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Kuwait Amir heads to UK on King Charles III invitation

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, accompanied by an official delegation, will depart for the United Kingdom on Tuesday, January 14, at the personal invitation of His Majesty King Charles III of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland.

Amir named 2024 Gulf Leadership Personality



KUNA photo

Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the Kingdom of Bahrain receives the award on behalf of His Highness the Amir.

MANAMA, Jan 13, (KUNA): Bahrain's Al-Sanabel Orphan Care Society selected on Sunday His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as the "Honorary Gulf Leadership Personality" for 2024.

The society awarded His Highness the 2024 Social Responsivity Award for Orphan Care in the GCC, for his contributions in the fields of charitable and humanitarian work.

His Highness the Amir is a leader who offers a lot to advance the care of orphans not only in his country, but also across many parts of the world, said Chairman of the Social Responsibility Network, Professor Yusef Al-Abbasi.

In a statement to KUNA, Kuwait Ambassador to Bahrain, Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah expressed his gratitude to the society for honoring His Highness the Amir.

Continued on Page 5



PM Diwan photo

His Highness the Prime Minister receives US Ambassador to Kuwait.

PM hosts US ambassador

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received U.S. Ambassador to Kuwait Karen Hideko Sasahara at Bayan Palace on Monday.

Continued on Page 5

Decree issued

MEW gets new undersecretary

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Monday issued a decree appointing Dr. Adel Mohammad Abdullah Al-Zamel as undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy.



Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

May God bless Syria, its people and new leaders

LET us set things on the right course. It would not have been easy to overthrow the regime of oppression and brutality in Syria without the strong will of the Syrians themselves, particularly those who believed in the Sham Liberation Army. From day one, the army demonstrated its capability, led by Ahmed al-Sharaa, and prioritized the interests of the country over their own.

Hence, the Riyadh Conference to support Syria was convened mainly because its organizers understood the importance of helping this Arab nation emerge from the ordeal inflicted by the leaders of a gang supported by the Iranian regime, which viewed Syria as a pivotal part of its evil axis.

Syria's salvation, along with the election of President Joseph Aoun to fill the vacuum in the Lebanese presidency, marks an important moment in the collapse of Persian domination over four Arab capitals. This signifies the end of the anxiety caused by the short-sighted vision of Iranian leaders who once dreamed of altering the social, political, and even religious fabric of the Arab world.

It is true that the change is dramatic, and there are challenges in dismantling the reach of this devilish octopus. However, with the new leaderships in Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq, this will not be impossible, especially since the only remaining force is the Houthi militia, which controls the fate of Yemen, the land of wisdom.

Here, we repeat the question we have always asked: What have the people of these countries gained from Persian hegemony? Wasn't the Gaza Strip destroyed because some Palestinian factions aligned themselves with the Persian axis of evil? Haven't over 51,000 martyrs, most of them children, women, and the elderly, been killed, while the entire Gaza Strip has become uninhabitable?

For nearly 44 years, the regime of discord has worked relentlessly to fuel division among the people through its mercenaries in Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen, and exploited the Baath regime to serve its interests. This has brought woe, siege, hunger, poverty, and death upon these nations.

Continued on Page 5

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Negligent foster mom hit with KD 4,000 fine

Court intervenes as child endures emotional and physical harm

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The Misdemeanor Court has fined a foster mother KD 4,000 for her behavior on social media, which were deemed to harm the principles of motherhood and the rights of the child. The court also ordered her to pay compensation of KD 2,000 to the child's father.

According to the case details, the plaintiff counsel Lawyer Hisham Al-Fahad accused the foster mother of negligence in caring for the child by leaving him alone in the residence where he stays with her, while she traveled abroad without notifying the father, the complainant. As a result of her absence, the child missed school after the official holiday without any valid excuse.

Continued on Page 5



Photo by Mohammed Morsi

33 tons of aid and medical supplies being loaded onto the second relief flight bound for Syria, as part of Kuwait's humanitarian campaign – 'Kuwait By Your Side.'

'No human rights violation'

Citizenship withdrawal aligns with sovereign rights: experts

By Najeh Bilal
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: A number of economists and politicians have affirmed that the withdrawal of citizenship is a sovereign matter for the state and it does not violate human rights.

They stressed the importance of holding accountable individuals who obtained citizenship through fraud and deception and those who aided them.

In separate discussions with Al-Seyassah, experts highlighted the positive effects of withdrawing citizenship from those who obtained it illegally, including reducing the financial burdens on the state, particularly in areas such as housing care, salaries, allowances and other forms of support provided to citizens.

Continued on Page 5

Second relief flight reaches Syria with 33 tons of crucial aid

Kuwait to sustain humanitarian support for Syria

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya affirmed that Kuwait would go on providing relief and humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people through coordination with international partners and organizations.

In a statement to KUNA, Al-Yahya said that such aid aims to alleviate humanitarian suffering and improve living conditions in a manner that contributes to achieving Syria's economic recovery.

The expanded meeting held on Syria discussed the latest humanitarian, field and political developments in Syria as well as the means of pushing political process and the relevant UN Security Council resolutions mainly the 2254, he added.

The participants further focused on how to meet the aspirations of Syrian people, and maintain its territorial integrity and independence, he stated.

International and regional efforts to support the negotiations path among Syrian parties were dealt with, along enhancing humanitarian response and ensuring the voluntary and safe return of refugees and those displaced, in line with international standards, Al-Yahya noted.

Achieving Syria's stability and security is a main pillar of regional security, he reiterated.

Continued on Page 5

Newswatch

BEIRUT: The first round of the binding parliamentary consultations President **Joseph Aoun** is holding to designate a new prime minister has ended.

According to Lebanon's National News Agency (NNA), Caretaker Prime Minister **Najib Mikati** received eight votes, while **Nawaf Salam** secured 12 votes.

Lebanese Constitution stipulates that the President of the country names the prime minister-designate in consultation with the Speaker of Parliament based on the results of binding parliamentary consultations officially presented to him. (KUNA)

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MOSCOW: Russian President **Vladimir Putin** will host his Iranian counterpart this week for the signing of a broad partnership pact between Moscow and **Tehran**, the **Kremlin** said Monday.

The agreement on "comprehensive strategic partnership" between the countries will be signed during Iranian President **Masoud Pezeshkian**'s visit to Moscow on Friday, the Kremlin said.

It added that the leaders will discuss plans for expanding trade and cooperation in transport, logistics and humanitarian spheres along with "acute issues on the regional and international agenda." (AP)

1 million dinar capital

Microsoft expands to Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority has granted approval for the establishment of Microsoft Kuwait, a subsidiary of the American tech giant Microsoft Corporation, with an initial capital of one million dinars, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Continued on Page 5

Day by Day

THE Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs should submit a request to the new Syrian regime to protect the properties of Kuwaitis that were exploited by the militias or those that were seized by them.

Some of these individuals are currently in custody, with one in particular having cooperated with a militia figure in Lebanon, who had stolen money from Gulf residents with the help of those in power in Damascus, including Bashar Al-Assad's militia.

What's strange is that this militia figure holds multiple nationalities and currently resides in Beirut. Unfortunately, he is protected by some corrupt Lebanese police officers who sell their services for a bribe or even a small gift.

… Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Lebanese nationals targeted in job scam

12 expats get five years for human trafficking and money laundering

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The Second Circuit of the Criminal Court has sentenced a Kuwaiti citizen to 7 years in prison and imposed a fine of 7,000 dinars for his involvement in a human trafficking and money laundering case related to illegal massage parlors.

The court also sentenced 12 expatriates to 5 years in prison, with an individual receiving a 2-year sentence and deportation after serving the term.

The Public Prosecution has also ordered the detention of the owner of the institutes (a citizen), an Egyptian employee and two Asian individuals who were arrested by the investigations department as part of the case, which involved allegations of human trafficking, prostitution and money laundering activities.

This ruling comes as part of Kuwait's ongoing efforts to crack down on illegal activities and protect individuals from exploitation.

In other news, the Ministry of Interior, under the directives of First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, announced significant progress in combating human trafficking, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The Residency Affairs Sector, led by the General Department of Residency Affairs Investigations, took swift action after monitoring a video clip exposing a fraudulent scheme targeting Lebanese nationals.

The video revealed that a Lebanese individual was warning members of his community about another Lebanese national who was deceiving people in Lebanon by offering fake job opportunities in Kuwait in exchange for $250.

Upon discovering this, the ministry's search and investigation teams launched an operation to identify and apprehend the suspect. The accused has been referred to the competent authorities for further legal action.

Continued on Page 5



9 Zain Kuwait in 2024: a year of digital leadership and active community engagement

10 Burgan Bank concludes its sponsorship of Kuwait's premier health and fitness summit 'NAWI'

Prayer Timings

Fajr	05:20	Asr	14:51
Sunrise	06:44	Maghrib	17:10
Zohr	11:57	Isha	18:31

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Mild with light to moderate northwesterly wind to variable wind, with speed of 10-32 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

By Night: Cold and partly cloudy with light to moderate northwesterly wind to variable wind, with speed of 08-30 km/h.

Weather

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	21	10
Kuwait Airport	20	10
Abdaly	21	07
Bubyan	20	09
Jahra	21	10
Failaka Island	22	11
Salmiyah	19	12
Ahmadi	22	07
Jal Aliyah	21	08
Nuwaisib	22	11



First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah receives Palestinian Ambassador in Kuwait Rami Tahboub.



First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah receives UN Secretary-General's Representative and Resident Coordinator in Kuwait Ghada Al-Taher.



KUNA photos

First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah receives Yemeni Ambassador in Kuwait Ali bin Safaa.

First Deputy PM talks boost in ties with Palestine, Yemen envoys and UN official

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13, (KUNA): First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah on Monday met separately with the ambassadors of Palestine and Yemen and a U.N. official on ways of promoting cooperation.

In a press release, the Ministry of Defense said Sheikh Fahad Al-Sabah separately received in his office at the ministry Palestinian Ambassador in Kuwait Rami Tahboub, Yemeni Ambassador in Kuwait Ali bin Safaa and UN Secretary-General's Representative and Resident Coordinator in Kuwait Ghada Al-Taher. During the reception, they exchanged views on several issues of mutual interest and reviewed the latest regional and international developments.

7th Ring Road maintenance at full throttle, says minister

Citizens, residents safety priority: Dr. Al-Mashaan

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan has announced the commencement of extensive maintenance work on the Seventh Ring Road as part of the new contracts, indicating that the most damaged areas will be prioritized, followed by the less affected once.



Dr. Al-Mashaan

The Public Works Ministry's teams will closely monitor this work to ensure quality and efficiency.

In a press statement on Monday, Al-Mashaan pointed out that the road maintenance projects are integral to the ministry's strategic plan to develop the national road network in order to create a safe and sustainable environment for the citizens and expatriates. She affirmed this initiative is in line with urban development efforts and the growing demand for transportation infrastructure.

She also explained that her directive to expedite the maintenance work stems from recommendations made by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad, stressing this is part of the government's commitment to improve the infrastructure of the country; since it is the cornerstone of any economic vision.

She stressed the importance of coordination to resolve any outstanding issues related to the roadwork and urged the implementing companies to complete the tasks promptly; while ensuring compliance with the required quality standards, technical specifications and agreed timelines.

She added that road maintenance is a top priority for the country's leadership, commending the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah . "Their unwavering support for road maintenance projects is a vital component of the advanced infrastructure envisioned in the New Kuwait 2035 plan," she stressed.

Meanwhile, Eng. Mahdi Al-Jassem from the Roads Supervision Department at the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART) said the maintenance efforts will include the application of new asphalt layers following the completion of the necessary earthworks.

On the other hand, the newspaper obtained information that the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) has set Feb 9, 2025 as the deadline for submitting bids for consultancy services related to the establishment, operation and maintenance of the Mutla'a City purification plant and associated works. The tender for the plant's construction, which the ministry has already obtained approval for from the State Audit Bureau (SAB), has a total value of KD149.8 million.



KUNA photo

Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Ambassador Sheikha Jawaher Al-Sabah in talks with Bahraini counterpart Ambassador Dr. Arwa Al-Sayed.

Kuwait, Bahrain discuss ways to tackle rights, women issues

MANAMA, Jan 13, (KUNA): Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Ambassador Sheikha Jawaher Al-Sabah discussed on Sunday with Bahraini counterpart Ambassador Dr. Arwa Al-Sayed ways to enhance cooperation between the two countries in the field of human rights in general and women issues in particular.

This came during a meeting held at the headquarters of the Bahraini Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the occasion of Ambassador Sheikha Jawaher Al-Sabah's visit to the Kingdom to participate in the "World Businesswomen Forum and Exhibition," which will kick off today.

Discussions also delved into Kuwaiti-Bahraini relations and ways to enhance them.

They also reviewed areas of joint coordination and exchange of advanced expertise in the field of human rights, coordination of international and regional positions, and ways to develop and enhance them, expressing aspiration for continued cooperation between the two sides.

The Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs also discussed, in another meeting with the Director-General of the Mohammad bin Mubarak Academy for Diplomatic Studies, Ambassador Dr. Munira bint Khalifa Al Khalifa, common issues, including enhancing cooperation in the field of training in the field of human rights and women's diplomacy.

Other Voices

The wise human beings...!

By Ahmad alsarraf

'Sapiens', authored by Israeli philosopher and historian Yuval Noah Harari, is one of the best-selling scientific books in history, with over 25 million copies sold.

Since its publication in 2011, the book has been translated into more than 60 languages and has consistently topped bestseller lists, including The New York Times.



alsarraf

It has garnered endorsements from prominent political and scientific figures, and its Arabic edition has become one of the most widely read books in the Arab world, a noteworthy achievement.

The book's extraordinary success can be attributed to its comprehensive approach to exploring the unknown history of humanity.

Harari examines where and how the human race began, presenting these complex topics in a simplified, engaging style that appeals to both scientific and general audiences. Drawing on his expertise in science, economics, philosophy, and history, Harari crafted a work that has inspired dozens of lectures, countless articles, and widespread discussions. He has also been a frequent guest on leading international television programs and interviews.

'Sapiens' delves into the history of humanity, from its origins to the present day, focusing on how Homo sapiens evolved to become the dominant species on Earth. Harari organizes his narrative around three pivotal revolutions:

■ The Cognitive Revolution (70,000 years ago): This period marked the development of unique mental and linguistic capabilities that enabled Homo sapiens to cooperate on a large scale, share knowledge, and create shared myths and narratives.

■ The Agricultural Revolution (10,000 years ago): Humans transitioned from hunting and gathering to agriculture, leading to profound social and economic transformations.

■ The Scientific Revolution (500 years ago): With the adoption of the scientific method, humans began to understand and control the natural world, driving remarkable technological and intellectual progress.

Harari argues that one of Homo sapiens' greatest achievements is the ability to imagine entities that do not exist in physical reality — such as gods, nations, money, and laws—enabling the creation of complex societies.

The book also examines the impact of economic and political systems, such as capitalism and empires, on shaping the modern world.

Harari explores the costs of the agricultural and industrial revolutions, highlighting the disconnection between technological progress and human happiness, as well as humanity's impact on the environment.

He raises profound philosophical questions about whether progress has truly made people happier and invites readers to reflect on the meaning of happiness and well-being.

Harari's accessible writing style blends history, anthropology, philosophy, and science, making complex concepts comprehensible to a broad audience.

He vividly portrays how Homo sapiens triumphed over other human species through a combination of intelligence and adaptability.

Despite its acclaim, Sapiens has faced criticism. Some historians argue that Harari oversimplifies historical events, focuses excessively on negative aspects, and occasionally demonstrates bias.

Nonetheless, the book remains a compelling exploration of human history, provoking deep philosophical questions about humanity's journey. For those interested in understanding how humans reached their current state, Sapiens is an essential read.

* * *

We offer our sincere condolences to our friend, Professor Muhammad Nagia, and his family on the passing of his companion, Salwa Tahboub.

May God have mercy on her.

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67 students deprived from sitting for Grade 12 exams

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The Ministry of Education announced yesterday that 47 Grade 12 students were deprived from answering science section's physics exam and 20 students from the literary section's philosophy exam, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Additionally, 1,630 students across both sections were marked absent.

This happened as the Grade 12 students proceeded with their exams in an atmosphere of calm and order.

Students in the science section appeared for their physics exam, while those in the literary section took their philosophy exam. Religious education students tackled the Arabic language exam, focusing on grammar and morphology.

Commenting on the examination process, Abdul Rahman Al-Jasser, head of the Palestine Secondary School for Boys Committee, affirmed that the exam questions for both sections were appropriate for the students' levels, with no complaints reported.

He emphasized the importance of guiding students to their assigned seats and ensuring they were fully informed about instructions, regulations and laws.

Al-Jasser provided details about the students and committees under his supervision. The school hosted 371 students from the Palestine Evening Center and Al-Tadamon National Secondary School, including 90 literary section students and 281 science section students. They were organized into five main committees and 23 subcommittees.

He praised the cooperation and dedication of the educational staff and the support from the Hawalli Educational District, particularly the Secondary Education Supervision Department.

Al-Jasser noted their efforts to encourage students to make the most of their time, remain diligent and pursue their academic goals for a brighter future.

MEW on right track for digital transformation

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy has achieved 59.2 percent completion of its digital transformation project as of the second quarter of the development plan, say sources from the ministry.

Sources confirmed that the ministry is working towards fully implementing its digital transformation strategy in accordance with the goals of the development plan.

Sources said the ministry currently offers 31 electronic services through its website, in addition to a user-friendly mobile application designed to facilitate transactions for the citizens and expatriates.

Sources also revealed that the ministry's plan includes several projects aimed at automating services and work processes, which will be rolled out progressively through the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) to support the digital transformation efforts.

In a separate announcement, the ministry confirmed the start of accepting requests for electricity connection in Mutlaa Residential City-District N12, which includes parts of Block One and Block Four. A total of 269 plots are eligible for electricity connection.

Cut in need to seek care abroad

State-of-the-art home for elderly, matching global standards eyed

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The acting Assistant Undersecretary for Planning and Administrative Development Affairs at the Ministry of Social Affairs Dr. Sayed Issa revealed that the ministry, in collaboration with the Public-Private Partnership Projects Authority, is set to launch the "Sabah Al-Ahmad Resort for the Care of the Elderly" project, which will be located on a 133,000 square meter plot in the service axis of Sabah Al-Ahmad Residential City, reports Al-Jarida daily.

He explained that the total cost of the project will be calculated by a specialized consultant. If the cost exceeds KD 60 million, it will be offered for public subscription to citizens.

The project is nearing the completion of its study and evaluation phase and is expected to be presented this week to the Higher Committee at the Public-Private Partnership Projects Authority, which is chaired by the Minister of Finance and includes the ministers of Public Works, Commerce and Industry, and Electricity and Water, the Director General of Kuwait Municipality, and the Director of the Environment Public Authority (EPA). This committee will finalize the procedures for launching the project.

If the cost is less than KD 60 million, the project will proceed as a partnership contract between the ministry, the investor, and the company's authority, following the regulations set by the Public-Private Partnership Projects Authority's law.

The estimated time-frame for implementing the project is three years.

The ministry aims to create a world-class resort that offers integrated rehabilitation services, and positions it as a regional center that competes with similar facilities in developed Western countries. This resort will provide specialized services for the elderly, which will reduce the need for them to seek care abroad.

The project is in line with the "New Kuwait 2035" vision, which seeks to strengthen partnerships with civil society institutions and the private sector, support social care initiatives, and provide comprehensive care services - life, educational, financial, and social - to enhance the psychological and social well-being of the elderly.

The resort, once completed, will feature green spaces and various buildings providing social, psychological, recreational, administrative, and security services. It will include a five-star hotel, a nursing home, and an awareness center for Alzheimer's, neurodegenerative diseases, and multiple sclerosis. The center will offer rehabilitation for patients and guidance for their families on how to manage the stages of these diseases.

The resort will also house a health, rehabilitation, sports, and cultural club, a physiotherapy and rehabilitation center, swimming pools for health rehabilitation, water treatments, sound therapy, playgrounds, a walking track, rest areas, a restaurant complex, a cinema, a mosque, and administrative buildings.

CMA tightens scrutiny on entities

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: On Sunday, January 12, the Capital Markets Authority (CMA) issued resolution No. 3/2025, which amends the provisions of articles 1 and 2 of Chapter Three, titled "Law Enforcement" of the executive regulations of law No. 7/2010 concerning the establishment of CMA and the regulation of securities activity and its amendments.

According to a press release issued by CMA, the articles, prior to the amendment, stipulated that CMA had the right to appoint, or request that a person seeking to obtain a license, appoint an auditor from among those registered with the CMA. The auditor's role was to prepare a report on a specific subject related to one of the activities of the licensed person. The articles also required the auditor to provide CMA with a copy of the report, and for the licensed person to cover the auditor's expenses and fees, as well as provide any requested documents, information, or assistance.

The amendment expands the scope of these articles to include companies listed on the stock exchange, in addition to licensed persons, under its provisions. This change is part of CMA's efforts to enhance oversight of entities under its jurisdiction, including those listed on the stock exchange.

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Kuwait's diplomatic journey and her relations with world

"SINCE 1961, Kuwait has navigated complex political landscapes, beginning with Iraqi Prime Minister Abdul Karim Qasim's claims on its sovereignty. Under the wise leadership of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem, Kuwait immediately reached out to the international community, garnering global support against these threats," columnist, former permanent envoy of the State of Kuwait to the United Nations (UN), the former Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) secretary general **Abdullah Bishara** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.



Bishara

"The rejection of Qasim's ambitions by the United Nations and other nations fortified Kuwait's independence and sovereignty, culminating in its accession to the UN in 1963. This milestone deepened Kuwait's integration into the global system and strengthened its diplomatic ties.

"Kuwait's approach to international relations has been characterized by three key paths -- Arab Solidarity: Striving for unity and consensus among Arab nations; Positive Neutrality: Avoiding alignment with major powers or military alliances and Developmental Cooperation: Actively supporting developing nations through aid and participation in global development programs.

"These principles have been embodied through Kuwait's mediation efforts, particularly in Arab affairs, led by the late Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad. His initiatives included advocating for Palestinian statehood and fostering unity among Gulf states.

"Kuwait's contributions to the international community reflect its commitment to justice, development and humanitarian efforts. As a consistent donor, Kuwait has hosted conferences, supported UN programs and provided logistical and expert assistance to developing nations.

"During the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the UN Security Council's swift response demonstrated the global community's solidarity with Kuwait.

"Resolutions condemning the invasion and affirming Kuwait's sovereignty underscored the international commitment to liberating the country. Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad's historic address at the UN General Assembly further highlighted Kuwait's strong ties with the organization and its shared commitment to the UN Charter's principles.

"Kuwait's foreign policy is marked by integrity, generosity and a steadfast commitment to global cooperation. It refrains from aggression, provocation, or hypocrisy, maintaining a reputation for fairness and sincerity. Its leadership and people value the importance of international support, reinforcing their role as active contributors to global peace and development.

"Kuwait's enduring partnership with the UN reflects its dedication to safeguarding its sovereignty while promoting collective efforts to address global challenges. These principles ensure that Kuwait remains a respected and influential member of the international community.

"May Kuwait continue to thrive in its commitment to diplomacy, global cooperation and goodwill."

Also:

"As Syria emerges from the clutches of terrorism and reclaims its position within the Arab fold, Lebanon too has returned to its people, shedding the nightmare of domination by the so-called 'Hezbollah'," columnist **Talal Abdul Karim Al-Arab** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"For years, this armed faction held Lebanon hostage, dictating its fate, decisions and destiny, while committing atrocities in Syria and embroiling Lebanon in futile, destructive battles with Israel.

"Lebanon's return signifies the end of a forced transformation into a hub of sabotage, terrorism, smuggling and corruption. Successive governments and parliaments, either complicit or submissive, allowed this decline, leaving Lebanon politically, financially and militarily weak. It became a country without power or direction, failing its people.

"The election of new president Joseph Aoun marked a turning point, exposing representatives loyal to foreign powers and paving the way for patriotic leadership. The overwhelming celebrations across Lebanon, echoed by joy throughout the Arab world -- particularly in the Gulf -- symbolized the collective relief at the end of a suffocating era.

"This change was brought about by national representatives who prioritized Lebanon's interests over self-serving, conspiratorial agendas.

"In his decisive and unambiguous inaugural speech, President Aoun emphasized Lebanon's independence from external loyalties and reaffirmed its Arab identity.

"His pledge to restrict weapons to the state, rather than allowing militias to terrorize under the guise of resistance, resonated deeply.

"His commitments to end drug smuggling, uphold an independent judiciary and establish a national government free from sectarian quotas won widespread applause, reflecting the Lebanese people's longing for reform and justice.

"The support for these promises from national representatives further strengthened the hope for a new chapter in Lebanon's history.

