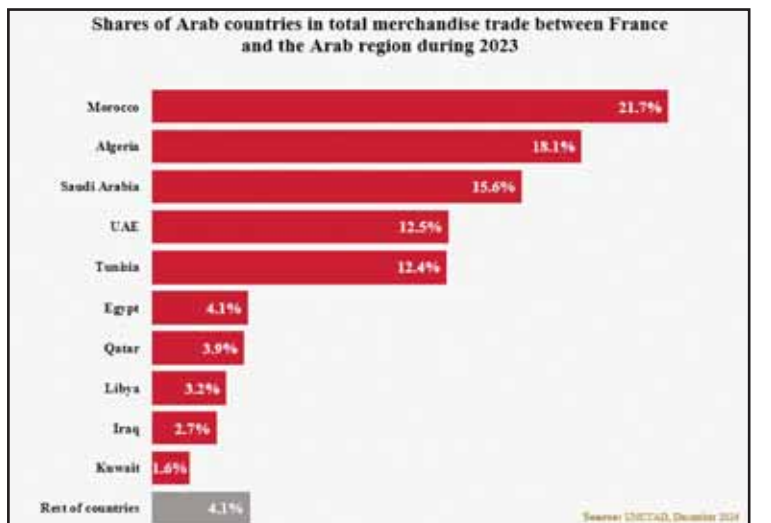
China has sharply ramped up production of cheap electric vehicles, solar panels, and batteries at a time when the Biden administration has championed moves to support those industries in the U.S.

The U.S. and other trading partners say China improperly subsidizes exports, giving exporters of solar panels and other products an unfair advantage in overseas markets, where its manufacturers charge lower prices thanks to government support. Washington also says China improperly pressures foreign companies to hand over technology.

China accounts for more than 80% of the market for solar panels at all stages of production, according to the International Energy Agency, more than double domestic demand for those products. Its huge economies of scale have made solar power more affordable, but also concentrated the supply chain inside China. The IEA has urged other countries to assess their solar panel supply chains and develop strategies to address any risks.

In early 2018, the Trump administration imposed 30% tariffs on imports of Chinese solar panels. Beijing filed a complaint with the World Trade Organization charging that the U.S. was unfairly supporting electric vehicle purchases.

The investigation that led the USTR to raise the tariffs on solar panels concluded with a report in May that has prompted increases in tariffs on a range of products including electric vehicles, syringes and needles, medical gloves and facemasks, semiconductors and steel and aluminum products, among others.



ECB cuts rates a quarter point amid concerns of tepid growth, impact of Trump trade policies

FRANKFURT, Germany, Dec 12, (AP): The European Central Bank has cut rates by a quarter percentage point amid signs of weakening growth and concern about the impact of political chaos in France and the possibility of new U.S. import tariffs.

The bank's rate-setting committee made the decision Thursday at its skyscraper headquarters in Frankfurt to lower the benchmark from 3.25% to 3%.

The bank said that efforts to return inflation to its 2% target were succeeding.

"The disinflation process is well on track," it said in a

statement accompanying the decision. It cautioned that it now foresaw "a slower economic recovery" than it did in a last set of projections in September.

Lower rates should support growth amid signs that the post-pandemic recovery is slowing in the 20 countries that use the euro currency and concerns that U.S. President-elect Donald Trump might impose new tariffs, or import taxes, on goods imported to the US after he is inaugurated Jan. 20. That sends a cold chill through the business world in Europe, where exports are an outsized contributor to growth and employment.

Yet there are internal risks as well.

French Prime Minister Michel Barnier resigned Dec. 5 after losing a vote of confidence, leaving the France without a functioning government and no clear majority in parliament able or willing to tackle the country's excessive budget deficit. Elections cannot be held before June. While the end of the Barnier government hasn't triggered a financial crisis, it adds uncertainty about how long it will take for France to right its finances.

Germany's governing coalition broke up in November, and a new national election is expected Feb. 23. Weeks of

coalition negotiations are expected to follow before a new government is in place. That leaves the two biggest eurozone economies politically adrift for months.

All that has dinged the confidence that businesses need to borrow, invest, expand production and take risks. The survey index of purchasing managers compiled by S&P Global came in at 48.3 in November, with levels below 50 suggesting the economy is slowing.

The Sentix survey of investor confidence fell in its first update after the U.S. election, by 4.6 points to minus 17.5.

Event marks 125 years of diplomatic relations between the UK and Kuwait

British Embassy hosts 'Best of Britain' fashion show



KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: In celebration of 125 years of official diplomatic relations between the UK and Kuwait, the British Embassy hosted a spectacular 'Best of Britain' Fashion Show, showcasing a blend of British and Kuwaiti brands, says a press release issued by the embassy.

The event, held at the British Embassy Gardens, featured models wearing an exquisite range of clothing and accessories from British brands sold at Debenhams, such as Hobbs, QUIZ, Phase Eight, River Island, Jack Wills,

Charles Tyrwhitt, Burton and Next, alongside Kuwaiti brands Thhaba Jewellery and Milano Shoes.

The models were styled with makeup from the popular UK brand Charlotte Tilbury and hairstyling tools from REVAMP Professional.

Her Excellency Belinda Lewis, British Ambassador to Kuwait, who wore a dress from the British brand 'Coast,' remarked, "Fashion is not just a means of self-expression, but also an art form with the power to connect."

"The 'Best of Britain' Fashion Show

celebrated the vibrant cultural links between our two countries and showcased the potential for expanding collaboration in the creative industries," said the British envoy.

Naz Demir, Trade Country Director at the British Embassy, expressed pride in the event's success, stating, "The show was a fantastic demonstration of the enduring partnership between the UK and Kuwait."

We look forward to exploring further opportunities to strengthen ties between our fashion industries."



Photos during the fashion show



Her Excellency Belinda Lewis, British Ambassador to Kuwait



Naz Demir, Trade Country Director at the British Embassy

ICSK-IIK Higher Education Fair 2024 bridging students with global opportunities

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The Indian Community School, Senior, warmly welcomed dignitaries, staff, parents, and students to the highly anticipated Higher Education Fair 2024, organized by The Indian Community School, Kuwait in collaboration with Indians in Kuwait, on 6th and 7th December, 2024. The sixth edition of the event offered the Indian students in Kuwait an exceptional opportunity to explore affordable higher education options and directly engage with representatives from esteemed universities and colleges both in India and abroad. The fair significantly expanded students' academic perspectives, presenting them with a wide array of educational possibilities.

The grand event was graced by the esteemed presence of the Chief Guest, H.E. Noshrevan Lomtadze, the Ambassador of Georgia to the State of Kuwait, whose participation elevated the occasion. Among the dignitaries were Mr. Sajith Thomas, Career Counsellor & Educational Expert, Dr. T. P. Sethumadhavan, Career Consultant Director, Mr. Shaikh Abdul Rahiman, Hon. Chairman to the Board of Trustees, Mr. Vinukumar Nair, Hon. Vice Chairman to the Board of Trustees, Mr. Sunoj Nambiar, Founder and Director of IIK, Mr. Wilson D'Souza, Director Marketing of IIK, Mr. George Mathew, Director Finance of IIK, Father James Tuscano, Principal of Indian English Academy School, Mr. Anoop Kumar, Principal of New Gulf Indian School, Dr. V. Binumon, Principal and Senior Administrator of ICSK Senior, Mr. Rajesh Nair, Principal of ICSK Amman, Mrs. Sherry Dennis, Director of Indian School of Excellence and Mrs. Sheeja C., Principal of ICSK Junior.

Gratitude

The ICSK - IIK Higher Education Fair was officially inaugurated by the Chief Guest, H.E. Noshrevan Lomtadze, who unveiled the official logo of the ICSK-IIK Higher Education Fair. The event's commencement was celebrated with sweet treats shared by the dignitaries and the ICSK family. Mr. Shaikh Abdul Rahiman, Honorary Chairman to the Board of Trustees presented a memento, a token of gratitude and appreciation to the honorable Chief Guest, H.E. Noshrevan Lomtadze. Following the opening ceremony, the dignitaries explored the Expo, which served as a vibrant platform for connecting students and parents with leading universities and colleges from around the world.

The Higher Education Fair featured a four-part program: the Career Mapped Aptitude Test, Personalized Career Counselling Sessions, Career Talk Sessions, and the University Expo. The Career Mapped Aptitude Test, conducted by Mr. Sajith Thomas, a renowned Career Counsellor & Educational Expert attracted hundreds of students and provided valuable insights into their interests, strengths, and skills. The results were followed by one-on-one personalized Career Counselling Sessions with both students and parents, ensuring that each participant received tailored advice based on their unique profiles.

The University Expo, one of the main highlights of the fair, featured 45 prestigious Business Schools, Medical and Engineering Colleges, Tourism Management Institutions, and Universities from both India and abroad. This event allowed students and parents to meet directly with university representatives, gaining firsthand knowledge about various academic programs, admission procedures, eligibility criteria, scholarships, student life, and more. The Expo provided a crucial opportunity for attendees to gain clarity on various study programs and plan their academic journeys accordingly.

In addition, five informative Career Talk Sessions were conducted specifically for students in grades 9 to 12. These sessions witnessed a sea of participation, with over thousands of students and parents attending the seminar. Dr. T. P. Sethumad-



Photos during the event.

havan, a distinguished Career Consultant Director, led the sessions, addressing a wide range of topics related to career planning, application strategies, and emerging trends across industries. The sessions also featured engaging question-and-answer interactions, where students had the chance to address their doubts and gain insights into various career options, further enhancing their understanding of the opportunities available to them.

Students expressed their appreciation for the variety of institutions and the quality of information provided, which greatly aided them in making informed educational decisions. Positive feedback highlighted the success of the fair in clarifying the complexities of higher education.

The ICSK-IIK Higher Education Fair 2024 proved to be a one-stop destination for students and parents to seek guidance on career choices and academic opportunities. It was an event that not only identified the potential of young minds but also offered personalized counselling to steer them in the right direction. By bringing together top educational institutions and providing expert career guidance, the fair played a crucial role in shaping students' perceptions of higher education and inspiring them to pursue their dreams. The event successfully bridged the gap between students and higher education institutions, making it a resounding success and an essential stepping stone toward a bright academic future.

IDAK participates in dental screening camps

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: On Friday, 29th November 2024, under the patronage of St. George Universal Syrian Orthodox Reesh Church, Kuwait, and in association with Indian Dentists Alliance in Kuwait (IDAK), a dental screening camp was organized for the church members by the Healthcare mission, at C Clinic in NECK.

IDAK CWC team represented by Dr Prashanth R and Dr Jane John Thomas, along with volunteers Dr. E T Roy and Dr Joshin

Susan participated in the camp. They worked with the church officials and organizers and assisted the healthcare mission to conduct the camp in a smooth manner. IDAK extended its appreciation to all the officials, especially Vicar Rev. Fr. Stephen Neduvakkattu, who graced the event, for this great initiative.

