

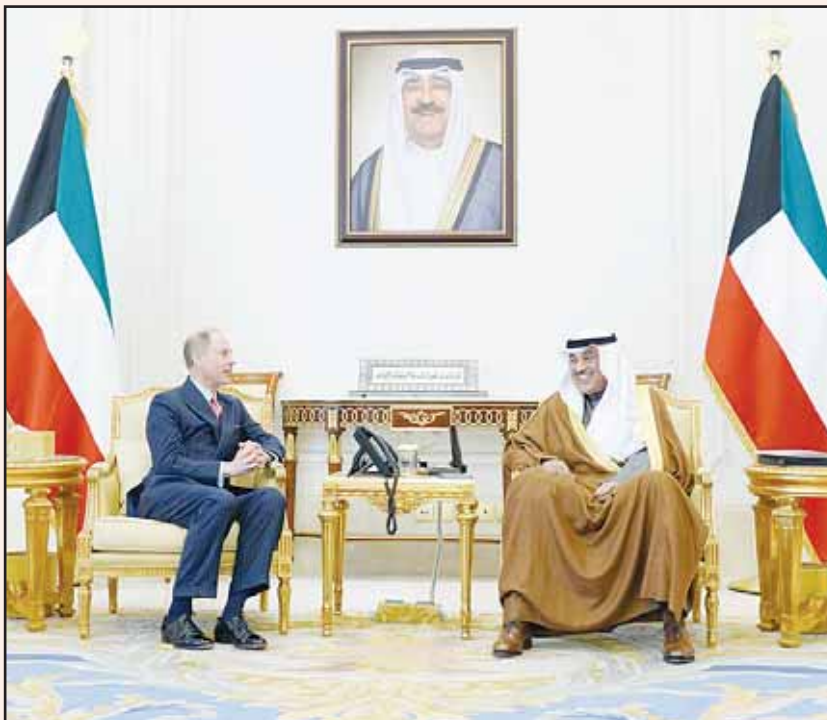


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HH the Amir receives the Duke of Edinburgh.

Amiri Diwan photo



HH the Crown Prince receives the Duke of Edinburgh.

Crown Prince Diwan photo

HH Amir, Crown Prince host Duke of Edinburgh

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace on Tuesday the Royal Prince Edward, Duke of Edinburgh, and his accompanying delegation who arrived in the country earlier today marking the start of an official visit.

The Duke of Edinburgh handed His Highness the Amir a written message from the UK King Charles III dealing with means of boosting further the deep-rooted and historic relations bonding the State of Kuwait and the UK.

The message included an invitation to His Highness the Amir to visit the UK.

For his part, His Highness the Amir asked Prince Edward to relay his greetings to King Charles, his wishes for him to enjoy good health and for the UK people to experience further progress and prosperity.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also received at Bayan Palace on Tuesday the Royal Prince Edward, Duke of Edinburgh, and his accompanying delegation who arrived in the country earlier today starting an official visit.

Senior state officials attended the audience.

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Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

Dear Ahmed al-Sharaa, read this and apply the Sharia

WE all cheered for the Syrian people after they attained salvation from the brutal regime that lasted for 54 years.

It is now time to speak frankly. The new Syria requires a lot of work to rebuild a nation that was shattered by the past era as well as carry out urbanization and development, which will require the collective cooperation of all, especially the Arab countries and their peoples. However, this mission cannot begin until the stolen rights are returned to their rightful owners.

Any attempt to build a new Syria on the same foundations of the old regime would make the country even weaker than it was under Assad, particularly with regard to the laws that allowed the confiscation of money and property. These laws enabled thieves, criminals, and con artists to rob both Syrian citizens and Arabs, including Gulf nationals.

Many properties were seized by the regime's henchmen or those connected to it, often under flimsy pretexts. These individuals betrayed the trust placed in them, whether in companies, real estate, or other ventures. Some of these criminals even claimed close relationships with high-ranking regime officials. They went as far as to spread rumors suggesting they were managing investments on behalf of Bashar al-Assad, his brother Maher, his sister Bushra al-Assad, and other members of the family. Through these false claims, they defrauded Kuwaitis, Saudis, Gulf citizens, and other Arabs.

The parties related to Bashar al-Assad issued decisions to seize people's money in agreement with Bashar al-Assad, his brother, their close associates, and the pil-

lars of the regime. It is inconceivable that all of this could have occurred without the approval of senior officials, such as ministers, presidents, or intelligence officers.

We reiterate that we possess many documents that confirm the validity of our claims, and even expose the methods of theft and robbery of not just cars and money, but also real estate, farms, palaces, and homes that belonged to Gulf citizens.

Confiscation became the primary method used by the regime to seize the properties owned by Gulf citizens, often due to personal disputes or in response to political positions taken by their governments that were not favored by Assad. The confiscated properties were then registered under the names of influential individuals or other front figures, and eventually sold to irrelevant individuals. This method made it increasingly difficult to return the properties to their rightful owners, who often found themselves unable to reclaim their rights. In doing so, they risked facing severe consequences, such as imprisonment in Tadmur Prison, Saydnaya, or the Palestine Branch detention center. They could also be falsely accused of spying for Israel, being enemies of the Baath Party, or insulting the president. Many of the well-known

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Kuwait air traffic lifts off with 29% growth

Passenger count soars by 34.7 pct

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: A recent report from the General Administration of Statistics revealed a 29.17 percent increase in aircraft movement at Kuwait International Airport from 2014 to 2023, with the number of arriving and departing planes rising from 83,443 in 2014 to 117,822 in 2023.

The report highlighted the severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on air travel, where aircraft movement plummeted to 30,215 and 35,215 flights in 2020 and 2021, respectively.

Passenger traffic similarly saw significant growth, surging 34.7 percent from 10.1 million passengers in 2014 to 15.5 million in 2023.

However, the pandemic led to a sharp decline, with numbers dropping to just 3.5 million passengers annually in 2020 and 2021 due to global travel restrictions.

The statistics further showcased the increasing capacity of Kuwait International Airport, which expanded from accommodating 7 million passengers annually in 2015 to 14 million passengers in 2023.

The observers stressed the urgency of modernizing airport infrastructure, improving service efficiency and expediting the completion of the new passenger terminal.

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Historic visit on Dec 21

Modi marks first Indian PM visit to Kuwait in 4 decades

By Paulo Francisco X. Fernandes
Arab Times/Al-Seyassah Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to make a historic official visit to Kuwait on Saturday, Dec 21.

This marks the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Kuwait in over 40 years. During his visit, the Indian premier is expected to engage in high-level talks with the Kuwaiti leadership to further strengthen and expand the long-standing and friendly relations between the two nations.

Earlier this month, Kuwait's Foreign Minister, Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya, visited New Delhi, where he met with Prime Minister Modi and extended an official invitation for the Indian leader to visit Kuwait.

In recent years, the Indian government has placed a greater emphasis on its relations with the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, and the timing of this visit is especially

significant as Kuwait currently holds the presidency of the GCC.

In September, Modi met with His Highness the Crown Prince of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York.

The two leaders expressed their satisfaction with the growing momentum in bilateral relations and discussed the prevailing security situation in the Middle East.

They both called for the swift restoration of peace and stability in the region and highlighted the importance of providing immediate humanitarian assistance to those affected by the ongoing crises.

This visit by Prime Minister Modi is expected to further cement the strong ties between India and Kuwait and contribute to deepening cooperation across various sectors.

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Narendra Modi

Kuwait and Iraq hold crucial maritime demarcation talks

BAGHDAD, Dec 17, (KUNA): The joint Kuwaiti-Iraqi technical legal committee on demarcation of maritime borders beyond the 162 mark held its seventh meeting on Monday in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad.

According to a Kuwaiti foreign ministry statement, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah headed the Kuwaiti delegation in the meeting, while

Deputy National Security Advisor Dr. Issam Al-Saadi headed the Iraqi side.

Both sides reaffirmed determination to continue alternately holding such meetings until reaching an agreement on this regard in accordance with international law rules and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982.

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Gov't committed to T2 airport project's completion: minister

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: Minister of Public Works, Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, emphasized the government's commitment to utilizing all available resources to ensure the timely completion and operation of the new "T2" airport project.

In a press statement following a meeting to review the project's progress, she reaffirmed the government's dedication to facilitating the airport's development and overcoming any challenges faced along the way.

The meeting, attended by Sheikh Hamoud Al-Mubarak, Chairman of the General Directorate of Civil Aviation, and representatives from the Ministry of Interior, was focused

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2 'Bahrain, Kuwait ties in rapid growth'



8 ATC partners with Al Amiri Hospital to celebrate its 10th Nutrition Week



10 Alghanim Industries and BYD unveil landmark showroom in Kuwait

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef hosts Emirati delegation

1st Deputy PM hails security ties with UAE

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17, (KUNA): First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah has praised the security cooperation with UAE.

A statement issued by the Ministry of Interior said the remarks came af-

ter Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef received an Emirati delegation Monday headed by the Director General of Identity and Passports at the Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs and Ports Security, Major General Suhail Al-Khaili, and the Executive Director

of Housing Data at the (Authority), Brigadier Marshid Al-Mazrouei.

According to the statement, discussion focused on security issues of common interest and ways to enhance efforts in all security fields between the two countries.

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KNG Chief lauds historic Kuwaiti-Qatari ties

Chief of Kuwait's National Guard Sheikh Mubarak Humoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah lauded Tuesday the deeply rooted and exceptional relations between Kuwait and Qatar.

In a statement, the National Guard mentioned that Sheikh Mubarak Al-Humoud received at KNG's Diwan

Ambassador of Qatar to the country, Ali bin Abdullah Al-Mahmoud, accompanied by first secretary Newaimi Mohammad Al-Hajri.

The two congratulated Sheikh Mubarak on his appointment as KNG Chief, and the latter thanked them for their sentiments. (KUNA)



KNG Chief receives Ambassador of Qatar.

KUNA photo



Photo shows meeting in progress.

Prayer Timings			
Fajr	05:11	Asr	14:34
Sunrise ..	06:36	Maghrib ..	16:52
Zohr	11:44	Isha	18:14

Local

Weather			
Expected weather for next 24 hrs:			
By Day: Rather cold and partly cloudy with light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speed of 12-38 km/h.			
By Night: Cold to very cold and partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times northwest-			
erly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 08-32 km/h with a chance for frost forming over agricultural and desert areas.			
Station	Max Exp	Min Rec	
Kuwait City	19	08	
Kuwait Airport	19	02	

Abdaly	19	01
Bubyan	19	03
Jahra	19	05
Failaka Island	20	07
Salmiyah	18	10
Ahmadi	19	03
Jal Aliyah	18	03
Nuwaisib	21	07

‘Bahrain, Kuwait ties in rapid growth’

Kingdom marks 53rd National Day



First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya and senior officials, diplomatic envoys attended the ceremony.

By Fares Al-Abdan
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: The Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to Kuwait Salah Al-Maliki has said that the bilateral cooperation between Kuwait and Bahrain continues to grow and develop at all levels, which benefits both countries and their peoples.

He stated this during a ceremony organized by the Embassy of Bahrain in Kuwait to celebrate the 53rd anniversary of Bahrain’s National Day and the 25th anniversary of King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa’s reign. The ceremony was attended by the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya, senior officials, dignitaries, and heads of diplomatic missions in the country.

Ambassador Al-Maliki commended the strong and long standing fraternal ties between Kuwait and Bahrain, which are continuously supported by the leaderships of both countries.

He affirmed the importance of continued cooperation to further strengthen the relationship for the mutual benefit of both nations and their people.

Ambassador Al-Maliki explained that Bahrain is steadfastly advancing its foreign policy, which is rooted in principles of balance, moderation, cooperation, dialogue, and human coexistence. It is committed to enhancing international cooperation, promoting sustainable peace, advancing development, protecting human rights and freedoms, and preserving the environment, all of which contributes to Bahrain’s influential role on the international stage.

On this occasion, Ambassador Al-Maliki extended his heartfelt congratulations to the King of Bahrain King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, and the people of Bahrain.

Meanwhile, the Ambassador of the People’s Republic of China to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei extended his warmest congratulations to Bahrain on its National Day.

He expressed his wishes for continued success, prosperity, and happiness for Bahrain and its people.

Ambassador Zhang thanked the Bahraini Ambassador for the kind invitation, and highlighted the strong and distinguished relations between China and Bahrain, particularly through Bahrain’s involvement in China’s Belt and Road Initiative.

Optimism

He expressed optimism about further cooperation in various fields to drive development in the Gulf region.

Ambassador Zhang described the Chinese-Gulf relations as strategic in serving the common interests of China and the GCC countries, and contributing to the establishment of security and stability in the region.

He stressed that China does not seek to expand its influence in the region but advocates for stability and joint development between China and the GCC states.

Addressing the regional situation, Ambassador Zhang expressed concern over ongoing developments and called for the restoration of security and stability.

He affirmed China’s respect for the choices of the region’s peoples, and urged the international community to play an effective role in supporting the development and progress of the region’s countries.

In this regard, the Egyptian Ambassador to Kuwait Osama Shaltout highlighted the historical and deep-rooted relations between Egypt and Bahrain, which is evident from the frequent mutual visits between the two countries.

He affirmed the importance of this long standing relationship and the ongoing cooperation between them.

Regarding the visit of the Egyptian Minister of Petroleum to Kuwait to participate in the OAEPEC meeting, Ambassador Shaltout described it as significant, as it is the first visit by the Egyptian Minister of Petroleum to participate in the ministerial meetings of the OAEPEC. He referred to it as a historic occasion, as the organization has evolved and been restructured into the Arab Energy



Bahrain Ambassador to Kuwait Salah Al-Maliki, Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times Ahmed Al-Jarallah (2nd right), Saud Al-Farhan (2nd left) and other diplomats at the ceremony.



Ambassadors of Egypt, Osama Shaltout, Qatar, Ali Bin Abdullah Al-Mahmoud and United Kingdom, Belinda Lewis attended the ceremony.



US Ambassador to Kuwait Karen Sasahara with Bahraini ambassador.



EU Ambassador to Kuwait Anne Koistinen at the ceremony.

Organization, now encompassing oil, gas, and renewable energy in its work.

Ambassador Shaltout explained that the Egyptian Minister of Petroleum, during the visit, had the honor of meeting His Highness the Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, and His Highness the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The minister also held bilateral talks with the Minister of Oil, the Chairman of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, the Minister of Energy of Qatar, the Minister of Oil of Algeria, and several Kuwaiti businessmen with investments in Egypt. These discussions were productive and will further enhance support from Arab countries in the oil and gas sectors.

Regarding Kuwaiti investments in Egypt, the ambassador affirmed that several ongoing projects are progressing and developing positively.

Ambassador Shaltout concluded by extending his best wishes to Bahrain for continued progress and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

Economic

In turn, the Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to Kuwait Sinan Al-Majali explained that the visit of the Jordanian Crown Prince, Prince Hussein bin Abdullah II, to Kuwait lasted for two days. During his visit, the Crown Prince met with His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad, held extensive talks with His Highness the Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, and also met with economic and media officials.

The visit was highly successful by all standards and Prince Hussein received a warm and welcoming reception, which he described as unsurprising given Kuwait’s longstanding hospitality. Whenever the Jordanian Crown Prince visits Kuwait, he is treated like family. The visit was part of ongoing efforts to strengthen cooperation and coordination between the two countries across various fields.

On the subject of bilateral relations, Ambassador Al-Majali affirmed that all issues between Jordan and Kuwait are on the table, with a shared understanding and alignment on many matters, adding that there is constant coordination at all levels between the two nations.

Regarding regional issues, the Ambassador emphasized that the Palestinian cause has always been a top priority for both Jordan and Kuwait, with a convergence of views on all regional matters.

On economic relations, he highlighted that Kuwait is considered Jordan’s most prominent partner among Arab countries, with the largest volume of investments from Arab nations. He expressed pride in this partnership and reiterated efforts to further increase these investments.

Ambassador Al-Majali concluded by extending his warmest congratulations and best wishes to the King of Bahrain, the Crown Prince, the Bahraini government and people, as well as to the Bahraini Ambassador to Kuwait on this special occasion.

In addition, the Algerian Ambassador to Kuwait Ambassador Abdelkader Al-Hassani stated that the participation of the Algerian Minister of Energy in the OAEPEC meetings held in Kuwait was highly successful.

He highlighted the productive discussions between the minister and his Egyptian, Qatari, and Libyan counterparts, but noted that the minister did not meet individually with his Kuwaiti counterpart.

The ambassador explained that they briefly discussed future cooperation between the two countries in the energy sector upon his arrival and agreed to include this area of collaboration in the upcoming meetings of the joint bilateral committee, with the aim of strengthening the already distinguished relations between the two brotherly nations.

He also revealed that an invitation had been extended to the Minister of Oil of Kuwait to visit Algeria, though a specific date has not been set, indicating that an official invitation would be sent in the coming days.

Ambassador Al-Hassani concluded by offering his congratulations to the Bahraini Ambassador and all the embassy staff on the occasion of Bahrain’s National Day and the Silver Jubilee of King Hamad’s assumption of the throne.

Kuwait and UK bolster 125 years of relations with focus on future

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17, (KUNA): Kuwait and the United Kingdom continue to bolster their 125-years-old relations, rooted in shared vision on regional and international matters and mutual commitment by their political leaderships to enhance shared interests.

Over decades, these ties have experienced steady progress, supported by agreements, across various sectors; January 1899 marked the beginning of formal diplomatic relations between the two nations based on cooperation and strategic partnership.

In honor of the momentous event, the two governments dubbed 2024 the year of Kuwaiti-British Partnership, as per agreement signed on the sidelines of an official visit by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, then Crown Prince, to the United Kingdom in August 2023.

A joint statement issued by both countries’ foreign ministries in January 2024 emphasized the exponential growth of the deeply rooted relations over the course of 125 years, highlighted mutual support and collaboration in the face of global challenges and in defense of common values.

The two nations are setting out to work for future focus on cooperation in trade, investment, defense, cybersecurity, education, culture and international development, the statement read.

It further noted that the strategic dialogue between the two countries would provide great opportunities to advance cooperation on major international issues, enhancing foreign policy collaboration and support mutual security and prosperity through frequent visits by leaders and senior officials from both countries.

One notable milestone was the visit of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait -- then Crown Prince -- to the United Kingdom as this visit marked a significant step in the robust and historical ties between the two nations.

The first seven decades of this relation remained stable until 1961 when the late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem initiated a new, more balanced phase in this relation, announcing Kuwait’s independence.

British government continued to support Kuwait, including sending military forces to defend Kuwait’s territorial integrity in the First Gulf War.

The Kuwait-UK Joint Steering Group -- established in 2012 and holding semi-annual meetings -- plays a vital role in strengthening bilateral ties and translating agreements into tangible outcomes that benefit both countries.

‘Peace & stability vital in fast moving world of technology’

“IN THE midst of the sweeping economic and political transformations unfolding globally, we find ourselves deeply and rapidly affected by the pace of modern digital media,” columnist **Dr. Ghadir Mohammad Asiri**, wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

“This unprecedented penetration into people’s homes and minds intensifies future anxieties surrounding the fast-moving changes that reshape political ideologies, societal norms and everyday life.

“These shifts underscore the urgent call by international organizations and nations for social security, fostering peaceful coexistence and enacting laws that promote social justice and protect individuals. The evolution of legal frameworks and strategic policies has become a cornerstone for achieving sustainable development in many countries.



Dr. Ghadir Asiri

“In today’s world, artificial intelligence (AI) developments are advancing beyond human capabilities, presenting both opportunities and formidable challenges.

“This rapidly evolving technology raises critical questions about its impact on the global future. As humans create robots that surpass them in intelligence, the need for legal reforms and regulations grows, ensuring alignment with modern advancements that enhance human life.

“AI’s applications span numerous critical sectors, particularly in medicine -- ranging from revolutionary surgical procedures and accurate diagnoses to addressing pregnancy and childbirth concerns. In addition, AI is transforming military systems, transportation and public services, while scientific institutions worldwide compete to achieve groundbreaking discoveries powered by AI.

“Digital transformation has also redefined human resources and cultural literacy. Technological advancements have elevated the concept of competition, shifting the definition of illiteracy.

“Today, illiteracy is no longer about the inability to read or write but rather a lack of knowledge and adaptation to evolving digital cultures.

“Societies now demand constant renewal and modernization, with a focus on fostering awareness of global policies and general cultural integration. For the next generation, staying abreast of these changes is not just a goal but a necessity.

“As we navigate this rapidly evolving era, we are collectively striving for peace, social security and stability -- essential pillars of modern digital societies.

“Our shared aspirations for progress are deeply rooted in the values of our unified homeland, a nation that has thrived on coexistence and harmony since its foundation.

“Looking ahead, the path forward calls for innovation, cultural adaptation and a commitment to shaping a future that balances technology, peace and societal well-being.”

Also:

“A bold decision to solve the world’s problems may seem like a distant dream amidst the global challenges of wars and conflicts -- whether between nations or among different groups,” columnist **Dr. Issa Mohammad Al-Amiri** wrote for **Al-Rai** daily.

“The key issue lies in the difficulty of resolving these conflicts given the diversity of interests, goals and objectives and the complexity of overlapping agendas among major powers.

“As such, the lack of agreement -- or even communication -- between major nations for the greater good of this world is deeply alarming.

“The global situation continues to spiral downward, especially in the face of pressing issues such as climate change.

“Despite agreements aimed at addressing environmental challenges, major powers often fail to honor their commitments. The ultimate losers in this scenario are future generations, who will bear the severe consequences of climate change.

“If we aim to understand the state of the world today, it becomes clear that divisions among major powers make solving global problems an impossible dream.

“Each nation envisions a world shaped to suit its own interests, leading to a perpetual clash of agendas.

“Consequently, problems persist for decades, often worsening over time. In some cases, tensions escalate to the point of nuclear threats, as seen recently when Russian President Vladimir Putin altered Russia’s nuclear doctrine in response to the advanced missiles supplied to Ukraine by Western nations. This development marks a dangerous turning point in the war.

“What is urgently needed today is a bold decision by the major powers to co-ordinate efforts and address the world’s problems collectively.

“This could be achieved through each nation leveraging its influence over its allies or dependents, based on their respective spheres of power.

“However, such coordination is only possible if the leaders of major nations genuinely intend to save this shared world in which we all live without discrimination.

“Setting aside ineffective proposals -- such as the recent suggestion by the French President at the G20 summit to add two permanent seats to the United Nations from Africa and South America -- what is truly needed is a comprehensive restructuring of the United Nations.

“This reorganization must reflect the current international realities and changing global dynamics that have emerged over the past 70 years since the UN’s establishment.”

□ □ □

“First of all, if you tell a rational person something unreasonable and they believe it, then they have no sound judgment. The story circulating on social media is hard to believe, as neither the appearance of the person in question suggests they have just been in a fight, nor are the words themselves reasonable,” columnist **Talal Al-Saeed** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“Also, the owner of the video explicitly admits in both sound and image that she allegedly put her hands around the neck of the minister. However, considering that the minister is about two meters tall, how could she possibly reach his neck? Is it really plausible for her or anyone else to act in such a manner?

“This is one thing, and the other is that assaulting a public employee while performing his official duties is considered a crime punishable by law. With her confession recorded in both audio and video, she has condemned herself and exposed herself to legal accountability. Even if she is outside Kuwait, it will be very easy to bring her back through Interpol or international police. Only then will she understand her true position in a case she got herself into of her own free will.