"Yet, the transitional period remains delicate, with the shadow of terrorist threats looming. The president's ability to deliver on these promises will be the true test of Lebanon's path to recovery.

"The broader regional context also sheds light on this transformation. Iran's continued use of armed proxies to challenge Western and Israeli interests has weakened its influence.

"With increased Saudi, Gulf and international pressures, the political and armed dominance of such forces has receded, signaling a shift towards sovereignty and stability in the region.

"The experiences of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen underscore a pattern of armed militias imposing sectarian agendas, alien to the Arab tradition of coexistence with minorities, sects and religions, including Judaism.

"The lifting of international tolerance for these forces has allowed Syria to reclaim its national identity and will enable Lebanon to recover its strength and unity.

"Looking ahead, the hope is that Yemen will similarly return to the Arab fold and Iraq will rediscover its historical roots in Arabism, erasing the sectarian divisions imposed by figures like Nouri al-Maliki and others who followed him.

"The return of Lebanon to its people is a beacon of hope for the region, signaling that Arab unity and sovereignty can triumph over division, militancy and foreign influence."

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"Although I have not had the opportunity to meet any GCC citizens in person, but based on what I have heard and seen on various social media platforms, it is clear that there is widespread praise for the organization and commendation for the generosity, cooperation, and hospitality of the Kuwaiti people. This has become a source of pride for many," columnist **Sheikh Ali Al-Jaber Al-Ahmad** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"It is important to highlight that this praise came not only from one individual but from all the sons and daughters of the participating countries in the tournament, shared across numerous media outlets.

"This reflects the deep pride, loyalty, and joy they feel toward Kuwait and its people, their second homeland. This is the true spirit of brotherhood.

"On behalf of myself and all Kuwaitis, I would like to express our sincere appreciation: You are always most welcome. Your presence made our home warm and welcoming, brightening our hearts. Your kind words have humbled us with their sincerity and love.



Sheikh Ali

"Kuwait -- its Amir, its government, and its people -- were truly honored to have you with us. Your presence helped us forget our losses and filled us with joy that will remain in our hearts, just as your past heroic stances are etched in our memories.

"The places where you spent your enjoyable moments will not be forgotten. The Gulf Cup Football Championship became more than just a tournament -- it became a Gulf celebration, a joyous occasion that spread throughout the country. We hope to see this same joy repeated in every nation that hosts this tournament.

"In closing, we extend our heartfelt thanks and gratitude to all of you, and we pray to God Almighty to continue blessing our homelands with security, safety, pride, and dignity, while protecting our homes from harm.

"We apologize for the delay at the border center during your departure, as Kuwait could not bear to see you leave. Until we meet again, may the bonds between us never cease.

"If you no longer walk with others near

"No one shall come to your door as a judge, it's clear.

"Leave appointments and treatments behind

"For this song is priceless, a treasure you'll find.'

"O Lord, protect Kuwait, Guard its people, From every harm, Bless our home, eternally."

-- Compiled by PFX Fernandes



KUNA photo

First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah observes the first aid training provided by women in uniform.

'Provide environment to better train women in military corps'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13, (KUNA): The First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah affirmed on Monday the importance of Kuwaiti female role in military corps as he pointed out her competence in enduring military responsibilities on and off the battlefield.

This came in a press release by the Ministry of Interior following the Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef's inspection visit to the Women's Police Institute, as he was received by Assistant Undersecretary for Education and Training Affairs at the ministry, Maj. Gen. Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Director General of Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences Brig. Ali Al-Wuhaib, and Director of the Women's Police Institute Col. Iman Boland and a number of senior officers in the education and training sector.

According to the statement, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousuf stressed the need to develop the education and training environment in the institution to keep pace with technological and digital developments and to benefit from modern sciences to hone the skills of the institute's graduates, stressing that this development contributes to enhancing their effective participation in supporting national security.

He also expressed his pride in the determination and competence of the Kuwaiti women, stressing their important role in various sectors of the security establishment.

Defendants jailed three yrs, fined KD27m in terror case

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The Kuwaiti Court of Cassation, presided over by Counselor Abdullah Jassim Al-Abdullah, issued a final ruling sentencing all defendants involved in a charitable committee accused of financing the Lebanese group "Hezbollah" to three years' imprisonment and a fine totaling KD 27 million.

The ruling follows appeals from the defendants against previous judgments in the case, which alleged illegal financing of Hezbollah amounting to KD 13 million.

The defendants faced charges brought by the Public Prosecution, including membership in Hezbollah, unauthorized collection of funds, transferring funds to the group, and disseminating promotional material online to support Hezbollah's ideologies.

The Court of Appeal had previously upheld a decision by the court of first instance acquitting a Lebanese defendant and two Kuwaiti nationals of certain charges, noting insufficient evidence to prove their direct involvement in acts constituting membership in Hezbollah or promoting its activities.

The court observed that the financial transfers were made under the guise of charitable and religious purposes.

The Court of Appeal also noted that one defendant claimed to have supported Hezbollah's charitable initiatives for religious purposes, while another justified his financial support as motivated by "noble goals," including resistance to Zionism and the protection of women from aggression.

This final ruling by the Court of Cassation reinforces Kuwait's legal stance against unauthorized financial activities linked to designated groups.

Court jails, fines Kuwaiti citizens for assaulting, insulting doctors

Seat belts mandatory for passengers in taxi : GTD

By Jaber Al-Hamoud
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and **Agencies**

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The Criminal Court has issued various convictions, including imprisonment and fines, against defendants accused of assaulting medical professionals working for the Ministry of Health hospitals.

The cases stemmed from a complaint filed by lawyer Elaf Al-Saleh, representing the Kuwait Medical Association, which has been actively prosecuting individuals who harm healthcare workers.



Elaf Al-Saleh

A Kuwaiti citizen was sentenced to two years in prison (suspended) and a 500 dinar bail for beating a doctor with a stapler and chair, claiming the doctor had refused to treat his wife.

The Court of Cassation imposed a 2,000 dinar fine on a Kuwaiti citizen who locked a female doctor in her room and physically assaulted her.

A female citizen was fined 200 dinars for insulting a female doctor over treatment delays and accusing the doctor of overstepping her professional role.

A citizen was fined 100 dinars for threatening to kill a doctor at the Farwaniya Hospital.

Attorney Elaf Al-Saleh emphasized her commitment to continuing legal actions against those who assault medical staff, seeking civil compensation for moral, ethical and material damages.

She stressed the need to end assaults on doctors, warning that severe legal penalties exist for aggressors to serve as a deterrent.

Al-Saleh also noted a recent amendment to the Criminal Procedures and Trials Law (No. 17 of 1960) that prohibits waiving or reconciling with the accused in cases involving assaults on public employees, including medical professionals.

The law stipulates penalties of up to three months in prison or a fine ranging from 100 to 300 dinars, or both, for anyone who insults a public employee while performing their duties.

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Seat belts mandatory: A security source has clarified that the General Traffic Department (GTD) enforces strict seat belt regulations for all vehicle occupants, particularly those seated in the front. The law stipulates fines for individuals who fail to comply, with violations detected through advanced surveillance cameras, reports Al-Anba daily.

These cameras, equipped with artificial intelligence, monitor traffic violations such as using mobile phones while driving and not wearing seat belts. Violations are categorized as follows:

Direct Violations: Recorded against the individual committing the offense, such as a passenger not wearing a seat belt.

Indirect Violations: Assigned to the vehicle owner when the offender cannot be directly identified.

In the case of mobile taxis, the security source emphasized that drivers are obligated to ensure passengers fasten their seat belts. If a passenger refuses, the driver is expected to refuse the trip or contact the Interior Ministry's operations department for assistance.

Drivers who proceed despite passenger non-compliance risk fines, particularly for indirect violations.

The General Traffic Department began issuing fines for seat belt violations for front-seat passengers last Thursday, reinforcing the department's commitment to road safety.

Additionally, the Ministry of Interior announced the deployment of approximately 252 AI-powered surveillance cameras on public roads. These cameras, along with the "Point-to-Point" monitoring system, calculate the distance and speed between checkpoints, ensuring stricter enforcement of traffic laws.

This initiative aims to enhance road safety and reduce traffic violations by leveraging advanced technology to monitor compliance with seat belt and mobile phone usage laws.

6 lawyers lose license

Scores nabbed in campaign against drugs , liquor users

By Munif Nayef
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13 : Under the directives of the Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic Affairs and Operations at the Ministry of Interior to continue the security campaigns of the emergency police patrols, officers were able to arrest 38 individuals in possession of suspected narcotics, 41 individuals who were under the influence of liquor, and 12 others in possession of intoxicating substances. The arrested individuals were referred with the seized items to the concerned authorities.

According to the weekly statistics from the emergency police patrols, 193 violators of the residency law, and those wanted for criminal cases were arrested, 44 people without identity proof were detained, 42 vehicles were seized, and 31 quarrels were resolved during the past week. Also, assistance was provided to 398 emergency cases, 10,283 traffic violations were recorded, and ten vehicles were confiscated.

The Emergency Police Department affirmed that these efforts are part of a comprehensive security plan aimed at enhancing stability, reducing crimes and legal violations, and focusing on the fight against drugs and liquor to protect society from negative behaviors. The plan also aims to improve compliance with traffic laws to reduce accidents and violations.

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6 lawyers lose license: The Kuwaiti Lawyers Association has decided to delete the registrations of six lawyers, bringing the total number of deletions to 12, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

These lawyers had final criminal rulings issued against them for actions that harmed their honor and integrity. Additionally, the Association decided to suspend the files of four law firms, as it was confirmed that they were managed by individuals not authorized to practice law.

These firms were found to have committed serious violations following reports filed by the Committee for Combating Pretenders in the Profession.

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2 held with drugs: Two young men were arrested in Salmiya in a disoriented state and were found in possession of narcotics.

According to security sources, officers were patrolling Salmiya when they became suspicious of the two individuals due to their unusual behavior. Upon further investigation, it was discovered that they were drug users and had narcotics and drug paraphernalia in their possession. They were referred to the concerned authorities with the seized items for necessary legal action.



Director celebrates theatrical performance selection

Kuwait 'Ghussat Oboor' competes among top Arab plays at Theater Festival in Oman

MUSCAT, Jan 13, (KUNA): Kuwaiti director Mohammad Al-Ansari emphasized on Monday the importance of presenting exceptional and well-rounded theatrical and artistic works to leave a distinct Kuwaiti imprint in various Arab and international festivals.

This statement was made by Al-Ansari to KUNA on the sidelines of his participation in the 15th Arab Theater Festival, which commenced on Thursday in the Omani capital, Muscat, and continues until January 15.

He noted that Kuwait is represented in the festival by the play "Ghussat Oboor," performed by the Kuwaiti Theater Troupe.

The play, directed by Al-Ansari and written by Taghreed Al-Dawood, was previously showcased at Kuwait's local theater festival in its most recent edition, where it won the award for Best Theatrical Performance.

Al-Ansari explained that the play revolves around a group of expatriates stranded on a fragile pedestrian bridge connecting two border crossings, each character has a deep history tied to the bridge, finding themselves stuck like a lump caught in the throat.



Kuwait's Mohammad Al-Ansari, director of the play (Ghussat Oboor), participating in the Arab Theater Festival in the Sultanate of Oman.

He added that the play addresses humanitarian themes and issues, the metaphor of people stranded on the bridge symbolizes individuals who feel trapped in life, whether due to social, political, economic, or other challenges.

He also mentioned that the judging panel of the Arab Theater Authority selected 11 plays from among 175 submitted plays by Arab countries to compete for the Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Mohammad Al-Qasimi Award for Best Arab Theatrical Performance.

He pointed out that Kuwait's "Ghasat Uboor" was one of the 11 selected works, describing this as a significant achievement for authentic Kuwaiti art and a testament to the efforts of the Kuwaiti Theater Troupe.

Al-Ansari stressed the importance of organizing such artistic and cultural festivals to explore diverse theatrical experiences, provide ample opportunities for the development of theatrical creativity, and encourage the exchange of ideas and perspectives between Arab and international theater practitioners.



KUNA photos

Arab Theater Festival activities.

Transforming MEW into authority could save Treasury 3.5bln dinars

Project remains unapproved and stagnant

Al-Seyassah Special Report

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Despite the passage of nearly 8 years since the signing of the decision by former Minister of Electricity and Water, Essam Al-Marzouq, to transform the Ministry into a public authority, the project remains stagnant.

Government sources revealed that the draft law is still with the Ministry and has not yet progressed to be referred to the Fatwa and Legislation Department, then to the Cabinet for approval.

The transformation is considered a key project that would support development and is expected to contribute to creating a dynamic private sector that attracts investment.

The sources stressed the importance of converting the Ministry into an authority, noting that this move could save about 3.5 billion dinars annually in the Ministry's operating budget.

Of this amount, 2.9 billion dinars are allocated to fuel costs for electricity production plants each year, as confirmed by the 2023-2024 budget figures.

While the Ministry generates about 500 million dinars in annual revenue, the sources confirmed that transforming it into an authority would ensure its management on a commercial basis, supported by modern technological means.

This would help achieve annual profits or balance between expenses and revenues, instead of the continued budget deficit.



Calls for two-phase implementation

100 brokers file complaints over new electronic real estate ledger

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: As the new system enters its second week of implementation and with the legal deadlines still in progress, real estate sources disclosed to Al-Seyassah that approximately 100 brokers and real estate experts have signed a letter of complaint against Ministerial Decision No. 234 of 2024.

This decision mandates the discontinuation of the paper-based broker ledger and requires brokers to use the electronic real estate broker ledger instead.

The sources stated that the complainants have requested in their letter to maintain the initial paper contracts as a starting point, to be followed by electronic contracts, in order to facilitate the buying and selling process.

They also suggested that the electronic contract should be applied in two phases: the first phase involves signing a paper contract between the parties before obtaining the property description certificate to link the sale, while the second phase would utilize the electronic contract.



KUNA photo

Second working session of the program.

PAY launches 'Mutakam' program to empower young women as leaders

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The Public Authority for Youth (PAY) has launched the 'Mutakam' program, aimed at preparing young women aged 18 to 26 as community volunteer leaders, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The initiative, conducted in partnership with the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, was inaugurated at PAY's Al-Qadisiyah Youth Center.

Acting Deputy Director General of the Youth Sector, Walid Al-Ansari, stated that the four-day program seeks to equip the 51 participants with essential knowledge and skills for leadership in volunteer and youth organizations.

Al-Ansari highlighted that the program includes dialogue sessions and workshops led by specialists and academics, emphasizing the Authority's commitment to partnering with state institutions to serve Kuwaiti youth.

On behalf of the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Abdul Latif Al-Kandari, Director of the Family Development Department, noted that the program is designed to enhance the leadership skills and life values of participants.

It aims to prepare a generation of young women capable of initiating and leading community projects effectively.

The 'Mutakam' program represents a strategic effort to strengthen the Kuwaiti volunteer movement with a cadre of knowledgeable and skilled leaders.

Projects aim to boost production

KOC launches two tenders for new excess water injection networks in North Kuwait

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: According to informed sources, the Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) is working on expanding its excess water injection networks in the North Kuwait Directorate to protect the environment. This is aimed at preventing the disposal of excess water into the sea or leaving it in the desert to evaporate.

The company adheres to the country's environment preservation laws to ensure safety and prevent pollution.

To support this goal, KOC recently launched two tenders for the construction of new excess water injection networks in North Kuwait. The first tender, which is not divisible, focuses on the Sabriya - Bahra area, with the final submission deadline set for April 13, preceded by a preliminary meeting on February 16.

The second tender involves establishing a new network for excess water injection in the Rawdatain area, with submissions also due by April 13, preceded by a preliminary meeting on February 11.

The sources confirmed that KOC is prioritizing the expansion of water injection operations, which are critical for increasing production, adding that this process raises reservoir pressure, and enhances production stability.

They said, "Despite efforts to minimize waste and control spending, KOC remains committed to investing in the development of oil reservoirs.

The company continues to drill wells, build additional facilities and gathering centers, and implement all necessary measures to boost production capacity for both oil and gas."

KU begins employee evaluation process

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Kuwait University today launched the process of evaluating university employees, which will continue until Thursday, February 6. The process will include all university employees and academic staff, reports Al-Anba daily.

This annual evaluation is based on decisions from the Civil Service Council regarding the guidelines, procedures, and timelines for evaluating employee performance, grievances, and exent of adherence to official working hours.

The university has stipulated that all direct managers and heads of work centers must ensure that their subordinates enter all vacation and leave records, and validate fingerprint data previously coordinated and approved by them and their next-level supervisors.

The application for evaluating efficiency of employees and supporting academic staff for the year 2024 will be available on the Oracle human resources system starting January 12.

Housing sector gets KD 261.6 mln upgrade

PAHW grants three key contracts for South Saad Al-Abdullah City development project

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare has awarded three major tenders for the development of South Saad Al-Abdullah City, aimed at establishing, completing and maintaining infrastructure for 23,551 residential plots, along with irrigation tank buildings and sub-electricity stations.

The total value of these contracts amounts to 261.6 million dinars.

According to a report obtained by Al-Seyassah, these tenders are a significant part of the city's infrastructure development, which spans all residential suburbs of the city, marking it as one of the largest development projects in the country's residential sector.

The first tender involves the construction, completion and maintenance of roads and infrastructure for 7,225 housing units.

This tender received 13 applications and was awarded to the lowest bid of 77.2 million dinars.

The second tender covers the same scope for 7,649 housing units. It had 10 competing companies, with the contract awarded to the second-lowest bid of 89.6 million dinars.

The third tender includes road and infrastructure work for 8,677 housing units. This tender also had 10 applicants, with the lowest bid of 94.8 million dinars winning the contract.

Informed sources stated that the South Saad Al-Abdullah City project is now considered one of the largest housing developments in Kuwait, second only to the Mutla'a City project.

KPC seeks provision of plots for private sector

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: According to informed sources, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) is actively working to facilitate the provision of suitable plots for the private sector to establish new factories related to the oil sector, reports Al-Jarida daily.

They explained that the Higher Steering Committee for Local Content and the Higher Purchasing Committee in KPC have approved the launch of contracting procedures for the petroleum industrial zone. This zone aims to expand the local production base in industries and services linked to the oil sector. The move seeks to maximize the private sector's participation in the local economy, create job opportunities for Kuwaitis, and ensure a timely supply of materials and services to meet the demands of the local oil industry, all at lower costs and with high quality.

The sources affirmed that KPC is fully confident in the capabilities of the local private sector and believes in the importance of involving it in current and future activities, investments, and support services.

They said KPC is particularly focused on supporting the development of transformation industries that depend on the outputs of the oil sector, such as petroleum products, to create a competitive and sustainable local value chain.

In addition, the sources highlighted that KPC is committed to achieving sustainable development and maximizing local spending in oil sector operations and projects. In this regard, KPC, in cooperation with PAI, has identified ten investment opportunities that will be announced through PAI.

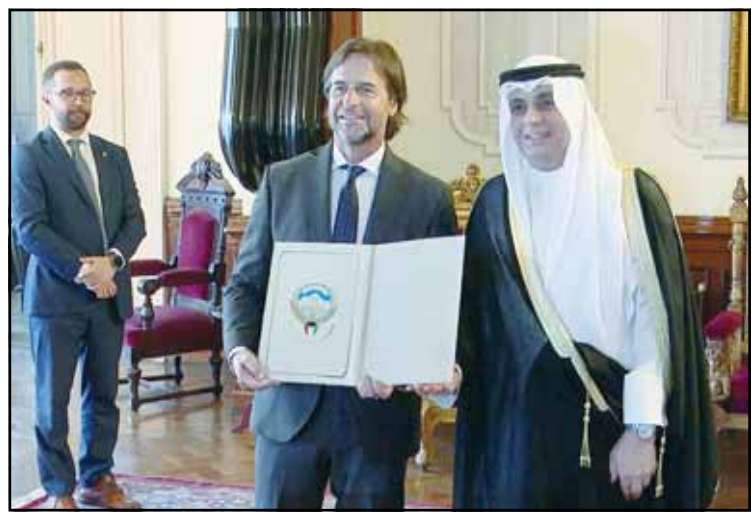
Kuwait's envoy Al-Bisher presents credentials to Uruguay's President

WASHINGTON, Jan 13, (KUNA): Kuwait Ambassador to Argentina Abdulaziz Al-Bisher presented his credentials to President of Uruguay Luis Lafalle Pou as non-resident Ambassador in Montevideo.

Al-Bisher conveyed regards of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to President Pou and wished Uruguay and its people further progress and prosperity, Kuwait Embassy in Argentina said in a statement.

President Pou extended best regards to His Highness the Amir and said he was looking forward to further promote cooperation in many fields, said the statement.

Al-Bisher and President Pou recalled the bilateral relations which dated to 45 years, and the leadershps in the two countries' desire to push them further.



KUNA photo
Kuwait Ambassador to Argentina Abdulaziz Al-Bisher presents his credentials to President of Uruguay Luis Lafalle Pou.



Al-Seyassah photo
Marzouq Al-Otaibi with Ambassador Ali Bin Issa pose for a group photo.

PAM discusses labor recruitment issues with Moroccan ambassador

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Manpower, Marzouq Al-Otaibi, met with the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco, Ali Bin Issa, to discuss mechanisms of cooperation in recruiting and employing Moroccan workers in Kuwait, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Al-Otaibi emphasized that Kuwait's labor market attracts workers with specialized skills and that the Authority is committed to continuously improving the recruitment process to serve the developmental and economic needs of Kuwait while benefiting the workers and their home countries.

The meeting also addressed various issues related to Moroccan workers in Kuwait. Al-Otaibi reaffirmed the Authority's efforts to regulate the labor market and provide legal protection for both national and expatriate workers.

The Moroccan Ambassador expressed appreciation for the support his country's embassy receives in Kuwait and thanked the Authority for its cooperation on matters related to Moroccan labor affairs.

Municipality clarifies transition to new advertising regulations

Old contracts will remain governed by 2006 guidelines

By Inaas Awadh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Kuwait Municipality has submitted a statement to the General Secretariat of the Municipal Council in response to a question raised by Municipal Council member Architect Sherifa Al-Shalfan regarding the implementation of certain provisions of the new advertising regulations.

The statement, which was approved by the Director General of Kuwait Municipality Manal Al-Asfour, explained that current auction contracts are governed by the old advertisement regulations No. 172/2006, and not the new advertisement regulations No. 599/2023.

According to the municipality's Legal Department, which issued a statement on July 10, 2024, the new regulations, published under ministerial resolution No. 599/2023 in the official gazette on January 7, 2024, do not include any provisions specifying retroactive effect. As a result, the old regulations, under which current contracts were signed, remain applicable to those contracts, their extensions, and amendments.



Al-Shalfan

Furthermore, the cancellation of the previous regulation No. 172/2006 under the new regulation pertains only to new contracts and transactions established after the publication date in the official gazette. The provisions of the new regulations will apply to these future contracts, while those formed prior to the publication will continue to be governed by the old regulations until their completion, including any extensions or amendments.

The municipality also confirmed that the new advertisement regulations will apply to contracts in future auctions that are signed after the regulations' publication in the official gazette.

KIB announces final monthly draw winners of 'Win with KIB Rewards' campaign

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) has announced the final batch of draw winners under its 'Win with KIB Rewards' campaign for the month of December. The campaign, which ended in December 2024, aimed to reward customers who used KIB's Banking App to open an Al Dirwaza account, issue a Multicurrency prepaid card, or open a deposit investment of any kind. The last batch of winners who won3,000 reward points each are Wadhha Ghazi Nemer Almutairi, Mohammad Motlaq Hofan Alrasheedi, Mohammad Jawared Mohammad Sifar, Ahmed Theeb Alsaleh, and Abeer Youniss Khalefa Atwa.

In this regard, Nawaf Al-Khrayef, Assistant General Manager of the Retail Banking Department at KIB, said: "We would like to congratulate the last group of winners under this campaign, which marked a great opportunity to reward our customers for their loyalty. We will continue to provide innovative banking solutions that meet their aspirations and fulfill all their needs, enhancing their overall banking experience and lifestyle, in line with our 'Bank for Life' slogan." He added: "At KIB, we remain committed to adopting a comprehensive strategy aimed at providing the best banking benefits, particularly with regard to the KIB Rewards Program, in addition to encouraging all customer segments to use our digital platforms to complete their financial transactions with utmost convenience and ease."



KIB's Nawaf Al-Khrayef

Throughout the campaign period, customers were able to qualify for and participate in the draws by using the KIB Banking App to open an Al Dirwaza account, issue a Multicurrency prepaid card, or open a deposit investment of any kind. Winners can redeem their reward points on KIB's rewards online market platform, which features an extensive list of participating outlets, including electronics services, retail products, and e-vouchers, and much more.