Later in the day, Indian Dentists Alliance in Kuwait (IDAK) and Indian Doctors Forum (IDF) collaborated with Indian Women's Association (IWA) to con-

duct a medical and dental screening camp at The Indian English Academy School.

Dr. Prashanth R Prasad, Chair of CWC IDAK and Dr. Valentina Fernandes were present to serve the community through this camp.

IDAK expressed its gratitude to IWA President Dr. Tahseen Khan and Mrs. Shireen Kanchwalla, Vice President of IWA for the invitation and congratulated them on the well organised event which aimed to benefit a large number of people.



Combo photos of dental camps.



Flyer of the event.

Embassy of Japan organizes 17th Japanese Speech Contest

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The Embassy of Japan in Kuwait held the 17th Japanese Speech Contest in collaboration with the Center for Community Service & Continuing Education at Kuwait University and the Japanese Society in Kuwait, on Wednesday, December 11, 2024.

The press release issued by the embassy said, the contest took place in the university administration building in Sabah Al Salem University City.

In his opening remarks, HE Mukai Kenichiro, Ambassador of Japan to the State of Kuwait expressed great delight in having been able to hold the event for seventeen years, showing his appreciation for the continuous support of the Center for Community Service & Continuing Education at Kuwait University for the Japanese lan-

guage education since 1996.

Very ardent Japanese language learners participated in the contest, in the presence of audience who are interested in the Japanese language and culture. The excellent performance shown by the contestants on stage impressed everyone indeed.

Moreover, a couple of side events took place, as Bader Alshawaf and Ibrahim Alhulail, ex-students who studied in Japan, participated, as Bader prepared a presentation introducing studying in Japan, and a speech was presented by Ibrahim Alhulail, about how Japanese language transformed his life.

Also, participants enjoyed watching the live performance of the Japanese martial art "Karate", performed by Japan Karate Association in Kuwait.



Photo during the meeting.

Bright November at Writers' Forum

November is the month for thanksgiving, Black Friday and many more such celebrations. One such celebration was the celebration of poetry at the monthly meeting of the Writers' Forum Kuwait held on Friday, 22nd November at the residence of Dr Radhika Guleri Bhardwaj. The meeting was presided by the President of the Forum, Mrs Maimuna Chougale and Ms Sabiha Bilgrami was the Chief Guest of the evening.

At the onset the General Secretary, Ms Nazneen Ali welcomed all while breaking the happy news of celebrating the Republic Day of India in collaboration with the Indian Community School, Khaitan. Subsequently there were related discussions on the Forum's activities and its way forward.

Then was the meeting's prose section with an enlightening article by Mrs Maimuna Ali Chougale followed by vivid colors of poetry making the evening bright and colorful.

There was a mix of art in terms of the language, form, pattern, subject and rendition of each poetry. While each poet's creation was a blooming flower together they were a colorful bouquet which depicts a soothing feel for both the eyes and the soul.

Ms Nazneen Ali, Dr Rajesh Gupta and Sayeed Nazar Kadpawi recited in Urdu, while Dr Radhika, Yajuvendra Chandrakar, Dr Vinod Kaushik and Aamir Diwan chose Hindi as their medium of expression. English poetry of Parminder Kaur was recited by her father Mohan Singh.

In the concluding session Ms Sabiha Bilgrami appreciated each poet's creativity in depth. She then recited the English translations of Dr Rajesh's Urdu poetry that she is currently working on. In her Presidential remarks, Mrs Maimuna Chougale admired the efforts of the members in nurturing and promoting literature.



This image shows documentary subject Marlee Matlin in a scene from 'Marlee Matlin: Not Alone Anymore,' by Shoshannah Stern, an official selection of the 2025 Sundance Film Festival. (AP)



A still from 'Ricky' by Rashad Frett, an official selection of the 2025 Sundance Film Festival. (AP)



This image shows Eva Victor in a scene from 'Sorry, Baby' by Eva Victor, an official selection of the 2025 Sundance Film Festival. (AP)

Mstyslav Chernov returns with Ukraine war doc

Sundance 2025 unveils diverse films and powerful docs

PARK CITY, Utah, Dec 12, (AP) — Next year's Sundance Film Festival will feature Jennifer Lopez singing and dancing in Bill Condon's "Kiss of the Spider Woman," Questlove exploring the legacy of Sly & The Family Stone and Associated Press journalist Mstyslav Chernov's latest documentary about the war in Ukraine.

The Sundance Institute on Wednesday unveiled 87 feature films set to premiere at the 2025 festival, kicking off on Jan. 23 in Park City, Utah.

Now in its 41st year, the festival remains a place of discovery for independent cinema and emerging voices. Because of its January timing, it's also a gathering that arrives alongside the presidential inauguration. At the 2017 festival following Donald Trump's first inauguration, Main Street was taken over by a lively women's march full of celebrities. This year, no such plans have been announced.

"Sundance as a festival has endured as a place to gather through inaugurations every four years, through different cultural moments and political moments," said festival director Eugene Hernandez. "We have a program that both engages with the world and also offers at the very same time an escape."

Narrative films and documentaries premiering this year will touch on politicized topics, "stand your ground" laws, incarceration, the right to die and book banning. But Sundance doesn't program by theme or have mandates about topics, said Kim Yutani, the festival's director of programming.

"I think what you see across the program are stories that are told with real authenticity. There's an innovative quality to many of these films," Yutani said. "And the idea of free expression is something that is just as important to us."

Documentaries are always a highlight at Sundance, where

the conversation starts and often continues through the year into the Oscar race. Chernov follows his Oscar-winning "20 Days in Mariupol" with "2000 Meters to Andriivka," which looks at a Ukrainian platoon on a mission to liberate a village from Russian occupation. It's a joint project between AP and PBS "Frontline."

"Free Leonard Peltier" looks at the Indigenous activist who has spent most of his life in prison since his conviction in the 1975 killings of two FBI agents in South Dakota. In July he was denied parole.

Hernandez further spotlighted Barry Levinson and Robert May's episodic series "Bucks County, USA" about political divides in small town America and the friendship of two teenage girls despite their opposing views.

Famous

There are also several docs about famous musicians and actors including Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson's "SLY LIVES! (aka The Burden of Black Genius)," Shoshannah Stern's "Marlee Matlin: Not Alone Anymore," Amy Berg's "It's Never Over, Jeff Buckley" and Matt Wolf's "Pee-wee as Himself." Elegance Bratton also looks at the roots of house music in "Move Ya Body: The Birth of House."

Some performances that may have people talking into the year include: Benedict Cumberbatch in "The Thing with Feathers," about a father processing the loss of his wife; Joel Edgerton and Felicity Jones in "Train Dreams" about a railroad day laborer from the "Sing Sing" writer and director; John Lithgow and Olivia Colman as father and daughter in "Jimpa"; Lopez in Condon's lush and vibrant musical adaptation; Lily Gladstone and Youn Yuh-jung in Andrew Ahn's "The Wedding Banquet"; Josh O'Connor in "Rebuilding"; and Ben Whishaw and Rebecca Hall in "Peter Hujar's Day,"

about New York's downtown art scene in the 1970s, from Ira Sachs.

Over 40% of the films, selected from nearly 16,000 submissions, are directorial debuts, like Rachael Abigail Holder's "Love, Brooklyn" with André Holland.

Highlighted

Yutani also highlighted Rashad Frett's "Ricky," starring Stephan James as a man trying to rebuild his life post incarceration. Another notable debut is "Sorry, Baby," which Eva Victor wrote, directed and stars in and Barry Jenkins produced.

"There are scenes in this film that I have never seen before," Yutani said. "It was a real revelation."

Film enthusiasts don't need to make the trek through the snow to pricey Park City to engage with the festival's offerings anymore. As with the past few years, about 60% of the program will be available online starting on Jan. 30. Tickets go on sale for individual films on Jan. 16 for the general public and even earlier for members.

"It's a really a great opportunity to just get a sampling of what's to come in the new year for films that will travel far and wide to other festivals or make it into theaters down the line," Hernandez said.

This will be one of the last years that the festival is primarily based out of Park City. Over the past year, the Sundance Institute has been exploring options for host cities starting in 2027. Finalists include Salt Lake City, Utah (with some events still in Park City), Boulder, Colorado, and Cincinnati, Ohio. An announcement is expected in the first quarter of 2025.

Oscar-winning documentarian and Associated Press journalist Mstyslav Chernov has a new film that delves further

into the Russia-Ukraine war.

"2000 Meters to Andriivka," a joint production between the AP and PBS' "Frontline," will have its world premiere in January at the Sundance Film Festival, organizers said Wednesday.

Chernov won the best documentary Oscar in March for "20 Days in Mariupol," his harrowing depiction of the early days of the war. That film debuted at Sundance in 2023 before going on to collect many of the film industry's most prestigious awards, including from the Directors Guild and BAFTA. The film drew on AP reporting that also won the 2023 Pulitzer Prize for public service and featured prominently that same year in a Pulitzer for breaking news photography.

The new film takes place during the failing counteroffensive and focuses on a Ukrainian platoon's mission to try to liberate a strategic village from occupation. They need to traverse "one mile of heavily fortified forest," the description reads. "But the farther they advance through their destroyed homeland, the more they realize that this war may never end."

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022, Europe's biggest armed conflict since World War II has cost tens of thousands of lives on both sides.

Kim Yutani, the festival's director of programming, said she expects audience will be deeply moved by the film.

"It's an incredible documentary," Yutani said. "It really takes you into the trenches, literally into the trenches with Ukrainian troops, Ukrainian soldiers, citizens who became soldiers - a beautiful, horrifying portrait of the futility of war."

The Sundance Film Festival kicks off on Jan. 23 in Park City, Utah, and runs through Feb. 2.

Variety

NEW YORK: Woody Allen's former personal chef claims in a lawsuit that the filmmaker and his wife fired him because of his service in the US Army Reserves and questions about his pay, then "rubbed salt on the wounds" by saying they didn't like his cooking.

Allen and Soon-Yi Previn "simply decided that a military professional who wanted to be paid fairly was not a good fit to work in the Allen home," private chef Hermie Fajardo said in a civil complaint filed Tuesday in federal court in Manhattan.

Allen and Previn knew Fajardo would need time off for military training exercises when they and their home manager hired him as their full-time chef in June 2024 at an annual salary of \$85,000, the complaint said. But he was fired the following month, soon after returning from a training that lasted a day longer than expected, it said.

When Fajardo returned to work, "he was immediately met with instant hostility and obvious resentment by defendants," according to the lengthy complaint.

At the time, Fajardo had been raising concerns about his pay - first that his employers weren't properly withholding taxes or providing a paystub, then that they shortchanged him by \$300, according to the complaint. (AP)

IRVING, Texas: A rape allegation against rapper Jay-Z, whose company Roc Nation has produced some of the NFL's entertainment presentations including the Super Bowl halftime show, won't impact the league's relationship with the music mogul.