“Another important point is her appeal to His Highness the Amir (May God protect and preserve him) for justice. The appeal should not go beyond the Prime Minister, as the Amir exercises his powers through the ministers he appoints. Therefore, he does not accept the insult or dishonor of his ministers by anyone. If someone insults a minister without justification, they must bear the consequences. For those who feel they have been wronged or assaulted in any way, the courtroom is large enough for everyone. How many times have ordinary citizens won cases against ministers?

“As for “dishonoring” a minister, this is unreasonable and unacceptable! It should also be noted that those who were harmed by the decision to withdraw citizenship have found what they were looking for in this video and have begun to promote and publish it in an attempt to tarnish Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef’s reputation. The reality is that such matters only increase the minister’s strength and resolve. The mission is not easy, and the burden is heavy. The withdrawal of citizenship has sparked many reactions from those whose interests were harmed, with some imagining that spreading the video will stop the withdrawal of citizenship or remove the minister from office!

“We tell everyone that preserving the national identity is a clear mandate for the current stage, and the matter will not end with the departure of the minister or the arrival of someone else. Moreover, the decision to withdraw citizenship has unprecedented popular support from the real Kuwaiti street, which breathed a sigh of relief after the recent measures!

“Finally, how difficult it is for someone among us to place themselves in situations they are not worthy of, losing all sense of reason in the process.”

□ □ □

“A Muslim is patient when he endures calamities that he cannot avert, and when he does not complain about the trials that have befallen him except to Allah Almighty. Instead of becoming impatient and filling his heart with worry, grief, and intense sadness to no avail, he remains steadfast,” columnist **Dr. Khaled Al-Janfawi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“Among the pillars of patience in today’s volatile world, we mention the following:

- This world is a place of trial: Only a believer is constantly tested throughout his life in this fleeting world. Our great Lord says in His book, “Do people think that they will be left to say, ‘We believe,’ and they will not be tested? But We have certainly tested those before them, and Allah will surely make evident those who are truthful, and He will surely make evident the liars.” (Al-Ankabut 1-3). Our Messenger (PBUH) said, “A man is tested according to his religion. If his religion is strong, his test will be severe. If his religion is weak, Allah will test him according to his faith. The test will continue to afflict the servant until he walks on the earth without any sin.”

- Expecting reward: A Muslim expects reward when he turns his heart to his Lord the Almighty, seeking His reward for the trials that befall him. He endures these trials seeking the pleasure of Allah the Almighty, and accepts and is satisfied with what Allah has decreed for him in this moment and circumstance. He does not despair of Allah’s mercy.

- Anxiety: Every sane person feels sadness when worldly calamities befall him, but this sadness should not prevent him from living his life as normally as possible. Only those suffering from psychological weakness resulting from external circumstances experience excessive anxiety. The stronger a person’s self-confidence, the less anxious they become.

- Not despairing: A sane Muslim does not despair of the forgiveness and mercy of Allah Almighty, especially if the calamity that befall him was due to a sin he committed against his Lord or the rights of others, and he has repented. Allah Almighty says, “Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills. And whoever associates with Allah has certainly fabricated a tremendous sin” (An-Nisa’ 48).

Only those who persist in polytheism despair of Allah’s mercy.”

— **Compiled by PFX Fernandes/ Mahmoud Attiyeh**



Municipality loader razes an encroachment.



Minicipality inspector issues citations.

711 citations issued, 158 abandoned cars lifted

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: The Public Relations Department of Kuwait Municipality has announced the results of an intensive field campaign conducted in the Shuwaikh Industrial Area by inspection teams from the Capital Governorate. The campaign aimed to ensure compliance with commercial regulations, building codes, and safety requirements, while also addressing public cleanliness and road usage violations, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

The inspection teams carried out thorough checks of various commercial activities, enforced regulations related to construction materials stor-

age, and monitored adherence to Municipality laws and safety standards. Violators were penalized according to applicable laws and regulations.

During the week-long campaign, inspectors issued 711 citations related to advertisements, public cleanliness, and road obstructions. Additionally, 98 warnings were issued, and 158 abandoned vehicles and heavy equipment were removed from the area.

This initiative highlights the Municipality’s commitment to maintaining order and ensuring safety in one of Kuwait’s busiest industrial zones.

Bail for suspects involved in money-laundering rejected

Court scraps appeal by ‘royal’ in OCA poll verdict

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: The detention renewal judge has refused to release on bail a businessman, a lawyer and a government employee who are involved in a money laundering and forgery case.

The suspects have been remanded to further detention until completion of further proceedings.

The businessman is accused of illegally transferring industrial plots of land worth over 150 million dinars, which belonged to a prominent car dealership, without the consent of the other partners.

He allegedly did so with the help of two other defendants in violation

of the law.

□ □ □

Appeal in OCA poll rejected: The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) has rejected Sheikh Talal Al-Fahad’s appeal, declaring it inadmissible and ordering him to bear the legal costs of the case, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

The ruling, issued on December 13, 2023, upholds the validity of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) elections held on September 8, 2023, which saw Indian candidate Rajarandhir Singh, 77, elected as OCA President.

Singh will serve a four-year term from 2024 to 2028, following his election at the 44th General Assembly in New Delhi, India.



KUNA photo

The MPW maintenance team at the site.

Stadium set to host Gulf Cup: MPW

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17, (KUNA): The Ministry of Public Works (MPW) announced on Tuesday that it has completed all tasks assigned in preparation for Kuwait’s hosting of the Arabian Gulf Cup, Khaleeji Zain 26, slated from December 21 to January 3.

Ministry spokesperson Engineer Ahmad Al-Saleh told KUNA that the ministry and its teams completed all assigned tasks, including parking areas near Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium and Sulaibikhat Club, which involved installing accessories, painting, and numbering spaces.

The ministry built approximately 12,000 parking spaces to accommodate the stadium, along with 20 entrances and exits for parking access, **Al-Saleh** added.

It also completed full stadium maintenance, asphalt paving, and three parking lots accommodating about 2,500 cars under the supervision of their Minister Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan.

The Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART) also constructed entrances and exits on the Sixth Ring Road for VIPs to facilitate smooth access.

96 stalls allocated in draw to sell truffles

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: The Public Relations Department of Kuwait Municipality announced that the Audit and Follow-up Department of Municipal Services at Capital Municipality, represented by Food and Markets Control, conducted a public draw to distribute 96 stalls in the seasonal truffle market in the Al-Rai Markets area, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The draw was carried out under the supervision of the Director of the Capital Municipality Eng. Mohammad Al-Mutairi.



Eng. Al-Mutairi

In this regard, the Food and Markets Supervisor at the Audit and Follow-up Department of Municipal Services at Capital Municipality Abdulrahman Al-Rashidi explained that the stall distribution process was done through a public draw, whereby names were selected from a box to ensure transparency and fairness.

The right to operate the stalls is granted for a period of six months, in accordance with the terms and conditions outlined in the public markets regulation issued by ministerial resolution No. 151/2006.

A total of 4,222 applications were submitted for the draw. The terms and conditions outlined in the regulations were applied to 4,208 of the applicants, while 14 applications were excluded for not meeting the required criteria for the right to operate the stalls.

The drawing and organization process was carried out under the supervision of the Audit and Follow-up Department of Municipal Services, with the participation of the Markets Committee. The Ministry of Interior, represented by officers from the Souq Al-Jumaa Police Station, also assisted in the organization and execution of the draw, with some of those present being asked to participate in the process of drawing names.

Sports officials probed in money corruption scam

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: The Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) has announced that, as part of its ongoing efforts to combat corruption, reduce its risks and effects, and hold those responsible accountable, it has referred several individuals from the Public Authority for Sports, the Kuwait Athletics Federation, and a sports club to the Public Prosecution, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

This referral follows an investigation into suspected crimes, which include:

1. Facilitating the seizure of public funds - This is criminalized under article 10 of law No. 1/1993 for the protection of public funds.

2. Harm to the public funds due to negligence - This offense is covered by article 14 of the aforementioned law.

3. Forgery - This is criminalized under Articles 257 to 259 in the Penal Code of Kuwait.

These actions are considered corruption crimes under article 22 of law No. 2/2016 regarding the establishment of the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority. The provisions are also related to the disclosure of financial assets.

Nazaha affirmed its commitment to continue examining, gathering evidence, and investigating all credible information that meets the necessary requirements and is submitted to it.

5 rescued in Andalus house fire

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: A fire broke out in a house in Andalus on Tuesday morning. No casualties were reported.

According to a press release issued by Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), when the Control Room of KFF received information about the house on fire, firefighters from Sulaibikhat and Ardiya Fire stations rushed to the location and extinguished the fire within a short time, after rescuing five individuals safely.

Investigations have been launched to determine the cause of the fire.

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Al-Tabtabaei issues key administrative reshuffle to strengthen MoE oversight

Key appointments aim to enhance operational stability

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: In a bid to enhance operational stability and streamline administrative processes, the Minister of Education, Jalal Al-Tabtabaei, has announced a series of administrative decisions aimed at strengthening the Ministry's governance structure.

These decisions involve the transfer and assignment of several department heads, supervisors, and technical staff, as well as the secondment of key national cadres to the Inspection and Audit Office.

These measures are part of the Ministry's broader reform vision, which seeks to improve administrative performance and fill gaps in supervisory positions across various departments.

The Ministry emphasized that these changes will activate the role of the Inspection and Audit Office by appointing qualified specialists to take on oversight and follow-up tasks, ensuring that these positions are fulfilled to the highest standards.

The specific decisions made include the following:

Transfer and Assignment Decisions -- Yusef Badr Al-Juba is transferred from his role as Head of the Legal Affairs Department in the Hawalli Educational District to become the Head of the Investigations Department in the Cases and Investigations Monitoring

Department within the Legal Affairs Sector.

Reem Issa Al Suwaidi is transferred from her role as Head of the Legal Affairs Department in the Capital Education District to Head of the Complaints and Grievances Department in the Research and Fatwa Monitoring Department within the Legal Affairs Sector.

Nidaa Marzi Al-Shammari moves from his position as Head of the Legal Affairs Department in the Jahra Educational District to Head of the Contracts Department in the Inspection and Contracts Monitoring Department within the Legal Affairs Sector. Transfer and Cancellation of Assignment -- Hanan Yassin Darb, previously a Kindergarten Supervisor in the Capital Educational District, will now work as a Senior Kindergarten Supervisor in the Farwaniya Educational District.

Amani Abdul Karim Al-Makimi, a Senior Kindergarten Technical Supervisor from the Farwaniya Educational District, will be transferred to the Capital Educational District for the same position.

New Assignments -- Naif Abdullah Al-Harbi, Senior Technical Supervisor of Arabic Language in the Jahra Educational District, will now also serve as a secondary education supervisor.

Mishaal Suleiman Al-Jatili, Technical Supervisor of Islamic Education, will take on additional duties as Supervisor of Religious Institutes Affairs. Tariq Yasser



Al-Tabtabaei

Al-Anzi, First Arabic Language Supervisor in the Capital Educational District, will also serve as Secondary Education Supervisor in the same district.

Assistant Muhammad Madhri, Secondary Education Supervisor in the Hawalli Educational District, will take on the role of Director of Educational Affairs for the district. Additional assignments include senior roles in various districts and departments, such as Arabic language, mathematics, and science supervisors across Kuwait's educational sectors.

Secondment Decisions -- Samia Awad Al-Murtaji, previously seconded to educational facilities in the private and qualitative education sector, will be returned to the Information Systems Department to lead as Head of the Computer Applications Development Department.

The Ministry also announced the secondment of the following individuals to the Inspection and Audit Office:

Fatima Nasser Al-Abdel Qader -- Assistant Supervisor of Accounting Clerks.

Israa Abdul Mohsen Al-Kharraz -- Senior Electronics Engineer.

Adhbah Abdul Wahab Al-Farsi -- Senior Accountant.

Anfal Khalil Al-Hashash -- Senior Industrial Specialist Engineer.

Youssef Abdullah Al-Asmawi -- Accountant, seconded to the Inspection and Audit Office.

These changes are designed to provide stronger oversight, increase efficiency, and enhance the Ministry's ability to fulfill its mission of improving education and administrative functions across Kuwait's educational landscape.

Kuwait HH Amir congratulates Bhutan's King on National Day

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Tuesday a cable of congratulations to Bhutan's King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck on his country's national day.

His Highness the Crown Prince expressed wishes of welfare and well-being to the monarch and his people.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent on Tuesday a cable of congratulations to the King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck on his country's national day.

His Highness the Amir expressed good wishes of welfare to the monarch and his people.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent on Tuesday a cable of congratulations to the King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck on his country's national day.

Exam procedures streamlined

Ministry of Education terminates assignment of official spokesman

By Abdulrahman Al-Shimmari
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: The Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education, Mansour Al-Dhafiri, has issued a decision to terminate the assignment of Ahmed Al-Wahida, the official spokesman for the Ministry.

The announcement was made today, Tuesday, December 17, 2024. No further details regarding the reasons for the decision or a successor have been disclosed at this time.

This move marks a notable administrative change within the Ministry as it continues to focus on enhancing its operations and addressing key educational priorities.

Meanwhile, as part of preparations for the first semester exams for the 2024-2025 academic year, Mansour Al-Dhafiri, Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education for General Education, has issued directives to streamline examination processes for the 12th

grade (scientific and literary sections), reports Al-Jarida daily.

The key measures include:

- **Exemption from Fingerprinting:** Individuals assigned to examination committees outside schools are exempt from fingerprint attendance requirements.
- **Fingerprinting Limits:** Staff assigned to examination committees for transfer classes in the intermediate stage and the tenth and eleventh grades will only be required to mark their attendance once during official working hours.
- **Prohibition on Late Entry:** Students will not be allowed to enter examination committees after the specified start time for exams.
- **Cessation of Resident Supervisor System:** The resident supervisor system in examination committees will be discontinued.

Al-Dhafiri emphasized the need for educational region directors and the Department of Religious Education to enforce these measures effectively to ensure smooth and disciplined exam operations.



PM Diwan photo
His Highness the Prime Minister receives the Duke of Edinburgh and his accompanying delegation on the occasion of his visit to the country.

Kuwait PM receives Duke of Edinburgh

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received the visiting Royal Prince Edward, Duke of Edinburgh, and his accompanying delegation at Bayan Palace on Tuesday.

Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs and Chief of the Accompanying Mission of Honor Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, His Highness Prime Minister's Diwan Chief Abdulaziz Al-Dakheel and UK Ambassador in Kuwait Belinda Lewis attended the audience.



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Health Minister Al-Awadhi underlines keenness on meeting society's needs

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17, (KUNA): Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi said on Monday the ministry is eager to continue to provide an environment to support doctors' ambition and meet the needs of society.

Delivering a speech during a ceremony marking the graduation of new doctors from the 2022-2024 Kuwait Board of Dermatology, Al-Awadhi urged them to continue working for excellence and ongoing development.

The noble message of doctors exceeds giving medicine but it includes offering



Dr. Al-Awadhi

humanitarian care and hope to patients, he said.

Kuwait, under the leadership of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince, has been paying utmost attention to the health sector, he affirmed.

He proudly recalled the prominent role of Kuwait's Board of Dermatology program established in 2003 that prepared more professional and qualified specialists.

Meanwhile, head of Kuwait Board of Dermatology Dr. Abeer Al-Bazali said the ceremony is a new start for this path, stressing that Minister of Health's patronage of this ceremony shows keenness on this sector.

Kuwait believes in investing in humans for the country's future, and some 94 doctors have graduated from the board, she noted.



Group photo from the event.

KuADR announces winners of 2024 Dental Research Award

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 16: Head of the Kuwait Association for Dental Research (KuADR) Dr. Aqdar Akbar announced that Dr. Ahmed Siddiqui has won the Dr. Jawad Behbehani Award for Dental Research in its fourth edition, and Dr. Ahmed Al-Ali won the inaugural Distinguished Case Report Award.

According to a press release issued by Kuwait University, the winners were announced during the closing ceremony, sponsored by the National Bank of Kuwait and Sultan United Medical Company. The event was attended by the Acting Dean of the Faculty of Dental Studies at Kuwait University Dr. Rashid Al-Azmi, along with assistant deans and faculty members from the college.

Dr. Akbar affirmed that the selection of winners followed a thorough review and evaluation of all scientific research that met the criteria for the two competitions.

He congratulated the winners and wished them continued success in their professional careers.

Dr. Akbar expressed his gratitude to the National Bank of Kuwait, the sponsor of the Dr. Jawad Behbehani Research Award, and to Sultan United Medical Company for sponsoring the Distinguished Case Report Award.

In addition, the Acting Dean of the Faculty of Dental Studies at Kuwait University Dr. Rashid Al-Azmi highlighted the significance of these research activities in the field of dentistry.

He said they are not only a scientific competition but also an important opportunity to exchange knowledge and discuss the latest advancements in dental and max-



Photos during the awarding ceremony.

illofacial surgery. Dr. Al-Azmi also honored the remarkable contributions of Dr. Jawad Behbehani to dental education and clinical training in Kuwait.

Highlighting its dedicated commitment to social responsibility

Burgan Bank continues to support the ‘Let’s Be Aware’ campaign by spreading banking awareness at educational institutions in Kuwait



Group photo from the banking awareness workshops for school and university students held by Burgan Bank.

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: In line with efforts to spread banking and financial literacy, Burgan Bank recently organized several visits to Kuwait’s respected educational institutions: the American United School (AUS) and the American University of Kuwait (AUK). The visits are part of Burgan’s annual plan to reinforce the public’s financial literacy, upholding its committed support for the “Let’s Be Aware” (Diraya) financial literacy and banking awareness campaign, launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA), in cooperation with Kuwaiti banks.

“We are delighted to continue playing an active role in spreading the Diraya messages across the different circles of society. Financial literacy is essential knowledge for people of all ages today, especially adolescents and young adults who rely heavily on digital banking in their day-to-day purchases,” commented Ms. Hessa Hussain Al-Najadah, Senior Manager – Corporate & CSR Communications at Burgan Bank.



Ms. Hessa Hussain Al-Najadah, Senior Manager – Corporate & CSR Communications at Burgan Bank

financial planning and secure banking practices.

Throughout the four years since the launch of Diraya, Burgan Bank has seized every opportunity to raise awareness about the different banking services and products and how they serve customers’ varying needs and aspirations. It also continues to dedicate its efforts to guiding members of its community toward the safest banking practices, especially those that rely on digital technology, by regularly raising awareness about the latest scam, phishing, and fraud trends and how to remain vigilant against the risk of falling victim to them.

In addition to organizing visits to educational institutions, Burgan Bank has spread Diraya messages across numerous mass media, including radio, newspapers and the Bank’s social media channels, to empower individuals to make informed financial decisions, build economic resilience and achieve financial well-being. These efforts not only highlight the Bank’s dedicated commitment to social responsibility but also directly advance its Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) strategy.

IOM launches Global Appeal for 2025

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has launched its Global Appeal for 2025. This worldwide initiative, aligned with IOM’s Strategic Plan (2024-2028), aims to raise USD 8.2 billion to support over 100 million individuals across the globe. As migration dynamics and humanitarian needs continue to evolve, IOM remains committed to addressing these challenges with agility and foresight.

The appeal is structured around three strategic objectives:

First, Saving Lives and Protecting People on the Move. This includes delivering multi-sectoral humanitarian aid to 55 million people integrating protection-centred and climate-smart approaches, and enhancing local capacities through the Localization Framework.

Second Driving Solutions for Displacement: IOM will focus on sustainable and durable solutions for 39 million people. This involves community-based planning, resilience-building initiatives, and expanding peace building and stabilization programs to address the



IOM Global Appeal 2025

root causes of displacement.

Third, Facilitating Pathways for Regular Migration in order to enhance regular migration pathways, ensuring they are effective and beneficial for migrants and their countries of origin, transit, and destination. This includes supporting labour mobility, resettlement programs, and combating human trafficking and exploitation.

The Global Appeal 2025 is a comprehensive strategy designed

to mobilize resources effectively and ensure IOM can respond proactively to global migration challenges.

Mazen AboulHosn, IOM Chief of Mission in Kuwait, emphasized the importance of this initiative, stating, “The Global Appeal 2025 is a testament to our commitment to addressing the complex challenges of migration and displacement.” Today we are celebrating International Migrants Day. This day gives us a special opportunity to shine a spotlight on the invaluable contributions of millions of migrants around the world. It’s also a day for us to highlight the increasingly complex environment in which migration occurs.”

He added “With the support of our partners, including countries like Kuwait, we can make a significant impact on the lives of millions of people in need.”

Migrants play critical roles in labour markets, filling skills gaps, driving innovation and entrepreneurship, they boost economic growth and provide a lifeline to families and communities back home, driving development.

Arab Media Forum launches 12th Kuwait Creativity Award



Arab Media Forum honors outstanding talent at 12th Kuwait Creativity Award. Photos by Mohammad Morsi

Outstanding talent honored

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: The Arab Media Forum on Tuesday launched the 12th Kuwait Creativity Award under the patronage of Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi.

Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information Dr. Nasser Al-Muhaisen, who represented the sponsor of the event, pointed out that the award celebrates exceptional individuals across a wide range of fields like media, literature, culture, poetry, engineering and management. He revealed that the award’s diverse categories aim to foster creativity and inspire talent, ultimately cultivating a spirit of innovation.

Al-Muhaisen explained that such recognition serves to motivate the honorees to further excel in their respective fields. He said this event conveys a clear message of inclusivity, reaffirming that those with exceptional energy and talent will always find a platform to thrive.

He also expressed his gratitude to Secretary General of the forum Madi Al-Khamis and all those responsible for organizing the annual award.

He affirmed that the Ministry of Information serves as a nurturing ground for emerging talent, aiming to prepare the next generation of media professionals to lead Kuwait’s me-

dia landscape.

On the other hand, Al-Khamis praised the presence of distinguished figures, media professionals and intellectuals at the event; stressing that their participation is a source of pride. He emphasized the importance of society’s role in acknowledging and celebrating these creators, ensuring they receive the recognition they deserve.

He pointed out the exceptional participation from Kuwait and other Gulf and Arab nations, while expressing his appreciation for the ongoing support of Kuwaiti media for such initiatives.

He stated that the forum’s success over the past 21 years can be attributed to its focus on quality, which has ensured the continuity and growth of both the forum and the award. Despite facing challenges, the forum’s sustained progress since its establishment in 2003 is a testament to the dedication and efforts invested over the years, he added.

He also took a moment to remember HH the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad on the first anniversary of his passing and extended his congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the first anniversary of his assumption of power, wishing him long life and continued success in Kuwait’s development.

On the occasion of Bahrain’s National Day, Al-Khamis wished for further progress for the Kingdom and its people.

Finally, Al-Khamis spoke about several clubs and initiatives established under the forum’s umbrella, including the Integrated Media Academy; Sophistication Club for Promoting Culture, Reading and Media; Skill Forum for Individuals and Institutions and the launching of Al-Badr Club, which focuses on culture and poetry.

