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Cabinet vows to achieve Amir vision, turn Kuwait into trade hub



PM Diwan photo
His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chairs the Cabinet meeting.

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Cabinet on Tuesday stressed eagerness to achieve the vision of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and proceed with steps to allure foreign investments and improve business environment in a manner that aligns with developmental ambitions to transform the country into a global and regional financial hub.

Chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace, the cabinet underlined the need of cooperation between the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority and the GE Vernova Technology Center, which has integrated control systems and big operational potential.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet expressed thanks to UAE President Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al Nahyan for marking the Decades of Brotherhood initiative as of January 29 for one week, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs said in a statement after the meeting.

The Cabinet further voiced appreciation to UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Dubai's Ruler Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Mak-

toum and Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed for these great stances.

The ministers appreciated this imitative, which showed the deep-rooted fraternal and historic bonds between the two countries, and common Gulf structural cohesion and support of their leaderships and nations throughout history, the minister added.

In addition, the meeting stressed continued financial reforms aiming to upgrade Kuwait's sovereign credit rankings in global indicators.

The Cabinet affirmed also keenness on providing the requirements of the current and future phase to achieve financial sustainability and maintain Kuwait's credit ranking.

Furthermore, the Cabinet saw a presentation by Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, and Acting Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Sabeeh Al-Mukhaizeem presented an explanation, in the presence of Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait Basel Al-Haroon, about Standard and

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HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

When someone is wronged and finds no one to support him, this is what he does

A merchant was waylaid by highwaymen and robbed of all his money.

He waited a whole year in front of the Caliph's gate, but was not allowed entry.

When he grew weary of waiting, he devised a plan to reach the Caliph.

O people of Baghdad, bear witness that I possess what Allah does not!

Caliph Al-Ma'mun said to him, "I swear I have never met a wiser man than you."

Omar ibn al-Khattab called for a congregational prayer so that he would not become arrogant.

A profound silence settled over the mosque, as if every heart had paused.

Ibn Awf said to him, "O Commander of the Faithful, I see that you have humbled yourself."

I feared becoming arrogant and proud, so I chose to discipline myself and remember my humble beginnings.

3

Amiri decree ratifies law in 'anti-narcotics' battle

Drug kingpins abroad face death, heavy fines

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26, (KUNA): An Amiri decree-law No. 59 of 2025 on combating drugs and psychotropic substances and regulating their use and trafficking has been issued, to be implemented and enforced two weeks after publication in the Official Gazette, comprising 84 articles divided across 13 chapters.

Article 82 of the decree-law stipulates that the competent minister shall issue the necessary decisions to enforce its provisions, while Article 83 repeals Law No. 74 of 1983 on combating drugs, Law No. 48 of 1987 on psychotropic substances, and any provisions conflicting with this decree-law.

Article 84 obliges all ministers to implement the decree-law in their respective jurisdictions, effective two weeks after its official publication, while the decree-law merges the previous drug and psychotropic substances laws, creating a single unified legal framework to protect society.

The merger unifies concepts and terminologies used in combating drugs and psychotropic substances, facilitating better understanding, enforcement, and consistency across regulatory authorities, while consolidating legal provisions related to crimes, penalties, and procedural requirements for easier application nationwide.

The decree-law consolidates Law No. 74 of 1983 on drug control and Law No. 48 of 1987 on psychotropic substances into a single law, enhancing legal clarity, administrative efficiency, and societal protection from the dangers of narcotics and psychotropic substances misuse.

The law spans 84 articles across 13 chapters, with Chapter

One defining key terms for implementation, including the Ministry as the Ministry of Health, the Minister as the Minister of Health, and licensing as the authorization granted by the Minister or delegate.

It also defines narcotic and psychotropic substances, chemical precursors, and preparations, covering production, manufacture, cultivation, import, export, transport, smuggling, promotion, barter, and possession, as well as terms such as addict, user, detention, and seizure procedures.

Chapter One further defines rehabilitation centers, addiction treatment centers, medical prescriptions, registers, records, and electronic or paper documentation containing schedules, prescriptions, or relevant data, alongside additional definitions necessary for full enforcement of the decree-law.

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Kuwait to verify academic docus

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26, (KUNA): Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereedah Al-Mousherji chaired a meeting Wednesday of the committee tasked with verifying academic certificates of citizens and residents working in public and private sectors, attended by Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal.

A statement by the Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs' office said Al-Mousherji directed the committee and its subcommittees at the Civil Service Commission, Ministry of Higher Education, and Public Authority of Manpower to complete their assigned duties.

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'No plan to privatize co-ops, food security is top priority'

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26: Director General for Cooperative Affairs at the Ministry of Social Affairs Athari Al-Matrouk denied the rumors about the intention of the ministry to privatize cooperative societies—whether entirely or partially—stressing this is untrue and has no basis, and the matter is directly related to food security in the country.

Speaking on behalf of Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah at the opening of the central market at Rawda and Hawally Cooperative Society, Al-Matrouk stated "we are honored and happy to inaugurate the new market in Rawda and Hawally Cooperative Society. We hope it will be a valuable addition for the residents in the area and, God willing, a boost to the cooperative movement in Kuwait."

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Photo by Rizk Taufiq
Cybersecurity and Innovation Forum organized by the American Embassy as part the Global Entrepreneurship Week in progress.

'Cybersecurity is first line of defense in State protection'

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26: "Cybersecurity is one of the most important tools for protecting national economies and infrastructure," says Information technology and cybersecurity consultant Eng. Hussein Al-Nakkas.

Al-Nakkas made the statement on the sidelines of the Cybersecurity and Innovation Forum organized by the American Embassy on Tuesday as part

the Global Entrepreneurship Week.

Participants in the forum stressed the importance of highlighting the role of entrepreneurs and youths in developing secure and sustainable digital projects.

According to Al-Nakkas, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, particularly Kuwait, are focusing on cybersecurity due to its crucial role in protecting automated systems and digital services.

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Extortion, human trafficking cases in co-ops

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26, (Agencies): The Public Prosecution has launched investigations into nine cases related to human trafficking and money laundering, into the exploitation of workers in cooperative societies due to their humanitarian and financial circumstances.

The Public Prosecution explained that the defendants forced these workers to pay daily fees in exchange for being allowed to work, in addition to depriving them of their legal rights. These acts constitute forms of exploitation prohibited under Law No.

91/2013 concerning the combating of human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

The Attorney General has issued directives to form investigation teams composed of members from the Capital Prosecution and the Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Prosecution. These teams are tasked with examining the cases, gathering evidence, and questioning witnesses and defendants, in coordination with supporting agencies, while taking the necessary measures to protect the victims.

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KUNA photo
Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Major General Ali Al-Adwani with the visiting Saudi delegation.

Kuwait, Saudi to upgrade ties

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26, (KUNA): Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Major General Ali Al-Adwani, met on Wednesday with a delegation from the Saudi Ministry of Interior to discuss strengthening security cooperation and exchanging expertise in the administrative and technical fields.

In a press statement, the Interior Ministry said that Al-Adwani received Major General Saleh Al-Murabba, the Saudi Interior Ministry's Supervisor of the Civil Affairs Agency, and his

accompanying delegation at the Ministry's headquarters as part of efforts to enhance joint cooperation and exchange visits between the two sides.

The statement explained that the meeting addressed several topics of mutual interest, reviewed aspects of security cooperation, exchanged expertise, and discussed best practices in administrative and technical work and procedures related to services provided to citizens.

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GCC committed to protect human dignity, give justice

NEW YORK, Nov 26, (KUNA): Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Ambassador Shaikha Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah reaffirmed Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) commitment to enhance international cooperation for protecting human dignity and strengthening criminal justice.

She made the remarks in a press statement to KUNA on Tuesday evening during an event organized by Kuwait Permanent Mission with GCC General Secretariat and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, partners present.

The side event occurred on sidelines of the General Assembly high level meeting evaluating the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons held November 24-25, 2025. She said GCC commitment will remain a cornerstone of global efforts to combat human trafficking, warning the crime represents one of the most dangerous and grave violations against human rights worldwide today for all communities.

She highlighted Kuwait current presidency of the GCC as an opportunity to enhance collective action and protect vulnerable groups through innovative initiatives and broader regional and international partnerships supporting sustainable human security goals globally.

During the event GCC Assistant Secretary General for Legal and Legislative Affairs Sultan Al-Suwaidi reviewed member states efforts to combat trafficking, praising recent legislative and institutional developments achieved across the council countries in recent years.

Special Rapporteur Siobhan Mullally commended GCC efforts and urged continued cooperation, as representatives from member states and organizations stressed coordination and launched a report covering trafficking, migrant smuggling and transnational organized crime challenges globally today.

Find housing for citizens: minister

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Abdulatif Al-Meshari underlined Wednesday the need to consider housing requirements and find varied solutions to fulfill family needs.

Giving a lecture at Kuwait University on

Kuwait's housing vision in the light of the revised housing development law, the minister said the law is meant to involve the private sector in the housing sector and establish an integrated housing city covering various family needs.

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Day by Day

I REITERATE that the most dangerous threat to a country's economic growth is cutting off the flow of funds for development projects, as this means a halt to the cycle of buying and selling.

When this happens, people stop spending, and the national output begins to decline. This applies to every country.

As the saying goes, "Spend what's in your pocket, and what is unseen will come to you."

The flow of money must remain open for spending; otherwise, everyone will suffer. ... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar



Burgan Bank receives the Digital Transformation Excellence Award as part of SAP Business Suite Innovation Day's customer celebration

Prayer Timings			
Fajr	04:57	Asr	14:30
Sunrise ..	06:20	Maghrib ..	16:50
Zohr	11:35	Isha	18:11

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Mild with light variable wind, with speeds of 06-22 km/h.

By Night: Rather cold to cold with light variable wind to

Weather

light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 06-26km/h.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	27	17
Kuwait Airport	30	12
Abdaly	30	11

Bubyan	25	09
Jahra	31	15
Fallaka Island	26	13
Salmiyah	24	21
Ahmadi	33	16
Nuwaisib	28	14
Wafra	31	11

UN meeting highlights need for counter-AI measures and stronger global cooperation

Kuwait reaffirms commitment to combating human trafficking

NEW YORK, Nov 26, (KUNA): Kuwait reaffirmed its longstanding commitment to combating human trafficking since joining the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its related protocols, which require states to criminalize online exploitation and cross-border crimes.

Speaking before the UN General Assembly's high-level meeting to review the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, Public Prosecution official Fahad Al-Mutairi warned that advanced technologies -- including artificial intelligence -- have become tools used by trafficking networks.

He noted that criminals now rely on algorithms to target victims, fabricate digital identities, conceal financial transactions, and exploit digital platforms for recruitment.

Al-Mutairi said the rapid evolution of AI poses major challenges to justice systems, including difficulties in early detection, complex electronic evidence, and the swift movement of crimes across borders.

He stressed the need for clear mechanisms such as developing counter-AI tools for early detection, enhancing cooperation with technology companies to monitor exploitative content, and establishing shared databases linked to national referral systems.

He also called for international regulations to ensure the safe and responsible use of AI and prevent its misuse in trafficking operations.

Al-Mutairi highlighted Kuwait's advanced legislative framework, citing Law No. 91/2013 on combating human trafficking and smuggling of migrants, which provides a precise definition of the crime and imposes harsher penalties when committed by organized groups or across borders.

He also referenced Law No. 63/2015 on combating cybercrimes, which explicitly criminalizes using digital networks to promote or facilitate human trafficking, alongside strict penalties for electronic money laundering and for creating online platforms linked to organized crime.

He added that Kuwait's legal system enables authorities to trace criminal groups using modern technologies by analyzing digital evidence, identifying patterns of exploitation, and tracking electronic communications linked to trafficking cases.



KUNA photo
Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs, Ambassador Sheikhha Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah, during the meeting.

Al-Mutairi concluded by emphasizing the importance of including a dedicated section on technological misuse in the updated Global Plan of Action, as well as strengthening cooperation with the private sector and digital platforms to identify and block exploitative material.

Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights, Ambassador Sheikhha Jawaher Al-Duaij Al-Sabah, affirmed Monday on Kuwait's unwavering commitment to combating human trafficking, based on the country's constitution and

its principles, considering such crime a "flagrant violation" of human rights, and a threat to the security and stability of societies.

Remarks by Sheikhha Jawaher was delivered before a high-level meeting of the UN General Assembly on the evaluation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Sheikhha Jawaher Al-Sabah added that today's meeting represents "a crucial juncture for assessing the progress made in implementing the Global Plan of Action, and considering the remaining challenges, including child trafficking, forced labor, the link between trafficking and organized criminal groups, and the use of modern technologies and artificial intelligence in exploitation."

She pointed out that persons with disabilities are also among the most vulnerable to this crime, stressing the need to develop more comprehensive protection mechanisms that take into account the circumstances of all targeted groups and ensure no exploitation under any circumstances.

Ambassador Sheikhha Jawaher emphasized the country's commitment to aligning its national efforts with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 8, and with its international obligations under the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols.

In the institutional framework, Sheikhha Jawaher noted that Kuwait established the Permanent National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants, which recently launched the National Strategy (2025-2028) entitled "Towards Protecting Rights and Promoting Justice."

Such strategy aims to transition to an integrated approach based on early detection, institutional responsibility, victim protection, accountability, and ensuring no impunity, she underlined.

Sheikhha Jawaher said that Kuwait has continued to strengthen protection mechanisms by activating the National Referral System, launching the electronic reporting system, and establishing specialized departments within the Public Prosecution and the Ministry of Interior.

Furthermore, Sheikhha Jawaher noted that Kuwait established shelters for men and women that provide medical, psychological, and social services, serving as a practical model for dealing with potential victims.

KPTC accelerates public transport modernization with UITP support

CEO credits political leadership for fueling innovation

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Kuwait Public Transport Company (KPTC) Mansour Al-Saad confirmed the launching of several high-quality projects over the past few years, including the modernization of the bus fleet, introduction of the first electric buses in the history of Kuwait, expansion of digital transformation, implementation of smart systems, strengthening governmental and international partnerships that support the development of the public transportation sector, and investment in the development of national talent.

In a speech delivered at the launching of the Union Internationales des Transports Publics -- International Association of Public Transport in English -- (UITP) Middle East and North Africa Conference 2025 on Wednesday, Al-Saad pointed out that aforementioned projects greatly contributed to the development of the public transportation sector, and affirmed the readiness of the country to transition to a more sustainable and efficient transport system in the future.

Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences participated in the event, with the representatives of UITP in attendance.

Al-Saad emphasized that the conference signifies the growing role of Kuwait in supporting and developing the future of public transport, while enhancing the position of the country in this vital sector. He said the State of Kuwait is currently witnessing a new phase of comprehensive development in various vital sectors, particularly the public transport sector, under the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

He disclosed that His Highness stressed the importance of developing public services, empowering national talent, and promoting innovation and technology, as all of which contribute to improving the quality of life and building a modern State capable of competing regionally and globally. He considers the support provided by the political leadership the main driver of national efforts aimed at building a sustainable, safe, smart and comprehensive transportation system that meets the needs of all segments of society.

He pointed out that the conference comes at a time



Mansour Al-Saad, CEO of Kuwait Public Transport Company



Mohamed Mezghani, Secretary General of UITP



Part of the audience.

Photos by Mohammad Morsi

the country is undergoing a major transformation in line with Kuwait Vision 2035 and the Fourth Structural Plan, thanks to the continuous support of the political leadership that put the development of public transportation and quality of life at the forefront of government priorities.

He stated that the conference is a unique platform, which brings together decision-makers, experts and investors to exchange knowledge and review global best practices, thus, activating the role of Kuwait as a regional center in shaping and developing the future of public transportation. He also affirmed the ongoing cooperation between KPTC and KFAS.

On the other hand, Secretary General of UITP Mohamed Mezghani praised the role of Kuwait in promoting sustainable transport and modernizing its transportation system.

He also revealed that the Union celebrated its 140th anniversary and reached 2,000 members from

100 countries, including operators, industrial companies, regulatory bodies, consultants and academics. He said Kuwait was among the first UITP members in the Gulf region, pointing out that the partnership between the two sides began in 2005 and was solidified when Kuwait hosted one of the regional events of the Union in 2009. He added that the continuation of this partnership reflects a shared commitment to develop urban transport in Kuwait and the region.

He stated that the conference is part of a busy week of UITP activities in Kuwait, including the training program for executive leaders in the public transport sector and meetings of the regional committee for the Middle East and North Africa. He emphasized that these meetings are essential, considering the significant transformations that the sector is undergoing, particularly in the areas of digitalization, cybersecurity, skills development, expanding the use of electric buses, and enhancing integration among operators.

Other Voices

The overt and the silent crime

By Ahmad alsarraf

WHEN a sensible citizen chooses to move to an apartment no larger than half the size of the villa they previously

lived in, despite being able to afford a larger villa, there must be a reason behind it. This is especially true given the growing demand for beautiful apartments

with stunning views, even as the government delays enacting a law to regulate the relationship between apartment owners.

Meanwhile, the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) continues to insist on providing citizens with villas, despite the system's many drawbacks, its high costs, and the heavy burden it places on public services and infrastructure.

Horizontal urban sprawl is destructive to the environment and depletes the country's resources, amounting to a crime against the nation and its citizens.

More than 30,000 houses are currently under construction in Al-Mutlaa and other areas. An agreement is also in place to build 55,000 villas, likely in partnership with international developers, on an area of 80 to 110 square kilometers in Al-Sabriya.

In Khairan, a project is ongoing that includes 60,000 residential units on an area of 135 square



alsarraf

kilometers. Also, the Nawaf Al-Ahmad City project plans to build 50,000 homes on 125,000 square kilometers. These massive projects represent a significant expansion that could strain existing housing and create financial challenges for many homeowners in the future due to increased borrowing to purchase and furnish their homes.

Although some of these projects include apartment buildings, their proportion in each project is small. Moreover, the specifications and finishes of these apartments are modest, offering minimal attractive views and lacking premium amenities.

A quick comparison between apartment and villa housing reveals the following:

The apartment system offers better land utilization, allowing for the construction of a larger number of residential units. It also provides shaded basement parking. Service costs are significantly lower, maintenance costs are moderate, and the need for a car is minimal due to the abundance of easily accessible services within the complex.

Apartments also encourage greater interaction and harmony among neighbors, with amenities such as sports clubs, swimming pools, children's playgrounds, event halls, and more located nearby.

I hope that PAHW officials will visit the Hessa Al-Mubarak project and create similar government models instead of building over 200,000 homes in the next ten years at exorbitant costs, which I consider a serious disservice to the nation and its citizens.

□ □ □

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Experienced urban expert Al-Ajeel tapped as ATO's Secretary-General

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26, (KUNA): Kuwait Municipality announced Wednesday the nomination of Bader Al-Ajeel as Secretary-General of the Arab Towns Organization (ATO), following the approval of representatives of Arab cities participating in the organization's extraordinary Executive Council meeting held via videoconference at the request of Kuwait Municipality, the permanent host country.

In a statement to KUNA, the Municipality said the meeting was dedicated to considering Kuwait's nomination of Al-Ajeel to assume the position of the organization's new Secretary-General, in line with the government's desire to enhance the organization's performance and strengthen its role.

The Municipality noted that Al-Ajeel, the nominee of the host country, is one of the organization's experienced cadres, having joined ATO in 2017 and acquiring extensive expertise in urban planning and develop-

ment, which enabled him to gain solid knowledge of municipal and developmental issues at both the local and Arab levels.

Speaking to KUNA, Al-Ajeel said that the shared responsibility goes beyond developing programs and initiatives to redefining the organization's role and reinforcing its position as a hub of expertise, a knowledge house, and a regional reference in urban affairs.

Al-Ajeel stressed the importance of continued efforts to establish platforms for exchanging experiences and developing national capacities across Arab cities, enabling them to play an active role in shaping the future.

He also underscored the need to enhance the organization's financial sustainability and diversify its revenue sources to support its ability to implement programs and meet the needs of Arab institutions with the support and empowerment they deserve.



KUNA photo

Director General of Kuwait Municipality Manal Al-Asfour with nominated Secretary-General of the Arab Towns Organization Bader Al-Ajeel.

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26: Dar Al-Muhamma has been awarded the prestigious Law Firm of the Year -- Infrastructure & Construction at the Legal community MENA Awards 2025, recognizing its exceptional legal services

in supporting major infrastructure and construction projects in Kuwait, across the Middle East, and internationally.

The firm stood out for its approach that combines deep knowledge of local regulations with international best

practices in contract management and project-related risk mitigation.

On this occasion, Mr. Abdulrahman Al-Houti, who leads the firm's specialized infrastructure and construction team, expressed his pride in the

achievement.

"This award reflects the added value we bring to our clients in a rapidly expanding and strategically vital sector. Our expertise in structuring complex contracts, managing legal aspects of large-scale projects, and efficiently resolving disputes has played a key role in enabling clients to meet their project goals successfully," he said.

Al-Houti added: "We reaffirm our commitment to continuing our role as a strategic legal partner contributing to the success of future projects in Kuwait. We extend our gratitude to our clients and partners for their trust, which has been fundamental to this milestone." This recognition further strengthens Dar Al-Muhamma's position as a leading Kuwaiti law firm with specialized capabilities and confirms its readiness to support companies and investors in the construction and infrastructure sectors as they navigate legal challenges and pursue sustainable growth.



Dar Al-Muhamma team proudly holds the Law Firm of the Year -- Infrastructure & Construction award.



Dar Al-Muhamma wins the Legal community MENA Awards 2025.

Ahmed Al-Jarallah



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Kuwait elected Chair of Arab Information Executive Office

Al-Mutairi calls for responsible media discourse

CAIRO, Nov 26, (KUNA): The Council of Arab Information Ministers on Wednesday elected uncontested the State of Kuwait as Chair of the Executive Office for the coming two years’ mandate.

Kuwait’s designation to the post by acclamation came during the council’s 55th session that began earlier today with participation of Arab information ministers and senior officials.

The State of Kuwait Minister of Information, Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Almutairi expressed, in a statement after the unanimous election, deep gratitude to the council’s members for their gracious confidence, designating the State of Kuwait as the head of the Executive Office.

“We are proud of this responsibility which we will shoulder with all seriousness and faithfulness as we are aware of this role’s significance in supporting pan-Arab information cooperation and boosting the Arab presence at various quarters,” the minister stated.

He expressed deep appreciation for his Saudi peer, Salman Aldosari, for his distinguished efforts during his expiring mandate of the bureau, tangibly overhauling joint media tasks mechanisms among the members and staying abreast of the changes in this vital sector.

The designation of the State of Kuwait to the key post was due to its status as a pioneering media example and its vision aimed at developing the Arab media order to match the current changes and challenges, he said.

The State of Kuwait is partaking in the session with a delegation headed by the information minister.

It includes the State of Kuwait Permanent Representative at the Arab League, Ambassador Talal Almutairi, and the Assistant Undersecretary at the Information Ministry for Services Affairs, Salem Alwuttayan.

Minister of Information, Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi called on Wednesday for unified efforts and stronger partnerships to develop a responsible Arab media discourse capable of keeping pace with rapid changes.

This came during his speech at the 55th session of the Council of Arab Information Ministers, held on Wednesday at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States.



Ministry of Information photo
Abdulrahman Almutairi, Kuwait Minister of Information, Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs during the 55th Council of Arab Information Ministers session.

Minister Al-Mutairi said the meeting is taking place amid exceptional, rapidly changing regional challenges, stressing the need for a clear strategic vision grounded in truth and credibility to promote stability and development in Arab countries.

He condemned the grave violations by Israeli occupation forces in the Palestinian territories, especially Gaza.

Minister Al-Mutairi said Kuwait strongly denounces the ongoing attacks, which ignore regional and international efforts for a ceasefire and stability, including the latest UN Resolution 2803 (2025).

He reiterated Kuwait’s firm support for the Palestinian people, their legitimate rights, and the establishment of an independent state along the June 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with UN resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Other Voices

Intellectual property and creative works protection in Kuwaiti law

By Attorney Abdulrahman Alhouti

Protection of intellectual property constitutes a fundamental pillar of the legislative system in Kuwait. The State recognizes the importance of safeguarding the intellectual rights of authors, innovators, inventors, and creators in all fields. Such protection grants these individuals exclusive rights over their intellectual, artistic, or industrial output, enabling them to derive both economic and moral benefits from their work.



Alhouti

Kuwait has established a comprehensive legal framework to protect intellectual property. Among its most prominent components is Law No. 75 of 2019 on Copyright and Related Rights, which protects literary, artistic, and scientific works, including books, software, music, films, photography, and similar works. It encompasses both economic rights and commercial exploitation of intellectual output.

Also central to this framework is Law No. 71 of 2013 concerning the Application of the Patent Law of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, which grants inventors protection for twenty years, provided they meet the requirements of novelty, inventiveness, and industrial applicability.

Furthermore, Law No. 13 of 2015 approving the GCC Unified Trademarks Law regulates the registration and protection of trademarks and protects them from imitation or unauthorized use by any person other than the trademark owner. Kuwait has also entered into several international conventions, adding an international dimension to its national laws and ensuring alignment with global standards for intellectual property and patent protection.