"We're aware of the civil allegations and Jay-Z's really strong response to that," NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said Wednesday after the conclusion of the league's winter meetings. "We know the litigation is happening now. From our standpoint, our relationship is not changing with them, including our preparations for the next Super Bowl."

A woman who previously sued Sean "Diddy" Combs, alleging she was raped at an awards show after-party in 2000 when she was 13 years old, amended the lawsuit Sunday to include a new allegation that Jay-Z was also at the party and participated in the sexual assault.

Jay-Z, whose real name is Shawn Carter, said the rape allegation made against him is part of an extortion attempt. The 24-time Grammy Award winner called the allegations "idiotic" and "heinous in nature" in a statement released by Roc Nation, one of his companies. (AP)

Film



This image released by Sony Pictures shows Aaron Taylor Johnson in Columbia Pictures and Marvel's 'Kraven the Hunter.' (AP)

A chaotic superhero tale

'Kraven the Hunter' fails to deliver thrills

LOS ANGELES, Dec 12, (AP) — Kraven the Hunter can climb sheer walls like a gorilla, snatch fish out of streams like a bear and outrun deer. But there's something this slab of human beef can't do: Anchor a decent movie.

Aaron Taylor-Johnson plays the titular hero in "Kraven the Hunter," the sixth attempt in Sony's sputtering efforts to stock enemies for Spider-Man in movies that don't feature the webslinger. It's stuck in time, a callback to years ago when convoluted superhero origin stories were hot, and studios were dusting off even the poorest IP to tell stories.

The screenplay by Richard Wenk, Art Marcum and Matt Holloway attempts to build the backstory of Kraven but soon loses interest and begins adding origin stories for third-rate bad guys, like The Rhino and The Foreigner, before introducing Chameleon right at the end, as if another Kraven movie is coming. (Sony, make it stop).

Kraven, we learn, was born Sergei Kravinoff, the son of a Russian mobster who is turned into a superhero in a laughably weird plot twist. After being attacked by a lion on safari in Ghana, he's given a mystical botanical serum mixed with lion's blood and some mumbo jumbo about a tarot card. Clinically dead for three minutes, Kraven wakes up and is a world-class hunter. At least that's what he keeps saying.

"Hunting people down is kind of my thing," he says. And later: "I am the greatest hunter on the planet." Soon he's assassinating bad guys, but his motives aren't always clear. Hunting isn't ex-

actly the same as infiltrating a high-security Siberian prison and killing a cartel boss.

Director J.C. Chandor has a very loose hand, never shaping a taut narrative or reining in his actors and sometimes letting scenes just sort of drop. The additional villains distract from what seems to be a meditation on masculinity, and the special effects are jerky and ludicrous, like a fistfight between Kraven and The Rhino - somehow still wearing pants - that prompted some laughter at a recent screening.

Proficient

Part of the problem is that Kraven's powers aren't clearly defined. He's supposed to use animal skills to hunt, but are there many four-legged predators out there proficient with a blow dart or a pen to the trachea? He hates poachers but wears a tooth necklace and a leather bomber jacket.

Kraven's eyes sometimes glow but with no apparent benefit other than to make Taylor-Johnson look even more badass as he glares into the camera, shirtless. He does have the ability to focus his attention on faraway objects, like when he spots a dropped cigarette and identifies it as a Turkish brand, a skill really low on the superhero must-haves.

The movie suggests Kraven can communicate with animals, like Aquaman, but, if so, he's really, really bad at it. At best, they just sort of tolerate him. A tiger at one point jumps him and you can't blame it.

Kraven has been shaped largely in opposition to his drug kingpin dad played by Russell Crowe, who has apparently watched "The Adventures of Rocky & Bullwinkle" to nail his thick, comical Russian accent. "Never fear death," he tells his son. "Man who kill legend, become legend."

Crowe's dad is a whisky-neat, all-testosterone, Tony Bennett-loving guy who detests any sign of weakness or kindness. He kills animals for fun, uses cocktail waitresses as human shields, doesn't pay ransoms because that makes him seem soft and dismisses his wife's suicide with the comment: "She was weak."

If Crowe is cartoonish to the point of parody, Alessandro Nivola as a human-rhino hybrid makes him look like Sir Laurence Olivier. There are few instances of someone overacting more in a movie, unnecessarily adding an undercurrent of murderous, jokey psychotic to an already bizarre creation. The costume department has also dropped the ball here, giving The Rhino a small, strung backpack that looks like it was found in the discount bins at Kohl's.

Two good actors - Fred Hechinger as Kraven's younger brother and Ariana DeBose as his lawyer-ally - are left marooned in a movie that tumbles and slips to an unsatisfactory end. Is Kraven a hero or a villain? Who cares? Without Spider-Man, what's really the point, right?

"Kraven the Hunter," a Sony Pictures release that hits theaters Friday, is rated R for "strong bloody violence and language." Running time: 127 minutes. One star out of four.

Travel



This Feb. 21, 2024, image released by the Neue Galerie New York shows an exhibition room featuring works of Austrian and German art and design at the Neue Galerie, a museum on the Upper East Side of Manhattan in New York. (AP)



An exhibition room featuring works of Austrian and German art and design at the Neue Galerie, a museum on the Upper East Side of Manhattan in New York. (AP)

Hidden treasures

Explore NYC's unique, specialized museums

NEW YORK, Dec 12, (AP): New York can be a magical place for museum goers. It can also be overwhelming and overcrowded at times, especially at the biggest, most famous museums.

Luckily, the city has scores of great museums to choose from: Everything from small and quirky, to elegant gems housed in historic mansions, to preserved Lower East Side tenement apartments and hands-on experiences that might surprise even longtime New Yorkers.

"Going to the Museum of Modern Art or the Metropolitan Museum of Art or the American Museum of Natural History is fantastic. But they can be like a big supersized coffee drink, while we're more like a cup of espresso," says Alex Kalman, director of two of the city's tiniest museums, Mmuseumm1 and Mmuseumm2.

One is built into an old elevator shaft in a downtown alleyway. (Both museums are closed for the holidays but reopen in spring.) At other small museums you'll find a cozy, Viennese-style coffee shop; comfort food like bagels, blintzes, herring and house-cured salmon; and edgy gift shops to rival MoMA's famous one. You could view the chair that George Washington sat in before giving his inaugural address to Congress (New York City was the seat of US government in those days.) Or you might make seltzer or solve math puzzles.

Here's some of what's happening at NYC's "other" museums:

227 W 27th St.
Tucked inside the Fashion Institute of Technology, behind the big sculpture in front, is the city's only museum solely devoted to fashion. And it's free. The current show, "Africa's Fashion Diaspora," runs through Dec. 29.

"It's about Africa as an idea that continues to inspire designers from Africa and also those whose ancestors came from Africa," says museum director Valerie Steele.

Opening in February is "Fashioning Wonder: A Cabinet of Curiosities," exploring connections between cabinets of curiosities and fashion.

1048 5th Ave.
This museum, housed in a 1914 Gilded Age mansion that was once home to society doyenne Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt III, focuses on art and design from Austria and Germany. Its Cafe Sabarsky is a destination of its own, with 1912 upholstery, period decor, and a grand piano in the corner used for cabaret, chamber and classical music performances. On view now is "Egon Schiele: Living Landscapes" and "Austrian Masterworks from the Neue Galerie."

The museum "transports you to Christmas in Vienna," says director Renée Price. "We dress up our 1914 historic landmark building with wreaths and ribbons, evoking a prior era.... Delight in some Apfelstrudel and savor our Hot Choc-

olate with Rum in Cafe Sabarsky." (Pro tip: The cafe is at its quietest for breakfast.)

1109 5th Ave. at 92nd St.
Not far from the Neue Galerie. On view now are "Illit Azouley: Mere Things," the first solo exhibit in a US museum dedicated to the Berlin-based artist, and "Engaging with History: Works from the Collection." Other displays include the "Tel Dan Stele," a 9th century BCE stone monument fragment containing the earliest mention of the royal House of David outside of the Bible.

The gift shop features an impressive array of memorabilia, dreidels, Hanukkah candles and specialty gifts, including works by artist Oded Halahmy. There's a cafe with updated takes on traditional bagels, blintzes, herring and house-cured salmon.

2 East 91st St.
Also nearby is one of the city's two Smithsonian museums. The Cooper Hewitt focuses on innovative design. Its gift shop rivals MoMA's, and there's a private garden and small restaurant. The museum is housed in the former home of industrial magnate Andrew Carnegie. Completed in 1902, the mansion was the first in the US to have a structural steel frame, and one of the first in the city to have a residential Otis passenger elevator. It also was among the first homes to feature central heating. It is now LEED-certified and features other cutting-edge technologies.

A major exhibit on now, "Making Home: Smithsonian Design Triennial," explores design's role in shaping concepts of home, physically and emotionally. It sprawls over the entire mansion and will be on view through Aug. 10.

1 Bowling Green
The other Smithsonian in town, it's at the lower end of Manhattan inside the Alexander Hamilton US Customs House, now a city landmark. Admission is free, and current exhibitions include "Jeffrey Vergege: Of Gods and Heroes," "Native New York" and "Infinity of Nations."

The gift shop features authentic Native American art, crafts, apparel and jewelry from a wide representation of groups, in addition to books by and about Native Americans.

103 Orchard St.
With something for all ages, the Tenement Museum is housed in two preserved tenement buildings, one from 1863 and the other from 1888. Each apartment is a kind of time capsule, telling the story of a different immigrant or migrant family who lived there. The museum also offers walking tours of the neighborhood.

"What is most unique about the Tenement Museum is that it shines the spotlight on 'ordinary people' - working-class families who never imagined they'd one day be the subject of a museum," says Tenement Museum President Annie Pollard.

Obituary

Mesmerizing entertainer and mentalist

Amazing Kreskin, George Kresge Jr., dies at 89

NEW YORK, Dec 12, (AP): **George Joseph Kresge Jr.**, who was known to generations of TV watchers as the mesmerizing entertainer and mentalist The Amazing Kreskin, has died at age 89.

Kreskin's friend and former road manager, Ryan Galway, told The Associated Press that he died Tuesday at his home in Caldwell, New Jersey, where he spent much of his life. Galway said Kreskin had not been feeling well in recent weeks but otherwise did not provide a cause of death.

Inspired by the crime-fighting comic book character Mandrake the Magician, Kreskin launched his television career in the 1960s and remained popular for decades, making guest appearances on talk shows hosted by everyone from Merv Griffin to Johnny Carson to Jimmy

Fallon.

Fans would welcome, if not entirely figure out, his favorite mind tricks - whether correctly guessing a playing card chosen at random, or, most famously, divining where his paycheck had been planted among the audience. He also hosted his own show in the 1970s, gave live performances and wrote numerous books, including "Secrets of the Amazing Kreskin" and "Mental

Power Is Real."