KIB announces winners of Al Dirwaza account’s 2024 campaign weekly draw

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced the winners of the weekly draw held under the Al Dirwaza account’s 2024 campaign, which is distinguished by the highest number of winners throughout the year. The third weekly draw, based on customers’ November deposits, recently took place in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as well as representatives from the Bank. The KD 1,000 prize was awarded Fahad Mahmoud Ali Dashti, Saoud Abdulrahman Shujaa Almutairi, Ali Abdulsamad Jaber Alfares, Mahmoud Abdullaziz Awadh Abo Alnja, Nouraya Mohammad Rabeca Almutairi, whilst the KD 500 prize was awarded to Jamal Naser Ghanim Sahow, Nabeelah Ali Abdullah Ali, Mohamed Ahmed Alzribi, Musaed Sulaiman Khaled Alrasheed, Abdulrahman Ahmed Merdas Bazan, Adam Saud Adam Aljabri, Alshaikha Wafaa Oqab Malek Alsabah.

It serves to note that AlDirwaza account is a savings account for individual customers, based on the Wakala investment principle, launched by KIB as one of its banking products for individuals. The ac-



KIB flyer

count is currently the best of its kind in the sector, with annual expected profits of up to 2% disbursed on a monthly basis, where the customer gets an expected profit of 2% for the first 3 months from the account opening date and up to 1% expected rate onward. The expected profits are automatically deposited into the customer’s account within the first day of the beginning of each month.

Al Dirwaza account holders are eligible to enter the weekly, monthly and annual draws on the condition of maintaining at least KD 100 in their account. For the weekly and monthly draws, each KD 1 that has

completed a full month’s cycle in the account will count for one chance, and chances are calculated based on the lowest monthly balance preceding the draw. As for the mega draw, chances are calculated for each KD 1 that completes a two-month cycle in the account – based on the lowest two monthly balances prior to the draw.

Al Dirwaza account is also in compliance with the provisions of Islamic Sharia and approved by the KIB’s Sharia Supervisory Board. Furthermore, the account comes with a wide range of benefits, including the ease of opening the account, which does not require a salary transfer, and the customer’s ability to open it remotely without visiting a branch through KIB Online on the Bank’s website or KIB Mobile application on smartphones.

Additionally, Al Dirwaza account automatically grants customers instant issuance of an ATM card, with a KD 2,000 ATM daily withdrawal limit, as well as the ability to issue credit cards against the cash collateral in the account. To open the account and participate in its draws, a minimum of KD 100 is required and can only be withdrawn upon account closure.

Dear Ahmed

Continued from Page 1

individuals involved in these practices are already subject to international sanctions, and some even hold multiple nationalities in addition to their Syrian one.

If those responsible are not held accountable, it will send a green light to many weak-minded individuals to exploit the situation and continue the exploitation of Gulf citizens, Arabs, and Syrians, under the guise of supporting the revolution or claiming proximity to the new leadership.

In such a scenario, the Gulf saying “Neither we recovered nor did the evil leave us” will ring true. There are many cases filed in Gulf countries against these fraudsters, who were sheltered by the regime, which crafted the laws to serve its own interests and those of its partners, including militant groups and criminal gangs used to silence the opposition.

Therefore, the current leadership must match their words with actions, and work immediately to restore the rights of the people.

Syria needs development after the

devastation left by the fascist regime, and it is impossible to build on ruins that will quickly bring down any new building.

From here, we assert: If the new administration fails to recognize this, it will set a bad precedent in its relations with the Arabs, who not only understand the Syrian situation but also have a deep affection for Syria and its people, and are ready to invest in its future.

We reiterate that we hold the names of some of those who stole under the Assad regime and are ready to share them with the leaders of the new administration, should they wish to know. Once again, we urge you, Ahmed al-Sharaa, to apply the law (Sharia).

HH Amir,

Continued from Page 1

British Royal Prince Edward, Duke of Edinburgh, and his accompanying delegation arrived in Kuwait, Tuesday, on an official visit to the country.

Upon arrival, Prince Edward was received by the head of the honorary

mission and Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

Modi marks

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, the Indian Ambassador to Kuwait HE Dr Adarsh Swaika briefed the local media on the recent visit of Kuwait’s Foreign Minister Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya to India on Dec 3-4, 2024 at the invitation of India’s External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar.

A significant outcome of the Al-Yahya’s visit to India, he said, was the signing of a joint commission for cooperation between the two countries, marking a vital development in their diplomatic relationship, he said.

Under the new framework, he added, seven joint working groups will be established in areas where institutional mechanisms did not previously exist.

These new working groups will focus on trade, investments, education and skill development, defense and security, consular issues, culture, and science and technology.

Prior to this, there were only four

institutional mechanisms in place -- political consultations between assistant foreign ministers, cooperation in the oil sector, medical cooperation, and labor relations.

With the addition of these seven new working groups, the relationship between the two countries will have a much more robust and structured framework for cooperation.

The new mechanism, Dr Swaika added, will elevate cooperation to the level of Foreign Ministers and serve as an umbrella body to coordinate all aspects of bilateral relations.

1st Deputy

Continued from Page 1

The statement noted, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef welcomed his guests, stressing on the depth of fraternal relations between the two countries.

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef praised the security cooperation and coordination between the two countries, and the joint keenness to enhance the exchange of expertise and successful experiences within the framework of enhancing integration and coordination to maintain collective security, and

protect the gains and interests of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

Kuwait air

Continued from Page 1

Additionally, Kuwait’s direct travel destinations grew from 101 in 2014 to 134 in 2023, marking a 24.6 percent increase and reflecting expanded global connectivity.

The report also highlighted growth in Kuwait’s national airline fleets, which increased from 29 aircraft in 2014 to 55 aircraft in 2023, adding 26 new planes over the last decade.

Observers affirm that these developments solidify Kuwait’s status as a key hub for international air travel while underscoring the need for continued investment in aviation infrastructure.

Gov’t committed

Continued from Page 1

on closely monitoring the project’s progress, resolving challenges, and ensuring all works are completed efficiently and on schedule.

Dr. Al-Mashaan stressed that the

new airport is a key element of Kuwait’s Vision 2035 to modernize and develop the country’s infrastructure, positioning it as a regional and global commercial and financial hub.

She also highlighted the importance of adhering to technical specifications, maintaining quality, and ensuring coordination between various involved bodies, including civil aviation, to meet the approved timetable.

Kuwait and

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait’s Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met on Monday with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein.

The meeting came within the framework of Sheikh Jarrah’s visit to Baghdad for the joint Kuwaiti-Iraqi technical legal committee meeting on demarcation of maritime borders beyond the 162 mark, according to a Kuwaiti foreign ministry statement.

Both sides shared views on varied regional issues and possible means of coordination regarding them.

Political gridlock

Scholz loses confidence vote, Germany heads for early polls

BERLIN, Dec 17, (AP): Chancellor Olaf Scholz lost a confidence vote in the German parliament on Monday, putting the European Union's most populous member and biggest economy on course to hold an early election in February.

Scholz won the support of 207 lawmakers in the 733-seat lower house, or Bundestag, while 394 voted against him and 116 abstained. That left him far short of the majority of 367 needed to win.

Scholz leads a minority government after his unpopular and notoriously rancorous three-party coalition collapsed on Nov. 6 when he fired his finance minister in a dispute over how to revitalize Germany's stagnant economy. Leaders of several major parties then agreed that a parliamentary election should be held on Feb. 23, seven months earlier than originally planned.

The confidence vote was needed because post-World War II Germany's constitution doesn't allow the Bundestag to dissolve itself. Now President Frank-Walter Steinmeier has to decide whether to dissolve parliament and call an election.

Steinmeier has 21 days to make that decision - and, because of the planned timing of the election, is expected to do so after Christmas. Once parliament is dissolved, the election must be held within 60 days.

In practice, the campaign is already well underway, and Monday's three-hour debate reflected that.



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz makes a statement after formally asking for a vote of confidence in parliament, to set the path for an early election in spring 2025, at the chancellery in Berlin, Germany, Wednesday, Dec. 11, 2024. (AP)

Scholz, a center-left Social Democrat, told lawmakers that the election will determine whether "we, as a strong country, dare to invest strongly in our future; do we have confidence in ourselves and our country, or do we put our future on the line? Do we risk our cohesion and our prosperity by delaying long-overdue investments?"

Scholz's pitch to voters includes pledges to "modernize" Germany's strict self-imposed rules on running up debt, to increase the national minimum wage and to reduce value-added tax on food.

Royal reckoning: Prince Andrew's troubles loom large

Scandals, spy links leave King Charles III grappling with his brother's fallout

LONDON, Dec 17, (AP): How do you solve a problem like Prince Andrew?

That's the question facing King Charles III as the drama surrounding his 64-year-old brother roils Britain and the monarchy once again.

In the latest episode, a Chinese businessman has been barred from the U.K. because of concerns he cultivated links with Andrew in an alleged effort to influence British elites on behalf of the Chinese Communist Party. The man, identified Monday as Yang Tengbo, said he wasn't involved in espionage and had "done nothing wrong or unlawful."

The allegations represent the most high-profile example to date of a threat intelligence officials have repeatedly warned about: China's increasing efforts to secretly influence politicians and other members of the British establishment to support the country's expansionist policies.

But the story also made news because it involves Andrew, once second-in-line to the British throne but now a constant source of tabloid fodder because of his money woes and links to questionable characters, including the late American financier and convicted pedophile Jeffrey Epstein.

Queen Elizabeth II stripped Andrew of his royal duties and charity roles, but the unflattering headlines kept coming. More recently, Charles



Prince Andrew leaves after attending the Christmas day service at St Mary Magdalene Church in Sandringham in Norfolk, England, Sunday, Dec. 25, 2022. (AP)

has tried to persuade his brother to cut his expenses by leaving the sprawling royal estate he occupies west of London and moving to a cottage inside the security perimeter of Windsor Castle. But Andrew remains ensconced at the 30-room Royal Lodge.

The king needs to take more aggressive action to keep Andrew out of the public eye, such as barring him from processions and other royal events, said Ed Owens, author of "After Elizabeth: Can the Monarchy Save Itself?"

While Andrew said in a statement that nothing sensitive was ever discussed and that he ceased contact with the Chinese businessman as soon as concerns were raised, his constant brushes with scandal tarnish the work of the royal family, Owens said.

"Andrew is toxic and he is very much damaged goods," he added. "He can only, through his behavior, further undermine the reputation of the monarchy. It's in the king's best interest, it's in the best interests of the future of the monarchy, for An-

drew to take a step back."

Britain's most prominent anti-monarchy group used the latest scandal to call for a parliamentary inquiry into alleged royal corruption.

"When a Chinese spy befriends a royal, they want access to the British state. We must know if the royals have given them what they want," said Graham Smith, leader of Republic, which seeks to replace the monarchy with an elected head of state.

Andrew has become a cautionary tale about the temptations and pitfalls of modern royalty.

When Andrew was born he was second in line to the throne, the proverbial spare who was there to step in if disaster struck the heir, his brother Charles. But after Charles married, Andrew's position dropped with every new child and grandchild. He now stands at eighth place in the royal pecking order.

While other senior royals spend much of their time opening recreation centers and meeting community leaders on behalf of their more exalted relations, Andrew initially took on bigger tasks.

After 22 years in the Royal Navy, including combat operations as a helicopter pilot during the Falklands War, Andrew was named Britain's special representative for international trade and investment in 2001.

Prosecutors propose compromise as sentencing remains uncertain

Trump's hush money conviction stands despite Supreme Court immunity ruling

NEW YORK, Dec 17, (AP): A judge Monday refused to throw out President-elect Donald Trump's hush money conviction because of the U.S. Supreme Court's recent ruling on presidential immunity. But the overall future of the historic case remains unclear.

Manhattan Judge Juan M. Merchan's decision blocks one potential off-ramp from the case ahead of the former and future president's return to office next month. His lawyers have raised other arguments for dismissal, however. It's unclear when - or whether - a sentencing date might be set.

Prosecutors have said there should be some accommodation for his upcoming presidency, but they insist the conviction should stand.

A jury convicted Trump in May of 34 counts of falsifying business records related to a \$130,000 hush money payment to porn actor Stormy Daniels in 2016. Trump denies wrongdoing.

The allegations involved a scheme to hide the payout to Daniels during the final days of Trump's 2016 presidential campaign to keep her from publicizing - and keep voters from hearing - her claim of a sexual encounter with the married then-businessman years earlier. He says nothing sexual happened between them.

A month after the verdict, the Supreme Court ruled that ex-presidents can't be prosecuted for official acts - things they did in the course of running the country - and that prosecutors can't cite those actions to bolster a case centered on purely personal, unofficial conduct.

Trump's lawyers then cited the Supreme Court opinion to argue that the hush money jury got some improper evidence, such as Trump's presidential financial disclosure form, testimony from some White House aides and social media posts made while he was in office.

In Monday's ruling, Merchan denied the bulk of Trump's claims that some of prosecutors' evidence related to official acts and implicated immunity protections.



Former U.S. President Donald Trump attends his trial for allegedly covering up hush money payments linked to extramarital affairs at Manhattan Criminal Court in New York, Tuesday, April 23, 2024. (AP)

The judge said that even if he found that some evidence related to official conduct, he'd still conclude that prosecutors' decision to use "these acts as evidence of the decidedly personal acts of falsifying business records poses no danger of intrusion on the authority and function of the Executive Branch."

Even if prosecutors had erroneously introduced evidence that could be challenged under an immunity claim, Merchan continued, "such error was harmless in light of the overwhelming evidence of guilt."

Prosecutors had said the evidence in question was only "a sliver" of their case.

Trump communications director Steven Cheung

on Monday called Merchan's decision a "direct violation of the Supreme Court's decision on immunity, and other longstanding jurisprudence."

"This lawless case should have never been brought, and the Constitution demands that it be immediately dismissed," Cheung said in a statement.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg's office, which prosecuted the case, declined to comment.

Merchan's decision noted that part of the Supreme Court's immunity ruling declared that "not everything the president does is official." Trump's social media posts, for example, were personal, Merchan wrote.

Security service behind attack: Kyiv

Head of Russia's nuclear defense forces killed in Moscow bombing

MOSCOW, Dec 17, (AP): A senior Russian general was killed Tuesday by a bomb hidden in a scooter outside his apartment building in Moscow, a day after Ukraine's security service leveled criminal charges against him. A Ukrainian official said the service carried out the attack.

Lt. Gen. Igor Kirillov, the chief of the military's nuclear, biological and chemical protection forces, was killed as he left for his office. Kirillov's assistant also died in the attack.

Kirillov, 54, was under sanctions from several countries, including the U.K. and Canada, for his actions in Moscow's war in Ukraine. On Monday, Ukraine's Security Service, or SBU, opened a criminal investigation against him, accusing him of directing the use of banned chemical weapons.

An official with the SBU said the agency was behind the attack. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to release the information, described Kirillov as a "war criminal and an entirely legitimate target."

The SBU has said it recorded more than 4,800 occasions when Russia used chemical weapons on the battlefield since its full-scale invasion in February 2022. In May, the U.S. State Department said that it had recorded the use of chloropicrin, a poison gas first deployed in World War I, against Ukrainian troops.

Russia has denied using any chemical weapons in Ukraine and, in turn, has accused Kyiv of using toxic agents in combat.

Kirillov, who took his current job in 2017, was one of the most high-pro-



Maj. Gen. Igor Kirillov, the chief of the Russian military's radiation, chemical and biological protection unit, attends a briefing in Kubinka Patriot park, outside Moscow, Russia, on June 22, 2018. (AP)

file figures to level those accusations. He held numerous briefings to accuse the Ukrainian military of using toxic agents and planning to launch attacks with radioactive substances - claims that Ukraine and its Western allies rejected as propaganda.

The bomb used in Tuesday's attack was triggered remotely, according to Russian news reports. Images from the scene showed shattered windows and scorched brickwork.

Russia's top state investigative agency said it's investigating Kirillov's death as a case of terrorism, and officials in Moscow vowed to punish Ukraine.

Dmitry Medvedev, deputy head of Russia's Security Council chaired by President Vladimir Putin, described the attack as an attempt by Kyiv to distract public attention away from its military failures and vowed that its "senior military-political leadership will face inevitable retribution."

Dangers of war and peace efforts

Pope's autobiography reveals apparent bombing plot during his '21 visit to Iraq

ROME, Dec 17, (AP): Pope Francis turned 88 on Tuesday and marked the occasion with revelations that he almost didn't make it. According to excerpts of his upcoming autobiography, suicide bombers had planned to attack him during his 2021 visit to Iraq, but were killed before striking.

Italian daily Corriere della Sera on Tuesday ran excerpts of "Hope: The Autobiography," written with Italian author Carlo Musso, which is being released in more than 80 countries next month. The New York Times ran other excerpts Tuesday, Francis' 88th birthday.

In the Italian excerpts, Francis recalled his historic March 2021 trip to Iraq, the first ever by a pope. COVID-19 was still raging and security concerns were high, especially in Mosul. The devastated northern city had been the headquarters of Islamic State militants, whose horrific reign had largely emptied the region of its Christian communities.

According to the book, British intelligence informed Iraqi police as soon as Francis arrived in Baghdad that a woman wearing explosives was heading toward Mosul and was planning to blow herself up during the papal visit. "And that a truck was heading there fast with the same intention," Francis says in the book.



Mosul and Aqra Archbishop Najib Mikhael Moussa, left, waves as he stands next to Pope Francis at the start of a gathering to pray for the victims of war at Hosh al-Bieaa Church Square, in Mosul, Iraq, once the de-facto capital of IS, Sunday, March 7, 2021. (AP)

The visit went ahead as planned, albeit under tight security, and became one of the most poignant of all of Francis' foreign trips: Standing in the wreckage of a Mosul church, Francis urged Iraq's Christians to forgive the injustices against them by Muslim extremists and to rebuild.

In the book, Francis said he later asked his Vatican security detail what became of the suicide bombers.

"The commander replied laconically 'They're no longer here,'" Francis writes. "Iraqi police had intercepted them and made them explode. This struck me as well: Even this is the poisonous fruit of war."

The book, originally planned to be published after Francis' death, is coming out at the start of the Vatican's big Holy Year, which Francis will officially inaugurate on Christmas Eve.

PM scrambles amid inflation, US tariff threats

Canada's finance minister resigns as unpopular Trudeau faces biggest test

TORONTO, Dec 17, (AP): Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau faced the biggest test of his political career after Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland, long one of his most powerful and loyal ministers, resigned from the Cabinet on Monday.

The stunning move raised questions about how much longer the prime minister of nearly 10 years - whose popularity has plummeted due to concerns about inflation and immigration - can stay on as his administration scrambles to deal with incoming U.S. President-elect Donald Trump.

"The Great State of Canada is stunned as the Finance Minister resigns, or was fired, from her position by Governor Justin Trudeau," Trump posted on Truth Social. "Her behavior was totally toxic, and not at all conducive to making deals which are good for the very unhappy citizens of Canada. She will not be missed!!!"

Trump previously trolled Trudeau by calling Canada a state. And during his first term in his office - when he renegotiated the free trade deal with Canada and Mexico - Trump said Freeland wasn't liked.

Trudeau swiftly named longtime ally and close friend Dominic LeBlanc, the public safety minister who recently joined him at dinner with Trump at Mar-a-Lago, to replace Freeland. Freeland did not make that trip.

After being sworn in, LeBlanc told reporters he and Trudeau are focused on the cost of living facing Canadians and on finding common ground with Trump on border security and economic issues.

"It's not been an easy day," Trudeau later told a room of party supporters. He called it one of his party's "toughest days" but he did not say what he planned to do.

Jagmeet Singh, leader of the opposition New Democratic Party which Trudeau's ruling Liberals have relied upon to stay in power, called for him to resign earlier Monday.



Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland delivers remarks on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Ontario, Wednesday, Dec. 11, 2024. (AP)

"He has to go," NDP leader Singh said.

The main opposition Conservatives have not called for Trudeau's resignation but demand an election.

But a no confidence vote in the government is not imminent with Parliament about to break for the holidays.

Freeland, who was also deputy prime minister, said Trudeau had told her on Friday he no longer wanted her to serve as finance minister and offered her another role in the Cabinet. But she said in her resignation letter that the only "honest and viable path" was to leave the Cabinet.

"For the past number of weeks, you and I have found ourselves at odds about the best path forward for Canada," Freeland said.



This combination of before and after images released by Maxar Technologies left to right, shows damage of Collège de Kwalé on the French Territory of Mayotte in the Indian Ocean after Cyclone Chido, Dec. 16, 2024. (AP)

Survivors scour debris-filled streets in search for water and shelter

Mayotte reels from Cyclone Chido as France mobilizes urgent relief

MAMOUZOU, Mayotte, Dec 17, (AP): France used ships and military aircraft to rush rescuers and supplies to Mayotte on Monday after the tiny French island territory off Africa was battered by its worst cyclone in nearly a century. Authorities fear hundreds and possibly thousands of people have died.

Survivors wandered through streets littered with debris, searching for water and shelter, after Cyclone Chido leveled entire neighborhoods on Saturday when it hit Mayotte, the poorest territory of France and, by extension, the European Union.

French President Emmanuel Macron said he will declare a national mourning period and planned to visit in the coming days after “this tragedy that has shaken each of us.”

Mayotte resident Fahar Abdoulhamidi described the aftermath as chaotic. In Mamoudzou, the capital, destruction was total - schools, hospitals, restaurants and offices were in ruins. Roofs were ripped from homes, and palm trees were half-shorn from winds that exceeded 220 kph (136 mph), according to the French weather service.

“Mayotte is totally devastated,” French Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau said, with the

ministry estimating 70% of the population was gravely affected.

As of Monday evening, the ministry confirmed 21 deaths at hospitals, with 45 people in critical condition. But French Health Minister Geneviève Darrieussecq warned that any estimates were likely major undercounts “compared to the scale of the disaster.”

Electricity was down across the archipelago, with only the capital spared. Telecommunications were severely disrupted, with most antennas knocked out of service. Authorities were concerned about a shortage of drinking water.

The French Red Cross described the devastation as “unimaginable” and said rescuers were still searching for bodies. The damage, including to Mayotte’s sole airport, has left some areas inaccessible to emergency teams.

Warnings

Many people ignored the cyclone warnings in the 24 hours before the storm hit, underestimating its power.

“Nobody believed it would be that big,” Abdoulhamidi told The Associated Press by phone. “Those who live in bangas stayed in despite the

cyclone, fearing their homes would be looted,” he said, referring to the island’s informal settlements.

Even worse, many migrants avoided shelters out of fear of deportation, Abdoulhamidi said.

Mayotte is a densely populated archipelago between Madagascar and the African continent of more than 320,000 people, according to the French government. Most residents are Muslim and French authorities have estimated another 100,000 migrants live there from as far away as Somalia.

“There’s no water, no electricity. Hunger is starting to rise. It’s urgent that aid arrives, especially when you see children, babies, to whom we have nothing concrete to offer,” Mayotte Sen. Salama Ramia told BFM-TV.

Chido was a category 4 cyclone, the second strongest on the scale, and the worst to hit Mayotte since the 1930s, Prefect François-Xavier Bieuville, the top French government official in the island group, told Mayotte la 1ere.

Bieuville on Sunday asserted that the death toll was several hundred people and could even be in the thousands. But he added it would be extremely hard to count the deaths and many might never be recorded, in part because of the

Muslim tradition of burying people within 24 hours.

Rescue teams and supplies have been sent from France and Reunion. Daily airlifts are delivering 20 tons of water and food to address urgent needs, Retailleau said.