Companies of various types and trademark owners are among the main beneficiaries of this legal framework in Kuwait, whether in relation to protecting industrial and technological inventions or preserving commercial identity. When foreign companies consider investing in a given country, they first seek a legal system that ensures protection of their trademarks, innovative technologies, and industrial secrets. Kuwait’s comprehensive legal regime offers investors reassurance that their rights are protected by law, thereby encouraging increased investment in sectors such as technology, manufacturing, media, and other creative industries.

Conversely, weak legal protection of intellectual property in any country leads to adverse consequences, including reduced investment, widespread commercial piracy, diminished innovation, and the absence of fair competition. Accordingly, the continuous development of legislation and legal oversight is necessary to strengthen the domestic legislative framework and keep pace with rapid global developments in intellectual property protection and creativity.

In addition to the importance of safeguarding the rights of creators and owners of works in their respective fields, society as a whole also has rights that must not be overlooked. The law must strike a fair balance between intellectual property rights and the public interest — a significant legal challenge not only in Kuwait but also in the global legal system striving to protect intellectual property rights.

Finally, the role of public awareness cannot be ignored. The protection of intellectual property is not achieved solely through legislation; it also requires societal awareness of its importance. Authors, programmers, artists, and trademark owners must know their rights and how to protect them. Likewise, the public must understand that respecting the rights and efforts of others is a legal obligation that supports creative activity and contributes to economic development in their country.

Continued from Page 1

‘No plan

She added “we must also acknowledge the role of the ministry, especially Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah for supporting the cooperative societies and their contribution to the development of Kuwait’s cooperative system.”

Regarding the role of cooperatives in achieving food security, Al-Matrouk confirmed that the ministry is aware of this issue and monitors all cooperative societies, indicating this contributes to the progress of cooperative work in the country, especially since this experience is being emulated in other Gulf and Arab countries. She hopes that this experience will serve as a fundamental building block for other countries to consider Kuwait a model in achieving food security.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the cooperative Mohammad Al-Kandari said the renovation of Rawda Central Market is a long-awaited qualitative leap for the residents in the area and the shareholders of the cooperative. He explained that the decision to close the market for five months to carry out the renovation works was courageous, asserting that the Board of Directors accepted the consequences of such a decision, which has been proven to the right move.

In his speech at the reopening ceremony following the complete renovation of the market, Al-Kandari pointed out “the residents of Rawda and the shareholders of the cooperative deserve this significant upgrade after more than 35 years since the last major renovation. The last comprehensive modernization took place in 1989, before the invasion, and it was reopened in 1992 in the presence of HH the late Crown Prince Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah. Today, after more than three decades, we are reopening the same market after a complete renovation that included the basic steel structure and all the final finishing touches.”

He stated that completing the project in just five months is a record-breaking achievement, especially considering that the procedures extended over three years. He clarified that the renovation is not a spur-of-the-moment decision, as it is rather the result of continuous effort, planning and work to ensure the market emerges in a new form that will serve the residents for decades to come.

He added the project has “financial, commercial and service-oriented returns” for the residents in the area and the shareholders of the cooperative, emphasizing that the market, in its new form, meets the aspirations of its visitors and reflects a civilized image befitting Rawda and the cooperative work in Kuwait.

He thanked his colleagues in the Board of Directors. “My colleagues were a great help in making major decisions, whether regarding the central market project or Rawda Mall. They were true partners in every step.”

He also praised the executive management, “who worked day and night,” from the general manager to the most junior employee, stressing that “their efforts are the foundation of the project’s success.”

He appreciated the role of the ministry, which is the “true support” for the cooperative, confirming that communication with its officials was continuous, even “late at night,” to obtain the necessary approvals and overcome obstacles.

He also thanked the members of the Municipal Council, especially Vice President Musaed Al-Azmi and Saroud Habib Al-Kandari, for their support in obtaining licenses and completing municipal procedures.

In a touching gesture, Al-Kandari revealed the use of the same knife that was used to cut the market’s opening cake 35 years ago. He said “this knife was used at the opening of the market in 1992. Today, we are using it again to cut the opening cake after the renovation... the same knife.”

Kuwait to

The statement added that Al-Mousherji praised the committee’s efforts and its fol-

low-up with entities that have not finalized employee data, stressing the importance of cooperation to fulfill the committee’s mandate and achieve its objectives.

It explained that the committee has begun verifying certificates of state employees in leadership and supervisory positions, with reviews of other employees underway, noting that penalties will be imposed on violators.

The Cabinet had previously assigned the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs to form a committee chaired by the Fatwa and Legislation Department, with several government entities, to verify the authenticity of academic certificates of employees in public and private sectors.

Extortion,

To date, the Public Prosecution has recorded the testimonies of 115 victims and questioned 48 defendants.

Kuwait’s Attorney General Counselor Saad Al-Safran has ordered formation of investigation teams to look into several cases related to human trafficking and money laundering crimes, Public Prosecution said on Tuesday. In a statement, the prosecution added it has commenced investigations into nine cases related to illegal exploitation of workers at cooperative societies.

Such practices are a type of misuse banned by the Law No. 91 of 2013 on combating human trafficking, it noted.

The prosecution elaborated that it has recorded accounts of 115 victims and interrogated 48 suspects until now, and investigations are going on, it said.

The Saudi Cabinet, headed by Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammad bin Salman, endorsed Tuesday a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for cooperation with Kuwait in combating money laundering and terrorism financing.

In a press statement following the cabinet meeting, Minister of State for Shura Council Affairs and Acting Information Minister Essam bin Saudi said the memo was signed between the Saudi General Department of Financial Intelligence and the Kuwait Financial Intelligence Unit.

As per the memo, the two bodies would exchange financial information related to money laundering, predicate offences and the financing of terrorism.

Find housing

He recalled that the law was enacted in 2023 to use the help of the private sector in building new residential cities in a bid to solve the housing shortage, reflecting a growing insight that sustainable housing solutions are not only based on funding, but on good management of resources as well.

The minister added the law was amended in August 2025 to cover developers’ qualification regulation and law application facilitation procedures and stipulating the provision of all actual schemes for buyers.

He stressed the significant role of architecture and designing in the improvement of housing solutions, and involving the society in developing a housing scheme that answers varied housing needs.

For his part, Director of the Public Foundation for Housing Welfare’s Investment Department Ahmad Al-Ansari addressed the audience by saying that the new housing law is chiefly intended to involve the private sector in building new housing cities.

He elaborated that the law allows the state to act as a market regulator, rather than a provider, focusing on strategic planning and supervision, while developers take charge of designing, funding, building, operating, maintenance and selling.

He added that the idea of the property developer came following a careful consideration, given that housing applications have been on the rise since 1985.

Radar expansion, new project sites approved

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26: The Technical Committee in the Municipal Council, chaired by Munira Al-Amir, approved the request of the Ministry of Interior to expand the radar network in Khairan, as previously allocated by the Council.

The committee also approved the following:

■ Request of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to allocate a site for Wind Cutting Station 36 RS in the Central Region,

■ Request of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy to allocate an absorption pit in Abu Kharjin and Subaiha, adjacent to the site of Zour Water Distribution Complex expansion,

■ Proposal of Council member Munira Al-Amir regarding the adoption and activation of an electronic review system for engineering plans in Kuwait Municipality.

On the other hand, the committee rejected the letter of the Insurance Regulatory Unit about the localization of all insurance activities in industrial zones, based on Insurance Law No. 125/2019 and its executive regulations.



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Other Voices

Add GBV to curriculums

By Nasser Al-Hajeri

Many people around the world live with fear, silence, or pressure because of violence that targets them for who they are. This is what we call gender based violence, and it remains one of the most serious problems in our communities today. It affects women, men, and children in every place and at every age. It can happen at home, at work, in public, and even in school. Sometimes it appears in clear ways, but many times it begins with small actions that people ignore. A joke that hurts someone, a comment that makes a girl uncomfortable, or pressure on a boy to act in a way that he does not want. These moments create the space where bigger harm can grow.

One of the strongest tools we have to stop this problem is education. When children learn the meaning of respect, kindness, and safety at a young age, they grow into adults who understand the value of dignity for themselves and others. Schools play a major role in this.

They are not just places to learn subjects. They are places where



Al-Hajeri

students learn how to treat each other, how to communicate, and how to build healthy relationships. A school that teaches these values can prevent many problems long before they begin.

Teaching about gender based violence should not be limited to a single lesson. It should be part of the wider learning environment. Students should understand what healthy behavior looks like. They should know how to set boundaries and how to protect themselves. They should feel confident speaking up when something feels wrong. They should also learn that violence can take many forms. It can be physical harm, emotional pressure, or words that slowly break someone down. When students are taught these things, they are more aware and more able to support one another.

This education helps everyone. Boys learn that strength is shown through respect, not control. Girls learn that they deserve safety and support. Teachers gain the tools to help their students. Parents understand how to guide their children at home. When all of these groups work together, the entire community becomes safer and more united.

Stopping gender based violence takes time and real effort, but it starts in the classroom.

When schools teach respect and equality, they shape a generation that believes in safety for all. And that is the future we all want.

AAIOT aims to boost Kuwait’s digital future at MWC25 Qatar

Chairman affirms importance of international presence

DOHA, Nov 26, (KUNA): Chairman of the Artificial Intelligence of Things Association Sheikh Mohammad Ahmad Al-Sabah, affirmed on Tuesday, the importance of participating in the Mobile World Congress (MWC25), hosted by Qatar over two days.

This came in a statement by Sheikh Mohammad to KUNA following his participation in the activities of MWC25, which is being held on November 25 and 26 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center, under the patronage of Qatar’s Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani.

Sheikh Mohammad stressed that holding the conference in Doha represents a pivotal moment for the region, saying, “Qatar’s hosting of MWC25 is a strategic step towards strengthening the region’s position as a global hub for digital innovation.”



KUNA photo
Sheikh Mohammed Al-Sabah, President of the Artificial Intelligence of Things Association, with John Hoffman, CEO of the GSM Association (GSMA).

He expressed his pleasure that the Artificial Intelligence of Things Association (AAIOT) is part of this international movement that contributes to developing smarter, more resilient, and innovative environments.

He explained that his participation as Chairman of AAIOT comes within the association’s efforts to enhance its international presence and build strategic partnerships that support Kuwait’s digital transformation plans and the region’s vision for a smarter and more prosperous future.

The Mobile World Congress (MWC25 Doha) is the first edition to be held in the Middle East and North Africa region, organized by the GSMA in partnership with the Qatari Ministry of Communications and Information Technology.

The event brings together a global elite of digital leaders, policymakers, experts, innovators, and investors on an international platform focused on the future of connectivity, artificial intelligence, and digital infrastructure.

The conference features the participation of more than 300 international speakers and 250 global and regional companies, in addition to a high-level ministerial program and specialized meetings on artificial intelligence, next-generation networks, fintech, and satellites, along with the 4YFN platform for startups.

Kuwait Fund takes part in Policy Dialogue on Harnessing Blended Finance for PPP projects

Jahra PIFSS project questioned

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 25: Municipal Council member Abdullah Al-Enezi on Tuesday submitted questions to the executive branch regarding the decision of the Council on the request of the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) to allocate land for an educational and recreational project in Jahra Governorate.

In his letter, Al-Enezi asked for clarification about the delayed implementation of the project despite the allocation of 1.4 million square meters in line with the efforts of the State to

realize its New Kuwait 2035 vision.

He submitted the following questions:

1. What are the reasons behind the delay in implementing this vital project despite the decision of the Council and the importance of the project in achieving the development goals of the State, particularly in the areas of community welfare and education?
2. What are the latest developments regarding the project’s allocation and the procedures of PIFSS in this regard?
3. Are there obstacles to the implementation of the project, considering the allocation date was March 6, 2023?
4. Has a timeline been established for commencing the project?

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26: The Kuwait Fund for Development participated in the Policy Dialogue on Harnessing Blended Finance for Public-Private Partnership (PPP), which was held in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan from November 24 to 28, 2025. The event was organized by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD), in cooperation with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). This dialogue comes as part of regional efforts to promote blended financing models and support partnership projects in priority development sectors.

Mr. Tariq Al-Menayes, Senior Economic Advisor at the Kuwait Fund, affirmed that participation in this dialogue reflects the Fund’s commitment

to supporting international initiatives aimed at promoting inclusive development, exchanging expertise on best practices in partnerships and development financing, and advancing greater regional integration, improved infrastructure, and market access opportunities.

He added that these efforts stem from the Fund’s belief that supporting countries most in need is a shared responsibility and a fundamental step toward building a more stable and just future.

The Fund’s participation reaffirms its commitment to developing sustainable financing mechanisms and enhancing cooperation between governments, the private sector, and development institutions, especially in



Photo from the event.

the sectors of health, education, water, transport, and social services, which are essential pillars for achieving long-term economic growth.

Continued from Page 1

Cabinet vows

Poor’s’ announcement last Friday on upgrading Kuwait’s ranking from A+ to AA- keeping a stable future outlook due to advanced general financial reforms.

He attributed the step to some reasons topped with the progress in financial and economic reforms mainly in economic diversity, modernizing infrastructure, diversifying non-oil renovates sources and other key steps in this regard.

He also told the minsters about the His Highness the Prime Minister’s tour to the GE Vernova Center on the 10th anniversary of founding the center in Kuwait.

Furthermore, Minister of Education Sayed Jalal Abdulmohsen informed the Cabinet about Kuwait’s winning of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) membership for a four-year term.

Praising this step, the Cabinet said this achievement showed Kuwait’s prestigious cultural position, adding it was the fruits of cooperation among the competent bodies of the Ministries of Education, Foreign Affairs and Information.

Winning the UNESCO membership mirrors Kuwait’s precious heritage and cultural record which boosts the country’s role in preserving human heritage and maintaining its components in line with the world-class criteria.

Additionally, the ministers were informed about the official accompanying delegation of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Bahrain to attend the 46th ordinary session of the GCC Supreme Council due on December 3.

The Cabinet saw a report by the Public Authority for Civil Aviation on the positive results of International Civil Aviation Organization on Kuwait regarding the safety of aviation.

Kuwait committed to 86 percent, an outcome that shows an advanced level of abiding by international standards of the organization and the requirements of overseeing safety.

The organization is based on this result when appreciating countries’ commitment to aviation safety, and is a national achievement, which reflects the efforts of all sectors and directorates of the authority.

On the 55th Anniversary of Oman’s National Day, the Cabinet extended sincere congratulations for Sultan Haitham bin Tareq, commending bilateral fraternal and historical relations between the two sides.

Also, the ministers saw a presentation by Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi about overseas treatment and measures taken by the ministry over the two last years to address challenges in this dossier.

Finally, the Cabinet extolled efforts by Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah, and Chairman of PACA Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Al-Humoud Al-Sabah as well as all staff that that led to getting the ICAO’s appreciation.

Amiri decree

Chapter Two concerns the establishment of entities, including the Supreme Council for Combating Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, tasked with formulating a comprehensive national strategy to combat trafficking, illicit use, prevention, awareness, treatment, and inter-ministerial coordination.

The council also ensures the development of state agencies combating trafficking and abuse, guarantees effective implementation of Kuwait’s ratified international conventions on narcotics and psychotropic substances, and works to reduce their spread and societal harm.

The decree-law stipulates the Ministry of Health shall establish rehabilitation and addiction treatment centers to treat and rehabilitate addicts and users, with separate facilities for individuals under twenty-one years, ensuring proper medical and security conditions.

Private sector entities may establish medical units for the same purposes under Ministry supervision, provided they obtain ministerial authorization, ensuring integration of public and private efforts in rehabilitation and treatment of substance abuse cases.

The Ministry of Interior is tasked with establishing correction and rehabilitation centers to enforce imprisonment sentences for drug-related offenses, with inmates undergoing medical, rehabilitation, training, and family reintegration programs, separate from general prison facilities.

Chapter Three regulates licenses for import, export, transport, production, and cultivation, prohibiting production, manufacture, import, export, transport, possession, purchase, sale, trafficking, dispensing, or administration of narcotic or psychotropic substances except under specific conditions defined by the decree-law.

Chapter Four addresses licensing for trafficking in narcotics, psychotropic substances, and preparations, prohibiting trade without ministerial authorization and establishing procedures for licensing, transfer, and destruction of controlled materials, ensuring accountability and legal compliance.

Chapter Five governs licenses for possession of narcotics, psychotropic substances, and preparations, regulating dispensing within healthcare facilities and pharmacies, and specifying types of substances physicians may possess for in-facility or external treatment purposes.

Chapter Six regulates production and manufacture of narcotics, psychotropic substances, and preparations, restricting manufacture to licensed pharmaceutical factories and prohibiting unauthorized use, while establishing ministerial procedures for licensing, manufacturing, and packaging controlled substances.

Chapter Seven addresses cultivation of prohibited plants, requiring ministerial authorization and limiting cultivation to government entities, research centers, universities, colleges, and licensed specialized institutions, ensuring controlled access and legal compliance.

Chapter Eight contains general provisions, while Chapter Nine defines

penalties, including the death penalty or life imprisonment with fines ranging from KD 100,000 to KD 2,000,000, or equivalent to the total value of controlled substances involved in trafficking offenses.

Article provisions also mandate death or life imprisonment penalties for trafficking, production, or cultivation for trafficking purposes, while lesser offenses incur life imprisonment and fines between KD 50,000 and KD 500,000, reflecting the severity of unauthorized handling of controlled substances.

Organizing criminal groups abroad involved in drug trafficking is punishable by death, while participation in such organizations incurs life imprisonment with fines from KD 20,000 to KD 50,000, ensuring accountability for both leadership and membership of illicit operations.

Chapter 10 emphasizes treatment and voluntary rehabilitation, granting immunity from criminal prosecution to addicts seeking treatment before formal charges or complaints, while mandating surrender of controlled substances to rehabilitation centers for official disposition under ministry supervision.

The centers may release recovering addicts after successful rehabilitation or for violations of regulatory protocols, with strict confidentiality maintained for personal information and treatment records, reinforcing protection of patients’ rights and privacy.

Chapter 11 addresses verdicts and their effects, mandating immediate enforcement of imprisonment sentences under the decree-law, allowing courts reviewing appeals to suspend execution but prohibiting challenges to detention orders issued under rehabilitation provisions, ensuring legal certainty and clarity.

Courts may exempt offenders who voluntarily report crimes before detection or provide assistance to authorities during investigations, while statutory limitations do not prevent prosecution or nullify penalties for offenses specified in Articles 46 and 47 of the decree-law.

Public prosecution holds authority for investigation, prosecution, and adjudication of all crimes and complaints under the decree-law, with criminal courts having jurisdiction over cases involving narcotics and psychotropic substances offenses and related violations.

The law applies to all individuals committing crimes within Kuwait’s territory and dependencies, as well as acts outside its jurisdiction that contribute to offenses occurring wholly or partly within Kuwait, extending accountability beyond borders for Kuwaiti nationals.

Kuwaiti citizens committing offenses abroad are subject to the decree-law and local laws upon return to Kuwait unless foreign courts have acquitted them, while convictions already served abroad prevent duplicate prosecution, reinforcing consistency in international legal compliance.

Chapter 12 focuses on arrest procedures and administrative regulations, detailing the authorities’ powers to enforce the law and ensuring proper handling of suspects and controlled substances during investigations and seizures, establishing accountability

and procedural integrity.

Chapter 13 covers administrative oversight and the role of employees with judicial policing powers, granting access to government, private, and licensed facilities holding narcotics or psychotropic substances to verify compliance with the decree-law and enforce legal provisions.

The decree-law thus establishes a comprehensive framework for combating drugs and psychotropic substances, integrating prevention, control, rehabilitation, and enforcement measures, aiming to protect public health, ensure social stability, and fulfill Kuwait’s international obligations.

It unifies previous legislation into a single coherent law, streamlines definitions, clarifies penalties, standardizes licensing procedures, regulates production, trafficking, and use, and incorporates rehabilitation and medical treatment programs for addicts, while providing strict criminal and administrative enforcement mechanisms.

By consolidating the previous 1983 and 1987 laws, the decree-law strengthens Kuwait’s ability to combat trafficking and abuse, ensures consistent application of penalties, enhances rehabilitation capacities, and aligns with global standards for drug control and psychotropic substances management.

The new legal framework supports inter-ministerial coordination, encourages public-private partnerships in treatment and rehabilitation, and mandates oversight by competent authorities to ensure compliance, prevent misuse, and protect vulnerable populations from the risks of substance abuse.

It also specifies ministerial responsibilities for licensing, monitoring, production, transport, and disposal of controlled substances, providing a structured legal foundation for enforcement, while defining rights and obligations of citizens, healthcare providers, and law enforcement personnel.

The decree-law reflects Kuwait’s commitment to safeguarding public health and social stability, reducing the prevalence of substance abuse, and promoting a safe environment for all residents, ensuring adherence to international conventions and best practices in drug control.

It includes provisions for specialized courts, public prosecution oversight, and jurisdictional clarity, ensuring that offenders are prosecuted fairly and consistently, while maintaining procedural safeguards, confidentiality for rehabilitation cases, and comprehensive legal remedies for violations.

The law’s comprehensive approach combines preventive education, public awareness, treatment, rehabilitation, enforcement, and administrative supervision, creating an integrated strategy to combat drug abuse and psychotropic substance misuse across all sectors of Kuwaiti society.

The decree-law also mandates periodic review and ministerial reporting to monitor implementation, evaluate outcomes, and update policies and procedures, ensuring the legislation remains effective, responsive, and aligned with evolving challenges in substance control.

By merging prior legislation, regu-

lating all aspects of narcotics and psychotropic substances, and integrating enforcement, treatment, and prevention measures, the decree-law strengthens Kuwait’s legal, social, and institutional capacity to combat the illicit use and trafficking of controlled substances.

The legal provisions encompass import, export, production, cultivation, transport, possession, trafficking, treatment, rehabilitation, licensing, administrative oversight, and criminal penalties, ensuring a comprehensive, enforceable, and coherent framework consistent with national interests and international obligations.

Kuwait’s legislative authorities, law enforcement agencies, health institutions, and social services are required to collaborate under this decree-law to achieve its objectives, prevent abuse, support rehabilitation, and maintain compliance with national and international standards.

In summary, the Amiri decree-law No. 59 of 2025 on combating drugs and psychotropic substances consolidates previous legislation, unifies regulatory frameworks, enhances enforcement, incorporates rehabilitation, defines licensing and procedural measures, and establishes strict penalties, reflecting Kuwait’s commitment to public health and social safety.

‘Cybersecurity

He stated that “Kuwait and the government’s adoption of digital transformation increased the need for data protection, especially with the expanded use of government applications, such as ‘Sahel’, to complete transactions. This has created new challenges related to protecting personal and official information from hacking, whether for the purpose of destruction or theft. Protecting these assets is a national priority.”

He pointed out that “cybersecurity is a fundamental part of the work program of the government and Kuwait 2035 vision. The State has started taking steps in the field of governance and the establishment of regulatory frameworks, specifically the National Cybersecurity Center and the attraction of Kuwaiti talent. The Ministry of Education introduced Cybersecurity as a subject in the Grade 10 curriculum for the first time in the history of Kuwaiti education.”

He added “public and private universities have also started developing cybersecurity programs to meet market needs in the coming years, through the graduation of young people who are scientifically and technically capable of managing digital systems and protecting infrastructure, including buildings, networks and communications, in light of the widespread availability of internet services in society and the government sector.”

He affirmed that cybersecurity has become a security tool that protects the State from cyberattacks and breaches, which may be intended for destruction, sabotage or theft, indicating the existence of terrorist groups specializing in this type of attack, and that modern wars—such as the Russian-Ukrainian war—are examples of the evolution of cyberattack methods at the State level.

On the other hand, Director of the National Cybersecurity Center and cyberse-

curity expert retired Major General Eng. Mohammad Buarki stressed that it is an honor to participate in the cybersecurity and innovation forum due to its national and strategic importance. He said the forum tackled the most difficult challenges and valuable opportunities in this sector, and the role of artificial intelligence and ethical responsibilities, in addition to showcasing practical and applicable solutions.

Buarki asserted that cybersecurity is now a matter of “national security” in every sense of the word, not only for Kuwait but also for other countries in the region and the world, given its connection to the economic, educational, health and banking sectors. He underscored the need for a comprehensive strategy at the national level, and the importance of strengthening cooperation between institutions and universities to develop specialized curricula for different age groups.

On the decision of the Education Ministry to include Cybersecurity in the curriculum, he described the step as “very important,” asserting that the collaboration between the ministry and experts contributed to the development of suitable curricula from Grade Six to Grade 12. He added that the current generation—born in the age of technology—has the capacity for rapid learning, making this step highly impactful for the future.

On cyber threats to Kuwait, Bouarki confirmed the threat exists for all countries that utilize technology, stressing the importance of aligning major digital projects, such as cloud computing projects with Google and Microsoft, with a security vision to protect data before launching these projects.