Although he was a talk show regular, one host wasn't amused by a Kreskin stunt. In 2002,

he claimed that a UFO would appear over Las Vegas on the night of June 2, and added that he would donate \$50,000 to charity if he was wrong. Hundreds of people gathered in the desert, in vain. Kreskin acknowledged to radio personality Art Bell that his prediction was a hoax, a way of proving that the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks the year before had made people susceptible to manipulation. Bell called the ruse "lame, lame, lame" and banned him from his show.

Galway said that Kreskin continued to make live appearances well into his 80s, and only stopped earlier this year after injuring himself in a fall. Kreskin never married and left no immediate survivors.

"His career was his life. That was his marriage," Galway said. "He was dedicated to his craft."



Kresge

Film



Nicole Kidman arrives at the premiere of 'Babygirl' on Wednesday, Dec. 11, at the DGA Theater in Los Angeles. (AP)

A Tolkien tale reimagined in anime form

'Rohirrim' shrinks a 'Lord of the Rings' legacy

LOS ANGELES, Dec 12, (AP): It's a discombobulating experience, after a "Lord of the Rings" trilogy that was built, down to every frame and hobbit hair, for the big screen, to see something so comparatively minor, small-scaled and TV-sized as "The Lord of the Rings: The War of the Rohirrim."

The film, set 183 years before the events of "The Hobbit," is a return to Middle-earth that, despite some very earnest storytelling, never supplies much of an answer as to why, exactly, it exists.

"Rohirrim," which sounds a little like the sound an orc might make sneezing, is perhaps best understood as a placeholder for further cinematic universe extrapolation from J.R.R. Tolkien's books. (A live-action movie about Gollum is due out in 2026.) Here, the thin basis in Tolkien comes from the "Lord of the Rings" appendix, which lists a history of Rohan, the plains kingdom south of the Elven forest of Lothlórien.

A small army of screenwriters - Jeffrey Addiss, Will Matthews, Phoebe Gittins and Arty Papageorgiou - have from those faint embers conjured a fiery war movie, made as an anime by director Kenji Kamiyama ("Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex," "Blade Runner: Black Lotus"). The obviously talented Kamiyama fashions some dazzling vintage anime visuals that - and perhaps this isn't all bad - feels a world apart from Peter Jackson's

Middle-earth features.

But "The War of Rohirrim" also feels conspicuously closer to 1990s direct-to-video release than an heir to some of the grandest big-screen fantasy storytelling of the past 25 years. Though there are many - too many - examples of Hollywood over-mining once-rich intellectual property, this dull, appendix-extracted anime adds to a not particularly Tolkienian tradition.

Tolkien diehards, though, may be grateful for whatever "The Lord of the Rings" morsels they can find. And there is some precedent. Before Jackson (an executive producer here)

built Middle-earth in New Zealand, "The Lord of the Rings" prompted a pair of 1970s animated TV specials and a not-much-remembered animated 1978 movie.

"The War of Rohirrim" concerns the adventures of Hera (voiced by Gaia Wise), daughter of Helm Hammerhand (Brian Cox), the Rohan king. Cox, coming off of "Succession," again finds himself beset with trouble over the future of his throne.

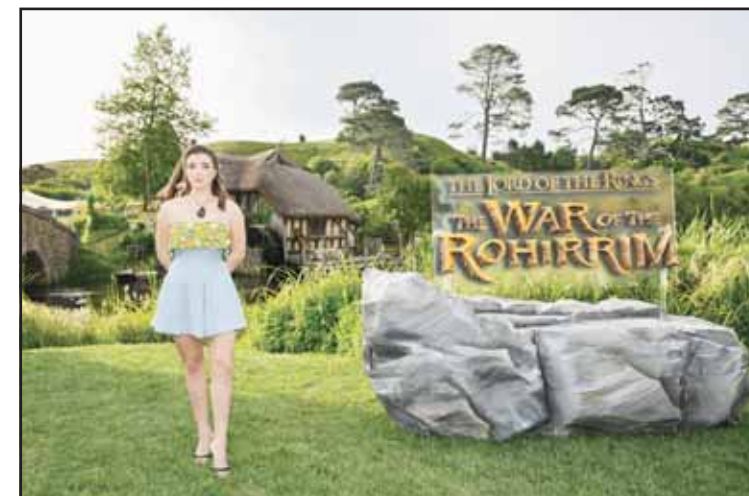
Things get underway when Freka (Shaun Doolley), leader of the Dunderlings, offers his son Wulf (Luke Pasqualino) to marry Hera and take the throne. After a swift refusal, a fight en-

sues, and with a mere punch, Helm accidentally kills Freka. Given how extreme Wulf's vengeance is following this punch, it's fair to wonder if "The War of Rohirrim" could have been started just as easily with a slap or, perhaps, an overly aggressive noogie.

But only self-seriousness reigns in this "Lord of the Rings" adventure. When the battle begins, Hera must save her people, which she strives to do by retreating to a fortress dug into a mountainside. Hera's story is said to be one lost to history in the opening narration, but "The War of Rohirrim" is just as much an origin story for the stronghold that will later be known as Helm's Deep.

I don't begrudge any Tolkien addict a little anime fun - and maybe these references and callbacks will be enough to conjure some of the majesty of the books or Jackson's movies. You can tell "Rohirrim" was made with sincere belief in the world Tolkien created. But I found the connective tissue, like the few notes from Howard Shore's original score that float in, only reinforced how such grander movie ambitions once came to Rohan. "The War of the Rohirrim" does manage to recapture one trait of the earlier films: at 134 minutes, it's long.

"The Lord of the Rings: The War of the Rohirrim," a New Line release is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association for strong violence. Running time: 134 minutes. One and a half stars out of four.



Gaia Wise arrives at the New Zealand Premiere of 'The Lord of the Rings: The War of the Rohirrim,' in Hobbiton, New Zealand, Dec. 10, 2024. (AP)

Variety

MILAN: British designer **John Galiano** is leaving the Maison Margiela fashion house after 10 years as artistic director, the Paris-based brand's owner Wednesday. No successor has been announced.

"John made it the most cutting-edge couture house in the world," said Renzo Rosso, chairman of Italy's OTB Group that owns Maison Margiela. Rosso said the last decade "of incredibly intense work, amazing shows and installations, extraordinary beautiful product, have laid the foundations for the future."

Galiano expressed his gratitude to

Rosso for giving him a new chance, adding "I continue to atone, and I will never stop dreaming." Galiano left fashion in disgrace in 2011 after making antisemitic comments in a Paris bar.

"My wings mended, 10 years later, I am forever grateful for this safe space to create, and his undying support," Galiano said in a statement.



Galiano

Galiano made his runway debut with Maison Margiela in January 2015, with a small couture collection to a carefully selected audience of about 100 in London. It was the start of a comeback for the flamboyant designer who was dismissed from Christian Dior after he was caught on video making an antisemitic comment.

Givenchy hired Galiano as a young head designer in 1995, before Christian Dior brought him on as creative director the next year. For 15 years, his star rose with theatrical runway shows. (AP)

LOGAN, Utah: A federal judge in Utah sentenced Louisiana rap artist

NBA Youngboy to just under two years in prison on gun-related charges after he acknowledged having possessed weapons despite being a convicted felon.

The rapper, whose real name is Kentrell Gaudin, reached an agreement that resolved Utah state charges against him and settled two sets of federal charges against him - one carries a 23-month sentence and the other orders five years of probation and a \$200,000 fine.

Gaudin, 25, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, reached the agreement with federal prosecutors in September, and he and the attorneys signed the deal Tuesday, court documents show. (AP)

Kuwait aims to boost pediatric services

Child, neonatal care priority for MoH: minister

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12, (KUNA): Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadh has affirmed care for children and the newborns is a priority for his department that continuously seeks to revamp medical services for this segment.

The minister's statement was addressed on his behalf by the assistant undersecretary, Abdullah Al-Fars, at the inauguration of the two-day eighth Kuwait Pediatric Neurology Conference.

Among the ministry initiatives in this regard was establishment of the specialized wards and promoting public awareness of the children diseases, he said, also indicating at special attention to the children neurological ailments, supporting researches and employing qualified personnel as well as using modern technology for treating illnesses such as epilepsy.

The Minister in the statement presented by the undersecretary has affirmed keenness on equipping the

hospitals with state of art devices.

Dr. Asmaa Al-Tawari, the head of the neurology and epilepsy department at the children ward of Al-Sabah Hospital, said the conference is a part of a chain of scientific and medical communications for addressing the hot issues in the child medicine.

The conference is set to draw 500 visitors and 39 lecturers from Kuwait, regional and foreign countries.



An attendee at the Microsoft Ignite conference records an address on Nov. 19, 2024, in Chicago. (AP)

'Hackers expose data'

Tech tip to safeguard your 'text' through encryption

LONDON, Dec 12, (AP): After a sprawling hacking campaign exposed the communications of an unknown number of Americans, US cybersecurity officials are advising people to use encryption in their communications.

To safeguard against the risks highlighted by the campaign, which originated in China, federal cybersecurity authorities released an extensive list of security recommendations for US telecom companies - such as Verizon and AT&T - that were targeted. The advice includes one tip we can all put into practice with our phones: "Ensure that traffic is end-to-end encrypted to the maximum extent possible."

End-to-end encryption, also known as E2EE, means that only the sender and recipient can see them. If anyone else intercepts the message, all they will see is a garble that can't be unscrambled without the key.

Law enforcement officials had until now resisted this type of encryption because it means the technology companies themselves won't be able to look at the messages, nor respond to law enforcement requests to turn the data over.

Consumers

Here's a look at various ways ordinary consumers can use end-to-end encryption:

Officials said the hackers targeted the metadata of a large number of customers, including information on the dates, times and recipients of calls and texts. They also managed to see the content from texts from a much smaller number of victims.

If you're an iPhone user, information in text messages that you send to someone else who also has an iPhone will be encrypted end-to-end. Just look for the blue text bubbles, which indicate that they are encrypted iMessages.

The same goes for Android users sending texts through Google Messages. There will be a lock next to the timestamp on each message to

indicate the encryption is on.

But there's a weakness. When iPhone and Android users text each other, the messages are encrypted only using Rich Communication Services, an industry standard for instant messaging that replaces the older SMS and MMS standards.

Apple has noted that RCS messages "aren't end-to-end encrypted, which means they're not protected from a third party reading them while they're sent between devices."

Privacy

To avoid getting caught out when trading texts, experts recommend using encrypted messaging apps.

Privacy advocates are big fans of Signal, which applies end-to-end encryption on all messages and voice calls. The independent nonprofit group behind the app promises never to sell, rent, or lease customer data and has made its source code publicly available so that it can be audited by anyone to examine it "for security and correctness."

Signal's encryption protocol is so reputable that it has been integrated into rival WhatsApp, so users will enjoy the same level of security protection as Signal, which has a much smaller user base. End-to-end encryption is also the default mode for Facebook Messenger, which like WhatsApp is owned by Meta Platforms.