Mayotte’s airport remained closed to civilian flights after its control tower was heavily damaged and was not expected to reopen until at least Thursday, authorities said.

Damage

Mayotte’s main hospital suffered extensive water damage to the surgery, intensive care, emergency and maternity departments, according to Darrieussecq, the health minister. Retailleau said a field hospital will arrive on Thursday.

The Interior Ministry said 1,500 additional personnel, including 800 civilian and military security teams, were being sent deployed, including 400 gendarmes and engineers for infrastructure repair.

The ministry said additional police and gendarmerie officers would “help the population and prevent potential looting.”

Mayotte’s people have previously said their

archipelago suffers from underinvestment and neglect by the French government. Around three-quarters of the population lives in poverty, with a median annual disposable income roughly one-eighth that of the Paris metropolitan area, according to the French statistics agency INSEE.

The territory has also faced political unrest and rising support for the far-right National Rally party, reflecting deep dissatisfaction with the political status quo. Last year, the French army moved to quell protests after a drought and mismanagement led to water shortages.

After pummeling Mayotte, Cyclone Chido continued west and made landfall Sunday in Mozambique, where it killed three people, injured 34 and destroyed classrooms in four schools. In neighboring Malawi, Chido killed two people.

December through to March is cyclone season in the southwestern Indian Ocean, and southern Africa has been hammered in recent years. Cyclone Idai in 2019 killed more than 1,300 people, mostly in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe. Cyclone Freddy left more than 1,000 dead across several countries in the Indian Ocean and southern Africa last year.

Political strife far from over

SKorean court clash brews over impeached Yoon fate

SEOUL, Dec 17, (AP): South Korea’s acting leader vowed Tuesday to convey to the world that things are back to normal following parliament’s impeachment of conservative President Yoon Suk Yeol, as rival parties squabble over the appointments of justices who will determine whether to unseat or reinstate him.

The country’s liberal opposition-controlled parliament voted to impeach Yoon last Saturday over his short-lived Dec. 3 martial law imposition, suspending Yoon’s presidential powers until the Constitutional Court determines whether he can continue in office. If Yoon is dismissed, a national election must be held within two months.

Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, who became acting leader, has taken steps to reassure the U.S. and others and stabilize markets. Presiding over a Cabinet Council meeting on Tuesday, Han said he will “continuously do my utmost to inform the international society that the Republic of Korea is fast regaining stability and maintaining confidence with partners.”

But the country’s intense political strife appears to be far from over, as the rival parties began bickering over whether to fill three vacant seats at the Constitutional Court.

To formally end Yoon’s presidency, the nine-member court panel needs support from at least six justices. But since three seats remain vacant following retirements, a unanimous decision in favor of Yoon’s impeachment is required to throw him out of office.

Three of the court’s nine justices are directly appointed by the president. Three others are nominated by the Supreme Court head and another three by the National Assembly, and their appointments

by the president have largely been a formality. The three seats that are currently open are to be nominated by the National Assembly - two by the Democratic Party and the other by Yoon’s ruling People Power Party.

The court can rule on Yoon’s case with only the current six justices. But the main liberal opposition Democratic Party, which led the impeachment efforts against Yoon, has said it will speed up the process of restoring the court’s all nine justices to promote fairness and public confidence in its ruling.

PPP floor leader Kweon Seong-dong, a Yoon loyalist, created a stir Tuesday as he voiced his objection to the push to fill the three vacancies. He said it would be inappropriate for Han, the acting leader, to appoint justices nominated by parliament, saying such authority solely rests with the president.

“An acting president can appoint Constitutional Court justices when there is a presidential vacancy, but not when the president’s duties are just suspended,” Kweon said.

Many observers say the court’s current six-member configuration is advantageous for Yoon’s chances to return to office, as it would only require a single justice rejecting the parliament’s impeachment. They note that Cheong Hyungsik, one of the six justices, is a clear conservative who was directly appointed by Yoon.

The Democratic Party quickly dismissed Kweon’s argument as “absurd and utterly nonsensical” and urged PPP to abide by a November agreement between the parties to nominate the three Constitutional Court justices.

Party lawmaker and spokesperson Jo Seung-lae said PPP has “blatantly revealed their true intention to obstruct the constitutional trial.”

There was no immediate response from Han, who during the Cabinet meeting stressed that the government will cooperate with the ruling and opposition parties to stabilize the economy.



Han

Prominent human rights attorney quits ICC over failure to prosecute Venezuela

MIAMI, Dec 17, (AP): A prominent human rights attorney has quietly parted ways with the International Criminal Court to protest what he sees as an unjustified failure of its chief prosecutor to indict members of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro’s government for crimes against humanity, The Associated Press has learned.

The Chilean-born Claudio Grossman, a former law school dean at American University in Washington and past president of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, was appointed special adviser to ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan in November 2021. In that unpaid position, he advised Khan on the deteriorating human rights situation in Venezuela.

In a harshly worded email last month to Khan, Grossman said his ethical standards no longer allow him to stand by silently as Maduro’s government continues to commit abuses, expel foreign diplomats and obstruct the work of human rights monitors from the United Nations - without any action from the ICC.

“I can no longer justify the choice not to take correspondingly serious action against the perpetrators of the grave violations,” Grossman wrote in an email rejecting an offer by Khan’s office in September to renew his contract.

A copy of the email, which has not been made public, was provided to the AP by someone familiar with the ICC investigation into Venezuela. A phone call by Khan asking Grossman to reconsider also failed, according to the person on the condition of anonymity to discuss the politically sensitive investigation.

Following AP’s inquiries with Khan’s office, Grossman’s name was removed from the court’s website listing him as a special adviser.

“The Prosecutor is extremely grateful to Professor Grossman for the expertise and work he has rendered,” the prosecutor’s office said in a statement without addressing Grossman’s stated reasons for cutting ties with the court based in The Hague, Netherlands. Grossman declined to comment.

The pressure on Khan to indict Venezuelan officials, including Maduro himself, comes as he battles allegations of misconduct with a female aide and the threat of U.S. sanctions over his decision to seek the arrest of Israeli Prime



Claudio Grossman, chairperson of the Committee against Torture speaks during a press conference at the European headquarters of the United Nations, in Geneva, Switzerland, May 23, 2014. (AP)

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for alleged war crimes in Gaza.

The Rome Statute that established the court took effect in 2002, with a mandate to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide - but only when domestic courts fail to initiate their own investigations.

Calls for faster progress in the court’s only ever investigation in Latin America have grown louder as Maduro tightens his grip on power, preparing to be sworn in for a third term Jan. 10 following an election marred by serious allegations of ballot box fraud and a post-election crackdown. More than 2,000 people were arrested and 20 killed following the vote.

The U.S. and even some fellow leftist leaders in Latin America have demanded authorities present voting records, as they have in the past, to refute tally sheets presented by Maduro’s opponents showing their candidate, Edmundo González, prevailed by a two-to-one margin.

Arrest

Many in Venezuela’s opposition have complained that the ICC is applying a double standard, moving aggressively to seek the arrest of Netanyahu and Russia’s Vladimir Putin for atrocities in Gaza and Ukraine while showing undue leniency with Venezuelan officials Khan has been investigating for more than three years.

“There is no justification whatsoever for the inaction,” González and opposition leader María Corina Machado wrote in a recent letter to Grossman and 18 other special advisers to the court appealing for their help.

“What is at stake is the life and well-being of Venezuelans,” they added in the letter, which was also provided to the AP by the person familiar with the ICC investigation. “This unjustifiable delay will cast legitimate doubts about the integrity of a system of accountability that has been an aspiration for the whole world.”

At the request of several Latin American governments, Khan three years ago opened an investigation into Venezuelan security forces’ jailing, torture and killing of anti-government demonstrators. At the same time, he promised technical assistance to give local authorities an opportunity to take action before the ICC, a tribunal of last resort.

Earlier this month, Khan delivered some of his harshest comments to date about the human rights situation in Venezuela, warning that officials’ repeated promises to investigate alleged abuses “cannot be a never-ending story.”

“I have not seen the concrete implementation of laws and practices in Venezuela that I hoped for,” he said in a speech at ICC headquarters. “The ball is in Venezuela’s court. The track

of complementarity is running out of road.”

Maduro’s government, in response, said in a statement that it “deeply regrets that the prosecutor is being led astray by campaigns that have emerged on social networks promoted by the extreme right, Zionism and Western powers seeking to apply legal colonialism against Venezuela.”

Some Venezuelan critics have linked what they view as foot-dragging to a potential conflict of interest involving Khan’s sister-in-law, international criminal lawyer Venkateswari Alagendra, who has appeared on behalf of the Venezuelan government in two hearings before the court.

An ICC code of conduct directs prosecutors to abstain from any conflicts that may arise from “personal interest in the case, including a spousal, parental or other close family, personal or professional relationship with any of the parties.” Alagendra has previously worked with Khan and his wife defending Saif Al-Islam Gaddafi, the son of the Libyan dictator, at the ICC.

Dismissal

Khan’s office declined to comment about the relationship. But in a filing this month seeking dismissal of a request for recusal filed by the Washington-based Arcadia Foundation, he said a sister-in-law is not a close enough personal relationship requiring automatic disqualification and that he doesn’t recall ever discussing the Venezuela probe with Alagendra, who is just one of several attorneys defending the South American government.

“No fair minded and informed observer would conclude that there is a real possibility of bias,” Khan wrote, adding that he continues to actively and independently investigate the situation in Venezuela.

Those claiming to be victims of the Maduro government have pushed for the court to wrap up its investigation without taking a position on whether Khan should be recused.

After millions of Venezuelans have fled Maduro’s rule, many for neighboring countries, regional governments are also anxiously awaiting progress.

“Many in Latin America expect the ICC prosecutor to have a more muscular response,” said Juan Papier, deputy director for the Americas at Human Rights Watch.

Asia

Call for less confrontation: The China-friendly mayor of Taiwan’s capital, Taipei, on Tuesday called for less confrontation between the sides, even as Beijing continues to send warships and fighter jets to intimidate the self-governing island democracy.

Chiang Wan-an was speaking Tuesday at the 15th Taipei-Shanghai Twin-City Forum, which is not sanctioned by Taiwan’s government, whose official position is that Taiwan is already an independent country with no reason to unify with China.

Chiang put a somewhat romantic twist on his remarks, saying “I am a Taipei mayor elected by the people. I have high expectations for whether there is peace, tension, or development across the strait. I think there should be more ... lights on fishing boats at dawn and less noise of (war) ships and (war) planes.”

Between Monday and Tuesday, China sent 10 military aircraft and seven aircraft toward Taiwan, according to Taiwan’s Defense Ministry. Four of the aircraft crossed the middle line of the Taiwan Strait that forms an unofficial border between the sides.

China considers Taiwan part of its territory, to be brought under its control by force if necessary, although economic ties between the sides - especially with China’s financial hub of Shanghai - remain robust, with an emphasis on high-tech.

Shanghai’s representative, Vice Mayor Hua Yuan, told the 102 participants that, “the people of the two sides are all one family.” (AP)


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7.3 quake hits Vanuatu: A powerful magnitude 7.3 earthquake struck just off the coast of Vanuatu on Tuesday, causing widespread destruction in the South Pacific island nation as the injured began arriving at a hospital and unconfirmed reports of casualties emerged.


A tsunami warning was called off less than two

hours after the quake. With communications still down hours later and official information scarce, witness accounts of casualties began to surface on social media and through patchy phone calls.

The earthquake occurred at a depth of 57 kilometers (35 miles) and was centered 30 kilometers (18 miles) west of Port Vila, the largest city in Vanuatu, a group of 80 islands that is home to



Chiang



Shipley

about 330,000 people. The jolt was followed by a magnitude 5.5 aftershock near the same location and the shudders continued throughout the afternoon and evening local time.

It was not immediately clear how much damage was caused as phone lines and government websites remained down. In first official information published on social media hours after the quake, the Geohazards Department said its monitoring systems were offline due to power outages.

Residents were urged to stay away from coastlines for at least 24 hours - and until tsunami and earthquake monitoring systems were operational once again. No confirmed reports of damage or casualties were provided but accounts detailing widespread destruction filtered out on social media and in interviews. (AP)

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Shipley seeks multilateralism: Former New Zealand Prime Minister Jenny Shipley called for revitalizing multilateralism and

global collaboration, reforming international institutions to address growing global challenges.

“The institutional framework of multilateralism is fragile. While it served the world well, it does need both reform and commitment,” Shipley said on the sidelines of the 2024 Imperial Springs International Forum held last week in Madrid, Spain.

Shipley emphasized the fragility of current multilateral frameworks and stressed the need for nations to commit to strengthening these systems.

“Global mechanisms must be alive and relevant,” she said.

Shipley pointed to trade as a key area where multilateral cooperation is critical, urging nations to prioritize dialogue over unilateral actions. “If there is conflict, there has to be a space to find resolution, and the WTO is not functioning as it should,” she said, calling for leadership, reform, and revitalization of the global trade institution. (AP)

A total of 1,145 licenses for sole proprietorships were issued

November 2023, a reflection of Kuwait’s vibrant entrepreneurial spirit

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: In November 2023, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry witnessed a surge in business activity, reflecting the country’s vibrant entrepreneurial spirit.

A total of 1,145 licenses for personal companies were issued, accounting for a significant 59.5 percent of all business licenses granted that month.

Along with this, the ministry approved 506 licenses for freelance businesses and 64 temporary trade fair licenses, contributing to the economic landscape. Furthermore, 106 special treatment licenses were granted in the brokerage profession, along with 4 licenses for temporary gold and jewelry trade fairs.

The total number of individual establishment licenses issued in November reached a remarkable 6,000, covering a broad range of sectors.

These included 914 wholesale and retail trade licenses, 819 men’s salon licenses, 796 restaurant licenses and 670 women’s clothing tailoring licenses. There were also 597 grocery licenses, 594 gifts and luxury goods licenses, 589 building construction licenses, 571 retail business licenses and 453 ready-made clothing licenses.

For joint stock companies, the statistics were equally impressive. 2,222 licenses were processed, covering a diverse array of business types. This included 519 licenses for business management, 549 for project management, 252 for commercial banks and 245 for business management offices.

Other notable figures included 240 banking licenses, 206 company management office licenses, 181 restaurant licenses and 61 banking services licenses. Even the egg production industry saw 59 licenses granted, highlighting the varied entrepreneurial pursuits across the country.

The ministry’s automated systems also reflected high efficiency, handling about 22,500 transactions for company licensing, 4,900 transactions for registering commercial transactions and 6,700 transactions through the Precious Metals Management Portal.

Moreover, 5,900 electronic services were provided by the Commercial Registry Department, with a total of 19,200 other transactions processed.

In terms of complaints and regulatory actions, 2,590 complaints were filed electronically, making up 71.9 percent of the total complaints and reports. The ministry also recorded 711 seizure reports (19.7 percent), 44 licensing violations and 11 shop openings, as well as 247 in-person complaints.

Trademark activity was another highlight in the ministry’s statistics. In No-

vember, 1,168 trademark applications were filed, accounting for 24 percent of the total transactions that month. Additionally, 908 trademarks were registered and certificates issued, while 874 trademarks were published and 458 trademark renewals were processed.

The ministry also handled 411 trademark renewals as part of the final year of protection, in addition to conducting 1,000 other trademark transactions.

The ministry also reported the printing of 4,600 statements, issuance of 1,400 general import licenses and 576 commercial registration certificates. In total, 161 registration requests were processed, along with 2,300 remaining transactions.

The Certificates of Origin for Kuwaiti exports also saw notable activity. A total of 2,141 certificates were issued, with Saudi Arabia receiving the largest share, totaling 1,180 certificates, or 55.3 percent of the total.

Other key recipients included the United Arab Emirates (271 certificates), Qatar (223 certificates), Arab and Islamic countries (322 certificates), Bahrain (80 certificates) and Oman (61 certificates).

These statistics underscore the ongoing dynamism of Kuwait’s economy, as the Ministry of Commerce and Industry continues to support both local entrepreneurs and international trade.

As part of its pioneering efforts in sustainable development

KFH showcases its environ sustainability achievements at UNCCD COP16

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: In line with its commitment to sustainable development and environmental preservation, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP16) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The conference, held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, from December 2nd to 13th, 2024, aimed to discuss global efforts to combat desertification, land degradation, and accelerate global land restoration and drought resilience initiatives.

COP16, the largest multilateral conference hosted by Saudi Arabia, brings together dignitaries, policy-makers, representatives from global institutions, businesses, government agencies, NGOs, and other key stakeholders. It also marks the largest-ever meeting of the UNCCD, coinciding with the convention’s 30th anniversary.

KFH’s participation highlights its

commitment to social responsibility and its pioneering role in advancing sustainability standards at all levels, especially in environmental sustainability. This aligns with Kuwait’s 2035 Vision, which prioritizes environmental sustainability and reinforces the country’s dedication to regional and global environmental initiatives for sustainable development.

Affirming its extended cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), KFH succeeded in organizing the first discussion on the role of Takaful in mitigating the risks associated with climate challenges in partnership with the UNDP.

KFH’s commitment to environmental preservation has yielded significant achievements, earning regional and global recognition, including multiple sustainability awards. These include “Kuwait’s Best Bank for Sustainable Finance” from Global Finance magazine, “Kuwait’s Best Bank for ESG” by Euromoney

and “Corporate Social Responsibility – Middle East” Award from EMEA Finance. KFH also received the Global Sustainability Assessment System GSAS – Gold Level Certificate, the first of its kind in Kuwait, for KFH Auto eco-friendly showroom.

Among its many environmental initiatives, KFH celebrated the success of its Keep it green campaign, an umbrella project encompassing a diverse range of green efforts.

KFH took pride in its impressive record of sustainability initiatives, which included numerous innovative programs aimed at improving energy efficiency, reducing waste, digitizing banking operations, reducing carbon footprint and successfully issuing green Sukuk. KFH also reiterated its commitment to issuing more sustainable sukuk in the future.

Additionally, KFH highlighted its purposeful initiative to combat desertification and drought in collaboration with the Scientific Center under the title

“We are Generation Restoration”. The initiative included training workshops and practical activities aimed at raising awareness on the importance of combating desertification, drought, and promoting biodiversity.

KFH was also awarded an “A” rating by MSCI Index, for its exemplary performance in environmental, social, and governance (ESG) practices. This prestigious rating underscores KFH’s commitment to sustainable finance and its leadership in integrating ESG principles into its operations and strategic initiatives.

It is worth noting that KFH is keen on taking part in global forums and discussions focusing on sustainability, mitigating climate change impacts and relying on green finance. These contributions included KFH’s participation in the 28th Conference of Parties (COP28) in December last year in Dubai. COP28 brought together presidents, country leaders, senior officials and chief executives



In the State of Kuwait pavilion at the conference.

from international financial institutions and private sector to take part in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and contribute to creating opportunities for sustainable and green change.

Boursa Kuwait experiences decline

General index fell by 11.92 points

By Mahmoud Shendi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: Boursa Kuwait ended Tuesday’s trading session with declines across all indices. The general index fell by 11.92 points, or 0.16 percent, closing at 7,282.07 points. Trading volume was substantial, with 352.9 million shares exchanged through 18,715 cash transactions, valued at KD 58.7 million (USD 179 million).

The main market index experienced a drop of 17.72 points, or 0.27 percent, settling at 6,666.72 points. This index saw 252.3 million shares traded through 10,747 transactions, worth KD 27.18 million (USD 82.8 million).

Similarly, the premier market index declined by 10.95 points, or 0.14 percent, closing at 7,796.81 points. It recorded 100.6 million shares traded through 7,968 transactions, with a total value of KD

31.6 million (USD 96.3 million).

The Main 50 index also fell, losing 24.26 points, or 0.37 percent, to end at 6,524.25 points. This index saw 142.6 million shares traded through 5,690 cash transactions, worth KWD 17 million (approximately USD 51.8 million).

On Monday, Boursa Kuwait experienced a decline with its general index dropping by 17.4 points, or 0.2 percent, to reach 7,293 points.

A total of 376 million shares were traded through 16,646 cash transactions, with a total value of 75.5 million dinars (approximately 230.2 million dollars). As a result, the market value decreased by 103 million dinars, bringing it down to 43.162 billion dinars, compared to 43.265 billion dinars in the previous session.

The main market index saw an increase of 17.4 points, or 0.2 percent, reaching 6,684 points, with 246 million shares traded through 9,769 transactions, worth 30.2 million dinars (approximately 92.1 million dollars).

On the other hand, the Premier Market Index declined by 27.6 points, or 0.3 percent, to 7,807 points, with 129.8 million shares traded through 6,877 transactions, totaling 45.3 million dinars (around 138 million dollars).

The Main 50 index rose slightly by 3.9 points, or 0.06 percent, to 6,548 points, with 158.7 million shares traded through 5,054 transactions, valued at 20.6 million dinars (around 8.62 million dollars).

During the session, 7 sectors saw declines, led by the technology sector with a 2.13 percent drop, while 4 sectors experienced gains, with the basic materials sector rising by 1.88 percent. The utilities and healthcare sectors remained stable.

Among the 67 declining stocks, the Hotels stock topped the list with a 4.43 percent drop, while 48 stocks saw price increases, with Al-Kout leading the gainers at 9.90 percent.

Additionally, 15 stocks remained unchanged. The most active stock in terms of volume was Al-Safat, which rose by 1.68 percent and led the session with 27.81 million shares traded. Kuwait Finance House (KFH) contributed 10.92 million dinars in liquidity through 1,040 deals, with the stock remaining stable at 740 fils following an announcement by Fitch Ratings.

The top-performing companies included Al-Kout, Marakez, A Real Estate and Asas, while the companies with the largest losses were Hotels, Unicab, Mushtaka and Al-Rabita.

Kuwait oil prices up to USD 74.78 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil went up 72 cents to reach USD 74.78 per barrel on Monday, compared to USD 74.06 pb on Friday, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Tuesday.

At the global market, Brent crude went down 58 cents to USD 73.91 pb, the West Texas Intermediate fell 58 cents to reach USD 70.71 pb.

Kuwait contributes to OPEC oil output growth in November

By KAMCO Invest
Continued from yesterday

Recent reports showed oil and condensate production growing to the highest in almost 11 years to reach 1.422 mb/d at the start of the month, as per the NOC. The output growth came after Eni and BP resumed drilling last month that were suspended since 2014 after the resolution of the political dispute. Oil production in Iraq witnessed a decline of 45 tb/d during November-2024 to reach 4.04 mb/d, as per data from OPEC secondary sources. This was almost in line with the OPEC+ quota for Iraq which is at 4.0 mb/d, reflecting full compliance with the quota.

Meanwhile, a recent report showed that UAE is planning to reduce oil shipments early next year as the OPEC+ seeks stronger compliance to the group’s production quotas. As per the report, Adnoc has cut allocation of crude oil cargoes for some customers in Asia and volumes were cut by almost 230 tb/d across a range of crude grades.