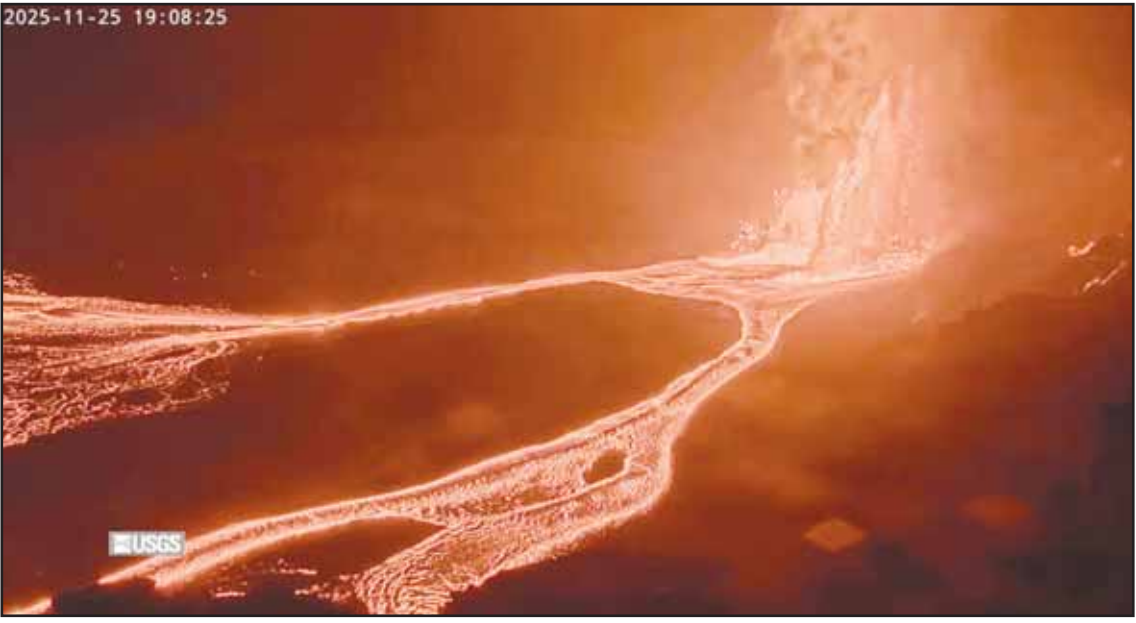
About the current security level in Kuwait, he clarified that he could not provide a precise percentage, but affirmed that Kuwait set up the necessary standards, particularly the establishment of an independent cybersecurity authority and the organization of national campaigns and conferences throughout October and November. “These steps contributed to raising public awareness and developing the defense infrastructure of the country, which is on the right track in terms of keeping pace with developed nations,” he added.

On cooperation between Kuwait and America in the cybersecurity field, he pointed out this is an excellent move, adding that the big number of participants in the event is an evidence of the depth of the partnership between the two countries, and that Kuwait is keen on benefiting from the latest solutions and advanced expertise in this vital sector.

Kuwait, Saudi

This aims to contribute to developing the security system, raising efficiency levels, and improving the quality of services.

The Interior Ministry affirmed its commitment to continuing coordination and cooperation with Saudi Arabia through the exchange of visits and technical meetings, and to activating joint Gulf cooperation initiatives which will enhance security and stability in both countries and support efforts to develop work systems and unify procedures in a way that serves common interests.



This image from video by the United States Geological Survey shows lava erupting from Kilauea volcano on Nov 25 in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Hawaii. (AP)

Hawaii’s Kilauea displays lava fountains for 37th time

The on-and-off eruption that’s been dazzling residents and visitors on Hawaii’s Big Island for nearly a year resumed Tuesday as Kilauea volcano sent fountains of lava soaring 400 feet (122 meters) into the air.

The molten rock was confined within Kilauea’s summit caldera inside Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, the U.S. Geological Survey said. No homes were threatened. It’s the 37th time Kilauea has

shot lava since last December, when the current eruption began.

The latest lava display was preceded by sporadic spattering and overflows that began Friday. Each eruptive episode has lasted about a day or less. The volcano has paused for at least a few days in between.

In some cases, Kilauea’s lava towers have soared as high as skyscrapers. The volcano has generated such tall fountains in part

because magma - which holds gases that are released as it rises - has been traveling to the surface through narrow, pipelike vents.

Kilauea is on Hawaii Island, the largest of the Hawaiian archipelago. It’s about 200 miles (322 kilometers) south of the state’s largest city, Honolulu, which is on Oahu.

It’s one of the world’s most active volcanoes and one of six active volcanoes in Hawaii. (AP)

Trump’s federal intervention continues

DC Mayor Bowser won’t seek 4th term

WASHINGTON, Nov 26, (AP): Muriel Bowser, the mayor of Washington, DC, announced on Tuesday that she will not be seeking re-election next year, a decision that came as she has had to confront a federal law enforcement intervention into her city launched by President Donald Trump.

Bowser announced her decision in a video posted to social media, where she did not mention Trump or directly address his steps against the city. She applauded the cooperation with residents to make the city a better place to live and called on them to “summon our collective strength to stand tall against bullies who threaten our very autonomy while preserving Home Rule. That is our North Star.”

Bowser has served three terms since being first elected in 2014, none more tumultuous than the last year, when she found herself walking a fine line between staying in Trump’s good graces and responding to the concerns of constituents who said she should have pushed back more on actions taken by the president.

She was at the helm of a city that has long been reliant on the federal government. The district is granted autonomy through a limited home rule agreement passed in 1973, but federal political leaders retain significant control over local affairs, including the ap-



District of Columbia Mayor Muriel Bowser listens as US President Donald Trump speaks during an event to announce that the 2027 NFL Draft will be held on the National Mall, in the Oval Office of the White House on May 5, in Washington. (AP)

proval of the budget and laws passed by the DC Council.

The federal government’s involvement in local affairs hit another level in August when, after Trump issued an emergency order targeting the city. This federalized D.C.’s police force and sent hundreds of National Guard troops there for what the administration called a crime-fighting mission. Although the emergency period has

lapsed, the federal law enforcement presence is still in the city, along with National Guard members from the district and several states, despite legal action against the military deployment.

Bowser in many ways cooperated with the administration’s efforts, including having city workers clear homeless encampments and work more closely with federal immigration agents.

Senator Tillis hopes subsidies extended

Health care plan circulated by White House runs into familiar Republican divisions

WASHINGTON, Nov 26, (AP): A health care proposal circulated by the White House in recent days is running into the reality of Republican divisions on the issue - a familiar struggle for a party that has been trying to scrap or overhaul the Affordable Care Act for the past 15 years.

The tentative proposal from US President Donald Trump would extend expiring ACA subsidies for two years while adjusting eligibility requirements for recipients. The plan has so far been met with a stony silence on Capitol Hill as Republicans debate among themselves whether to overhaul the law, tweak it or simply let the subsidies expire.

It’s unclear now when the White House plan might be released, or if it will be released at all.

The Republican indecision comes as the COVID-era tax credits are set to expire Jan. 1, creating sharp premium increases for millions of Americans. Democrats who shut down the government for six weeks over the issue are demanding a straight extension with no changes, though some indicated they could support a plan similar to the one circulated by the White House.

But support may be harder to find in the GOP conference, where many lawmakers say costs are still too high and have been eager to make another run at repealing the ACA. The last effort in 2017 failed when Republicans couldn’t decide on how to provide coverage to millions of Americans who depend on government-run marketplaces for their health care. It’s a dilemma that persists for the party after record numbers signed up for coverage this year.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., promised a group of moderate Democrats a vote on the ACA tax credits by mid-December in exchange for their votes to end the government shutdown. But it’s unclear, so far, whether that arrangement will lead to a solution.

Health care has long been one of the most politically fraught topics on Capitol Hill, so a bipartisan compromise seems unlikely. But the coming price spikes have motivated some lawmakers to look for points of agreement.

Republican Sen Thom Tillis of North Carolina said last week that he hopes the subsidies are extended.

“I’m sure some of my colleagues will be mad at me for saying this - if we don’t



A podium is prepared before Democrats hold a news conference on the health care funding fight on the steps of the House before votes to end the government shutdown, on Capitol Hill on Nov 12, in Washington. (AP)

address the subsidies issue in December, I don’t think it’s going to get addressed next year,” Tillis said, adding that Democratic campaigns will be “just churning up all the very sympathetic stories” if it isn’t fixed.

The draft White House proposal would put new income limits on the tax credits - at 700 percent of the federal poverty level, according to two people with knowledge of the proposal who requested anonymity to discuss it. The White House would also require those on Obamacare, regardless of the type of coverage, to pay

some sort of premium for their plans. That would effectively end zero-premium plans for those with lower incomes, addressing a concern from Republicans who say the program has enabled fraud.

Some Democrats have suggested they are open to those ideas as a part of broader negotiations. “I’m glad the president is reportedly considering a serious proposal,” said New Hampshire Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, one of the Democrats who voted to end the shutdown.

Some Republicans have signaled support as well. Nebraska Rep. Mike Flood, the chairman of the business-oriented Republican Main Street Caucus, said in a statement that the group supports “President Trump’s ongoing efforts to address the ACA tax credit cliff with an extension.”

Several bipartisan bills in the House would extend the ACA credits for two years, with changes such as income limits for the enhanced credit. “I think two years is really the sweet spot where everybody is OK,” said Pennsylvania Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, a co-chair of the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus.

Still, House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., has declined to say whether he will allow a vote on a health care bill. Many other members of his GOP conference want to see the subsidies eliminated or the underlying law overhauled. In addition, Thune and other Republicans have said they want new language on abortion restrictions if they pass an extension - a dealbreaker for Democrats.

If Congress doesn’t act, the enhanced premium tax credits that have helped many Americans pay for Affordable Care Act health insurance plans will disappear. And premiums could more than double for subsidized enrollees, according to an analysis by the health care research nonprofit KFF.

Signups for next year’s insurance began on Nov. 1, meaning that many Americans are already planning for the higher costs. Democrats who forced the shutdown at the beginning of October had hoped to negotiate an extension before open enrollment began.

“When people’s monthly payments spike next year, they will know it was Republicans that made it happen,” Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said last week.

America

Civil rights leader Jackson leaves hospital: The Rev Jesse Jackson has been released from a Chicago hospital where he was treated for a rare neurological disorder, his son said Tuesday.

The 84-year-old civil rights leader was discharged Monday from Northwestern Memorial Hospital, his son and family spokesperson Yusef Jackson said.

In 2013, Jackson, who now receives round-the-clock care at home, was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease. The diagnosis was changed last April to progressive supranuclear palsy, or PSP, a neurodegenerative disorder which can have similar symptoms to Parkinson’s.

Yusef Jackson thanked “the countless friends and supporters who have reached out, visited and prayed for our father,” as well as the medical and security staff at Northwestern Memorial Hospital.

“We humbly ask for your continued prayers throughout this precious time,” Yusef Jackson said. (AP)

Colorado car crash kills 5 people: Five people, including three children, have been killed and two others injured in a multi-vehicle crash in the U.S. state of Colorado, local authorities said.

According to a statement from the Colorado State Patrol (CSP), the accident occurred just after 4:30 p.m. Monday local time, involving a Toyota hatchback, a Ford sedan and a Ford pickup on Highway 83 near Franktown, a small town about 50 km south of Denver.

The Toyota was traveling southbound when the driver lost control and went off the right shoulder, then it returned to the roadway and rolled onto the northbound lane, ejecting the driver, the CSP said.

It said that the Ford sedan was traveling northbound when the Toyota hit it head-on. The Toyota, after crashing into the Ford sedan, kept traveling southbound in the northbound lanes and struck the Ford pickup, causing minor damage. (Xinhua)

Europe

Italy recognizes crime of femicide: Italy’s parliament on Tuesday approved a law that introduces femicide into the country’s criminal law and punishes it with life in prison.

The vote coincided with the international day for the elimination of violence against women, a day designated by the UN General Assembly.

The law won bipartisan support from the center-right majority and the center-left opposition in the final vote in the Lower Chamber, passing with 237 votes in favor.

The law, backed by the conservative government of Premier Giorgia Meloni, comes in response to a series of killings and other violence targeting women in Italy. It includes stronger measures against gender-based crimes including stalking.

High-profile cases, such as the 2023 murder of university student Giulia Cecchettin, have been key in widespread public outcry and debate about the causes of violence against women in Italy’s patriarchal culture. (AP)

Romania cylinder blast injures 6: Six people were injured on Tuesday after an explosion in a ground-floor apartment in Buftea, a town outside Bucharest, authorities said.

Firefighters were dispatched following reports that a gas cylinder had exploded without igniting a fire, but the blast left the building at risk of collapse, according to the Bucharest-Ilfov Emergency Situations Inspectorate.

Search-and-rescue teams were sent in to assess the structure, and authorities ordered the evacuation of the building and residents within a 50-meter radius as a safety measure.

The Health Ministry said it has activated an emergency task force that includes major Bucharest emergency hospitals.

On Oct 17, three people were killed and at least 13 others injured when a gas explosion ripped through an apartment block in Bucharest. (Xinhua)

Kremlin confirms US envoy’s visit as talks on ending war in Ukraine gain momentum

MOSCOW, Nov 26, (AP): A senior Kremlin official confirmed Wednesday that US special envoy Steve Witkoff is set to visit Moscow next week as efforts to find a consensus on ending the nearly four-year war between Russia and Ukraine pick up speed.

But Yuri Ushakov, Russian President Vladimir Putin’s foreign affairs adviser, insisted that Kremlin officials still have not seen a US peace proposal, even though representatives of the United States, Russia and Ukraine held talks in Abu Dhabi earlier this week.

“Contact is ongoing, including via telephone, but no one has yet sat down at a round table and discussed this point-by-point. That hasn’t happened,” Ushakov told Russian state media.

Ukrainian officials didn’t confirm whether US Army Secretary Dan Driscoll, who in recent weeks has played a high-profile role in the peace efforts, would be in Kyiv in the coming days, as Trump indicated Tuesday.

Trump’s plan for ending the war became public last week, setting off a spate of diplomatic maneuvering. The initial version appeared heavily slanted toward Russian demands for halting its invasion of its neighbors. After week-end talks in Geneva between US and Ukrainian officials, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the plan



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Presidential Press Office, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, (left), shakes hands with US Secretary of the Army Dan Driscoll in Kyiv, Ukraine on Nov 20. (AP)

could be “workable,” although key points remain unresolved. A Ukrainian official said Zelenskyy hoped to meet with Trump in coming days.

Witkoff’s role in the peace efforts came under a renewed spotlight Tuesday when a report indicated he coached Ushakov, the Putin aide, on how Russian leader should pitch Trump on the Ukraine peace plan.

Trump described Witkoff’s reported approach to the Russians in the call as “standard” negotiating procedure.

“He’s got to sell this to Ukraine. He’s got to sell Ukraine to Russia,” Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One as he flew to his home in Florida on Tuesday night. “That’s what a dealmaker does.”

France top court upholds Sarkozy’s conviction

PARIS, Nov 26, (AP): France’s top court on Wednesday upheld ex-president Nicolas Sarkozy’s conviction for illegal campaign financing of his reelection bid in 2012.

The decision by the Court of Cassation makes definitive Sarkozy’s conviction to a year in prison, half of it suspended, for fraudulently overspending on the failed campaign.

Under French law the sentence can be served at home, monitored with an electronic bracelet or other requirements set by a judge.

The decision comes just two weeks after Sarkozy’s release from prison pending an appeal in another campaign financing case.

Sarkozy is publishing a book on Dec 10 about his recent time behind bars, titled “Diary of a Prisoner.”

He described prison as “a nightmare.”

“I had never imagined I would experience prison at 70. This ordeal was imposed on me, and I lived through it. It’s hard, very hard,” Sarkozy said during a court hearing on his release.

In a post on X, he said that “the noise is, unfortunately, constant” and that “the inner life of man becomes stronger in prison.”

French investigative judges filed preliminary charges in 2023 against Sarkozy for his alleged involvement in a possible attempt to clear him in the Libya financing case by pressuring a witness.

In 2016, French-Lebanese businessman Ziad Takieddine said that he had delivered suitcases filled with cash from Tripoli to France’s Interior Ministry under Sarkozy. He later retracted his statement.

Financial prosecutors said that Sarkozy is suspected of



Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy leaves his home on Oct 21, in Paris as he heads to prison to serve time for a criminal conspiracy to finance his 2007 election campaign with funds from Libya. (AP)

“benefitting from corruptly influencing a witness,” in reference to Takieddine.

Sarkozy’s wife, former supermodel Carla Bruni-Sarkozy, was given preliminary charges in July 2024 for alleged involvement in efforts to pressure Takieddine. Bruni-Sarkozy was placed under judicial supervision, which includes a ban on contact with all those involved in the proceedings except for her husband. Investigative magistrates still have to decide whether they send the couple to trial on these charges.

Takieddine died in September in Beirut.

Pope Leo XIV to visit Turkey and Lebanon on first foreign trip

VATICAN CITY, Nov 26, (AP): Pope Leo XIV is embarking on his first foreign trip, a pilgrimage to Turkey and Lebanon that would be delicate under any circumstances but is even more fraught given Mideast tensions and the media glare that will document history’s first American pope on the road.

Leo, who spent 12 years as superior of his Augustinian religious order and two decades as a missionary in Peru, says he loves to travel. And in recent weeks, he has shown both diplomatic and linguistic dexterity in answering questions on the fly from reporters.

The trip is being covered closely by US media, with all major US networks - ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox as well as CNN and the BBC - inside Leo’s travelling pool, following his speeches, homilies and prayers at a crucial moment in negotiations to end Russia’s war in Ukraine and maintain a cease-fire in Gaza.

Vatican correspondents plus Lebanese and Turkish media round out the papal press corps of about 80 journalists, with an ample waitlist of reporters who applied to be on the papal plane but were denied a seat because of limited space.

“Anytime the pope travels, it’s a big deal,” said Natalia Imperatori-Lee, associate professor of theology at Fordham University in New York.

But an American pope on his first foreign trip is an even bigger deal, she said, especially in the saturated American media ecosystem where Leo has emerged as something of a foil to the



Pope Leo XIV waves as he arrives for his weekly general audience in St. Peter’s Square, at the Vatican on Nov 26. (AP)

Trump administration and its crackdown on immigrants.

“He is still driving coverage here because of his engagement with one of the most important issues we’re facing, which is migration,” said Kim Daniels, director of the Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life at Georgetown University.

‘Families in Thailand perch on rooftops to escape flooding that killed 33’

Landslides, flash floods on Indonesia’s Sumatra island kill at least 17 and 6 missing

MEDAN, Indonesia, Nov 26, (AP): Rescuers recovered more bodies in the search for dozens of people buried under landslides or swept away after torrential rains unleashed flash floods and triggered landslides on Indonesia’s Sumatra island, increasing the death toll to 17 and leaving six people missing, officials said Wednesday.

Rescue teams were struggling to reach affected areas in six regencies of North Sumatra province after the monsoon rains over the past week caused rivers to burst their banks, tearing through hilly villages as mud, rocks and trees tumbled down, leaving destruction in their wake, the National Police said in a statement.

Rescue workers by Wednesday had recovered at least five bodies and three injured people in the worst-hit city of Sibolga and were searching for four villagers who were reported missing, the statement said. In the neighboring district of Central Tapanuli, landslides hit several homes, killing at least a family of four, and floods submerged nearly 2,000 houses and buildings.

Rescuers retrieved seven more bodies in South Tapanuli district, raising the death toll to eight, after floods and landslides also uprooted trees, prompting more than 2,800 residents to flee to temporary shelters and injuring 58 others, said National Disaster Mitigation Agency’s spokesperson Abdul Muhari.

He said landslides also hit 50 houses in North Tapanuli district and destroyed at least two main bridges in the region. Floods had cut off a bridge in Mandailing Natal and submerged hundreds of houses in the hilly district and its neighboring Padang Sidempuan city, while a main road was blocked by mud and debris on Nias island.

Videos on social media show water cascading down rooftops as panicked residents scramble for safety. In some areas, flash floods rose rapidly, transforming streets into raging torrents carrying tree trunks and debris.

Sibolga police chief Eddy Inganta said emergency shelters have been set up and authorities urged residents in high-risk zones to evacuate immediately, warning that continued rainfall could trigger more landslides after six landslides in the hilly city flattened 17 houses and a café.



People wade through flood water after heavy rain hit Padang Pariaman regency, West Sumatra, Indonesia on Nov 24. (AP)

“Bad weather and mudslides hampered the rescue operation,” Inganta said, adding that access remains limited as rescuers battle harsh conditions.

Tuesday’s disasters occurred the same day the National Disaster Mitigation Agency declared the official end of relief efforts in two areas of Indonesia’s main island of Java

after 10 days of operations. More than 1,000 rescue workers had been deployed to search for people buried under landslides triggered by torrential rains that left 38 people dead in Central Java’s districts of Cilacap and Banjarnegara.

At least two people in Cilacap and 11 in Banjarnegara were still unaccounted for when the operations ended, as unstable ground, bad weather and the depth and extent of the landfill material pose a high safety risk to rescue teams and residents, the agency said.

Also:

BANGKOK: Severe flooding in southern Thailand has caused at least 33 deaths since the weekend, officials said, as dramatic video footage showed people whose homes were virtually engulfed by water awaiting help on rooftops.

About 1 million households and more than 2.7 million people have been impacted by floods in 12 southern provinces triggered by heavy rains, the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation said Wednesday.

The accumulated rainfall began to decrease Wednesday and authorities were hopeful water levels would start to recede, but the Meteorological Department issued a warning for heavy rains and flash flooding in the country’s southern region through Wednesday.

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul on Tuesday declared a state of emergency for Songkhla province, which includes southern Thailand’s biggest city, Hat Yai, citing the “unprecedented severity” of the flooding that has caused widespread damage.

Streets in Hat Yai were impassable and low-rise buildings and cars nearly submerged by rising water, trapping thousands of people. Some residents on higher floors were given food baskets, hoisted up from rescue teams in flat-bottom boats.

Footage from a camera drone broadcast by Thai PBS showed a family of five in Hat Yai being rescued Tuesday from the rooftop of their house, which was nearly submerged. The family, including an older woman, appeared in the video as colorful specks in a landscape of flat, brown water.

South Korea’s special counsel seeks 15-year prison term for ex-PM Han

SEOUL, Nov 26, (Agencies): South Korea’s special counsel sought a 15-year prison term Wednesday for former prime minister Han Duck-soo on charges of aiding and abetting the insurrection of former impeached President Yoon Suk-yeol.

The team of Cho Eun-suk, independent counsel leading the investigation into Yoon’s insurrection and other charges, demanded a 15-year jail sentence for Han on charges of aiding the insurrection leader, engaging in important tasks for the insurrection, and perjury, according to multiple media outlets.

The special prosecutor team was quoted by Yonhap news agency as saying Han attempted to secure the legitimacy of martial law, committed crimes of judicial obstruction by falsifying official documents, and remained uncooperative by retracting his statements.

Despite being the only person who could prevent the insurrection, Han neglected his duty and participated in the insurrection through a series of actions before and after the martial law declaration, the team noted.

The constitutional court upheld a motion to impeach Yoon on April 4 over his botched martial law bid last December, officially removing him from office.

The ousted leader was indicted under detention on Jan. 26 as a suspected ringleader of insurrection.

Also:

TOKYO: South Korean Unification



South Korean Prime Minister Han Duck-soo speaks to the media as he arrives at the Government Complex in Seoul on March 24, after the Constitutional Court dismissed the impeachment of the prime minister. (AP)

Minister Chung Dong-young said Wednesday the government seeks to implement the North Korea policy in a peaceful and gradual manner, Yonhap News Agency reported.

“A radical policy cannot help inviting public animosity. We could not imagine (taking) shocking or radical methods (in terms of North Korea policy),” Chung said during his meeting with Kim Jong-hyuk, president of the United Christian Churches of Korea.

The minister stressed the government has inherited three principles

of North Korea policy -- peaceful, phased and gradual approaches -- from previous governments.

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung has vowed to resume dialogue and reconciliation with North Korea since taking office in June.

Last week, the Defense Ministry proposed holding military talks with the North to discuss clarifying the Military Demarcation Line in a bid to prevent possible accidental clashes at border areas. But Pyongyang has remained silent toward the proposal.

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SEOUL: A US MQ-9 drone deployed in South Korea crashed off the coast of Gunsan, about 180 km south of the capital Seoul on Monday, local newspaper Chosun Ilbo reported.

According to the report, the 8th Fighter Wing under the US 7th Air Force in South Korea said the MQ-9, part of the 431st Expeditionary Reconnaissance Squadron deployed at Gunsan Air Base, experienced an accident at 4:35 am local time near the coast of Gunsan City, while conducting a routine mission.

There were no civilian casualties or property damage, and the cause of the accident is under investigation, the report said.

The MQ-9 was first permanently deployed to units stationed on the Korean Peninsula in September, said the report.