In addition to this and numerous other campaigns, KIB offers a wide variety of products with unparalleled benefits. Those who open an Al Dirwaza account can enjoy weekly and monthly draws, with one chance to enter the draw for every KD 1 deposited, culminating in a Mega Draw. The Multicurrency prepaid card offers a great deal of flexibility, allowing customers to use six currencies simultaneously and choose from a total of 12 currencies. Additionally, deposits starting from KD 1,000 are given competitive profit rates.

The Bank encourages its customers to stay informed about the campaign's latest developments and news, as well as to learn more about the KIB Rewards Program, by following its social media accounts and visiting its website.

It is worth mentioning that KIB spares no effort in launching initiatives and campaigns that reward its customers, while continuously striving to enhance the quality of its banking products and services. The Bank aims to elevate its banking experience by complementingdigital financial solutions with attractive rewards, maintaining its leading position as a reliable partner in the market.

Continued from Page 1

May God

The leaders of this regime lost their sense of reality when they chose to support a small minority at the expense of the large majority in those countries. They believed that their control was secure and thought no one would challenge their dominance over the four Arab capitals they controlled. They failed to realize that the oppressed peoples would eventually rise up and overthrow the oppressor, no matter how powerful he seemed.

The aftershocks of the Syrian earthquake quickly began to reverberate on the rest of the drug-trafficking axis of evil. Signs of their defeat became evident in Lebanon, with the downfall of the so-called Party of Satan (Hezbollah). Meanwhile, Iraq began to recover under the leadership of Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani.

These shifts must be understood by the Houthi leaders, who should undoubtedly be cautious, as their power is now under intense pressure. After Operation Prosperity Guardian weakened most of their strength, coupled with increasing sanctions and blockades, the Houthi leaders must be on alert, and know that their days are numbered.

We acknowledge that the Houthi group has long been used as a tool to undermine the Arab Gulf countries. Unfortunately, the Houthis have not learned from the lessons of Lebanon and Syria. On the contrary, they continue to blindly implement the Iranian agenda.

What has transpired in the past two years, particularly in recent months, indicates that the Arab world is moving toward peace and stability. It reinforces the truth that no group, regardless of its military strength or the extent of its oppression, can alter the cultural fabric of society.

The Syrian people, for example, endured 54 years of brutal repression, but they never abandoned their beliefs. They eventually rose up against the regime.

We therefore say to the Houthis: "Look at what the mullahs' regime did to the people of Iran and how they eventually revolted. Learn the lesson before your turn comes. Be assured that there will be no place for you in a stable and prosperous Arab world."

Negligent foster

She also endangered the child's safety by purchasing an electric scooter for him, which he used on public roads outside the area.

Lawyer Al-Fahad explained that his client, the child's father, was shocked to find his child alone in the street opposite his house, and carrying heavy bags containing his clothes and belongings, allegedly because of the foster mother's anger toward him, and for not informing him of her actions. This left a negative impact on the child's mental health, and caused him to suffer from involuntary urination.

Also, the foster mother allowed the child to go to the chalet of a strange man to spend the night there without the father's permission or consent.

She also used the child's name in her commercial activities. The child developed morbid obesity due to the foster mother's preoccupation with commercial advertising and frequent travel, rather than focusing on the child's well-being.

The court, after reviewing photos of the accused posted on various social media platforms, concluded that they were shameful and led to the firm conviction that the accused had abandoned the principles of motherhood and the care of her son. Instead, she appeared to be chasing worldly desires, and neglecting both her reputation and her child's well-being.

According to the court, while most mothers focus on caring for their children at night, the accused have been taking photographs in questionable places, fully adorned and indulging in fleeting pleasures.

How can a woman who exposes herself to different people on social media neglect her responsibilities as a mother, especially when her son is still young and should be protected from such shameful behavior? The accused has been engaging in such actions for some time, and this raises serious concerns about her ability to care for her child.

The judiciary, after thoroughly examining the case, has the right to convict and punish the accused. It has been conclusively proven that she committed the actions attributed to her, as outlined in the relevant legal provisions. In accordance with Article (1/172) of the legal procedures, the court has issued a conviction.

The court called on the accused and others who may follow her example after a divorce to be mindful of their actions. They should fear Almighty Allah, first for their own sake and then for the sake of their children, and refrain from engaging in the trivialities of social media platforms.

Amir named

For his part, the Supervisor of the Award, Sheikh Salman bin Abdullah, praised the efforts Bahrain dedicates to the care of orphans, as well as the ceremony.

Chief of the International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO), Dr. Abdullah Al-Matouq, added that the award is a pioneering initiative that deserves support as it reflects the commitment to Islamic and humanitarian values.

PM hosts

During the meeting, they reviewed ways of further promoting Kuwaiti-U.S. relations in various fields, and exchanged views on a set of issues of mutual interest.

Chief of His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan Abdulaziz Al-Dakheel was present at the meeting. (KUNA)

12 expats

The Ministry emphasized its firm commitment to combating fraud, deception and human trafficking in all forms. It vowed to take severe measures against anyone attempting to exploit humanitarian conditions or violate the law by facilitating illegal residency in exchange for money.

This effort reflects Kuwait's ongoing dedication to upholding justice and protecting vulnerable individuals from exploitation.

Citizenship

The following are opinions of some of the experts who talked to Al-Seyassah newspaper.

■ Dr. Sadiq Al-Bassam argued that the withdrawal of citizenship has positive economic and social impacts on the country.

■ Qais Al-Ghanim emphasized that such measures could solve the housing crisis and help mitigate the rise in housing requests.

■ Hamdan Al-Namshan countered claims that withdrawing citizenship violates human rights, asserting that the practice is not against these rights.

■ Ali Al-Attar called for accountability for anyone who obtained Kuwaiti citizenship through fraud.

■ Dr. Ibrahim Al-Shukri noted that withdrawing citizenship under Article 8 aligns with the interests of Kuwaiti women.

Dr. Ahmed Salama pointed out that a Kuwaiti man marrying a female compatriot leads to better social stability and strengthens family bonds.

While the experts recognized that there could be challenges, such as a decline in purchasing power and potential effects on bank profits, they agreed that the benefits of such measures outweigh the negatives, particularly in ensuring fairness and protecting the country's resources.

Microsoft expands

The capital is divided into 100,000 shares, each valued at 10 dinars. According to the company's articles of association, Microsoft Kuwait will be headquartered in Kuwait, with the flexibility to expand through branches and agencies both within the country and internationally.

The company's activities will include computer programming, data processing, website hosting, computer consulting and facilities management services.

The term of the company's contract is set for 30 years, with the possibility of extension upon the owner's request. Additionally, Microsoft Kuwait is authorized to engage in activities related to or complementing its core business.

This move by Microsoft is part of a growing trend of major international companies choosing to establish a presence in the Kuwaiti market, attracted by the growth opportunities and the incentives provided by the country's direct investment laws.

Kuwait to

Al-Yahya pointed to Kuwait's unwavering position to backing joint international efforts toward sustainability, security and stability in both Syria and the region.

Earlier in the day, Riyadh hosted the meeting which featured foreign ministers from the GCC States, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, the UK, Germany and Turkiye, along high-level representatives of the foreign ministries of France the US, Italy and Spain.

The meeting also included GCC and the Arab League Secretaries General, and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, in addition to UN Special Envoy for Syria.

The expanded meeting on Syria expressed on Sunday its support for a Syrian political transition process, where Syrian political and social forces are represented, as well as the preservation of Syrian's rights.

The final communique underlined the need to address any challenges or concerns through dialogue, and providing support in a manner that respects Syria and its people's independence and sovereignty.

The meeting also expressed concern over the Israeli occupation incursion into the buffer zone with Syria and its neighboring sites in Jabal al-Sheikh and Quneitra Governorate.

Meanwhile, the second relief plane from the Kuwaiti airlift landed at Damascus International Airport, carrying 33 tons of aid and medical supplies as part of the Gulf country's humanitarian campaign: "Kuwait By Your Side".

Speaking to KUNA ahead of takeoff, Assistant Foreign Minister for Development Affairs and International Cooperation Ambassador Hamad Al-Mashaan underlined the pioneering role of Kuwait's leadership, government and people in humanitarian and charitable domains.

The second Kuwaiti relief aircraft was sent to Syria under the direction of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and under the supervision of Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya.

'Victory sign of approval and trust'

Croatia's President Milanović wins another term after defeating ruling party in runoff

ZAGREB, Croatia, Jan 13, (AP): Croatia's opposition-backed President Zoran Milanović, a critic of the European Union and NATO, overwhelmingly won reelection for another five-year term on Sunday, defeating a candidate from the ruling conservative party in a runoff vote, official results showed.

Milanović won more than 74% of the vote compared to his challenger Dragan Primorac, who received nearly 26%, according to the results released by Croatia's state election authorities after more than 99% of the ballots were counted. The result presents a major boost for Milanović, who is a critic of Western military support for Ukraine in its war against Russia. Milanović is also a fierce opponent of Croatia's conservative Prime Minister Andrej Plenković and his government.

In a speech after the results were released, Milanović said his victory was a sign of approval and trust from the voters but also presented a message "about the state of affairs in the country for those who need to hear it."

"I am asking them (the government) to hear it," said Milanovic. "That is what the citizens wanted to say. This is not just support for me."

Milanović, 58, is the most popular politician in Croatia, and is sometimes compared to U.S. President-elect Donald Trump for his combative style of communication with political opponents. His triumph sets the stage for a continued political confrontation with PM Plenković, with whom he sparred during his first term.

Milanović also won comfortably in the first round of voting on Dec. 29, leaving Primorac, a forensic scientist who had unsuccessfully run for president previously, and six other candidates far behind.



President incumbent Zoran Milanovic with his wife Sanja Music Milanovic greets his supporters as the preliminary results grant him victory in a runoff vote for the Croatian presidential election in Zagreb, Croatia, Sunday, Jan. 12, 2025. The sign reads "Thank You". (AP)

The runoff between the top two contenders was necessary because Milanović fell short of securing 50% of the vote by just 5,000 votes, while Primorac trailed far behind with 19%.

The election was held as Croatia, which has a population of 3.8 million, struggles with biting inflation, corruption scandals and a labor shortage.

Upon voting on Sunday, Milanović again criticized the EU as "in many ways non-democratic" and run by unelected officials. The EU position that "if you don't think the same as I do, then you're the enemy" amounts to "mental violence," Milanović said.

"That's not the modern Europe I want to live and work in," he said. "I will work on changing it, as much as I can as the president of a small nation."

Milanović served as prime minister in the past with a mixed record.

He regularly accuses Plenković and his conservative HDZ of systemic corruption, while Plenković has labeled Milanović "pro-Russian" and a threat to Croatia's international standing.

Deal to bring them home still elusive

Biden speaks with family members of three Americans held by Taliban

WASHINGTON, Jan 13, (AP): President Joe Biden spoke Sunday with relatives of three Americans the U.S. government is looking to bring home from Afghanistan, but no agreement has been reached on a deal to get them back, family members said.

Biden's call with family members of Ryan Corbett, George Glezmann and Mahmood Habibi took place in the waning days of his administration as officials try to negotiate a deal that could bring them home in exchange for Muhammad Rahim, one of the remaining detainees at Guantanamo Bay.

Corbett, who had lived in Afghanistan with his family at the time of the 2021 collapse of the U.S.-backed government, was abducted by the Taliban in August 2022 while on a business trip and Glezmann, an airline mechanic from Atlanta, was taken by the Taliban's intelligence services in December 2022 while traveling through the country.

Officials believe the Taliban is still holding both men as well as Habibi, an Afghan American businessman who worked as a contractor for a Kabul-based telecommunications company and also went missing in 2022. The FBI has said that Habibi and his driver were taken along with 29 other employees of the company, but that all except for Habibi and another person have since been freed.

The Taliban has denied that it has Habibi, complicating talks with the U.S. government and the prospect of finalizing a deal.

On the call Sunday, Biden told the families that his administration would not trade Rahim, who has been held at Guantanamo since 2008, unless the Taliban releases Habibi, according to a statement from Habibi's brother, Ahmad Habibi.


President Joe Biden speaks from the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, Sept. 30, 2024. (AP)

"President Biden was very clear in telling us that he would not trade Rahim if the Taliban do not let my brother go," the statement said. "He said he would not leave him behind. My family is very grateful that he is standing up for my brother."

Dennis Fitzpatrick, a lawyer acting on behalf of Glezmann's family, expressed dismay at the lack of progress, saying in a statement, "President Biden and his national security adviser are choosing to leave George Glezmann in Afghanistan. A deal is available to bring him home. The White House's inaction in this case is inhumane."

Ryan Fayhee, a lawyer acting on behalf of Corbett's relatives, said the family was grateful to Biden for the call but also implored him to act on the deal. "A deal is now on the table and the decision to accept it - as imperfect as it may be - resides exclusively with the President," Fayhee said in a statement. "Hard decisions make great Presidents, and we hope and believe that President Biden will not let perfection be the enemy of the good when American lives are at stake."

New fires could add to complication

Los Angeles wildfire death toll surges to 24 as firefighters brace for more fierce winds

LOS ANGELES, Jan 13, (AP): After a weekend spent blocking the explosive growth of fires that destroyed thousands of homes and killed at least 24 people in the Los Angeles area, firefighters got a slight break with calmer weather but cast a wary eye on a forecast for yet more wind.

Should that happen, already burned homes and valleys could flare anew, sending embers to unburned territory miles downwind. New fires could add to the complication.

The death toll surged late Sunday with an update from the Los Angeles County medical examiner. At least 16 people were missing, a number authorities said was also likely to rise.

The relative calm Sunday allowed some people to return to previously evacuated areas, however.

The National Weather Service issued red flag warnings for severe fire conditions through Wednesday, with sustained winds of 50 mph (80 kph) and gusts in the mountains reaching 70 mph (113 kph). The most dangerous day will be Tuesday, warned fire behavior analyst Dennis Burns at a community meeting Sunday night.

"It will kind of ebb and flow over the next couple days," Burns said. "Tomorrow night, it will really ramp up."


Newsom

Spotting - new fires caused by blowing embers - could happen as much as 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) or more downwind of areas that have already burned, Burns said.

Despite their recent losses, stress, and uncertainty, the crowd in a Pasadena City College gym was mostly respectful, in contrast with harsh criticism elsewhere for Los Angeles and California leaders. Applause followed each of the experts, police, firefighters and community leaders who spoke.

Los Angeles County Fire Chief Anthony C. Marrone said 70 additional water trucks arrived to help firefighters fend off flames spread by renewed gusts. "We are prepared for the upcoming wind event," Marrone said.

Fire retardant dropped by aircraft will act as a barrier along hillsides, officials said.

Fierce Santa Ana winds have been largely blamed for turning the wildfires sparked last week into infernos that leveled entire neighborhoods around the city where there has been no significant rainfall in more than eight months.

Twelve people were missing within the Eaton Fire zone and four were missing from the Palisades Fire, Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna said. Investigators were reconciling whether some of the missing might be among the dead but so far no children were among those reported missing, he said.

Meanwhile, the death toll rose to 24 over the weekend.


Retardant is dropped by air tanker on the Palisades Fire in the outskirts of the Pacific Palisades neighborhood of Los Angeles, Friday, Jan. 10, 2025. (AP)

Eight deaths were attributed to the Palisades Fire and 16 to the Eaton Fire, according to the Los Angeles County coroner's office.

The toll could rise still more as cadaver dogs conducted systematic searches in leveled neighborhoods. Authorities established a center where people could report the missing.

Officials also were building an online database to allow evacuated residents to see if their homes were damaged or destroyed. In the meantime, LA city Fire Chief Kristin Crowley urged people to stay away from scorched neighborhoods.

Officials warned the ash can contain lead, arsenic, asbestos and other harmful materials.

About 150,000 people in Los Angeles County remained under evacuation orders, with more than 700 residents taking refuge in nine shelters, Luna said. Officials said most of the orders in the Palisades area were unlikely to be lifted before the red flag warnings expire Wednesday evening.

In all, four fires had consumed more than 62 square miles (160 square kilometers), an area larger than San Francisco. The Palisades Fire was 11% contained and containment on the Eaton Fire reached 27%. Those two blazes alone accounted for 59 square miles (nearly 153 square kilometers).

Crews from California and nine other states are part of the ongoing response that includes nearly 1,400 fire engines, 84 aircraft and more than 14,000 personnel, including newly arrived firefighters from Mexico.

After a fierce battle Saturday, firefighters managed to fight back flames in Mandeville Canyon, home to Arnold Schwarzenegger and other celebrities near Pacific Palisades not far from the coast, where swooping helicopters dumped water as the blaze charged downhill.

The fire ran through chaparral-covered hillsides and also briefly threatened to jump over Interstate 405 and into densely populated areas in the Hollywood Hills and San Fernando Valley. Looting continued to be a concern, with authorities reporting more arrests as the devastation grew. Those arrested included two people who posed as firefighters going into houses, Los Angeles Police Department Capt. Michael Lorenz said.

With California National Guard troops on hand to guard properties, Gov. Gavin Newsom posted on X: "California will NOT allow for looting."

The fires that began Tuesday just north of downtown LA had burned more than 12,000 structures. No cause for the largest fires was determined.

Diplomacy at play

Italy releases Iranian, blocks US extradition

ROME, Jan 13, (AP): Italy on Sunday released an Iranian citizen wanted by the U.S. over a drone attack in Jordan that killed three Americans a year ago, after the Italian justice minister asked a court to revoke his arrest.

Mohammad Abedini has already returned to Iran, Iranian state TV said on Sunday afternoon.


Meloni

He was scheduled to appear at a Milan court on Wednesday in connection with his bid for house arrest pending extradition to the U.S.

Abedini was arrested on a U.S. warrant on Dec. 16, three days before Italian journalist Cecilia Sala was detained while on a reporting trip to Iran. Sala, who was believed held as a bargaining chip for Abedini's release, returned home last week.

The U.S. Justice Department has accused Abedini of supplying the drone technology to Iran that was used in a January 2024 attack on a U.S. outpost in Jordan that killed three American troops.

An official note on the case released by the Italian Justice Ministry on Sunday said that under Italy-U.S. extradition treaties, "only crimes that are punishable according to the laws of both sides can lead to extradition, a condition which, based on the state of documents, can't be considered as existing."

The ministry said that the potential charge against Abedini - criminal association for violating the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, a U.S. federal law - "did not correspond to any conduct recognized by Italian law as a crime."

Iranian state TV said the release and return of Abedini came after Iran's foreign ministry pursued the case, as well as "talks" between Iran's intelligence ministry and the Italian intelligence service.

Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni described a "diplomatic triangulation" with Iran and the United States as being key to securing Sala's release, confirming for the first time that Washington's interests entered into the negotiations.

Sala's release came after Meloni made a surprise trip to Florida to meet U.S. President-elect Donald Trump at his Mar-a-Lago estate.

America

Tough-on-crime approach back: Within minutes of his inauguration Monday, new Missouri Gov. Mike Kehoe is expected to issue a variety of orders targeting crime. The tone-setting move reflects a national trend.

After a period of relaxed sentencing laws, a tough-on-crime approach is back in political favor in the U.S.

Republicans and Democrats alike are promoting anti-crime initiatives as a new year of lawmaking gets underway in state capitols.

That comes after voters in several states approved ballot measures in the fall imposing stricter penalties for crimes ranging from shoplifting to deadly drug dealing. (AP)

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Arizona governor faces uphill battle: Arizona Democratic Gov. Katie Hobbs knows she is outnumbered this legislative session, with Republicans having expanded their majorities in the statehouse after the last election.

While President-elect Donald Trump swept the battleground state, Hobbs noted in a recent interview with The Associated Press that Arizona voters also elected Democrat Ruben Gallego to the U.S. Senate, sending the message that they want their political leaders to work across the aisle to solve the thorniest of issues. (AP)

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Winter storm thaws southern areas: After a freezing winter storm shut schools, cut power and cancelled or delayed flights, the South was slowly thawing Sunday.

Crews worked furiously and by Sunday morning power had been restored to parts of North Carolina and South Carolina where tens of thousands of customers lost electricity over the last few days, according to Duke Energy. (AP)

Coalition targets 6.3 bln euro savings

Austrian far-right reach budget accord

VIENNA, Jan 13, (AP): Austrian far-right leader Herbert Kickl and his prospective coalition partners said Monday that they have reached an agreement to bring down the budget deficit, an important first step toward what would be the country's first post-World War II government led by the far right.

Kickl, whose Freedom Party won Austria's parliamentary election in September, received a mandate to try to form a government with the conservative Austrian People's Party a week ago. The latter had previously attempted to form a government without Kickl, but lengthy talks with two other mainstream parties collapsed - with the question of how to get the country's finances in shape a key sticking point.

On Monday, the two parties said they had agreed to some 6.3 billion euros ($6.5 billion) in savings this year that would get Austria's deficit below the 3% maximum mandated by European Union rules.

Kickl said that would be achieved without new taxes, "with measures against tax loopholes and privileges, particularly those of big players, with savings in the ministry apparatus, with an end to excessive subsidies." The negotiators were vague about details as they still have to thrash out a full financial package.


The leader of Austria's Freedom Party, Herbert Kickl, addresses a news conference in Vienna, Austria, on Jan 7, 2025. (AP)

"We have achieved together, in three days of intensive and good negotiations, what was not possible in about 100 days in a different political constellation," Kickl said in a swipe at the mainstream parties' previous efforts.

Negotiations to form a new government could still take weeks or months and aren't guaranteed to succeed. In the meantime, Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg has taken over as interim chancellor after conservative Karl Nehammer, Austria's leader for the past three years, resigned following his failed attempt to put together a new coalition.

Schallenberg was heading to Brussels Monday to meet senior EU officials as they face the prospect of an Austria led by the euroskeptic, Russia-friendly and anti-immigration Freedom Party.

He said ahead of his trip that "my message is clear: Austria is and remains a strong, reliable and constructive partner in the European Union," and that the EU can continue to rely fully on Austria in foreign and security policy, the Austria Press Agency reported.

However, Schallenberg doesn't plan to stay in the government under Kickl and can't speak for the prospective new coalition.

Europe

German-Iranian activist released: Germany's foreign minister on Monday welcomed the release of a German-Iranian rights activist from prison in Iran and her return to Germany. Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock wrote on the social media platform X that it's "a great moment of joy that Nahid Taghavi can finally embrace her family again."

Baerbock retweeted a post by Taghavi's daughter, Mariam Claren, with a photo of herself hugging her mother, which said: "It's over. Nahid is free! After more than 4 years as a political prisoner in the Islamic Republic of Iran my mother Nahid Taghavi was freed and is back in Germany." (AP)

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Sweden to contribute warships: Sweden will contribute up to three warships to a NATO effort to increase the alliance's presence in the Baltic Sea as it tries to guard against sabotage of underwater infrastructure, the government said Sunday.

The Swedish military also will contribute an ASC 890 surveillance aircraft, the government said in a statement. And the country's coast guard will contribute four ships to help monitor the Baltic, with a further seven vessels on standby. (AP)

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Thousands protest in Romania: Tens of thousands protested in Romania's capital on Sunday against a top court's decision last month to annul the presidential election after an outsider candidate unexpectedly emerged as the frontrunner.

Many of the demonstrators in Bucharest honked horns and waved Romania's blue, yellow, and red flags, while others brandished placards bearing slogans such as "Democracy is not optional" and "We want free elections." (AP)

India kicks off massive Hindu festival touted as world's largest religious gathering

PRAYAGRAJ, India, Jan 13, (AP): Millions of Hindu devotees, mystics and holy men and women from all across India flocked to the northern city of Prayagraj on Monday to kickstart the Maha Kumbh festival, which is being touted as the world's largest religious gathering.

Over about the next six weeks, Hindu pilgrims will gather at the confluence of three sacred rivers - the Ganges, the Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati - where they will take part in elaborate rituals, hoping to begin a journey to achieve Hindu philosophy's ultimate goal: the release from the cycle of rebirth.

Here's what to know about the festival:

Hindus venerate rivers, and none more so than the Ganges and the Yamuna. The faithful believe that a dip in their waters will cleanse them of their past sins and end their process of reincarnation, particularly on auspicious days. The most propitious of these days occur in cycles of 12 years during a festival called the Maha Kumbh Mela, or pitcher festival.

The festival is a series of ritual baths by Hindu sadhus, or holy men, and other pilgrims at the confluence of three sacred rivers that dates to at least medieval times. Hindus believe that the mythical Saraswati river once flowed from the Himalayas through Prayagraj, meeting there with the Ganges and the Yamuna.

Bathing takes place every day, but on the most auspicious dates, naked, ash-smeared monks charge toward the holy rivers at dawn. Many pilgrims stay for the entire festival, observing austerity, giving alms and bathing at sunrise every day.

