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Kuwait bus stop failures draw Municipal scrutiny

Al-Farsi raises concerns over commuter safety, convenience

By Inaas Awad
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Municipal Council member Alia Al-Farsi has submitted a question to the executive branch regarding the public transportation system in Kuwait, specifically concerning the bus passenger waiting stations.

In the preamble to her inquiry, she referred to Article 21, Paragraph 4 of Law No. 33/2016, which outlines the Municipal Council's jurisdiction in "determining projects and their locations, beautifying cities, villages, suburbs, districts, islands, roads, streets, and squares, and their expansion."

She also cited Paragraph "d" of the same article, which states that "The Municipal Council, within the framework of the state's general structural plan and the approved budget, is responsible

for public roads, squares, sidewalks, and open spaces."

Al-Farsi explained that the state provides public bus services as a primary means of mass transportation to ensure safe and convenient movement for residents. This helps reduce traffic congestion, lowers emissions, protects the environment, and supports individuals without private transportation by offering an affordable means of reaching workplaces, educational institutions, and essential facilities. An efficient public transportation network enhances urban development and facilitates movement within cities.

She highlighted that Kuwait is currently experiencing a degree of disorder due to overlapping responsibilities among operating entities and the spread of unregulated routes, along with weak adherence to arrival and departure schedules and insufficient monitoring of compliance with designated bus stops.

She revealed that some drivers stop outside the assigned areas, which negatively affects traffic flow and safety levels.

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HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

The boy's honesty and faith in God changed the king's decision

The doctors told the king that his only cure was a human liver transplant

The boy's parents were tempted by money and agreed to have their son killed

The king asked in astonishment, "Why are you smiling when you are on the verge of death?"

The king said, "It is better for me to die sick than to live after shedding the blood of an innocent person"

The Orthodox Patriarchate opened its doors to feed the hungry

Patriarch Haddad mortgaged the endowments and sold the church's golden vessels

He lifted a loaf of bread and asked the distributor, "Is it written on the loaf that it is only for Christians?"

When the Patriarch passed away, Muslims mourned him even more than Christians

Omar ibn Abd al-Aziz said, "I have left nothing for my children except the fear of God"

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Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah chairs the weekly Cabinet meeting on Wednesday.

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Foggy fury

Kuwait weather calms Thursday

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10, (KUNA): Kuwait's Meteorological Department forecast that the country will continue to experience thunderstorms and strong winds with speed reaching 45 km/h on Wednesday.

The acting Director of the department Dhirar Al-Ali told KUNA that the weather is expected to start improving on Thursday evening.

He explained that weather charts show the country is affected by a low-pressure system combined with a warm, humid air mass, leading to low-altitude cumulus clouds. Also, visibility has decreased due to fog.

'Prefab' homes reshape Kuwait's rental market

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Standardized models and low-cost "modular" designs are rapidly spreading in vacant land as the anti-land monopoly law approaches implementation in early January 2026.

Kuwait's real estate market is witnessing rapid and unprecedented changes in development and construction trends, as the anticipated fees have prompted landowners and developers to fundamentally reconsider their real-estate investment strategies.

This has opened the door to the spread of rapid construction technologies, most notably precast concrete systems and prefabricated homes. Al-Seyassah surveyed experts and specialists to explore the scenarios facing landowners and assess the validity of concerns about potential declines in rental prices.

Real estate expert Fahad Al-Mu'min explained that prefabricated concrete construction is now widely used in many countries around the world, particularly in commercial towers and complexes that require rapid completion within a specific timeframe.

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Ambassador Sönmez hopes 2026 brings peace to region

Diwaniya fosters strong Kuwait-Turkiye connections

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Ambassador of Turkiye to Kuwait Tuba Sönmez says, "The monthly 'Turkish Diwaniya', which is a long-standing tradition established by the Turkish Embassy in Kuwait, serves as an important platform for cultural exchange and increased cooperation".

The ambassador highlighted that the event regularly welcomes Kuwaiti citizens, diplomats, and students, and keeps the embassy's doors open to the community.

During the final event of the year, Ambassador Sönmez stated, "Every month, we are keen to welcome our Kuwaiti brothers and sisters, Turkish students, students of the Turkish language, as well as members of the diplomatic corps,



Photo during the Turkish Diwaniya.

Kuwait invests \$20 bn to boost oil capacity amid global demand rise

MANAMA, Dec 10: Reaffirming that Artificial Intelligence and rising energy consumption will drive future oil demand, Deputy Chairman and CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Sabah announced that Kuwait is investing over \$20 billion in exploration and production to increase its capacity from 3 million to 3.2 million barrels per day, with plans to reach 4 million barrels per day

eventually, reports Al-Seyassah daily. During the 19th Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Forum (GPCA) in Bahrain, Sheikh Nawaf explained that the International Energy Agency (IEA) has adopted a more realistic outlook concerning oil demand. IEA's recent statements reflect current market conditions, highlighting that global energy demand is expected to rise by 40 percent by 2050.

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Polio-free Kuwait tops regional immunization rankings

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Kuwait achieved a leading regional ranking in the 2025 Eastern Mediterranean Region Immunization Programme Performance Index, scoring 16 points higher than its previous ranking. The country's performance rate reached 91 percent, up from 75 percent in 2023, reports Al-

Seyassah daily. This achievement is based on the World Health Organization's (WHO) assessment of the National Advisory Committees on Immunization (NITAG) indicators. Kuwait's progress in the index reflects its com-

mitment to strengthening evidence-based health policies, improving management efficiency, and raising health awareness among citizens and residents.

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Kuwait reaffirms commitment to human rights, dignity

By Inaas Awad
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: The National Human Rights Bureau, under the patronage of Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya, recently hosted a major event at the Saud Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute to mark International Human Rights Day.

Titled "Human Rights... A Shared National Responsibility," the event brought together high-ranking diplomatic and official figures.

Assistant Foreign Minister for Consular Affairs, Ambassador Aziz Rahim Al-Daihani, represented Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya at the event.

Other important attendees included Head of the Tripartite Committee for Steering the Bureau's

Work, Anas Issa Al-Shaheen, and the United Nations Office representative and resident coordinator in Kuwait, Nasser Al-Shatti. During the event, Ambassador Al-Daihani stressed the importance of upholding human dignity, describing it as a commitment that is "national, moral, and societal."

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Log fingerprint 'glitches': MoH

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: The Ministry of Health issued Circular No. 52/2025 regarding the mechanism for monitoring the smart fingerprint system in order to ensure smooth workflow and adherence to official working hours in all sectors of the ministry.

The ministry explained in the circular that if an employee is unable to record attendance, presence, departure, or overtime due to a technical malfunction in the smart fingerprint system, they must follow these steps:

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Mol tightens 'digital' grip on deportees

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: The Ministry of Interior has announced the launch of the TETRA wireless communications project and the electronic fingerprint exchange project for deportees, along with the introduction of additional traffic services in cooperation with the UAE Ministry of Interior, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, the ministry explained that Brigadier General Abdullah Al-Ateeqi, Head of the Traffic and Operations Sector,

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Photos during the event titled 'Human Rights ... A Shared National Responsibility,' at the Saud Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute to mark International Human Rights Day.



Photos by Rezk Tawfiq

Prayer Timings

Fajr	05:07	Asr	14:31
Sunrise ..	06:31	Maghrib ..	16:50
Zohr	11:41	Isha	18:12

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Mild and partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times at times northeasterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-40 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times and a chance for fog forming at night.

Weather

By Night: Rather cold and partly cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate northeasterly wind, with speeds of 08-32 km/h with a chance for fog forming over some areas.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	24	20

Kuwait Airport	25	20
Abdaly	23	19
Bubyan	21	18
Jahra	24	20
Failaka Island	22	18
Salmiyah	24	22
Ahmadi	23	17
Nuwaisib	26	20
Wafra	25	19

Need to speed up pace of joint projects with China: Kuwait envoy

BEIJING, Dec 10, (KUNA): The Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to China, Jassem Al-Najem, affirmed on Wednesday the need to speed up the pace of joint projects with China to achieve mutual benefit for both countries.

This statement came during Ambassador Al-Najem's meeting with Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Miao Deyu at the Foreign Ministry in Beijing.

Ambassador Al-Najem said that bilateral relations saw significant developments in various fields, attributing such success to the high-level visits carried out by officials from both countries.

He affirmed Kuwait's keenness on expanding its partnership with Chi-

na, exploring all means to help boost ties and achieve mutual benefits.

The Kuwaiti diplomat commended the partnership with China, especially within economic and commercial cooperation, adding that Kuwait was working on ambitious programs and major development projects, and would welcome Chinese government companies to explore opportunities within this framework.

He affirmed Kuwait's support for the second China-Arab States Summit to be held in Beijing next year, pointing out that Kuwait was ready to provide all assistance to make the event successful.

Ambassador Al-Najem said that the meeting with Deyu discussed

several important issues, including China's honorable stance on the just Palestinian cause, for which Beijing expressed condemnation of violations of international and humanitarian laws carried out by the Israeli occupation.

For his part, Vice Foreign Minister Deyu lauded the tremendous development of Kuwaiti-Chinese relations due to the directives of both countries' leaderships.

He pointed out that next year, China and Kuwait will celebrate the 55th anniversary of diplomatic ties, affirming that China would work to further boost strategic partnership with Kuwait.

He expressed his country's readiness to host the China-Arab States

Summit in 2026, adding that his country was looking forward to boost ties with Kuwait and the Arab World.

He revealed that President Xi Jinping announced recently a USD 100 million package of assistance for the people of Palestine, an important step highlighting Beijing's eagerness to help the Palestinian cause.

Kuwait and China signed several MoUs in 2023 to expand cooperation, especially in the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project and Kuwait's power grid.

MoUs also included cooperation in renewable energy, green low-carbon emission systems, recycling, the free trade zone, as well as housing and infrastructural development projects.



KUNA photo
Kuwait's Ambassador to China Jassem Al-Najem meets with the Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Miao Deyu at the Foreign Ministry in Beijing.



Ahmadi Governorate photo
Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah presents a memento to the Ambassador of the Republic of Benin to Kuwait, Professor Baderou Dine Aguemon.

'Welcome to Kuwait'

Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received the Ambassador of the Republic of Benin to Kuwait, Professor Baderou Dine Aguemon, at his office, in the presence of Minister and Counselor at the embassy Finayon Hounsou and Diplomatic Attaché Gabriela Boni Basaro Zakari.

According to a press release issued by Ahmadi Governorate, Governor Sheikh Hamoud welcomed Ambassador Aguemon, and wished him success

in his duties and in strengthening relations between the two countries.

They exchanged greetings and engaged in a friendly discussion about bilateral relations and ways to enhance cooperation in various fields.

Ambassador Aguemon expressed his gratitude for the warm reception, highlighting the care and support the diplomatic mission and Beninese community receive at both official and public levels in Kuwait.

Info puts end to 'paper-based' transactions for leave request

By Mohammad Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: The Ministry of Information has mandated that all employee leave requests be submitted exclusively through the Civil Service Commission (CSC) application as part of its push for digital transformation and enhanced electronic services.