Smoke rises after a fire broke out at Wang Fuk Court, a residential estate in the Tai Po district of Hong Kong’s New Territories on Nov 26. (AP)

13 killed in fire engulfing HK high-rise residential buildings

Thirteen people were killed in a fire that spread across seven high-rise apartment buildings in a Hong Kong housing complex, and others were still trapped, the city’s fire services said Wednesday.

Nine people were declared dead at the scene and four others who were sent to the hospital were later confirmed dead, authorities told reporters. At least 15 others were injured.

About 700 people have been evacuated to temporary shelters.

The raging fire sent up a column of flames and thick smoke as it spread quickly on bamboo scaffolding and construction netting that had been set up around the exterior of the housing complex in Tai Po district, in the New Territories. Records show the housing complex consisted of eight blocks with almost 2,000 apartments housing about 4,800 people.

Video from the scene showed multiple buildings close to each

other ablaze, with bright flames and smoke shooting out of many of the apartments’ windows as night fell. Firefighters were aiming water at the intense flames from high up on ladder trucks.

The blaze started mid afternoon and after nightfall authorities upgraded it to a level 5 alarm, the highest level of severity, the Fire Services Department said. The fire was still raging after midnight local time. (AP)

India intensifies crackdown in disputed Kashmir after deadly New Delhi bombing

NEW DELHI, Nov 26, (AP): Hours after police in Indian-controlled Kashmir released shopkeeper Bilal Ahmed Wani but kept his son in custody in this month’s deadly New Delhi blast investigation, Wani set himself on fire, members of his family said.

The 55-year-old dry fruit seller was treated at three hospitals but died a day later. His relatives, who spoke on condition of anonymity as they feared reprisals from authorities for talking to media, said stress and humiliation over the detentions drove him to self-immolation. Police said Wani died due to “self-inflicted burn injuries.”

The Nov 10 explosion near New Delhi’s historic Red Fort killed at least 10 people and wounded 32 others. Indian investigators quickly focused on Kashmir, launching sweeping raids, detaining suspects and questioning thousands for possible links to what authorities called a “heinous terror incident.” Hundreds still remain in custody.

The blast occurred hours after police in Indian-controlled Kashmir said they had dismantled a suspected militant cell operating from the region to the outskirts of New Delhi. Officers initially arrested at



Indian army soldiers patrol outside near the blown-up home of one of the key suspects behind the Nov. 10 Delhi car blast, in Pulwama, south of Srinagar, Indian controlled Kashmir, on Nov 14. (AP)

least seven people, including two Kashmiri doctors, and seized a large quantity of bombmaking material in Faridabad, a city near the capital.

On Nov 14, some of the explosives seized in Faridabad and brought to a police station in Kashmir’s Srinagar

city detonated, killing at least nine people. Authorities were still investigating the police station blast but the region’s top police officer, Nalin Prabh, ruled out any sabotage, indicating mishandling of the explosive material may have caused the explosion.

Nigerian President Tinubu confirms rescue of 24 abducted schoolgirls

SOKOTO, Nigeria, Nov 26, (AP): All 24 schoolgirls held by assailants following a mass abduction last week from a school in northwestern Nigeria have been rescued, the country’s president announced Tuesday.

A total of 25 girls were abducted Nov. 17 from the Government Girls Comprehensive Secondary School in Kebbi state’s Maga town, but one of them was able to escape the same day, the school’s principal said. The remaining 24 were all rescued, according to a statement from President Bola Tinubu, though no details were released about the rescue.

“I am relieved that all the 24 girls have been accounted for. Now, we must put as a matter of urgency more boots on the ground in the vulnerable areas to avert further incidents of kidnapping,” the statement quoted Tinubu as saying.

The attack in Kebbi was among a spate of recent mass abductions in Nigeria, including a raid Friday on the Saint Mary’s School in north-central Niger state in which more than 300



A vendor displays local newspapers on the street of Lagos with headlines of the Government Girls Comprehensive Secondary School, where gunmen on Monday attacked the school dormitory, abducted schoolgirls, in Kebbi Nigeria on Nov 19. (AP)

students and staff from the Catholic school were abducted. Fifty students escaped over the weekend.

Musa Rabi Magaji, principal of the primarily Muslim school in

Kebbi, told The Associated Press that all of the girls had been released but that they were still in the custody of authorities. He had no immediate details of their condition.

Lat/Am

Brother of ex-Colombia prez Uribe sentenced: A brother of former Colombian president Álvaro Uribe was sentenced Tuesday to 28 years in prison for his alleged role in an illegal paramilitary group linked to hundreds of killings during the peak of Colombia’s civil war.

Prosecutors said that in the 1990s **Santiago Uribe** backed a group known as The 12 Apostles, which has been linked to at least 300 slayings and dozens of forced disappearances.

The group was set up to protect ranchers in Colombia’s Antioquia province from attacks by left-wing guerrillas who kidnapped and extorted business owners, including Uribe’s father, who was murdered in 1983 during a botched kidnapping attempt.

Santiago Uribe, now 68 and a horse breeder, has denied ties to criminal organizations. (AP)

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US sanctions high-ranking Haitian official: The US government imposed visa restrictions on Fritz Alphonse Jean, a member of Haiti’s transitional presidential council, accusing him of supporting gangs and other criminal organizations as the country’s political instability threatened to deepen.

The US did not name the person it sanctioned in late



Uribe

Monday’s announcement, but Jean confirmed it was him, telling The Associated Press on Tuesday that he rejected those accusations, which some believe are being used as a threat to try and influence Haiti’s politics.

Haiti is due to hold elections by Feb. 7, when the nine-member transitional presidential council is supposed to step down. Critics have asserted that some council members seek to stay in power beyond that date and are looking for a new prime minister who would support those plans. (AP)

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Women march in Mexico City: Hundreds of women marched through Mexico City’s streets Tuesday to protest violence against women in a country where gender violence remains pervasive.

Among the hundreds of marchers clad in purple or with green bandanas, some beat drums and others carried signs. One read: “Today I am the voice of those who are asking for help.”

“I am here for my grandmother, for my mother, for all of the women who aren’t here anymore, for all the women who report (violence) and aren’t supported,” said Alin Rocha, a 41-year-old teacher, who marched on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

Gender violence and equality have received more attention since President Claudia Sheinbaum, Mexico’s first female leader, took office last year. But even Sheinbaum was groped by a drunken man as she walked in the capital’s historic center earlier this month.

On Tuesday, she gathered governors from Mexico’s 32 states to report on progress to make sexual harassment a crime in every state. “Changing the laws is not enough, but it is necessary,” she said. (AP)

Bolsonaro begins prison sentence

BRASILIA, Brazi, Nov 26, (AP): Former Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro on Tuesday started his 27-year prison sentence for leading a coup attempt, to the surprise of many in the South American nation who doubted he would ever end up behind bars.

Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, who has overseen the case, ruled Bolsonaro will remain in custody after being preemptively arrested on Saturday. Supporters and detractors of the embattled leader gathered outside the federal police headquarters after the order was issued, some calling for Bolsonaro’s release and others toasting to his imprisonment.

The far-right leader had been under house arrest since August and was taken in on Saturday after trying to break his ankle monitor. Bolsonaro blamed “hallucinations”, a claim that de Moraes dismissed in his preemptive arrest order.

Bolsonaro will not have any contact with the few other inmates at the federal police headquarters. His 12-square-meter room has a bed, a private bathroom, air conditioning, a TV set and a desk, according to federal police.



Korail slum is seen engulfed in a major fire, in Dhaka on Nov 25. (AP)

Fire destroys crowded slum in Bangladesh

A devastating fire in a crowded slum in the heart of Bangladesh’s capital has destroyed 1,500 shanties, leaving thousands homeless, authorities said Wednesday.

No casualties have been reported.

The blaze, which began Tuesday evening at the massive Korail slum in Dhaka, was doused Wednesday after 16 hours, said Rashed Bin Khalid, a duty officer at the Department of Fire Service and Civil Defence.

The fire service’s director, Lt Col Mohammad Tajul Islam Chowdhury, said about 1,500 shanties were burned or damaged in the blaze and thousands remained homeless.

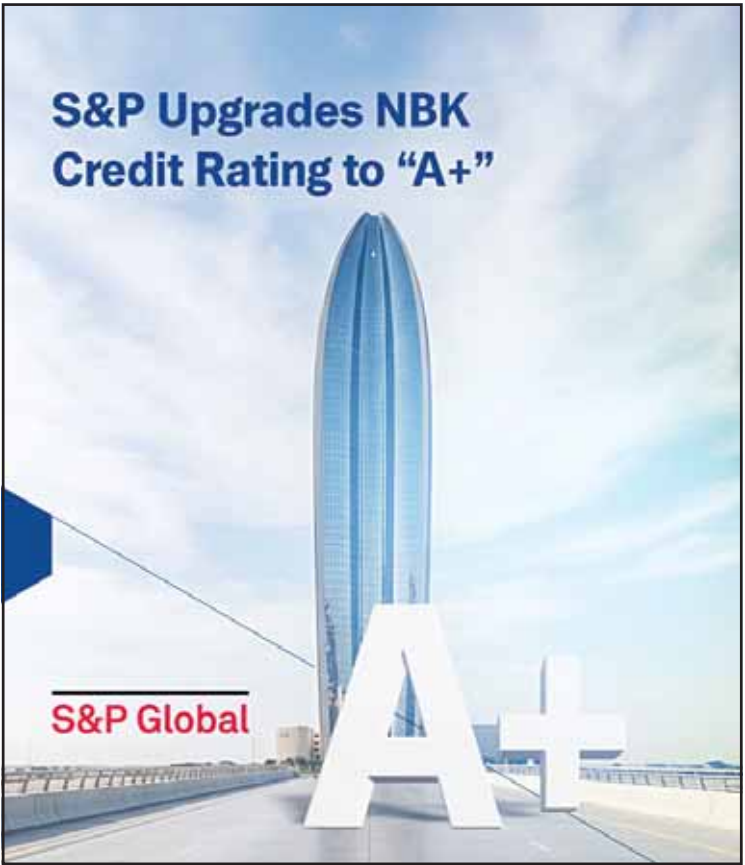
According to official data, about 60,000 families - many of them climate refugees - live in the slum which has an area of more than 160 acres (65 hectares). The slum straddles Dhaka’s upscale Gulshan and Banani neighborhoods, and it is surrounded by clusters of high-rise apartment and office buildings. (AP)

Kuwaiti oil rises to \$64.08 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26, (KUNA): Price of Kuwaiti oil rose by 65 cents, reaching US 64.08 per barrel in Tuesday trading, compared to USD 64.43 per barrel on Monday, according to the Kuwait Petroleum Corpora-

tion on Wednesday.

Globally, price of Brent crude dropped by USD 1.03 to USD 62.34 pb, while West Texas Intermediate crude fell by 99 cents to USD 57.85 pb.



Market dominance highlighted

NBK credit rating raised to A+ on strong performance

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26: S&P Global Ratings announced that it has upgraded the credit rating of National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) from 'A' to 'A+', with a Stable Outlook.

The agency explained that the upgrade reflects NBK's position as the largest and most systemically important bank in Kuwait, and affirmed the short-term rating at 'A-1'.

S&P Global Ratings noted that the ratings assigned to NBK reflect the Bank's strong franchise in the Kuwaiti market and its increasing geographic diversification, with 26% of operating income generated outside Kuwait in the first nine months of 2025.

Furthermore, the agency affirmed that rising domestic lending opportunities, coupled with the strategic expansion of its loan portfolio across key international markets, including the GCC, the United States, Europe, and Asia, supported robust annualized loan growth of 13% in the first nine months of 2025.

The agency added that the Bank has kept its nonperforming loan (NPL) ratio below 1.5% and cost of risk under 50 basis points since 2022.

Asset quality is expected to remain stable, while S&P also factors in the bank's strong capitalization. The Bank's risk-adjusted capital (RAC) ratio is projected to stay within the 10.5%-11.0% range over 2025-2026, compared with 10.9% in 2024.

The global rating agency explained that the Bank's long-term rating now stands two notches above its stand-alone credit profile (SACP) of 'a-'. This reflects its view of a higher likelihood of extraordinary government support for NBK if needed, given the Bank's significant systemic importance in Kuwait.

Moreover, S&P Global Ratings highlighted NBK's dominant market position, noting that the Bank holds a market share exceeding 30% of the domestic banking sector, with a strong presence in both retail and corporate banking. It also underscored the high level of support that the Kuwaiti government extends to the local banking system, backed by a consistent record of assistance when needed. In addition, S&P's assessment incorporates its expectation that NBK would receive additional help from Kuwait, given its very close proximity and importance to the government.

The agency also raised the long-term ratings of NBK's core subsidiaries, National Bank of Kuwait (International)

- The bank's ratings reflect its strong franchise in Kuwait and increasing geographic diversification
- NBK has maintained its NPL ratio below 1.5% and its cost of risk under 50 basis points since 2022
- The loan portfolio registered robust annualized growth of 13% in the first nine months of 2025
- The Bank's asset quality remains stable, taking into account its strong capitalization

PLC (NBKI) in London and National Bank of Kuwait-France S.A. (NBK-France) to 'A+' from 'A', while affirming the short-term ratings at 'A-1' and maintaining the Stable Outlook. It likewise affirmed the 'A-1' short-term ratings on National Bank of Kuwait SAKP (New York Branch) and on the bank's \$5 billion commercial paper program.

It stressed that Kuwait's fiscal reform momentum and reduced fiscal funding constraints will drive economic growth, noting that the newly implemented financing and liquidity law will ease hard budgetary constraints and pave the way for comprehensive financing arrangements over the medium to long term.

Additionally, it also noted that despite lower oil prices, easing fiscal funding constraints, a modest increase in oil production, and large-scale capital projects are expected to support Kuwait's economic growth. Real GDP growth is projected to accelerate to an average of 2% over 2025-2028, following two consecutive years of economic contraction.

Earlier this month, S&P Global Ratings upgraded Kuwait's sovereign credit ratings to 'AA-/A-1+', stating that the upgrade reflects reform momentum and reduced fiscal funding constraints, which will support economic growth in the country.

Business

S&P upgrades Kuwait to AA- as reform momentum accelerates

Reforms, mega projects propel credit rating

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26, (KUNA): Kuwait's recent upgrade by Standard & Poor's (S&P) to a sovereign credit rating of AA- with a stable outlook marks a pivotal moment in the country's economic trajectory, reflecting the cumulative impact of wide-ranging reforms and structural transformation carried out over the past year.

S&P's decision represents a strong vote of confidence in Kuwait's economic direction, the agency highlighted that the reforms undertaken by the government have strengthened the fiscal framework, enhanced liquidity management, and created a more predictable environment for long-term financial planning.

The improved rating is expected to support greater foreign investment inflows, boost investor confidence, and enhance the competitiveness of Kuwait's development projects regionally and globally.

During its weekly meeting on Tuesday, chaired by Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the Cabinet affirmed its commitment to implementing the vision of Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, pushing ahead with reforms to attract foreign investment and improve the business climate, aiming to transform the country into a regional and global financial and commercial hub.

The Cabinet reiterated its support for ongoing financial reforms intended to raise Kuwait's sovereign credit rating on international indices and assured that it will meet current and future requirements to ensure fiscal sustainability.

It assigned the tasks of reporting every six months on developments in Kuwait's sovereign credit rating to Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and Acting Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs Dr. Sabeeh Al-Mukhaizeem.

S&P also pointed to Kuwait's substantial financial assets, managed by Kuwait Investment Authority, and ongoing reform momentum as key factors that strengthen Kuwait's fiscal resilience and reduce dependence on hydrocarbons.

The agency highlighted major infrastructure and capital projects such as the northern economic zone, a new port, energy projects, a new international airport terminal, new residential cities, and a free economic zone as evidence of the state's long-term economic transformation.

The momentum behind Kuwait's reform agenda accelerated significantly since mid-2024, with a synchronized program covering economic, financial, legislative and structural areas, where these reforms seek to build a modern, flexible and sustainable economic model aligned with Kuwait Vision 2035, while enabling the country to respond effectively to fast-evolving global challenges.

A central milestone in this process was the enactment of Law No. 60 of 2025, known as

the Liquidity and Financing Law, which provides a comprehensive framework for managing liquidity needs and supporting public finances.

The law enables the state to adopt diversified financing tools and ensures smoother fiscal operations, helping reduce pressure on public spending during periods of fluctuating oil revenues.

In parallel, Kuwait implemented the global minimum tax on multinational corporations earlier this year, making it one of the first regional economies to adopt the international tax framework endorsed by the G20 and OECD.

This move strengthens Kuwait's commitment to transparency, enhances integration with global markets, and diversifies non-oil revenues.

Complementing these legislative reforms is the anticipated approval of the Sukuk Law, which will provide Kuwait with an additional sovereign financing instrument and create new opportunities for Islamic finance investment, where these measures aim to build a robust fiscal foundation that supports long-term stability and growth.

The government has also advanced several structural initiatives aimed at optimizing national resources and improving efficiency across key sectors, including efforts to reprice state land assets to maximize economic value, rationalize subsidies to direct support to eligible beneficiaries, and enhance performance standards within the public sector to raise productivity and service quality.

To strengthen the investment climate, the government introduced the real-estate brokerage system to improve transparency and reduce irregular practices in property transactions.

It also launched the smart licensing project, implemented key steps for the real-estate developer ecosystem, and advanced capital-market modernization initiatives to attract institutional investment.

On the development front, Kuwait recorded its highest quarterly development spending in five years during the first quarter of the 2025-2026 development plan, reaching KD 132.4 million (USD 434 million).

The government is currently implementing 373 ongoing development projects in addition to 69 new ones planned for the upcoming fiscal year.

Notable flagship projects include the Umm Al-Haiaman Wastewater Expansion, the new passenger terminal at Kuwait International Airport, and Phase One of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, expected to be completed in 2028.

The Cabinet recently directed ministries and state agencies to expedite procedures for signing major project agreements with several partner governments in sectors such as construction, transportation and logistics, these steps are part of Kuwait's broader strategy to reinforce international partnerships and mobilize global expertise to support national development priorities.

Kuwait also intensified high-level economic and technical engagements in recent months, resulting in accelerated legal and technical reviews for major projects and deeper cooperation with China through specialized joint committees that monitor project execution, evaluate investment opportunities, and support the exchange of developmental expertise.

In the monetary sector, the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) continues to anchor the Kuwaiti dinar to a basket of currencies, providing a strong foundation for price stability and limiting inflationary pressures, this policy supports the dinar's position as a reliable store of value and contributes to monetary stability.

Meanwhile, reforms in the investment and tourism sectors have strengthened Kuwait's attractiveness as a destination for global companies, visa facilitation measures, infrastructure upgrades, and the development of new tourism facilities have stimulated activity in the sector.

Major international firms, including Google Cloud and BlackRock, have expanded operations in Kuwait, reflecting confidence in the country's economic transformation and digital-economy ambitions.

The government also launched the Government Performance Management System to promote accountability, strengthen governance, improve service quality, and enhance transparency across ministries and state agencies, where these measures support long-term efforts to counter administrative inefficiencies and reinforce integrity.

Kuwait's economic performance has already shown positive indicators, with the national economy recording 1.3 percent growth in the first half of 2025, international organizations expect this trend to continue, supported by ongoing reforms and rising capital investments.

S&P emphasized that Kuwait's substantial financial assets, coupled with reform momentum, will mitigate risks associated with reliance on the oil sector and potential volatility in energy markets.

The agency added that Kuwait's fiscal and external balances will remain among the strongest globally over the medium term.

Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and Acting Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs Dr. Sabeeh Al-Mukhaizeem said the upgraded sovereign rating reflects the positive impact of Kuwait's structural and fiscal reforms.

He affirmed that the government remains committed to advancing economic diversification, strengthening revenue sources, and ensuring long-term financial sustainability.

Kuwait's comprehensive reform roadmap represents a transformative step toward addressing structural imbalances and building a sustainable development model centered on economic diversification, improved business conditions, and accelerated project execution.

Sheikh Dr. Nimer Al-Sabah highlights digital energy transformation efforts

Kuwait showcases carbon management at IEF meeting

RIYADH, Nov 26, (KUNA): Undersecretary of the Ministry of Oil Sheikh Dr. Nimer Fahad Al-Sabah stated Wednesday that Kuwait presented its pioneering experience in carbon management and digital energy data transformation during the International Energy Forum's (IEF) high-level advisory committee meeting in Riyadh.

He told KUNA after the meeting that Kuwait's selection to present a technical paper on carbon management and gas developments reflects its active role and standing in global energy market dialogues amid rapid transformations.

He said the presentation underscores Kuwait's commitment to advancing emissions-management practices and promoting innovation in energy, gas,

and hydrogen, noting that the session reviewed ways to strengthen coordination among member states to address future challenges.

He added that Kuwait's participation highlights its effective role in international discussions on global energy markets, stressing that the technical paper showcased national efforts to reduce emissions and enhance operational efficiency in the oil sector.

The meeting discussed means of promoting innovation and advanced technologies supporting the transition to clean energy, examining pathways to develop global data systems and enhance cooperation to balance energy security, sustainability, and development.

By paying with eligible cards only through the website and application

NBK offers customers a KD 50 discount on Blue Friday X-Cite purchases

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26: As part of its strategic partnership with X-Cite Electronics, National Bank of Kuwait announced offering a KD 50 discount on Blue Friday purchases made by customers only through X-Cite's website and application on Friday, November 28, 2025. This offer will be available for the first 600 customers who spend a minimum of KD 300 using the following cards:

- NBK 247 Cashback Visa Platinum Prepaid Card
- NBK Visa Platinum Credit Card
- NBK Visa Signature Credit Card
- NBK Visa Infinite Credit Card
- NBK KWT Visa Infinite Credit Card
- NBK-KPC Visa Infinite Credit Card
- NBK-Kuwait Airways (Oasis Club) Visa Signature Credit Card
- NBK-Kuwait airways (Oasis Club) Visa Infinite Credit Card
- NBK Avios Visa Signature Prepaid Card

On this occasion, Mr. Anwar Al-Ballam, AVP - Cards Services Management at NBK, commented: "At NBK, we are keen on always being close to our customers on



Anwar Al-Ballam

their occasions and providing them with exclusive offers that meet their different needs from all age groups and segments. Moreover, we work diligently to match their expectations and enrich their banking experience by adding value to it with a package of exclusive benefits and discounts".

Al-Ballam also added: "Our commitment towards our custom-

- Al-Ballam:**
- We work diligently to enrich our customers' experience by offering them exclusive benefits and discounts.
 - NBK Credit Cards are more than just payment tools; they are gateways to attaining unique lifestyles.

ers goes beyond simply providing them with conventional banking services. Instead, we strive to be part of their daily life and share their interests through campaigns and rewards designed specifically for their diverse lifestyles".

Finally, Al-Ballam pointed out that NBK's credit cards are not payment tools; rather, they are gateways to attaining a unique lifestyle and a wide range of exclusive benefits through the campaigns we make all year round in partnership with prestigious companies and institutions from numerous sectors.

Providing an exceptional banking experience that prioritizes customers, Al-Ballam stressed, is a deep-rooted culture at NBK, which is evident in the year-round

offers that aim to bring forward a comprehensive banking experience supported by innovative solutions and developed banking products that meet their needs, which is something NBK prides itself for maintaining over the years.

It is worth noting that NBK credit cards offer customers the opportunity to participate in the bank's year-round offers, in addition to providing a unique lifestyle with the numerous benefits they offer their holders, as they are the ideal solution for completing payments, offering numerous benefits, including the NBK KWT program, Oasis Club Miles, NBK Miles, and the NBK Rewards Program, in addition to purchase protection and extended warranty services.



Cementing the Bank’s leadership role in Kuwait’s digital transformation and banking innovation

Burgan Bank receives the Digital Transformation Excellence Award as part of SAP Business Suite Innovation Day’s customer celebration

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26: In line with its progressive and forward-looking banking innovation and digital transformation strategy, Burgan Bank attended the Business Suite Innovation Day, hosted by the Bank’s strategic partner SAP, a global leader in enterprise applications and business AI. The event, held under the theme “Kuwait’s Digital Future: driven by connected Applications, Data and AI”, took place at Waldorf Astoria Kuwait, under the patronage of the Ministry of State for Communication Affairs. As part of the event’s Customer Celebration ceremony, Mr. Ahmad Hajeyah, Assistant General Manager - Technology Factory, accepted the Digital Transformation Excellence Award for its outstanding achievements in leveraging SAP technologies to enhance operational efficiency, customer experience, and innovation in the banking sector on behalf of Burgan Bank.

Burgan Bank’s recognition and participation are a testament to its far-reaching influence across the local and regional technology and banking innovation markets, as well as its ongoing contribution to ensuring the success of Kuwait Vision 2035.

“On behalf of Burgan Bank, we are honored to be recognized by our valuable partners at SAP for our Digital Transformation Excellence in utilizing SAP technologies to magnify the value of data as a resource on all operational fronts,” said Mr. Barrak Al-Mattar, General Manager- Information Technology at Burgan Bank “Information and technology are two of the strongest forces driving global markets and economies, and as part of our future ready culture and momentous digital transformation journey, we spare no effort to invest in the latest information management software. For this reason, our strategic partnership with SAP is pivotal to our culture, which leverages data optimization and analytics for constantly advancing everything from banking offerings to employee experience and overall culture.”