OPEC crude oil production increased for the second consecutive month during November-2024 to average at a three month high level of over 27.0 mb/d, according to data from Bloomberg. The monthly increase of 120 tb/d was mainly led by higher output in Libya, UAE, Kuwait and Equatorial Guinea while the rest of the producers showed marginal declines. Data from OPEC secondary sources showed a slightly smaller production growth of 104 mb/d with output averaging at 26.7 mb/d, during the month. The increase was once again led by higher output in Libya, further supported by an increase in production in Iran and Nigeria. The rest of the producers showed minimal change in output as compared to the previous month. The average output in Saudi Arabia remained unchanged at close to 9.0 mb/d during November-2024, as per data from Bloomberg as well as OPEC secondary sources.

Bitcoin surges to all-time high

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: Bitcoin surged to an all-time high above \$106,000 during early Asian trading on Tuesday, driven by remarks from US President-elect Donald Trump who suggested plans to establish a US strategic reserve for bitcoin, similar to the nation’s strategic oil reserve, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Bitcoin, the world’s largest cryptocurrency, reached a high of \$106,533 before stabilizing at \$105,688, according to Reuters.

“We’re at the record highs now,” said Tony Sycamore, an analyst at IG, noting that the next target for the market is \$110,000. He remarked that the expected pullback from these record highs did not materialize.

Trump recently told CNBC that the US intends to take significant action in the cryptocurrency sector, stating, “We’re going to do something amazing with crypto.”

When asked about the possibility of creating a cryptocurrency reserve akin to the strategic oil reserve, Trump confirmed, “Yes, I think so.”

Countries around the world are already exploring the concept of strategic cryptocurrency reserves. China, the United Kingdom, Bhutan and El Salvador have been reported to hold substantial amounts of Bitcoin, according to BitcoinTreasures.

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin recently commented that the US administration’s political use of the dollar is diminishing its role as a global reserve currency. This has prompted many countries to seek alternative assets, including cryptocurrencies.

Focus on advanced enteral & parenteral nutrition

ATC partners with Al Amiri Hospital to celebrate its 10th Nutrition Week



Photos from the event

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: Advanced Technology Company (ATC), the leading distributor of comprehensive health and environmental care solutions across the public and private sectors, announced its strategic partnership with Al Amiri Hospital during the 10th Annual Nutrition Week. This initiative is dedicated to raising awareness about the vital role of nutrition in overall well-being and patient care.

The event featured a diverse range of activities, workshops, and discussions on advanced enteral and parenteral nutrition. It was inaugurated by Dr. Afrah Al Sarraf, Director of Capital Health Zone, alongside prominent speakers and experts from Kuwait and abroad.

Notable speakers included Dr. Abdulrahman AlFares, Head of the ICU Department at Al Amiri Hospital, who spoke about replacing protein via enteral nutrition in a stepwise approach in critically ill patients, while Dr. Osama Tabbara, President of the IVPN Network, highlighted parenteral nutrients and micronutrients interpretation on lab data in TPN.

Adding to the discussion, Carla Daou of Cleveland Clinic, Abu Dhabi, shared insights into gastrointestinal health, meanwhile, Dr. Anwar Al Qenaie discussed the implementation of international Dysphagia diet standardization initiative (IDDSI) in Amiri Hospital and the role of dietitians.

Clinical Dietitian Specialists from Al Amiri Hospital, Sharifah Hilal Al-mutairi and Esra’a Almahmoud, conducted interactive sessions designed to empower the community with practical knowledge about nutrition. These sessions highlighted Al Amiri Hospital’s dedication to fostering communi-

ty awareness and promoting education. Representatives from medical institutions and hospitals, including doctors and practitioners, gained valuable insights into pediatric and clinical dietetics. They were also updated on advanced nutrition practices and healthcare innovations aimed at improving patient outcomes.

“The 10th Nutrition Week was a great opportunity to focus on the advancements in Enteral and Parenteral Nutrition and their importance in improving patient care. We are proud to have Advance Technology Company (ATC) as our strategic partner, supporting us in raising awareness and enhancing practices in clinical nutrition”, stated Reem Hamed AlRefaei, Head of Clinical Nutrition & Food Services at Al Amiri Hospital.

From his side, Sales Manager, Ehab Sidrak, from dialysis department, clinical nutrition line at ATC, expressed the company’s pride in supporting this initiative, stating: “ATC is honored to partner with Al Amiri Hospital for the 10th Nutrition Week. This event fosters knowledge-sharing among the medical community, equipping healthcare professionals with advanced enteral and parenteral nutrition skills to enhance patient care. Innovation and education are key pillars of our commitment to improving lives.”

By collaborating with local healthcare leaders, providing cutting-edge solutions, and engaging meaningfully with Kuwait’s medical community, ATC continues to advance Kuwait’s healthcare landscape. Through initiatives like Nutrition Week, ATC reaffirms the importance of education, innovation, and collaboration in improving patient care and fostering community well-being.

Bid to accelerate company’s evolution into a purpose-driven TechCo conglomerate

Zain unveils new ‘4WARD’ corporate strategy



Al-Kharafi with globally renowned strategists and presenters: Jean Oelwang, Gerd Simon, and Zack Kass.

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative technologies and digital lifestyle and ICT communications operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, announces the introduction of ‘4WARD’ – Progress with Purpose, a new five-year sustainable corporate strategy. This strategy is focused on continuity, acceleration, collaboration and digital innovation, and is designed to foster value creation by fast-tracking the company’s evolution from a predominantly mobile centric operator into a purpose driven technology entity. Zain looks to maximize its full potential as a customer-centric, future-proof, and impactful leading regional TechCo conglomerate.

The 4WARD strategy was formulated internally through a series of groupwide collaborative workshops led by the Zain Group strategy team and announced during a recent strategy forum held in Kuwait, attended by Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi, senior Group executives and management leadership teams from all Zain’s and Omantel’s operating entities, shortly thereafter receiving formal approval from Zain Group’s Board of Directors

4WARD builds on the significant momentum and transformational accomplishments made under the previous corporate strategy, 4SIGHT, which was introduced in 2019, and under which Zain emerged as a multi-core digital player, successfully transforming its fixed and mobile services, and expanding into a number of new business verticals including ICT, Digital mobile operations, Fintech, Entertainment, Digital Infrastructure, Subsea and Cross-Border Connectivity, and more.

The new ‘4WARD’-Progress with Purpose strategy comprises of four primary forces, each with three accelerators (thus 12

key accelerators) that will further progress Zain from being a Telco to a TechCo, to meet the ever-growing demand for superior and dynamic consumer and enterprise services:

1. Customer Delight: Exceeding customer expectations by placing them at the heart of everything Zain does, achieved through delivering superior fixed and mobile connectivity experiences for consumers, businesses, communities, and governments, thus enhancing Zain’s position as a provider of choice for all
2. Digital Zain: Elevating digital capabilities and innovation to drive expansion and growth through the further development of Fintech activities; artificial intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies; and building out digital infrastructure further
3. Purpose and Action: Ensuring that Zain’s actions align with meaningful impact and responsibility, through Sustainability, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and other ESG initiatives that lead to



4WARD logo Vertical

systemic change

4. Collaborative Growth: Empowerment of the company’s 8,000 talented workforce, and fostering a culture of collaboration and partnerships to unlock opportunities and synergies across Zain’s ecosystem

Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi commented, “4WARD will unleash Zain’s full potential in transforming from a Telco to a purpose driven

Vice-Chairman & Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi:

- 4WARD focuses on accelerating the achievements of the 4SIGHT strategy, and realizes Zain’s purpose of providing ‘Better Lives and Lasting Connections’”
- 4WARD powered by four primary forces- Customer Delight; Digital Zain; Purpose and Action; and Collaborative Growth; each designed to drive value creation and unleash Zain’s full potential
- Strategy formalized during meeting of senior management teams from Group and operations



Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi unveils the new strategy.

the necessary impetus for Zain’s continued relevance and impact on shaping societies, and drive the Zain brand value to new heights.”

He added, “This new five-year strategy will future-proof Zain and create shareholder value given the purpose-driven focus of continuity, acceleration, collaboration and digital innovation. Zain has a rich pioneering history of commercial and strategic success regionally, and we look forward to continuing our positive relationships with regulatory bodies and all stakeholders as we implement 4WARD to the benefit of customers, communities, and government bodies we proudly serve.”

Al-Kharafi noted, “With powerful and sweeping innovations such as artificial intelligence, big data analytics and other emerging technologies becoming increasingly significant and highly sought-after, it is important for Zain to harness these dynamics in its underlying strategy. We will also enhance collaboration inter-

nally and with strategic ecosystem partners and continue building on the sound foundations and purposeful fundamental values of the many new lucrative business verticals that embrace ICT, Digital Mobile, Fintech, Entertainment, Digital Infrastructure, Subsea and Cross-Border Connectivity, and the like.”

The success of the 4SIGHT strategy over the past five years has seen the establishment of multiple robust entities, namely ZainTECH, Zain Omantel International (ZOI), TASC Towers, Zain Ventures, Tamam, Zain Cash, Bede, Dizlee, Zain Esports, Yaqoot, oodi, and a marketing partnership with Red Bull, with more in the pipeline. All these entities offer a wide range of dynamic, business-enriching and life-enhancing services.

This has contributed immensely to Zain’s brand value to currently stand at more than US\$3 billion, according to Brand Finance 2024 rankings, a 50% increase from its 2020 valuation. The company’s commitment to its values and the community, along with its purpose-driven focus on sustainability, inclusion, diversity, and equity powered by innovation, are key drivers for the Zain brand’s value success. This drove an improved Brand Strength Index (BSI) rating of AAA-.

Commenting on the highly recognizable Zain brand, Al-Kharafi concluded, “While historically associated primarily with mobile services, we are keen to evolve that association to harness the inherent strengths of the Zain brand and adapt it to mirror the diversified TechCo conglomerate it embodies today. Consequently, we are actively exploring avenues to reposition the Zain brand, aiming to amplify its value by capitalizing on the collective strength of the various new business entities under the widely recognized and reputable Zain umbrella.”



Al-Kharafi with CEOs of all Zain entities.

Bank continues efforts to promote the ‘Let’s Be Aware’ banking awareness campaign

NBK advises customers to ensure updating civil ID and personal documents through official websites

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: Pursuing its active role in raising financial awareness and inclusion among different sectors, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues promoting the “Let’s Be Aware” banking awareness campaign introduced by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in cooperation with Kuwaiti banks and Kuwait Banking Association (KBA). The bank has focused on not disclosing any sensitive or personal information to any person or entity through SMS or calls.

In this context, NBK called customers to always ensure that civil ID and personal documents are renewed/updated through official sources only to protect sensitive information and steer clear of any scams.

The bank advised that with the evolving fraud tactics, scammers may use artificial intelligence to clone the websites and logos of government service agencies to trick victims that they are official websites, such as PACI, Molor other entities



that the public needs on a daily basis for their transactions, stressing that information and documents should be renewed/updated using only official websites.

NBK affirmed that it will never ask customers for personal information via e-mail, SMS or phone calls, warning them of responding to such scams which target obtaining their banking information to steal their money or information.

The bank also urged customers to beware of disclosing any sensitive or personal information to any per-

son or entity through SMS or calls, and to avoid clicking on suspicious or unknown links, downloading attachments and apps using public Wi-Fi networks, or conducting any banking transactions using these networks being insecure. It also called them to follow the tips and instructions shared by the bank to avoid any scams.

NBK intensifies awareness by sharing educational material including video clips, text messages, and tips across its social media platforms and other digital channels, as well as

reposting CBK’s communications. This aims to raise awareness among all people and familiarize them with different scams and the required protection methods.

NBK employs its strong customer communication capabilities as well as all its digital channels, which are the most popular among all Kuwaiti banks, to support the Central Bank’s endeavors to protect customers and the national economy.

It is worth mentioning that NBK is a key promoter and participant in all CBK’s campaigns and initiatives to increase financial and banking awareness among different segments of society. As one of the leading local and regional financial institutions, the bank frequently organizes various activities to raise awareness on all topics related to the banking sector, as well as a wide range of training courses for its employees to enhance their knowledge and expertise in the areas of combating fraud and financial crime.

NBK sponsors Bloom Market to promote sustainability in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) sponsored the Bloom Market, a pioneering event held at Al Raya Shopping Center organized by Seeds. The market gathered eco-friendly vendors and sustainable brands in one vibrant space. The market aimed to raise awareness about sustainability, support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and encourage environmentally conscious practices within the Kuwaiti community.

The Bloom Market featured vendors across five key sustainability categories: food and beverage, lifestyle and wellness, innovation and technology, fashion and beauty, and a dedicated Bloomies section for children. The event highlighted NBK’s strategic focus on fostering innovation while promoting responsible consumer behavior.

The Bloom Market sponsorship is part of NBK’s ongoing dedication to

driving positive change and supporting projects that promote a sustainable and inclusive future.

As a leader in corporate responsibility, NBK continues to support initiatives that align with its sustainability strategy and Kuwait Vision 2035, focusing on environmental protection, youth empowerment, and community development.

Bloom Market was a unique opportunity to bring together organizations and individuals who share a vision for a more sustainable future.

NBK is proud to champion initiatives that encourage innovation and empower local businesses while reinforcing our commitment to building a healthier, greener Kuwait.

NBK has consistently been at the forefront of sustainability efforts in Kuwait, earning recognition for its contributions to sustainable economic development and community impact.



Honoring the bank team.

US retail sales rose at healthy pace last month

WASHINGTON, Dec 17, (AP): Consumers stepped up their spending at retail stores last month, providing a boost to the economy in the early phases of the winter holiday shopping season.

Retail sales rose 0.7% in November, the Commerce Department said Tuesday, a solid increase and higher than October’s 0.5% gain. Sales jumped 2.6% at auto dealers, driving most of the gain. Some of that demand likely reflected a need for new cars in parts of the southeast slammed by Hurricane Helene

in October, as well as healthy incentives provided by car dealers. Big discounts at many retail chains also attracted some consumers.

The boost in spending underscores that the economy is still growing at a healthy pace even with higher interest rates, a trend that could cause the Federal Reserve to lower borrowing costs more slowly next year than they have previously signaled. The Fed will announce its latest rate decision Wednesday.

At the same time, there were some signs of con-

sumer caution, as sales at grocery stores, clothing shops, and restaurants fell. Outside of car dealers and online retailers, sales gains were modest.

“We ultimately expect this will be a decent holiday sales season for retailers,” Tim Quinlan, an economist at Wells Fargo, said in a note to clients. “It’s not going to knock anyone’s socks off in the wake of record pandemic gains, but continued consumer momentum means it’s unlikely to be overly weak either.”



Kutayba Y. Alghanim, Executive Chairman of Alghanim Industries



Mohammed Al-Duwaihees, Prof. Dr. Huang, Mahmoud Samara, the Chinese Ambassador, and Yousef Behbehani



Group photo of BYD Alghanim team with BYD delegation visiting from China



From right to left: Yousef Behbehani, Malek Maarefi, Mohammed Al-Duwaihees, Mahmoud Samara, Bader Al-Kharafi, Dari Al-Badr, and Abdul Latif Al-Sharakh

Alghanim Industries and BYD unveil landmark showroom in Kuwait

- The largest BYD showroom outside China paves the way for transformative mobility.
- Cutting-edge electric and hybrid models empower eco-friendly choices.
- Reinforces customer-centric values and long-term commitment to Kuwait's progress.

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: Alghanim Industries, (Kutayba Alghanim Group), one of the largest privately-owned companies in the MENA region, celebrated the grand opening of its first BYD Alghanim showroom on the 4th Ring Road in Al Rai. As the largest BYD showroom outside China, this landmark facility marks a pivotal step forward in Kuwait's journey toward cleaner, more sustainable transportation solutions.

This opening BYD coincides with its 30th anniversary and the production of its 10 millionth NEV—an unprecedented global achievement. As a pioneer in clean energy, BYD is reshaping the future of transportation through cutting-edge, environmentally responsible innovation. Alghanim Industries' partnership with BYD aligns with its broader strategy to explore new opportunities in energy and sustainability, reaffirming the company's commitment to innovation and excellence in Kuwait's automotive sector and beyond.

This milestone occasion was further distinguished by the attendance of His Excellency Zhang Jianwei, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Kuwait, who commended the partnership as a notable alliance between Alghanim Industries—renowned for its enduring legacy and customer-first ethos—and BYD, a Chinese innovator shaping the future of sustainable transportation.

A Partnership Driving Kuwait's Sustainable Vision

Kutayba Y. Alghanim, Executive Chairman of Alghanim Industries, reflected on the company's enduring legacy and role in shaping Kuwait's future mobility:“Throughout our long history of serving Kuwait, Alghanim Industries has introduced offerings that enrich everyday life. Today, by partnering with BYD—an international leader in electric mobility—we're not simply adding to our automotive range; we're paving the way toward a cleaner, more innovative transport landscape. This alliance signals a forward-looking commitment to building a thriving, sustainable future for generations to come.”

Building on this perspective, Mahmoud Samara, CEO of Alghanim Industries, emphasized the company's tangible steps toward advancing sustainable transportation:“For decades, Alghanim Industries has operated on a simple truth: serving our customers' needs is what drives real progress. This principle led us to be among the first to introduce electric vehicles to Kuwait and invest in early charging infrastructure—an approach that raised industry



Mahmoud Samara, CEO of Alghanim Industries



Bader Al-Kharafi and Mahmoud Samara



His Excellency Zhang Jianwei, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Kuwait

standards and redefined what's possible. Now, as we join BYD, an innovator whose vision and values mirror our own, we are moving beyond incremental improvements and embracing an era where sustainability, innovation, and genuine customer focus work in harmony, setting the tone for Kuwait's evolving mobility landscape.”

Underscoring the synergy between the two organizations, AD Huang, General Manager of BYD Middle East & Africa, praised the strength of the collaboration:“We are proud to partner with Alghanim Industries, a trusted name whose success across multiple sec-

tors has contributed to Kuwait's growth and development. Their dedication to excellence and a forward-thinking approach aligns perfectly with BYD's vision for a sustainable future. As we celebrate our 30th anniversary and the production of our 10 millionth NEV, we look forward to working closely with Alghanim Industries to deliver transformative mobility solutions, helping accelerate Kuwait's journey toward cleaner, more efficient transportation.”

Paving the Way for Kuwait's Green Future

Beyond the showroom's launch, the partnership between BYD and Al-



Prof. Huang, General Manager of BYD Middle East & Africa



Isam Jassim Al-Sager - Vice Chairman and Group CEO of National Bank of Kuwait



Salman Al Najdi and Abdulrahman Al Marri, Sales Managers at BYD Alghanim

ghanim Industries reinforces a long-term vision for sustainable mobility in Kuwait. Alghanim Industries is actively investing in EV infrastructure, home-charging solutions, and collaborating with both public and private entities to accelerate the shift toward cleaner energy transportation.

Looking ahead, BYD plans to introduce models like the Sealion 7, the Shark electric pickup, and the Atto 2 compact SUV, broadening Kuwait's range of environmentally friendly driving options.

With BYD's global expertise and Alghanim Industries' enduring legacy, this collaboration is poised to advance

Kuwait's transition toward sustainable mobility—creating a cleaner, more vibrant future for all.

Showcasing BYD's Cutting-Edge Lineup

The BYD Alghanim showroom features a diverse selection of NEVs designed for a range of lifestyles and preferences:

■ **BYD SEAL:** An electric vehicle designed for various driving needs, featuring an 82.5 kWh battery that offers a range of up to 570 km on a single charge (WLTC). It includes a sleek design, comfortable interior, and innovative driver-assistance technologies,

making it ideal for daily commutes and family outings.

■ **BYD HAN:** An electric sedan equipped with a 85.4 kWh battery, providing a range of up to 565 km on a single charge (WLTC). It can reach a top speed of 180 km/h and accelerates from 0 to 100 km/h in just 3.9 seconds. The Han EV combines elegant design with cutting-edge technology, advanced safety features, and a state-of-the-art infotainment system.

■ **BYD ATTO 3:** A compact electric SUV with a 60.48 kWh battery, offering a range of up to 420 km (WLTC). It is equipped with a front electric motor producing 150 kW (201 hp) and 310 Nm of torque, ensuring a balanced and dynamic driving experience. The BYD ATTO 3 features a spacious interior with advanced infotainment and safety systems.

■ **BYD QIN PLUS DM-i:** A plug-in hybrid sedan featuring an 18.3 kWh lithium iron phosphate battery and a 1.5L engine. It provides a total maximum output of 145 kW (194 hp) and 325 Nm of maximum torque, with an electric range of up to 95 km and a combine driving range of up to 795 km (WLTC). The BYD QIN PLUS DM-i accelerates from 0 to 100 km/h in around 7.3 seconds and has a top speed of 185 km/h.

■ **BYD SONG PLUS DM-i:** A versatile plug-in hybrid SUV powered by a 1.5T engine paired with an electric motor, delivering a combined output of 270 kW (362 hp). It features an electric range of up to 80 km with a 18.3 kWh battery. It also gives a combined range of up to 890 km (WLTC). The BYD SONG PLUS DM-i offers advanced safety features and a spacious interior for a comfortable driving experience.

Each model comes equipped with advanced features, including high-resolution rotating touchscreens, wireless smartphone integration, over-the-air (OTA) updates, advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS), and premium interiors designed for comfort and convenience.

Enhancing Community Engagement

To commemorate the showroom launch, Alghanim Industries announced support for a local road-improvement initiative led by Yousef Al Omran, known as “Bu Jarrah,” a prominent social media personality recognized for community-focused projects. While a lighthearted addition, this initiative demonstrates Alghanim Industries' commitment to contributing positively to the surrounding neighborhood.

Event Highlights

The grand opening gathered industry leaders, automotive enthusiasts, and community members. Guests enjoyed a live performance by Murmuration, a band known for its dynamic and creative flair, adding a festive note to an event that celebrated both innovation and community progress.

In addition to Murmuration's dynamic performance, guests were treated to a captivating recital by six-year-old Turkish qanun prodigy Aytaç Doğan Junior, whose extraordinary talent brought a distinctive cultural flair to the evening's celebration.



Some cars on display.



A shot from the opening.



Photo taken during the launch.

‘The High Road:’ The journey home meant experimenting

Kane Brown ‘gave everything’ on his new album

NEW YORK, Dec 17, (AP): Kane Brown is in his new home studio just outside Nashville, preparing to have the first sit-down conversation about his fourth studio album, “The High Road.” It’s a fitting title, because pounding the pavement is something he’s more than familiar with. A few short days ago, he was in Los Angeles, performing at the iHeartRadio Jingle Ball alongside an eclectic mix of the biggest performers - SZA, Tate McRae, Madison Beer, T-Pain, Paris Hilton and K-pop group NCT Dream among them.

To the untrained ear, it might seem unusual pairing - one of the great modern country voices alongside pop acts. But genre-mixing? That’s something Brown knows a little bit about, too.

Country is at the heart of everything he does - the genre’s narrative style, fiddles, slide guitar and Brown’s signature twang carry throughout - but “The High Road” isn’t afraid to play with different sounds. He says he’s “always been kind of nervous to push boundaries and do certain things. But I’ve been here for almost a decade now, so I needed to stop hiding and just do what I love to do. And country is always my number one.”

“This is by far my favorite album, from the sequencing to the songwriting to the different sounds. There’s definitely a song for everybody,” he continues. “My other albums, I always kind of, you know, cared what people thought about. And this album, we don’t... we gave our everything into the songs.”

He’s also no stranger to working with a variety of artists, from regional Mexican country superstar Carin León on “The One (Pero No Como Yo),” which released earlier this year, to 2019’s “One Thing Right” with EDM giant Marshmello. The helmet-wearing DJ is back on “The High Road,” with the

radio smash “Miles On It.”