According to a circular, this new procedure is retroactively effective from January 2025. This means all past and current leave requests are now subject to this electronic submission process, and employees are

urged to use the approved digital system.

In addition, informed sources revealed that the ministry has stopped accepting paper-based transactions for attendance and departure services, including annual, emergency, and all other types of leave requests and exemptions, effective January 1. These services will now be provided exclusively through the CSC app.

The ministry stressed the importance of employees adhering to official attendance and departure times and ensuring their accounts on the app are active to fully benefit from the new electronic services.

Other Voices

The gov't of the FIFA empire

By Ahmad alsarraf

Kuwait is banned from participating in international football tournaments by FIFA on several occasions, most notably in October 2007, when a brief suspension of just two weeks was imposed after FIFA determined that the government had interfered in the affairs of the Kuwait Football Association.

One year later, another short suspension was imposed because the required independent general assembly elections for the Kuwait Football Association were not held.

The third and most painful suspension came after Kuwait failed to amend its sports laws by the FIFA-imposed deadline of October 15, 2015. The reasons for the suspension was unjustified political interference, including parliamentary oversight and forced elections, which violated FIFA regulations. Kuwait's membership and participation in all international matches were suspended, and the country was barred from World Cup and Asian Cup qualifiers (with its results nullified), club competitions, and development programs.

These sanctions were lifted on December 6, 2017, after the National Assembly passed a new sports law that complied with FIFA requirements.

The suspension and related violations were reportedly the result of conflicts within the ruling family that undermined the independence of the Kuwait Football Association, prompting FIFA to enforce its regulations strictly to protect the autonomy of football.



alsarraf

What is FIFA, and how did it gain such international influence despite not being a sovereign state, lacking military power, and having no affiliation with the United Nations?

FIFA is the global governing body for football, responsible for overseeing major tournaments, including the World Cup. It was founded on May 21, 1904, in Paris, following a meeting of representatives from several European football associations. Zurich, Switzerland, was later chosen as FIFA's permanent headquarters.

The football associations of France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark, and Spain were the first to establish FIFA and sign its founding document in 1904.

Initially a European federation, FIFA soon began including associations from outside Europe, such as Argentina, Chile, South Africa, and the United States. Over time, it evolved into a global organization comprising more than 200 national associations.

FIFA is a French abbreviation for Fédération Internationale de Football Association. The name has remained in French to this day, despite the organization's global reach.

The FIFA Council is elected by national football associations within their respective continental regions. Powerful members of the Council have historically played a major role in selecting the host countries for the World Cup matches.

FIFA's reputation has been repeatedly tarnished by scandals involving bribery and large-scale kickbacks.

Subsequent reforms have been implemented within FIFA, significantly reducing the risk of similar violations in the future.

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Kuwait stresses rule of law to prevent genocide

Accountability vital for sustainable peace: Al-Mulla

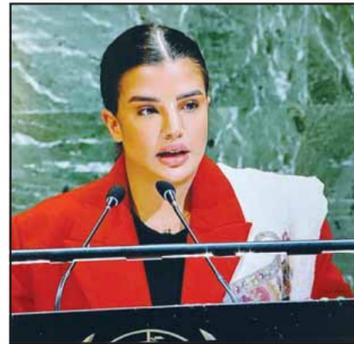
NEW YORK, Dec 10, (KUNA): Kuwait has affirmed that the prevention of genocide starts with enhancing the rule of law, accountability, early warning and combating hate speech in all types.

The statement was made, during Kuwait's speech, by Second Secretary of Kuwait's Permanent Mission to the UN Wafiqah Al-Mulla before the high-level meeting of the UN General Assembly marking the 10th anniversary of the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of Prevention of Genocide.

She commenced the speech with expressing Kuwait's honor of participating in this key meeting, which embodies the renewed commitment of international community to preventing genocide, the most dangerous crime known by humanity throughout history.

The crime of genocide is not merely a grave violation of international law, but a direct attack on humanity itself, Al-Mulla said.

She warned that leaving such crimes without clear designation or strict accountability allows their repetition in different places and against



KUNA photo
Wafiqah Al-Mulla

different peoples.

Al-Mulla called for facing strictly genocide and ensuring that any society will not turn to a new crime of genocide that targets human existence.

The 10th anniversary comes at a time when the world is witnessing worrying escalation in

the armed conflicts, growing hatred discourse, the spread of misleading information and the expansion of attacks on civilians without deterrence, she noted.

She highlighted the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which, seven decades ago, established the legal and humanitarian framework obligating states to prevent acts that could lead to the partial or total destruction of any protected group.

Al-Mulla cited what the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip are witnessing - practices that amount to crimes of genocide under international law, including the widespread targeting of civilians, the deliberate deprivation of essential means of survival, and the obstruction of humanitarian aid.

Protecting Palestinian people, ending their sufferings and ensuring the non-impunity are not only legal obligations but also an ethical necessity and an international rule to mainly prevent the repetition of atrocities, she highlighted.

Concluding the speech, Al-Mulla affirmed Kuwait's unwavering commitment to backing all international efforts aiming to prevent grave crimes and boosting accountability as well as building sustainable peace and establishing tol-



Jahra Governorate photo
Jahra Governorate holds an open meeting to discuss the services and projects planned for Al-Mutla'a City.

Open talks held on delay in Al-Mutla'a City projects

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Jahra Governorate held an open meeting to discuss the services and projects planned for Al-Mutla'a City, with wide participation from government representatives and city residents.

According to a press release issued by Jahra Governorate, government agencies reviewed the most prominent projects currently underway, their completion rates, and the expected developments in infrastructure and basic services.

They discussed the reasons for delays in completing some projects and the corrective plans to ensure their completion according to the set schedules.

City residents shared their demands and observations, and discussed the daily challenges they face, in an interactive setting aimed at unifying visions and enhancing coordination between residents and authorities.

The meeting is part of Jahra Governorate's efforts to promote community partnership and provide accurate and transparent information about public projects.

'UN-Habitat' event sheds light on one family values

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10, (KUNA): The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in Kuwait held an event titled "The Family is a Homeland" in conjunction with the celebration of Arab Family Day, which falls on December 7 each year.

The event aims to raise awareness about the role and societal importance of the family and to increase knowledge on issues related to it.

Dr. Amcera Al-Hassan, Head of the UN-Habitat Office in Kuwait and the Gulf States, told KUNA on the sidelines of the event that the family is considered a fundamental pillar for the sustainability of urban communities, and supporting it forms an essential basis for achieving social stability.

Al-Hassan explained that dedicating this day aims to highlight the core values of family stability, considering the family a safety valve amid social, economic, and cultural changes. She added that this event falls within the UN-Habitat Mandate Work to strengthen social cohesion and support family unity as one of the foundations of community sustainability.

She noted that the event included a panel discussion on issues concerning the Arab family, its bonds, and the Arab values and customs intertwined with other cultures. The panel concluded with recommendations, the most important of which was the emphasis on reinforcing these bonds and solidifying their values.

Four new branches to augment co-ops presence in 'Al-Mutla'a'

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Hamad Al-Dhafeeri, the newly appointed manager of Al-Mutla'a Cooperative Society, announced the completion of a major phase in the area's expansion plan.

In a press statement, Al-Dhafeeri revealed that contracts have been signed to furnish four new branches, which will officially open and start serving citizens on January 28, 2026.

He stressed that this step is part of a clear strategy to develop the cooperative work system and strengthen the cooperative society's presence in Al-Mutla'a, keeping pace with population growth and the rising needs of residents.

Al-Dhafeeri explained that the new branches will enhance competitiveness, improve product quality, and conven-

iently meet consumers' daily needs.

The cooperative society is working intensively to finalize tender procedures for furnishing seven additional branches, which will be announced once the signing and approval processes are completed through the established legal frameworks. This phase is part of comprehensive expansion plans aimed at improving service levels and providing a modern, integrated cooperative environment.

The cooperative society's expansion and development are receiving direct support from the Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, Dr. Al-Huwailah, with diligent follow-up from the Undersecretary of the ministry Dr. Khaled Al-Ajmi. This support reflects a clear vision to strengthen the role of cooperative societies as vital economic and social resources for serving the community.



KUNA photo
MPW workers paving the road in Al-Nuzha locality.

Road repairs continue in Nuzha

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Affirming that field work on the comprehensive road maintenance projects is proceeding as per the planned schedule, Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan revealed that supervisory teams from the Ministry of Public Works were present in Nuzha, Block 3, Street 30, to monitor the progress of work on the ground, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The minister explained that the site is currently undergoing the application of the final asphalt layer, Type 3, with a thickness of 5 cm, following the completion of preliminary infrastructure works. These works included cleaning and inspecting rainwater drainage and sewage networks.

Dr. Al-Mashaan confirmed that work is progressing steadily in preparation for the next phase of the project.

HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah



The boy's honesty and faith in God changed the king's decision

THE story recounts that a king fell seriously ill, and his doctors believed that the only cure was a liver transplant from a human being with specific characteristics.

Senior officials were tasked with finding a boy who met the required criteria. When they located him, the king summoned the boy's parents and offered them a large sum of money for their son's liver. The parents consented, allowing their son to be killed so the king could take his liver and be cured of his illness.

The king then consulted a judge to determine whether it was permissible to take the boy's life for the sake of medicine. The unjust judge declared that it was permissible.

The boy was brought forward to be slaughtered like a sheep while the king watched from a distance.

The king saw the boy looking at his executioner, then raising his eyes to the sky and smiling. The king hurried toward him and asked in astonishment, "Why are you smiling when you are about to die?"

The boy replied, "My parents should have shown mercy to their son. The judge should have been just in his ruling, and the king should have pardoned me."

Money blinded my parents, so they handed my life over to you.

The judge feared you, O king, more than he feared God, so he made my blood lawful for you to shed.

You, my lord king, saw your cure in killing an innocent person. Therefore, I have no refuge except my Lord, and I lift my head to Him, accepting His judgment.

I know for certain that God is more merciful to me than my parents, who abandoned me for money. I will take the judge of the earth to the Almighty Judge of Heaven.

O king of this world, your kingdom will not last forever. God is always there, and He will grant me justice, for I have been wronged."

The king was deeply moved by the boy's words and wept.

He then said, "It is better for me to die sick than to live after shedding the blood of an innocent person."

The king embraced the boy and granted him whatever wealth he wished.

● The doctors told the king that his only cure was a human liver transplant

● The boy's parents were tempted by money and agreed to have their son killed

● The king asked in astonishment, "Why are you smiling when you are on the verge of death?"

● The king said, "It is better for me to die sick than to live after shedding the blood of an innocent person"

● The Orthodox Patriarchate opened its doors to feed the hungry

● Patriarch Haddad mortgaged the endowments and sold the church's golden vessels

● He lifted a loaf of bread and asked the distributor, "Is it written on the loaf that it is only for Christians?"