“We are delighted to recognize Burgan Bank with the Digital Transformation Excellence Award at our SAP Business Suite Innovation Day,” said Sundus Bushahri, Managing Director, SAP Kuwait. “Burgan Bank has demonstrated exceptional leadership in leveraging SAP technologies to enhance



Mr. Barrak Al-Mattar, General Manager — Information Technology at Burgan Bank



His Excellency Omar Al Omar, Minister of State for Communications Affairs, Mr. Ahmad Hajeyah, Assistant General Manager — Technology Factory, Burgan Bank, and Ms. Sundus Bushahri, Managing Director, SAP Kuwait

operational efficiency, elevate customer experiences, and foster innovation within Kuwait’s banking sector. Its strategic commitment to digital transformation aligns seamlessly with Kuwait’s vision for sustainable growth and technological advancement. We are proud of our strong partnership with Burgan Bank and look forward to continuing our collaboration as the bank sets new benchmarks for technology-driven excellence in the region.”

The SAP regional team selected Burgan Bank for this award in light of its demonstrated success in adopting and integrating SAP solutions across business functions; measurable impact on efficiency, innovation, and customer centric processes; strategic alignment with Kuwait’s vision for digital transformation and sustainable growth; and partnership strength and continued collaboration with SAP toward technology-led excellence.

In addition to the awards and recognitions, the event covered several angles of Kuwait’s Digital Future through insightful keynote speeches and panel discussions, with a focus on ‘Empowering People and Processes for Effective Digital Transformation’, ‘Driving Sustainable Transformation with SAP’, ‘Turning Data into Action’, and ‘Igniting AI-Driven Insights Breakthroughs’, among other important discussions. In addition to the valuable industry insights and novel use cases for SAP software for ambitious institutions ready to launch in a digital-first, customer-centric future, the event presented an op-



Mr. Ahmad Hajeyah, Assistant General Manager – Technology Factory, accepting the award on behalf of Burgan Bank, accompanied by the Burgan team.

portunity for Burgan Bank to grow its network of forward-looking industry partners.

Among Burgan Bank’s most notable and recent achievements in line with its vision and strategy to be the most modern and progressive bank in Kuwait is its partnership deal with SAP to deploy the cutting-edge, full-suite human resources management (HRM) system, Success Factors. The agreement to adopt this integrated AI and data-driven system marked a feat for the Bank’s human resources and IT departments, which provided employees with advanced technical experience that supports their holistic growth.

It serves to note that, as a leader of digital transformation and banking innovation in Kuwait, Burgan Bank continues to support and participate in the most impactful local, regional, and international events on financial technology and innovation. These efforts include the Bank’s participation in the IDC Kuwait CIO Summit 2025, held under the theme “Architecting an AI-Fueled Business” as well as Kuwait’s biggest technology and innovation event, NEXUS 2024. In recognition of the Bank’s notable impact on the industry, Mr. Al-Mattar was awarded the “Legend CIO” award in the “20+ years’ experience in the field” category, as part of the World CIO 200 Summit’s recognition of the most influential IT leaders in their respective industries worldwide in 2024.

US adds 119,000 jobs

Job market stalls amid economic uncertainty

NEW YORK, Nov 26, (AP): It’s a tough time to be looking for a job.

Amid wider economic uncertainty, some analysts have said that businesses are at a “no-hire, no fire” standstill. That’s caused many to limit new work to only a few specific roles, if not pause openings entirely. At the same time, sizable layoffs have continued to pile up - raising worker anxieties across sectors.

Some companies have pointed to rising operational costs spanning from U.S. President Donald Trump’s barrage of new tariffs and shifts in consumer spending. Others cite corporate restructuring more broadly - or are redirecting money to artificial intelligence.

Federal employees have encountered additional doses of uncertainty, impacting worker sentiment around the job market overall. Shortly after Trump returned to office at the start of the year, federal jobs were cut by the thousands. And the record 43-day government shutdown also left many without paychecks.

The impasse put key economic data on hold, too. In a delayed report released last week, the Labor Department said U.S. employers added a surprising 119,000 jobs in September. But unemployment rose to 4.4% - and other troubling details emerged, including revisions showing the economy actually lost 4,000 jobs in August. The shutdown also resulted in holes for more recent hiring numbers. The government says it won’t release a full jobs report for October.

Here are some of the largest job cuts announced recently:

In November, HP said this week it expected to lay off between 4,000 and 6,000 employees. The cuts are part of a wider initiative from the computer maker to streamline operations, which includes adopting AI to increase productivity. The company aims to complete these actions by the end of the 2028 fiscal year.

Also in November, Verizon began laying off more than 13,000 employees. In a staff memo announcing the cuts, CEO Dan Schulman said that the telecommunications giant needed to simplify operations and “reorient” the entire company.

General Motors will lay off about 1,700 workers across manufacturing sites in Michigan and Ohio in late October, as the auto giant adjusts to slowing demand for electric vehicles. Hundreds of additional employees are reportedly slated for “temporary layoffs” at the start of next year.

In long-awaited cuts just months after completing its \$8 billion merger with Skydance, Paramount plans to lay off about 2,000 employees - about 10% of its workforce. Paramount initiated roughly 1,000 of those layoffs in late October, according to a source familiar with the matter.

In November, Paramount also announced plans to eliminate 1,600 positions as part of divestitures of Televisión Federal in Argentina and Chilevision in Chile. And the company said another 600 employees had chosen voluntary severance packages as part of a

coming push to return to the office full-time.

Amazon said in October that it will cut about 14,000 corporate jobs, close to 4% of its workforce, as the online retail giant ramps up spending on AI while trimming costs elsewhere. A letter to employees said most workers would be given 90 days to look for a new position internally.

United Parcel Service has disclosed about 48,000 job cuts this year as part of turnaround efforts, which arrive amid wider shifts in the company’s shipping outputs. UPS also closed daily operations at 93 leased and owned buildings during the first nine months of this year.

Target in October said it would eliminate about 1,800 corporate positions, or about 8% of its corporate workforce globally. The retailer said the cuts were part of wider streamlining efforts.

In mid-October, Nestlé said it would be cutting 16,000 jobs globally - as part of wider cost cutting aimed at reviving its financial performance amid headwinds like rising commodity costs and U.S. imposed tariffs. The Swiss food giant said the layoffs would take place over the next two years.

In September, Lufthansa Group said it would shed 4,000 jobs by 2030 - pointing to the adoption of artificial intelligence, digitalization and consolidating work among member airlines.

Also in September, Danish pharmaceutical company Novo Nordisk said it would cut 9,000 jobs, about 11% of its workforce. The company - which makes drugs like Ozempic and Wegovy - said the layoffs were part of wider restructuring, as it works to sell more obesity and diabetes medications amid rising competition.

Oil giant ConocoPhillips announced plans in September to lay off up to a quarter of its workforce, as part of broader efforts from the company to cut costs. Between 2,600 and 3,250 workers were expected to be impacted, with most layoffs set to take place before the end of 2025.

Intel has moved to shed thousands of jobs - with the struggling chipmaker working to revive its business. In July, CEO Lip-Bu Tan said Intel expected to end the year with 75,000 “core” workers, excluding subsidiaries, through layoffs and attrition. That’s down from 99,500 core employees reported the end of last year. The company previously announced a 15% workforce reduction.

In May, Microsoft began laying off about 6,000 workers across its workforce. And just months later, the tech giant said it would be cutting 9,000 positions - marking its biggest round of layoffs seen in more than two years. The company has cited “organizational changes,” but the labor reductions also arrive as the company spends heavily on AI.

In June, Procter & Gamble said it would cut up to 7,000 jobs over the next two years, 6% of the company’s global workforce. The maker of Tide detergent and Pampers diapers said the cuts were part of a wider restructuring - also arriving amid tariff pressures.

US consumer confidence falls sharply

Inflation, tariffs, and politics lead consumer worries

WASHINGTON, Nov 26, (AP): **U.S. consumers were much less confident in the economy in November in the aftermath of the government shutdown, weak hiring and stubborn inflation.**

The Conference Board said Tuesday that its consumer confidence index dropped to 88.7 in November from an upwardly revised October reading of 95.5, the lowest reading since April, when President Donald Trump announced sweeping tariffs that caused the stock market to plunge.

The figures suggest that Americans are increasingly wary of high costs and sluggish job gains, with perceptions of the labor market worsening, the survey found. Declining confidence could pose political problems for Trump and Republicans in Congress, as the dimmer views of the economy were seen among all political affiliations and were particularly sharp among independents, the Conference Board said.

Earlier Tuesday, a government report showed that retail sales slowed in September after healthy readings over the summer. While economists forecast healthy growth for the July-September quarter, many expect a much weaker showing in the final three months of the year, largely because of the shutdown.

Less-confident consumers may spend less, though the connection isn’t always clear. In recent years, consumer spending has held up even when the available data suggests they’ve grown more anxious.

“We do not think that consumer spending is about to hit a cliff, as spending has decoupled from confidence, but risks to the downside are increasing,” Thomas Simons, chief U.S. economist at JEFFERIES, an investment bank, said.

The proportion of consumers that said jobs are “plentiful” dropped to 27.6% in November, down from 28.6% in the previous month. It is down sharply from 37% in December.

At the same time, 17.9% said jobs are “hard to get,” slightly below the 18.3% who said so in Oc-

tober. That figure is up from 15.2% in September. The figures on job availability are seen by economists as reliable predictors of hiring and the unemployment rate.

Americans continue to worry about elevated costs, fueling the “affordability” concerns that were a key issue in elections earlier this month.

“Consumers’ write-in responses pertaining to factors affecting the economy continued to be led by references to prices and inflation, tariffs and trade, and politics, with increased mentions of the federal government shutdown,” said Dana Peterson, chief economist at the Conference Board. The shutdown ended Nov. 12.

The economy likely grew at a solid annual rate of about 3% in the July-September quarter, economists estimate. But growth is likely to slow in the final three months of the year, largely because of the shutdown, which cut off pay for federal workers, disrupted contracts, and interrupted air travel.

The Conference Board survey ran through Nov. 18, about five days after the shutdown ended.

Government aims to generate £26 billion by 2029-30

UK budget leaked ahead of Treasury chiefs’ statement

LONDON, Nov 26, (AP): Britain’s Treasury chief Rachel Reeves stood up Wednesday to deliver a crucial tax-raising budget statement to lawmakers following an unprecedented leak from the government’s independent forecaster that basically laid out her measures.

The biggest change in terms of money raised, according to the leak from the Office for Budget Responsibility, is freezing the levels at which earners pay Britain’s different tax levels, meaning as wages rise, more people fall into higher tax brackets.

Other measures include a mansion tax on high-valued properties, changes to the capital tax regime and a cut to tax-free provisions for private pensions.

According to the leaked documents from the OBR, which it has apologized for, the government will raise 26 billion pounds (\$34 billion) in 2029-30.

The OBR blamed a “technical error” for the leak, saying it went “live on our website too early this morning.” It said it will report to all relevant authorities, including the Treasury, as to what happened.

The leak is a further embarrassment for the United Kingdom’s center-left Labour government following weeks of weeks of speculation and mixed signals that unsettled the markets.

In May, Microsoft began laying off about 6,000 workers across its workforce. And just months later, the tech giant said it would be cutting 9,000 positions - marking its biggest round of layoffs seen in more than two years. The company has cited “organizational changes,” but the labor reductions also arrive as the company spends heavily on AI.

In June, Procter & Gamble said it would cut up to 7,000 jobs over the next two years, 6% of the company’s global workforce. The maker of Tide detergent and Pampers diapers said the cuts were part of a wider restructuring - also arriving amid tariff pressures.



Britain’s Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves and followed by Treasury team members, Chief Secretary to the Treasury James Murray, Financial Secretary to the Treasury Lord Spencer Livermore, Economic Secretary to the Treasury Lucy Rigby, Minister for Pensions Torsten Bell and Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury Dan Tomlinson, as she prepares to leave 11 Downing Street, Wednesday, Nov. 26, 2025. (AP)

blaming her decision last year to slap taxes on business. Though there were signs that the economy was improving in the first half of the year, when it was the fastest-growing among the Group of Seven leading industrialized nations, it has faltered again.

“The chancellor faces a delicate balancing act of conveying fiscal stability while advancing the growth agenda,” said Peter Arnold, chief economist at consulting firm EY U.K.

False dawns have been a regular feature of the U.K. economy since the global financial crisis of 2008-2009. If the economy had kept growing at precrisis levels, it would be nearly a quarter bigger than it is now. That’s a lot of lost activity - and a lot of lost tax revenue going

into the Treasury’s coffers.

In addition to the long-term costs of the financial crisis, Britain’s public finances, like those of other nations, have been further squeezed by the costs of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war and U.S. President Donald Trump’s global tariffs. The U.K. bears the extra burden of Brexit, which has knocked billions off the economy since the country left the European Union in 2020.

Meanwhile, Reeves has a bunch of spending commitments aimed at easing the cost of living as inflation remains stubbornly high, including making up for a series of about-faces on planned welfare cuts and the likely ditching of a cap on benefits paid out to families with several children. That and measures such as

freezing rail fares or cutting green taxes on energy bills don’t come cheap.

The budget is a high-stakes moment for Reeves and Starmer, who is facing mounting concern from Labour lawmakers over his dire poll ratings. Opinion polls consistently put Labour well behind the hard-right Reform UK party led by Nigel Farage.

The next election doesn’t have to be held until 2029, and the government continues to hope that its economic measures will spur higher growth and ease financial pressures.

But speculation is swirling about a potential challenge to Starmer’s leadership from within his party, and analysts say a misfiring budget could add to the sense of crisis within the government.

What's On

SPOTLIGHT

Got a birthday or event?



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In line with government efforts to empower them and strengthen their role in society and the labor market

MoH commends Gulf Bank for its role in employing and supporting people with disabilities

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26: As part of the government's ongoing commitment to empowering people with disabilities and reinforcing their role in the Kuwaiti community and the labor market, H.E. Dr. Ahmad Abdulwahab Al Awadhi, Minister of Health, conducted an official visit to Gulf Bank. He was received by Acting Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Sami Mahfouz; Acting Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Faisal AlAdsani and Acting General Manager of Human Resources, Mr. Hamed Al Tamimi; along with a number of senior executives and department heads.

The visit comes in recognition of the Bank's continuous efforts to empower national talent from among people with disabilities, and its commitment to providing an inclusive work environment that supports their professional and social integration.

During the visit, H.E. the Minister expressed his pride in the genuine commitment he witnessed at Gulf Bank toward developing programs that support the employment of people with disabilities and offering them fair opportunities. He emphasized that the banking sector is a vital partner in supporting Kuwait's plans to enhance equal opportunities.

His Excellency praised the leading role Gulf Bank plays in this area, noting that the Bank has adopted clear policies and comprehensive training programs aimed at developing the skills of employees with disabilities and enabling them to contribute effectively to the banking sector.

The visit also featured a special



H.E. Dr. Ahmad Abdulwahab Al Awadhi, Minister of Health seen in a friendly conversation with the employees, and Hamed Al Tamimi appears in the picture.



Sami Mahfouz and Faisal AlAdsani welcomed H.E. Dr. Ahmad Abdulwahab Al Awadhi.



H.E. Dr. Ahmad Abdulwahab Al Awadhi honors one of the bank's female employees with disability.

recognition ceremony honoring a group of Gulf Bank employees with disabilities, reflecting the Bank's and its leadership's commitment to acknowledging their contributions and highlighting their impact on institutional performance. H.E. the Minister presented commemorative shields to the honorees, affirming that this gesture serves as a message of support that strengthens their confidence and encourages them to continue excelling and innovating in their daily roles.

Acting CEO Mr. Sami Mahfouz expressed his pride in the accom-

plishments of Gulf Bank employees with disabilities, affirming the Bank's ongoing commitment to enhancing their participation and creating opportunities that enable them to grow professionally and showcase their abilities. He added that the success stories achieved by many of them inspire the Bank to expand its efforts in this area.

For his part, Acting Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Faisal AlAdsani welcomed the Minister's visit, stressing that empowering people with disabilities is a top priority for the Bank as part of its national role

and corporate social responsibility. He noted that the Bank consistently works on developing sustainable initiatives that support workplace integration, whether through providing suitable accommodations or offering specialized training and development programs.

Acting General Manager of Human Resources Mr. Hamed Al Tamimi stated that Gulf Bank is one of the largest private-sector employers of people with disabilities- a reflection of the Bank's full belief in their capabilities, and of its continued efforts to achieve sustainable develop-

ment through the contribution of all segments of Kuwaiti society, in line with its 2030 strategy and Kuwait Vision 2035.

H.E. the Minister was also briefed on the Bank's ongoing initiatives to support workplace inclusion. He affirmed that these efforts serve as a model for the private sector, highlighting that collaboration between the public and private sectors represents a pivotal step toward a more inclusive and advanced society, where every individual enjoys equal opportunities to contribute to national development.

It is worth noting that Gulf Bank actively supports and participates in the national initiative "Partners for Their Employment," organized by the Public Authority for Disability Affairs in partnership with the Human Building Institute. The Bank has also received the "Best Implementation of Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives" award from MEED International Magazine, in recognition of its efforts to strengthen community sustainability and provide a diverse, inclusive work environment that guarantees equal opportunities for all.

Now easier with visa-free travel

Explore Georgia's beauty & heritage

By John Fernandes

Al Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26: Georgia is rapidly emerging as a top destination for Kuwaiti travelers, thanks to visa-free access and convenient direct flights. With the number of Kuwaiti visitors to Georgia jumping by 38% in just one year, the Caucasus country is leveraging its breathtaking landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and warm hospitality to captivate Gulf tourists. Whether you're drawn to the historic charm of Tbilisi, the coastal beauty of Batumi, or the serene mountain villages, Georgia offers an accessible, diverse, and unforgettable getaway just a few hours from Kuwait.

Speaking at a Tourism Promotional Forum in Kuwait, Georgian Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Noshervan Lomtadze, highlighted Georgia's scenic landscapes, moderate climate, and visa-free access for Kuwaiti citizens as key attractions.

Direct flights by Jazeera Airways and Kuwait Airways to Tbilisi and Batumi have boosted arrivals, with plans to expand routes further. Kuwait is Georgia's second-largest Gulf tourism market, after Saudi Arabia, and the forum aimed to strengthen bilateral tourism ties and promote investment opportunities in Georgia's travel sector.

Arab Times Online Media Manager John Fernandes conducted an exclusive interview with Ms. Elene Gogelia, Chief Coordinator (Ministry of Economy & Sustainable Development of Georgia, Georgian National Tourism Administration).

Question: Georgia is rich in culture, history, and nature but is still not widely known internationally. What steps is the ministry taking to raise Georgia's profile in key global markets?

Answer: The Georgian National Tourism Administration is actively implementing a multi-layered global marketing strategy to strengthen Georgia's visibility. This includes large-scale digital campaigns, international media collaborations, and participation in leading travel fairs across Europe, the Gulf region, and Asia.

We are also working closely with airlines and travel partners to launch joint promotional initiatives, improve connectivity, and increase the number of direct flights. In addition, we host familiarization trips for influencers, journalists, and tour operators to ensure that Georgia's authentic story reaches new audiences in an engaging and credible way.

Q: Despite being Muslim-friendly, Georgia's tourism is seasonal. How are you promoting year-round tourism, especially from the Middle East and Southeast Asia during quieter months?

A: Georgia has a huge potential as a year-round destination, and we are actively promoting off-season experiences tailored to travelers from the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

Our campaigns highlight autumn and spring travel, emphasizing nature, wellness, gastronomy, cultural tourism, spa resorts, and adventure activities such as hiking, skiing, and thermal experiences.

We also work with airlines and travel agencies to develop attractive off-season packages, ensuring that visitors can enjoy Georgia's mild climate, diverse landscapes, and cultural experiences throughout the year.

Q: Cities like Tbilisi and Batumi have seen infrastructure upgrades, but rural and mountain areas remain difficult to access. Are there plans to improve infrastructure in these regions?

A: The development of regional and



Georgian Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Noshervan Lomtadze



Ms. Elene Gogelia, Chief Coordinator



Photos from the event.

mountain tourism is a national priority. Significant investments are being made in road rehabilitation, improved transportation links, and enhanced visitor facilities in rural destinations.

New infrastructure projects include upgraded mountain roads, improved safety measures, improved signage and expanded accommodation options that support sustainable tourism growth. These efforts ensure that visitors can access Georgia's most unique regions comfortably and safely while supporting local communities.

Q: How is Georgia enhancing Muslim travelers' experiences through halal food options, local cuisine adjustments, and dining hospitality?

A: Georgia offers a welcoming and tolerant atmosphere for travelers from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. We collaborate with hospitality providers to broaden the availability of suitable food options, including halal-friendly offerings, in key tourism areas.

Local hospitality providers enhance cultural sensitivity, ensuring that dietary needs, privacy, and prayer facilities are properly accommodated. Our goal is to provide an inclusive and comfortable experience for visitors from the GCC and beyond.

Q: Limited English outside major cities can challenge tourists. What initiatives support better language skills among tourism staff and guides?

A: To strengthen service quality, GNTA regularly conducts training programs for tourism industry profession-

als across the country. These cover English-language training, customer service, hospitality standards, and guide certification programs.

We work closely with educational institutions, regional tourism centers, and private partners to ensure continuous professional development. By raising service standards nationwide, we are creating a more seamless and welcoming travel experience for international visitors.

Q: With most tourists staying around five days and many returning, what positive feedback is being used to encourage new visitors and promote repeat tourism?

A: Visitors consistently highlight Georgia's hospitality, diverse landscapes, safety, cuisine, and affordability. These strengths guide our promotional messaging and are emphasized in our marketing campaigns across the GCC and other key markets.

Within our promotional campaigns we encourage longer stays, including cultural routes, wellness itineraries, and multi-city experiences. Returning visitors often become ambassadors for Georgia, and we aim to build on their positive experiences by offering new, curated, and immersive travel opportunities.

Additionally, Georgia offers a stable business environment, strategic location, competitive tax system, and growing tourism infrastructure. We actively encourage investment in hospitality, wellness resorts, rural development projects, and tourism services.

Initiative aims to enhance workplace readiness

ABK organizes a safety & occupational health workshop for branch employees

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26: As part of its ongoing commitment to ensuring a safe and secure working environment across all its premises, Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) conducted an awareness workshop for employees of the Retail Banking Division focusing on safety and occupational health standards within all branches.

The workshop was delivered by Sheikha Al Zamel, Head of the Safety Management Systems Unit at ABK, in collaboration with Al Mulla Engineering. It provided an overview of key safety procedures to be implemented across the branch network and equipped participants with the essential knowledge and tools required to identify potential risks and respond effectively ensuring seamless integration between employee safety and operational efficiency.

Participants received hands-on training on the proper use of firefighting equipment, supported by practical demonstrations conducted by the Al Mulla Engineering team. The workshop witnessed strong engagement covered various interactive safety modules.

ABK continually strives to uphold the highest safety standards across all departments and branches, recognizing that safety is a fundamental component of a resilient working environment and essential for uninterrupted business continuity.

This initiative reflects ABK's direct investment in strengthening the capabilities of its employees, empowering them to act as effective safety ambassadors within their workplace. The workshop also familiarized participants with emergency communication protocols, the importance of providing accurate and timely information during incidents, and practical training on handling injuries or potential cases of suffocation reinforcing their readiness and enhancing response plans.

Establishing strong occupational health and safety standards remains a cornerstone of ABK's operational philosophy. Safety is not merely a set of procedures it is a comprehensive and proactive system designed to anticipate and manage unforeseen events in the workplace.

The Bank's success is deeply rooted in its ability to pro-



Sheikha Al Zamel providing guidance during the workshop.



Part of the training.

vide a work environment that fosters security and confidence, supported by highly trained internal response teams that serve as the frontline safeguard in protecting employees and enabling them to operate effectively under pressure.

China Cultural Center in Kuwait hosts folk and classical music concert series

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26: China Cultural Center in Kuwait hosts its first concert series dedicated entirely to Chinese folk and classical music. The two-day event, "Traditional Rhythm & New Vibe: Chamber Concert of Chinese Classical Music," takes place on 24 and 25 November, organized with support from China Center of International Cultural Exchange and Tourism Promotion and China Conservatory of Music.

The programme brings together a group of distinguished musicians from China Conservatory of Music - Zhang Jian (dizi and xiao), Cheng Yuyu (pipa), Ma Ke (erhu), and Yang Xi (guzheng). All four artists have a solid grounding in traditional Chinese music and extensive experience performing internationally.

The programme has been curated to demonstrate both the depth of China's musical heritage and its ongoing evolution. Traditional pieces such as The Moon over the River on a Spring Night and Birdsong in Hollow Valley will sit alongside contemporary works, including Mist and Clouds over the Xiao and Xiang Rivers arranged by composer Gao Weijie and As slow as... by rising composer Xie Wenhui. The selection is intended to showcase the wide expressive range of instruments like erhu, guzheng, dizi and pipa, offering audiences a blend of familiar classics and modern reinterpretations.