"We feel peaceful here and attain salvation from the cycles of life and death," said Bhagwat Prasad Tiwari, a pilgrim.

The festival has its roots in a Hindu tradition that says the god Vishnu wrested a golden pitcher containing the nectar of immortality from demons. Hindus believe that a few drops fell in the cities of Prayagraj, Nasik, Ujjain and Haridwar - the four places where the Kumbh festival has been held for centuries.

The Kumbh rotates among these four pilgrimage sites about every three years on a date prescribed by astrology.



A Hindu devotee prays before taking a dip at the confluence of the Ganges, the Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati rivers on the first day of the 45-day-long Maha Kumbh festival in Prayagraj, India, Monday, Jan. 13, 2025. (AP)

This year's festival is the biggest and grandest of them all. A smaller version of the festival, called Ardh Kumbh, or Half Kumbh, was organized in 2019, when 240 million visitors were recorded, with about 50 million taking a ritual bath on the busiest day.

At least 400 million people - more than the population of the United States - are expected in Prayagraj over the next 45 days, according to officials. That is around 200 times the 2 million pilgrims that arrived in the Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia for the annual Hajj pilgrimage last year.

The festival is a big test for Indian authorities to showcase the Hindu religion, tourism and crowd management.

A vast ground along the banks of the rivers has been converted into a sprawling tent city equipped with more 3,000 kitchens and 150,000 restrooms. Divided into 25 sections and spreading over 40 square kilometers (15 square miles), the tent city also has housing, roads, electricity and water, communication towers and 11 hospitals. Murals depicting stories from Hindu scriptures are painted on the city walls.

Indian Railways has also introduced more than 90 special trains that will make nearly 3,300 trips during the festival to transport devotees, beside regular trains.

About 50,000 security personnel - a 50% increase from 2019 - are also stationed in the city to maintain law and order and crowd management. More than 2,500 cameras, some powered by AI, will send crowd movement and density information to four central control rooms, where officials can quickly deploy personnel to avoid stampedes.

India's past leaders have capitalized on the festival to strengthen their relationship with the country's Hindus, who make up nearly 80% of India's more than 1.4 billion people. But under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the festival has become an integral part of its advocacy of Hindu nationalism. For Modi and his party, Indian civilization is inseparable from Hinduism, although critics say the party's philosophy is rooted in Hindu supremacy.

The Uttar Pradesh state, headed by Adityanath - a powerful Hindu monk and a popular hard-line Hindu politician in Modi's party - has allocated more than $765 million for this year's event. It has also used the festival to boost his and the prime minister's image, with giant billboards and posters all over the city showing them both, alongside slogans touting their government welfare policies.

The festival is expected to boost the ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party's past record of promoting Hindu cultural symbols for its support base. But recent Kumbh gatherings have also been caught in controversies.

Modi's government changed the city's Mughal-era name from Allahabad to Prayagraj as part of its Muslim-to-Hindu name-changing effort nationwide ahead of the 2019 festival and the national election that his party won. In 2021, his government refused to call off the festival in Haridwar despite a surge in coronavirus cases, fearing a backlash from religious leaders in the Hindu-majority country.



Traffic moves past a banner in Srinagar, welcoming the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other leaders to inaugurate a strategic tunnel project that connects Kashmir with Ladakh, Monday, Jan.13, 2025. (AP)

India's PM Modi marks opening of strategic tunnel in disputed Kashmir

JAMMU, India, Jan 13, (AP): India's prime minister marked Monday the opening of a tunnel in the northeast of disputed Kashmir that will grant all-year accessibility to a town that is isolated by heavy snow each winter.

The $932 million project includes a second tunnel and a series of bridges and high mountain roads that will link Kashmir with Ladakh, a cold desert region nestled between India, Pakistan and China that has faced territorial disputes for decades.

Amid high security, Narendra Modi visited the resort town of Sonamarg where he inaugurated the 6.5-kilometer (4-mile) tunnel. The town denotes the end of the conifer-clad mountains of the Kashmir Valley before Ladakh begins across the rocky Zojila mountain pass. The tunnel, named Z-Morh, will now grant it accessibility for the first time all year round.

The second tunnel, about 14 kilometers (9 miles) long, will bypass the challenging Zojila pass and connect Sonamarg with Ladakh and is expected to be completed in 2026.

Sonamarg and Ladakh have been plagued with severe snowfalls that close the mountain passes due to massive snowfalls, forcing them to remain cut off from neighboring towns for nearly six months every year.

Authorities on Monday deployed police and soldiers in the area and established multiple checkpoints at key intersections as an enhanced security measure for the prime minister's visit. Troops also stationed sharpshooters at several points and carried out drone surveillance to ensure constant vigilance.

Modi is scheduled to speak later at a public meeting.

Experts say the tunnel project is important to the military, which will gain significantly improved capabilities to operate in Ladakh while also providing civilians with freedom of movement year-round between the Kashmir valley and Ladakh.

In October, gunmen fatally shot at least seven people working on the tunnel project and injured at least five others. Police blamed insurgents fighting for decades against Indian rule in the region.



Democratic Republic of Congo Defence Forces gather in the North Kivu province village of Mukondi, on March 9, 2023. (AP)

Congo says several towns recaptured from rebels

Several towns that fell to armed groups in eastern Congo's North Kivu and South Kivu provinces have been recaptured by government forces, a Congolese army spokesman said, even as the rebels have made advances in other areas amid intensified fighting in the conflict-battered region.

Eastern Congo has been in conflict for decades with more than 100 armed groups, most of which are vying for territory in the vast and mineral-rich region near the border with Rwanda. The conflict has created one of the world's largest humanitarian crises with more than 7 million people displaced, including 100,000 who have fled their homes this year.

The Congolese army said some of the recovered towns have been occupied by rebels for months, including Ngungu, a key town in the Masisi territory that is near the North Kivu provincial capital, Goma. Some Masisi villages, however, remain under the control of rebels, including its center known as the Masisi Center.

"They (the rebels) have seen their adventure come to a halt by the FARDC (Congolese security forces)," Guillaume Ndjike Kaiko, army spokesman in North Kivu, told reporters, listing other recovered towns as Lumbishi, Ruzirantaka, Kamatale, Bitagata and Kabingo.

"All over there, they have been pushed back," Kaiko said Sunday, attributing the victories to a joint military operation led by the commanders of the two provinces.

The news of the recovered towns brought mixed feelings among villages that had fled the areas. They worried for their safety as they celebrated their return home.

"We are in Ngungu … but we continue to suffer because the security is not well established," said Nsabimana Alexis, a resident. "People continue to die, we just buried a person 30 minutes ago," he said.

Frequent clashes between the Congolese forces and the rebels have made dozens of villages inaccessible and out of the reach of aid. The most dominant rebel group in the region has been the M23 rebel group, which the Congolese government and United Nations experts say is being backed by neighboring Rwanda. Rwanda denies this.

In Masisi, displaced camps and aid facilities are being overstretched as more people try to seek refuge from the violence, French charity Doctors Without Borders, or MSF, has said.

"We are doing our best to respond to this situation. But the severe lack of humanitarian responders in the area is making things difficult," said Romain Briey, the MSF coordinator in Masisi. (AP)

Lat/Am

Heavy rains kill at least 11 in Brazil: Heavy rains in southeastern Brazil claimed the lives of at least 11 people on Sunday, including nine who were killed in landslides in the valley region of Minas Gerais state during the early morning, said local authorities.

According to the state fire department, landslides killed nine people and left one missing in the city of Ipatinga. The city was hit by both landslides and flooding after a downpour of 80 millimeters of rain per square meter fell in less than an hour. In response, local officials declared a 180-day state of public disaster.

In a video message on social media, Romeu Zema, the governor of Minas Gerais, announced that he would travel to Ipatinga on Monday morning to assess the disaster and arrange safer temporary housing for those displaced. (Xinhua)

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6.2 quake jolts southwestern Mexico: A magnitude 6.2 earthquake struck a region in southwestern Mexico early Sunday, according to the United States Geological Survey, causing no serious damage or casualties.

It said the quake was centered 21 kilometers (13 miles) southeast of Aquila near the boundary of Colima and Michoacán states at a depth of 34 kilometers (21 miles).

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said on social media platform X that the quake prompted emergency response teams to review their protocol.

"There are no new developments," she wrote. Mexico's Social Security Institute said there were no reports of damage in the capital of Mexico City, some 600 kilometers (372 miles) east of the temblor's epicenter - near the mountainous village of Coalcomán, Michoacán. (AP)

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2 dead after buses collide in Cuba: At least two people were killed and 60 others, including seven children, injured after two buses collided in the central Cuban province of Camaguey, local media reported Friday.

Prime Minister Manuel Marrero expressed condolences on X social media platform to the families of the deceased, assuring them that the government is closely monitoring "the condition of the injured, who are receiving medical care" at a hospital in Camaguey, about 700 km east of Havana.

The accident occurred on Friday when one bus driver ignored a "Stop" sign and collided with the other. (Xinhua)

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Attack on Brazil workers' settlement kills 3: Three farmers were shot dead and five others injured in an attack on a workers' settlement in Brazil's Sao Paulo state, local authorities said Saturday.

Ten armed men stormed the Olga Benario agricultural settlement of Brazil's Landless Workers' Movement (MST) in the city of Tremembe late Friday, opening fire on families living there, said the local police.

The land where MST farmers have been working for 20 years is home to 45 families, who produce food in the area. (Xinhua)



Soldiers wearing face masks to help curb the spread of the coronavirus rally to welcome the 8th Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea at Kim Il Sung Square in Pyongyang, North Korea, on Oct. 12, 2020. (AP)

'No desire to defect'

South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers on Monday that two North Korean soldiers who were captured by Ukrainian forces while fighting alongside Russian forces in Russia's Kursk border region haven't expressed a desire to seek asylum in South Korea.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said he's willing to hand over the soldiers to North Korea if the country's authoritarian leader, Kim Jong Un, arranges for an exchange with Ukrainian prisoners of war in Russia. Zelenskyy said one of the North Korean soldiers wishes to stay in Ukraine while the other wants to return to his country, which was consistent with interview videos released by his government. "If Kim Jong Un even remembers these citizens of his and is capable of organizing an exchange for our warriors being held in Russia, we are ready to transfer such soldiers. Undoubtedly there will be more POWs from North Korea," Zelenskyy said in an address late Sunday. He said in a separate posting on the social media platform X that "there may be other options" for North Korean prisoners who don't wish to go back.

In a closed-door briefing at South Korea's National Assembly, the National Intelligence Service confirmed its participation in the questioning of the North Korean soldiers by Ukrainian authorities. The agency said the soldiers haven't expressed a request to resettle in South Korea, according to two lawmakers who attended the meeting.

The agency said it was willing to discuss the matter with Ukrainian authorities if the soldiers eventually do ask to go to South Korea. (AP)

Asia

Thai police vow to protect Chinese citizens' rights: The Thai Police will strengthen their efforts to prevent and combat transnational crimes and try their best to protect the safety and legitimate rights and interests of Chinese citizens visiting Thailand, said a senior official.

Thailand's Senior Inspector General Thatchai Pitaneelaboot made the remarks during a meeting with Wu Zhiwu, the minister of the Chinese Embassy in Thailand, on Sunday while briefing the Thai Police's recent work regarding cases of missing Chinese citizens.

Wu expressed appreciation for Thailand's determination and efforts to ensure the safety of Chinese citizens. The two sides also engaged in a detailed discussion on ways to strengthen cooperation in tackling cross-border crimes such as telecommunications fraud and human trafficking. (Xinhua)

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Landslide in western Indonesia claims 4: Four people were killed in the Indonesian city of Batam, located in the Riau Islands province, after a landslide struck a housing complex early on Monday. The disaster also injured five others and destroyed five houses, according to the province's disaster mitigation agency.

Hendrija, the agency's head of the rehabilitation and reconstruction division, told local media that heavy rains had been falling in the Riau Islands since the previous Friday and were expected to continue until Saturday. He later urged the public to remain vigilant and alert for potential further hydrometeorological disasters.

"We plan to implement roadblocks to the housing complex as part of the emergency response. We don't want more victims," he said. (Xinhua)

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Oil spillage causes brief traffic disruption: An oil spillage temporarily disrupted traffic at the Woodlands Checkpoint, a major border crossing between Singapore and Malaysia, on Monday morning, according to Singapore's Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA).

The incident occurred along the Johor-Singapore Causeway heading towards the checkpoint, blocking two out of the three lanes, the ICA reported on Facebook, advising travelers to expect delays.

By 10:58 a.m., the ICA confirmed that the oil spillage had been cleared, and all lanes were reopened to traffic. (Xinhua)

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6 killed in Vietnam after van crashes into store: Six people, including four children in Vietnam's central province of Nghe An, have been killed after a van losing control crashed into a grocery store, local media reported Monday.

The accident occurred around 5:00 p.m. on Sunday when the van lost control at a slope in Ky Son district and crashed into a group of people standing in front of the store.

Five people died on the spot. Another died at the hospital.

The youngest victim was a 13-month-old baby. (Xinhua)

Market Movements 13-01-2025

			Change	Closing pts
▲ DUBAI	-	DFMGI	+4.18	5,232.50
▲ PAKISTAN	-	KSE 100	+1,030.86	114,470.13
▼ EGYPT	-	EGX 30	-721.17	28,556.28
▼ PHILIPPINES	-	PSEi	-153.22	6,343.10
▼ SAUDI	-	TASI	-17.03	12,109.94

Business

Boursa Kuwait completes annual review of listed companies for '25

New additions to Main Market Index 50 revealed

By Mahmoud Shendi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The Boursa Kuwait has announced the completion of its annual review of listed companies for the year 2025, in accordance with the Stock Exchange regulations.

As a result of this review, Eva Hotels and Resorts Company has been transferred from the main market to the first market, having met the required criteria for the first market.

On the other hand, Al-Imtiaz Investment Group and Al-Afco for Aircraft Financing and Leasing will be transferred from the First Market to the Main Market due to their failure to meet the continued standards of the First Market. This transition reflects the companies' inability to sustain the criteria required for the prestigious market.

The adjustments will take effect on Sunday, February 9, 2025, as the Boursa Kuwait continues its periodic reviews and reshuffling of its listed companies.

The Boursa Kuwait also revealed the companies that will be added to the Main Market Index 50, following their fulfillment of the index's stringent criteria.

These companies include -- Kuwait and Middle East Financial Investment Company, Bayan Investment Holding Company, KFIC Investment Company, Unicap Investment and Finance Company, Al Imtiaz Investment Group, Al Oula Takaful Insurance Company and Al Enmaa Real Estate Company.

This is in addition to MENA Real Estate Company, ASICO Industries Company, Equipment Holding Company, Automated Systems Company, Energy House Holding Company, Alafco Aircraft Finance and Leasing Company, Kuwait Parks Company, Inovest Company and Dalqan Real Estate Company.

The companies that will not be included in the Main Market Index 50 are: Commercial Bank of Kuwait, Ahli United Bank - Kuwait, Commercial Facilities Company, Kuwait Financial Centre, Ektitab Holding Company, Gulf Insurance Group, Warba Insurance and Reinsurance Company, Injazat Real Estate Development Company, Dubai First Real Estate Development Company and Kuwait Portland Cement Company.

This is in addition to Kuwait Casting Company, Privatization Holding Company, Eva Hotels and Resorts Company, Jiyad Holding Company, GTC Logistics for Transport and Handling Company and International Housing Company for Real Estate Development.

In a separate announcement, Arabi Holding Group Company will continue to be listed on the Main Market.

This decision follows a statement by the company expressing its desire to remain on the Main Market despite meeting all the necessary requirements for listing on the First Market. According to Article 8-5 of the Stock Exchange Rules, a company may opt to stay listed on its current market even if it qualifies for the First Market.

These changes are part of the Boursa Kuwait's ongoing efforts to ensure the integrity, competitiveness and transparency of the exchange, fostering a dynamic investment environment in Kuwait's capital markets.

Bank trains 26,000 students

Gulf Bank partakes in INJAZ Kuwait's 2025 Internship Fair

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: As part of its commitment to supporting and empowering youth, Gulf Bank took part in the second edition of INJAZ Kuwait's Internship Fair for 2025. Held over two days at the Movenpick AlBida'a Hotel, the event brought together a wide range of private sector organizations to offer students practical career development opportunities.

Gulf Bank's Human Resources team provided an in-depth look into the banking sector, showcasing the Bank's operations and the career opportunities it offers to recent graduates. The team also shared insights into the demands of the private sector job market and answered students' questions about the benefits and supportive work environment at Gulf Bank.

The team organized interactive activities, where students were divided into groups and task forces to work towards specific goals. They also provided guidance on creating professional CVs and offered tips to help students confidently navigate job interviews.

Mrs. Salma Al-Hajjaj, General Manager of Human Resources at Gulf Bank, stated:

"We are proud of our 18-year partnership with INJAZ Kuwait, which has helped nurture countless innovative ideas and projects, many of which now play a vital role in Kuwait's economy. Gulf Bank is dedicated to empowering youth by developing their professional skills to meet the ever-evolving demands of local and global job markets. This commitment aligns with Gulf Bank's 2025 strategy, which prioritizes youth, and Kuwait's Vision 2035, which emphasizes the importance of investing in the next generation."

Al-Hajjaj also emphasized the success of Gulf Bank's partnership with INJAZ Kuwait, which trained nearly 26,000 students during the 2022/2023 academic year. The programs covered a range of educational levels, from elementary through university, and also included support for recent graduates.

Gulf Bank aims to be Kuwait's leading bank, fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace to deliver exceptional customer service while contributing sustainably to the community. Through its extensive branch network and innovative digital services, the bank empowers customers to conduct banking transactions conveniently and efficiently, ensuring a seamless experience.

In alignment with Kuwait Vision 2035, "New Kuwait," and its commitment to fostering collaborative partnerships, Gulf Bank is dedicated to driving robust sustainability initiatives across environmental, social, and governance (ESG) dimensions. The bank is committed to implementing strategically selected and diverse sustainability programs both internally and externally.



Salma Al-Hajjaj and Dhari Al-Bader represent Gulf Bank at the exhibition opening.

As part of its strategic partnership with College of Engineering and Petroleum

KFH becomes main sponsor of 47th Engineering Design Exhibition

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: As the largest and main sponsor of the College of Engineering and Petroleum, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announces its strategic partnership for the 47th Engineering Design Exhibition. The exhibition is held under the patronage of the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Professor Nader Al-Jalal.

Under its sponsorship, KFH has supported over 300 graduation projects for students throughout the year.KFH has also dedicated the "Environmental Sustainability" Award to projects focusing on sustainability and environmental issues and aligning with KFH's comprehensive strategy. The award is also part of the Keep it green Campaign, launched by KFH to support environmental and sustainability initiatives.

At KFH's pavilion, a team was designated to offer distinctive services to college students and visitors and respond to their inquiries.



Mohammed Alfaris receiving the KFH honor.

Commenting on this participation, KFH Executive Manager Media and Government Relations, Mohammed Alfaris, said that KFH is keen on supporting students and graduates of the College of Engineering and Petroleum and sponsoring their graduation projects in this exhibition, which is held twice a year. "Students and youth are a priority of KFH's CSR strategy alongside education, innovation and continuous cooperation with various educational institutions," he noted.

Through its sponsorship of the Engineering Design Exhibition, Alfaris emphasized that KFH is the primary and largest supporter of the College of Engineering and Petroleum students. He further noted that KFH provides crucial support to participating students as they strive to complete their projects, inspiring them to embrace innovation and creativity.

He praised Kuwait University graduates and particularly College of Engineering and Petroleum alumni, emphasizing their role in delivering innovative projects and effective solutions for Kuwait and contributing to its development.

53 IPOs in GCC, raising $12.9 bn in 2024

GCC IPO performance strong despite external challenges

By KAMCO Invest

GCC witnesses record IPOs in 2024 led by strong activity in Saudi Arabia

GCC equity markets continued to witness healthy primary market activity during 2024 with steady growth in IPO volumes and proceeds during the year. GCC exchanges witnessed a total of 53 IPOs during 2024 with the bulk of the companies listing in Saudi Arabia. This was the highest number of IPOs in the region and a healthy growth from 46 IPOs in 2023. The growth came despite marginal growth in the aggregate GCC index during 2024 for the second consecutive year as the performance was affected by a number of external factors including geopolitical issues, decline in oil price and elevated interest rates.

In terms of proceeds, GCC issuers raised USD 12.9 Bn during the year, a 19.8% gain as compared to the proceeds of USD 10.8 Bn in 2023 and the second highest proceeds over the last five years, based on data from Bloomberg and stock exchanges. The increase in proceeds came despite issuance numbers being driven by smaller-ticket IPOs. In terms of performance post listing, bulk of the companies reported gains by the end of the year. As per data as of end of year, 31 companies showed gain in share price since listing while 21 posted declines. Nevertheless, the performance of companies post listing was also affected by the prevailing issues in the region. Gainers, on the other hand, reflected niche offerings in the region including in sectors like Software and Services, Healthcare, and Utilities with solid business fundamentals with future growth and attractive dividend yields. Moreover, the list of gainers mainly included private issuers as against companies that were privatized by the government as seen over the last few years.

UAE leads with higher issuance proceeds; Saudi Exchange dominates deals yet again

Saudi Arabia continued its leadership position in terms of volume of GCC IPO in 2024, as 42 out of the 53 GCC IPOs debuted on either the Nomu or the Main Market. Within Saudi Arabia, the Nomu – Parallel market dominated the number of issuances with 28 deals, as compared to 14 deals for the Main Market. UAE continued its domination in terms of IPO proceeds at USD 6.2 Bn, but the country's share of aggregate proceeds in the GCC declined from 56.3% in 2023 to 47.8% in 2024. The UAE also witnessed a decline in the number of IPOs with 7 IPOs in 2024 as compared to 8 IPOs in 2023. On the other hand, Saudi Arabian companies raked in 31.6% of the aggregate proceeds in 2024 at USD 4.1 Bn, almost in line with the 32.0% of the proceeds in 2023. Oman's privatization efforts were highlighted this year with the IPO of two state-owned firms on the Muscat Exchange during the year. The listing of OQ Exploration & Production and OQ Base Industries resulted in aggregate proceeds of USD 2.5 Bn, ranking third in the GCC and accounting for 19.3% of the total IPO proceeds during the year.

Global IPO proceeds decline for the third consecutive year

Global IPO activity plunged for the third year in a row with decline in both number of deals as well as IPO proceeds. Total number of IPOs reached 1,199 during the year, as per data from LSEG, as compared to 1,305 deals during 2023. In terms of proceeds, IPO offerings totaled USD 112.8 Bn during 2024, registering a decline of 1% from 2023, and recording the slowest period for IPO activity since 2009. In terms of IPO proceeds, companies in the US raised USD 31.6 Bn during the year, up 54% as compared to 2023, to reach the highest in three years. On the other hand, IPOs in China resulted in total proceeds of USD 14.4 Bn, registering a decline of 71% from 2023 to reach the lowest level in the last 20 years.



GCC IPO Pipeline	Announced	Mandated	Rumoured	Total
Saudi Arabia	26	4	1	31
United Arab Emirates	3	-	3	6
Oman	-	-	2	2
Qatar	1	-	-	1
Total	30	4	6	40

Source: LSEG Workspace, Kamco Invest Research.

Size of IPOs in the GCC in 2024

In terms of size of the IPOs, the GCC remains a hotspot with the combined region ranking fourth globally after China in terms of total IPO proceeds. UAE ranks fifth in terms of proceeds while Saudi Arabia ranked seventh globally after Japan. The average listing size (market-cap) of the seven IPOs on UAE exchanges was significantly higher at around USD 3.8 Bn in 2024 as compared to around USD 759 Mn in 2023. This was also sharply higher as compared to the rest of the GCC average listing size of around USD 598 Mn in 2024 as compared to USD 124 Mn last year. The USD 10.1 Bn IPO of Talabat on the Dubai exchange was the largest this year after its German parent company, Delivery Hero, listed 20% of the company and raised USD 2.01 Bn in proceeds.

Oman's state-owned energy company OQ SAOC listed its Exploration & Production business in the second-biggest offering in the region during 2024 and raised USD 2.0 Bn after listing 25% stake. The oil company attracted USD 5.4 Bn in demand despite lower oil prices as well as geopolitical issues in the region. Lulu Retail was next with IPO proceeds of USD 1.72 Bn resulting in the biggest non-government IPO in the UAE in the last ten years with a market-cap of USD 5.7 Bn.