● When the Patriarch passed away, Muslims mourned him even more than Christians

● Omar ibn Abd al-Aziz said, "I have left nothing for my children except the fear of God"

In response, Patriarch Gregory Haddad mortgaged all the endowments of the Patriarchate and the Syrian monasteries, and sold the church's gold and silver artifacts and vessels to buy wheat and save people from starvation.

Everyone who came to the Church of Mary received a loaf of bread each day, regardless of their religion.

One day, the person in charge of distributing the bread complained about the large number of Muslims coming to collect it, saying their numbers had surpassed those of the Christians.

The Patriarch held the loaf high and asked the distributor, "Is it written on the bread that it is only for Christians?"

He then ordered that a loaf of bread be given daily to anyone who asked, regardless of their religion.

One day, a poor man came to the Patriarch seeking charity. One of the Patriarch's attendants asked the man about his religion. The Patriarch became furious and said, "Would you withhold charity from him because he is not of your faith? Is it not enough that he extended his hand to you? Why humiliate him by asking about his beliefs?"

When the Patriarch passed away, Muslims mourned him even more than Christians.

It is said that eighty thousand Muslims joined the Patriarch's funeral procession. They called him "the Father of the Poor."



A Sermon by Muqatil to Abu Ja'far al-Mansour

Muqatil ibn Sulayman visited the Abbasid Caliph Abu Ja'far al-Mansour, who requested a sermon from him.

Muqatil replied, "Shall I advise you based on what I have seen or what I have heard?"

The Caliph said, "Based on what you have seen."

Muqatil said, "Your Majesty, the Umayyad Caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz had eleven sons and left behind eighteen dinars. They shrouded him with five dinars, bought a grave for four, and distributed the remaining amount among his sons.

The Umayyad Caliph Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik had

■ The Arabs say that a person's grudges are revealed in their jokes. Be discerning and listen carefully during moments of jest, as you might hear the truth and discover your friend's real feelings.



■ They also say that a rich man's joke is funny, no matter how ridiculous. Of course, if he does not hear your praise and flattery, you will not be counted among his companions.



■ All political analysts are battle fugitives. They are heroes only in news broadcasts, political analyses, and strategy discussions. People listen to them, but only the wise remain cautious.



■ When someone flatters you and claims to love you as much as they love themselves, remember Cain's love for Abel. God help us... how many liars there are!

eleven sons, and each son inherited one million dinars. I swear by God that I saw one of Omar ibn Abd al-Aziz's sons donating one hundred horses for the sake of God. On the same day, I saw one of Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik's sons begging in the markets.

People asked Omar ibn Abd al-Aziz as he lay on his deathbed, "What have you left for your sons, Omar?"

Omar ibn Abd al-Aziz replied, "I have left my sons nothing but the fear of God. If they are righteous, then God Almighty will take care of them. If they are unrighteous, I will not leave them money that would enable them to disobey God Almighty."



Farwaniya governorate photo Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah discusses issue of bachelors living in residential areas with officials from various sectors.

'Bachelor housing' issue to be solved

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah held a coordination meeting on Tuesday morning to discuss practical solutions to the issue of bachelors living in residential areas.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, the meeting was attended by representatives from Kuwait Municipality, the General Department of Criminal Investigations, the Public Authority for Manpower, and the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy.

During the meeting, participants reviewed the main field challenges and discussed ways to strengthen monitoring and enhance joint efforts among the relevant authorities. The aim was to resolve the issue in line with approved legal and procedural frameworks, ensuring the safety and security of residential areas and the well-being of residents.

Governor Sheikh Athbi highlighted Farwaniya Governorate's commitment to closely follow up on this matter and to implement practical and effective solutions in collaboration with the concerned authorities.

Charities urged to help out victims of cyclone in Lanka

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: The Ministry of Social Affairs has issued a circular to charitable organizations, requesting them to declare their capacity to provide humanitarian and relief assistance to victims of Cyclone Dittu in Sri Lanka. This is aimed to streamline the ministry's facilitation of the necessary procedures.

The circular specifies that contributions may include financial support, essential relief supplies, logistical assistance, and technical expertise. Such comprehensive aid is crucial for ensuring the timely, effective, and targeted delivery of assistance.

The primary objective is to support the restoration of livelihoods, strengthen healthcare services, and assist in repairing community infrastructure in the cyclone-affected areas.

Charitable organizations are required to notify the ministry of their ability to assist, which will allow the ministry to take the necessary steps.

Court says doctor is not 'negligent'

Patient complaint rejected

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: The Court of Appeals upheld a lower court's ruling to overturn the warning issued by the Technical Appeals Committee of the Medical Liability Authority against a doctor at Al-Sabah Hospital.

The court confirmed that the penalty lacked any technical or legal basis and that the doctor had followed the approved medical protocols in his specialty.

The case originated from a patient filing a negligence complaint with the Public Prosecution against the senior general practitioner.

After reviewing the Appeals Committee's report, which had recommended a warning, the court determined that the doctor had adhered to proper medical procedures according to established standards, and that his actions did not amount to gross professional negligence warranting liability.

The court explained in its reasoning that medical liability is established only in cases of gross professional negligence, and that a doctor is legally required to exercise due care, not to guarantee a cure. The administrative warning lacked valid grounds and was issued in violation of the law, leading the court to overturn it.

Dr. Fawaz Khaled Al-Khatib, the doctor's attorney, said the ruling provides essential protection for medical practitioners amid a concerning rise in complaints.

He warned that the current situation, marked by excessive criminal, administrative, disciplinary, and civil accountability, threatens doctors' peace of mind.

Dr. Al-Khatib stressed the need to balance the emotional well-being of doctors, who serve in a profession dedicated to human life, while ensuring the protection of patient rights.

Dealers face penalties while users will receive treatment

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Colonel Hisham Al-Ibrahim, Director of the Local Control Department at the Drug Control General Department (DCGD), stated that the penalties under the new drug law are structured hierarchically, ranging from treatment to administrative deterrence, criminalization, and the most severe punishments, reports Al-Jarida daily.

He highlighted the clear distinction between users and dealers, with users receiving treatment while dealers face harsher penalties.

Colonel Al-Ibrahim explained that the new law closes previous loopholes, particularly regarding crystal meth, synthetic cannabinoids, and online drug trafficking. It also targets organized crime, ensuring that seizures extend beyond the shipment to include the individuals and the entire gang.

Special attention is being given to protecting vulnerable groups through measures addressing the exploitation of minors and the sick, in addition to an unprecedented crackdown reflecting the state's shift from moderate to deterrent penalties.

Regarding the classification of drug schedules, Colonel Al-Ibrahim explained

that narcotics are categorized based on their origin. Chemically manufactured substances are included among psychoactive substances, while naturally derived substances, such as hashish, opium, and heroin, are classified as narcotics. Psychoactive substances were previously rare, but their use has increased significantly over the past 40 years, particularly because they are produced from toxic chemicals that cause severe addiction, brain cell damage, and contribute to violent crimes. These substances are linked to many crimes committed by perpetrators exhibiting extreme violence.

Regarding the local anti-narcotics department, Colonel Al-Ibrahim clarified that the department is responsible for controlling and securing investigation procedures in drug cases, referring defendants to the Public Prosecution, and executing prosecution orders related to detention and imprisonment.

In response to a question about the legality of minors being involved in drug use or trafficking, he stated that the new law applies to adults, while minors fall under the juvenile law.

Mol offers ex-police officers jobs

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: The Ministry of Interior, represented by the General Directorate of Police Affairs, announced that it will start accepting applications from former police officers whose service ended due to resignation, health reasons, absence from work, or refusal to comply with disciplinary penalties, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

It revealed that applications will be accepted from December 11 to 18, 2025.

The ministry explained that applicants must meet the following requirements:

- Be a Kuwaiti citizen, have a good reputation and conduct, be no older than 35 years at the time of application
- Have at least six months elapsed since the termination of their previous service.
- Have no more than three years elapsed since the termination of their previous service.

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Kuwait pledges role to up Arab world tourism

Call for better infrastructure, quality

BAGHDAD, Dec 10, (KUNA): Undersecretary of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information Dr. Nasser Muhaisen said that Kuwait is committed to actively contributing to the development of Arab tourism policies and strengthening joint initiatives, thereby supporting sustainable development efforts and solidifying the presence of Arab countries on the regional and international tourism map.

Representing Kuwait on behalf of Minister of Information and Culture and State Minister for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, Muhaisen made the statement to KUNA during his participation in the 28th Ordinary Session of the Arab Ministerial Council for Tourism, held in Baghdad, Iraq.

Muhaisen explained that the current session discussed several key topics, most notably innovation and digital transformation towards smart tourism, updating joint Arab strategies for

the sector, and supporting initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of tourism experiences in Arab countries.

The meetings also addressed ways to develop a shared regional tourism product encompassing a range of integrated Arab tourism assets that would contribute to boosting intra-Arab tourism and support integration and cooperation efforts in this sector.

He added that the Council's decisions would enhance cooperation among member states, facilitate the exchange of expertise, and develop joint programs, emphasizing Kuwait's commitment to supporting these efforts and participating in the implementa-

tion of future initiatives.

Muhaisen concluded by affirming that Kuwait would continue to support the joint Arab action system in developing the tourism sector and actively contribute to the implementation of the Council's adopted decisions and initiatives, thereby strengthening Arab tourism and fulfilling member states' aspirations for a more competitive and sustainable sector.

This conference was preceded by the 36th session of the Organizing Committee, which convened Monday, with Kuwait participating in its capacity as Vice-Chair of the Executive Office of the Arab Ministerial Council for Tourism.



KUNA photo
Undersecretary of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information Dr. Nasser Muhaisen at the Baghdad meeting.

Show nationality docus, co-ops members told

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: The Ministry of Social Affairs has requested citizenship certificates from elected members of the boards of directors of cooperative societies, reports Al-Rai daily.

Mariam Al-Awad, Head of the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies, addressed the boards, emphasizing the importance of providing the ministry with recently issued citizenship certificates "to ensure the accuracy of records and the completion of required data according to applicable

regulations."

She said, "To enable the union and its cooperative societies to implement ministerial instructions and decisions, please instruct your executive bodies to submit the citizenship certificates of your elected members to the Ministry of Social Affairs as soon as possible. Failure to provide the documents within the specified period may lead to the suspension or postponement of some transactions until the data is completed."

Air Force role in defense vital: MoD



KUNA photo
Minister of Defense (MoD) Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah at the closing ceremony of joint exercise, the 'Sky Shield 2025'.

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10, (KUNA): Minister of Defense (MoD) Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah has highlighted the importance of backing defense system, and enhancing its human and technical potential as well as upgrading air force in a manner that protects the country, and enforces its stability and security. This came on Tuesday in a statement made by the Ministry of Defense after the minister had patronized and attended a closing ceremony of a joint exercise, the "Sky Shield 2025", carried out by the Air Defense Force, with the participation of the Bahrain Defense Force's Air Defense Missile Unit, the U.S. Army, and the British Military Mission.