This album, which will be released Jan. 24, includes more features than any other in Brown’s discography, including tracks with Khalid, Jelly Roll, and the legendary Brad Paisley.

They came about naturally: Khalid expressed interest in wanting to go country, Brown helped him make it happen. For the Paisley track “Things We Quit,” Brown shared a video of him singing it on social media, and “a lot of people said, ‘This sounds like a Brad Paisley song,’” he says, smiling. “And it’s kind of a comedy country song, a little bit, so he was perfect for that.”

And as for Jelly Roll, on the song “Haunted”? That one was written while Brown was staying in a hotel in Manchester, England.

Meaningful

“It was this big hotel, and I had the suite, which was a bank vault. So, the bank vault was actually in my room and there were these, like, old paintings on the wall. And we wrote three or four songs that day and we couldn’t think of a song title. And I was like, ‘This is place is haunted,’” he recalls. “Let’s write a song called ‘Haunted,’ about depression and all that. So, I mean, it actually, it came out really quick and, you know, it’s meaningful to me. So hopefully it’ll be meaningful to a lot of other people.”

Jelly Roll has never been one to veer away from topics of mental health, and he made the ideal collaborator. “That song is so him,” Brown says. “He didn’t think that I was going to release it, so he was trying to keep it for himself. So that told me that the song meant even more to him than what I thought it was going to mean.”

Important to Brown, no doubt, are two new duets with his wife Katelyn, following the success of their 2023’s single “Thank God.”

“Our music is about telling our story,” she told The Associated Press.

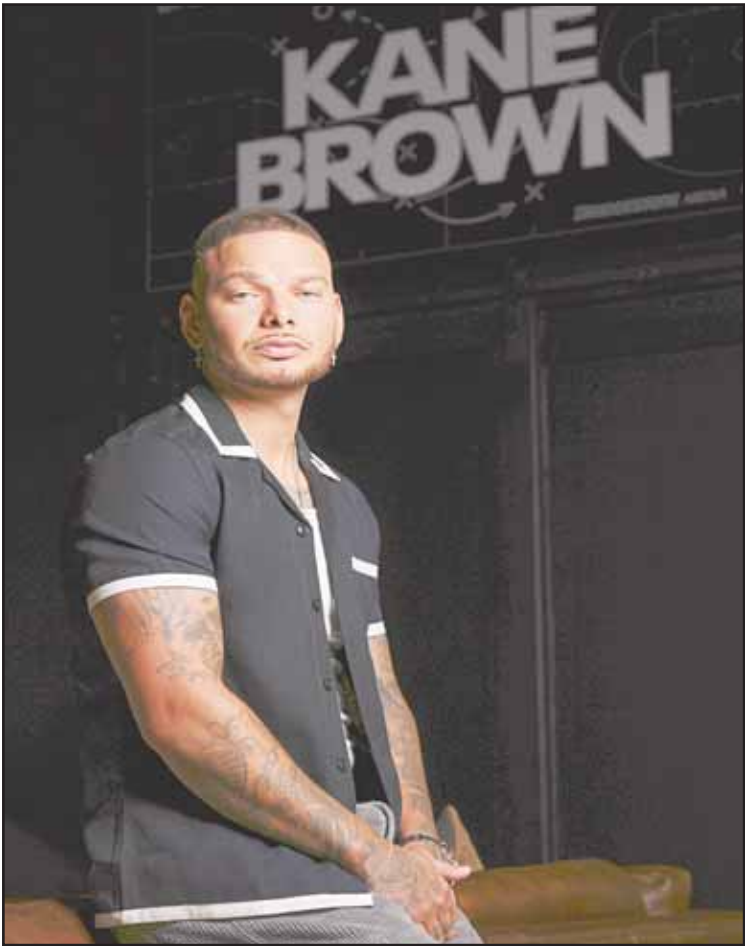
There’s the R&B-pop of “Body Talk,” and a traditionalist’s country tune in “Do Us Apart” - pulling from a long tradition of country music greats performing with their partners. The latter should come as no surprise. “Our favorite duet to sing together is Randy Travis and Carrie Underwood’s “I Told You So,” so we’ve always wanted to have that type of song,” he says.

And country songs, he’s got a lot of them: the jukebox “Fiddle in the Band,” the slow-burn “Backseat Driver,” the barstool swaying of “Says I Can.”

Or the closer, “When You Forget,” a song that I wrote about my granddad with Alzheimer’s. To me, that’s ‘90s country song storytelling,” he says. “That’s keep the tradition there - and then I go far left with some other songs.”

On “The High Road,” Brown believes each track tells a story - and he looks forward to sharing them, both through the record and on a North American tour next spring.

“I just hope people can find a piece of themselves in each song,” he says. “Or... at least one song.” 1. “I Am”; 2. “Fiddle In the Band”; 3. “Backseat Driver”; 4. “Miles On It” (featuring Marshmello); 5. “Says I Can”; 6. “3”; 7. “Rescue” (featuring Khalid); 8. “Haunted” (featuring Jelly Roll); 9. “Start A Fire”; 10. “Body Talk” (featuring Katelyn Brown); 11. “Gorgeous”; 12. “Beside Me”; 13. “I Can Feel It”; 14. “Things We Quit” (featuring Brad Paisley); 15. “Back Around”; 16. “Stay”; 17. “Do Us Apart” (featuring Katelyn Brown) and 18. “When You Forget”



Kane Brown poses for a portrait Tuesday, Dec. 10, 2024, in Nashville, Tenn. (AP)

‘I just wanted to sing’

‘Rock pioneer’ Brenda Lee shines in new film

NEW YORK, Dec 17, (AP): Come and take a trip to the giddy birth of rock ‘n’ roll through the eyes of one of its pioneers - Brenda Lee.

The “I’m Sorry” and “Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree” hitmaker who shared stages with both Elvis Presley and the Beatles is a guide to those heady years in “American Masters - Brenda Lee: Rockin’ Around,” which premiered Monday on PBS.

“That era can never be repeated again,” she tells The Associated Press on the eve of the broadcast. “That was an era when the money wasn’t thought about, the fame wasn’t thought about. I know that sounds crazy, but it is true. The artists of that time were there to do their thing, and they loved it, whether they got paid or not.”

Achievement

Lee, 80, had her first hit record in 1960 at age 15 and went on to sell more than 100 million albums. In the ‘60s, she earned more Hot 100 singles in the United States - 46 - than any recording artist besides the Beatles, Presley or Ray Charles. She won a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 2009.

She is the rare artist inducted into both the Country Music Hall of Fame and the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, moving effortlessly in her career between country, pop, rock and rockabilly sounds.

“I never classified myself as a ballad singer, as a rock singer, as a country singer or anything. I just wanted to sing,” she says in the interview. “Some artists can sing it all. Not me. I have to love what I’m singing or it’s not believable.”

The documentary draws on the commentary of musicologists and such stars as Keith Urban, Tanya Tucker, Trisha Yearwood, Jackie DeShannon, Pat Benatar and Neil Giraldo.

“I had no trouble getting people to talk about Brenda and why she matters and why we should look to her,” says director Barbara Hall. “This is what’s possible when you just get your head down and stay focused and do what you know you’re good at and don’t give up.”

Lee was the daughter of a carpenter in Atlanta who died in a construction accident when she was just 8. Her mother soon was

forced to work in the cotton mill. When she was 10, country music singer Red Foley put her on his national TV program “Ozark Jubilee.” By age 12, she had appeared on various network TV variety shows.

The portrait that emerges is a rare one for the music industry, the story of a young woman who is protected and nurtured. Lee credits producer Owen Bradley; her manager, Dub Allbritten; and the musicians she worked with for looking out for her, treating her like a little sister.

“I hear horror stories about children in show business, but I certainly didn’t have that experience, and I’m grateful for that,” says Lee. “It was like I was one of the group, and that was so important to me.”

The holidays are when Lee shines most, with her hit “Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree” in high rotation. In 2023, it topped the Billboard Hot 100 chart for the first time ever, 65 years after the song’s debut.

Celebrate

“She is in your house every Christmas,” says Hall. “She is a part of something that so many Americans celebrate. So, I’m hoping that people will embrace her story and her music once they get reintroduced to it.”

She recorded it at age 13 in July 1958, not exactly a snowy time in the South. The air conditioner was cranked up in the recording studio and there was a Christmas tree set up to get everyone in the mood. It initially was a bigger hit abroad and later got a boost in the 1990 film “Home Alone.”

“You get a wonderful song and it may lay around for a few years like ‘Rockin’ did, but if it’s as wonderful as ‘Rockin’ was, it’ll show its head sooner or later, and that’s what happened,” Lee says.

Hall, who worked on a 2017 “American Masters” documentary on Patsy Cline, says she tried to find any dirt on Lee and simply couldn’t. Even when Lee broke her leg during the shoot and had to be hospitalized, she was gracious and kind.

“If my leg was broken in 10 places and I had to be in a rehab facility, I’d probably be in a bad mood the whole time,” she says. “She was cracking jokes and everyone in the room felt like she was their friend.”



Brenda Lee arrives at the 57th Annual CMA Awards on Wednesday, Nov. 8, 2023, at the Bridgestone Arena in Nashville, Tenn. (AP)

Film



Elle Fanning poses for photographers upon arrival at the photo call for the film ‘A Complete Unknown’, in London, on Monday, Dec. 16. (AP)

Variety

NEW YORK: An attorney defending Jay-Z against the rape allegation brought against him last week by an unnamed woman outlined a range of evidence Monday that he said showed the accuser’s account to be “provably, demonstrably false.”

The woman told NBC News last week that Jay-Z and Sean “Diddy” Combs sexually assaulted her in 2000, when she was 13, at an after-party for the MTV Music Awards. She has since acknowledged certain inconsistencies in her story.

Speaking to reporters at Roc Nation’s New York headquarters, Jay-Z’s attorney, Alex Spiro, said the woman’s claim relied on an “impossible timeline” and a nonexistent location. While the lawsuit said the assault happened at a “large white residence with a U-shaped driveway,” photos show both Jay-Z, whose legal name is Shawn Carter, and Combs at a nightclub following the award show.

In the suit, the woman said she snuck out of a window of her home

in Rochester and hitched a ride to the award ceremony from a friend, who has since died. She said she watched the event on a jumbotron outside, then befriended a limousine driver who drove her to the house party where she was assaulted by the two rap moguls.

Following the alleged rape, she said she fled the house and called her father for a ride home from a nearby gas station. The allegation, Spiro said, “defies credibility.”

It would’ve taken her five hours to drive from Rochester, the lawyer noted, meaning she would’ve had to leave her home by 3 p.m. Permits and photographs show there was no jumbotron outside the VMAs in 2000, according to Spiro. The woman’s father has said he does not recall driving from Rochester to pick her up in New York City. (AP)



Jay-Z

□ □ □

NEW YORK: At Wisconsin’s Mukwonago Community Library, director Abby Armour isn’t only committed to providing books and other media for local residents.

Armour, one of 10 recipients this year of an “I Love My Librarian Award,” has been overseeing the cataloging of some 12,000 Native American artifacts donated to the library in the 1960s and making sure they are returned to the tribes that have claimed them. Armour’s efforts led to members of her community nominating her for the honor presented by the American Library Association, which gives each of the 10 winners \$5,000 and a \$750 stipend for an association gathering next month in Phoenix.

The other librarians cited by the ALA are based everywhere from Morgantown, West Virginia, to Wailuku, Hawaii.

“Librarians nationwide make positive impacts on their communities every day, and the inspiring stories from this year’s I Love My Librarian Award recipients prove how transformative their efforts can be to the lives of their patrons,” Cindy Hohl, ALA president, said in a statement Monday. (AP)

Fed fraud

Watson gets 10 yrs in Ozy Media case

NEW YORK, Dec 17, (AP): Former talk show host Carlos Watson was sentenced Monday to nearly 10 years in prison in a federal financial conspiracy case that cast his once-buzzy Ozy Media as an extreme of fake-it-til-you-make-it startup culture.

In one example, another Ozy executive impersonated a YouTube executive to hype Ozy to investment bankers - while Watson coached him, prosecutors said.

Watson, 55, and the now-defunct company were found guilty last summer of charges including wire fraud conspiracy. He has denied the allegations and plans to appeal.

“I loved what we built with Ozy,” he said in court Monday, initially addressing supporters

in the audience before the judge suggested he turn around. Watson told the judge he was a target of “selective prosecution” as a Black entrepreneur in Silicon Valley, where African American executives have been disproportionately few, and he called the case “a modern lynching.”

“I made mistakes. I’m very, very sorry that people are hurt, myself included,” he said, but “I don’t think it’s fair.”

Watson, who faced a mandatory minimum sentence of two years in prison and potentially as much as 37 years, remains free for now on \$3 million bond. He is to surrender to prison March 28. Any restitution will be determined after a hearing in February.

US District Judge Eric Komitee said Monday that the “quantum of dishonesty in this case is exceptional.”

“Your internal apparatus for separating truth from fiction became badly miscalibrated,” he told Watson in sentencing him.

Prosecutors accused the former cable news commentator and host of playing a leading role in a scheme to deceive Ozy investors and lenders by inflating revenue numbers, touting deals and offers that were non-existent or not finalized, and flashing other false indications of Ozy’s success.

Contempt

Watson even listened in and texted talking points while his co-founder posed as a YouTube executive to praise Ozy on a phone call with potential investors, prosecutors said.

“His incessant and deliberate lies demonstrated not only a brazen disregard for the rule of law, but also a contempt for the values of honesty and fairness that should underlie American entrepreneurship,” Brooklyn-based U.S. Attorney Breon Peace said in a statement Monday. His office prosecuted the case.

During the trial, Watson’s defense blamed any misrepresentations on others, particularly co-founder Samir Rao and former Ozy chief of staff Suzee Han. She and Rao pleaded guilty, are awaiting sentencing and testified against Watson.

Watson portrayed himself Monday as a founder who put everything he had into his company, saying that he took an average salary of around \$51,000 from Ozy in its final years, has triple-mortgaged his home and drives a 15-year-old car.



Watson



This image released by the Library of Congress shows Jesse Eisenberg in a scene from the 2010 film 'The Social Network.' (AP)



This image released by the Library of Congress shows a scene from the 1974 film 'Texas Chainsaw Massacre.' (AP)



This image shows (clockwise from top left), Gina Gugino, Antonio Banderas, Alexa PenaVega and Daryl Sabara in a scene from the 2001 film 'Spy Kids.' (AP)

25 films, spanning 115 years, inducted into 2024 class

‘Beverly Hills Cop,’ ‘Up in Smoke’ join National Film Registry

LOS ANGELES, Dec 17, (AP): Nobody puts baby in a corner, but they’re putting her in the National Film Registry. “Dirty Dancing,” along with another 1980s culture-changer, “Beverly Hills Cop,” are entering the Library of Congress’ registry, part of an annual group of 25 announced Wednesday that spans 115 years of filmmaking. “Dirty Dancing” from 1987 used the physicality and chemistry of Patrick Swayze as Johnny Castle and Jennifer Grey as Frances “Baby” Houseman to charm generations of moviegoers, while also taking on issues like abortion, classism and antisemitism. In the climactic moment, Swayze defiantly declares, “Nobody puts baby in a corner” before taking Grey to dance to “(I’ve Had) The Time of My Life.” 1984’s “Beverly Hills Cop,” the first Eddie Murphy film in the registry, arguably made him the world’s biggest movie

star at the time and made action comedies a blockbuster staple for a decade. Since 1988, the Librarian of Congress has annually selected movies for preservation that are “culturally, historically or aesthetically” significant. The current picks bring the registry to 900 films. Turner Classic Movies will host a TV special on Wednesday, screening a selection of the class of 2024. The oldest film is from 1895 and brought its own form of dirty dancing: “Annabelle Serpentine Dance” is a minute-long short of a shimmying Annabelle Moore that was decried by many as a public indecency for the suggestiveness of her moves. The newest is David Fincher’s “The Social Network” from 2010. “Pride of the Yankees” (1942): The film became the model

for the modern sports tear-jerker, with Gary Cooper playing Lou Gehrig and delivering the classic real-life line: “Today I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the Earth.” “The Miracle Worker” (1962): Anne Bancroft won an Oscar for best actress for playing title character Anne Sullivan and 16-year-old Patty Duke won best supporting actress for playing her deaf and blind protege Helen Keller in director Arthur Penn’s film. “Up in Smoke” (1978): The first feature to star the duo of Cheech Marin and Tommy Chong established a template for the stoner genre and brought weed culture to the mainstream. Marin, who also appears in the inductee “Spy Kids” from 2001, is one of many Latinos with prominent roles this year’s crop of films. “Star Trek II: Wrath of Khan” (1982): The second movie

in the “Star Trek” franchise featured one of film’s great villains in Ricardo Montalban’s Khan, and showed that the world of Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock could bring vital thrills to the cinema. “Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt” (1989): The Oscar-winning documentary on the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt was a landmark telling of the devastation wrought by the disease. “My Own Private Idaho” (1991): Director Gus Van Sant’s film featured perhaps the greatest performance of River Phoenix, a year before the actor’s death at age 23. “American Me” (1992): Edward James Olmos starred and made his film directorial debut in this tale of Chicano gang life in Los Angeles and the brutal prison experience of its main character.

Event



Tom Cruise, (right), receives a Navy Distinguished Public Service Award from The United States Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro presented at the Longcross South Studios, in Runnymede, Surrey, England, Tuesday, Dec. 17. (AP)



Katy Perry performs at Q102’s iHeartRadio Jingle Ball on Monday, Dec. 16, at the Wells Fargo Center in Philadelphia. (AP)



Alexandra Grant, left, and Keanu Reeves arrive at the premiere of ‘Sonic The Hedgehog 3’ on Monday, Dec. 16, at TCL Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)



Kristen Bell attends the Academy Women’s Luncheon on Dec. 10, 2024, in Los Angeles. (AP)

Kristen Bell set to return to host SAG Awards next year

LOS ANGELES, Dec 17, (AP): Kristen Bell will return as host of next year’s Screen Actors Guild Awards, streaming live on Netflix for a second consecutive year. “I’m honored to be asked back and can’t wait to share the evening with my fellow actors, doing what we do best...celebrating ourselves,” Bell said in a statement Monday. The actor, who starred in “ Nobody Wants This ” and “The Good Place,” was the SAG Awards’ first host in 2018. The 31st annual awards ceremony, which honors outstanding performances in film and television, will stream live on Netflix on Feb. 23 at 8 p.m. Eastern from the Shrine Auditorium & Expo Hall in Los Angeles. Idris Elba hosted last year’s ceremony. “Kristen Bell’s wit, warmth and charm makes her the perfect fit for our show - a night celebrating actors and the outstanding performances of the year,” said Jon Brockett, executive producer of the SAG Awards. “Plus, everybody wants this.”

Film

Directorial debuts revive sports genre with unique twists

New sports dramas pack a punch

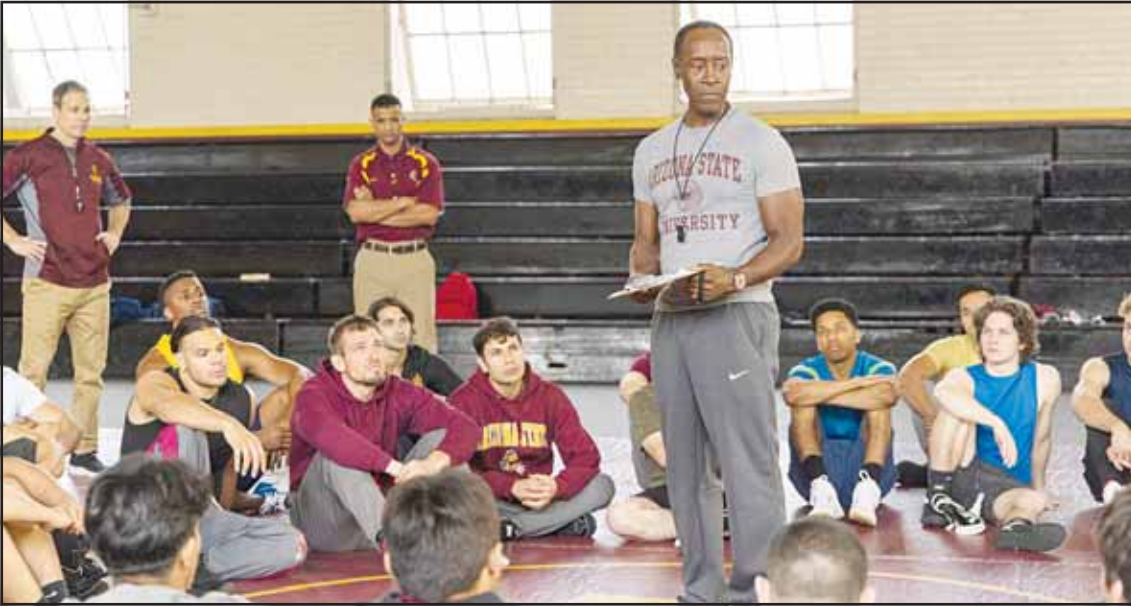
NEW YORK, Dec 17, (AP): The sports movie, like any genre, can easily fall victim to overly familiar story beats. An underdog challenger. A big match. You know how the rest goes. But a trio of new movies brings some original moves, and a few curveballs, to a genre where tried-and-true formula often reigns supreme. In a movie year that’s already given us “Challengers” - a tennis movie that has almost nothing to do with tennis and everything to do with the dynamics of a threesome - these movies carve out their own place in the hard knocks world of sports dramas. Each, curiously enough, is a directorial debut by an industry veteran. And each features, among other fine performances, one of the great standbys of the sports film and the abiding refuge of great character actors: the inspirational coach.

“Day of the Fight”

Jack Huston’s “Day of the Fight,” currently playing in theaters, stars Michael Pitt as down-and-out middleweight boxer “Irish” Mike Flannigan. He is, like some battered boxers before him, seeking redemption. Flannigan’s once-promising career was long ago derailed by a fatal drunk driving accident. But on this day, he’s preparing for an unlikely opportunity: an undercard bout at Madison Square Garden. “Day of the Fight” is loosely based on the 1951 Stanley Kubrick documentary short of the same name, and it’s likewise in black and white. Huston, the “Boardwalk Empire” actor and grandson to director John Huston, has mulled the movie since watching his “Boardwalk” co-star Pitt, the sometimes troubled but always talented actor. “I had in my head this image of Michael Pitt punching a sandbag when we were on the set of ‘Boardwalk,’” says Huston. “I think his life in a strange way mimics that of a boxer - sometimes the ups, sometimes the downs. Specifically where he is in his life right now, he has the essence of that boxer mentality. He can take a punch but, guess what, he keeps standing up.” “Day of the Fight” culminates in the Madison Square Garden match, but the movie is largely about the preamble to the fight. The movie follows Flannigan on a series of poignant errands. “I wanted to make a film where you didn’t necessarily need the boxing match,” Huston says. “The boxing match became icing.”