In addition to the performances, the programme includes an educational component featuring illustrated intro-



Photos during the event.

ductions to traditional instruments. After each concert, attendees will have the opportunity to try basic playing techniques under the guidance of the musicians. Visitors with musical backgrounds may also join informal technical discussions or short improvisation sessions.

A highlight of the programme will

be a collaborative performance featuring the Chinese musicians and a Kuwaiti band, presenting a joint arrangement of the well-known Chinese song Jasmine Flower. The cross-cultural collaboration aims to underscore the resonance between different musical traditions and to deepen cultural ties through shared performance.

Judy Hopps and Nick Wilde lead in timid sequel

‘Zootopia 2’ delivers fun for families, but lacks bite of original

LOS ANGELES, Nov 26, (AP): The original “Zootopia” was a minor miracle. Here was a Disney animated film that took themes of race and prejudice and managed to make a sensitive-to-all-sides tale, anthropomorphize it and, as a bonus, sneak in a Department of Motor Vehicles sloth gag that the DMV is still wincing from.

A sequel coming almost a decade later, “Zootopia 2” isn’t as good. It’s a more timid and tame movie that leans largely on the (still winning) duo of Judy Hopps (Ginnifer Goodwin) and the small-time hustler fox Nick Wilde (Jason Bateman). Both are now out-to-prove-themselves rookies on the police force, nicknamed “the fuzz.”

Nobody would call the original “Zootopia” an especially biting satire. But, still, the sequel is a little toothless - not just Nick’s move from con man to cop but throughout the metropolis. Nick’s baby-posing partner in crime, the fennec fox Finnick (Tommy Lister Jr., who died in 2020), is only briefly seen. Missing entirely is anyone like Tommy Chong’s nudist stoner yak. A hint of gentrification, you might say, has swept over Zootopia.

So “Zootopia 2,” directed by Jared Bush and Byron Howard (both veterans from the first film), is, like many long-incoming sequels, a slightly watered down version of what came before. But the central relationship of Judy and Nick, a team-up with some echoes of “48 Hours,” remains a compelling one, and the primary reason that “Zootopia 2” will be plenty satisfying to families seeking more cartoony lions and tigers and bears (oh my) this November. It looks great, it’s mildly funny and animal cities are fun.

That’s particularly because of Bateman’s fox. For an actor with a long list of credits, it might sound odd to say, but Nick Wilde is Bateman’s best movie role. A sly, sarcastic but secretly sweet canine in a loose tie is so squarely in Bateman’s wheelhouse. No one can better draw out a line



This image released by Disney shows Nick Wilde, voiced by Jason Bateman, (left), and Judy Hopps, voiced by Ginnifer Goodwin, in a scene from ‘Zootopia 2.’ (AP)

about making a rug from the fur off a skunk’s butt, and I mean that as a high compliment.

Out to prove themselves as detectives, Judy and Nick cause widespread damage through the city chasing a criminal, leading Idris Elba’s surly cape buffalo Police Chief Bogo to order them into a therapy session for dysfunctional partners. (Other members include an elephant and mouse duo.)

Acknowledging and talking through differences is the running theme, which dovetails with a plot that goes to the roots of Zootopia. Snakes, we learn, aren’t allowed in the city. As Zootopia prepares for its centennial celebration, Judy uncovers some clues that suggest a snake infiltration. But when

one turns up (a cloying Ke Huy Quan as Gary De’Snake), Judy and Nick realize that snakes aren’t so bad.

They follow a deepening conspiracy to keep out snakes that goes back to the founding of Zootopia, “Chinatown”-like. A family of Lynxes, the Lynxleys, has always taken ownership for the weather walls that divide the city into variously accommodating climates. But even one of their own, Pawbert Lynxley (Andy Samberg), suspects foul play - which, I’m sorry to report, doesn’t include a single fowl.

But there are, to be sure, plenty of puns (Gnu Jersey, Burning Mammal) to be found, as well as a “Shining” reference and a quick nod to “Ratatouille” (a sequel to which is also reportedly in development). In “Zootopia,” this stuff is like shooting fish in a barrel. Back is Shakira as a pop-star gazelle named ... Gazelle. New characters include a beaver podcaster named Nibbles Maples-tick (Fortune Feimster) and a long-maned stallion mayor (Patrick Warburton). Judy and Nick’s adventures take them to a New Orleans-like reptile-friendly enclave and a snowy Tundatown.

For a movie that was in so many ways about a country mouse (bunny) coming to the big city and finding endless varieties of wildlife, both upright and shady, the “Zootopia” sequel spends too much of its time away from its mammalian metropolis.

Even Nick Wilde - no longer scheming, more in touch with his feelings - doesn’t feel quite so wild now. The fun caper spirit of the first movie is alive enough to carry Bush and Howard’s film, but you can’t help feel like sequelization also means domestication.

“Zootopia 2,” a Walt Disney Co. release, is rated PG by the Motion Picture Association for action/violence and rude humor. Running time: 108 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

New chapter

Designer Banks shares his story

NEW YORK, Nov 26, (AP): Designer Jeffrey Banks spent years co-authoring seven books on fashion before finally deciding it was time to share his own story.

The menswear designer recounts more than 50 years in fashion, from working for Ralph Lauren to launching his own label, in his new memoir “Storyteller: Tales from a Fashion Insider.”

At 72, Banks is having a breakout year. One of his designs was selected by the Metropolitan Museum of Art for its “Superfine: Tailoring Black Style” exhibit, and he’s re-launching his eponymous menswear label.

Banks debuted his label of polished tailoring and American sportswear back in 1976 at 21. His menswear played with color and texture: think tartan plaid jackets, pinstriped suits and furs. And at a time when there were few Black designers, his clothes were being sold in major department stores from Macy’s to Bergdorf Goodman and he was landing multimillion-dollar deals.

For his Jeffrey Banks menswear relaunch in January, he’s moving away from suiting and embracing sustainable sportswear, from knits to underwear.

“As much as I love suits and tailored clothing,” he told The Associated Press, “I don’t think that’s the business for now, and the business of young people.”

Conversation

His industry friends have rallied around him on his book tour. The Council of Fashion Designers of America hosted a conversation between Banks and Isaac Mizrahi last week to celebrate the publication of Banks’ book. Mizrahi, who worked for Banks on his womenswear line, called him a trendsetter in the commercial space.

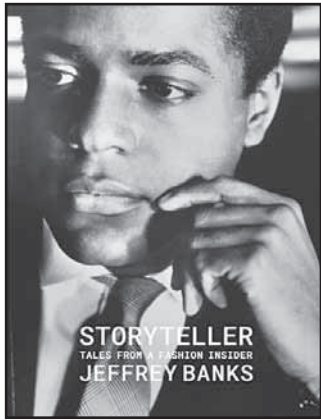
“I was so inspired when I was working with him, and he was one of the first people to do a lot of things at once,” Mizrahi said. “I looked at that, and I thought that was real success.”

Banks’ memoir doubles as a love letter to the family, loved ones and fashionable friends who supported him over the years. One motivation for doing the book, he said, was to ensure his mother, who turns 105 in January, could read it.

“She instilled in me and in my sister, as did my father, the idea that if we wanted something bad enough and we were willing to work hard enough for it, we could achieve and get anything that we wanted,” Banks said. “And the fact that we were Black, that shouldn’t make a difference.” Banks and his mother shared a love of clothing. At 10, he designed a yellow asymmetrical wool coat and matching sheath dress for her to wear on Easter Sunday.

Former CFDA President Stan Herman, 97, said that Banks is a natural storyteller with an impeccable memory, who he joked, “was born with a Vogue in his crib.”

In his book, he highlights his “Mentors” and “Best Friends Forever” through entertaining anecdotes and photos of fashion industry stalwarts like late designer Perry Ellis and celebrities like Bobby Short, Barbra Streisand and Audrey Hepburn.



This book cover image released by Pointed Leaf Press shows ‘Storyteller: Tales from a Fashion Insider’ by Jeffrey Banks. (AP)

Film



This image released by A24 shows Callum Turner, (left), and Elizabeth Olsen in a scene from ‘Eternity.’ (AP)

Olsen, Turner and Teller lead whimsical comedy

A puzzling love triangle in ‘Eternity’

LOS ANGELES, Nov 26, (AP): Joan Cutler has an impossible decision to make in “Eternity.” The newly deceased character, played by Elizabeth Olsen, has one week to decide who she wants to spend her afterlife with and two husbands lurking and hoping that she’ll choose them. Luke (Callum Turner) is the dashing one who died in the Korean War right as they were starting a life together. Larry (Miles Teller) is the other one, kind of common, kind of a crank, but the person who she was married to for 65 years.

Apparently even death is no respite from earthly puzzles like the love triangle. Sure it’s messy and confusing for those involved but it’s also one of the great storytelling setups for a screwball comedy. And this particular film, imaginative and shrewdly whimsical with an utterly charming cast, delivers on the promise. Lucky us.

Most of the film takes place in the Junction, a comically ordinary, brutalist-style hotel/convention center, expo-style trade show in which the recently departed shop around for an afterlife of their choosing. There you’re greeted with an afterlife coordinator (our main “ACs” are the delightful Da’Vine Joy Randolph and John Early) who explains what’s going on. The options are vast and amusingly specific: Paris Land, Studio 54 World, Mountain Town, Weimar World (with 100% less Nazis!) are just a few. The big catch is that your decision is final.

The story comes from screenwriter Patrick Cunnane who developed it further with director David Freyne. The film wears its many influences on its colorful, kitschy sleeves with Albert Brooks’ “Defending Your Life” looming large.

We meet Joan and Larry briefly as octogenar-

ians, on the way to a family party and bickering over whether to go away to the beach (Larry’s wish) or the mountains (Joan’s). They mostly seem exhausted by one another, two people who remain together simply because their lives are so intertwined and, you know, what else are they going to do? Joan doesn’t have much time left, she’s dying of cancer, and Larry is ready to care for her as long as it takes. Then, he dies first.

Larry’s holdover week is nearly up when Joan arrives at the Junction where her AC, Ryan (Early), says he’s been waiting for her for 67 years. (Sorry to the filmmakers for innocently choosing a number with six and seven in it and whatever shenanigans might ensue in the movie theater.)

Gesture

Ryan is also AC to Luke, who, it turns out has been in limbo just waiting for Joan to arrive. It’s the ultimate romantic gesture. And Joan, youthful once more, is profoundly moved by the sight of her dashing first love as Larry looks on, baffled. It’s hard not to think of the “Curb Your Enthusiasm” episode in which another Larry comes to the conclusion that he’d rather be single in the afterlife. Teller’s Larry, however, has never considered that Joan wouldn’t be by his side in the great beyond.

If you’re wondering why Joan and Larry arrive at the Junction looking like Elizabeth Olsen and Miles Teller, it’s because in this world (and perhaps playing by “Titanic” logic), you turn back into the happiest version of yourself. That’s why, Randolph’s AC Anna explains, there’s a lot of 10-year-old boys around and not a lot of teenagers.

Joan is, understandably, flustered and overwhelmed by the choice between her steady (and neurotic) rock and the passionate first love whom she never got to have a life with. If there is a gripe, it’s that the script takes a little too long to float the idea that perhaps neither man is also an option for Joan.

Olsen is channeling a kind of mid-century Diane Keaton in her performance, in which she gets to be an old soul in a young body. In one scene, she and Larry end up in hysterics as they rediscover the joys of being able to squat and jump again.

Teller, meanwhile, is surprisingly great as the obvious underdog - an egoless performance that goes a long way. Luke is a little bit less fleshed out as a full character, perhaps because he’s still that young man who was killed in the war (there’s a running joke about it not being World War II). But Turner is committed and enjoyable as the Robert Redford version of Benjamin Braddock. Though he swats away compliments like mosquitoes and insists he’s “not perfect,” it truly does not seem to occur to him that Joan might not choose him in the end.

And again there’s that pesky choice. Is it romantic? Is it depressing? Is it woefully limited in its idea of what a human life amounts to? Yes? It’s committed, clever, comforting simplicity is also pretty satisfying - a contained, crowd-pleaser that does not go on for eternity.

“Eternity,” an A24 release in theaters Wednesday, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association for “sexual content and some strong language.” Running time: 112 minutes. Three stars out of four.

Variety

LONDON: Joan Branson, the wife of British billionaire Richard Branson, has died at age 80.

Branson announced her death Tuesday on Instagram and LinkedIn. No other details were disclosed.

“Heartbroken to share that Joan, my wife and partner for 50 years, has passed away,” he said. “She was the most wonderful mum and grandmum our kids and grandkids could have ever wished for. She was my best friend, my rock, my guiding light, my world.”

Richard Branson is the founder of Virgin Atlantic airline, space tourism company Virgin Galactic and satellite launcher Virgin Orbit.

In a 2020 blog post, he said he met Joan in 1976 at The Manor, a recording studio in Oxfordshire, England. (AP)



Branson

PARIS: The Paris prosecutor announced four more arrests Tuesday in connection with the stunning heist at the Louvre Museum in October by a gang that made off with \$102 million worth of jewels.

The two men and two women taken into custody are from the Paris region and range in age from 31 to 40, said the prosecutor, Laure Beccuau, whose office is heading the investigation.

Her statement didn’t say what role they’re suspected of having played in the Oct. 19 theft. Police can hold them for questioning for 96 hours.

French media report that one of those arrested, a 39-year-old already known to police services, is believed to be the fourth member of the team thought to have carried out the daring daylight robbery and is from Aubervilliers, a suburb north of Paris other suspects have connections with. (AP)

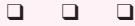


PARIS: A large number of French media outlets on Wednesday called for the release of sports journalist Christophe Gleizes, who is imprisoned in Algeria ahead of his appeals trial next week.

The Alliance of General Information Press, which represents more than 300 outlets, published a collective op-ed across its members’ publications. A court of appeal in Tizi Ouzou is set to review Gleizes’ case on Dec. 3.

The 36-year-old French freelance sports journalist has been sentenced to seven years in prison in Algeria over an interview with a soccer official accused of ties to a banned separatist movement, in a case rights groups say criminalizes routine reporting.

Gleizes was arrested on May 28, 2024 while reporting on a soccer club in the Kabylie region. He was placed under judicial supervision and later found guilty of “glorifying terrorism” and “possessing publications aimed at propaganda harmful to the national interest,” Reporters Without Borders said. (AP)



NEW YORK: Writers in US prisons will have a new path to getting their work seen through a website managed by PEN America that includes information on publishers, agents, journalists and other potential contacts.

PEN’s Prison and Justice Writing Program on Tuesday announced the launch of the Incarcerated Writers Bureau, an initiative developed with support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and designed to “make the literary community more inclusive of writers behind bars.”

“For too long, powerful storytellers in prison have been left out of publishing and writing opportunities due to the challenges of connecting with the wider world,” Clarisse Rosaz Shariyf, co-interim CEO of PEN and chief program officer of the free expression organization’s Literary Programming, said in a statement.

The new resource has a mission to help those in prison navigate the “dance of limited access and burdensome logistics.” (AP)



A Light-up T-800 Endoskeleton Skull (left) from the film Terminator 2: Battle Across Time (1996) and screen-matched Bloodied Ghostface mask (right) from the film Scream (1996) are displayed by a gallery assistant during a press preview of Propstore’s Winter Entertainment live auction which will take place on Dec. 5-7, in London, Tuesday, Nov. 25. (AP)

‘America-first entry fee policies’

US National Parks to raise fees for international tourists

WASHINGTON, Nov 26, (AP): The National Park Service said Tuesday it is going to start charging the millions of international tourists who visit US parks each year an extra \$100 to enter some of the most popular sites, while leaving them out of fee-free days that will be reserved for American residents.

The announcement declaring “America-first entry fee policies” comes as national parks deal with the strain of a major staff reduction and severe budget cuts, along with recovering from damage during the recent government shutdown and significant lost revenue due to fees not being collected during that time.

The fee change will impact 11 national parks, including the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone and Yosemite, according to the U.S. Department of the Interior.

As part of the changes, which are set to take effect Jan. 1, foreign tourists will also see their annual

parks pass price jump to \$250, while US residents will continue to be charged \$80, according to the department’s statement.

Interior Secretary Doug Burgum said in a post on the social platform X that the changes make sure US taxpayers who support the park service “continue to enjoy affordable access, while international visitors contribute their fair share to maintaining and improving our parks for future generations!”

A White House post on X laying out the increased fees ended with the phrase, “AMERICANS FIRST.”

The announcement follows a July executive order in which President Donald Trump directed the parks to increase entry fees for foreign tourists.

“There’s a lot to unpack in this announcement, including many questions on its implementation - all which NPCA will raise with the Department of Interior,” Kati Schmidt, a spokesperson for National

Parks Conservation Association, said in an email.

The U.S. Travel Association estimated that in 2018, national parks and monuments saw more than 14 million international visitors. Yellowstone reported that in 2024, nearly 15% of its visitors were from outside the country, which was down from 30% in 2018.

The money made off the new fees will help support the national parks, including with upgrading facilities for visitors and maintenance, according to the statement.

The “resident-only patriotic fee-free days” next year include Veterans Day, which was one of the parks’ eight free days open to everyone in 2025. The Department of the Interior had announced those days by saying they wanted to ensure that “everyone, no matter their zip code, can access and enjoy the benefits of green spaces and our public lands.”



Tourists flock to Mather Point at Grand Canyon National Park, Oct. 1, 2025, in Grand Canyon, Ariz. (AP)

Music



Chinese pianist Lang Lang performs during the Pyramids Echo (TPE) festival at the Giza Pyramids scenic spot in Giza, Egypt, Nov. 24. (Xinhua)

Chinese pianist opens TPE festival in Egypt

Lang captivates audience at Egypt’s pyramids concert

CAIRO, Nov. 26, (Xinhua): World-renowned Chinese pianist Lang Lang opened the first edition of the Pyramids Echo (TPE) festival in Egypt on Monday evening with a spellbinding performance at the Giza Plateau, marking a striking fusion of global classical artistry and the timeless grandeur of the pyramids, a breathtaking backdrop to the open-air theater.

Lang opened the evening with an intimate solo show, performing expressive works by classical masters including France’s Claude Debussy, Hungary’s Franz Liszt, and Poland’s Frederic Chopin, showcasing his clarity of technique and emotional depth.

He then offered a delicate rendition of the Chinese folk classic Jasmine Flower and a reimagined piano arrangement of a beloved melody by Egypt’s Sayed Darwish, drawing warm applause from the audience.

Speaking to Xinhua, Lang said the night felt like “a dream,” adding that it was deeply meaningful to open the festival at such a historic site. “Performing beside the pyramids has always been a dream for me, and I am very grateful to everyone who helped make this concert possible,” he said.

Reflecting on cultural exchange, he said music plays a powerful role in bringing people together. “The audience responded most warmly to Jasmine Flower and Song at Nile River’s Bank, which I specially rearranged for this concert,” he noted. “These pieces show how Chinese and Egyptian cultures can touch peo-

ple deeply, even without language.”

Lang recalled his last performance in Egypt nearly a decade ago, when he played at Upper Egypt’s Luxor Temple during the celebrations of the 60th anniversary of China-Egypt diplomatic relations. “It feels meaningful to return almost ten years later,” he said, “and I truly hope that ties between our two countries will continue to grow closer.”

During the show, Lang introduced young Egyptian-Hungarian violinist Amira Abouzahra, whom he invited to join him especially for the festival’s opening night. Performing alongside the British Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra, Abouzahra led the ensemble in a vibrant interpretation that highlighted her rising international profile and added a distinctly Egyptian touch to the evening.

The evening reached its peak as Lang returned to the stage with the Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra under the baton of British conductor Ben Palmer, delivering a powerful performance that blended technical brilliance with sweeping orchestral warmth, turning the historic setting into a full symphonic experience.

As the final notes resonated under the night sky, the audience, a diverse blend of Egyptians, Chinese, and other international guests, erupted in enthusiastic applause. Cheers and admiration filled the open-air venue.

Egyptian actor Ahmed Magdy, the festival’s ambassador,

said seeing an artist of Lang’s stature perform iconic Egyptian music was a powerful moment, adding that artistic encounters between Egypt and China carry immense potential.

“When two civilizations of this size, depth, and advancement come together at such an iconic site, the result is bound to be different and remarkable,” he told Xinhua, expressing hope that this spirit of exchange extends not only to politics and economics but also to the arts.

Among the Egyptian audience, many expressed personal emotional connections to the pieces Lang performed, including Gharam Akmal, a young Egyptian woman who said the night exceeded her expectations.

“I honestly enjoyed Lang’s performance so much. I was surprised when he started with Debussy’s Clair de Lune -- it’s one of my all-time favorites. I listen to it all the time,” she said.

Held across eight selected evenings from Nov. 24 to Dec. 13, and themed “Cradle of Civilizations: Meeting Point of Arts and Cultures,” the first edition of TPE takes place at two iconic venues: the open-air Pyramids Panorama overlooking the Giza pyramids and the Grand Theater at the City of Arts and Culture in Egypt’s New Administrative Capital.

This year’s festival presents a wide spectrum of performances, from orchestral tributes and Arab-heritage concerts to gala evenings, international vocal showcases, and world-class ballet, bringing a rich array of global artistry to Egyptian audiences.

New Christmas releases from Pentatonix, LeAnn Rimes, and more

Celebrate the holidays with best new albums of 2025

NEW YORK, Nov 26, (AP): ‘Tis the season to put on some brand-new holiday music. The best way to get festive is to sing along to Christmas classics new and old. But don’t know what to press play on? We’ve got you covered.

In honor of the most wonderful time of the year, here are some of the best new holiday releases for the 2025 season. So, grab a loved one, a cup of eggnog and get to listening.

For the cappella fan, there is no better news than yet another holiday album from Pentatonix. Across 18 tracks, “Christmas in the City” celebrates the magic of cosmopolitan life around the holidays and showcases the group’s vocal athletics. Hear them reimagine the songs you know and love as well as introduce a few originals. Start with “Snowing in Paris,” which features the R&B-pop star JoJo, and end with “I’ve Got My Love to Keep Me Warm,” a never-before-heard recording of the Frank Sinatra classic featuring Ol’ Blue Eyes himself.

It’s hard to believe, but 60 years ago, the “Peanuts” gang’s classic “A Charlie Brown Christmas” aired on television for the first time and become an almost-instant sensation. Part

of its charms, of course, must be credited to its whimsical score by jazz pianist Vince Guaraldi. To celebrate such a huge anniversary, Craft Recordings is reissuing its soundtrack - as good as anyone as any to revisit these beloved songs.

Just ahead of her Christmas tour, the country icon LeAnn Rimes released “Greatest Hits Christmas.” It’s exactly what it sounds like: a mesh of classics and some of her best-known songs from her past holiday albums. There are also new collaborations, like Aloe Blacc on “That Spirit of Christmas” and Gavin DeGraw on “Celebrate Me Home.”

Some things just make sense together: peanut butter and jelly, coffee and doughnuts, Brad Paisley and his touring band sitting down in Nashville to record a charming Christmas album. “Snow Globe Town” boasts of eight originals and eight covers - exactly what the heart wants this holiday season. It’s the former collection that will really connect, though; there are real charms to be found in “Lit,” “That Crazy Elf” and the title track.

Country singer Trisha Yearwood’s voice sounds like coming home; it



This combination of cover images shows ‘It’s Christmas’ by Eric Benet, (top row from left), ‘Snow Globe Town’ by Brad Paisley, ‘Christmas in the City’ by Pentatonix, ‘A Charlie Brown Christmas,’ ‘Feels Like Christmas’ by Mickey Guyton, and ‘The Chess Records Christmas Album.’ (AP)

makes her the ideal talent for a new holiday collection. “Christmastime” is stacked with familiar tunes and perhaps, best of all, features “Merry Christmas, Valentine,” a duet with her husband Garth Brooks. Blast that one at your get-together and there won’t

be a dry eye in the house.

The world lost a giant in February when Roberta Flack, the Grammy-winning singer and pianist, died at 88. Perhaps best known for her timeless take on “Killing Me Softly with His Song,” the Christmas season brings up

another reason to celebrate her. A new release, “Holidays,” like many on this list, features originals and covers - and a selection of songs from Flack’s classic “The Christmas Album.” It holds a special meaning this year.

The country powerhouse Mickey Guyton feels like Christmas and once you dive into these eight tracks, you will, too. From her rendition of “O Holy Night” to her masterful take on “Do You Want to Build a Snowman?” from Disney’s “Frozen” (sorry, parents!) there’s a lot to love here.

R&B singer Eric Benét’s first holiday album, “It’s Christmas,” is filled with warmth; consider it the sonic equivalent of curling up to a roaring fireplace on a snowy winter’s evening. Don’t believe us? Well, one listen to his take on “Please Come Home for Christmas” or “Oh Holy Night” will make you a believer. Or better yet, there’s “Christmas Morning,” featuring Benét’s youngest daughters Lucia and Luna. Tissues, you might want to grab a few.