He commended fruitful cooperation with the sisterly and friendly countries' forces, noting that the exercise is a practical example to constantly develop combat readiness and raise air force capability as well as boost common action with the sisterly and friendly forces, according to the statement. Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ali was

received by Chief of General Staff of Kuwait's Armed Forces Lt. Gen. Khaled Al-Shuraian and saw a briefing on the phases of exercise that showed the ability to common action, it noted.

It stated that Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ali witnessed live-fire drills of air-defense systems, which reflected a high-level professionalism in engaging aerial targets and demonstrated precise coordination among the participating units to share expertise and enhance tactical and operational capabilities. The ceremony was attended by Undersecretary of Ministry of Defense Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Meshal Al-Sabah, Deputy Chief of Staff Lt. Air Vice Marshal Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Deputy Commander of the U.S. Central Command is Maj Gen. Sean M. Salene and more. The exercise is part of the scheduled training programs of Kuwait's army with the sisterly and friendly countries to raise efficiency of air defense personnel.

Contract renewal, full commitment linked

By **Mohammad Al-Enezi**
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) has announced that renewing the contracts of Kuwaiti citizens holding religious positions - muezzin, imam, and imam-preacher - in the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, totaling 1,409, is contingent upon their full-time commitment.

In a letter to the Ministry of Islamic Affairs regarding its request to renew the contracts of these 1,409 Kuwaiti citizens, effective September 11 for one year, CSC explained that it has granted its approval "in principle" after a meeting

with several ministry officials and subsequent coordination. This "in principle" approval applies only to full-time Kuwaiti citizens and is subject to final approval by the Civil Service Council.

The monthly stipend will remain unchanged, as previously set by CSC - KD 375 for imam-preacher positions, KD 350 for imam positions, and KD 275 for muezzin positions.

Regarding part-time employees or retirees, CSC stated that the matter will be referred to the Civil Service Council once the outcome of the meeting between CSC and the Ministry of Islamic Affairs is received. The ministry will be informed of the decision afterward.



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Jahra Governorate photo
Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habashi with his guests.

All depts must work together to improve services: Governor

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habashi received in his office the directors of the Engineering Audit and Follow-up Department, Public Hygiene and Road Occupancy Department, and Safety Department at the Jahra Municipality to discuss work progress and field efforts aimed at improving services for citizens.

According to a press release issued by Jahra Governorate, Governor Al-Habashi honored several distinguished employees for their outstanding contributions to public

safety and cleanliness in the governorate.

He praised the crucial role played by the Safety, Hygiene, and Road Occupancy departments, highlighting that their efforts are essential to supporting the governorate's plans and improving the overall environment.

The governor affirmed the importance of cooperation and coordination among relevant institutions to ensure the provision of integrated services that meet the aspirations of Jahra residents.

News in Brief

Citizen's position in CID restored

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: The Administrative Court issued a final ruling overturning the decision of the administrative body that had refused to accept the appointment documents of a citizen who applied for the position of "Junior Researcher", a role that qualifies for appointment as an "Investigator" in the General Department of Criminal Investigations for the year 2024.

Lawyer Mohammad Al-Ansari said the Administrative Court issued its final ruling accepting the appeal, overturning the previous ruling, and reaffirming the annulment of the administrative body's refusal to accept his client's appointment papers.

He confirmed that the court upheld their arguments, emphasizing that the administrative body's refusal had no legal basis or justification and that his client met all the required qualifications for the position.

Lawyer Al-Ansari stated that the ruling proves that the administrative judiciary always supports citizens and applicants for public sector jobs and deters arbitrary or unjustified administrative decisions that violate the law.

KUNA Junior issue out: The 23rd issue of Kuwait News Agency's KUNA Junior is out with loads of fun stories and valuable content addressing children of all ages.

The new issue focuses on educational and media content, which aims to satisfy children's cultural appetite through a variety of comic strips, stories, and more.

From "The Adventures of Dalal and Hamad" with its children-focused storyline on following safety, security and traffic regulations, "Cultural Tidbits with Zaina" exploring interest in reading and knowledge, to the media adventures of "Faris: The Young Journalist", issue 23 is a whimsical journey with a variety of other contents guaranteed to keep children glued to its pages.

Schools and those interested in getting their copies can contact the agency directly through its 22271800 line or visit the headquarters located in Shuwaikh administrative area next to the Jahra Road. Previous editions are available on the Instagram account kunanews_kids or through KUNA's application. (KUNA)

PAM calls for elections: The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) has terminated the membership of some members of the Social Affairs Workers' Union due to their retirement, and has called for supplementary elections within two months, reports Al-Jarida daily.

According to sources from PAM, the Trade Union Organizations Department of PAM decided to end the membership of some board members of the Social Affairs Workers' Union. This decision was based on their inclusion in Ministerial Resolution No. 113/2024, which mandates retirement upon reaching the legal retirement age.

Such a decision followed several complaints submitted by some members to PAM, requesting the implementation of Ministerial Resolution No. 20/2025, which regulates the procedures for convening general assemblies and filling vacant seats on the boards of directors of trade union organizations.

LOCAL



Some photos during the 10th Food Africa Exhibition.

KUNA photos

10th Food Africa expo kicks off in Cairo with Kuwait's participation

CAIRO, Dec 10, (KUNA): The 10th Food Africa Exhibition kicked off Tuesday, with the participation of more than 1,200 companies from 45 countries, including Kuwait, represented by the Public Authority for Industry (PAI).

Egypt's Deputy Prime Minister for Industrial Development, and Minister of Industry and Transport Lt.-Gen Kamel Al-Wazir, opened the exhibition, which runs until December 12.

He toured several local and international pavilions, including PAI's pavilion, where he welcomed Kuwaiti officials and commended the quality and diversity of the Kuwaiti products on display.

Kuwait is taking part with a delegation headed by PAI Deputy Director General for Export Sector Mishari Al-Mnawer, and including Promotion Department Director at PAI Hammad Al-Zoubi and Senior Exhibitions Specialist Salwa Al-Enezi.

PAI's pavilion features 10 Kuwaiti factories and companies in the food industry, offering frozen and fresh food products, coffee, packaging materials, and various spices.



The 10th Food Africa Exhibition with the participation of more than 1,200 companies from 45 countries, including Kuwait.

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait bus

Al-Farsi stressed that the limited infrastructure for bus stops contributes to their inefficient distribution and worsens the existing disorder.

She indicated that all these factors combined create a less organized transportation experience and highlight the need to modernize and develop the public transportation system to ensure more efficient and safer service.

Al-Farsi directed her inquiry to the municipality, seeking clarification from the relevant authorities responsible for the public transportation system, specifically bus passenger waiting stations, in Kuwait.

She attached a list of related entities to her inquiry and requested that the municipality officially forward it to them for their responses.

Al-Farsi said several entities may share responsibility for a single task, and in the case of bus passenger waiting stations, it is possible that no single entity is fully accountable.

She concluded by emphasizing the importance of adhering to the legal timeframe for responding to questions from Municipal Council members in accordance with applicable regulations and bylaws.

Log fingerprint

1. Immediately document the malfunction by taking a screenshot of their phone screen clearly showing the technical issue.

2. Send the screenshot directly via the Smart Attendance application using the following path - Home > Menu > Help Desk > Tickets > Create New Ticket > Upload and Send Document.

The ministry clarified that there is no need to contact the relevant department if these steps are followed.

It stressed that the procedure aims to facilitate verification of malfunctions and address attendance recording issues without disrupting workflow.

Polio-free

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health announced that the National Polio Laboratory has achieved a major milestone by scoring 100 percent on its first proficiency test of environmental samples as part of the environmental survey program to monitor Kuwait's polio-free status, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The ministry explained that this achievement strengthens monitoring and rapid response capabilities in line with the latest international recommendations.

It also reflects the readiness of national laboratories and their role in supporting preventive programs and maintaining Kuwait's leading regional position in disease control.

Kuwait is among the first countries in the region to implement the environmental survey program for polio, which enhances the health security system and supports national efforts to ensure Kuwait stays polio-free.

Mol tightens

held discussions with members of the Kuwaiti and Emirati technical teams participating in the eighth meeting to follow up on joint connectivity projects between the two countries' Ministries of Interior.

The delegation visited the Operations Room at the Ministry of Interior's building in Sabhan to review the latest operational systems and technologies supporting security and traffic operations.

The eighth meeting of the technical teams was held on Tuesday, December 9 and Wednesday, December 10, with the Kuwaiti side led by Brigadier General Khaled Al-Adwani and the Emirati side led by Brigadier General Abdulaziz Al-Ahmad.

The meeting focused on following up on the implementation of recommendations from previous sessions and discussing several joint projects.

The joint projects include the bilateral connectivity project for supple-

mentary traffic services, the electronic data and fingerprint exchange system for deportees, and the TETRA wireless communications system.

The ministry reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening Gulf cooperation and developing security and traffic systems to enhance integration, improve service levels, and achieve the common strategic goals of the GCC countries.

Diwaniya fosters

activists, and representatives of Kuwaiti associations.

The gathering reflects the strong ties between the two peoples and provides guests with an opportunity to deepen their understanding of Turkish culture and develop communication networks.

Ambassador Sönmez highlighted that Kuwaiti interest in Türkiye is significant and growing, whether in tourism, the economy, or culture.

She affirmed that the diwaniya "represents an ideal opportunity to strengthen these ties and promote greater academic and economic cooperation," especially given the presence of Turkish professors and doctors in Kuwaiti universities and hospitals, as well as ongoing Turkish language courses at Turkish universities and schools.

Regarding high-level visits, the ambassador said, "The recent visit of our president to Kuwait represented the highest level of political communication. We are now in the follow-up phase of the signed agreements, and are working to ensure their implementation and the activation of joint programs. This is a huge responsibility that we strive to fulfill in the best possible way."

Commenting on the impressive turnout at the evening events, Ambassador Sönmez said that the pleasant weather and rain "brought blessings", adding that many of the ambassadors and attendees "have personal ties to Türkiye, as some own summer homes in Türkiye or visit annually, while others enjoy Turkish coffee, traditional cuisine, and the language."

The Turkish ambassador expressed her hopes for 2026, saying, "We hope that next year will bring peace to our region and the world, especially in light of the tragic events we have witnessed this year, particularly in Gaza."

She highlighted Turkey's ongoing role in "conflict resolution and mediation" as part of its foreign policy, which follows a "comprehensive 360-degree approach," pointing to the recent participation of the Turkish Foreign Minister in the Doha Forum, where he delivered a unified message for peace.

Ambassador Sönmez said, "Joint action between countries is the way to bring about positive change. One country cannot succeed alone, but together we can make a difference."

She affirmed that Kuwait is characterized by warm relations within the diplomatic community, adding, "We are here as one family, and I always tell our guests, 'My home... your home.'"

On learning Arabic, Ambassador Sönmez shared that she understands a great deal but needs more practice.

She expressed deep admiration for Arabic poetry and music, particularly the works of Majida Al Roumi, describing Arabic words as "deep and powerful."