In terms of demand for the IPO, the large local investor base has resulted in strong demand for the regional IPOs. The IPO of Saudi Arabia's Dr Soliman Abdel Kader Fakeeh Hospital garnered the biggest orders during the year. Shares of the company was oversubscribed by 119x with orders worth USD 91.0 Bn. Dubai's Parkin was next with total orders of USD 71.0 Bn and an oversubscription of 165.6x. Another healthcare stock, Almoosa Health, garnered the third highest orders of USD 46.0 Bn with an oversubscription of 102x. Out of the top ten companies in the GCC IPO list by total orders, eight companies were listed in Saudi Arabia while the remaining two were listed on UAE exchanges, one each on Abu Dhabi Exchange and on Dubai Financial Market.

In terms of sectoral split, the Commercial & Professional Services sector was leading with a total of 10 IPOs during the year with companies like Parkin, Saudi Manpower Solutions and Tamkeen Human Resources. Consumer Services and Materials sectors were next with 7 IPOs each followed by Healthcare and F&B with 6 and 5 IPOs, respectively. The overall sectoral participation from the region remained diverse with corporates with unique niche operating models coming to the primarymarket.

Emerging trends reshape global IPO volumes during the year

Data from EY's annual IPO report for 2024 showed that the IPO activity during the year was led by a growth in the Americas and the EMEIA regions that was offset by a decline in IPOs in the Asia Pacific region. While Americas and EMEIA showed growth of 37% and 17% in terms of number of IPOs in 2024, the Asia Pacific region showed a decline of 35% as compared to 2023. IN terms of IPO proceeds, the decline in the Asia Pacific number was even steeper at 51% while the Americas and EMEIA regions registered healthy growth of 45% and 64%, respectively, according to EY. That said, India witnessed the highest number of IPOs during the year globally followed by the US and European regions, while in terms of money raised, US was at the top during the year. The quarterly trend in IPOs showed a back end loaded year with a majority of the IPOs coming during the last quarter of the year and was highlighted by steeper prevailing valuations in the market.

The sectoral trend in IPOs during 2024 showed the impact of emerging technologies as TMT topped in terms of number of IPOs during the year. Industrials and Consumer sectors were next with the top three sectors accounting for 60% of the total IPOs in terms of volume and proceeds.

Strong pipeline of IPOs in the GCC for 2025

With resilient investor demand as seen in the several large cap IPOs in 2024 and GCC governments continued push to diversify economy and deepen capital markets, the pipeline of offerings in 2025 remains resilient in the region. Based on the status of IPO offering, there are around 40 IPOs already in the pipeline in the GCC, with 30 IPOs already announced, 4 have been mandated and 6 rumoured IPOs. Saudi Arabia is expected to lead once again in terms of volume of IPOs in 2025.

This offerings include the continued privatization effort from the Saudi PIF that is planning three listings soon including port operator Saudi Global Ports and medical procurement firm Nupco. There was also a recent news of PIF-backed Tabreed District Cooling going for an IPO this year. There are a number of other private firms looking to raise funds in the Kingdom including low cost carrier Flynas, buy-now-pay-later company Tabby, and IT company Ejada Systems. There are also reports that Abu Dhabi's wealth fund ADQ is planning to list state carrier Etihad Airways and has lined up banks to raise as much as USD 1 Bn. Oman is also expected to be active in the IPO market with the state sovereign wealth fund keen on privatizing around 30 assets in the next few years, as per an announcement at the end of 2023. The fund was active in 2024 and the pipeline shows logistics firm Asyad Group and Oman Electricity Transmission Co. as IPO contenders in 2025. State energy firm OQ also plans further listing in the coming years. In the UAE, the IPO pipeline shows hotel operator FIVE planning an IPO this year along with Dubai Holdings that is planning two real estate listings. Other contenders, according to Bloomberg include classifieds company Dubizzle Group, IT services firm Alpha Data and ICD owned construction firm ALEC Engineering & Contracting LLC.

Zain Kuwait in 2024: A year of digital leadership and active community engagement

Prestigious awards highlighted excellence in technology and community contributions



His Highness the Amir and Bader Al-Kharafi during the Amir Cup's final.



Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi and Bader Al-Kharafi at the launch ceremony of the Child Support Line 147 campaign.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Driven by its purpose – 'Better Lives, Lasting Connections', Zain continued to lead the telecommunications and digital innovation sector throughout 2024, solidifying its longstanding market leadership in Kuwait. The company also dedicated increased efforts to advancing its social mission by supporting various sectors within the community in alignment with Kuwait's developmental goals.

From the beginning of the year, Zain adopted a comprehensive strategic approach, launching diverse initiatives to achieve its sustainability goals, including empowering Kuwaiti youth digitally, supporting sports and athletes, promoting volunteerism and humanitarian work, fostering innovation and creativity, and empowering tech startups.

This report highlights Zain's key initiatives and projects in 2024 that supported the aspirations of the Kuwaiti community:

Telecom Leadership and Prestigious Awards

In 2024, Zain maintained its market leadership by spearheading advancements in technology, telecommunications, and digital innovation. Early in the year, the company achieved a landmark technological breakthrough, reaching speeds of 10 Gbps through 5.5G technology after successfully testing it on its network. This milestone made Zain the first company in Kuwait to achieve this significant feat.

Zain also celebrated the launch of the Samsung Galaxy S24 series by hosting a special event at its headquarters, attended by senior executives from Zain, Samsung Gulf, and Al Babtain. The company also signed a strategic MoU with Samsung during the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, which aimed to expand their collaboration to deliver advanced solutions and innovations for consumers and businesses in Kuwait.

Further emphasizing its commitment to innovation, Zain established the Zain Data Office, which focuses on data governance to ensure that data management practices are deeply integrated across its operations. The company also collaborated with Huawei to launch an AI Excellence Center, which aims to enhance AI-driven services and automate 5G network infrastructure.

Zain contributed to a significant national project by inspecting and evaluating Kuwait's primary road networks for the Ministry of Public Works. This initiative marked the first phase of a comprehensive infrastructure evaluation using AI-powered drones.

Throughout the year, Zain earned numerous accolades from local, regional, and international organizations, affirming its leadership in technology and community service. These included awards such as Best Telecom Company from International Finance, ranking first in the Best Mobile Operator and Best ISP categories in the Service Hero Customer Satisfaction Index, Best Corporate Social Responsibility Project from the GCC General Secretariat, Digital Transformation Enabler of The Yearfrom The Energy Year, Best 5G Business Development Strategy award from the GSMA, Outstanding Mobile Broadband Network Quality award from SAMENA Council, and Best Industry Digitalization award for the Energy Sector at the Huawei B2B Innovation Summit.

Supporting Sports Locally and Regionally

In 2024, Zain took its support for sports to entire new heights through its title partnership with the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup (Khaleeji Zain 26), held under the esteemed patronage of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Since announcing its partnership with the tournament in September 2024, Zain mobilized all its resources and expertise to ensure the success of this prominent regional event. The company contributed to key elements, including creating the tournament's brand identity, developing the official mascot (Haydo), supporting the draw ceremony, and producing the widely celebrated "Hala Walla" TV commercial. Zain also collaborated with Kuwait Airways, hosted the trophy's promotional tour, and engaged fans daily through contests, prizes, and fan zones across Kuwait.

During the year, the company also maintained its long-standing partnership with the Kuwaiti Football Association, sponsoring the Kuwaiti Premier League (Dawri Zain) and the First Division League. Under this partnership, Zain supported the prestigious Amir's Cup and provided record-breaking rewards exceeding KD 60,000 per season—the highest prize value in the league's history—to motivate players and engage fans.

Zain Alshuhoor Ramadan Campaign

The company's comprehensive Zain Alshuhoor Ramadan campaign reinforced the values of generosity, compassion, and peace that the Holy Month embodies. The campaign featured a range of initiatives reflecting Kuwait's heritage of helping others and promoting goodwill,collaborating with six strategic partners from the public and private sectors. Through these partnerships, the company presented a plethora of volunteer, humanitarian, charitable, social, religious, and sports programs that continued throughout the Holy Month.

As part of the campaign, Zain distributed over 1,000 food baskets to underprivileged families and a total of 42,000 Iftar meals for fasting individuals. The campaign also included visits to care homes and hospitals, hosting iftar gatherings, and cultural activities such as the annual Ramadan Challenge at Al Shaheed Park, which attracted over 800 participants.Additionally, Zain organized its employee Ramadan football tournament with 16 teams and held the first-ever Zain Quran Recitation Competition in partnership with the Grand Mosque of Kuwait.

Driving Innovation and Empowering Entrepreneurs

In 2024, Zain intensified its efforts to enhance innovation, foster creativity, and support entrepreneurship within the community, particularly in the fields of technology, engineering, science, and mathematics (STEM). These efforts were carried out through various programs under the umbrella of its Innovation Nation initiative.

At the start of the year, Zain announced its role as the strategic partner of the Kuwait National Robotics Competition (KNRC), organized by the Computer Science Department at the College of Science, Kuwait University. This initiative aimed to ignite the passion of Kuwaiti students for technology. Additionally, Zain supported the 'Girls Power' workshop, one of KNRC's key activities, which focused on investing in the digital capabilities and skills of girls and young women.



Nawaf Al-Gharabally and Dr. Osama Al-Saeed signing the partnership between Zain and Kuwait University.

Zain also signed an MoU with the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) to launch training programs aimed at preparing and empowering young national talents. Further partnerships included an MoU with the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL) to establish a strategic collaboration for driving the development of Kuwait's creative economy and another MoU with Kuwait University to contribute to the growth of the country's knowledge economy.

The company supported the summer technology camp organized by the Computer Science Department at the College of Science, in addition to hosting the second Innovation Nation summer camp, which attracted over 1,600 young technology enthusiasts. The camp offered 126 training sessions and interactive workshops covering the principles and fundamentals of various modern technological topics.

The year 2024 also marked the launch of the all-new Zain Great Idea (ZGI) tech startup accelerator program, which provided limitless opportunities for Kuwaiti entrepreneurs to expand, grow, and prepare their startups for an AI-driven future.

The program featured several key stages, beginning with a boot camp led by an elite group of local, regional, and international experts. This was followed by the Super Saturday event, where finalists presented their startups before a judges panel to qualify for the next phase—the global acceleration phase in Silicon Valley, USA.

The global acceleration phase featured an extensive program that included masterclasses, one-on-one consultations, and visits to major tech companies. The aim was to give participants an up-close look at the dynamics of entrepreneurship by interacting with leading experts and specialists in business, innovation, and technology.

Reinforcing Commitment to Sustainability

Throughout the year, Zain intensified its efforts to implement its corporate sustainability strategy. The company installed a solar panel setup at the outdoor car park in its headquarters to promote the use of clean energy to contribute to powering the company's buildings and reducing its carbon emissions.

Zain also launched the Sustainability Week initiative, aimed at fostering a culture of sustainability among its employees. The week featured a rich program of awareness and educational activities, which garnered remarkable engagement from employees across various departments and divisions, with active participation from the executive management.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Zain spearheaded a national campaign to raise awareness about the Child Protection Hotline (147). This hotline, established by Zain for the Ministry's Child Protection Office since 2016, provides a direct and confidential point of contact for reporting all cases of violence and abuse against children in Kuwait.

Highlights:

- Prestigious awards highlighted excellence in technology and community contributions
- Support for sports reached new heights with Khaleeji Zain 26 and Dawri Zain
- Zain Alshuhoor campaign reinforced giving and connection in Ramadan
- Innovation Nationfostered creative talents, ZGI empowered entrepreneurs
- Company reinforced commitment to sustainability and clean energy initiatives



Waleed Al-Khashti honoring the winners of the Dawri Zain awards.



Zain's Ramadan campaign embodied the spirit of giving during the Holy Month.



Chief Technology Officer Daaij Al-Oud receiving Zain's award.



Nawaf Al-Gharabally with Zain and Huawei officials at MWC Barcelona.



Zain Great Idea entrepreneurs in San Francisco.

Under the umbrella of its comprehensive social responsibility program and efforts to foster healthier lifestyle in Kuwait

Burgan Bank concludes its sponsorship of Kuwait's premier health and fitness summit 'NAWI'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Burgan Bank launched into 2025 with robust resolve and commitment to contribute to its community's overall growth and development, leading the year with the platinum sponsorship of the first edition of NAWI, Kuwait's annual health,fitness and wellness expo held at The Arena Kuwait. The sponsorship is part of Burgan's comprehensive social responsibility program and its unwavering commitment to advancing the health, wellness, and sports sectors.

"In line with the Bank's slogan 'Driven By You', we were resolved to begin the new year with our platinum sponsorship of NAWI, the biggest and most important health and fitness summit in Kuwait, which saw an impressive turnout of health and wellness professionals and enthusiasts throughout its three-day span," commented Ms. Hessa Hussain Al-Najadah, Senior Manager – Corporate and CSR Communications at Burgan Bank.

"Stemming from our commitment to sustainability and corporate responsibility, we continue to place our community's mental health and wellness at the top of our priorities for contributing to the development of Kuwait's sports and health sectors," added Al-Najadah."In addition, we remain committed to supporting youthful Kuwaiti calibers as well as empowering women by sponsoring different initiatives and events such as NAWI, which rests on the shoulders of an all-female team of aspiring Kuwaitis who were able to realize their vision and aspiration through our partnership. I would like to conclude by thanking the NAWI team for their effort and collaboration and expressing our great pride in their achievement."



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





Snapshots of visitors participating in various activities at Burgan's dedicated booth.

During the expo, visitors of all ages were able to explore the rich variety of Kuwait's well-being industry and receive the guidance needed to make a sustainable plan for physical and mental wellness.

On their part, the NAWI team expressed their gratitude to Burgan Bank for their unwavering support, saying: "Having many great options to choose from denotes the vivaciousness of any industry; however, it can be daunting for consumers to decide where to start or what choices to opt for. As the name suggests, NAWI was designed for everyone with a sincere intention to lead a life of balance and wellness. Thanks to our sponsors, especially Burgan Bank, and their earnest support, we were able to deliver an expo that is both holistic and wholesome, offering all visitors the needed guidance to turn their intentions into fruitful action."

As part of its platinum sponsorship, Burgan Bank hosted numerous interactive activations at its dedicated booth, including Spin the Wheel for a chance to win different valuable prizes as well as fitness gadgets. It also held a "Seen Jeem" competition that challenged visitors' knowledge of Kuwait's history of athletic achievements and other health and wellness-related trivia, awarding top winners a cash prize.

In addition to Burgan Bank's interactive competitions, the event featured a wide range of engaging sessions for adults and families, varying between discussions and keynote speeches, educational workshops, and pop-up fitness classes. These sessions focused on a number of health and wellness topics including combating obesity, children's wellness, nutrition, fitness and tech, defining a balanced lifestyle, and mental health among others.

To capture the wealth of Kuwait's wellness industry, NAWI featured leading industry professionals in physiotherapy and sports rehabilitation, gym facilities and fitness studios, sports tech, equipment and apparel brands, diet centers and nutritionists, healthy food and beverage, mental wellbeing consultancy, yoga, meditation, and breath-work.

In addition, the expo included an immersive art installation that pays homage to Kuwait's history of athletic achievements. The NAWI Museum, designed by architect Jassim Al-Nashmi, featured a remarkable curation of artifacts and heritage pieces that offer a glimpse into the nation's sporting legacy, encouraging younger generations to follow their passion for sports and continue to raise Kuwait's flag across the most esteemed sporting arenas regionally and globally.

It is worth noting that Burgan Bank has been a steadfast contributor to the advancement of Kuwait's health and wellness sectors through strategic sponsorship and partnerships that continue to benefit athletes, sports federations and committees, as well as hospitals and healthcare centers. With its sponsorship of NAWI, Burgan vows to uphold its commitment to fostering a healthier lifestyle for all Kuwaitis.

About Burgan Bank

Established in 1977, Burgan Bank is a Kuwait-based conventional bank with a significant focus on the corporate and financial institution sectors. From its earliest days, the Bank has significantly sought to diversify its offering to cater to its growing retail and private banking customer base.

Burgan Bank has majority-owned subsidiaries, collectively known as the "Burgan Bank Group", in the MENAT region. This Group is supported by one of the largest branch networks across the region and includes: Gulf Bank Algeria – AGB (Algeria), Tunis International Bank – TIB (Tunisia), and Burgan Bank Turkey. Furthermore, Burgan Bank has a presence in the UAE through its corporate office, Burgan Financial Services Limited.

The Bank has continuously improved its performance over the years, through an expanded revenue structure, diversified funding sources, and a strong capital base. The adoption of state-of-the-art services and technology has positioned it as a trendsetter in the domestic market and within the MENA region. Moreover, Burgan Bank's brand has been built on a foundation of real values – trust, commitment, excellence, and progression – which serve as a reminder of the high standards to which the Bank always aspires. In fact, the Bank's core philosophy of 'Driven by You' is the foundation on which its products and services are continuously developed.



Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co. supports the 'Kuwait Wishes You Well' campaign

AAW joins Lebanese Embassy's 'donation campaign' in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co. (AAW) announced its participation in the donation campaign, organized by the Lebanese Embassy in Kuwait from December 6-8, 2024. The initiatives aimed to collect donations including medicine, medical supplies, and essential items, for the Lebanese people in need, reflecting AAW's commitment to standing with Lebanon during humanitarian crises.

AAW supported the campaign by promoting it and enabling customers to donate medical and healthcare supplies to those in need in Lebanon through the Al Mutawa Pharmacies website (almutawapharmacies.com.kw). The company also ensured the swift delivery of donated supplies to the Lebanese Embassy.

AAW remains committed to supporting community causes in Lebanon. The company has donated critical care and laboratory equipment to Siblin Government Hospital (SGH) in response to the COVID-19 outbreak and continues its ongoing support for the Children's Cancer Center in Lebanon, along with other vital initiatives.

AAW logo

Party to choose new leader

Trudeau responds to Trump's '51st state' comments amid tariff threats

VANCOUVER, Jan 13, (AP): Canada's outgoing Prime Minister Justin Trudeau suggested that President-elect Donald Trump's remarks about Canada becoming America's "51st state" has distracted attention from the harm that steep tariffs would inflict on U.S. consumers.

Trump has threatened to impose 25% tariffs on all Canadian imports.

"The 51st state, that's not going to happen," Trudeau said in an interview with MSNBC. "But people are talking about that, as opposed to talking about what impact 25% tariffs (has) on steel and aluminum coming into the United States."

Trudeau told MSNBC: "No American wants to pay 25% more for electricity or oil and gas coming in from Canada. That's something I think people need to pay a little more attention to."

Trump has also said that if Canada merged with the U.S., taxes would decrease and there would be no tariffs.

"I know that as a successful negotiator he likes to keep people off balance," Trudeau said of Trump's threats to use economic force to turn Canada into the 51st state. Trump has also erroneously cast the U.S. trade deficit with Canada - a natural resource-rich nation that provides the U.S. with commodities like oil - as a subsidy.

Canadian officials say that if Trump follows through with his threat of punishing tariffs, Canada would consider slapping retaliatory tariffs on American orange juice, toilets and some steel products. Already during Trump's first term in the White House, Canada responded to Trump's tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum with its own on American products like bourbon, Harley Davidson motorcycles and playing cards.

"He got elected to try and make life easier for all Americans, to support American workers," Trudeau said of Trump. "These (tariffs) are things that are going to hurt them."

Trump said last week that the U.S doesn't need oil, or anything else, from Canada. But almost a quarter of the oil that the U.S. consumes each day comes from Canada. The energy-rich western province of Alberta exports 4.3 million barrels of oil a day to the U.S.

Data from the United States Energy Information Administration shows that the U.S. consumes 20 million barrels a day, and produces about 13.2 million barrels a day.

Canada, a founding partner of NATO and home to more than 40 million people, is also the top export destination for 36 U.S. states. Nearly $2.7 billion worth of goods and services cross the border each day.

Trump has said that he would reconsider his tariff threat if Canada made improvements in managing security at the Canada-U.S. border, which he and his advisers see as a potential entry point for undocumented migrants.

Trudeau has said that less than 1% of illegal immigrants and fentanyl cross into the U.S. from Canada.

But after a meeting last November with Trump at Mar-a-Lago, the president-elect's private club and residence in Florida, Trudeau announced an increase in spending on border security, expressing willingness to address Trump's concerns in hopes that he would reconsider his tariff threat.

With the challenge of Trump's second administration looming and Trudeau's party trailing badly in the polls, the beleaguered Canadian prime minister announced his resignation last Monday. He will be replaced on March 9, when his Liberal party is set to pick a new leader.

New framework allows 20 key allies unrestricted access to AI chips

Biden administration proposes new AI chip export framework amid security concerns

WASHINGTON, Jan 13, (AP): The Biden administration is proposing a new framework for the exporting of the advanced computer chips used to develop artificial intelligence, an attempt to balance national security concerns about the technology with the economic interests of producers and other countries.

But the framework proposed Monday also raised concerns of chip industry executives who say the rules would limit access to existing chips used for video games and restrict in 120 countries the chips used for data centers and AI products. Mexico, Portugal, Israel and Switzerland are among the nations that could have limited access.

Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said on a call with reporters previewing the framework that it's "critical" to preserve America's leadership in AI and the development of AI-related computer chips. The fast-evolving AI technology enables computers to produce novels, make scientific research breakthroughs, automate driving and foster a range of other transformations that could reshape economies and warfare.

"As AI becomes more powerful, the risks to our national security become even more intense," Raimondo said. The framework "is designed to safeguard the most advanced AI technology and ensure that it stays out of the hands of our foreign adversaries but also enabling the broad diffusion and sharing of the benefits with partner countries."

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan stressed that the framework would ensure that the most cutting-edge aspects of AI would be developed within the United States and with its closest allies, instead of possibly getting offshored such as the battery and renewable energy sectors.



US President Joe Biden speaks in the Roosevelt Room at the White House in Washington, Friday, Jan. 10, 2025. (AP)

A tech industry group, the Information Technology Industry Council, warned Raimondo in a letter last week that a hastily implemented new rule from the Democratic administration could fragment global supply chains and put U.S. companies at a disadvantage.

"While we share the U.S. government's commitment to national and economic security, the rule's potential risks to U.S. global leadership in AI cannot be emphasized enough," said a statement from Naomi Wilson, the group's senior vice president for Asia and global trade policy. She called for a more extensive consultation with the tech industry.

One industry executive, who is familiar with the framework and insisted on anonymity to discuss it, said the proposed restrictions would limit access to chips already used for video games, despite claims made otherwise by the government. The executive said it would also limit which companies could build data centers abroad.

Because the framework includes a 120-day comment period, the incoming Republican administration of President-elect Donald Trump could ultimately determine the rules for the sales abroad of advanced computer chips. This sets up a scenario in which Trump will have to balance economic interests with the need to keep the United States and its allies safe.

Government officials said they felt the need to act quickly in hopes of preserving what is perceived to be America's six- to 18-month advantage on AI over rivals such as China, a head start that could easily erode if competitors were able to stockpile the chips and make further gains.

Ned Finkle, vice president of external affairs at Nvidia, said in a statement that the prior Trump administration had helped create the foundation for AI's development and that the proposed framework would hurt innovation without achieving the stated national security goals.

"While cloaked in the guise of an 'anti-China' measure, these rules would do nothing to enhance U.S. security," he said. "The new rules would control technology worldwide, including technology that is already widely available in mainstream gaming PCs and consumer hardware."

Under the framework, roughly 20 key allies and partners would face no restrictions on accessing chips, but other countries would face caps on the chips they could import, according to a fact sheet provided by the White House.

The allies without restrictions include Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan and the United Kingdom.

Users outside of these close allies could purchase up to 50,000 graphics processing units per country. There would also be government-to-government deals which could bump up the cap to 100,000 if their renewable energy and technological security goals are aligned with the United States.

Institutions in certain countries could also apply for a legal status that would let them purchase up to 320,000 advanced graphics processing units over two years. Still, there would be limits as to how much AI computational capacity could be placed abroad by companies and other institutions.

Also, computer chip orders equivalent to 1,700 advanced graphics processing units would not need a license to import or count against the national chip cap, among the other standards set by the framework.

S&P 500 and Dow futures drop amid inflation worries

World stocks follow Wall Street's retreat, oil prices surge

HONG KONG, Jan 13, (AP): World stocks retreated on Monday after U.S. stocks fell as good news on the job market added to inflation worries.

The future for the S&P 500 dropped 0.9% and that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 0.4%.

Oil prices surged more than $1 a barrel after President Joe Biden's administration expanded sanctions against Russia's critically important energy sector over its war in Ukraine. The Biden administration said the sanctions announced Friday were the most significant to date against Moscow's oil and liquefied natural gas sectors, major drivers of Russia's economy.

U.S. benchmark crude oil surged $1.48 to $78.06 per barrel, while Brent crude, the international standard, rose $1.38 to $81.14 per barrel.

In early European trading, Germany's DAX declined 0.7% to 20,074.11 and the CAC 40 in Paris was down 0.7% to 7,379.02. Britain's FTSE 100 fell 0.4% to 8,217.34.