“Unstoppable”

William Goldenberg, the Oscar-winning editor (“Argo,” “Heat”) directs this based-on-a-true-story drama about the life of NCAA champion wrestler Anthony Robles, played by Jharrel Jerome. The film, which arrives Jan. 16 on Prime Video, chronicles Robles’ constant hardships, not the least of which is that he



This image released by Amazon/MGM shows Don Cheadle in a scene from ‘Unstoppable.’ (AP)



This image released by Amazon Content Services shows Ryan Destiny as Claressa Shields in a scene from ‘The Fire Inside.’ (AP)

was born without his right leg.

While “Unstoppable” does steer toward the moment of ultimate triumph for Robles, it carefully and naturally dramatizes his long road to the championship. It’s less about Robles’ overcoming one challenge than it is about his perseverance through constant adversity. Jennifer Lopez co-stars as his mother, with Bobby Cannavale as an abusive step father. “At a certain point, it’s a movie about an athlete who wins, so there’s going to be certain tropes that are unavoidable. And I didn’t want to avoid them,” says Goldenberg. “I just wanted to try to do them in an organic, real-feeling way. Shooting handheld was the idea that we’re with him along the journey, so you feel like you were facing the

challenges he faces.”

“It was a constant battle,” says Robles. “That’s kind of how I felt going through my life, whether it was on a mat against a flesh and blood opponent or it was in my family life or the world. There was always something I was fighting against.”

“The Fire Inside”

“The Fire Inside,” directed by decorated cinematographer Rachel Morrison (“Fruitvale Station,” “Mudbound”), is also about a real champion, the Olympic gold medal winner Claressa Shields (played by Destiny Ryan). The first half of “The Fire Inside,” which opens Dec. 25, is somewhat conventional, albeit crafted with a keen sense of texture and the local fla-

vor of Flint, Michigan, where Shields was from. It charts her rise as a female boxer leading up to the 2012 Olympics. Once she’s won gold, you might even glance at your watch and wonder why they wrapped things up so quickly. But the film, scripted by Barry Jenkins, the “Moonlight” director, then turns into something else, something more interesting. Shields’ glory is short-lived. No Wheaties box covers come for her. A tough Black woman in a bloody sport who makes no apologies for her interest in knocking out her opponent, is unappealing to marketers. As “The Fire Inside” continues in its thought-provoking third act, it asks questions less about who wins and more about who gets to be deemed “an American hero.”

Variety

MEMPHIS, Tenn.: A man who spent more than 20 years behind bars before he was exonerated of robbing a Memphis music club is suing the city and 10 police officers, alleging they made up evidence that led to his wrongful conviction and a lengthy prison sentence. The federal lawsuit filed Thursday by Artis Whitehead, 61, says Memphis Police Department officers fabricated evidence that led to charges of armed robbery and kidnapping in the 2002 robbery of B.B. King’s Blues Club on Beale Street. Whitehead, who is Black, was tried, convicted and sentenced in 2003 to 249 years in prison. But Whitehead’s conviction and sentence were thrown out in December 2023 and he was released from

prison. A Memphis judge determined that no physical evidence connected Whitehead to the robbery and that police fabricated information about the crime, including false identifications of Whitehead by club employees who had been held hostage and robbed. The fake evidence included an anonymous tip made by phone against Whitehead by a man detained for two different armed robberies, the lawsuit says. It claims the man who made the call was coerced by officers working the case. The lawsuit names as defendants the city of Memphis and officers involved in the investigation. It seeks a jury trial and unspecified damages for “loss of liberty, great mental anguish, humiliation, degradation, physical and emotional pain and suffering.” (AP)

SHANGHAI: US-based global fashion brand **Ralph Lauren** has prevailed in court in a series of trademark infringement cases adjudicated by the Shanghai Intellectual Property (IP) Court, marking China’s latest progress in IP right protection, **Ralph Lauren China** said on Tuesday. The cases were brought against Shanghai Ruifa Apparel Co., Ltd. and Qingyuan Huahao Zhibai Leather Goods and Apparel Co., Ltd., two major licensees of Guangzhou Aichi Leather Goods Co., Ltd. The court’s rulings recognized



Lauren

Ralph Lauren’s trademarks including “POLO,” “POLO BY RALPH LAUREN” and “POLO RALPH LAUREN” as highly influential within the industry and among Chinese consumers. Based on the facts, the court concluded that the unauthorized use of the marks by the defendants was likely to mislead the public regarding the origin of the goods and falsely suggest an association between the defendants and the registered trademarks of Ralph Lauren, according to the court judgment. The court has asked the defendants to immediately cease all infringing activities, including halting the use of trademarks identical or similar to those of Ralph Lauren, discontinuing the sale of products bearing such trademarks, and removing these trademarks from storefront signs, interior decorations and product packaging. (Xinhua)

‘Progress on climate change is too little, too slow’

Can UN summits save the planet amid faltering talks?

NEW YORK, Dec 17, (AP): The world’s nations keep faltering in their efforts to join together to save the planet from several environmental crises.

In the past few months United Nations-sponsored negotiations to tackle climate change, plastic pollution, loss of global species and a growing number of deserts have either outright failed or come out with limited outcomes that didn’t address the scale of the problems. It’s been three years since activist Greta Thunberg dismissed global talks as “blah-blah-blah,” which became a rallying cry for young environmentalists.

“If you are not feeling some kind of grief about what’s going on, you’re obviously not understanding what’s going on,” said climate negotiations veteran analyst Alden Meyer of the European think-tank E3G. He said he’s been watching humanity “collectively fail as a species.”

The Associated Press interviewed more than 20 experts and they called multilateral environmentalism broken because of a cumbersome consensus process, the power of the fossil fuel industry, geopolitical changes and the massive size of the problems they are



Ann Carlotta Oltmanns pretends to resuscitate the Earth during a demonstration at the COP29 UN Climate Summit, Nov. 18, 2024, in Baku, Azerbaijan. (AP)

trying to fix.

Progress is being made, especially on climate change, but it’s too little, too slow and in stutter steps, United Nations officials and others said.

“Is it frustrating? Yes. Is it difficult? Yes,” said United Nations Environment Programme Executive Director Inger Andersen. But it is the “only way” in which smaller and poorer nations get a seat at the table with powerful rich countries, she said. “I wouldn’t classify it as an outright failure.”

It’s a far cry from the hopeful days

of 1987 when the world adopted a treaty that is now reversing the dangerous loss of stratospheric ozone by banning certain chemicals. That was followed by a 1992 Earth summit that set up a United Nations system for negotiating environmental problems, especially climate change called Conference of Parties or COPs. A flurry of these conferences in a row fell relatively flat.

The biodiversity COP in Cali, Colombia in October ran out of time, ending with no big agreement except to recognize Indigenous people’s efforts. November’s climate change COP in Baku, Azerbaijan, on paper reached its key goal of increasing financing for poor nations to cope with warming, but the limited amount left developing nations upset and analysts saying it wasn’t nearly enough. A plastics pollution meeting in Busan, South Korea, the next week got many nations saying they wanted to do something, but didn’t in the end. And the conference on desertification in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia also failed to reach an agreement on how to deal with drought.

“We can sum up all these four multilateral meetings of 2024 that we are still failing,” said Johan Rockstrom,

director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany.

Nine years ago, when more than 190 nations came together to adopt the historic Paris agreement, countries had a mindset that realized a healthy planet benefitted every one, but “we’ve lost track of that,” said former U.N. climate secretary Christiana Figueres, who shepherded that deal. “We’re now entering as though we were gladiators in the Colosseum with an attitude of fighting and confrontation. And that mindset is not very productive.”

Panama lead negotiator Juan Carlos Monterrey was part of all four meetings and said the entire system is “fundamentally broken.”

“It feels like we have lost our way, not only as countries and governments, but as humanity. It feels like we no longer care for each other,” Monterrey said from the desert meeting in Riyadh.

Monterrey said he thinks countries like his are going to have to fight environmental problems on their own or with just small groups of nations. Others are embracing the idea of “climate clubs ” which is a group of countries working together, but not quite the

whole world.

“We need to find alternative pathways,” Harjeet Singh, of the Fossil Fuels Non Proliferation Treaty said, pointing to a climate case before the International Court of Justice. Figueres said one group of lawyers has filed 140 climate change-oriented legal actions in courts across the world.

“The U.N. system is the worst system except for all the others. They don’t have another,” former Ireland President Mary Robinson, a member of the advocacy group The Elders, told The Associated Press.

But former U.S. Vice President Al Gore said: “We can’t keep doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.”

Thirty years ago when the climate conferences started there was debate over how decisions should be adopted.

A prominent fossil fuel industry lobbyist and Saudi Arabia pushed hard to kill the idea of majority or supermajority vote and instead adopt the idea of consensus so that every country more or less had to be on board, said climate negotiations historian Joanna Depledge at Cambridge University in England.

New variant

Germany reports four mpox cases

BERLIN, Dec 17, (Xinhua): German authorities reported on Monday four cases of the new Clade Ib variant of the mpox virus, including two infections in school-age children, in a western community near Cologne.

The initial case was confirmed following a family member’s trip to Africa. Subsequent testing identified the virus in three other family members, according to a press release from the community. The family is currently under quarantine.

As a precaution, classrooms at the school attended by the two infected children have been closed, and students will switch to remote learning until Friday.

Germany recorded its first case of the new Clade Ib variant in October. No deaths related to mpox have been registered in the country to date.

Mpox, caused by an orthopoxvirus, was historically prevalent in West and Central Africa. The first case of the Clade Ib variant outside the African continent was reported in Sweden in mid-August.

Symptoms of the disease include fever, swollen lymph nodes, sore throat, muscle aches, skin rash, and back pain.

In August, the World Health Organization declared mpox a public health emergency of international concern, reactivating its highest level of global alert for the second time in two years.

Bird flu: The US state of California has recalled raw milk produced and packaged by Valley Milk Simply Bottled, a local dairy company based in Stanislaus County, due to detection of bird flu virus.

The recall order came following the detection of Influenza-A H5N1 (bird flu) virus in samples taken from a raw milk bulk tank at the Valley Milk Simply Bottled dairy farm, said the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) in a release.

The order applies to all “Valley Milk Simply Bottled Raw Cow Milk” and “DESI Milk Raw Cow Milk” distributed in quart, half-gallon, and one-gallon plastic jugs with a code date marked on the container of DEC 23 2024 through DEC 30 2024.

CDFA urged consumers not to consume any product remaining in their refrigerators. No illnesses have been reported in the state yet.

US weight-loss drug surge raises risks

New blood test makes treatments of cancer safer, more effective: experts

SYDNEY, Dec 17, (Xinhua): Australian researchers have developed a new blood test they say could make cancer treatments safer and more effective.

In a new study, researchers from RMIT University and the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity in Melbourne detailed how the first-of-its-kind test can rapidly assess how effective different nanomedicines are at killing cancer cells and minimizing side effects using just a drop of blood, said a news release by RMIT University on Tuesday.

The study tested three different polyethylene glycol (PEG) based nanomedicines on the blood of 15 people with leukemia, a common type of blood cancer, and found that differences in immune systems affect how well the therapies work against cancer cells as well as side effects.

Nanomedicines comprise tiny particles that interact with the body in precise ways. They are designed to carry drugs directly to diseased cells and spare healthy ones.

The research team said their new innovation represents a big step forward in understanding how nanomedicines interact with cells in cancer patients.

“Our study sheds light on why some cancer patients respond better to nanomedicine therapies than others,” said Yi Ju, lead author of the study from RMIT.

“By understanding these differences, we can develop more personalized and effective treatments for leukemia patients.”

The test is not yet available in clinical settings but the researchers said it could be developed and rolled out in collaboration with industry partners and government support within years.

Weight-loss drug: US telehealth companies looking to capitalize off the weight-loss drug boom have made it as seamless as possible to get the shots, sometimes regardless of medical need, reported Bloomberg News on Monday.

“It can take as little as filling out an online form and having a valid form of payment to get a prescription. The lack of guardrails means the drugs are getting into the hands of people for whom they’re dangerous, or even life threatening,” noted the report.

People with eating disorders are particularly vulnerable in this system, given their condition often drives them to lie to cover up their behaviors. Half a dozen eating disorder specialists across the United States said that they’re seeing an influx of patients who’ve relapsed after taking drugs like Ozempic, according to the report.

Families struggle for treatment

Malnutrition crisis deepens in Yemen

SANAA, Dec 17, (Xinhua): Hafidhah Jamal, a 22-month-old Yemeni girl, has been plagued by severe malnutrition for more than a year. She barely escaped death after her family, despite every difficulty, managed to transfer her to the hospital in the capital Sanaa for better treatment.

“After Jamal’s skin turned darker brown and started peeling off, we rushed her to a hospital in our district. Doctors told us she was in critical condition and needed to be quickly



A malnourished child is treated at a hospital in Sanaa, Yemen, on Dec 14, 2024. (Xinhua)

ly transferred to specialized hospitals in Sanaa,” the girl’s grandfather Mohammad Al-Sufi told Xinhua.

Upon Jamal’s arrival at Al-Sabeen Maternity and Child Hospital, a major public hospital for treating malnutrition in Sanaa, she was admitted to the intensive care unit due to her urgent condition, said Ameen Al-Ayzari, a doctor at the hospital.

“The girl was only skin and bones, 5.15 kg in weight, and had developed apparent symptoms of acute malnutrition that required urgent treatment so that she could keep breathing and stay alive,” Al-Ayzari recalled.

The doctor noted that the hospital treats dozens of malnourished patients per day, mostly from remote areas like Jamal, who lives in Hajjah Governorate, 127 km northwest of Sanaa.

Though its rooms, even corridors, have been crowded with malnourished and stunted children, the hospital has usually been quiet as these children, albeit suffering, are too weak to cry.

What’s worse, many impoverished families, particularly those from remote villages, cannot afford the cost of treatment in Sanaa and are often forced to leave before their children recover, Hael Al-Jarbani, supervisor of the malnutrition department at the hospital, told Xinhua.

That’s exactly the predicament facing Jamal’s family. Unable to pay the high medical expenses, they had no choice but to leave the hospital before Jamal fully recovered, the girl’s grandfather lamented.



This Jan. 2, 2010 image made available by NASA shows the planet Saturn, as seen from the Cassini spacecraft. (AP)

4.5 billion years mystery

Saturn’s rings may be as old as the planet: study

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., Dec 17, (Agencies): New research suggests that Saturn’s rings may be older than they look - possibly as old as the planet.

Instead of being a youthful 400 million years old as commonly thought, the icy, shimmering rings could be around 4.5 billion years old just like Saturn, a Japanese-led team reported Monday.

The scientists surmise Saturn’s rings may be pristine not because they are young but because they are dirt-resistant.

Saturn’s rings are long thought to be between 100 million and 400 million years old based on more than a decade of observations by NASA’s Cassini spacecraft before its demise in 2017.

Images by Cassini showed no evidence of any darkening of the rings by impacting micrometeoroids - space rock particles smaller than a grain of sand - prompting scientists to conclude the rings formed long after the planet.

Through computer modeling, the Institute of Science Tokyo’s Ryuki Hyodo and his team demonstrated that micrometeoroids vaporize once slamming into the rings, with little if any dark and dirty residue left behind. They found that the resulting charged particles get sucked toward Saturn or out into space, keeping the rings spotless and challenging the baby rings theory. Their results appear in the journal Nature Geoscience.

Hyodo said it’s possible Saturn’s rings could be somewhere between the two extreme ages - around the halfway mark of 2.25 billion years old. But the solar system was much more chaotic during its formative years with large planetary-type objects migrating and

interacting all over the place, just the sort of scenario that would be conducive to producing Saturn’s rings.

“Considering the solar system’s evolutionary history, it’s more likely that the rings formed closer to” Saturn’s earliest times, he said in an email.

NASA’s James Webb Space Telescope has found planet-forming disks lived longer in early universe, NASA said on Monday.

In 2003, NASA’s Hubble Space Telescope provided evidence of a massive planet around a very old star, almost as old as the universe. Such stars possess only small amounts of heavier elements that are the building blocks of planets.

This implied that some planet formation happened when the universe was very young, and those planets had time to form and grow big inside their primordial disks, even bigger than Jupiter, according to NASA.

To confirm Hubble’s discovery, researchers used Webb to study stars in a nearby galaxy that, much like the early universe, lacks large amounts of heavy elements.

They found that not only do some stars there have planet-forming disks, but that those disks are longer-lived than those seen around young stars in our Milky Way galaxy.

“With Webb, we have a really strong confirmation of what we saw with Hubble, and we must rethink how we model planet formation and early evolution in the young universe,” said study leader Guido De Marchi of the European Space Research and Technology Centre in Noordwijk, Netherlands.

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England, Netherlands land in a strong group with top-seeded France and Wales

Spain drawn with Italy, Belgium and Portugal in Euro 2025 group

LAUSANNE, Switzerland, Dec 17, (AP): World Cup winner Spain will chase a sweep of major women's soccer titles at the 2025 European Championship after drawing a group with Italy, Belgium and Portugal.

A European title would complete the set for Spain women after winning the inaugural UEFA Nations League in February for coach Montse Tomé, who took over when the team and federation was in turmoil after the 2023 world title win in Sydney. Tomé is the only female coach in Spain's Euro 2025 group.

Euro 2025 host Switzerland will open the 16-nation tournament against Norway on July 2 in Basel. The group also includes Iceland and Finland.

The past two European champions, titleholder England and Euro 2017 winner the Netherlands,

landed in a strong group with top-seeded France and Wales.

France and England reunite next July 5 in Zurich after coming through the same qualifying group, in which they traded away wins in a five-day spell and France finished on top of the standings.

"We had some beautiful matches in May and June. It's a very good challenge," France coach Laurent Bonadei said.

Germany, the record eight-time European champion, was drawn with Denmark, Poland and Sweden, the inaugural winner in 1984.

Basel's St. Jakob Park stadium also will host the final on July 27.

More than 700,000 tickets are publicly available for the 31 games being hosted in eight Swiss cities.



The tournament groups are displayed on the video wall at the end of the UEFA Euro 2025 European women's soccer championship final draw at the Swiss Tech Convention Centre in Lausanne, Switzerland. (AP)

Switzerland has the responsibility to continue the momentum in European women's soccer after three successful major tourna-

ments.

France hosted the 2019 Women's World Cup, won by the United States; host England won the Euro 2022 final against Germany watched by more than 87,000 fans at Wembley Stadium; and Spain and England played for the 2023 world title at the first 32-team tournament, hosted by Australia and New Zealand.

"For me it is the perfect moment for this tournament to come here," said retired Swiss great Lara Dickmann, a two-time Champions League winner with Lyon.

"It will be a game-changer for us," Dickenmann told The Associated Press. "It's going to be really important for the Swiss population but also for the Swiss media, Swiss politics, on any level that takes part in football."

Switzerland will start against

Norway - which lost the 2023 World Cup opening game against New Zealand - one month after the same teams meet in a Nations League group that also includes Iceland.

Switzerland coach Pia Sundhage said she aimed to field her best team in what will be a final competitive warmup for Euro 2025.

"Confidence can take any team anywhere," said Sundhage, the Swedish veteran who led the U.S. to back-to-back Olympic titles in 2008 and 2012.

England coach Sarina Wiegman has won the past two Euros titles, after leading her native Netherlands to the 2017 title, and suggested it will be an open and exciting tournament in Switzerland.

"It's not just three or four countries" who can win, Wiegman said. "You can't predict anymore."

West Ham 'share' points with Bournemouth after late drama



Bournemouth's Antoine Semenyo, left, attempts a shot on goal, during the English Premier League soccer match between Bournemouth and West Ham United, at the Vitality Stadium, in Bournemouth, England. (AP)

Christie laments inconsistent decision-making from officials

BOURNEMOUTH, England, Dec 17, (AP): Enes Ünal scored a superb free kick in the last minute of normal time to rescue a point for Bournemouth in a 1-1 home draw against West Ham in the Premier League.

Both sides struggled to break down their opponent and goalkeepers made timely saves at each end.

But in the 87th minute, just when it looked like a 0-0 draw was on the cards, West Ham took the lead thanks to a VAR-assisted penalty. After a video review, referee Chris Kavanagh adjudged the ball to have struck Tyler Adams' hand and Lucas Paqueta made no mistake from 12 meters.

That would have been hard on Bournemouth, which enjoyed the better of the second half but came up



Bournemouth's Enes Ünal scores his side's first goal of the game from a free-kick, during the English Premier League soccer match between Bournemouth and West Ham United, at the Vitality Stadium, in Bournemouth, England. (AP)

against the man of the match in West Ham goalkeeper Łukasz Fabiański.

But in the 90th minute, Ünal curled a free kick into the top corner to give the Cherries a deserved share of the points.

"Credit to him, big moment, especially the reaction as well, I thought the boys were brilliant," Bournemouth forward Ryan Christie told broadcaster Sky. "And it was a moment of magic to get us level."

There will be debate over the penalty decision and Christie lamented what he said was inconsistent decision-making from officials.

"I thought it was harsh," Christie said. "I know his hand is high but he's so close to the ball. We didn't get one last week against Ipswich from a similar scenario. "It's a bit frustrating because we dominated. But it's good to get a point in the end."

The comeback was another example of Bournemouth's late resilience. The south coast side has picked up nine points from losing positions this season, better than everyone bar Aston Villa and Manchester City. Bournemouth climbed into sixth place, just two points behind Manchester City, while West Ham was 14th.

'Team needs a new impulse'

Salzburg fires Lijnders ahead of Klopp's arrival at Red Bull

SALZBURG, Austria, Dec 17, (AP): Salzburg fired coach Pepijn Lijnders, with the club 10 points off the lead in the Austrian league and unlikely to advance in the Champions League. That saved Jürgen Klopp having to decide his former colleague's future.

Lijnders was hired by Salzburg, Austria's biggest club, on a three-year contract in May after leaving Liverpool, where he was the longtime assistant to Klopp.

He was fired two weeks before Klopp begins work leading drinks giant Red Bull's troubled network of soccer clubs, which includes Salzburg.

"It was clear to see that in many of our matches, we have been far short of our own requirements and aims," Salzburg CEO Stephan Reiter and managing director of sport Rouven Schröder said in a joint statement.

"We have therefore become convinced that our team needs a new impulse under new management, even if we continued to hope for a turnaround until the end."



Klopp

Salzburg is fifth in the Austrian league after 16 games, 10 points behind leader Sturm Graz - the defending champion who ended Salzburg's run of 10 straight titles.

In the Champions League, Salzburg has won one of its six league matches and is 32nd in the 36-team standings, five points from the qualification spots.

Salzburg will be one of 12 teams playing in the Club World Cup in the United States next year.

Lijnders won his last game in charge on Saturday 3-0 against Austria Klagenfurt but the team was still mired in trouble ahead of Austria's winter break.

Reiter and Schröder said they want a new coach in place by the time Salzburg starts training on Jan. 3 after the winter break. Salzburg's next competitive game isn't until Jan. 22 at Real Madrid in the Champions League.

Klopp will begin his new role as head of global soccer at Red Bull on Jan. 1, overseeing its international network of clubs including Salzburg.

The Austrian team isn't the only one of Red Bull's clubs in trouble. Leipzig has lost all six of its games in the Champions League and is already eliminated from contention for the knockout stages.

Best of the Rest

Louzan elected new president: Rafael Louzan was elected as the new president of the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) after defeating his only rival Salvador Gomar by 90 votes to 43 at an assembly at the headquarters of the organization on Monday.

Louzan's election comes despite him facing a seven-year ban from holding public office for perversion of justice, related to when he was president of the Provincial Deputation of Pontevedra.