Kuwait invests

He indicated that the forecasts for the energy sector are changing rapidly, requiring close monitoring by producing companies, adding that the rising global demand necessitates ongoing production expansion to meet market needs in the coming decades.

Sheikh Nawaf stated that future demand in the petrochemical sector is closely tied to China's projected growth through 2030.

It is worth noting that Kuwait has long been working to increase its production capacity to four million barrels per day as part of its "2040 Strategy," which includes expanding the northern fields, developing the Burgan field,

and boosting free gas production to reduce reliance on imports.

Economic reports indicate that global energy demand could increase by 30 percent to 40 percent by 2050, driven by population growth, industrial consumption, and urban expansion in Asia and Africa.

Meanwhile, Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC), a subsidiary of KPC, reaffirmed its strong commitment to leading innovation and promoting sustainability in the Gulf industrial sector.

PIC's Executive Vice President for Projects and Business Development, Firas Al-Awad, stated that participating in the 19th GPCA Forum, held under the patronage of His Majesty the King of Bahrain's Representative for Humanitarian Work and Youth Affairs, Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad, reinforces Kuwait's leadership in the petrochemicals sector.

Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad affirmed that Bahrain's hosting of this global industrial event for the first time marks a significant milestone.

He described the forum as a significant step in the development of Bahrain's energy sector, reinforcing its position as a regional hub capable of hosting major international events.

Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad noted that the forum reflects the Kingdom's commitment to supporting initiatives that promote innovation and sustainability, helping to build an industrial system more resilient to the rapid changes occurring worldwide.

Kuwait reaffirms

He explained that Kuwait follows a consistent approach based on respect for human beings as the foundation of development and stability, in line with the Constitution, deeply-rooted human values, and the international conventions ratified by the State.

Kuwait's membership in the Human Rights Council reflects the international community's confidence in its dedication to promoting dialogue and collective action.

Al-Daihani stressed that Kuwait continues to improve its public policies and legislation to meet leading international standards by working closely with the private sector and civil society organizations.

He noted that the increasing complexity of global challenges requires stronger international cooperation to safeguard human rights.

In this regard, Al-Daihani praised the National Human Rights Bureau for its adherence to the Paris Principles and its independent work in monitoring, raising awareness, and providing recommendations.

He concluded by reaffirming Kuwait's humanitarian commitment and its readiness to work with international partners to uphold human dignity.

Meanwhile, Minister Plenipotentiary Anas Al-Shaheen expressed appreciation for the Foreign Minister's support for human rights issues, noting that the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 77 years ago laid the foundation for the principles on which the international community is built.

Al-Shaheen explained that the National Human Rights Bureau operates as per a participatory institutional approach with state institutions and civil society to highlight Kuwait's standing in this field, stressing that protecting human dignity can only be achieved through the collective efforts of all national stakeholders.

He expressed pride in the strategic partnership with the United Nations in Kuwait, which has supported specialized national programs and strengthened cooperation and the exchange of expertise.

He also praised the role of government agencies, the private sector, and civil society in supporting the human rights system.

Al-Shaheen concluded by saying, "Investing in people is not just an option but it is the only path toward a more peaceful, just, and stable future."

In addition, Nasser Al-Shatti, representative of the United Nations Office, reviewed the history of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, noting that its historic adoption paved the way for more than 70 international treaties.

Al-Shatti explained that the partnership between the United Nations and the National Human Rights Bureau has grown stronger since the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding in 2021, resulting in human-centered initiatives such as the "Support Them" program for the rehabilitation and social reintegration of prisoners.

Kuwait has deepened its international engagement through cooperation with UN mechanisms and its Universal Periodic Review in May, during which it made tangible progress in social protection, empowerment of persons with disabilities, care for the elderly, women's rights, and the protection of migrant workers.

Kuwait endorsed more than 70 percent of the international recommendations, which reflects its genuine commitment in this field.

Al-Shatti outlined three steps to strengthen national momentum, which are:

- Establishing a clear implementation framework for the recommendations,
- Enhancing human rights education and training within institutions,
- Ensuring vulnerable groups are not marginalized by enforcing anti-trafficking laws and developing reporting mechanisms and victim protection measures.

He concluded by affirming the commitment of the UN team in Kuwait to work with the government, the National Human Rights Bureau, and civil society organizations to ensure that everyone in the country enjoys dignity, equality, and justice.

'Prefab' homes

He explained that this system is characterized by its light weight and speed of implementation, while still providing high strength and safety when carried out by specialized companies. These companies typically offer warranties ranging from 20 to 25 years on the quality of the concrete and on any defects that may appear in the future. This system is safe, globally recognized, and effective. Some owners of vacant land in Kuwait have recently begun experimenting with it.

Al-Mu'min said he believes it is an excellent option for completing larger residential units within short timeframes, especially in light of the need to address the issue of vacant land monopolization.

He predicted that real estate developers will adopt this method in the future due to its speed and quality, but individuals will remain more hesitant to use it for building their homes because of their attachment to traditional construction methods.

Al-Mu'min affirmed that the introduction of prefabricated units will positively impact the real estate market by enabling the construction of a large number of villas and residential units within short periods, thereby contributing to development and helping revitalize the market.

He said this approach represents a qualitative shift in real estate development and will pave the way for providing suitable units for various segments, especially those seeking ready-made villas without having to go through the traditional construction process.

Al-Mu'min indicated that the availability of a large number of rental units could lead to stable or slightly lower rental prices, though this ultimately depends on the type of units offered.

However, Al-Mu'min stressed that demand for rentals in Kuwait remains very high, with approximately 8,000 marriages taking place annually, in addition to the ongoing need for alternative housing among a large segment of the population due to the long waiting periods for housing applications.

He explained that current Kuwait Municipality regulations restrict the construction of multi-apartment buildings, requiring the ground and first floors to be fully occupied, while the third floor may only be divided into two apartments. This limits the availability of small units, which could lead to a slight decrease in rental prices for full floors, while apartment rents remain relatively stable. This limited decline in rental yields may affect property values, but it also helps stabilize the market and prevents significant increases in private housing prices.

The exhibition also hosts three major concurrent events: the 6th "PacProcess" packaging and processing exhibition, the "Fresh Africa" exhibition for agricultural produce, and the "Dates Africa" exhibition dedicated to the dates sector, organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Industry's Food Industries and Agro Processing Center.

This edition sees broad international participation with 14 national pavilions.

It also includes events and panel discussions on the future of food industries, agricultural produce, packaging, export competitiveness, investment opportunities, development of the dates sector, women's role in the future of food, mechanisms to boost intra-African trade, and European Union investments in the agriculture food sector.

Key participating countries include Kuwait, Algeria, Bahrain, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United States, Germany, Russia, Brazil, Spain, India, Pakistan, Italy, China, Poland, Turkey, South Korea, Malaysia, France, Nigeria, Jordan, Morocco, and Mauritania.

Cabinet accelerates Gulf Railway 'push'

Kuwait champions Gulf partnership

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10, (KUNA): During its weekly Cabinet meeting on Wednesday, the Kuwaiti Cabinet tasked the Ministry of Public Works to step up its efforts to implement the Gulf Railway and fast transports projects.

The meeting, held at Bayan Palace, was chaired by Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, said Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sherida Abdullah Saad Al-Maousharji.

The cabinet members were apprised of the messages addressed to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah by leaders of several friendly countries regarding the enhancement of cooperation with Kuwait.

They commended the speech delivered by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the opening meeting of the 46th session of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council hosted by Bahrain on last Wednesday.

His Highness the Amir underscored the importance of expanding strategic cooperation among the GCC member countries to ensure collective security and regional stability.

He reaffirmed Kuwait's commitment to all agreements signed with sisterly Iraq regarding the demarcation of the border mark 162 in keeping with the international law and United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya briefed the Cabinet on the final communique of the 46th session of the GCC Supreme Council, where the GCC leaders appreciated the great efforts and achievements made by His Highness the Amir and the government of Kuwait, the presidency of the 45th session of GCC Supreme Council.

In the final communique the GCC leaders welcomed Kuwait's bid to host the third GCC-China Summit, due in 2030, voicing hope that the summit would give momentum to the friendly relations and common interests of both sides.

They commended the outcomes of the first GCC conference on the future of judicial and legislative cooperation, hosted by Kuwait on October 21, 2025.

They congratulated Kuwait on its designation as capital of Arab culture and media in 2025. Minister of State for Communications Affairs Omar Saud Al-Omar briefed the cabinet members on the Arab League honoring of his ministry for the government e-service app Sahel during the fourth session of the Arab government excellence award for the best communication initiative, held in Cairo on last Thursday.

Minister of Justice Naser Youssef Al-Sumait briefed the Cabinet on Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) winning of the Arab government excellence award for the best anti-graft strategy.

MoCI suspends property description certificate for e-brokerage contracts

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Emad Haidar, Head of the Real Estate Brokers Union, revealed that the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has agreed to suspend the requirement of obtaining a property description certificate as a prerequisite for concluding electronic brokerage contracts until further notice.

In an exclusive statement to the daily, Haidar explained that the union submitted a formal request to suspend the certificate issued by the Kuwait Credit Bank, following growing complaints from brokers about recurring technical problems in the electronic system, which led to the unjustified cancellation of contracts and property description certificates. The ministry responded by temporarily suspending the certificate requirement and assigning brokers the task of canceling electronic contracts themselves for ensuring smoother procedures and minimizing technical errors. This step is part of a series of measures to regulate the real estate brokerage sector, and it reflects the ministry's cooperation and responsiveness to the union's recent requests.

Doha East station upkeep on track

KUNAWAIT CITY,

Dec 10: The

ongoing maintenance work at the Doha East Power Station is proceeding according to plan without any obstacles, reports Al-Jarida daily.

I n f o r m e d

sources at the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy noted a significant improvement in the implementation of maintenance programs this season, with no need for exceptional maintenance in the production and generation units.

They explained that the generating units at the station are in stable condition.

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INTERNATIONAL

America

Democrat wins Miami mayor's race: Democrat Eileen Higgins won the Miami mayor's race on Tuesday, defeating a Republican endorsed by President Donald Trump to end her party's nearly three-decade losing streak and give Democrats a boost in one of the last electoral battles ahead of the 2026 midterms.

Higgins, 61, will be the first woman to lead the city of Miami. She spoke frequently in the Hispanic-majority city about Trump's immigration crackdown, saying she has heard of many people in Miami who were worried about family members being detained.

She campaigned as a proud Democrat despite the race being officially nonpartisan and beat Trump-backed candidate Emilio Gonzalez, a former city manager, who said he called Higgins to congratulate her. (AP)

One dead in N.Carolina school stabbing: A stabbing at a central North Carolina high school Tuesday left one student dead and another injured, authorities said.

Forsyth County Sheriff Bobby Kimbrough said officers at North Forsyth High School in Winston-Salem sought assistance shortly after 11 am.

"We responded to an altercation between two students," Kimbrough said at a news conference, adding that "there was a loss of life."