Markets in Japan were closed for a holiday.

China reported its exports grew at a 10.7% annual pace in December, faster than expected, as factories rushed to fill orders to beat higher tariffs that U.S. President-elect Donald Trump has threatened to impose once he takes office.

Economists had forecast they would grow about 7%. Imports rose 1% year-on-year. Analysts had expected them to shrink about 1.5%.

The upbeat data failed to boost the region's stocks. Hong Kong's Hang Seng dropped 1% to 18,874.14, while the Shanghai Composite lost 0.3% to 3,160.76.

"Adding to the skittish sentiment is the uncertainty over how Asian economies, especially China, will fare under the shadow of the incoming Trump administration's 'America First' trade policies," Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management said in a commentary.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 dipped 1.2% to 8,191.90. South Korea's Kospi shed 1% to 2,489.56.

On Friday, the S&P 500 tumbled 1.5%, ending its fourth losing week in the last five. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 1.6% and the Nasdaq composite sank 1.6%.

Stocks took their cues from the bond market, where yields leaped to crank up the pressure after a report said U.S. employers added many more jobs to their payrolls last month than economists expected.

Such strength in hiring is of course good news for workers looking for jobs. But it could also keep upward pressure on inflation by keeping the overall economy humming. That in turn could dissuade the Federal Reserve from delivering the cuts to interest rates that Wall Street loves. Lower rates can not only goose the economy but also boost prices for investments.

The Fed has already indicated it's likely to ease rates fewer times this year than it earlier expected because of worries about higher inflation. That's in part because some officials are taking seriously the possibility of tariffs and other policies coming from President-elect Donald Trump that could worsen inflation.

Friday's jobs report might not have been as strong as it appeared, given weakness in manufacturing.

Markets have been deflating after traders sent U.S. stock indexes to dozens of records last year, banking on a stream of rate cuts coming from the Fed. If fewer cuts materialize than expected, stock prices would likely either need to fall, or profits at companies would have to rise more strongly to compensate.

Los Angeles fires impact entertainment industry

Meghan delays Netflix lifestyle show launch

LOS ANGELES, Jan 13, (AP): Weaker winds and intense firefighting efforts over the weekend boosted containment of fires burning in and around Los Angeles, but the effects of the blazes on the entertainment world continue.

Several projects and awards shows have been delayed, with the Producers Guild opting not to announce its nominations Sunday due to ongoing effects of the fire. Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex, also announced she would not launch a Netflix lifestyles program until March.

After a fierce battle Saturday, firefighters managed to fight back flames in Mandeville Canyon, home to Arnold Schwarzenegger and other celebrities near Pacific Palisades not far from the coast, where swooping helicopters dumped water as the blaze charged downhill. While firefighters have been able to push the flames away from several populated areas, strong winds are expected to resume this week and last through Wednesday.

Thousands of homes have been destroyed, and 24 people have died as a result of the fires. More are reported missing and officials expect that number to increase.

Here's more on how the fires are affecting celebrities and the entertainment world.

The Duchess of Sussex has pushed back the release of her new Netflix series due to the wildfires that have ravaged the LA-area.

"With Love, Meghan" was set to debut Wednesday, but the streaming service said Sunday that it supports her request to push the premiere to focus on helping those affected by the fires.

The Duchess was born and raised in Los Angeles and now lives in Montecito, California, with Harry, the Duke of Sussex and their two children.

On Saturday, the royal couple visited Pasadena to hand out food and water to fire victims and thank first responders.

"With Love, Meghan" is a lifestyle program featuring the Duchess chatting with celebrity pals and demonstrating tasks like floral arrangements and baking. "I've always loved taking something pretty ordinary and elevating it," Meghan says in the trailer. The show will now drop March 4.

The publisher Arnold Schoenberg's works says original manuscripts and scores from the composer were lost in the Los Angeles wild fires.

Belmont Music Publishers, located in the Pacific Palisades neighborhood, made the announcement Sunday.

"We have lost our full inventory of sales and rental materials," the company said in a statement. "We hope that in the near future we will be able to 'rise from the ashes' in a completely digital form. … There are some scores and performing materials for which we have digital scans."

Born in Austria, Schoenberg moved to the U.S. when the Nazis took power and settled in Los Angeles, where he died in 1951.



This image released by Netflix shows Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, and Mindy Kaling in a scene from her series 'With Love, Meghan.' (Netflix via AP)

Variety

MILAN: Oliviero Toscani, the photographer behind Benetton's provocative ad campaigns of the 1990s who later broke with the Italian knitwear brand under controversy, died Monday at age 82.

Toscani disclosed last year that he was suffering from a rare disease and did not know how long he had to live.

"It is with immense pain that we announce that our beloved Oliviero has undertaken his next journey,'' his wife Kirsti and their three children said in a statement Monday.



Toscani

Toscani suffered from amyloidosis, a disease characterized by a buildup of abnormal protein deposits in the body. He told Corriere della Sera last August that he had lost 40 kilograms (nearly 90 pounds) in a year, adding, "I don't know how long I have left to live, but I'm not interested in living like this anyway."

Toscani said he would like to be remembered "not for any one photo but for my whole work, for the commitment."

His decades-long relationship with Benetton was severed after Toscani outraged relatives of victims in the deadly 2018 Genoa bridge collapse, telling RAI television, "Who cares about a bridge collapse?" He was responding to a public flap over a photograph of founding members of a political protest movement alongside key members of the Benetton family, which controlled the company that maintained the bridge.

Toscani apologized in an interview with La Repubblica, saying: "I am sorry. More: I am ashamed to apologize. I am humanly destroyed and deeply pained." But the damage was done, and Benetton completely cut ties with him. (AP)

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PHNOM PENH: Archaeologists of Cambodia's APSARA National Authority (ANA) have completed the restoration of Tower 15 at Phnom Bakheng temple in the Angkor Archaeological Park in northwest Siem Reap province, said an ANA's news release on Monday.

The ruined brick tower, located south of the ancient Phnom Bakheng temple, is more than 1,000 years old.

Chhun Ratana, a technical officer from the ANA Department of Conservation of Monuments and Preventive Archaeology, said that before the restoration, Tower 15 had suffered significant damage, with its roof and walls nearly collapsing due to age and natural elements.

She said during the six-month restoration work, the team undertook extensive repairs to reinforce the walls, ceiling, and floor, while also reorganizing the platform to ensure the tower's stability for centuries to come.

"The restoration team is now focused on cleaning the site and removing renovation materials to prepare for the temple's reopening to visitors," Ratana said.

"Additionally, plans are underway to initiate a new project aimed at restoring Tower 14, which is situated adjacent to Tower 15," she added. (Xinhua)

Film



This image released by Lionsgate shows Gerard Butler in a scene from 'Den of Thieves 2: Panthera.' (AP)

LA wildfires disrupt moviegoers with theater closures

'Den of Thieves 2' tops quiet box office

NEW YORK, Jan 13, (AP): On a quiet weekend in movie theaters, while much of Hollywood's attention was on the wildfires that continue to rage in Los Angeles, Lionsgate's "Den of Thieves 2: Pantera" debuted atop the box office with $15.5 million, according to studio estimates Sunday.

Mid-January is often a slow moviegoing period, and that was slightly exacerbated by the closures of about 10 theaters in Los Angeles, the country's top box-office market.

A sequel to the Gerard Butler 2018 heist thriller, "Den of Thieves 2" performed similarly to the original. The first installment, released by STX, opened with $15.2 million seven years ago. O'Shea Jackson Jr. co-stars in the sequel, which debuted in 3,008 North American theaters.

Butler's films are becoming something of a regular feature in January. He also starred in "Plane," which managed $32.1 million after launching on Jan. 13 in 2023.

"Den of Thieves 2," made for about $40 million, was a bit more costly to make. Audiences liked it well enough, giving it a "B+" CinemaScore. Reviews (58% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes) weren't particularly good. But it counted as Lionsgate's first No.1 opening since "The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes" in November 2023.

Also entering wide release over the weekend was the Robbie Williams movie "Better Man," one of the more audacious spins on the music biopic in recent years. Rather than going the more tradition routes of Elton John ("Rocketman") or Elvis Presley ("Elvis"), the British popstar is portrayed by a CGI chimpanzee in Michael Gracey's film.

The Paramount Pictures release, produced for $110 million and acquired by Paramount for $25 million, didn't catch on much better than Williams' previous forays into the United States. It tanked, with $1.1 million in ticket sales from 1,291 locations. Gracey's previous feature, 2017's "The Greatest Showman" ($459 million worldwide), fared far better in theaters. Reviews, however, have been very good for "Better Man."

It was bested by "The Last Showgirl," the Las Vegas drama starring Pamela Anderson. The Roadside Attractions release expanded to 870 theaters and collected $1.5 million.

Also outdoing "Better Man" was Brady Corbet's "The Brutalist." Coming off winning best drama at the Golden Globes, the A24 postwar epic grossed a hefty $1.4 million from just 68 locations. It expands wider in the coming weeks.

The weekend's lion share of business went to holiday holdovers, including "Mufasa: The Lion King," "Sonic the Hedgehog 3," "Nosferatu" and "Moana 2."

In its fourth week of release, Barry Jenkins "Mufasa" continued to do well, adding $13.2 million to bring its total to $539.7 million worldwide. Also on its fourth weekend, "Sonic the Hedgehog 3" padded its $384.8 million global total with $11 million. Robert Eggers' "Nosferatu," the surprise hit of the Christmas period, collected $6.8 million in ticket sales, bringing the vampire tale to $81.1 million domestically.

The Walt Disney Co.'s "Moana 2," in its seventh week of release, added $6.5 million to bring its global tally to $989.8 million. In the coming days, it will become the third Disney film released in 2024 to notch $1 billion, joining "Inside Out 2" and "Deadpool and Wolverine."

Final domestic figures will be released Monday. Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore:

1. "Den of Thieves 2: Pantera," $15.5 million; 2. "Mufasa: The Lion King," $13.2 million; 3. "Sonic the Hedgehog 3," $11 million; 4. "Nosferatu," $6.8 million; 5. "Moana 2," $6.5 million; 6. "A Complete Unknown," $5 million; 7. "Wicked," $5 million; 8. "Babygirl," $3.1 million; 9. "Game Changer," $1.9 million and 10. "The Last Showgirl," $1.5 million.



Colorful lights shine inside the walls of ice at Ice Castles, Jan. 10, 2025, in North Woodstock, N.H. (AP)



Youngsters explore caves at Ice Castles. (AP)



Nearly-made ice formations appear a glacial blue during daylight hours at the Ice Castles. (AP)

Dazzling Ice Castles draw tourists to New Hampshire, other states

An annual architectural celebration of ice is up and running again in New Hampshire and several other states.

Ice Castles, which are both temporary art installations and tourist attractions, feature towers, tunnels, archways and caves, all created by growing, harvesting and arranging thousands of icicles and then blasting them with sprinklers.

The company behind the displays has expanded since its first installation in 2011. This year it has operations in Utah, Minnesota, two locations in Colorado and New Hampshire, where the site includes a snow tubing hill and ice bar. After a mild winter last year, officials were thrilled that temperatures were cold enough to open earlier this season.

"It's one of the biggest ice castles we've ever built," said Jared Henningsen, the company's vice president for operations. "We're looking at about 25 million pounds of ice spread over two acres."

As a winter storm brought biting cold and wet snow to the South, visitors to the New Hampshire castle bundled up to explore its twists and turns Friday.

Julia Jones of Gloucester, Massachusetts, said she travels to northern New Hampshire several times a year but had not experienced the ice castles until her opening-day visit.

"I've never seen anything like this before," she said. "Honestly I didn't think it was gonna be this big."

Jessica Sullivan, of Fairhaven, Massachusetts, also was surprised, and not just by the frozen environment. Her boyfriend, Brian Jacques, proposed to her during their visit.

"It's a beautiful place," said Jacques, who got the "yes" he was hoping for. "I definitely thought, this is the time and place to do it."

By day the walls and other structures shine with a pale blue hue. After darkness falls, lights embedded within the ice glow pink, purple and green. (AP)



Men wearing suits and women wearing kimono arrive for the Coming-of-Age Day celebration, in Yokohama near Tokyo, Monday, Jan. 13. (AP)



Kimono-clad women walk to the venue of a ceremony to celebrate the Coming-of-Age Day. (AP)



A kimono-clad woman celebrates the Coming-of-Age Day, a centuries-old tradition and national holiday celebrating the milestone from child to adult, in Yokohama near Tokyo, Jan. 13. (AP)

Young people in Japan mark Coming of Age Day with sumptuous kimonos

Japan's Coming of Age Day is a sure sign of winter, arriving after New Year celebrations and ahead of the cherry blossom parties of early spring.

The national holiday is held on the second Monday of January. Citizens around the nation turn out to admire the elaborate outfits young people don to celebrate the milestone from child to adult. The age of adulthood has been lowered from 20 to 18, but many of the participants are still 20-year-olds.

The men usually wear sober black suits, but the women are resplendent in kimonos woven in lustrous patterns - often of flowers - and a bright array of colors, many with elaborately constructed hairdos and fancy handbags.

In photos by chief Tokyo photographer Eugene Hoshiko, throngs of young people can be seen Monday milling about on the streets of Yokohama, a city that forms part of Greater Tokyo. The women are wearing fur muffs to keep off the chill. One woman chats on her cellphone. There are wide smiles and self-conscious poses, selfies and hugs. (AP)

Television

SZA, Chris Stapleton join 'Sesame Street'

Elmo gets musical in 55th season



This image released by Sesame Workshop shows singer SZA, (left), with muppet character Oscar the Grouch on the set of 'Sesame Street.' (AP)



Singer-songwriter Chris Stapleton, (left), with muppet character Elmo on the set of 'Sesame Street.' (AP)



Actor-singer Renee Rapp with muppet characters Cookie Monster, (from left), Elmo and Abby Cadabby on the set of 'Sesame Street.' (AP)

NEW YORK, Jan 13, (AP): Appearing on "Sesame Street"? That's the best idea.

The 55th season of the acclaimed family program features a star-studded lineup of musicians that would be the envy of any summer festival: SZA, Chris Stapleton, Noah Kahan, Reneé Rapp and Samara Joy.

The upcoming season will focus on lessons in emotional well-being. It debuts Jan. 16 on MAX with new episodes releasing every Thursday. "Sesame Street" will also be available on PBS stations and to stream on PBS Kids in the fall.

No one is more excited than Elmo himself.

"There's a lot to learn from music - yeah, timing and harmonies and melody and different styles and different cultures," the 3 1/2-year-old monster told The Associated Press. "It's really cool! We've got a lot of wonderful people come and do some music with us on 'Sesame Street,' like Miss Reneé Rapp and SZA! Chris Stapleton, Noah Kahan, Samara Joy - lots of great people!"

Songs double as life lessons on "Sesame Street," from an alt-R&B-pop track about gratitude with SZA to an acoustic number about feelings with Rapp.

"SZA is really cool - really talented. And 'gratitude' was a new word for Elmo, too. So, Elmo learned all about gratitude with SZA," he said.

"Elmo was feeling really, really happy after his playdate with Miss Reneé. It was a really beautiful song. She's got a great voice and Elmo hopes she comes back soon."

As for the secret to a great "Sesame Street" song? According to Tony - and Grammy-winning composer, producer and "Sesame Street" music director Bill Sherman, its "earworms on earworms."

"If the verse is an earworm, so is the chorus. Mostly in pop music, the chorus is the earworm, and the verses are just a bunch of jumble." The difference, he explains, is that pop songs are about three and a half minutes long. Children's music is about a minute and a half. "You only have a very finite amount of time to do what you got to do."

Writers

Usually, writers on the show provide Sherman and his team of songwriters with a script and lyrics detailing the lesson of each episode, as well as the name of the musical guest. Then they get to work, composing music true to the genre and spirit of each artist.

Those musical guests take different levels of involvement, but the result is always awe-inspiring.

Other highlights from this season include Kahan performing a foot-stomping folk song about music and feelings, Joy using jazz improvisation to teach a lesson in taking turns and a country ode to music and friends courtesy of Stapleton.

"Chris Stapleton really wanted to write his own song," says Sherman, and so the pair hopped on a Zoom and wrote a song together, Stapleton with his guitar in tow, ideas flowing. "It was really one of the most surreal two-hour Zooms that I really ever had in my life."

Joy took a different approach. "Samara Joy insisted on singing live," says Sherman. "It very rarely happens on 'Sesame Street.' I can only count, like, a few times. So, there was like Stevie Wonder back in the day, which is a classic. And there's like Billy Joel, there's John Legend, there's a couple people that actually sing live. But Samara insisted on it."

Her reasoning was simple. "She said, 'Well, this whole episode is about improvisation and thinking on your toes. And so, if it's prerecorded, that's the opposite of what we're trying to teach.'"

If there is a theme that connects all these performances to one another, it's a spirit of connection. At least, that's Elmo's theory: "Elmo thinks that music brings people together, you know? And some people who like some things and some people who like other things can kind of come together because they like the same kind of music. And that's kind of cool!"

"Sesame Street," designed by education professionals and child psychologists, is shown in more than 150 countries, has won over 200 Emmys, 11 Grammys, two Peabody Awards and received a Kennedy Center Honor for lifetime artistic achievement, the first time a television program got the award.

There've been no shortage of great musical guests across the show's five decade run. So, who would they like to see pay a visit in the future? "Miss Taylor Swift! Maybe she could revisit her 'Red' era?" chimes in Elmo. That's his favorite of her albums.

"But also, Elmo would love to sing with Miss Beyoncé. Destiny's Child was on 'Sesame Street,' so Elmo would love to have her back."

Variety

LOS ANGELES: Los Angeles sports organizations are uniting to launch an "LA Strong" custom logo and apparel line that will raise money for organizations assisting those impacted by this week's devastating wildfires.

Fanatics announced Friday that T-shirts featuring the new logo will be available to purchase on team and league online stores, as well as the Fanatics website. The collaboration spans eight leagues, the University of Southern California and the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic organizing committee.

The sports organizations and Fanatics will donate all proceeds from the initiative to the American Red Cross and Los Angles Fire Department Foundation. LA Strong hoodies will also be available in the coming weeks.

"What's happening is absolutely gut-wrenching and it's our duty to use our platform in any way we can," said Fanatics founder Michael Rubin in a statement. He said he was heartbroken to watch the "horror continue to unfold across Los Angeles and completely upend so many lives."

"We are proud to have teamed up with the LA sports community to launch a new 'LA Strong' merchandise collection," he said.

Wind-whipped fires tore across Los Angeles, destroying homes, clogging roadways as tens of thousands fled as the fires burned uncontained Wednesday.

The pro teams partnering together on the initiative include the Los Angeles Lakers, Dodgers, Rams, Chargers, Clippers, Sparks, Angels, Kings, Football Club, Galaxy, Golf Club (TGL), Angel City FC and Anaheim Ducks.

The leagues span from the National Football League, National Basketball Association, Major League Baseball, National Hockey League, Major League Soccer, Women's National Basketball Association, National Women's Soccer League and TMRW Golf League. (AP)

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ATLANTA: Reality TV star **Chase Chrisley** is accused of slapping the manager of a popular sports bar in Atlanta after refusing to leave.

Chrisley, who gained fame on the "Chrisley Knows Best" show that featured his parents and close-knit family, was allegedly drunk at a Twin Peaks restaurant on Jan. 6 and refused to leave when asked by the manager, according to an Atlanta police report. He allegedly slapped the manager twice in the face, including once while he was on the phone with 911, according to audio of the call that was released.

Chrisley was arrested Thursday on suspicion of simple battery and later released on a $10,000 bond. A public relations representative Chrisley lists on his Instagram account didn't immediately respond to an inquiry Sunday about the incident.

An Atlanta police report said the manager told officers that the 28-year-old Chrisley was acting "very disrespectful and belligerent." He refused to leave several times and his behavior got worse - culminating in the slapping.



Chrisley

Chrisley left with his driver before officers arrived. The restaurant shared security footage of the incident with police.

Chrisley's parents, Todd and Julie Chrisley, are both in prison on bank fraud and tax evasion charges. A jury in 2022 found them guilty of conspiring to defraud community banks out of more than $30 million in fraudulent loans. The older Chrisleys were also found guilty of tax evasion by hiding their earnings. (AP)

Music



Alex Kapranos, (left), and Bob Hardy of Franz Ferdinand pose, Thursday, Nov. 28, 2024, in London. (AP)

Longest hiatus ends

Franz Ferdinand talks fear and indie revival

LONDON, Jan 13, (AP): Two decades ago, the Scottish rock band Franz Ferdinand sent a jolt across the music world. They waltzed in stripped-shirts and quickly became global icons for their deliriously hooky songs, hitting a critical mass in the chant-along singles "Take Me Out" and "Do You Want To." A lot has changed in that time, but the band never wavered in their dedication to 2000s indie ebullience. Over the last few years there's been a bit of an indie music resurgence, but for Franz Ferdinand, it never went away.

Last Friday, they released "The Human Fear,'' their sixth studio album and the first in seven years, making the end of the longest break between full lengths in their career.

Frontman Alex Kapranos says the album tackles relationships forming and breaking down. "The title is a clue to the scene," he teases. "But it wasn't written to the theme, at least not consciously."

In an interview with The Associated Press in London, Kapranos and Franz Ferdinand bassist Bob Hardy discussed about "The Human Fear," the resurgence of indie music and the band's love for Chappell Roan and Charli XCX. Responses have been edited for length and clarity.

AP: What is the story behind "The Human Fear"?

Kapranos: The last song that was written, the last lyrics that were written was (for) the song "Hooked." It starts off with the line, "I've got the fear / I've got the human fear." And I realize that so many of the songs had an underlying theme of fear to them. But not necessarily succumbing to fear, but more like overcoming fear.

"The Doctor" is about the fear of leaving an institution, and "Bar Lonely" is the fear of leaving a relationship. "Night or Day" is the fear of committing to a relationship. But fear is fascinating because fear is universal. We all experience fear. We all experience the same fears. But how we respond to it is individual. And that's how we find who we are, our personalities. And overcoming fear feels good. That's why we watch horror films or ride rollercoasters — because you overcome fear and then feel very alive for having done so.

AP: The latest single, "Audacious," deals with fear as well.

Kapranos: The song starts off addressing that feeling that we all have sometimes, which is, you know, you feel that your life is collapsing around about you for one reason or another. It could be a relationship that is disintegrating. Often, it'll go that things tend to happen to you (all) at once. The relationship starts going south as well as your professional life. And then you realize that the washing machine leaked and your basement's flooded and just all that kind of annoying stuff. Your phone gets nicked or whatever. And it can be overwhelming. And you just, you have this sense of fear that, "Gosh, everything's collapsing."

I guess I was feeling a little bit like that when I was writing the song for one reason or another. And I thought, "What am I going to do?" ... I'm just going to do something astonishingly audacious. I'm going to go into it with an audacious attitude and get through it that sort of way. And don't blame anybody else for it as well. Like, own the responsibility of overcoming the fear myself.

AP: Has your writing process changed?

Kapranos: We're not one of these kinds of bands that will sit down and say, "Right, we've got two months to write an album. " For me, you're always writing, you're always coming up with ideas. And so, on this album, there's ideas that were written in the studio literally the day before it was sent off to be mastered. And there's also ideas … I think the oldest idea is the bassline (of) one of the songs, which is from 1995.

I think the way my brain works is like if you imagine going into the office of a university's eccentric professor that's scattered with bits of paper. It's all kind of like catastrophic, organizational hell, but they know exactly where everything is. That's what my brain is like with bits of ideas and bits of songs and stuff like that. I know where they are, and when I need to use them, they'll come out.

Hardy: And the show has become the reward for making records, to me. It all kind of focuses playing it live in front of an audience and seeing people react to it in the moment. When you release a record, you don't see people listen to it at home. You know, the way you kind of get the reaction is these live shows.

AP: What do you think about the current resurgence of indie?

Hardy: It's never gone away.

Kapranos: There was a period in the late-2000s where there was point of saturation where, like, you turned on any mainstream radio show and you heard nothing but indie bands. And when it becomes that saturated, maybe the quality control goes down slightly. And then when that happens, there's always a reaction to it. And I think over the last decade, there's been a bit of, "Right, okay, so we're going to listen to like pure pop instead." And of course, there's some brilliant stuff like Charli XCX. Amazing. Chappell Roan (is) incredible. But there's a lot of stuff that's maybe not quite premier tier as well. And I think there's been maybe a little bit of a reaction to that.

I think from our perspective, just, yeah, make the thing that you love and then you're not really going to go wrong.