Telegram is an app that can be used for one-on-one conversations, group chats and broadcast "channels" but contrary to popular perception, it doesn't turn on end-to-end encryption by default. Users have to switch on the option. And it doesn't work with group chats.

Cybersecurity experts have warned people against using Telegram for private communications and pointed out that only its opt-in 'secret chat' feature is encrypted from end-to-end. The app also has a reputation for being a haven for scammers and criminal activity, highlighted by founder and CEO Pavel Durov's arrest in France.

Tests urged

'Mystery illness' may be malaria

KINSHASA, Congo, Dec 12, (AP): The mystery flu-like illness that has killed dozens of people in southwest Congo in recent weeks might be malaria, according to results from laboratory samples of infected people, authorities said Wednesday.

"Of the 12 samples taken, nine were positive for malaria but these samples were not of very good quality, so we are continuing to research to find out if this is an epidemic," Dr. Jean-Jacques Muyembe, director-general of the National Institute for Biomedical Research in Kinshasa, told The Associated Press.

"But it is very likely that it is malaria because most of the victims are children," he added.

On Tuesday, the head of the World Health Organization, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, also said most of the samples tested positive for malaria, but noted it is possible that more than one disease was involved. He said further samples will be collected and tested.

In recent weeks, there were 416 reported cases of the mystery disease and 31 deaths from it in hospitals, WHO director-general said. There were another 44 deaths in the community, Congo's health minister Roger Kamba said last week.

Most of the cases and deaths are in children under 14 in the remote Panzi health zone in Congo's western Kwango province, according to the WHO.

Panzi resident Ezekiel Kasongo said his 9-year-old son was just released from the hospital after he fell sick two weeks ago.

"He had a high fever, a headache and was very weak," Kasongo told the AP. "We were very worried because of the number of deaths, especially among children, but God be praised, he is out."

The symptoms include fever, headache, cough and anemia. Experts from the National Rapid Response Team and WHO were in Panzi last week to take samples and investigate.

The Panzi health zone, around 435 miles (700 kilometers) from the capital, Kinshasa, is hard to access. The experts took two days to arrive, according to Congo's health minister.

Because of the lack of local testing capacity, samples had to be taken to Kikwit, more than 500 kilometers away, the head of the National Institute for Public Health, Dieudonne Mwamba, said last week.

Safety risks found in medication use

UK indefinitely bans puberty blocker for children with gender dysphoria

LONDON, Dec 12, (AP): The British government has indefinitely banned puberty blockers for children with gender dysphoria after independent experts found there was an unacceptable safety risk in prescribing the medication.

The decision, which will be revisited in 2027, effectively bans a common approach to medical gender transitions for youths. It also goes against standards held by medical groups elsewhere, including the European and World Professional Associations for Transgender Health, as well as the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

The ban will prevent prescribing medications that can suppress or pause puberty in children with gender dysphoria, providing more time to consider options that could include gender reassignment.

The announcement comes after a judge this summer upheld an emergency ban in a ruling that said the treatment was potentially harmful. The emergency ban was put in place by the center-right Conservative government and has now been extended by the

center-left Labour government.

The ban does not apply to those already receiving puberty blockers for gender dysphoria, to their use in clinical studies or in treatment of children with precocious puberty, an uncommon medical condition that causes puberty to begin abnormally early.

Consultation

It applies across the United Kingdom after consultation with the Scottish and Welsh governments, and an agreement with Northern Ireland.

Health Secretary Wes Streeting said a clinical trial will be set up next year to better evaluate use of the drugs.

"We need to act with caution and care when it comes to this vulnerable group of young people, and follow the expert advice," Streeting said.

The National Health Service in England stopped prescribing puberty blockers at gender identity clinics last year, saying there was not enough evidence about the benefits and harms.

In July, Justice Beverley Lang said a review commissioned by the NHS

found "very substantial risks and very narrow benefits" to the treatment. She concluded that gender care is an area of "remarkably weak evidence" and young people have been caught up in a "stormy social discourse."

The British Medical Association, which noted that the NHS review was controversial and included patients, academics, scientists and legal experts among its critics, voted to carry out an evidence-led evaluation of that report.

The court challenge was brought by the group TransActual and a youth who cannot be named, according to a court order.

TransActual criticized Wednesday's decision, saying that evidence of danger from 40 years of puberty blockers remains elusive.

"Banning medicines with no evidence of serious harm, only for trans people ... is discrimination plain and simple," said Keyne Walker, the group's strategy director. "Evidence of the harm of the temporary ban continues to emerge, and will grow now that it has been made permanent."

Ultra-processed foods tied to faster aging

Obesity overtakes smoking in health risks

CANBERRA, Dec 12, (Xinhua): Being overweight has become the leading risk factor contributing to disease in Australia for the first time, according to government data.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) on Thursday published its annual Australian Burden of Disease Study for 2024. It estimated that Australians lost a combined 5.8 million years of healthy life due to living with disease and dying prematurely in 2024.

It found that 36 percent of the loss of healthy life, called the burden of disease, could have been avoided or reduced due to modifiable risk factors.

Being overweight, including obesity, was identified by the AIHW as the leading modifiable risk factor.

Tobacco use was previously the leading risk factor, but the AIHW said its burden of disease has declined 41 percent since 2003.

"This fall is likely due to declines in smoking prevalence," AIHW spokes-

person Michelle Gourley said in a statement.

The study attributed 8.3 percent of Australia's total disease burden in 2024 to the risk factor of being overweight, with tobacco use responsible for 7.6 percent and all dietary risks for 4.8 percent.

A separate report published by the AIHW in June found that 66 percent of Australian adults, and 26 percent of children and adolescents, were overweight or obese in 2022.

Thursday's report found that cancer remained the leading group of diseases causing burden in 2024, accounting for 16.4 percent of the national loss of healthy life.

For young Australians, mental health conditions, suicide and self-inflicted injuries were the leading contributors of disease burden.

Ultra-processed food: Australian research has found that consumption

of ultra-processed food (UPF) is associated with faster biological aging.

In a new study, researchers from Monash University in Melbourne analyzed the diets of 16,055 people from the United States aged 20-79 with health and lifestyles comparable to those in other Western countries.

For every 10 percent of a person's daily caloric intake that came from UPFs, biological age rose by 2.4 months, the study found.

Biological age - also known as physiological or functional age - measures how old a person's cells and tissues are and can be affected by sleep quality, exercise, diet, water consumption and physical environment while chronological age refers to the time passed since birth and is fixed.

"Adults with higher ultra-processed foods tended to be biologically older," the study said.

UPFs include carbonated drinks, ice cream, chocolate, sweet or savory packaged snacks and instant noodles.

More privacy and new features

Apple's latest iPhones get gift of more AI for holiday shopping season

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec 12, (AP): Apple is pumping more artificial intelligence into the latest iPhones during the holiday shopping season with a free software update that includes a feature that enables users to create customized emojis within a matter of seconds.

The Wednesday release of the iPhone's upgraded operating system, iOS 18.2, extends Apple's expansion into AI months after rivals such as Samsung and Google began implementing the revolutionary technology on their devices. The update builds upon another one that came out in late October

to usher in the AI era for Apple and the iPhone, as well as for the iPad and Mac.

The latest round of AI tricks includes "Genmojis," Apple's description for emojis that iPhone users will be able to ask the technology to create and then share. Apple says it is placing some limits its AI's emoji artist to prevent the distribution of violent or hateful imagery. Other features include an "Image Playground" for a variety of AI-styled illustrations, writing tools and options for summarizing emails.

The technology won't work on iPhones that Apple made

before 2023 because it requires a special processor that isn't in older models. The AI will work on the iPhone 16 lineup that came out in September and the premium iPhone 15 models released last year.

That exclusivity is expected to propel a cycle of iPhone upgrades during the current holiday shopping season into next year, driving up Apple's profit even higher from the \$94 billion that the Cupertino, California, company pocketed in its last fiscal year ending in September. That expectation is the main reason Apple's stock price has climbed by about

30% so far this year to push the company's market value closer to the \$4 trillion threshold for the first time.

Apple is broadening the AI suite's appeal by including English versions tailored for Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, and the U.K. that are included in the latest software update.

Although the iPhone's AI is similar to many of the features that have already been available from other companies, Apple is taking a slightly different approach to the technology in an effort to stand out from the rest of pack.

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Bhavans emerge victorious in 11th edition of the Inter-School Badminton Tournament



The winners pose for a group photo.

FAIPS DPS and ILOA complete the podium

By Paulo Francisco X. Fernandes
Arab Times/Al-Seyassah Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The 11th edition of the Inter-School Badminton Tournament, hosted by the Indian Badminton Association of Kuwait (IBAK), concluded with a remarkable victory for Bhavans School, who were crowned overall champions.

The event, held at the IBAK Gym in Salwa on December 5th and 6th, 2024, saw fierce competition from over 300 players representing more than 40 schools. FAIPS DPS claimed the runner-up position in this highly competitive tournament.

Bhavans School's exceptional performance across multiple categories, including Under-11, Under-13, and Under-17 singles and doubles, secured them the coveted overall championship trophy.

FAIPS DPS displayed great teamwork and skill to finish as the runners-up, while ILOA rounded out the top three as second runners-up.

Many children also participated in the "OPEN" category, as there was no official representation from their schools, adding to the event's inclusivity and spirit.

The championship trophy was presented to the victorious Bhavans students in the presence of enthusiastic badminton supporters in Kuwait. All winners, runners-up, and semifinalists received medals and certificates to honor their outstanding achievements. Special recognition was given to the Most Promising Players, celebrating not just skill but also the positive spirit demonstrated by all participants.

Dr. Manimara Chozhan, Chairman of IBAK, remarked, "The 11th edition of the Inter-School Badminton Tournament has been a tremendous



Dr. Manimara Chozhan, Chairman of IBAK, addressing the contestants.

success. The level of competition continues to rise each year, and it's inspiring to see so many talented players taking part. We are proud to support these young athletes and look forward to nurturing future badminton stars."

IBAK remains committed to fostering badminton's growth at the grassroots level, providing young players with opportunities to showcase and develop their skills in a competitive setting. Through events like this tournament, IBAK continues to encourage youth participation and contribute to the development of the next generation of badminton champions.

The following are the winners, runners up and semifinalists.