In an email to families and staff, Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools superintendent Don Phipps said one student died and another was injured. (AP)

Kentucky State University shooting kills 1: One student was killed and another was critically wounded in a shooting at a residence hall at Kentucky State University on Tuesday, and a suspect who is not a student at the school has been arrested, officials said.

The shooting happened around 3 p.m. and was an "isolated incident," Scott Tracy, assistant chief of police for Frankfort, said during a news conference Tuesday evening. Tracy said police swiftly responded to the shooting.

"There are no active safety concerns on campus at this time," he said. Authorities haven't publicly addressed a motive. (AP)

Hegseth still weighing release of drug boat strike full video

WASHINGTON, Dec 10, (AP): US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth told congressional leaders Tuesday that he was still weighing whether to release the full video of an attack on an alleged drug boat that killed two survivors, even as he faced intensifying demands from Congress for disclosure.

Hegseth provided a classified briefing for congressional leaders alongside Secretary of State Marco Rubio and CIA Director John Ratcliffe at the Capitol. Inside the secure room, Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer asked the defense secretary whether he would allow every member of Congress to view the video of the attack from September.

Schumer said Hegseth's response was: "We have to study it."

Lawmakers are demanding a full accounting from the Depart-

ment of Defense on the military campaign and the particular attack that killed two people who were clinging to the wreckage of an initial strike. Legal experts say that action may have violated the laws governing the use of deadly military force. The situation has awakened the Republican-controlled Congress to its oversight role after months of frustration about the trickle of information from the Pentagon.

Schumer described the briefing as "very unsatisfying" and added that "Democrats and Republicans had a right to see it, wanted to see it, and should see it."

Separately Tuesday, the US Navy admiral who is retiring early from command of the campaign to destroy vessels allegedly carrying drugs near Venezuela spoke to key lawmakers overseeing the U.S. military. The classified video call between Adm. Alvin Holsey, who will be retiring from U.S. Southern Command in the coming days, and the GOP chair and ranking Democrat of the Senate Armed Services Committee represented another determined step by lawmakers to get answers about the operation.



Hegseth



Rescue workers with Chehalis Fire venture into a flooded neighborhood to pick up evacuees after heavy rains on Dec 9, in Chehalis, Wash. (AP)

Pacific Northwest braces for more heavy rain

Pacific Northwest residents braced for another round of heavy rain Wednesday after a powerful storm clobbered the region the day before, swelling rivers, closing roads and prompting high water rescues.

The first in what is expected to be a series of damaging storms this week caused power outages, flooding and school closures in parts of Oregon and Washington on Tuesday. Drivers had to navigate debris slides and water that closed roads and submerged vehicles.

Fire officials northeast of Seattle said rescue crews used inflatable kayaks to pull people from stranded cars, and carried another person about a mile (1.6 kilometers) to safety after they were trapped in the woods by rising water.

Washington Gov Bob Ferguson said in a post on the social platform X on Tuesday night that the state's Emergency Operations Center had moved to its highest activation level because of the rain and wind. (AP)

'I felt violated of my rights'

Trump's crackdown on immigration taking toll on child care workers, pre-school teachers

WASHINGTON, Dec 10, (AP): Not long after US President Donald Trump took office in January, staff at CentroNia bilingual preschool began rehearsing what to do if Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials came to the door. As ICE became a regular presence in their historically Latino neighborhood this summer, teachers stopped taking children to nearby parks, libraries and playgrounds that had once been considered an extension of the classroom.

And in October, the school scrapped its beloved Hispanic Heritage Month parade, when immigrant parents typically dressed their children in costumes and soccer jerseys from their home countries. ICE had begun stopping staff members, all of whom have legal status, and school officials worried about drawing more unwelcome attention.

All of this transpired before ICE officials arrested a teacher inside a Spanish immersion preschool in Chicago in October. The event left immigrants who work in child care, along with the families who rely on them, feeling frightened and vulnerable.

Trump's push for the largest mass deportation in history has had an outsized impact on the child care field, which is heavily reliant on immigrants and already strained by a worker shortage. Immigrant child care workers and preschool teachers, the majority of whom are working and living in the US legally, say they are wracked by

anxiety over possible encounters with ICE officials. Some have left the field, and others have been forced out by changes to immigration policy.

At CentroNia, CEO Myrna Peralta said all staff must have legal status and work authorization. But ICE's presence and the fear it generates have changed how the school operates.

"That really dominates all of our decision making," Peralta said.

Instead of taking children on walks through the neighborhood, staff members push children on strollers around the hallways. And staff converted a classroom into a miniature library when the school scrapped a partnership with a local library.

Schools and child care centers were once off limits to ICE officials, in part to keep children out of harm's way. But those rules were scrapped not long after Trump's inauguration. Instead, ICE officials are urged to exercise "common sense."

Tricia McLaughlin, spokesperson for the Department of Homeland Security, defended ICE officials' decision to enter the Chicago preschool. She said the teacher, who had a work permit and was later released, was a passenger in a car that was being pursued by ICE officials. She got out of the car and ran into the preschool, McLaughlin said, emphasizing the teacher was "arrested in the vestibule, not in the school." The man who had been driving went inside the preschool, where officials arrested him.



Belkis Mendez, (center), helps the lead teacher with quiet time as they lead their Prek-5 students in a short stretch in their classroom at CentroNia in Washington, on Dec 9. (AP)

About one-fifth of America's child care workers were born outside the United States and one-fifth are Latino. The proportion of immigrants in some places, particularly large cities, is much higher: In the District of Columbia, California and New York, around 40% of the child care workforce is foreign-born, according to UC Berkeley's Center for the Study of Child Care Employment.

Immigrants in the field tend to be better educated than those born in the

United States. Those from Latin America help satisfy the growing demand for Spanish-language preschools, such as CentroNia, where some parents enroll their kids to give them a head start learning another language.

The American Immigration Council estimated in 2021 that more than three-quarters of immigrants working in early care and education were living and working in the U.S. legally. Preschools like CentroNia conduct rigorous background checks, including verifying

employees have work authorization.

Beyond the deportation efforts, the Trump administration in recent months has stripped legal status from hundreds of thousands of immigrants. Many of them had fled violence, poverty or natural disasters in their homes and received Temporary Protected Status, which allowed them to live and work legally in the U.S. But Trump ended those programs, forcing many out of their jobs - and the country. Just last month, 300,000 immigrants from Venezuela lost their protected status.

CentroNia lost two employees when they lost their TPS, Peralta said, and a Nicaraguan immigrant working as a teacher left on his own. Tierra Encantada, which runs Spanish immersion preschools in several states, had a dozen teachers leave when they lost their TPS.

At CentroNia, one staff member was detained by ICE while walking down the street and held for several hours, all the while unable to contact colleagues to let them know where she was. She was released that evening, said the school's site director, Joaquin Hernandez-Figueroa.

Another staff member, teacher Edelmira Kitchen, said she was pulled over by ICE on her way to work in September. Officials demanded she get out of her car so they could question her. Kitchen, a US citizen who immigrated from the Dominican Republic as a child, said she refused and they eventually let her go.

"I felt violated of my rights," Kitchen said.

Hernandez-Figueroa said ICE's heightened presence during the federal intervention in the city has taken a toll on employees' mental health. Some have gone to the hospital with panic attacks in the middle of the school day.

When the city sent mental health consultants to the school earlier this year as part of a partnership with the Department of Behavioral Health, school leadership had them work with teachers rather than students, worried their anguish would spill over to the classroom.

"If the teachers aren't good," Hernandez-Figueroa said, "the kids won't be good either."

It's not just adults who are feeling more anxious. At a Guidepost Montessori School in Portland, Oregon, teachers observed preschoolers change in the weeks after an ICE arrest near the school in July. After pulling over a father who was driving his child to the school, officials encountered him in the school parking lot and tried to arrest him. In the ensuing commotion, the school went into lockdown: Children were pulled off the playground, and teachers played loud music and had children sing along to drown out the yelling.

Amy Lomanto, who heads the school, said teachers noticed more outbursts among students, and more students retreating to what the school calls "the regulation station," an area in the main office with fidget toys kids can use to calm themselves.

French lawmakers pass social security budget in knife-edge vote

PARIS, Dec 10, (AP): France's lower house of parliament narrowly approved on Tuesday a key health care budget bill, offering the minority government some relief from political turmoil at the cost of suspending President Emmanuel Macron's flagship pension reform.

The bill passed by 247 votes in favor while 234 lawmakers voted against.

The Social Security budget includes the suspension of Macron's unpopular pension changes, which raise the retirement age from 62 to 64, until after the next presidential election in 2027.

With no majority at the National Assembly, centrist Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu offered to put the reform on hold as a concession to the Socialists, who voted for the bill. The move aims to prevent his fragile minority government from being toppled.

French politics have been in turmoil since Macron called early parliamentary elections in June last year which resulted in a deeply fragmented legislature.

Macron appointed Lecornu, 39, in September after budget debates led to the fall of previous prime ministers. Lecornu promised he would seek compromises with lawmakers from the left and the right to pass bills.

Lecornu will soon face another major hurdle as lawmakers prepare to vote later



Parliament members sit as France's National Assembly vote on a national health care budget that would suspend Macron's unpopular pension reform raising the retirement age, in Paris, France on Dec 9. (AP)

this month on the state budget for 2026. The prime minister vowed to prioritize decreasing France's ballooning deficit. France's previous prime minister was ousted over plans to cut 44 billion euros (\$51 billion) in public spending, meant to rein in debt of the European Union's second-largest economy.

France's deficit hit 5.8% of gross

domestic product last year, way above the official EU target of 3%.

The country has a high level of public spending driven by generous social welfare programs, health care and education - and a heavy tax burden that falls short of covering the costs.

Also:

PARIS: Brigitte Macron was facing criticism on Tuesday after video emerged of her using a remark to denounce feminist protesters.

The scene filmed Sunday showed France's first lady in discussion backstage at the Folies Bergère theatre in Paris with Ary Abittan, a French actor and humorist previously accused of rape, before a performance he was about to give.

Before Sunday's performance, Brigitte Macron asked him how he was feeling. When he said he was feeling scared, she made a derogatory and sexist reference to the women, adding: "We'll toss them out."

Her office said in a statement that she'd been trying to calm his nerves: "As the video shows, Mrs. Macron's only intention was to reassure an artist who, in his dressing room before going on stage, had just told her, 'I'm scared,' because his show had been disrupted the previous evening."



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, (second from left), is received at Chigi Palace by Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni on Dec 9. (AP)

Ukraine can hold elections within months if security ensured - President Zelenskyy

KYIV, Ukraine, Dec 10, (AP): Ukrainian officials were expected to hand their latest peace proposals to United States negotiators Wednesday, according to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who also said Ukraine would be ready for elections within three months if partners can guarantee a safe vote during wartime and if its electoral law can be altered.

Zelenskyy was responding to comments by US President Donald Trump in which he questioned Ukraine's democracy and suggested the Ukrainian leader was using the war as an excuse not to hold an election.