'Caring for people is my mission'

Amputee Gaza doctor returns to care for kids

GAZA, Jan 13, (Xinhua): Dr. Khaled al-Saidani moves deliberately between hospital beds at Al-Aqsa Hospital's pediatric ward, his prosthetic leg a testament to the personal toll of a war that has devastated Gaza's medical system. For him, the choice to continue practicing medicine, even after losing his leg to an Israeli airstrike, wasn't really a choice at all.

"It is my mission," said Al-Saidani, 51, his voice steady despite his struggle to navigate the ward. "Even if I became a disabled man, I still have the medical experience that all my community needs."

The airstrike that claimed his leg six months ago also destroyed his home in the al-Bureij refugee camp and killed several family members. Like thousands of others in Gaza, he became both a victim and a caregiver in a war that has upended countless lives.

"Without any prior notice, my family and I became displaced," he said, his words weighted with the memory. "But what made the matter worsen was the fact that I became a disabled man who even cannot help himself."

The aftermath plunged him into months of depression, a dark period when he questioned whether life was worth living. "Several times, I wished that I was killed during the attack," he admitted. "I felt that my life lost all of its value since I became a burden on my family and community."

But Gaza's mounting medical crisis -- with hospitals under strain and medical staff in short supply -- eventually pulled him back to work. At first, he relied on a wheelchair. Now he uses a locally made prosthetic leg, though it's far from ideal. "The prosthetic is not in the best condition," he said, "but at least it motivates me to continue my work."

Al-Saidani faces another looming medical challenge: tests have revealed a severe arterial blockage in his remaining leg that could, in the worst case, necessitate another amputation. Yet he refuses to step away from his duties.

"I cannot leave the hospital, especially since I am a pediatrician and the children require special care during the war," he said, embodying the determination of Gaza's medical workers to continue their work despite personal trauma and professional challenges.

The war, which began after Hamas's Oct. 7 attack on Israel that killed about 1,200 people, has claimed more than 46,000 Palestinian lives and injured over 109,000, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health. The majority of casualties have been women and children.



Doctor Khaled al-Saidani checks a patient at Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir al-Balah city, central Gaza Strip, on Jan. 9, 2025. (Xinhua)

Spacecraft buzzes Mercury

Blue Origin delays New Glenn launch

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., Jan 13, (AP): Blue Origin called off the debut launch of its massive new rocket early Monday because of technical trouble.

The 320-foot (98-meter) New Glenn rocket was supposed to blast off before dawn with a prototype satellite from Florida's Cape Canaveral Space Force Station. But launch controllers had to deal with an unspecified rocket issue in the final minutes of the countdown and ran out of time. Once the countdown clock was halted, they immediately began draining all the fuel from the rocket.

Blue Origin did not immediately set a new launch date, saying the team needed more time to resolve the problem.

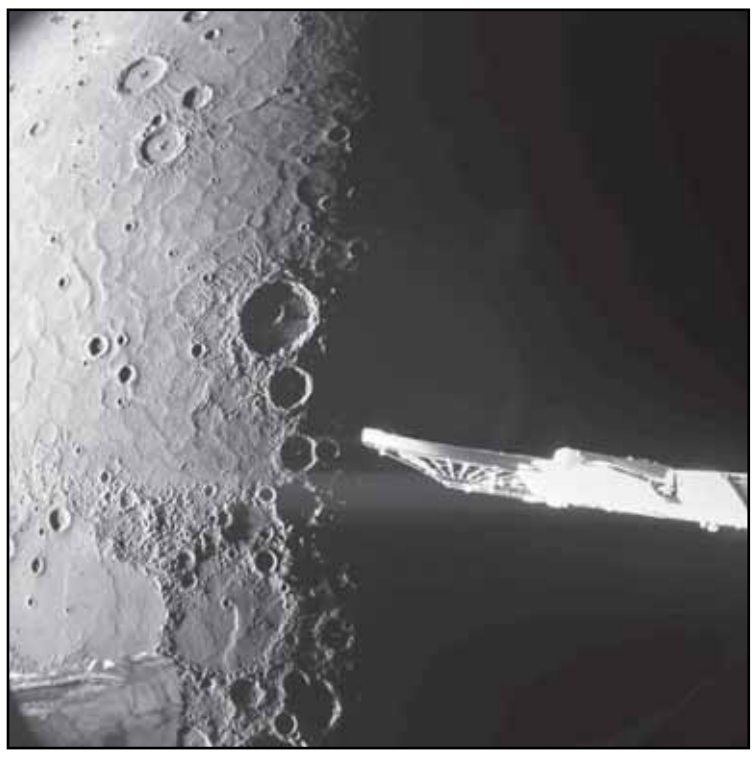
The test flight already had been delayed by rough seas that posed a risk to the company's plan to land the first-stage booster on a floating platform in the Atlantic.

New Glenn is named after the first American to orbit Earth, John Glenn. It is five times taller than Blue Origin's New Shepard rocket that carries paying customers to the edge of space from Texas.

❑ ❑ ❑

A spacecraft has beamed back some of the best close-up photos yet of Mercury's north pole.

The European and Japanese robotic explorer swooped as close as 183 miles (295 kilometers) above Mercury's night side before passing directly over the planet's north pole. The European Space Agency released the stunning snapshots Thursday, showing the permanently shadowed craters at the top of of our solar system's smallest, innermost planet.



This image provided by European Space Agency shows close-up photos of Mercury's north pole taken by the European-Japanese spacecraft Bepi-Colombo. (AP)

Cameras also captured views of neighboring volcanic plains and Mercury's largest impact crater, which spans more than 930 miles (1,500 kilometers).

Women 18-44 report highest fatigue rates

Tired all the time? Boost energy with essential nutrients, sleep, exercise

By Lina Begdache
Binghamton University, State University of New York

The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.

❑ ❑ ❑

Feeling drained and lethargic is common: A 2022 national survey found that 13.5% of US adults said they felt "very tired" or "exhausted" most days or every day over a three-month period.

Women ages 18 to 44 had the highest rate of fatigue - just over 20%.

Being tired is linked to something deeper than just overwork or a sign of the times. I'm a registered dietitian and nutritional neuroscientist. My research, along with the work of others in the field, shows that your diet and lifestyle choices may contribute to your struggles. These two factors are closely interconnected and could be the key to understanding what's holding you back.

In particular, not getting enough of three essential nutrients - vitamin D, vitamin B12 and omega-3 fatty acids - is linked to low energy levels.

More than 40% of adult Americans are deficient in vitamin D. Low levels are linked to fatigue, bone pain, muscle weakness, mood disorders and cognitive decline.

Foods high in vitamin D include fatty fish like salmon, sardines, freshwater rainbow trout, fortified dairy products and egg yolks. Among the sources for vegetarians and vegans are fortified plant-based milks and cereals and some kinds of mushrooms.

The US government's recommended daily amount of vitamin D is 400 international units, or IU, for infants up to 12 months, 600 IU for people ages 1 to 70 and 800 IU for people over 70. Just over 5 ounces (150 grams) of sockeye salmon fillet has about 800 IU of vitamin D. If you are low in a vitamin, your doctor may prescribe you a higher dose than the recommended daily amount to elevate your blood levels to normal.

About 20% of Americans have inadequate vitamin B12 levels, which can impair energy production and lead to anemia, resulting in fatigue.

Low levels of B12 are notably higher in older people, pregnant and lactating women, people with gastrointestinal disorders like inflammatory bowel disease, those who take certain medications like proton-pump inhibitors, and people with alcohol use disorder.

Vitamin

Because vitamin B12 is primarily found in meat, fish, dairy and eggs, vegetarians and vegans should consider taking a vitamin B12 supplement. The recommended daily amount for anyone ages 4 and older is 2.4 micrograms, about what's found in 3 ounces of tuna or Atlantic salmon. Pregnant and breastfeeding women require slightly more.

Taking B12 supplements can be as effective as getting the vitamin from food - and taking the supplement with food may enhance its absorption.

That said, here's a note on supplements in general: While they can be beneficial, they shouldn't replace whole foods.

Not only are supplements less strictly regulated by the Food and Drug Administration compared to prescription and over-the-counter drugs, making their potency uncertain, but real food also provides a complex array of nutrients that work in a synergistic way. Many supplements on the market boast multiple servings of vegetables, but nothing beats the actual food.

About 87% of adults ages 40 to 59, and about 80% of those 60 and older, don't get enough omega-3 fatty acids to meet dietary recommendations. Neither do many pregnant women.

Omega-3 fatty acids are crucial for brain health, and a deficiency can lead to higher anxiety and depression levels and impaired cognitive function. Taken together, these deficiencies can add to fatigue.

The best sources of omega-3 fatty acids are fatty fish, but if you're strictly vegan, flaxseeds, chia seeds and walnuts can be great alternatives. However, it's worth noting the omega-3s in fish are absorbed better in the body than plant sources - and that determines how efficiently the body can use the omega-3. Also, whole flaxseed has a tough outer shell, which makes it more difficult to digest and absorb its nutrients. But ground flaxseed has been broken down, making the omega-3s and other nutrients more available for absorption.

Diet isn't everything. Sunlight, exercise, better sleep and stress management are all critical factors for reducing fatigue.

Your body can make vitamin D from sunlight, and you don't need a lot. A few minutes up to a half hour of sun exposure can help most people get what they need. The amount of time can vary depending on where you live, how much clothing you wear and what time of year you get the exposure. (AP)

SD-3 rocket launches satellites from sea

Shenzhou-19 crew conducts new test

BEIJING, Jan. 13, (Xinhua): China's Shenzhou-19 crew aboard the orbiting Tiangong space station has carried out a variety of experiments since the beginning of 2025, including a test on a pipeline inspection robot, according to the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA).

The astronauts placed the robot inside a simulated pipeline, powered it up and pressed the task button to activate the robot. After completing the inspection, the robot returned to the pipeline entrance, where it was retrieved by the astronauts.

The experiment validated key technologies, including the robot's design for adapting to various complex pipelines and multi-stage coordinated full-body motion control in challenging pipeline environments, laying a solid technical foundation for automated pipeline inspection on the space station, the CMSA said.

Meanwhile, in conducting space medicine experiments, the crew has used electroencephalography equipment and software to carry out a number of tests.

Data collected will help ground-based researchers explore areas such as the impact of gravity on visual motion processing and the effects of brainwave music intervention on regulating inhibitory control functions during long-duration space flights, according to the CMSA.

The team has employed various devices to collect data on plantar pressure and joint kinematics, and obtain motion images of running and resistance exercises under different loads -- revealing the relationships between motion parameters and plantar pressure.

In addition, astronauts have worn devices that track their movements and heart rates, while also filling out sleep quality surveys weekly to explore how the space environment impacts the human circadian rhythm.

The crew, in collaboration with ground-based researchers, has conducted a system-wide pressure emergency drill, which simulated the entire process of emergency response in the event of internal pressure loss on the space station.

Meanwhile, a Smart Dragon-3 (SD-3) rocket lifted off on Monday in east China's Shandong Province, sending the satellite group CentiSpace 01 into the planned orbit.

The rocket blasted off at 11 a.m. (Beijing Time) from the sea near the city of Haiyang. Taiyuan Satellite Launch Center conducted the offshore launch mission.

Developed by the China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology, the SD-3 rocket has a total length of 31 meters and a weight of 140 tonnes.

Liu Wei, deputy chief designer of the SD-3 rocket, noted that this was the first low-inclination orbit launch from Haiyang offshore waters.

"Selecting such a location for the launch not only ensures safety but also reduces maritime navigation expenses, shortens technical preparation time and enhances the economic efficiency of the mission," Liu said.

He added that the sea launch verified the rocket's capability to adapt to the hard maritime environment and strong winds during winter.

Onboard payloads include a group of 10 CentiSpace 01 satellites, which will be used for space environment data acquisition and intersatellite laser networking tests.

2 cats die after drinking recalled raw milk

NEW YORK, Jan 13, (AP): A California man whose two cats died after drinking raw milk recalled for bird flu risk says he meant to keep his beloved pets healthy, but his efforts tragically backfired.

"It's horrible when you realize that you're the one that actually gave them the milk that killed them," said Joseph Journell, 56, of San Bernardino.

Journell lost his 14-year-old tabby, Alexander, and Tuxsie, a 4-year-old tuxedo cat, in late November. A third cat, 4-year-old Big Boy, was hospitalized for a week before tests showed the animal was infected with the H5N1 bird flu virus.

The cats drank unpasteurized milk from lots recalled by Raw Farm, of Fresno, whose dairy products were pulled from California store shelves in December after health officials found the virus in milk for sale, he said. The animals' deaths were confirmed by state and county health officials. The cats were kept indoors, with no access to potentially infected birds, and ate conventional, not raw, pet food, the owner said.



This photo provided by Joseph Journell of San Bernardino, Calif. shows two of his cats, Alexander, background, and Tuxsie, right, who died from bird flu after they drank raw cow's milk. Cleo, center, did not drink the milk and remained healthy. (AP)

Journell said he had been drinking Raw Farm milk himself for several months because he heard it had "better immunity and healing properties" than pasteurized milk.

He thought it might be able to help Alexander, who had been losing weight.

"I was trying to make him healthier and make him live longer," Journell said.

Instead, Alexander died on Thanksgiving Day. Tuxsie followed two days later.

Big Boy was hospitalized and treated with antiviral medications, Journell said. The veterinary team collected urine samples from the cat, which were confirmed positive for H5N1 at labs run by the U.S. Agriculture Department and Cornell University, records show.

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Taylor wins Sony Open playoff

Britain & Ireland takes Team Cup

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates, Jan 13, (AP): Britain & Ireland completed a 17-8 victory over Continental Europe in the Team Cup, an event that gave European players valuable match play experience ahead of the Ryder Cup.

Tommy Fleetwood secured the winning point for Britain & Ireland, which led 11-4 heading into Sunday's singles after a dominant first two days at Abu Dhabi Golf Resort.

Britain & Ireland needed just two more points from the singles and after Laurie Canter beat Romain Langasque 5 and 4, Fleetwood topped Matthieu Pavon 3 and 1. Fleetwood also claimed the winning point for Europe against the United States in the 2023 Ryder Cup.

Nick Taylor of Canada delivered another theatrical finish Sunday, this time chipping in for eagle on the 18th hole to get into a playoff at the Sony Open and winning with a superb pitch that set up birdie to defeat Nico Echavarria.

Taylor never looked like a winner at Waialae, especially after missing two short birdie chances down the stretch. That changed all so suddenly when his eagle chip from 60 feet rolled in on the par-5 closing hole for a 5-under 65.

Echavarria joined him with a great bunker shot for a tap-in birdie on the 18th and a 65. They finished at 16-under 264.

Taylor has five PGA Tour titles and won the last three in a playoff. He had to hole a 10-foot birdie putt on the 18th to stay alive. Playing the 18th again, Taylor went from a fairway bunker to 46 yards short of the cup. His pitch was close to perfect, landing on the front of the green and rolling with the grain and wind to just inside 3 feet.

Echavarria was just on the collar at the back of the green, but his 40-foot eagle putt came up 7 feet short and he missed the birdie putt.

The victory sends Taylor to the Masters again, a big perk after a dismal end to last season. He had won the Phoenix Open with clutch putts in a playoff last year. His best playoff win was at home in the Canadian Open in 2023 when he made a 70-foot eagle putt.

John VanDerLaan shot a career-best 10-under 60 to take the lead in the suspended first round of the Korn Ferry Tour's season-opening Bahamas Golf Classic.

VanDerLaan had an eagle, nine birdies and a bogey at the Ocean Club course at Atlantis. He played the back nine in 8-under 28, eagling the 11th and making birdies on Nos. 12-17.

Rick Lamb and Pierceson Coody shot 62. Twenty-seven players were unable to finish because of darkness.



Nick Taylor, of Canada, poses with his trophy after winning the Sony Open golf event at Waialae Country Club in Honolulu. (AP)

Pacers end NBA-leading Cavs winning streak at 12



Indiana Pacers forward Obi Toppin (1) goes to the basket in front of Cleveland Cavaliers forward Evan Mobley (4) in the second half of an NBA basketball game in Cleveland. (AP)

Brunson scores 44 points as Knicks rout Bucks

CLEVELAND, Jan 13, (AP): Andrew Nembhard scored 19 points, Pascal Siakam had 18 points and nine rebounds and the Indiana Pacers ended NBA-leading Cleveland's winning streak at 12 games, beating the Cavaliers 108-93 on Sunday night.

The teams will complete the home-and-home set Tuesday night in Indianapolis.

Myles Turner added 15 points and 10 rebounds, and Jarace Walker had eight points and 12 rebounds off the bench to help Indiana win its sixth straight. The Pacers held the Cavaliers to a season low in points and outscored them 68-40 in the second half.

Cleveland lost for the first time since Dec. 8 at Miami. It is 33-5 overall and 20-2 at Rocket Mortgage FieldHouse.

Darius Garland had 20 points and seven assists for the Cavs. Donovan Mitchell scored 19 points and Evan Mobley had 16 points and 12 rebounds.

Knicks 140, Bucks 106

In New York, Jalen Brunson scored 44 points despite missing part of the third quarter with an apparent injury, and the New York Knicks beat the Milwaukee Bucks.

Brunson had 23 points in the first quarter, one off his career high for any period, and was off to another strong start in the third when he was slow to get up after having his shot blocked on a drive to the basket. Once he did stand up, he immediately motioned to the bench that he needed to come out and walked directly to the locker room area.

The Knicks never announced an injury and Brunson eventually emerged from the tunnel about six minutes later to a loud ovation and checked back into the game. He reached 40 points for the 17th time as a Knick, tying Carmelo Anthony for third on the franchise list.

Karl-Anthony Towns added 30 points and 18 rebounds for the Knicks, who had lost four of five before shooting 58% from the field.

Nuggets 112, Mavericks 101

In Dallas, Russell Westbrook had 21 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists and Nikola Jokic added 19 points, 18 rebounds and nine assists as the Denver Nuggets rallied in the fourth quarter to beat the Dallas Mavericks .

The Nuggets trailed by 19 points late in the third period and by 12 early in the fourth. They outscored the Mavericks in the fourth period 33-12. After hitting only four of 25 3-pointers through three quarters, Denver shot 3 for 7 down the stretch while the Mavs missed all 11 3-point tries in the fourth.

The Nuggets won for the 12th time in 17 games.

Kings 124, Bulls 119

In Chicago, Domantas Sabonis had 22 points, 15 rebounds and eight assists, and the Sacramento Kings beat the Chicago Bulls to extend their season-high win streak to seven games.

De'Aaron Fox scored 26 points and grabbed nine rebounds for Sacramento after missing three games because of a bruised right glute. Malik Monk had 18 points, nine assists and eight rebounds.

DeMar DeRozan got a warm reception in his return to Chicago and finished with 21 points. The six-time All-Star spent three seasons with the Bulls before leaving for Sacramento in a three-team trade in July.

Sabonis had another big outing after he had 23 points and a season-high 28 rebounds against Boston on Friday. He helped the Kings improved to 7-1 under interim coach Doug Christie, who took over when Mike Brown was fired on Dec. 27.

Thunder 136, Wizards 95

In Washington, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 16 of his 27 points from the foul line to overcome his worst shooting performance of the season and help the Oklahoma City Thunder to a rout of the Washington Wizards.

Gilgeous-Alexander shot only 29.4% (5 of 17) from the floor over 30 minutes, well below his previous worst of 35% against San Antonio on Oct. 30.

But Gilgeous-Alexander's ability to draw fouls, combined with another strong showing by the NBA's best defense, lifted Western Conference-leading Oklahoma City to its largest margin of victory and sent NBA-worst Washington to its most lopsided defeat.

Aaron Wiggins added 23 points, Jalen Williams scored 17, and Isaiah Hartenstein had 10 points and 12 rebounds to help the Thunder improve to 2-1 on their four-game trip.

Magic 104, 76ers 99

In Orlando, Cole Anthony had 27 points, Paolo Banchero scored seven points in the final 1:32 and the Orlando Magic beat the Philadelphia 76ers.

Banchero finished with 20 points, eight rebounds and six assists in his second game back after being sidelined by a torn oblique.

Suns 120, Hornets 113

In Phoenix, Devin Booker scored 30 points, Kevin Durant added 27 and the Phoenix Suns rallied in the final minutes to beat the Charlotte.

The Suns have won three straight and four of five. Charlotte has lost 10 of 11.

The Hornets - who were trying to beat the Suns for the second time in a week - pushed to a 98-93 lead after the third quarter and led for much of the fourth. Durant hit a stepback jumper to give the Suns a 111-110 advantage with just over three minutes left.

Durant found rookie Oso Ighodaro for a dunk to take a 115-113 lead. Royce O'Neale hit a 3-pointer for an 118-113 advantage with 41.5 seconds left.

Charlotte hadn't played since Tuesday night when it beat the Suns 115-104 at home. The Hornets were supposed to play the Lakers on Thursday and the Clippers on Saturday, but those games were postponed because of the wildfires in the Los Angeles area.

Jazz 112, Nets 111 OT

In Salt Lake City, Isaiah Collier drove for the go-ahead layup with 2 seconds left to lift the Utah Jazz to a 112-111 overtime victory over the Brooklyn Nets.

Collier finished with a career-high 23 points, seven rebounds and seven assists, and Collin Sexton added 21 points to lead the Jazz, snapping a three-game losing streak. Svi Mykhailiuk and Brice Sensabaugh chipped in 16 points apiece.

Sensabaugh put Utah up 110-108 on a 3-pointer with 1:48 left but Tosan Evbuomwan knocked down a pair of go-ahead free throws with 6.4 remaining.



New York Knicks' Jalen Brunson, right, dribbles against Milwaukee Bucks' Damian Lillard, left, during the first half of an NBA basketball game Sunday, Jan. 12, 2025, in New York. (AP)

Improving Strasbourg climbs into ninth place

Dembélé scores twice, PSG remains unbeaten halfway through season

PARIS, Jan 13, (AP): Paris Saint-Germain remained unbeaten and seven points clear at the top of the French league - halfway through the season - after Ousmane Dembélé scored twice in a 2-1 win over Saint-Etienne .

Marseille is in second place after 17 rounds, with third-place Monaco 12 points adrift of defending champion PSG, which has beaten both sides.

Dembélé scored in the 13th minute and the France winger netted from the penalty spot 10 minutes later after a video review spotted a handball from Léo Pétrot on Achraf Hakimi's cross. The decision seemed harsh as the ball grazed Pétrot's hand without him knowing.

Dembélé moved to 10 league goals, level with teammate Bradley Barcola and one behind co-top scorers Jonathan David (Lille) and Mason Greenwood (Marseille)

Barcola thought he had his 11th goal of the season close to halftime but, on a day of video reviews, the goal was ruled out for a foul by the player himself.

PSG has been linked with a move for Georgia winger Khvicha Kvaratskhelia from Napoli, but it was another Georgian who scored for 16th-place Saint-Etienne as Zuriko Davitashvili neatly curled in a free kick midway through the second half.

Despite its unbeaten league record, PSG again looked nervous and came close to conceding an equalizer.

Earlier, Deiver Machado scored late as seventh-place Lens won 2-1 at struggling Le Havre to move one point behind Lyon in sixth.

The Colombia defender headed powerfully home from Poland winger Przemyslaw Frankowski's cross in the 77th minute.

Central defender Abdukodir Khusanov was left out of the Lens squad amid reports of an imminent big-money transfer to Premier League defending champion Manchester City reportedly worth 50 million euros ($51 million).

The 20-year-old joined Lens on a four-year contract last season, becoming the first Uzbek to play in Ligue 1. Lens paid just 100,000 euros ($110,000) to sign him from Belarus club Energetik-BGU Minsk.



PSG's Ousmane Dembele, centre, and Saint-Etienne's Leo Petrot challenge for the ball during the French League One soccer match between Paris Saint-Germain and Saint-Etienne at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris, France. (AP)

Veteran winger Andre Ayew put Le Havre ahead in the eighth minute, scoring for the second straight game following his goal against Marseille last weekend.

Striker Goduine Koyalipou equalized in the 28th with a header on debut after joining on Thursday.

Le Havre has lost five straight league games and is in 17th spot.

Elsewhere, improving Strasbourg climbed into ninth place with a 2-1 win at Toulouse in a match where video reviews affected both sides, and rock-bottom Montpellier had two players sent off near the end of a 3-1 home loss to Angers.

Dutch striker Emanuel Emegha scored two first-half goals for Strasbourg and then had a third ruled out for offside in the 38th minute.

Toulouse scored from Ismaël Doukouré's own-goal in the 35th and, in the 75th, striker Zakaria Aboukhlal prepared to take a penalty to make it 2-2 after being fouled. However, the referee changed his mind following a video review and instead awarded Toulouse a free kick right on the edge of the area.

More frustration followed for the home side moments later.