Under 17 Girls Doubles -- Winner: Kenil Saira Ann & Vagvala Shruti; **runner-up:** Biju Neha Susan & Murgaiyan Sumitra; **semifinalists:** Sachin Kandahar Esha & Sam Sifenshika Sam and Maria Sibi Joan & Samit Shriya

Under 17 Boys Doubles -- Winner: Varghese Bobby Edwin & Singh Kushalveer; **runner-up:** Patil Aayush & Mewada Kinshuk; **semifinalists:**

Wankhade Harsh & Sreejith K Sidharth and Mathews Basil & Jacob Ethan

Under 17 Girls Singles -- Winner: Neha Susan Biju; **runner-up:** Vagvala Shruti; **semifinalists:** Kenil Saira Ann and Nithyanand Arundhati

Under 17 Boys Singles -- Winner: Varun Siva Sajith; **runner-up:** Edwin Bobby Varghese; **semifinalists:** Wankhade Harsh and Allen Roland

Under 15 Girls Doubles -- Winner: Nithyanand Arundhati & James Olivia; **runner-ups:** Tony Angela & Kaur Avneet; **semifinalists:** Qiyas Palekar Aamina & Chouhan Avni and Angel Subin & Shaik Zoia

Under 15 Boys Doubles -- Winner: Sumesh Addison & Sajith Siva Varun Siva; **runner-up:** Santhosh Alan & James Chris; **Semi-Finalist:** Sajeev P Abijith & Sajeev P Abinav and Anilkumar Aadithya & Jayaraj Hariharan

Under 15 Girls Singles -- Winner: Kaur Avneet; **runner-up:** Tony Angela; **semifinalists:** Shruthi Sanjana and Samit Shriya

Under 15 Boys Singles -- Winner: Sumesh Addison; **runner-up:** Santhosh Alan

semifinalists: Anilkumar Aadithya and Sreejith K Sidharth

Under 13 Girls Doubles -- Winner: Bananki Ashray Lipi Gowda & Althara Mariyam Nouril; **runner-up:** Pawar Harish Anika & Suresh Nair Nivedya; **semifinalists:** Dilipkumar Gami Bhavya & Ashish Chaudhari Ruth and Bhavani Tadepalli Isha & Shetty Samyuktha

Under 13 Boys Doubles -- Winner: Titto Liyan Fen & Antony Lobo Ranston; **runner-up:** Amitkumar Motaval Aksh & Sachin Kangralkar Vivaan; **semifinalists:** Rajaguru Shrivani Guru & Murgaiyan Sujith and Frankdud Aiden Stalin & Shobith Siddharth

Under 13 Girls Singles -- Winner: James Olivia; **runner-up:** Angel Subin; **semifinalists:** Dilipkumar Gami Bhavya and Althara Mariyam Nouril. **Under 13 Boys Singles -- Winner:** Titto Liyan Fen; **runner-up:** Sajeev P Abinav; **semifinalists:** Antony Lobo Ranston and Rajaguru Shrivani Guru

Under 11 Girls Doubles -- Winner: Jose Gianna & Kaur Keerat; **runner-up:** Santhosham Divinishiya Ruble & Sajith Sruti Siva; **semifinalists:** Maria Christy & Alice Maria and Ridika Renjith & Renjith Riddi

Under 11 Boys Doubles -- Winner: Santhosh Divine & Sanu Thammaiah Uday; **runner-up:** Muhammed Ayaan & Visakh Nair Dhyaan; **semifinalists:** Titto Leyon Ben & Muhammed Nahyan and Santhosh Aaron & Mohamed Ismail Musa

Under 11 Girls Singles -- Winner: Jose Gianna; **runner-up:** Sajith Sruti Siva; **semifinalists:** Kaur Keerat and Santhosham Divinishiya Ruble

Under 11 Boys Singles -- Winner: Visakh Nair Dhyaan; **runner-up:** Vinoy Mathew Chris; **semifinalists:** Muhammed Ayaan and Sanu Thammaiah Uday

Under 9 Singles (Boys & Girls Combined) -- Winner: Mohamed Ismail Musa; **runner-up:** Titto Leyon Ben; **semifinalists:** Praseesh Aayush and K Sri Sai Vee

IBAK can be reached on www.ibakwt.org or ibakcommittee@gmail.com

Hawks rally past Knicks

Rockets reach NBA Cup semis

HOUSTON, Dec 12, (AP): Jalen Green made two free throws with 3.5 seconds left and the Houston Rockets beat the Golden State Warriors 91-90 on Wednesday night to advance to the NBA Cup semifinals in Las Vegas.

Houston snapped a 15-game skid against the Warriors, winning for the first time in the series since Feb. 20, 2020. The Rockets will face Oklahoma City, which beat Dallas in the other West quarterfinal game on Tuesday night, in the semifinals on Saturday.

Alperen Sengun led the Rockets with 26 points and 11 rebounds and Jabari Smith Jr. added 15 points.

Houston led by 14 before falling behind late to set up the thrilling finish.

Houston trailed by six with about 1 1/2 minutes left before Fred VanVleet made a 3-pointer and Sengun added a layup with 27 seconds to go to cut the lead to one.

Stephen Curry missed a 3-pointer with 11 seconds left and Gary Payton II grabbed the rebound, but Green intercepted his pass and was fouled by Jonathan Kuminga to set up the winning free throws.

The Warriors had a chance to win it at the buzzer but Smith blocked Brandin Podziemski's 3-point attempt.

Golden State beat the Rockets twice this season without Curry before losing Wednesday in a game where he had 19 points.

This young Rockets team showed poise in finishing this one after squandering a double-digit lead.

Green's hustle on getting the ball late to draw the foul to set up the winning free throws.

Houston won despite making just 6 of 27 3-pointers.

While Houston heads to Las Vegas this weekend, the Warriors will return to regular-season play Sunday at Dallas.

Trae Young had 22 points and 11 assists, De'Andre Hunter and Jalen Johnson outplayed the Knicks frontcourt and the Atlanta Hawks took their surprising NBA Cup run all the way to the semifinals in Las Vegas, beating New York 108-100.

Hunter scored 24 points and Johnson had 21 points, 15 rebounds and seven assists for the Hawks, who were perhaps the surprise team of the tournament after knocking off the defending champion Celtics in Boston and NBA-leading Cleveland Cavaliers in group play to reach the knockout stage as the No. 3 seed in the East.

Now they will face another East power, the top-seeded Milwaukee Bucks, on Saturday in a semifinal matchup.

Josh Hart scored 21 points and Karl-Anthony Towns had 19 points and 19 rebounds for the Knicks, who went 4-0 in group play and shot out to a 12-point lead Wednesday. But as in the 2021 playoffs, it was Young who was celebrating on the floor of Madison Square Garden after eliminating the Knicks.



Atlanta Hawks' Bogdan Bogdanovic (13) defends a shot by New York Knicks' OG Anunoby (8) during the second half of an Emirates Cup NBA basketball game in New York. (AP)

Just advancing out of a tough pool group would have been a great experience for some young Hawks players. Now they can go and win the whole thing with two victories in Las Vegas.

Knicks, one of the favorites to win the tournament had a shockingly poor second half and fell to 0-2 against Atlanta this season.

The Knicks led 66-62 before Young scored eight straight points, pointing to the floor after a 31-footer for his second consecutive 3-pointer. Hunter then hit a 3 to cap an 11-0 surge during which Atlanta took its first lead of the game and went ahead 73-66.

Atlanta outscored New York 61-46 in the second half.

LeBron James was excused from the Los Angeles Lakers' practice on Wednesday for personal reasons, coach JJ Redick said.

James sat out of the Lakers' victory over Portland on Sunday because of left foot soreness, missing his first game of the season. The top scorer in NBA history also was not at the Lakers' training complex for the first practice during their extended break created by the NBA Cup tournament, but Redick described it as an "excused absence."

Los Angeles' next game is Friday at Minnesota, and Redick isn't sure whether James or fellow starter Austin Reaves will play against the Timberwolves.

"I think both of them it seems like are day to day," Redick said. "Just kind of wait and see how looks (Thursday), wait and see how it looks Friday."

James will turn 40 in less than three weeks, and Redick previously indicated that the Lakers would use their current four-day stretch without a game to give rest to the superstar currently in his record-tying 22nd NBA season.

James expressed a desire earlier this season to play in all 82 games, but both he and the Lakers are now being practical with the inevitable minor injuries that arise during any season.



Golden State Warriors guard Buddy Hield (7) defends against Houston Rockets guard Fred VanVleet (5) during the first half of an Emirates NBA Cup tournament quarterfinal basketball game in Houston. (AP)

Rayo Vallecano looms

Griezmann has steered Atletico back on track

MADRID, Dec 12, (AP): Antoine Griezmann wishes he was as good in the real world as he is on PlayStation. Based on his performances with Atletico Madrid, he must be really good on the video game.

Griezmann and fellow forward Julián Álvarez have returned to form to lead Atletico on a 10-game winning streak that has put the club back on track in the Champions League and Spanish league, where on Sunday it hosts Getafe with a chance to reach the top of the standings.

Atletico trails leader Barcelona by three points and is one point behind second-placed Real Madrid. Atletico and Madrid have a game in hand compared to Barcelona. The Catalan club hosts Leganes on Sunday, while Madrid visits Rayo Vallecano on Saturday.

Griezmann scored his sixth and seven goals in his last five matches in Atletico's 3-1 win over Slovan Bratislava in the Champions League on Wednesday. Álvarez scored his fifth goal in five matches.

Griezmann is a long-time fan of video games and used to make headlines for his Fortnite celebrations during that game's hype a few years ago. The France star celebrated one of his goals at Metropolitan Stadium on Wednesday alongside Pablo Barrios and Giuliano Simeone, two of his PlayStation playing partners, imitating the moves they make on the video game.

"We play FIFA a lot and that's the celebration we usually do when we play together," Griezmann said. He quickly added, "We are better on the Play than we are on the field."

Griezmann, named the man of the match against Slovan, scored his goals in the 42nd and 57th minutes, after Álvarez - who arrived from Manchester City for more than \$100 million in



Slovan's Kenan Bajric, left, and Atletico Madrid's Samuel Lino vie for the ball during the Champions League opening phase soccer match between Atletico Madrid and Slovan Bratislava at Riyadh Air Metropolitan stadium in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

August - put Atletico ahead with a nice curling finish to open the scoring in the 16th. Slovan's lone goal came in the second half.

Atletico's attack has been key for the team's resurgence since an October loss at Real Betis in La Liga. Since then, Diego Simeone's team has outscored opponents 30-7 across all competitions. It has scored three or more goals in each of its last five games, something that hadn't happened since 1950, according to UEFA.

"We've been playing really well and the team as a whole is performing excellently," Álvarez said. "Everyone, even those coming off the bench, has

been contributing to the team. We are on the right path and we have to keep working this way. All the competitions are very challenging but we've been doing really well."

The victory against Slovan moved Atletico to 11th place in the Champions League standings, in position to try to grab one of the top eight spots in the league phase.

"We needed the points. They were very important for us to carry on with this dynamic," coach Simeone said. "The team is responding to the situations we find ourselves in in these games. This reflects well on the team."

'Evidence is not sufficient to proceed'

Prosecutors close rape investigation that Swedish media say focused on Mbappé

STOCKHOLM, Dec 12, (AP): Swedish prosecutors on Thursday dropped a rape investigation that was launched in connection with soccer star Kylian Mbappé's visit to Stockholm in October.