Zelenskyy told reporters late Tuesday that he is "ready" for an election but would need help from the U.S. and possibly Europe to ensure security for a vote to happen. He suggested that Ukraine could be ready to hold balloting in 60 to 90 days if that proviso is met.

"To hold elections, two issues must be addressed: primarily, security - how to conduct them, how to do it under strikes, under missile attacks; and a question regarding our military - how they would vote," Zelenskyy said.

"And the second issue is the legislative framework required to ensure the legitimacy of elections," he said.

Previously, Zelenskyy had pointed out that a ballot can't legally take place



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen speaks during a media conference regarding Ukraine's financing needs for 2026-2027 at EU headquarters in Brussels on Dec 3. (AP)

while martial law imposed due to Russia's invasion nearly four years ago is in place. He has also asked how a vote could happen when civilian areas of Ukraine are being bombarded by Russia and almost 20% of the country is under Russian occupation.

Zelenskyy said he has asked lawmakers from his party in Parliament

to draw up legislative proposals that would allow elections while Ukraine is under martial law.

Ukrainians have on the whole supported Zelenskyy's arguments, and there has been no clamor in Ukraine for an election. Under the Ukrainian law that is in force, Zelenskyy's rule is legitimate.

Also:

BRUSSELS: Almost four years into Russia's full-scale war on Ukraine, European Union leaders have committed to funding Kyiv's economic and military needs for the next two years, one way or another. Ukraine is desperate and needs the money by early 2026.

At a summit next week, the 27 EU leaders will weigh whether to use tens of billions of dollars in frozen Russian assets held in Europe to help meet Ukraine's requirements, which the International Monetary Fund puts at 135 billion euros (\$157 billion).

Such a move has never been done before, and it comes with risks. The European Central Bank has warned that if Europeans appear willing to grab other countries' money, it could undermine confidence in the euro currency. Some member nations are also concerned about inviting retaliation from Russia.

Europe

Lukashenko approves defense plan: Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko has approved the country's defense plan for 2026-2030, Chief of the General Staff and First Deputy Defense Minister Pavel Muraveiko said Tuesday.

After a session of the security council, Muraveiko said the Belarusian president had reviewed and endorsed all documents outlining the nation's course of action to ensure its military security and defense. The preparation of a presidential decree to formally approve the overarching five-year plan is now underway, he added.

The meeting focused heavily on the ongoing militarization of Western nations, particularly those bordering Belarus.

State Secretary of the Security Council Alexander Volfovich said all prepared measures are solely aimed at protecting national interests, sovereignty and territorial integrity. (Xinhua)



Lukashenko

Slovakia OKs plan to dismantle office: Slova-

kia's parliament approved on Tuesday a government plan to dismantle an independent office that protects those who report corruption and other criminal activities.

A total of 78 lawmakers representing the coalition government led by populist Prime Minister Robert Fico voted in favor of the move in the 150-seat parliament, despite critical voices at home and abroad.

The critics included the opposition, the Slovak prosecutor-general, the European Union and international and local nongovernmental organizations dealing with corruption.

President Peter Pellegrini, usually an ally of Fico, expressed his reservations. Pellegrini has to sign the legislation to become law, but the government has a majority to override his possible veto.

"The level of protection, as well as people's trust in the whistleblower protection system, which we have been working hard to build at the office over the past years, will be significantly weakened by this law," the Whistleblower Protection Office said in a statement. It was created in 2021 under EU rules.

The government wants to create a new institution that would deal with the protection of whistleblowers and also crime victims. It said the previous rules were abused for political reasons.

The new rules would make it possible to cancel the protection granted under previous legislation and allow repeated reviews of the protection at the request from employers. (AP)

Renewed fighting displaces hundreds of thousands

Two of Trump's peace deals at risk as fighting surges in Congo, Cambodia-Thailand border

WASHINGTON, Dec 10, (AP): At least two of several agreements aimed at ending global conflicts that US President Donald Trump has hailed as evidence of his negotiating prowess are in trouble and at risk of collapsing.

Less than a week after Congo and Rwanda signed a deal in Trump's presence in Washington that was meant to halt fighting in eastern Congo, and less than two months after he witnessed Cambodia and Thailand sign a cease-fire pact in Malaysia to end their border conflict, fighting has surged in both places.

The developments have caused international alarm, which on Tuesday resulted in urgent calls to halt the renewed violence from countries involved in the African Great Lakes region and from US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

In each case, the statements urged the combatants to live up to their commitments in the deals that Trump has touted in part as the rationale for casting himself as the "president of peace."

Trump late Tuesday expressed confidence that once again he could end the fighting between Cambodia and

Thailand.

"Tomorrow I'll have to make a phone call," Trump said at a rally in Pennsylvania. "Who else could say, 'I'm going to make a phone call and stop a war of two very powerful countries, Thailand and Cambodia?'"

A joint statement released by the International Contact Group for the Great Lakes expressed "profound concern" over the situation in Congo's South Kivu region, where new deadly violence blamed on the Rwandan-backed M23 militia group has exploded in recent days.

"The ICG urges the M23 and the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) to immediately halt their offensive operations in eastern DRC, in particular in South Kivu, and calls on the RDF to withdraw from eastern DRC and on M23 to return to its positions" as stipulated in multiple agreements that culminated in the signing of a deal in Washington on Thursday with Presidents Felix Tshisekedi of Congo and Paul Kagame of Rwanda.

The White House had touted it as a "historic" agreement brokered by Trump following monthslong peace



People line up to receive food in an evacuation center in Sa Kaew province, Thailand, on Dec 10. (AP)

efforts by the US and its partners, including the African Union and Qatar, finalizing an earlier deal signed in June.

"It's a great day for Africa, a great day for the world," Trump said then.

He added, "Today, we're succeeding where so many others have failed."

The Great Lakes contact group - which includes Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the

United States and the European Union - urged all sides "to uphold their commitments" under the deal signed last week and "immediately de-escalate the situation."

The State Department, using an acronym for the Democratic Republic of Congo, said the US "is deeply concerned by the ongoing violence in eastern DRC, driving displacement and inflicting suffering on countless families."

"The Trump administration continues to advance its diplomatic engagement on this important issue, working to ensure the full implementation of the recently signed agreements and restore stability on the ground," it said. "We are working closely with regional partners to uphold the commitments made and reinforce the ceasefire."

In a separate statement, Rubio said the US is concerned by an uptick in fighting between Cambodia and Thailand along their contested border, just over a month after the two countries signed an agreement in Malaysia that was pushed for by Trump.

"We strongly urge the immediate cessation of hostilities, the protection

of civilians, and for both sides to return to the deescalatory measures outlined in the Oct. 26 Kuala Lumpur Peace Accords," Rubio said in a statement.

The Cambodia-Thailand deal has been faltering for weeks, but it took a big hit when fighting broke out following a weekend skirmish in which two Thai soldiers were injured.

Renewed border fighting between Thailand and Cambodia showed no signs of abating Wednesday, leaving hundreds of thousands of displaced people in both countries living in strained conditions as more flooded into temporary shelters.

Associated Press reporters on the Thai side of the border heard sounds of outgoing, indirect fire Wednesday.

About 400,000 people have been evacuated from affected areas in Thailand and around 700 schools closed while fighting was ongoing in four border provinces, Thai military spokesperson Rear Adm. Surasant Kongsiri said Wednesday.

Cambodia evacuated more than 127,000 villagers and hundreds of schools closed, the defense ministry said.

North Korea's ruling elite prepares for once-in-5-years party meeting

SEOUL, South Korea, Dec 10, (Agencies): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and other top officials have gathered to discuss preparations for the ruling party's first full congress in five years, state media reported Wednesday. The top-level meeting will set new priorities as the US and South Korea seek a resumption of talks with North Korea.

The Korean Central News Agency reported that Kim presided over a plenary meeting of the Workers Party's Central Committee on Tuesday. It said participants began discussing unspecified key issues related to the party congress and reviewing this year's state policies.

KCNA gave no further details, but observers say the plenary meeting will likely last a few days and set an official agenda for the party congress, which is expected to be held in January or February.

The congress, the top decision-making organ of the Workers' Party, was revived by Kim in 2016 after a 36-year hiatus. Experts say Kim aimed to increase the party's authority as part of

efforts to solidify his grip on power.

The focus of outside attention on the congress is whether Kim will respond to U.S. and South Korean efforts to improve ties. North Korea has steadfastly rebuffed the U.S. and South Korea's calls to resume talks since Kim's high-stakes nuclear diplomacy with President Donald Trump collapsed in 2019, but some experts say Kim could return to talk with the U.S. next year.

In an apparent response to Trump's repeated outreach, Kim suggested in September that he could return to talks if the U.S. drops "its delusional obsession with denuclearization" of North Korea.

Meanwhile, South Korea's military said North Korea fired several artillery rounds off the North's west coast on Tuesday. Observers say the artillery launches were likely part of the North Korean military's wintertime training.

Last year, Kim declared that his country was abandoning its long-standing goal of peaceful unification with South Korea and ordered the re-writing of the North's constitution to

mark the South as a permanent enemy.

Also:

TOKYO: North Korea fired around 10 artillery shells from its multiple rocket launcher system earlier this week, in what appeared to be part of its regular wintertime drills, Yonhap News Agency reported Wednesday, citing military officials.

"The military detected around 10 artillery rockets launched toward the northern waters of the Yellow Sea at around 3 p.m. (0900 GMT) Tuesday," the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said, adding a detailed analysis of the launch is under way.

The rockets were presumed to be launched from the 240 mm multiple rocket launcher that puts Seoul and its adjacent areas in target range.

"Our military is closely monitoring North Korea's various movements under a firm South Korea-US combined defense posture and maintains capabilities and posture that can overwhelmingly respond to any provocation," the JCS said.



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, (center), attends a plenary meeting of the Workers Party's Central Committee in North Korea on Dec 9. (AP)

Machado's daughter accepts Nobel Peace Prize in Venezuela opp'n leader's absence

OSLO, Norway, Dec 10, (AP): Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado's daughter accepted the Nobel Peace Prize in Norway on her mother's behalf Wednesday, and said in a speech written by Machado that Venezuela shows the world "we must be willing to fight for freedom."

Machado has been in hiding and hasn't been seen in public since Jan. 9, when she was briefly detained after joining supporters in a protest in Caracas, Venezuela's capital.

Jørgen Watne Frydnes, chair of the Norwegian Nobel committee, told the award ceremony that "María Corina Machado has done everything in her power to be able to attend the ceremony here today - a journey in a situation of extreme danger."

"Although she will not be able to reach this ceremony and today's events, we are profoundly happy to confirm that she is safe, and that she will be with us here in Oslo," he said to applause.

Her daughter, Ana Corina Sosa, accepted the prize in her place.

"She wants to live in a free Venezuela, and she will never give up on that purpose," she said. "That is why we all know, and I know, that she will be back in Venezuela very soon."

Machado said in an audio recording of a phone call published on the Nobel website that many people had "risked their lives" for her to arrive in Oslo.