Louzan has appealed against to the Spanish High Court, with the case due to be held in February, but if the ban is upheld, Louzan will become the fourth consecutive RFEF President.

Louzan's election comes at a vital moment for the Spanish game, coming just days after Spain was confirmed as one of the hosts for the 2030 World Cup, along with Portugal and Morocco, while the RFEF has still to recover from the effects of the 'Luis Rubiales case' after the former president's unsolicited kiss of Jenni Hermoso following Spain's win at the 2023 Women's World Cup in Australia. (Xinhua)

Yamal out for up to a month: Barcelona forward Lamine Yamal is expected to be sidelined for three to four weeks because of an ankle injury, the club said.

Barcelona said the 17-year-old Yamal has a grade-one injury to his right ankle. He sustained the injury in the team's 1-0 loss to Leganes at home in the Spanish league on Sunday, when he had to be replaced in the 75th minute.

He is set to miss Barcelona's match against Atletico Madrid in the Spanish league on Saturday and against fourth-division club Barbastro in the Copa del Rey in January. He is also unlikely to be fit for team's game against Athletic Bilbao in the Spanish Super Cup in Saudi Arabia, also in January.

Yamal has already missed time because of a right-ankle injury earlier this season, an ailment that also kept him from playing some matches with Spain's national team. (AP)

Muani could be a solution

With Balogun sidelined, Monaco needs another forward

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PARIS, Dec 17, (AP): With United States striker Folarin Balogun injured, Monaco is in need of more firepower up front.

The team has been showing signs of fatigue in recent weeks, both in the French league and the Champions League.

It has failed to score in its past couple of matches, a 3-0 thrashing at the hands of Arsenal in Europe's top competition and a goalless draw at Reims over the weekend in the French league.

The Monaco squad is filled with young talented players but has only two strikers available at the moment, Breel Embolo and George Ilenikhena.

Balogun will undergo surgery on his recently dislocated shoulder on Tuesday and Monaco coach Adi Hütter said he will be out of action for about four months.

Speaking ahead of his team's final French league game of the year against leader Paris Saint-Germain on Wednesday, Hütter said he is looking for an extra striker in January.

"It's necessary that we have our eyes open," he told reporters. "This is our job to take a look at the transfer market."



Arsenal's Gabriel Jesus tries to score next to Monaco's Thilo Kehrer, right, during the Champions League opening phase soccer match between Arsenal and Monaco, at the Emirates Stadium in London. (AP)

Asked whether France forward Randal Kolo Muani - who is being used sparingly by PSG coach Luis Enrique - could be the right option, Hütter said, chuckling, "it sounds good."

"But you have to be honest," he added. "We have to find a good solution for the second period of the season. Which striker, we don't know exactly now. We have some profiles. We have to find someone who scores goals."

Hütter, who previously coached teams in Germany, said he followed Kolo Muani when the forward played for Frankfurt.

"He scored lots of goals, he was really, really, really good there," he said. "He is a profile, maybe. But there are lots of other things. He is for sure not the cheapest one."

Monaco is level on points with second-place Marseille in the French league standings, seven points behind leader PSG.

"Of course we want to win this game against Paris, but for this we need a perfect day," the coach insisted. "They are unbeaten in Ligue 1, they are the favorites for this game. We are able to win against Paris but for this we need a top, top, top performance."

Tourists 252-9 in their first innings

Persistent rain forces likely draw in third test between India and Australia

BRISBANE, Australia, Dec 17, (AP): It was another day of rain at the Gabba in Brisbane on Tuesday, almost ensuring the third cricket test between Australia and India would end in a soggy draw.

After four days of play, India was 252-9 in its first innings, trailing Australia by 193 runs, which scored 445 in its first innings.

More importantly, India avoided having to follow-on with a late flurry of tail-end runs in fading light Tuesday, forcing Australia to bat again and almost ensuring a draw by the end of the fifth day on Wednesday.

With the five-test series level at 1-1 and Brisbane touted as being a pivotal test in the series, it has turned out to be anything but. Rain delay after rain delay has spoiled the Gabba match and forced Cricket Australia to refund tickets to about 35,000 spectators who attended the first day because not enough overs were bowled.



Australia's captain Pat Cummins celebrates the wicket of India's Nitish Kumar Reddy during play on day four of the third cricket test between India and Australia at the Gabba in Brisbane, Australia. (AP)

KL Rahul top-scored for India with 84 runs before being caught by Steve Smith off Nathan Lyon's bowling.

A 10th-wicket partnership Tuesday between Jasprit Bumrah and



India's Mohammed Siraj bats during play on day four of the third cricket test between India and Australia at the Gabba in Brisbane, Australia, Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2024. (AP)

Akash Deep took India from 213-9 to 252-9 at stumps. Australia will have to take one more wicket on

the fifth day and either bat again or declare their innings for nil and risk losing the test if India can chase

down the remaining runs.

Only 13 overs were bowled on the first day Saturday and there were eight stoppages of play due to rain on the third day Monday. That continued Tuesday morning and rain returned to delay the start of play after lunch, then again after only two overs were bowled. Bad light finally stopped play Tuesday after only 58 overs were bowled on the day.

Australia could be a bowler down for the remainder of the test after Josh Hazlewood suffered calf soreness ahead of the fourth day's play and was only able to send down one over before leaving the field.

Hazlewood, who missed the second Adelaide test due to side soreness, was late entering the field at the start of play and then looked labored when he came into the attack.

India won the first test by 295 runs at Perth, while Australia came back to win the second day-night test in Adelaide by 10 wickets.

Balich Wonder Studio teams up with local experts

Kuwait prepares for dazzling opening ceremony

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: The Supreme Organising Committee for the Khaleeji Zain 26 is wrapping up a stunning Opening Ceremony, and the team behind the show promises an event that will make Kuwait proud.

The prestigious biennial football tournament will be launched at the 57,000-capacity Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium at 7 p.m. on Saturday, December 21. The opening Ceremony will feature music, special effects, and choreography before the first match between Kuwait and Oman.

It is being delivered in a partnership that sees world-renowned ceremony experts, Balich Wonder Studio, working with local talent and expertise to produce a bespoke spectacle

using cutting-edge technologies that will captivate fans both inside the sold-out stadium as well as the millions more watching across the world.

The Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information for Television Affairs and member of the Supreme Organising Committee, Turki Al-Mutairi, said: "The Supreme Organising Committee is closely following up on the preparations, monitoring every detail to have a successful Opening Ceremony that emulates the best and highest international standards.

"The selection to work with Balich Wonder Studio came after comparing with many specialized companies, and in light of them successfully deliver-



One of the stadiums for the Khaleeji Zain 26 games.

ing similar ceremonies for major international sporting events such as the 2022 Qatar FIFA World Cup; 2016 Rio Olympic Games Ceremonies, and 2014 Sochi Olympic Games closing and Paralympic Games Ceremonies.

"We look forward to a dazzling and exciting ceremony which will be the best introduction to a tournament and that will be enjoyed by people across the Gulf, followed by matches full of high levels of sportsmanship."

Formerly known as the Arabian Gulf Cup, the Khaleeji Zain 26 will see hosts Kuwait joined by Oman, U.A.E, and Qatar in Group A, with the reigning champions Iraq, Yemen, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia contesting Group B.



Turki Al-Mutairi

Jokic has another triple-double, Nuggets rally past Sacramento



Denver Nuggets guard Russell Westbrook, left, and Sacramento Kings guard Colby Jones chase the ball during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Sacramento, Calif. (AP)

Harden scores 24 of his 41 points in 1st quarter

SACRAMENTO, Calif., Dec 17, (AP): Jamal Murray made a go-ahead jump-er with 8.6 seconds remaining and the Denver Nuggets rallied past the Sacramento Kings 130-129 on Monday night.

Nikola Jokic had his NBA-leading 10th triple-double with 20 points, 14 rebounds and 13 assists as the Nuggets ended Sacramento's three-game winning streak. Murray scored 28 points, while Russell Westbrook had 18 points, nine rebounds and 10 assists.

Denver (14-10) trailed by 10 with four minutes remaining before storming back on the strength of a 14-3 spurt.

The teams exchanged leads seven times over the final 75 seconds, with Murray nailing the decisive shot about 12 seconds after DeMar DeRozan put the Kings (13-14) in front with a baseline dunk.

DeRozan missed inside in the final seconds, and the Nuggets held on.

Domantas Sabonis had 28 points, 14 rebounds and six assists for the Kings. De'Aaron Fox added 29 points and seven assists. Malik Monk scored 25.

James Harden scored 24 of his 41 points in the first quarter and the Los Angeles Clippers rolled to a 144-107 victory over the Utah Jazz while reaching a season-high scoring total.

Norman Powell had 29 points, Ivica Zubac added 19 points with 12 rebounds and Amir Coffey scored 16 points as the Clippers ended a three-game losing

streak and a two-game home skid.

Harden had 34 points at halftime when the Clippers had an 81-47 lead. It was the most points in a first half as a team for the Clippers since scoring 82 in a December, 2019 game against Washington.

Jordan Clarkson scored 20 points, Lauri Markkanen added 17 and Collin



Los Angeles Clippers guard James Harden (1) drives the ball against Utah Jazz guard Collin Sexton (2) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Inglewood, Calif. (AP)

Sexton had 15 for the Jazz, who lost their third consecutive game and fell for the eighth game in their last nine. Utah dropped to 3-10 on the road.

Evan Mobley scored 21 points, Caris LeVert added 19 and the Cleveland Cavaliers rolled to a 130-101 win over the Brooklyn Nets.

Donovan Mitchell had 18 points and five assists, and Georges Niang had 17 points and nine rebounds for Cleveland (23-4), which won its second straight and for the sixth time in seven games.

Cameron Johnson led Brooklyn with 22 points and five assists, and Day'Ron Sharpe had 15 points and seven rebounds. The Nets (10-16) lost their third straight and fell for the sixth time in seven games.

Kenny Atkinson returned as a head coach to Brooklyn with the Cavaliers. The 57-year-old led the Nets for four seasons.

Tim Hardaway Jr. hit three 3-pointers in overtime to help the Detroit Pistons end the Miami Heat's four-game winning streak with a 125-124 victory.

Cade Cunningham had 20 points, a career-high 18 assists and 11 rebounds for the Pistons, his sixth triple-double of the season. Jimmy Butler had 35 points, 19 rebounds and 10 assists for Miami.

Malik Beasley led the Pistons with

Stokes sidelined

New Zealand beats England by 423 runs in the 3rd test

HAMILTON, New Zealand, Dec 17, (AP): Captain Ben Stokes was unable to bat because of a hamstring injury on Tuesday as England slumped to a 423-run loss to New Zealand before tea on the fourth day on the third cricket test.

Stokes strained his left hamstring while bowling on the third day and could not take the field as England was bowled out for 234 as it chased an impossible target of 658 for victory.

New Zealand's winning margin matched its largest test win by runs of a 423-run win over Sri Lanka in 2018 and prevented England from completing a series whitewash. England had an unassailable 2-0 lead in the series after winning the first test by eight wickets and the second by 323 runs.

"You can't fault any of the energies or efforts we put into this game, particularly in the field," Stokes said. "It's obviously not ideal to end the tour on this note but we've come here against a New Zealand team which is very strong and full of confidence after beating India in India 3-0. So to come here and lift that trophy at the end proves we played some very good cricket."

England resumed its second innings Tuesday at 18-2 after losing the wickets of Ben Duckett and Zak Crawley late on day three after New Zealand, leading by 204 on the first innings, was dismissed for 453.

Joe Root made 54 and Jacob Bethell 76 in a 104-run partnership for the third wicket which briefly fanned England's hopes that it might somehow endure for two full days to draw the match. But dogged perseverance is not a feature of England cricket in the "Bazball" quick-scoring era and instead it maintained a policy of all-out attack before the final wicket fell midway through the second session.



New Zealand bowler Tim Southee is congratulated by teammates after taking the wicket of England's Jacob Bethell during play on day four of the third cricket test between England and New Zealand in Hamilton, New Zealand. (AP)

After lunch Gus Atkinson blasted 43 from 41 balls with seven fours and a six and Ollie Pope made 17 but wickets fell steadily and the result became inevitable.

"I think anytime you finish a series with a win when you've been behind is pleasing," New Zealand captain Tom Latham said. "We weren't at our best in those first two games but the way we came here on a wicket that was slightly different to the first couple and we adapted was very pleasing."

New Zealand's win owed a great deal to the contribution of Mitchell Santner in the first innings who made 76 batting at No. 8 and worked with Matt Henry, Tim Southee and Will O'Rourke to add 116 runs for New Zealand's three wickets. That allowed New Zealand to reach 347 after losing the toss and being sent in.

Fluminense expresses formal interest in Spurs' Richarlison

RIO DE JANEIRO, Dec 17, (Xinhua): Fluminense is pushing ahead with plans to sign forward Richarlison from Tottenham Hotspur, the Brazilian club's president said on Monday.

Mario Bittencourt said he was hopeful the 27-year-old would return to the club he represented from 2016 and 2017.

"We have expressed formal interest in Richarlison," Bittencourt told reporters. "We know it will be difficult to bring him back, but we believe that perhaps because he will be closer to the Brazilian national team, at the club where he excelled, he may be tempted." According to local media reports, Palmeiras is also interested in signing the Brazil international but has yet to initiate talks with Spurs.

Former Everton and Aston Villa winger Yannick Bolasie is poised to join Cruzeiro after parting ways with Brazilian Serie A rivals Criciuma.

The 35-year-old, who is a free agent, has reached an agreement to sign a one-year contract with the Belo Horizonte club, Globo Esporte reported.

It added that Cruzeiro had beaten off interest in Bolasie from several other Brazilian top-flight clubs, including Gremio and Fluminense.

Palmeiras has reached an agreement to sign Uruguayan forward Facundo Torres from Orlando City, according to media reports in Brazil.

The Brazilian Serie A club agreed to pay 12 million U.S. dollars plus add-ons to secure the 24-year-old on a five-year deal, Globo Esporte said on Monday.

It added that Torres, who has been capped 19 times for Uruguay, would arrive in Sao Paulo this week to undergo a medical check and finalize the personal terms of his contract.

Torres made 123 appearances across all competitions for Orlando City, scoring 47 goals and providing 20 assists after joining the club from Penarol in 2022.

Palmeiras finished second in the 2024 Brazilian Serie A standings, six points behind champions Botafogo.



Australia's Marnus Labuschagne fields the ball during play on day four of the third cricket test between India and Australia at the Gabba in Brisbane, Australia. (AP) — See Page 15

Sports

Pizzi expresses optimism about team's progress, despite challenges in the 2026 World Cup qualifiers

Kuwait sets sights on Khaleeji Zain 26 title as preparations intensify

By Khaled Al-Enezi
Al-Seayssah/Arab Times Staff
KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: Kuwait began preparations at Thamer Stadium and will launch an internal training camp today ahead of the "Khaleeji Zain 26".
The tournament is set to kick off in Kuwait on Saturday, running until January 3.
Kuwait will open its campaign on the championship's first day with a Group One match against Oman. The group's other game, featuring Qatar and the UAE, will also take place on Saturday.
Speaking to Abu Dhabi Sports Channel, Kuwait's head coach, Argentine Juan Pizzi, highlighted

the significance of the tournament for all eight participating teams, noting their shared ambition to develop and elevate the level of the game.
"As the host country, we will approach the competition with great enthusiasm, aiming to compete for the title and secure a new achievement for the team," Pizzi stated.
Pizzi expressed optimism about the team's progress, despite challenges in the 2026 World Cup qualifiers.
"The Blues are moving in the right direction with continuous improvement. Although we haven't secured a victory in six rounds of the qualifiers, we re-

main hopeful and ambitious to reach the final stages or even qualify for the World Cup," he added.
The coach emphasized the importance of hard work, frequent matches, and effectively implementing his strategies.
He also pointed to the tournament's demanding schedule, with matches every three days, as a critical test of the team's readiness and development.
Pizzi welcomed the opportunity to introduce young players, allowing them to gain professional experience and adapt to high-level competition.
Following the conclusion of its Doha camp last Monday, Pizzi fi-

nalized a 26-player squad for the tournament.
The roster includes:
Khaled Al-Rashidi, Salman Abdul Ghafoor, Abdulrahman Al-Fadhli, Hamad Harbi, Ahmed Al-Dhafiri, Mubarak Al-Fanani, Youssef Nasser, Nasser Khader, Hassan Hamdan, Youssef Majeed, Ali Khalaf, Khaled Ibrahim, Mashari Ghannam, Mohammed Daham, Sami Al-Sanea, Rashid Al-Dosari, Salman Al-Awadhi, Bandar Bursali, Moaz Al-Dhafiri, Faisal Zayed, Fahad Al-Hajri, Sultan Al-Enezi, Reda Hani, Eid Al-Rashidi, Moaz Al-Aseima, and Fawaz Ayed. Four players were excluded from the final list.



Juan Pizzi watches as the players train.

Kuwaiti gymnasts make mark at Mediterranean Champ'ship



Kuwait gymnastics team with coach Vitaly.

Team wins silver and bronze

TUNIS, Dec 17: The Kuwait youth artistic gymnastics team clinched two medals — a silver and a bronze — during its debut at the ongoing Mediterranean Championship in Tunisia, which runs until December 19.
The team, comprising Musa Al-Sahaf, Saud

Al-Radini, Ali Abdul Hadi, and Khaled Al-Dhaham, secured second place in the team event, finishing behind Italy, which claimed gold, while Algeria took third place. Individually, Musa Al-Sahaf earned the bronze medal in the all-around category, adding to Kuwait's medal tally.
Fahad Al-Soula, President of both the Kuwaiti and Arab Gymnastics Federations, expressed his

delight at this achievement, emphasizing the progress Kuwaiti gymnastics has made. He commended the players and praised the efforts of their Ukrainian coach, Vitaly Arseniev, from the "Blue Gymnastics" academy.
The Kuwaiti team's participation in the Mediterranean Championship, which began on December 9, was facilitated by a special invitation from the Arab Gymnastics Federation, allowing Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar to join this edition of the competition.

Hayat re-elected as President of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: The General Assembly of Equestrianism has approved a new board of directors to lead the Kuwait Equestrian Federation for the 2024-2028 electoral cycle, with veteran equestrian Masoud Jawhar Hayat re-elected as president. The decision was made during the assembly's meeting at the headquarters of the Olympic Committee.
The newly appointed board includes Sheikh Youssef Mishaal Al-Sabah as Vice Chairman, Ghazi Faisal Al-Jariwi as Secretary, Raghad Waleed Al-Dubos as Deputy Secretary, and knights Ali Jassim Al-Kharafi and Abdulrahman Al-Fuzai as representatives of the Knights Committee. Additionally, the board will include a representative for endurance riding.
Masoud Hayat expressed his gratitude to the General Assembly for their confidence in the board, stating, "I thank the General Assembly for endorsing the Federation's board for the new term. We remain committed to supporting and advancing Kuwaiti equestrianism, overcoming challenges, and enabling our riders to participate in local and international competitions."



Masoud Jawhar Hayat

Hayat, now serving his second term as president after initially taking office in January 2021, also extended his appreciation to the sponsors of equestrianism and local championships. He urged private sector companies to continue their support to further develop and promote equestrian sports in Kuwait.

FA has contacted Mudryk after 'adverse finding' in doping test

LONDON, Dec 17, (AP): Chelsea forward Mykhailo Mudryk, one of the most expensive players in soccer history, had an "adverse finding" in a routine urine test, the Premier League club said Tuesday.
The Ukraine international, who was bought by Chelsea for \$108 million in 2023, was contacted by the English Football Association following the finding.
Mudryk said he had "never knowingly" taken banned substances, Chelsea said in a statement.
The FA did not comment on the situation when approached by The Associated Press and Chelsea did not say if he had been suspended. Mudryk was last included in a Chelsea squad as an unused substitute on Dec. 1.
"Both the Club and Mykhailo fully support The FA's testing program and all our players, including Mykhailo, are regularly tested," Chelsea said. "Mykhailo has confirmed categori-

cally that he has never knowingly used any banned substances. Both Mykhailo and the Club will now work with the relevant authorities to establish what has caused the adverse finding."
The 23-year-old Mudryk has made nine appearances for Chelsea this season, but played only once in the Premier League.
The FA's anti-doping regulations state it is a player's "personal duty to ensure that no Prohibited Substance enters his body".
Mudryk was one of the most sought-after players in Europe when he became Chelsea's latest big money signing under American owners Todd Boehly and Clearlake Capital.
It was widely reported that he was a target for Arsenal before he completed a move from Shakhtar Donetsk to Chelsea. He was given an 8 1/2-year contract, which is unusual in soccer.

Kuwait Club defeats Bahrain's Al-Ahli to maintain lead in WASL group stage

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Seayssah/Arab Times Staff
MANAMA, Dec 17: Kuwait Club secured an impressive 77-63 victory against Bahrain's Al-Ahli in the fourth round of Group A in the West Asia Gulf Region Basketball Championship (WASL). The match took place in Manama, the capital of Bahrain.
With this win, Kuwait Club extended its lead at the top of the group standings, accumulating 8 points. Al-Ahli remains at 5 points, tied with the UAE's Shabab Al-Ahli, while Oman's Al-Bishr sits at the bottom with 3 points.



Kuwait Club player dribbles past an opponent during Kuwait Club's game against Bahrain's Al-Ahli.

Nasr at 7:00 pm. Both games will be held at the Basketball Federation Hall in Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex.
Currently, Kuwait Club and Al-Qadsia share the top spot with 8 points each. They are followed by Kazma and Al-Nasr with 6 points, Al-Arabi and Al-Sulaibikhat with 5 points, Al-Qurain with 4, and Al-Tadamon and Yarmouk with 3 points each.

The league follows a two-stage format, with the top four teams advancing to the semi-finals. The semi-finals will feature a best-of-three play-off series between the first and fourth teams and the second and third teams. The winners will progress to a five-game final series, where the team that wins three matches will be crowned champion.

Kuwait Club and Qadsia qualified for final

Kuwait Volleyball League set to begin on Dec 23rd

By Khaled Al-Enezi
Al-Seayssah/Arab Times Staff
KUWAIT CITY, Dec 17: The Volleyball Federation's Competitions Committee has announced the schedule for the League Championship for the Men's category, which will begin on December 23. On that day, Kuwait Club will face Al-Nasr, followed by a match against Al-Yarmouk on December 26.

These fixtures are part of Kuwait Club's preparation for the Arab Clubs Championship, scheduled to take place in Doha, Qatar, from January 13-26.
The Federation has released the match schedule for the Championship, covering dates from December 23 to February 24. Additional match dates will be determined after clubs conclude their international participation.
The Committee also confirmed the schedule for the Women's General Volleyball League Championship, which will feature Al-Fatati, Salwa Al-Sabah, and Al-Oyoun Girls clubs.
This league will run from January 11 to March 18. Additionally, the Girls' Under-18 League will take

place from January 19 to March 16.
In other news, the Kuwait Club and Qadsia teams have qualified for the final of the Federation Championship. Kuwait Club secured its

place by defeating Borgan 3-0 in the semi-finals, while Qadsia overcame the "Orange" team with a 3-2 victory. Later today, Kazma and Borgan will compete for third place.



Qadsia player goes for a spike as opponents defend.