In a statement, lead investigator Marina Chirakova said there was not enough evidence to continue the investigation, which centered on an incident at a hotel.

"During the course of the investigation, there has been a designated person suspected on reasonable grounds of rape and two cases of assault, but my assessment is that the evidence is not sufficient to proceed and the investigation is therefore closed," Chirakova said. "The designated person has not been notified of suspicion of a crime."

Prosecutors never publicly named the suspect in the investigation, but many Swedish media reported it was Real Madrid striker Mbappé, who visited Stockholm in October during a break in the Spanish league.

At the time Mbappé's legal team dismissed those reports as false.

Mbappe's lawyer Marie-Alix Canu-Bernard and the player's representatives did not immediately respond to a request for comments on Thursday.

In an interview that aired Sunday on French TV station Canal



Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappé warms up prior the Spanish La Liga soccer match between Athletic Bilbao and Real Madrid at the San Mames stadium in Bilbao, Spain. (AP)

Plus, Mbappé said he was "surprised" by the reports that he was the subject of a rape investigation and he had not been contacted by Swedish authorities.

"These are things that come into your life like that, you can't see them coming," Mbappé told Canal Plus. "It's just incomprehension. I don't think it weighed on me in the sense that I have never considered myself involved."

The 25-year-old soccer star appeared in Stockholm on Oct. 10 during an international break in-

stead of playing for France in the Nations League. Just days later Swedish media reported he was the subject of a rape investigation.

At the time Swedish prosecutors confirmed that a rape investigation began but declined to comment further.

Kylian Mbappé has injured his left thigh and will likely be sidelined for an undetermined period of time, Real Madrid said on Thursday.

The club did not specify the nature of the injury nor how long Mbappé will be out, saying "his progress will be monitored."

Madrid crosses the Spanish capital to play at Rayo Vallecano on Sunday, trailing La Liga leader Barcelona by two points.

It then travels to Qatar to play the Intercontinental Cup final on Dec. 18. Sevilla follows on Dec. 22 then a short winter break until playing at Valencia on Jan. 3.

The France captain was injured on Tuesday after scoring the opening goal in Madrid's 3-2 win at Atalanta in the Champions League. He left the game in the first half.

Mbappé has 12 goals in 22 games since joining Madrid from Paris Saint-Germain in the off-season, but he has delivered disappointing performances against major rivals.

Sheikh Khaled Al-Bader praises Zubaid's record-breaking achievements in Budapest

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: National swimming team athlete Mohammed Zubaid set a new Kuwaiti record after completing the 50-meter backstroke in 25.06 seconds at the World Swimming Championships in Budapest, Hungary, thereby breaking the previous record held by Ali Al-Zamel.

According to a press release issued by Kuwait Water Sports Federation, Zubaid also set a new Kuwaiti record in the 100-meter backstroke, finishing in 55.18 seconds, surpassing the previous record of 55.71 seconds set by Abdullah Al-Thuwaini.

The President of the Kuwait Water Sports Federation Sheikh Khaled Al-Bader Al-Sabah expressed his delight

with Zubaid's outstanding performance in Budapest, highlighting the swimmer's success in achieving new records for Kuwait.

He affirmed that Zubaid is one of the promising, talented swimmers with strong determination and a commitment to achieving successes that will be recorded in Kuwait's name.

Sheikh Khaled said the federation's Board of Directors is keen about providing all necessary support and overcoming any obstacles facing water sports by working closely with the relevant authorities.

He expressed hope that the coming period will bring more support to expand the reach of water sports and achieve

greater accomplishments at the continental and international levels.

Sheikh Khaled said this initiative aligns with the guidance of the wise political leadership, which stresses the importance of continued work and dedication to realizing the dreams and aspirations of young athletes, supporting them, and providing all necessary resources for their success.

Sheikh Khaled praised the excellent cooperation and coordination between the Kuwait Water Games Federation and the swimmers' families, thanking them for their ongoing moral support, which has played a major role in achieving the athletes' ambitions and securing remarkable accomplishments for Kuwait.



Sheikh Khaled Al-Bader Al-Sabah

Saudi Arabia views 2034 World Cup as transformative moment, says bid head

'Naturally positioned to host the biggest football tournament in the world'

RIYADH, Dec 12, (Xinhua): Saudi Arabia is stepping onto the global stage with ambitions to host the 2034 FIFA World Cup, reflecting readiness and enthusiasm rooted in its expanding sports infrastructure and passion for football, said Hammad Albalawi, head of the Saudi World Cup Bid, in an interview with Xinhua.

Saudi Arabia was awarded the right to host the 2034 World Cup at an Extraordinary FIFA Congress on Wednesday when Morocco, Portugal and Spain were chosen to co-host the 2030 World Cup.

Albalawi emphasized Saudi Arabia's preparations and the synergy between sports and Vision 2030, the kingdom's transformative economic and social blueprint.

"We have great football, great tourism, great projects, and great infrastructure," he said.

"It means we are naturally positioned to host the biggest football tournament in the world. We very much look forward to 2034 and beyond." Albalawi underscored the long-standing love of football among Saudis, which he said has been further nurtured by Vision 2030.

"All of this coming together means that we are achieving in all sectors, in sports and in football, more specifically," he remarked.

Saudi Arabia has shown growing influence in international sports after successfully hosting of major



A map at the Saudi Arabia World Cup bid exhibition in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, showing the proposed host cities and venues for the 2034 World Cup. (AP)

events. According to Albalawi, in 2023, Saudi Arabia welcomed 27 million international visitors, including three million fans attending various international sporting events.

Albalawi highlighted Saudi Arabia's openness to global partnerships, particularly with China, a key player in infrastructure development. When asked about cooperation with Chinese firms, especially in building stadiums, Albalawi said, "The business is open for everyone, and Chinese

investors are great at identifying the right opportunities. We will work with the best partners in the world to develop and execute this project in a way that satisfies the best global standards." He praised the strong ties between Saudi Arabia and China, underscoring the significant role of Chinese investors in the kingdom's development.

Albalawi stressed that sustainability is a core pillar of Vision 2030 and central to World Cup preparations. The kingdom aims to ensure

that World Cup preparations align with global environmental standards, making football accessible to all regions of the country.

He said the kingdom's strategic approach, supported by its commitment to excellence, demonstrates its readiness to deliver an unforgettable tournament that will leave a lasting legacy.

"We look forward to 2034 as a transformative moment, not just for Saudi Arabia but for the global football community," Albalawi concluded.

The crisis derby

Problems grow for Man City and Man United

MANCHESTER, England, Dec 12, (AP): A climate of crisis hangs over the first Manchester derby of the season.

Four-time defending Premier League champion Manchester City is in freefall.

Meanwhile, the great reset at Manchester United under British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe has hit new lows on the field and major disruption off it.

Defeat for either team at Etihad Stadium on Sunday is unthinkable as their respective campaigns rapidly unravel.

"Of course I question myself, but I'm stable in good moments and bad moments," City manager Pep Guardiola said after his team's latest loss against Juventus in the Champions League on Wednesday. "Our game will save us. We can do it."

This is uncharted territory for serial winner Guardiola, who is enduring the worst run of his coaching career after seven losses and only one win in City's last 10 games in all competitions.

The 2-0 loss to Juventus left the 2023 Champions League winner in danger of missing out on qualification for the knockout phase.

Domestically, City is eight points behind leader Liverpool in England's top flight, having played a game more. A record-extending fifth league title looks increasingly unlikely and the gap to Liverpool could be 11 points by the time the derby kicks off on Sunday.

If it's bad for City, it's a lot worse for United.

The record 20-time English champion's troubles have continued despite the optimism sparked by victory against City in last sea-

son's FA Cup final and an overhaul of the club's soccer operations following Ratcliffe's partial takeover in February.

A turbulent start to the campaign saw United fire manager Erik ten Hag and replace him with Ruben Amorim. Further disruption came last week with confirmation that sporting director Dan Ashworth departed after less than six months in the role following a lengthy process to prise him away from Newcastle.

Ratcliffe - owner of petrochemicals giant INEOS and one of Brit-

ain's richest people - paid \$1.3 billion for a 27.7% stake in United with the bold target of returning it to the summit of English and European soccer. A number of executive hires have been made and more than \$200 million spent on transfers in the offseason, yet United made its worst start to a Premier League and is 13th in the standings, eight points behind fourth-placed City.

Amorim, who won two Portuguese league titles with Sporting Lisbon, has quickly realized the size of the task on his hands after

back-to-back league defeats going into Sunday's game.

He at least has fond recent memories of facing Guardiola, having thrashed City 4-1 in November in one of his final games in charge of Sporting.

It was a perfect way to announce himself to United fans, having already agreed to take over at Old Trafford before that game. But he has called for patience as he tries to turn around the club's fortunes.

"I already knew it was a big job," Amorim said, "and I have a long way to go."



Manchester City's Erling Haaland, center, tries to score against Juventus' goalkeeper Michele Di Gregorio during the Champions League, opening phase soccer match between Juventus and Manchester City at the Allianz stadium in Turin, Italy. (AP)

Kuwait Club perfect run continues

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: Kuwait Club continued to dominate the basketball league, securing its fourth consecutive win with a commanding 122-80 victory over Al-Nasr in the fifth round. In the same round, Al-Qurain triumphed over Al-Tadhamun 93-67. This victory brought Kuwait Club's total to 8 points, having won all four of its matches, while Al-Nasr remains with 6 points. Al-Qurain now has 4 points, and Al-Tadhamun has 3.

At the conclusion of the second half of the merged league, the top four teams will qualify for the semi-finals, where the first-place team will face the fourth, and the second-place team will meet the third.

Kuwait Club asserted its dominance from the start, thanks to strong performances from players like Hamad Adnan, Alexander Al-Ghais, and American standout Robitt, who was the team's top scorer with 24 points. Kuwait Club ended the first quarter with a comfortable 32-13 lead. The team continued to control the game in the second quarter, extending its lead to 60-28 by halftime. The third and fourth quarters saw no change in momentum, as Kuwait



Kuwait Club player dunks during the league match.

Club remained firmly in control, finishing the third quarter 95-55, and wrapping up the match with a 122-80 victory.

In the second match, Al-Qurain earned a well-deserved win over Al-Tadhamun, dominating throughout the game. They led 27-17 after the first quarter, 53-33 at halftime, and 70-55 after the third quarter, ultimately securing a 93-67 victory.

Al-Gharib joins the international squash conference in Hong Kong

HONG KONG, Dec 12: Adel Al-Gharib, a member of the Board of Directors of the Squash Federation, took part in the international conference organized by the International Squash Federation yesterday. The event was held on the sidelines of the ongoing World Championship in Hong Kong.

During the conference, Al-Gharib engaged with prominent figures in the sport, including Jahangir Khan, honorary president of the International Federation; Zeina Wold, president of the International Federation; and Alex Gough, president of the International Professional Federation.

Key topics discussed at the conference included the comprehensive management of players, focusing on their physical, psychological, and nutritional needs, as well as strategies for preparing athletes for international tournaments.