Sometimes a compilation album is what a holiday party needs. Chess Records has the answer. “The Chess Records Christmas Album” is an impressive collection of veteran talent.

Obituary

‘Lite-Brite’

Toy creator Burt Meyer dies at 99

LOS ANGELES, Nov 26, (AP): Burt Meyer, who invented toys like Rock ‘Em Sock ‘Em Robots, Lite-Brite and MouseTrap in the 1960s that delighted a generation of children, has died. He was 99.

Meyer’s creations arrived in the postwar boom, when plastic molding and mass production transformed how American children played. That shift opened the door for more dynamic toys, and Meyer seized the moment with designs that would stay on shelves for decades.

Meyer died on Oct. 30, said Rebecca Mathis, executive director at King-Bruwaert House, a retirement community in Burr Ridge, Illinois, where he lived.

Meyer succeeded by straddling two often conflicting worlds, carrying a boundless childlike imagination alongside a pragmatic understanding of machines.

The idea for Lite-Brite came in 1966 when Meyer was walking in Manhattan with Marvin Glass, who owned one of the largest toy design companies at the time, and the two men passed a window display featuring hundreds of colored lights. Engineers at the company doubted that eclectic lights could be safely adapted for children, according to Tim Walsh, who interviewed Meyer for his 2005 book “Timeless Toys.”

Meyer, an employee at Marvin Glass & Associates, insisted it could.

“There’s billions of ideas out there,” Walsh wrote, “but executing them into a final creative solution is often the hard part.”

Meyer came up with a small backlit box and black paper sheets that allowed kids to create illuminated patterns. Lite-Brite was a hit, earning spots on Time Magazine’s list of 100 greatest toys and in the Strong National Museum of Play’s hall of fame. New versions are still being sold.

Meyer had a similar role with a design team that reimagined a bulky boxing arcade game for home use. The original concept stalled in development after a featherweight boxer died from a brain injury, making any toy that invoked the tragedy unmarketable, company leaders thought.

Meyer revisited the idea with a simple shift. “This is too good to pass up,” he recalled saying in a 2010 interview.



Meyer

Variety

MELBOURNE, Australia: The Australian government said young children will be banned from social media next month as scheduled despite a rights advocacy group on Wednesday challenging the world-first legislation in court.

The Sydney-based Digital Freedom Project said it had filed a constitutional challenge in the High Court on Wednesday to a law due to take effect on Dec. 10 banning Australian children younger than 16 from holding accounts on specified platforms.

Communications Minister Anika Wells referred to the challenge when she later told Parliament her government remained committed to the ban taking effect on schedule. (AP)

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NAIROBI: Kenya on Tuesday called on the international community to safeguard education from both physical and digital threats.

Musalia Mudavadi, prime cabinet secretary and cabinet secretary for foreign and diaspora affairs, warned that the safety of schools is no longer threatened solely by armed conflict, but also increasingly by cyber risks, psychological manipulation, and artificial intelligence.

“Technology has brought with it numerous challenges. As we embrace it, how do we make sure our schools are safe with this new silent partner?” he said during the opening ceremony of the Fifth International Conference on the Safe Schools Declaration (SSD) in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya. (Xinhua)

ByHeart baby formula from all lots may be tainted

UK extends sugar tax to more high-sugar drinks to tackle obesity

LONDON, Nov 26, (Agencies): The UK government has announced an extension of the soft drinks industry levy to more high-sugar drinks, including milk-based drinks, Department for Health and Social Care statement said Tuesday.

This change is part of a package of measures the government is using to tackle obesity and prevent heart disease, stroke, and cancer, including: the Healthy Food Standard to make the average shopping basket of goods healthier, banning junk food adverts before the 9pm watershed, banning the sale of high-caffeine energy drinks to children aged under 16 and giving local authorities powers to stop fast food shops setting up outside schools, the department said in a press release.

The new plans are expected to reduce daily calorie intake by around 4 million in children and 13 million in adults across England, it said, adding that this could prevent almost 14,000 cases of adult obesity and nearly 1,000 cases of childhood obesity.

It is expected to also deliver almost £1 billion in health and economic benefits, including by saving the NHS £36 million, reduce social care pressures by £30 million, and

contributing around £221 million in economic output through improved workforce participation.

The threshold is being lowered from 5g to 4.5g of sugar per 100ml. This means more high-sugar drinks will fall under the levy unless manufacturers reduce sugar, with businesses given until 1 January 2028 to reduce sugar in their drinks.

Obesity is one of the root causes of diabetes, heart disease and cancer. With the UK now having the third highest rate of adult obesity in Europe, it remains a critical public health challenge, costing the NHS £11.4 billion a year, 3 times the NHS budget for ambulance services.

Between 2015 and 2024, the levy has cut sugar levels in affected products by almost half. These interventions have led to substantial reductions in hospital admissions for children requiring caries-related tooth extractions, with decreases of over 28 percent among 0-4 year olds and more than 5% among 5-9 year olds.

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Tests of ByHeart infant formula tied to a botulism

outbreak that has sickened dozens of babies showed that all of the company's products may have been contaminated.

Laboratory tests of 36 samples of formula from three different lots showed that five samples contained the type of bacteria that can lead to the rare and potentially deadly illness, the company said Monday on its website.

"Based on these results, we cannot rule out the risk that all ByHeart formula across all product lots may have been contaminated," the company wrote.

At least 31 babies in 15 states who consumed ByHeart formula have been sickened in the outbreak that began in August, according to federal and state health officials. In addition, other infants who drank ByHeart formula were treated for botulism in earlier months, as far back as November 2024, although they are not counted in the outbreak, officials said.

Clostridium botulinum type A, the type of bacteria detected, can be unevenly distributed in powdered formula. Not all babies who ingest it will become ill, though all infants under age 1 are at risk, medical experts said.

ByHeart recalled all of its formula nationwide on Nov.

11. However, some product has remained on store shelves despite the recall, according to state officials and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Parents and caregivers should stop feeding the formula to babies immediately and monitor the children for symptoms, which can take up to 30 days to appear.

Infant botulism occurs when babies ingest spores that germinate in their intestine and produce a toxin. Symptoms include constipation, difficulty sucking or feeding, drooping eyelids, flat facial expression and weakness in the arms, legs and head. The illness is a medical emergency and requires immediate treatment.

At least 107 babies nationwide have been treated for botulism with an IV medication known as BabyBIG since Aug. 1, health officials said. In a typical year, less than 200 infants are treated for the illness.

To report an illness tied to the outbreak, contact an FDA consumer complaint coordinator or fill out an online Med-Watch form.

Consumers who bought ByHeart on the company's website on or after Aug. 1 can receive a full refund, an expansion of its previous policy, the company said.



Technical equipment of the INEOS Energy's Siri platform is seen from the helicopter pad at the platform in the North Sea, Denmark, Tuesday, Nov. 25. (AP)

'Firms must not use CCS to avoid emissions cuts'

Ambitious plan to store CO2 beneath the North Sea set to start operations

NORTH SEA, Denmark, Nov 26, (AP): Appearing first as a dot on the horizon, the remote Nini oil field on Europe's rugged North Sea slowly comes into view from a helicopter.

Used to extract fossil fuels, the field is now getting a second lease on life as a means of permanently storing planet-warming carbon dioxide beneath the seabed.

In a process that almost reverses oil extraction, chemical giant INEOS plans to inject liquefied CO2 deep down into depleted oil reservoirs, 1,800 meters (5,900 feet) beneath the seabed.

The Associated Press made a rare visit to the Siri platform, close to the unmanned Nini field, the final stage in INEOS' carbon capture and storage efforts, named Greensand Future.

When the project begins commercial operations next year, Greensand is expected to become the European Union's first fully-operational offshore CO2 storage site.

Environmentalists say carbon capture and storage, also known as CCS, has a role to play in dealing with climate change but should not be used as an excuse by industries to avoid cutting emissions.

Mads Gade, chief executive of INEOS Energy Europe, says it will initially begin storing 400,000 tons (363,000 metric tons) of CO2 per year, scaling up to as much as 8 million tons (7.3 million metric tons) annually by 2030.

"Denmark has the potential to actually store more than several hundred years of our own emissions," says Gade. "We are able to create an industry where we can support Europe in actually storing a lot of the CO2 here."

Greensand has struck deals with Danish biogas facilities to bury their captured carbon emissions into the Nini field's depleted reservoirs.

A "CO2 terminal" that temporarily stores the liquefied gas is being built at the Port of Esbjerg, on the western coast of the Danish Jutland peninsula.

A purpose-built carrier vessel, dubbed "Carbon Destroyer 1," is under construction in the Netherlands.

Proponents of carbon capture technology say it is a climate solution because it can remove the greenhouse gas that is the biggest driver of climate change and bury it deep underground.

They note the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the world's top body of climate scientists, has said the technology is a tool in the fight against global warming.

The EU has proposed developing at least 250 million tons (227 million metric tons) of CO2 storage per year by 2040, as part of plans to reach "net zero" emissions by 2050.

Gade says carbon capture and storage is one of the best means of cutting emissions.

"We don't want to deindustrialize Europe," he said. "We want to have actually a few instruments to decarbonize instead."

Experts at Denmark's geological survey say Greensand sandstone rock is well-suited for storing the liquefied CO2. Almost a third of the rock volume is made up of tiny cavities, said Niels Schovsbo, senior researcher at the Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland.

'Food is not just a matter of survival'

Food assistance programs can feed families and nourish their dignity

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

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By Joslyn Brenton, Ithaca College; Alyssa Tindall, Ursinus College, and Senbagam Virudachalam, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia's Research Institute, University of Pennsylvania

The 2025 government shutdown drew widespread attention to how many Americans struggle to get enough food. For 43 days, the more than 42 million Americans who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits had to find other ways to stock their cupboards.

When asked how she felt about her benefits being suspended, one woman in West Virginia told a New York Times reporter, "We're angry. Because we do count!"

Her sentiment reflects an often underappreciated fact about food. Food is not just a matter of survival. What and how you eat is also a symbol of your social status. Being unable to reliably feed your family healthy and nutritious foods in a way that aligns with your values can feel undignified. It can make people feel unseen and less important than others.

As researchers who study food inequality, nutrition and food justice, we have spent decades surveying and interviewing Americans about how they eat. We have witnessed firsthand how food assistance does help people meet their basic needs, but how it can also be stigmatizing and diminish their sense of dignity.

We have also studied alternatives to typical charitable food programs that, despite good intentions, tend to induce shame. We have learned that it is possible to help people put food on the table while preserving their dignity.

Addressing the root causes of food insecurity - what happens when people lack steady access to the food they need for a nutritious diet that's in keeping with their preferences - is a persistent problem in the United States.

Thus, the demand for SNAP benefits, which help Americans buy groceries, other government nutrition



In this photo provided by the Rev. John Udo-Onon, people wait in line for free food at the World of Life Christian Fellowship International food pantry in the Bronx borough of New York on Saturday, Nov. 1, 2025. (AP)

programs, and food banks and food pantries rarely declines much - even when the economy is strong. Yet relying on food assistance programs does not tend to support a healthy diet and can take a toll on mental health.

As interviewers and clinicians, we have heard mothers describe the shame they feel when SNAP benefits do not cover the entire grocery bill. We have witnessed the frustration that comes with walking down a food pantry aisle lined with signs instructing hungry people to "take only 1 item!"

"The stuff looks like almost trash, but they give it to you," one woman we interviewed said of her experience with food pantries and the like.

These kinds of stories are not uncommon. Charitable food programs receive leftover items from grocery stores, donations from community food drives and local businesses, and sometimes surplus from local farms. Food is often damaged in transport or from being handled too many times. A review of the research found that many people who use food pantries described the food as unhealthy, moldy or inedible. Being given unhealthy and unappealing food in a time of need is a double burden.

While free food may fill the stomach, it does not satisfy the desire to feel fully human and worthy of nourishment.

People who visit food banks have told researchers that they have come

to expect low-quality food and few choices. When food aid is provided that way, it can leave the people it is supposed to help feeling powerless and ashamed.

These indignities are compounded by the fact that people who visit food banks and food pantries routinely face suspicion and surveillance around what they buy and how they eat, intensifying the stress associated with food insecurity.

In our research, we saw cashiers hovering over mothers using SNAP EBT cards in the self-checkout line. Politicians routinely suggest that SNAP is corrupt, contributing to nationwide perceptions that people who rely on this program are unfairly gaming the system. One study found that more than two-thirds of the Americans people who get food assistance have been the target of hostile comments and interactions from strangers at the grocery store.

Several studies have shown that food programs do not need to sacrifice dignity to offer help. Programs that offer opportunities for people with lower incomes to receive and give back are important.

In Canada, bulk-buying food cooperatives did just that. Food assistance programs confer dignity when they make people feel good. People seeking help feel more satisfied after visiting food pantries that keep convenient hours or offer fresh produce. (AP)

Miami Project improves millions of lives

Relentless mission fuels advances in treating paralysis and neuro disorders

MIAMI, Nov 26, (AP): Marc Buoniconti said his father, the late NFL Hall of Famer Nick Buoniconti, explained the secret to the success of their nonprofit and its fundraising efforts simply: "We're just not good listeners."

In the 40 years since Marc Buoniconti, then a college football linebacker at the Citadel, was paralyzed during a routine tackle, they have been told countless times that it was a problem that couldn't be fixed. The Buonicontis didn't listen.

Instead, through the fund that bears their name, they have helped raise more than \$550 million for The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis, and improved the lives of millions with spinal cord and brain injuries.

"The Buoniconti Fund has lasted because we're relentless," Marc Buoniconti recently told The Associated Press. "We never give up. When we see a challenge, we face it head-on and don't stop until we find a solution. It's that determination, that refusal to quit that's kept us going all these years."

That drive has also led The Miami Project to expand its work beyond curing paralysis. Its research center at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine now also studies neurological diseases and disorders including Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease, and it is testing the brain-computer interface implant from Elon Musk's technology company Neuralink.

Dr. Barth A. Green, chairman of The Miami Project, who co-founded the organization in 1985 with Nick Buoniconti, says the most surprising developments from the center have been the broadest ones.



In this photo released by the University of Miami, The Buoniconti Fund to Cure Paralysis President Marc Buoniconti and former East Tennessee State running back Herman Jacobs at The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis on the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine campus in 2007. (AP)

"Every operating room in the world that puts people to sleep monitors their nervous system for safety," Dr. Green said. "That was all developed at The Miami Project."

Therapeutic hypothermia, where the body is cooled after an injury to protect the brain and spinal cord, is another widely used treatment developed at the center.

Dr. Green said that before Buoniconti's accident he had been working on helping those who had been paralyzed for 20 years. Yet there wasn't a hub for that work until The Miami Project was established.

It provided a home for him and "thousands of scientists and researchers in Miami and around the world, who were equally engaged by

the opportunity to change people's everyday quality of life and their opportunities to have more function and a better opportunity to be mobile and do things they never dreamt they could before."

Miami Project Scientific Director W. Dalton Dietrich III said gathering those people from a variety of disciplines - neuroscientists, researchers, clinicians, biomedical engineers - into one building has led to unexpected advances.

"Not one particular treatment is going to cure paralysis," Dietrich said. "So I've tried to look at other disciplines to bring into the project to help us achieve that goal."

One new, multidisciplinary area, neuromodulation, is "something we never thought about five years ago," Dietrich said. "It's just an exciting area where you can stimulate these residual circuits after brain injury or spinal cord injury in patients and they start moving their limbs."

The Buoniconti Fund's support for the center helps accelerate research in these areas by funding early trials. That, in turn, makes it easier to eventually receive grants from government agencies like the National Institutes of Health or the Department of Defense, Dietrich said.

Marc Buoniconti says "it's hard to put into words" seeing so many people rally behind him and the millions of others who have been paralyzed.

"What started as a promise to help me walk again became a mission to help millions," he said. "Every resource, every dollar, every hour given is a testament to the belief that we can change lives."

HIV aid falls

UNAIDS warns of major setbacks

GENEVA, Nov. 26, (Xinhua): A new report released by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIVAIDS (UNAIDS) on Tuesday warns that the global HIV response has suffered its most significant setback in decades, urging reliance on solidarity, resilience, investment and innovation to achieve the goal of ending the AIDS epidemic.

Titled "Overcoming Disruption, Transforming the AIDS Response," the report highlights the severe impact of reduced international funding and a lack of global solidarity on HIV prevention efforts.

Abrupt cuts to international HIV aid in 2025 have worsened existing funding gaps, said the report, citing an estimate from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development that indicates external health assistance is expected to fall by 30-40 percent in 2025 compared with 2023, which will lead to immediate and increasingly severe disruptions to health services in low- and middle-income countries.

The report shows that prevention services have been hit the hardest. Big cuts in supplies of HIV prevention medicines and steep drops in voluntary medical male circumcision have created a growing protection gap for millions. HIV prevention programs targeting young women have also been dismantled, leaving many adolescent girls and young women without prevention, mental health or gender-based violence services, which further increases their vulnerability.

The report warned that a failure to reach the 2030 global HIV targets outlined in the next Global AIDS Strategy could result in an additional 3.3 million new HIV infections between 2025 and 2030.



Emissions rise from the smokestacks at the Jeffrey Energy Center coal power plant as the sun sets, near Emmett, Kansas, Sept. 18, 2021. (AP)

US EPA seeks to abandon tough limits on deadly soot pollution

WASHINGTON, Nov 26, (AP): The Trump administration is seeking to abandon a rule that sets tough standards for deadly soot pollution, arguing that the Biden administration did not have authority to set the tighter standard on pollution from tailpipes, smokestacks and other industrial sources.

The action follows moves by the administration last week to weaken federal rules protecting millions of acres of wetlands and streams and roll back protections for imperiled species and the places they live.

In a separate action, the Interior Department proposed new oil drilling off the California and Florida coasts for the first time in decades, advancing a project that critics say could harm coastal communities and ecosystems. The Environmental Protection Agency finalized a rule last year that imposed strict standards for soot pollution, saying that reducing fine particle matter from motor vehicles and industrial sources could

prevent thousands of premature deaths a year.

Twenty-five Republican-led states and a host of business groups filed lawsuits seeking to block the rule in court. A suit led by attorneys general from Kentucky and West Virginia argued that the EPA rule would raise costs for manufacturers, utilities and families and could block new manufacturing plants.

In a court filing this week, the EPA essentially took the side of the challengers, saying the Biden-era rule was done "without the rigorous, stepwise process that Congress required" and was therefore unlawful.

"EPA now confesses error and urges this Court to vacate the Rule" before Feb. 7, the agency said in a brief filed with the US District Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. Vacating the Biden-era rule would revert the soot standard to a level established a dozen years ago under the Obama administration.

Italy makes debut in Group C

Pakistan and India drawn in same group of T20 World Cup

MUMBAI, India, Nov 26, (AP): Defending champion India will play against Pakistan in Colombo after South Asian archrivals were drawn in the same group of T20 World Cup .

The ICC announced the groups and schedule of the mega event with 20 nations split into four groups of five teams each. Italy will be making its first appearance in a major cricketing event and is placed in Group C with England, West Indies, Bangladesh and Nepal.

The Group B comprises co-host Sri Lanka, Australia, Ireland, Zimbabwe and Oman. New Zealand, South Africa, Afghanistan, Canada and United Arab Emirates are placed in Group D.

India opens the month-long tournament in Mumbai on Feb. 7 when it takes on United States before meeting Namibia on Feb. 12, Pakistan on Feb. 15 and plays against the Netherlands in its final Group A match at Ahmedabad on Feb. 18.

The R. Premadasa Stadium in Colombo, which hosts Pakistan vs. India game, is one of the three venues in Sri Lanka along with Sinhalese Sports Club, Colombo and Pallekele International Cricket Stadium in Kandy.

Pakistan, which plays all its matches in Colombo, also opens its campaign on Feb. 7 against the Netherlands, followed by games against United States on Feb. 10, India, and Namibia on Feb. 18.

The tournament which runs from Feb. 7-March 8 will be played on the same format as when United States and the West Indies hosted the event in 2024. Two top teams from the four groups will advance to Super Eight stage where they will be split into two groups of four.

The leading two teams from each Super Eight group advance to the semifinals. If India advance to Super Eight stage it will play its matches in Ahmedabad, Chennai and Kolkata. In case India plays the semifinals it will be hosted in Mumbai.

The ICC has also shortlisted Colombo or Kolkata as the venues for the second semifinal in case Sri Lanka or Pakistan go on to qualify for the last four.

Ahmedabad will host the final, but if Pakistan qualifies for it, Colombo will host the final.

India won the last edition, beating South Africa in the final at Barbados and after the victory, captain Rohit Sharma retired from T20 format.

Sharma was named as next year's tournament ambassador on Tuesday after leading India to victory in 2024. He is one of the few cricketers who have been part of two successful T20 World Cup campaigns, the first of which came in the inaugural edition of the tournament in 2007.

"I wish all the players the very best and hope they have a memorable time and enjoy India's hospitality while taking back a lot of memories," Sharma said.



In this file photo, India's players celebrate with the winners' trophy after winning against South Africa in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup final cricket match at Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados. (AP)

From Zidane to Hazard

Gueye adds new twist to soccer weirdest send-offs

MANCHESTER, England, Nov 26, (AP): Idrissa Gueye's sending-off for Everton for slapping his teammate in the face during a Premier League game joins the list of soccer's most bizarre red cards.

Here are a few others:

Arguably, the most famous red card in soccer happened in the World Cup final and to one of the game's greatest ever players. It was during extra time in the 2006 title match between France and Italy when French star Zinedine Zidane received some insults from opponent Marco Materazzi off the ball. Zidane turned toward Materazzi, approached him and planted his head into the top of the Italy defender's chest, knocking him to the ground. The incident appeared to have been missed by the on-field referee, but after a few minutes of confusion - during which the fourth official might have seen a replay on a TV monitor - Zidane was shown a red card in what was already his last ever match before retirement. France went on to lose the final on penalties. It has long been speculated that it was the first-ever unofficial video review, more than a decade before the introduction of the VAR system ahead of the 2018 World Cup.

Croatia centre back Josip Simunic's red card in the same 2006 World Cup was less "wow" and more "what?" During a wild 2-2 draw between Croatia and Australia, Simunic was shown a second yellow card in the 90th minute by English referee Graham Poll. However, Poll didn't then follow it up with a red card, and the game continued - only for Simunic to collect another booking, for dissent, after the final whistle and finally get a red. Simunic looked bemused, and Poll didn't officiate in another game that tournament. He later said he thought he had shown the second yellow card to an Australian player and not Simunic, who was born in Australia and spoke with an Australian accent.

Eden Hazard was best known for his weaving runs during his trophy-laden time at Chelsea from 2012-19, but there was also an unusual red card thrown in there. In an English League Cup match in 2013, Chelsea needed two late goals against Swansea when the ball went out of play and into the possession of a ball boy. He covered the ball with his body as Hazard approached. In an attempt to retrieve the ball, Hazard initially tried to grab it with his hands but then aimed a kick under the ball boy's body. The boy writhed around in agony, holding his ribs and even complaining to the referee. Whether Hazard connected with the ball or the ball boy's ribs didn't matter - he was sent off. No action was taken against Hazard after the boy was interviewed by police.

It wasn't just the 6-0 scoreline that provided the farcical element to Arsenal's heavy Premier League beating at Chelsea in 2014. In the 15th minute, Arsenal midfielder Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain blatantly handled the ball in the penalty area while making a diving save to tip away a shot by Eden Hazard. Oxlade-Chamberlain escaped any sanction - but only because referee Andre Marriner chose instead to show the red card to defender Kieran Gibbs. Oxlade-Chamberlain was seen saying "it was me" to Marriner, but the referee ignored protests, while his assistants also failed to spot the mistake. Marriner later admitted, via a statement, to making a mistake.

The confrontation involving Gueye and Keane was nothing compared to the brawl between then-Newcastle teammates Lee Bowyer and Kieron Dyer during a Premier League game against Aston Villa in 2005. The pair squared up away from the ball, grabbed each other around the neck, and started throwing punches late in the second half. It needed the intervention of other Newcastle players and Villa midfielder Gareth Barry for Bowyer and Dyer to be separated. Both were shown red cards, and that reduced Newcastle to eight players, because the team had already had a man sent off.



Everton's Idrissa Gueye, third right, gets a red card from referee Tony Harrington during the English Premier League soccer match between Manchester United and Everton in Manchester, England. (AP)

Best of the Rest

Wang cleared of doping: Chinese long jumper Wang Jianan has been cleared of doping after the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) confirmed that his positive result was caused by a passive inhalation of banned substance.

The China Anti-Doping Agency (CHINADA) announced that Wang bore no fault or negligence for anti-doping rule violation after an out-of-competition test on November 1, 2024 returned a positive result.

According to CHINADA, Wang inadvertently inhaled terbutaline particles in the air while accompanying a family member who was receiving nebulizer treatment.

After the AIU received the case file from CHINADA for its review, it filed a protective appeal with the Court of Arbitration for Sport on May 1, 2025. The AIU later withdrew the appeal on November 11 after reviewing all case materials. CHINADA then publicly disclosed the ruling in line with World Anti-Doping Code requirements.