Toulouse thought it had equalized when Frank Magri side-footed in Aboukhlal's pinpoint cross from the left. But VAR intervened again to rule the goal out because United States defender Mark McKenzie was narrowly offside.

Forward Esteban Lepaul netted twice as Angers moved up to 13th place. He scored in each half, either side of a penalty from Montpellier midfielder Téji Savanier.

Montpellier lost its composure in the closing stages when defender Boubakar Kouyaté and captain Jordan Ferri were sent off within one minute of each other.

Midfielder Zinedine Ferhat added the third goal for Angers in the ninth minute of stoppage time.



Fadi Al-Andari poses with his titles.

Inspiring journey

Fadi Al-Andari: The Arab pride defying odds in Muay Thai

BEIRUT, Jan 13: In a world of fierce competition and passionate fans, few stories stand out as brightly as that of Fadi Souhail Al-Andari, the Lebanese Muay Thai legend. His journey to becoming an icon of Arab pride and sportsmanship is etched in the annals of history, particularly through his crowning achievement in 2019.

In November 2019, Al-Andari secured the title of "Muay Thai Legend" at the World Muay Thai Federation (WMF) Championships. This victory marked a historic milestone, as he defeated 23-year-old Thai competitor Piset Banjongjit, known as "Babo," in the middleweight category. Despite being 45 years old and enduring significant injuries—including a fractured knee, torn muscles, and a broken foot—Al-Andari triumphed with a knockout in the second round, earning his nickname, The Miracle.

The match took place at the "Muay Thai Legend Live" event in Bangkok, Thailand, where Al-Andari's grit and skill overcame the odds, leaving an indelible mark on the sport and Arab sports history.

Incredibly, just 24 hours after his Muay Thai victory, Al-Andari competed in the World Bodybuilding Physique Sports Federation (WBPSF) Championship in South Korea, where he was honored as the best natural bodybuilder. This dual triumph in martial arts and bodybuilding within such a short time frame showcased his extraordinary determination and versatility.

Over the years, Al-Andari has amassed numerous titles, including accolades from the World Muay Thai Organization (WMO), World Muay Champion (WMC), and World Muay Legend (WML). His mastery spans multiple Muay Thai styles, such as Muay Chaiya, Muay Boran, and traditional Thai boxing.

Al-Andari's career has not been without challenges. A severe motorcycle accident in 2012 nearly ended his journey when doctors advised him to abandon competitive sports. Defying the odds, he returned stronger, proving his resilience by achieving world titles and inspiring countless fans.

Though he planned to compete in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic caused cancellations. Subsequent years saw him face setbacks, including disputes over prize money and lingering injuries. Despite these challenges, Al-Andari remains undeterred, focusing his energy on mentoring future generations.

Today, Fadi Al-Andari dedicates himself to training children and adults in martial arts and self-defense through his academy. His programs emphasize not only physical skills but also sportsmanship, discipline, and ethics. He encourages trainees to use martial arts solely for defense, fostering resilience and self-confidence in a world where bullying and societal pressures are prevalent.

Parents of his students often commend the personal and psychological growth their children experience under his guidance. Al-Andari's influence extends beyond the ring, making him a role model for both athletes and the wider community.

Fadi Souhail Al-Andari is more than a champion; he is a testament to perseverance, ethics, and the spirit of sports. His accomplishments as an athlete, coach, and mentor have earned him titles such as The Miracle in Sports, The Legend, and The Champion of Generations.

Event organized by Atyab Al-Marshoud

Weyay continues its support for sports and youth through sponsorship of International Show Jumping Championship

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Weyay Bank has announced its sponsorship of the 11th International Atyab Al-Marshoud Show Jumping Championship, held at the Kuwait Equestrian Center in Sabhan, under the supervision of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation. This championship is the most important annual equestrian event in Kuwait. This edition saw the participation of around 150 male and female riders and a remarkable attendance of nearly 20,000 spectators throughout the 3-day event.

Weyay Bank's sponsorship of this international championship represents a significant step that highlights the Bank's strong commitment to supporting sports and youth. Additionally, this sponsorship directly contributes to the development of various sports and provides opportunities for young talents to showcase their skills both locally and internationally. By supporting this event, Weyay Bank strengthens its role in encouraging youth participation in sports, which helps build a strong and capable generation. This support also reflects the Bank's commitment to contributing to the development of Kuwaiti society and providing an environment that fosters excellence and creativity in all fields.

The Bank was keen to introduce its services to the attendees and reward its customers with exclusive offers in collaboration with "Caribou Coffee" and special discounts from "Atyab Al-Marshoud." This, in turn, allows customers to maximize their benefits while attending this sporting event.



Participant attempts to clear a hurdle during the show jumping championship.

Amal Al-Duwaisan, Head of Weyay Bank, participated in awarding the top winners and expressed her pride in the Bank's contributions to supporting youth interests, stating, "I am pleased to join you today at this event that reflects our ongoing commitment to supporting sports and equestrian activities. Weyay Bank's sponsorship of the annual equestrian championship organized by Atyab Al-Marshoud is a true reflection of our belief in the importance of promoting sports culture, developing local talent, and embracing everything that contributes to raising the banner of excellence and professionalism in our beloved Kuwait."

Through this sponsorship, Weyay Bank emphasizes the importance of this sport, which has begun to attract the attention of all age groups. The growing interest in equestrianism reflects positive interaction across different ages, as people of all generations can enjoy watching it. The support provided by Weyay Bank to this sport enhances its ability to attract a larger audience and reflects the Bank's commitment to encouraging physical activity that promotes health and well-being for all members of society, contributing to the creation of an inclusive and diverse sporting environment.

Weyay is Kuwait's first digital bank, aiming to simplify banking through an advanced digital platform and offering its customers a seamless and secure experience via the Bank's mobile app. Through its continuous focus on empowering the youth, Weyay Bank offers banking products that help the younger generation stay aligned with the digital age we live in.



Group photo of show jumping championship winners and officials.

Borsley to champion disability rights as 2nd Vice Prez

CAIRO, Jan 13: Rehab Borsley, Chairwoman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwaiti Association for Families of Persons with Disabilities, has been elected as the Second Vice President of the Arab Organization for Persons with Disabilities for the 2025-2028 term.

This was decided during the elections of the Executive Office of the organization, which took place at the Seventh General Conference of the Arab Organization for Persons with Disabilities in Cairo. The event was attended by members of the Executive Office, the Board of Commissioners, and the General Assembly.

Borsley expressed her gratitude and pride in receiving the trust of the General Assembly members, emphasizing that this responsibility requires intensified efforts to achieve the organization's mission.

She highlighted the ongoing challenges faced by persons with disabilities in the region, stressing the need to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and enhance community awareness about disability to support the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals related to disability.



Rehab Borsley

She also acknowledged the significant efforts made by the Arab Organization for Persons with Disabilities since its establishment in 1998, particularly in advancing the rights of persons with disabilities and improving their quality of life through various projects, initiatives, workshops, seminars, and training courses aimed at highlighting the issues faced by individuals with disabilities.

During the same General Assembly meeting, the newly elected Executive Office of the Arab Organization for Persons with Disabilities included Dr. Nawaf Kabbara as President, Muwaffaq Tawfiq Al-Khafaji as First Vice President, Rehab Borsley as Second Vice President, Abdul Majeed Al-Makni as Secretary, and Yasser Musa as Treasurer.

Burgan wraps up Cairo camp, heads to Doha for the Arab Championship

CAIRO, Jan 13: Burgan Club has wrapped up its training camp in Cairo, Egypt, and is set to depart today for Doha to participate in the 43rd Arab Men's Clubs Volleyball Championship. The tournament will take place in Doha from January 16 to 26, featuring 15 Arab clubs, including Burgan and Kuwait Club.

During its Cairo camp, Burgan played one friendly match against Heliopolis, while scheduled matches with Al-Ahly and Zamalek were canceled.

The Burgan delegation is led by the club's vice president, Mohammed Al-Faraj, and includes volleyball apparatus head Mohammed Al-Otaibi, administrator Ahmed Al-Holi, Argentine coach Alejandro Grossi, and 18 players.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Club continues its preparations for the championship with intensive daily training sessions at their camp in Doha. The Kuwait delegation is headed by the club's Director of Volleyball, Musleh Al-Rashidi, and includes administrators Mosaed Al-Amiri and Abdulaziz Al-Duwaisan, Turkish head coach Taner Atik, assistant coach Erin Jay, and fitness coach Dr. Abdullah Talib, along with 18 players.



Burgan heads to Doha.

The tournament draw placed Burgan in Group Four, alongside Gaza (Palestine), Qatar SC (Qatar), and Al-Jazira (UAE). Kuwait Club was placed in Group Two, joining Al-Seeb (Oman), Zamalek (Egypt), and Al-Hilal (Libya).

In a related development, the women's league for the 2024-2025 sports season kicks off today. Three clubs—Al-Fatat, Salwa Al-Sabah Club, and Al-Oyoun Girls—are participating. The opening match will feature Al-Fatat facing Al-Oyoun Girls at 6 p.m. in the Al-Fatat Club Hall.

Napoli takes control of Serie A without unsettled Kvaratskhelia

Inter Milan moves into 2nd

MILAN, Jan 13, (AP): Without injured and unsettled star Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, Napoli still took control of Serie A.

Napoli coach Antonio Conte confirmed the previous day that Kvaratskhelia - nicknamed "Kvaradona" by the fans in homage to Diego Maradona - had asked to leave the club, with Paris Saint-Germain the likely destination.

His current teammates did not let themselves be affected by the controversy as they beat lowly Hellas Verona 2-0 to move four points clear of Inter Milan after the defending champion moved into second place earlier with a 1-0 win at Venezia.

Atalanta was third after it was held 0-0 at Udinese on Saturday. Inter has played two fewer matches than Napoli and one less than Atalanta.

Kvaratskhelia was out of the match in Naples through injury anyway, saving Conte from perhaps a difficult choice.

Verona had beaten Napoli 3-0 in Conte's first league match in charge.

But there was no such danger this time as Napoli took the lead in the fifth minute. Giovanni Di Lorenzo played a one-two with Romelu Lukaku and then curled in a shot that hit the left post and went in off the back of Lorenzo Montipò, going down as an own-goal from the Verona goalkeeper.

Frank Anguissa should have doubled Napoli's lead seconds later but he blazed over the bar from seven yards, falling to his feet and clutching his face after the miss.

He made up for it in the 61st minute with a spectacular goal as he cut inside from the right, played a one-two with Lukaku and then drove the ball powerfully into the near side of the net from outside the area.



Napoli's Amir Rrahmani, left, fights for the ball with Verona's Amin Sarr, during the Serie A soccer match between Napoli and Verona at the Diego Armando Maradona Stadium in Naples, Italy. (AP)

Inter Milan bounced back from a demoralizing Italian Super Cup loss but it was harder than might have been expected at relegation-threatened Venezia.

Inter lost the Italian Super Cup final to city rival AC Milan in Saudi Arabia on Monday after throwing away a 2-0 lead.

It was also facing an injury crisis Sunday as several key players either could not make the trip to Venice or were only fit for a place on the bench.

Inter took the lead in the 16th minute when Lautaro Martínez showed fantastic control on a long ball over the top. His volley was parried by Filip Stankovic but Matteo Darmian turned in the rebound

Stankovic, who is the son of Inter hero Dejan and also on loan from the Nerazzurri, pulled off a number of fine saves against his parent club.

Venezia almost leveled in the 74th but United States international Gianluca Busio curled a fine attempt off the base of the far post.

Inter held on for its sixth straight away victory without conceding a goal.

Venezia remained 19th in the 20-team standings, five points from safety.

New Genoa owner Dan Sucu was in the stands to see the team beat Parma 1-0 in a relegation fight, for its first league home win of the season.

It needed a huge slice of luck as Morten Frendrup's strike took a huge deflection off Parma defender Enrico Delprato to give Genoa the lead in the 65th minute.

Genoa moved four points above Parma and five away from the relegation zone.

Roma forward Artem Dovbyk converted a penalty with the last kick of the match, in the eighth minute of stoppage time, to snatch a 2-2 draw at Bologna.

Al-Qadsiya takes on Al-Ittihad

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

JEDDAH, Jan 13: Al-Qadsiya's first basketball team faces a pivotal challenge tonight at 6:00 pm against Saudi Arabia's Al-Ittihad in Jeddah, as part of the second division of Group A in the West Asian League Championship for the Gulf region. Meanwhile, Al-Arabi of Qatar will compete against Bahrain's Al-Manama in another key match in the same group.

The group stage is intensifying, with all teams closely matched, each holding six points. This makes every game crucial for advancing in the tournament. Al-Qadsiya, under the leadership of American coach Stepping, aims to replicate its previous victory over Al-Ittihad in the first division. Al-Qadsiya is eager to bounce back from its recent loss to Al-Manama, leveraging a strong lineup that includes Saleh Yousef, Abdulaziz Al-Hamidi, Rashid Al-Rabah, Abdul Mohsen Murtada, and the American duo Green and Illinois.

In other league news, Kazma delivered an overwhelming 134-52 victory over Yarmouk during the sixth round of the First Division League at Union Hall in Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Hall Complex,



Kazma drives the ball past an opponent during the league match.

increased Kazma's points tally to 8, while Yarmouk remains at 5 points after five consecutive losses.

Additionally, Al-Sulaibikhat comfortably defeated Al-Tadamon with a score of 105-61, earning their seventh point in the league standings. Al-Tadamon, despite the loss, holds 5 points. With teams vying for dominance in both tournaments, the stakes are higher than ever as they push toward securing their spots in the next rounds.

Fury announces retirement again

LONDON, Jan 13, (AP): British heavyweight Tyson Fury has retired from boxing - again - one month after losing a rematch with Ukrainian Oleksandr Usyk.

The 36-year-old Fury announced the decision in a short video posted on his Instagram account on Monday, which included a cryptic message.

"Hi everybody, I'm going to make this short and sweet. I'd like to announce my retirement from boxing," Fury said. "It's been a blast, I've loved every single minute of it and I'm going to end with this: Dick Turpin wore a mask. God bless everybody, see you on the other side."

It was unclear why Fury made a reference to Turpin, a famed 18th century English highway robber and horse thief.

Fury was upset with the unanimous decision when he lost the Dec. 21 rematch with Usyk in Saudi Arabia. However, Usyk landed 179 of 423 punches thrown (42%), while Fury landed 144 of his 509 punches, a 28% clip.

Fury had acknowledged making mistakes, notably by showboating too much, when losing their first fight in Riyadh in May by split decision.

Fury has announced his retirement before, however, notably on his 34th birthday in August 2022.

But he was back fighting again two months later. Fury's record is 34-2-1, with 24 KOs.

The losses to Usyk were the only defeats in Fury's career, which began in 2008 and included one draw against American boxer Deontay Wilder in 2018.



Manchester United's Noussair Mazraoui, center, challenges for the ball with Arsenal's Gabriel Martinelli, left, during the English FA Cup soccer match between Arsenal and Manchester United at the Emirates stadium in London. Zirkzee converted the clinching penalty as United beat Arsenal 5-3 in a shootout in the third round of the FA Cup. (AP)

Sports



In this file photo, Kuwait players celebrate after qualifying for the World Cup.

Championship kicks off in Croatia

Kuwait returns to Men's Handball World Championship after 16 years

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13, (KUNA): After a 16-year absence, Kuwait's national handball team is set to return to the IHF Men's World Championship, which will begin in Croatia on Tuesday. The team secured its place in the prestigious tournament, co-hosted by Denmark and Norway, by finishing fourth in the last Asian Handball Championship held in Bahrain. Algerian coach Said Hadjazi has selected 18 players for the international competition, with the majority of the squad having previously won bronze in China last year. Kuwait's last appearance in the World Championship was in 2009, also in Croatia.

The Kuwaiti team, which has won the Asian championship four times, has qualified for the IHF Men's World Championship on eight occasions: in Germany (1982), Iceland (1995), Egypt (1999), France (2001), Portugal (2003), Tunisia (2005), Germany (2007), and Croatia (2009).

The handball team delegation is headed by the Secretary-General of the Federation, Qaed Al-Adwani, and includes the Director of National Teams, Faisal Saywan, Director of the First Team, Abdulaziz Al-Zaabi, and technical staff led by Algerian coach Saeed Hijazi and his assistant, Mohammed Masoudan. The team consists of 18 players: Abdullah Al-Khamis, Abdulaziz Al-Shammari, Haidar Dashti, Mohammed Amer, Fawaz Mubarak, Abdulaziz Salmeen, Fawaz Al-Shammari, Mohammed Al-Hindal, Ali Naseer, Saif Al-Adwani, Mishaal Al-Harbi, Saleh Al-Moussawi, Mohammed Al-Sanea, Abdulrahman Al-Shammari, Mohammed Ghadanfar, Hassan Safar, Abdulaziz Al-Dhafiri, and Mohammed Bouyabes.

The 29th IHF Men's World Championship will officially begin on January 14, 2025, in Herning, with Italy facing Tunisia at 17:30 CET, followed by France taking on Qatar at 18:00 CET in Porec.

The 32 participating teams are divided into eight groups of four:

Group A: Germany, Czech Republic, Poland, Switzerland
Group B: Denmark, Italy, Algeria, Tunisia
Group C: France, Austria, Qatar, Kuwait
Group D: Hungary, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Guinea
Group E: Norway, Portugal, Brazil, USA
Group F: Sweden, Spain, Japan, Chile
Group G: Slovenia, Iceland, Cuba, Cape Verde
Group H: Egypt, Croatia, Argentina, Bahrain

In addition to Kuwait, five other Arab teams—Qatar, Bahrain, Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria—will compete in the tournament. Egypt, following a quarterfinal finish at the 2024 Paris Olympics, is aiming for its first World Championship medal. Their best finishes were in 1995 (Iceland) and 1997 (Japan), where they finished sixth. Tunisia previously reached the quarterfinals in 2005, when they hosted the event.

Since its inception in 1938, the IHF Men's Handball World Championship has been dominated by European teams, with no non-European country winning medals until Qatar's victory in 2015. France is the most successful team, with six titles, followed by Sweden, Romania, and Germany, each with four. Denmark, the current champion, has won the title three times, with their latest victory in 2023. Russia has also claimed three titles, while Spain has won twice.

France holds the record with six World Cup titles, followed by Sweden, Romania, and Germany with four titles each. Denmark and Russia have won the tournament three times, while Spain has secured the title twice.

Sweden has the most runner-up finishes with four, followed by Denmark and Croatia, each with three. France and Sweden are tied for third, each with four, while Poland and Spain have each finished as runners-up three times. The first tournament, held in Germany in 1938, was won by the host team. The competition was then discontinued for 16 years before its return in 1954 in Sweden. Since 1993, the tournament has been held every two years, beginning with the Sweden edition.

Barcelona crushes Real to win Spanish Supercup

A stunning first-half display

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia, Jan 13, (Xinhua): FC Barcelona produced a stunning first-half display to beat Real Madrid 5-2 in the final of the Spanish Supercup.

Hansi Flick's side led 4-1 at the break and despite seeing goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny sent off for bringing down Kylian Mbappe early in the second half, they were able to hold on with relative ease against the Madrid attack.

Things looked to be going Madrid's way when goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois pulled off two stunning saves in the opening minutes from Lamine Yamal and Raphinha before Mbappe put Madrid ahead in the fifth minute.

A Barca attack broke down with Vinicius feeding the ball to the Frenchman, who produced a powerful run from deep, held off the defender and scored with his right foot.

Barca continued to create chances, with Raphinha shooting across the face of the goal before Yamal equalized in the 22nd minute.

Robert Lewandowski dropped deep and pulled Antonio Rudiger out of position to create space for the young winger to run onto his pass. Yamal then turned inside and wrong-footed Courtois with an angled shot.

Barca suffered an injury setback when Inigo Martinez had to be replaced by Ronald Araujo, but they took the lead after 36 minutes when Eduardo Camavinga's rash challenge on Gavi gifted Barca a penalty, which Lewandowski dispatched into the corner.

Three minutes later, it was 3-1 as Real Madrid's defense gave Jules Kounde space to angle a cross for Raphinha to head home after the Brazilian stole in completely unmarked past Lucas Vazquez.

There were nine minutes of injury time and in the last action of the first half, Madrid made a horrible mess of a short corner, allowing Yamal to steal possession. He slid the ball to the onrushing Raphinha, who in turn passed to Alejandro Balde to beat Courtois with a low shot.

With his side 4-1 down, Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti brought on midfielder Dani Ceballos for Camavinga.

Real Madrid went close in the 47th minute when Rodrygo saw his volley hit the post.

But it was Barcelona's night and that was clear one minute later when Raphinha made it 5-1 with a calm finish.



President of Barcelona Joan Laporta, centre, and his players celebrate with the trophy after winning the Spanish Super Cup against Real Madrid at King Abdullah Stadium in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. (AP)

Al-Sarraf crowned Micro Max champ at the Bahrain International Circuit



Winners on the podium.

MANAMA, Jan 13, (KUNA): Abdulaziz Al-Sarraf secured the top spot in the Micro Max category during the fifth round of the Bahrain Rotax Max Challenge Championship. The event was held on the karting track at the Bahrain International Circuit, known as the "home of motorsport in the Middle East." In a statement released recently, the circuit highlighted the achievements of Abdulaziz Al-Sarraf, Sheikh Ahmed bin Saqr Al Khalifa, Nasser Nass, Vedant Menon, Abdullah Sajjad, and Mohammed Al-Mahroos, who claimed first place in their respective categories along the 414.14 km karting track during the championship weekend.

The Micro Max category witnessed intense competition, with Tariq Sufi showcasing dominance throughout the season. He led the trials, secured first place in the qualifiers, and initially crossed the finish line in first place after completing nine laps in the final race. However, a 10-second time penalty imposed by the judges relegated Sufi to second place, elevating Abdulaziz Al-Sarraf to first place. Leo Saruhan rounded out the podium, finishing in third place alongside Al-Sarraf and Sufi.

'Kuwait chances tough but not impossible'

'Participation in Handball WC is difficult challenge'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13, (KUNA): The 2025 IHF Men's Handball World Championship will begin on January 14 across Croatia, Denmark, and Norway, marking Kuwait's return to the prestigious tournament for the first time in 15 years. This is the ninth time Kuwait's national handball team will compete at the world championship, having last participated in 2009.

Reflecting on the team's return, Burgan SC coach Hussain Habib spoke with KUNA, emphasizing the difficulty of Kuwait's group, which features top-tier international teams. He highlighted the challenge posed by the Kuwaiti players' long absence from international competitions, noting that the experience of competing at such a high level is vastly different from previous participations.

Despite these challenges, Habib expressed confidence in the Kuwaiti players, stressing their potential to perform at a level befitting their reputation. He praised the quality of the technical staff, particularly Algerian coach Saeed Hejazi, who led the team to World Cup qualification and has extensive experience managing high-stakes matches. The team also benefited from a training camp that included friendly matches against international teams like Italy and Tunisia.

Al-Salmiya SC handball coach Yaqoub Al-Mousawi also shared his thoughts, acknowledging the difficult draw but emphasizing the importance of gaining experience by playing against world-class players. He praised Coach Hejazi for his deep understanding of the players' capabilities and stressed the need to improve the Kuwaiti league. Al-Mousawi believes this could help shift the national team's mindset from mere participation to competing for top positions, first at the Asian level, and eventually on the global stage.

Dr. Khaled Al-Sharji, former technical director of the Kuwaiti Handball Federation and international lecturer, echoed the sentiment, calling the group "extremely difficult." Kuwait will face France, the 2024 European champions, Qatar, the 2024 Asian champions, and Austria, a team with a strong historical pedigree. Al-Sharji acknowledged that while the technical and physical abilities of Kuwait's players may present a challenge, he remains confident in their dedication and the excellent preparation provided by the coaching staff. He also noted that qualifying for the finals would be a remarkable achievement for Kuwaiti handball.

Sulaibikhat Club coach Waleed Salmeen added that while Kuwait's chances in the tournament are tough, they are not impossible. He expressed full confidence in the players and their abilities to deliver an honorable performance on the world stage. Salmeen emphasized that, with the guidance of Coach Hejazi, the team's focus should be on playing without pressure, especially after a long 15-year absence from such a high-profile competition.

Kuwait has been drawn into Group C for the 2025 IHF Men's Handball World Championship, alongside Austria, France, and Qatar. The team will play Austria on January 14, France on January 16, and Qatar on January 18. The championship will run from January 14 to February 2, with matches held across Croatia, Denmark, and Norway.

Kuwait's history in the IHF Men's Handball World Championship dates back to 1982, when they first participated in West Germany. Since then, the team has competed in several editions, including in Iceland (1995), Egypt (1999), France (2001), Portugal (2003), Tunisia (2005), Germany (2007), and Croatia (2009).

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