Al-Gharib expressed his satisfaction with the experience, noting that the workshop provided valuable insights and practical knowledge. He highlighted the opportunity to connect with representatives from various countries involved in the sport, including board presidents and council members, fostering stronger global relationships among squash federations.



Adel Al-Gharib, Jahangir Khan and Alex Gough

Rising stars compete in Championship

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The "EQUICIETY" Dressage Championship will begin tomorrow at the Kuwait Equestrian Center, featuring intense competition at the beginner, basic, and training levels. The event is set to showcase fierce rivalry among both male and female riders vying for top results.

The championship sponsor, rider Fajr Al Sabah, highlighted the growing popularity of dressage in Kuwait, noting the organization of numerous local championships with broad participation. She explained that dressage, the art of horse taming, forms the foundation of equestrian sports. It focuses on teaching both the horse and rider balance, flexibility, and the ability to transition smoothly between different speeds with minimal effort and complete obedience from the horse. The ultimate goal for every rider is to communicate commands seamlessly and at precise moments, without confusing the horse.

Rider Ibrahim Ismail shared his deep passion for equestrianism, which began with horse riding sessions at a farm with friends. His interest grew



A file photo of a rider celebrating.

as he watched world champions and followed international dressage competitions. When the dressage sport field was introduced in Kuwait, he was among the first to join and has participated in local championships over the past two seasons.



People gather at the King Abdullah Sports City stadium prior to the Soccer Club World Cup match between Al-Ittihad and Auckland City in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. (AP)

Sports

HH the Amir congratulates Saudi Arabia and Morocco on hosting of World Cup

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Wednesday sent cables of congratulations to King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud of Saudi Arabia and the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, on the kingdom's winning of hosting the 2034 world cup.

Selecting the kingdom to host this international sports event depicts its high-esteem status and the great confidence in its potentials and expertise for organizing such an international event.

This achievement is a source of pride for the GCC states, Arab and Muslim nations, His Highness the Amir noted in his cables.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent two congratulatory cables to King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, King of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, in which he expressed his sincere congratulations on the occasion of

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's winning the hosting of the 2034 FIFA World Cup.

His Highness the Crown Prince stressed that this distinguished achievement is a source of pride and honor for the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and all friendly Arab and Islamic countries, wishing success and good luck to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in hosting this major global sporting event.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Sabah sent two congratulatory cables to King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, King of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the Crown Prince, and Prime Minister, in which he expressed his sincere congratulations on the occasion of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's winning the hosting of the 2034 FIFA World Cup.

His Highness the prime minister stressed that this distinguished achievement is a source of pride and honor for the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and all friendly Arab and Islamic countries, wishing success and good luck to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in hosting this major global sporting event.

His Highness the Amir sent a cable of congratulations to the King of Morocco Mohammed VI on the winning of hosting the 2030 World Cup alongside with Spain and Portugal.

Selecting the kingdom of Morocco to host this international sports event depicts its high-esteem status and the great confidence in its potentials and expertise for organizing such an international event.

This achievement is a source of pride for Muslim nations, His Highness the Amir noted in his cable.

His Highness the Crown Prince sent a cable to the King of Morocco Mohammed VI, in which he expressed his sincere congratulations on the winning of hosting 2030 world cup alongside with Spain and Portugal.

His Highness the Crown Prince stressed that this distinguished achievement is a source of pride and honor for the Arab and Islamic countries, wishing success and good luck to the Kingdom of Morocco in hosting this major global sporting event.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh sent a cable to the King of Morocco Mohammed VI, in which he expressed

his sincere congratulations on the winning of hosting 2030 world cup alongside with Spain and Portugal.

His Highness the prime minister stressed that this distinguished achievement is a source of pride and honor for the Arab and Islamic countries, wishing success and good luck to the Kingdom of Morocco in hosting this major global sporting event.

Minister of Information, Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi on Wednesday congratulated Saudi Arabia on winning the bid to 2034 FIFA World Cup and Morocco on being named co-host of the 2030 edition with Spain and Portugal.

Minister Al-Mutairi hailed the successful bids of the two Arab countries as a remarkable achievements for the Arab World.

He congratulated the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Minister of Sports Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al-Faisal, and all the Saudi people for the well-deserved winning to host the world cup.



Lille's Thomas Meunier, right, challenges for the ball with Sturm's Dimitri Lavalee during the Champions League soccer match between Lille and Sturm Graz at the Stade Pierre Mauroy in Villeneuve-d'Ascq, outside Lille, northern France. (AP)

Barca, Arsenal take big steps towards CL top-eight finishes

Man City in serious danger

MADRID, Dec 12, (Xinhua): Ferran Torres scored twice as FC Barcelona claimed a valuable 3-2 win away to Borussia Dortmund that moves it closer to assuring direct qualification for the last-16 of the UEFA Champions League.

According to this season's Champions League format, teams finishing among the top eight in the group will qualify automatically for the round of 16, while the teams finishing in ninth to 24th place will compete in a two-legged knockout phase play-off to secure their path to the last-16.

After Raphinha's 53rd-minute

opener for Barca was canceled out by Serhou Guirassy's 60th-minute penalty, Torres scored from close range in the 75th minute after Fermin Lopez's shot had been saved.

Guirassy leveled again three minutes later as Borussia caught out Barca's defense, but Torres scored his second of the game five minutes from time when his side broke quickly after Borussia made a mess of a corner.

The bad news for Barcelona was seeing Raphinha go off injured in the second half.

Manchester City is in serious danger of not even making the play-off round after losing 2-0 away to Juventus, which left it with just eight points from six matches.

A scrambled effort from Dusan Vlahovic, which the VAR deemed

to have crossed the goal-line, put Juventus ahead after 53 minutes and Weston McKennie's volley on the turn doubled the lead in the 75th minute.

Arsenal beat Monaco 3-0 to move third in the group, with goals from Bukayo Saka after 34 and 78 minutes. Saka then assisted Kai Havertz for Arsenal's third of the game two minutes from time.

Bologna and Benfica drew 0-0 in a result that all but eliminates the Italian side from the competition, while Tammy Abraham scored a late goal to see AC Milan come back from a goal down at home to Crvena Zvezda, who had equalized Rafael Leao's opener through Nemanja Radonjic's goal in the 67th minute.

The win leaves Milan a point outside the top-eight, but with relatively accessible matches to play at home

to Girona and away to Dinamo Zagreb.

Feyenoord kept its hopes of a top-eight finish alive with a comfortable 4-2 win at home to Sparta Prague. The home side led 2-0 by the 10th minute with goals from Gernot Trauner and Igor Paixao.

Anis Hadj Moussa and Santiago Gimenez piled on the agony for the visitor, who scored a consolation through Albion Rrahmani and an own goal.

Stuttgart came back from conceding an early goal to Young Boys to take a convincing 5-1 win to keep its playoff hopes alive, with Angelo Stiller leveling before halftime, while Enzo Millot, Chris Fuhrich, Josha Vagnoman and Yannik Keitel all scored as the Germans ran away with things in the second half.



Officials arrive for the inauguration.



Officials pose for a group photo after the inauguration.

Jaber International and Jaber Mubarak stadiums ready for Khaleeji Zain 26

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Sports Bashar Abdullah affirmed the readiness of Jaber International and Jaber Mubarak stadiums for the "Khaleeji Zain 26" competition, which will take place in Kuwait from December 21 to January 3.

According to a press statement issued by Kuwait Football Association (KFA), Abdullah said, "The stadiums are fully prepared to host the Gulf 26 Championship, following the official opening of Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah Stadium. We extend our gratitude to all the workers who worked tirelessly around the clock to complete this sports landmark, and ensure the stadium is ready for this cherished tournament."

Bashar Abdullah made these remarks during the inauguration of Jaber Mubarak Stadium at the Al-Sulaibikhat Club in the presence of Minister of Information, Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi

Abdullah said, "Kuwait is fully prepared for this significant sporting event, which brings together Gulf nations. This achievement is made possible through the guidance of the high leadership and the follow-up and oversight of Minister Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi to ensure the final preparations are on track.

He revealed that Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah Stadium is the first stadium in Kuwait without a track, and it has a seating capacity of 15,000 spectators.

Abdullah indicated that Fahaheel Club's stadium, which will soon open, will also be trackless.

It is worth highlighting that the opening ceremony of Jaber Mubarak Stadium was attended by the Vice Chair of the Supreme Organizing Committee for the tournament and President of the Kuwait Football Association Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef, Head of the Local Organizing Committee Mubarak Abdulaziz and the Tournament Director Mishal Al-Subaie.

Meanwhile, Deputy Director of the Facilities, Maintenance, and Infrastructure Sector in the Public Authority for Sports Sara Fletah affirmed that all the facilities are equipped with the latest systems and technologies, which will be operated by approved technical teams from global companies in collaboration with local national companies and staff.

Fletah, who heads the Facilities and Infrastructure Committee in the tournament's organizing committee, highlighted that the training grounds are ready to welcome the participating Gulf teams and referees to complete their training ahead of the major Gulf sports event.

Kuwait makes winning start at Padel Arabian Gulf Cup

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The Kuwaiti men's national padel team kicked off its campaign in the third edition of the Arabian Gulf Cup with a dominant 3-0 wins over Saudi Arabia. The tournament is being held at the Regency Hotel courts and will continue until the day after tomorrow.

In another match, the UAE men's team also triumphed 3-0 against Oman.

Today, the Kuwaiti men's team will face Bahrain in their third and final match of the preliminary round.

The Kuwaiti women's national team also secured a convincing 3-0 victory over Saudi Arabia. Meanwhile, the Omani team managed to edge out the UAE with a 2-1 win.

The Kuwaiti women's team will rest today and will meet Oman tomorrow, Saturday, in their final match of the league-style competition. The team with the most points will secure first place in the women's standings.



Al-Sarraf and Muaiouf team up against Saudi Arabia.

Four Kuwaiti gymnasts qualify for finals in Tunisia

TUNIS, Dec 12: The Kuwaiti girls' rhythmic gymnastics team has made a strong impression at the Mediterranean Union Championship, currently underway in Tunisia, with four players advancing to the finals of the competition.

Raya Al-Qassar secured a spot in the ribbon performance final after earning third place in her group. Similarly, Sarah Al-Bannai advanced to the hoop performance final, also finishing in third place. Layan Behbehani qualified for the scepter final with a commendable fourth-place finish, while Nabila Al-Kharafi excelled in the ball

performance category to book her place in the final. Despite a graceful display in the hoop competition, Amina Al-Kandari's fourth-place finish fell just short of qualification.

In a show of support, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Tunisia, Mansour Al-Omar, visited the team delegation at the competition venue. The ambassador praised the "Blue Gymnastics" players for their efforts and encouraged them to strive for top positions, aiming to raise the Kuwaiti flag high in this prestigious international event.



The Kuwaiti gymnastics team.