Wang, 29, claimed bronze at the 2015 World Championships in Beijing with a jump of 8.18 meters, becoming the first Asian athlete to medal in the men's long jump at the event. He won the world title in Eugene in 2022 with an 8.36-meter leap, making him China's first male world champion in a field event. A two-time Asian Games gold medalist, Wang competed in qualifying at China's 15th National Games on November 17 but did not reach the final. Afterwards, he said in a social media post that he underwent surgery earlier this year and plans to continue his recovery with the goal of returning next season. (Xinhua)

Lakers smash Clippers to seal NBA Cup group



Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James (23) puts up a shot against Los Angeles Clippers center Yanic Konan Niederhauser (14) during the second half of an NBA Cup basketball game in Los Angeles. (AP)

Orlando dominates injury-depleted 76ers

LOS ANGELES, Nov 26, (AP): Luka Doncic had 43 points, 13 assists and nine rebounds, and LeBron James added 25 points in the Los Angeles Lakers' fifth consecutive victory, 135-118 over the Los Angeles Clippers.

Doncic matched his season high with 32 points in the first half on the way to his 51st career 40-point game. He fell just short of his 10th career 40-point triple-double, but the Lakers clinched their group with their third straight win in NBA Cup play.

Austin Reaves had 31 points and nine rebounds for the Lakers, who have won 11 of 13 overall.

The 40-year-old James also looked more like his old self in the third game of his unprecedented 23rd NBA season, scoring 16 points in the second half while the Lakers steadily pulled away.

James Harden continued his scoring surge with 29 points and nine assists for the Clippers, who have lost 11 of 13. Kawhi Leonard scored 19 in his second game back from a 10-game injury absence.

The crosstown rivals' first meeting of the season got chippy when Clippers guard Kris Dunn was ejected with 3:33 to play after knocking Doncic to the ground with a hit to his back. Doncic confronted Dunn, who shoved the ball into Doncic's chest before Lakers center Jaxson Hayes shoved Dunn in the back. Dunn then swatted at Hayes,



Atlanta Hawks guard Nickeil Alexander-Walker (7) dribbles toward the basket against Washington Wizards guard CJ McCollum during the second half of an Emirates NBA Cup basketball game in Washington. (AP)

who also got a technical foul.

Magic 144, 76ers 103

In Philadelphia, Anthony Black scored 27 of his career-high 31 points in the first half, Franz Wagner added 21 points and the Orlando Magic routed the injury-depleted Philadelphia 76ers in an NBA Cup game.

Orlando's Jalen Suggs was ejected with 27 seconds left in the first half after receiving two technicals during a heated altercation between the teams.

Tyrese Maxey scored 20 points to lead the 76ers, whose absences included Joel Embiid (right knee injury management), Paul George (right ankle sprain) and rookie VJ Edgecombe

(left calf tightness).

Orlando improved to 3-0 in the Cup and the 76ers dropped to 0-3.

The game was tied at 35-all after the first quarter before the Magic took control in the second period. Philadelphia fans started showering boos on the court when Orlando went up 17 points with 5 1/2 minutes left.

The frustration spilled onto the court with 27 seconds before the break when the altercation led to Suggs' ejection.

The Magic dominated the second quarter, outscoring Philadelphia by 26 points in the period to take an 86-60 lead at halftime.

Philadelphia's Trendon Watford limped to the bench with just over four

minutes left in the first half and did not return due to a left adductor strain.

Embiid missed his eighth game in a row and 11th this season. The seven-time All-Star and 2023 MVP began the season recovering from left knee surgery, limiting him to 20-to-25 minutes when available, but has since had issues with his right knee.

George, who signed a four-year, \$212 million deal with Philadelphia prior to last season, made his season debut on Nov. 17 after offseason knee surgery. He missed the following game, played the next two before sitting out against Orlando.

Wizards 132, Hawks 113

In Washington, CJ McCollum posted season highs with 46 points and 10 made 3-pointers, and the Washington Wizards never trailed en route to a win over the Atlanta Hawks.

McCollum missed only three times from beyond the arc and finished one 3 shy of his career high and a franchise record. Washington opened with a 45-point first quarter and 77-point first half, both season bests.

Alex Sarr added 27 points and 11 rebounds for the Wizards (2-15), who snapped a 14-game losing streak - two shy of a franchise record. They earned their first home win since a 116-111 victory over Sacramento on April 2. Washington's Corey Kispert had 19 points before leaving midway through the third quarter with an apparent wrist injury.

Kristaps Porzingis scored 22 points and Onyeka Okongwu had 20 for Atlanta, which had a two-game win streak snapped in its worst since a 138-118 defeat to Toronto in an Oct. 22 season opener.

Alcaraz's season is done but tennis star's year isn't

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MADRID, Nov 26, (AP): Carlos Alcaraz recently wrapped up his 2025 official schedule with the ATP's year-end No. 1 ranking, tour-highs of 71 match wins and eight trophies and a pair of Grand Slam titles that lifted his career total to six.

Yes, his season is done - but his year isn't. That's because the 22-year-old Alcaraz, who skipped representing Spain in last week's Davis Cup Final 8 because of pain in his right hamstring, is signed up for a pair of upcoming exhibition events that include singles

matches against two-time U.S. Open semifinalist Frances Tiafoe in Newark, New Jersey, on Dec. 7, and against Joao Fonseca, a 19-year-old Brazilian ranked 24th, in Miami on Dec. 8.

Alcaraz is one of many tennis players critical of his sport's calendar, saying it runs too long, asks too much of the athletes and provides too short of an offseason. Does he get why some fans might wonder why he would add these unofficial outings?

"First of all, it's normal

that people think that way and they don't understand why we're complaining about the calendar and then we set up the exhibition matches," Alcaraz told The Associated Press. "But for me, the main difference is that, at a tournament, you've got to keep your focus and it's really physically and mentally demanding for one week and a half. And an exhibition is just one day. You just stay focused, just warm up, just practice not that much - for one match."

It boils down, he said, to the

external and internal pressure that come with the week-in, week-out grind - for victories, for rankings points, for hardware - that adds up over the season.

Those sorts of things are absent when Alcaraz swings his racket somewhere other than the All England Club or Roland-Garros, and instead at the homes of the NHL's New Jersey Devils, say, or Major League Baseball's Miami Marlins, two sites that never previously hosted professional tennis.

Three flights deployed with the KFA and Kuwait Airways to support the national team

Zain takes Al-Azraq supporters to Doha as Kuwait seals Arab Cup spot



Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef and Al-Azraq stars celebrate the qualification.



The presence of Kuwaiti fans in Doha played a key role in securing the win.



Zain's youth played an active role in organizing the trip.



Kuwait flags distributed to passengers on board the flight.



The trip saw outstanding participation from youth and families.

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26: Zain Kuwait co-arranged three special flights to carry the fans of the Kuwait national football team (Al-Azraq) to Doha, Qatar, to support the team in the Arab Cup qualifying play-off match against Mauritania. This initiative saw three aircraft allocated to transport supporters, in cooperation with the Kuwait Football Association and Kuwait Airways.

This step came as part of Zain's ongoing initiatives to support Kuwaiti sports and strengthen the presence of the national team and its fans at regional competitions.

The trip helped create an ideal atmosphere for supporters to cheer the national team from the stands and share in the joy of victory and qualification.

The match, which was played at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium at Al-Sadd Club in Doha, saw a deserved win for Kuwait,

which secured a spot in the finals of the Arab Cup after defeating Mauritania 2-0. The team booked its place in Group D alongside Egypt, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates in the tournament that will be held in Qatar from 1 to 18 December.

This initiative reflects Zain's belief in the vital role that fans play in supporting the national team. The trip embodied the company's commitment to standing behind the players on the pitch and in the stands alike, and to sharing with the people of Kuwait the joy of this achievement.

Organizing these flights in cooperation with the Kuwait Football Association and Kuwait Airways also presented a distinguished model of public-private partnership in support of Kuwaiti sports. Zain is keen to continue launching initiatives that bring fans closer to their



Zain considers itself a key partner in supporting and developing Kuwaiti sports.

favorite teams and enhance Kuwait's position on the Arab and regional sports map.

Zain and the Kuwait Football Association have a long-term strategic partnership that includes sponsorship of many local football competitions, including the local Premier League (Dawri Zain), the First Division League, the Amir and Crown Prince Cups, and more.

This initiative also builds on Zain's role in supporting some of the region's top football events, most notably its successful official partnership with the Arabian Gulf Cup (Khaleeji Zain 26), the tournament closest to the hearts of the people of the Gulf. Through its national talents, marketing and media activities, and fan zones across multiple locations, Zain helped showcase the tournament in an exceptional way on both the organizational and fan engagement levels.

Zain's continued support for national teams, local competitions, and fans forms a core part of its corporate sustainability and social responsibility strategy, which places youth and sports at the top of its priorities. The company believes in the importance of sports in reinforcing national spirit, promoting healthy lifestyles, and positively representing Kuwait in regional and international arenas.

The company continues to roll out initiatives and programs that meet the expectations of football fans in Kuwait, support the national team in all competitions, and strengthen the role of the private sector in developing local sports, while wishing the Kuwait national team continued success and performances that reflect its rich history and loyal fan base at the upcoming Arab Cup finals.

South Africa clinches first test series win in India since 2000

Jansen named player of the match

GUWAHATI, India, Nov 26, (AP): Hansie Cronje was the South Africa captain in 2000 and Sachin Tendulkar led India the last time South Africa won a test series in India.

On Wednesday, some 25 years later, South Africa clinched its second series in India in that span by beating the hosts by 408 runs. World Test Championship winner South Africa won the opening test at Kolkata by 30 runs.

Off-spinner Simon Harmer took a career-best 6-37 and India crashed to be 140 all out in its second innings and lose the two-match series 2-0.

South African allrounder Marco Jansen was named player of the match for scoring 93 in the first innings and taking six wickets for 48 runs.

Cronje's South Africa won a closely fought first test in Mumbai by four wickets, and then registered an innings' victory in the second test at Bengaluru.

Pacers Shaun Pollock (9) and Allan Donald (7) had shared 16 wickets in two tests, while left-arm spinner Nicky Boje picked up seven wickets. For India, Anil Kumble took 12 wickets in the two tests. Gary Kirsten top-scored for the Proteas with 149 runs in three innings, while Jacques Kallis scored 136 runs.

Tendulkar led with 97 in the first test, while Mohammed Azharuddin



South Africa's cricket team celebrates with the trophy after winning the test series against India in Guwahati, India. (AP)

scored 102 in his 99th (and final) test at Bengaluru. But India went down 2-0 to lose a first home series since 1987, when it had lost to Pakistan.

In 2000, the Cronje-led South Africans also clinched a 2-0 win. The Proteas had won both tests in Mumbai and Bengaluru, against the Tendulkar-led India.

Since then, South Africa had managed to win only two of 13 tests in India before overturning that record in Kolkata and Guwahati this year.

South Africa had set an improbable 549 runs for victory, after it scored 489 and 260-5 in two innings. India had folded for 201 runs in its first innings, conceding a 288-run lead.

India had lost three wickets in the morning session Wednesday, and was 90-5 at tea. Then it lost a further five wickets in just over an hour in the second session, comprehensively beaten before lunch on day five.

It was India's biggest test defeat by runs - its previous highest margin of defeat (by runs) was 342 against Australia in 2004 at Nagpur. Overall, India has lost five of its last seven home tests - a first in 66 years. Its two wins came against West Indies last month.

"It's a little disappointing and as a team we need to get better. You have to credit the opposition for playing better cricket than us," India captain and wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant said. "They dominated the

series. You cannot take things for granted playing at home."

It was a second home loss for India in consecutive seasons. New Zealand won 3-0 in October 2024, raising a serious question about India's transitional phase in the red-ball format.

Harmer finished with 17 wickets in the two tests, scripting a historic win for the Proteas. It was a first five-wicket haul on Indian soil for the off-spinner - he had previously had four four-wicket hauls here.

Harmer was named player of the series.

Aiden Markram supported him with nine catches in the match - the most ever for a fielder in a single test in history.

Kuwait volleyball team heads to Jordan for Arab Challenge Cup

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

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26: Kuwait volleyball team departed yesterday for Amman, Jordan, ahead of the inaugural Arab Challenge Cup, taking place from November 28 to December 5 with seven Arab national teams competing.

The Kuwaiti delegation is led by Federation Board Member Jassim Al-Felkawei, and includes team manager Mohammed Al-Baloushi, Argentinian head coach Julian Faiz, his assistants Zaid Al-Kazemi and Argentinian coach Lux, as well as physiotherapist Mohammed Bin Al-Yamam. The squad features 14 players: Abdunnasser Al-Anzi, Abdullah Al-Mulla, Abdullah Al-Muein, Fares Siraj, Badr Al-Attar, Rashid Anbar, Ahmed Al-Munees, Nasser Dashti, Abdullah Faris, Talal Abdulrazzaq, Abdulrahman Al-Mulla, Fahad Saad Yaqoub, Abdulrahman Al-Mutawa, and Saud Al-Dwaisan.

Kuwait will open the tournament against host nation Jordan on November 28, followed by matches against Bahrain, Palestine (November 30), Tunisia (December 3), Libya (December 4), and Egypt (December 5). All games will be played at Princess Sumaya Hall in Amman.

Assistant coach Zaid Al-Kazemi emphasized that the Arab Challenge Cup represents an important step in the team's development, allowing players to gain international experience and improve their technical performance.

Ronaldo set to avoid ban at World Cup

GENEVA, Nov 26, (AP): Cristiano Ronaldo will likely avoid missing any Portugal games at the World Cup despite his red card in a qualifying game for elbowing an Ireland opponent.

FIFA published a disciplinary verdict Tuesday that imposed a three-game ban, which judged Ronaldo's action as "violent conduct" or "serious foul play," but with two of those games deferred for a one-year probation period.

Ronaldo served a mandatory one-game ban

when Portugal played its final qualifying game last week - a 9-1 win over Armenia that sealed its place at the World Cup in North America.

The superstar had been expected to be banned for at least one more game and start what will be his record sixth World Cup on the sidelines.

FIFA cited its disciplinary rules that allow for parts of a sanction to be probationary, though it is rare in cases of a three-game ban for two of them to be deferred.

In two cases judged by FIFA this month, players from Armenia and Burundi were banned for three games after getting red cards for acts of aggression in World Cup qualifying games and neither got a reduction on probation.

"If Cristiano Ronaldo commits another infringement of a similar nature and gravity during the probationary period," FIFA said in a statement, then the remaining two games will be activated.

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Chelsea's Estevao, right, celebrates after scoring his side's second goal during the Champions League opening phase soccer match between Chelsea and Barcelona in London, England. (AP)

Sports

Al-Mutairi, Sheikh Al-Yousef congratulate Kuwait's team on Arab Cup qualification

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26: Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, congratulated Kuwait's soccer team on securing a spot in the FIFA Arab Cup 2025, to be held in Doha, Qatar, from December 1 to 18.

Minister Al-Mutairi praised the team's outstanding 2-0 victory over Mauritania, which clinched their qualification, delighting fans across Kuwait.

He also commended the Kuwait Football Association and the national team's technical and administrative staff for their exceptional efforts in preparing the players for this major FIFA tournament.

"The Kuwaiti sports sector enjoys strong support from the nation's leadership, and we look forward to even greater achievements in upcoming competitions," Minister Al-Mutairi stated.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Football Association Chairman Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah extended heartfelt congratulations to 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 to the people and government of Kuwait on the national team's success.

Sheikh Al-Yousef also thanked Kuwaiti fans for their unwavering support, calling them "number one," and expressed appreciation for the players, coaching staff, and team management for their role in achieving this milestone.



Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi with Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah

Barcelona falls apart at Stamford Bridge

Leverkusen stuns City, Mourinho gets off the mark

LONDON, Nov 26, (AP): On a night of changes, blunders and a glorious individual goal by 18-year-old Estevão, defensive lapses cost Manchester City and Barcelona dearly as both teams slumped to notable losses in the Champions League.

In Pep Guardiola's 100th Champions League game as City coach, his team struggled to cope with Bayer Leverkusen's quick transitions in a 2-0 defeat, while Barcelona had an own goal and a red card in its 3-0 loss at Chelsea.

Guardiola made 10 changes to his starting lineup following Saturday's loss to Newcastle in the Premier League, with Erling Haaland among those on the bench, but it didn't have the desired effect.

Alejandro Grimaldo fired home Leverkusen's first goal with a low shot into the far corner in the 23rd, and Patrik Schick headed in a second in the 54th.

"It feels wonderful, and we gave everything till the last second," Schick told broadcaster DAZN.

Chelsea comfortably beat 10-man Barcelona 3-0 at Stamford Bridge to earn its third league-phase win and move closer to the top.

It was the second loss for Barcelona, which went down a man after defender Ronald Araujo was shown a second yellow card just before halftime for a forceful tackle on Marc Cucurella.

Jules Koundé's own goal handed Chelsea the lead in the 27th as Barcelona defenders got tangled up in the goalmouth.

The hosts stretched their advantage



Ajax's Wout Weghorst, right, heads the ball ahead of Benfica's Rodrigo Rego during the Champions League opening phase soccer match between Ajax and SL Benfica in Amsterdam, Netherlands. (AP)

with a fine individual goal by Estevão in the 55th as he held off two defenders, and a close-range shot by Liam Delap in the 73rd.

Barcelona's fourth loss in 10 games in all competitions could mean more criticism of coach Hansi Flick's approach.

City would have moved atop the table with a win, but the night ended with the top three unchanged. Bayern Munich, Arsenal and Inter Milan all

play on.

While Guardiola had an unexpected loss, his old foe José Mourinho picked up his first Champions League win

with his new club Benfica as left back Samuel Dahl's early goal set the stage for a 2-0 win over troubled Ajax. It was No. 36 vs. No. 35 in the pre-game standings as the two winless teams met in Amsterdam.

Dahl scored an unstoppable volley in the sixth, and Leandro Barreiro added a second goal in the 90th. Ajax has lost all five of its Champions League games and won only one of its last 10 games in all competitions.

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scored twice in four minutes early in the second half to turn the game around for Marseille in a 2-1 win over Newcastle.

Serhou Guirassy scored two goals as Dortmund routed 10-man Villarreal 4-0 to end a three-game winless run in all competitions.

Juventus won 3-2 on its trip into the Arctic Circle to face Bodo/Glimt and needed a stoppage-time winner from Jonathan David after the Norwegian host levelled the score in the 87th.

David scored on the rebound of a shot by Kenan Yildiz, who was brought on at halftime and had a hand in all three Juventus goals.

Canadian forward Promise David scored the only goal as Belgium's Union Saint-Gilloise won 1-0 at injury-depleted Galatasaray. The Turkish club was without injured Champions League top scorer Victor Osimhen, and finished with 10 men after 18-year-old defender Arda Ünyay picked up two yellow cards.

Scott McTominay scored the opening goal as Napoli won 2-0 against Azerbaijan's Qarabag, whose player Kevin Medina seemed to be knocked unconscious by another McTominay shot and was later substituted. Napoli fans commemorated the fifth anniversary of club legend Diego Maradona's death.

Athletic Bilbao was frustrated in a 0-0 draw with Slavia Prague, which leaves both clubs outside the qualifying places after five games.

Greek rower Gaidatzis launches torch relay

Under a cloud, the Olympic flame begins journey to Milan Cortina Winter Olympics

ANCIENT OLYMPIA, Greece, Nov 26, (AP): The Olympic flame began its journey Wednesday to the Milan Cortina Winter Games - missing a little of its usual magic.

Bad weather lashing western Greece forced organizers to move the torch-lighting ceremony indoors, from Olympia's ancient stadium and temples to a nearby museum.

The flame is lit by focusing the sun's rays with a concave mirror. But with skies overcast, officials used a backup flame kindled during a brief spell of sunshine at Monday's rehearsals.

Greek rower Petros Gaidatzis launched the torch relay, which, after reaching Italy, will be carried across the host country by about 10,000 runners before the Feb. 6-22 competition.

The sun ultimately made an appearance over rain-soaked Olympia on Wednesday during the indoor ceremony. "It's incredibly memorable and a little bit emotional for me to be standing here," said IOC President Kirsty Coventry, who was overseeing her first torch lighting after being elected to the post in March. "It feels like the past and the present are really coming together. We are extremely happy that today's ceremony reminds us what the games stand for."

Italy is hosting its third Winter Games, but preparations have been plagued by cost overruns and construction setbacks.

Organizers say there's plenty for fans to look forward to: a program featuring 116 medal events, the debut of ski mountaineering, higher female participation and the return of NHL players to Olympic hockey.

After a short tour of Greece and a handover on Dec. 4, the flame will begin a 63-day, 12,000-kilometer relay through all 110 Italian provinces, highlighting cultural sites and host venues before reaching Milan's San Siro Stadium for the opening ceremony.

"Over the next few weeks, the Olympic flame will pass through all the Italian provinces, 60 cities, 300 towns, 20 regions and all the UNESCO sites. It will travel from the northern peaks to the southern shores," said Giovanni Malago, head of the Milan Cortina Organizing Committee. Speakers at Wednesday's ceremony urged world leaders to recognize the spirit of the Olympic Truce - an ancient Greek tradition pausing conflicts during the



Greek rower Petros Gaidatzis, right, and former Italy's Cross Country skier Stefania Belmondo start the torch relay after the ceremony of the flame lighting for the Milan Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics, at the archaeological museum of Olympia, Greece. (AP)

games to allow safe participation.

"Today humanity is going through a time of multiple and parallel crises. Wars proliferate from Europe to the Middle East and from Asia to Africa. So we should honestly admit that a society at war is a failed society," the mayor of Ancient Olympia, Aristidis Panayiotopoulos, said. "The flame allows us to again recall the values that guide humanity, values that were born and forged here."

Despite moving indoors, Wednesday's ceremony retained its traditional elements: sculptural dance gestures by performers dressed as priestesses and male kouroi, and invocations in Greek to the ancient gods.

Artemis Ignatiou, the ceremony's artistic director, said the team had prepared for the possibility of bad weather and that, despite the setback, "we gained something special: the energy of the museum and the archaeological space itself."

Speaking to The Associated Press, Ignatiou said dancing among the statues "gave the ceremony a timeless feeling."

A separate flame for the March 6-15 Winter Paralympics will be lit Feb. 24 at Stoke Mandeville Hospital in England, the birthplace of the Paralympic movement.

Drama awaits lower-ranked teams

Top-ranked teams get special paths to World Cup semifinals

GENEVA, Nov 26 (AP): The 2026 World Cup draw next week will reward the four highest-ranked teams - Spain, Argentina, France, and England - who will be placed in separate sections of a new tennis-style seeded tournament bracket.

FIFA said the top four teams in the latest men's rankings will, if they finish top of their respective round-robin groups, avoid each other until the semifinals of the June 11-July 19 tournament being co-hosted by the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

Defending champion Argentina, with Lionel Messi, and top-ranked European champion Spain, with Lamine Yamal, can therefore ensure they do not meet until the final at MetLife Stadium near New York.

"To ensure competitive balance, two separate pathways to the semifinals have been established," FIFA said in a statement, aiming to reward teams whose consistent good results have raised their world ranking.

At previous World Cups, the path for teams into and through the knockout phase was decided by which group they were drawn into.

The draw ceremony for the

first 48-team World Cup will be held Dec. 5 at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., in the presence of U.S. President Donald Trump.

The 42 teams that have already qualified include Iran and Haiti, which FIFA expects will play exactly where they are drawn, regardless of the complicated politics those countries have with the U.S.

The 16 host venues for the 104 games include 11 cities with NFL stadiums in the U.S., three in Mexico, and two in Canada.

The other six entries will be decided in March, when European and global playoffs brackets are scheduled, and those teams will all come out of the draw pot of the lowest-ranked teams.

That means four-time champion Italy could be a dangerous option in the draw on Friday of next week, which will set the match schedule by placing teams in 12 round-robin groups of four teams each.

Europe has 16 teams in the



Messi

lineup, and a maximum of two can be drawn into any one group. The other 32 teams in the tournament cannot be drawn in a group with a team from the same continent.

The three co-hosts are among the 12 top seeds in the draw, which is scheduled to take about 45 minutes during a show lasting about an hour and a half, FIFA said. The U.S. will open on June 12 against a team from pot 3, then face a team from pot 2, and close the group stage against a team from pot 4.

World Cup draw seedings Pot 1: Spain, Argentina, France, England, Brazil, Portugal, Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, United States, Mexico, Canada.

Pot 2: Croatia, Morocco, Colombia, Uruguay, Switzerland, Japan, Senegal, Iran, South Korea, Ecuador, Austria, Australia.

Pot 3: Norway, Panama, Egypt, Algeria, Scotland, Paraguay, Tunisia, Ivory Coast, Uzbekistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa.

Pot 4: Jordan, Cape Verde, Ghana, Curacao, Haiti, New Zealand, European playoff winner 1, European playoff winner 2, European playoff winner 3, European playoff winner 4, Intercontinental playoff winner 1, Intercontinental playoff winner 2.