"I am very grateful to them, and this is a measure of what this recognition means to the Venezuelan people," she said, before indicating that she was



Norway's King Harald, (second left), welcomes Ana Corina Sosa, the daughter of the Nobel Peace Prize laureate María Corina Machado as Queen Sonja, (center), Crown Prince Haakon, third right, Crown Princess Mette-Marit, (second right) and Princess Ingrid Alexandra look on, at the Royal Palace, in Oslo on Dec 10. (AP)

about to board a plane.

Machado said that "since this is a prize for all Venezuelans, I believe that it will be received by them. And as soon as I arrive, I will be able to embrace all my family and my children that I've have not seen for two years and so many Venezuelans, Norwegians that I know that share our struggle and our fight."

Prominent Latin American figures attended Wednesday in a signal of solidarity with Machado, including Argentine President Javier Milei,

Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa, Panamanian President José Raúl Mulino and Paraguayan President Santiago Peña.

The 58-year-old Machado's win for her struggle to achieve a democratic transition in her South American nation was announced on Oct. 10. Watne Frydnes said that "Venezuela has evolved into a brutal authoritarian state," and he described Machado as "one of the most extraordinary examples of civilian courage in recent Latin American history."



Rescue workers and residents search for survivors amid the wreckage of two collapsed buildings in Fez, Morocco on Dec 9. (AP)

19 people killed in Morocco building collapse

Two four-story buildings collapsed overnight in the Moroccan city of Fez, killing 19 people in the second fatal collapse there this year, authorities said on Wednesday.

Morocco's state news agency reported the two residential buildings housed eight families. Sixteen people were injured in the collapse and sent for treatment at a nearby hospital. Authorities said the neighborhood had been evacuated and search and rescue efforts were ongoing.

It was unclear what caused the collapse or how many

people were unaccounted for on Wednesday morning. Fez is Morocco's third-largest city and one of the hosts of this month's Africa Cup of Nations and the 2030 FIFA World Cup. It is best known for its walled city packed with medieval souks and tanneries. But beyond tourism, it's also one of the country's poorest urban centers, where aging infrastructure is common in many neighborhoods.

Another collapse in May killed 10 people and injured seven in a building that had already been slated for evacuation, according to Moroccan outlet Le360. (AP)

West Africa in state of emergency after several coups, says bloc leader

ABUJA, Nigeria, Dec 10, (AP): Coups and attempted coups in West Africa, along with escalating security challenges, have left the region in a state of emergency, a leader of the regional bloc said Tuesday.

Omar Touray, president of the Economic Community of West African States Commission, spoke to the bloc's mediation and security council two days after a failed coup attempt in Benin, the latest in a string of military takeovers and attempted takeovers. Last month, a military coup in Guinea-Bissau removed former President Umaro Sissouma.

Also on Tuesday, Nigeria's Senate approved a request from President Bola Tinubu to deploy troops in Benin at its government's request. Nigeria had carried out airstrikes on armored vehicles during the attempted takeover there, also at the government's request.

"Events of the last few weeks have shown the imperative of serious introspection on the future of our democracy and the urgent need to invest in the security of our community," Touray said. "Faced with this situation, Ex-



Omar Touray, president of the ECOWAS Commission, left, Gambia's President Adama Barrow, center and Nigeria Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yusuf Tuggar pose for a photo, prior to the start of the ECOWAS meeting in Abuja, Nigeria on June 22. (AP)

cellencies, it is safe to declare that our community is in a state of emergency."

It was not immediately clear whether his declaration was a formal one and

what it might entail.

The bloc has faced criticism over its uneven response to the coups in recent years.

Africa

Sudan plane crashes, crew members dead: A Sudanese military aircraft crashed while attempting to land in the east of the country, killing all the crew, military officials said Wednesday, in the latest plane crash in the war-torn African nation.

The Ilyushin Il-76 cargo plane experienced technical failure while attempting to land Tuesday in the Osman Digna Air Base in the coastal city of Port Sudan, two officials said.

They said the crew were killed but didn't disclose how many personnel were on board. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to brief the media.

Among the dead was military pilot Omran Mirghani, according to his uncle, prominent Sudanese journalist Osman Mirghani, who mourned his nephew's death on social media. (AP)

Drone attack on oil field kills dozens: Dozens of people were killed Tuesday evening in a drone strike near Sudan's largest oil processing facility carried out by the Sudanese Armed Forces, according to the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

The RSF, which has been fighting Sudan's military since 2023, said the oil field in Heglig was attacked a day after the RSF seized the facility near the border with South Sudan.

Both sides told The Associated Press that the exact number of dead and wounded could not immediately be confirmed. Local news outlets reported seven tribal leaders and "dozens" of RSF troopers were killed. (AP)

Dozens killed in Haiti following clashes within gang coalition

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico, Dec 10, (AP): Dozens of people in Haiti's capital have been killed following violent clashes within a powerful gang coalition, with 10 children among the victims, a local human rights group said Tuesday.

Among those killed was Dèdè, one of the highest ranking gang members in the Bel-Air slum of Port-au-Prince. He was beheaded, while powerful gang leader Kempès Sanon, a former police officer, was injured, according to the Committee for Peace and Development.

It wasn't immediately clear how seriously Sanon was injured, although many worry the clashes that began in recent days could unleash even more violence in a city already 90% controlled by gangs.

Sanon has been replaced while receiving treatment for his injuries by two men who go by the names of Jamesly and Ti Gason, according to the human rights group.



Kenyan police officers, part of a gang suppression force, sing and dance on the tarmac after landing at Toussaint Louverture International in Port-au-Prince, Haiti on Dec 8. (AP)

The ongoing violence is unusual because a large number of gangs banded together in September 2023 and announced the formation of Viv Ansanm, or "Live Together," a coalition that led to a drop in violence after armed groups agreed to no longer fight each other.

Kuwait oil price drops to \$61.97 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil dropped USD 1.64 to reach USD 61.97 per barrel on Tuesday, compared to USD 63.61 pb the day before, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation

(KPC) on Wednesday.

In global markets, Brent crude and the West Texas Intermediate dropped by 55 cents and 63 cents to USD 61.94 and USD 58.25 pb respectively.

General market index up by 5.10 points

Boursa Kuwait closes slightly higher on Wed

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait ended Wednesday's trading session with a marginal gain, as the general market index edged up by 5.10 points, or 0.06 percent, to close at 9,015 points. The trading day recorded a volume of 406.3 million shares executed through 22,334 cash transactions, amounting to a total value of KD 86.9 million (approximately USD 265 million).

The main market index slipped by 8.86 points, or 0.11 percent, settling at 8,233.23 points. Trading on this segment involved 301.2 million shares across 14,724 transactions, valued at

KD 45.9 million (around USD 140 million).

In contrast, the premier market index inched higher by 8.76 points, or 0.09 percent, reaching 9,654.06 points. It saw 105.14 million shares change hands through 7,610 transactions, with a total trading value of KD 40.9 million (nearly USD 124.7 million).

Meanwhile, the Main 50 Index advanced by 13.73 points, or 0.16 percent, closing at 8,602.02 points. A total of 120.7 million shares were traded through 6,685 transactions, generating KD 22.11 million (approximately USD 67.4 million) in value.

EQUATE strengthens GCC petrochemical collaboration

MANAMA, Dec 10, (KUNA): The CEO of EQUATE petrochemicals group, Nasser Al Dosari, affirmed on Wednesday Kuwait's commitment to supporting Gulf petrochemical production and strengthening its presence in regional and global markets, thereby promoting sustainability in the chemicals industry.

Al-Dosari made the remarks on the occasion of EQUATE's participation in the 19th GCC Petrochemicals & Chemicals Forum (GPCA) in Bahrain, held under the theme "Catalyzing Competitiveness through Strategic Partnerships," which continues until 11 December.

He indicated that EQUATE's participation reflects its firm commitment to cooperation and partnerships aimed at developing the chemicals

sector, emphasizing the exchange of expertise and economic and technical partnerships that open broader horizons for sustainable growth.

Al-Dosari also commended Bahrain's efforts in organizing and hosting the forum, which brings together top specialists and professionals from around the world to share knowledge and review key developments in the sector.

At the forum's accompanying exhibition, EQUATE presented a number of joint sustainability initiatives designed to accelerate technical innovation and support sustainable practices in the chemicals sector - underscoring its commitment to embedding sustainable practices across its operations, in line with its vision for a more sustainable future for the petrochemical industry.

Offering premium travel benefits

Warba customers get elite privileges at El Corte Inglés

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: As part of its vision for banking excellence and its commitment to enriching its customers' experience, Warba Bank announced the signing of a collaboration with the world-renowned Spanish luxury department stores, El Corte Inglés, offering Warba Bank customers a range of exclusive benefits and services that transform their shopping trips in Spain into a truly exceptional experience.

El Corte Inglés luxury department stores, located in Castellana and Serrano47 in Madrid, Diagonal in Barcelona, Marbella and Lisbon, offer a curated collection of international luxury brands, exclusive local designers, fine jewelry and watches, fragrances, cosmetics and gourmet culinary experiences.

The collaboration includes a set of exclusive services that provide customers with a unique shopping experience. These include a personalized welcome from the in-store concierge team, luxury hospitality, a 10% reward card and an instant tax refund of up to 15.7%. Customers may also benefit from the personal shopper service with prior booking, enjoy a convenient shopping experience without the need to carry bags and request access to a prayer room to ensure maximum comfort throughout their visit.

Commenting on the collaboration, Muhammad Issa Bourahma, Director of Product Development and Customer Segments at Warba Bank, stated: "We believe at Warba Bank that our relationship with our customers extends to every aspect of their lives. Our partnership with a prestigious name such as El Corte Inglés is a reflection of this belief as we seek to offer our customers a distinguished experience even beyond Kuwait's borders. These exclusive privileges are not only designed to provide comfort and luxury; they reaffirm that Warba Bank customers are appreciated wherever they are, embodying our vision of empowering



Muhammad Bourahma



them to enjoy the exceptional experiences of tomorrow."

Bourahma added: "The partnership affirms Warba Bank's commitment to enhancing the customer experience by building a strong global network of partnerships that provide access to premium services and exclusive advantages around the world. It aligns with the Bank's strategy that places the customer at the heart of everything we do."

The partnership is a continuity to Warba Bank's commitment to its core values of trust, innovation, performance, collaboration and ambition. The Bank promises customers more exciting surprises and upcoming partnerships that will enhance their lifestyle and expand their choices, ensuring that Warba remains the preferred banking partner for ambitious individuals and businesses in Kuwait.

Business

Pioneering 5G-advanced services in Kuwait & Saudi Arabia

Zain wins two global 5G Core Awards for innovation

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: At the recent global Informa 5G Core Awards, that recognize operators and solution providers that are pushing the boundaries of what's possible through cutting-edge developments in 5G Core design, deployment, operation, and commercialization, Zain scooped two major awards for 'Best 5G-Advanced Service Innovation' and 'Best 5G-Advanced Technology Breakthrough' in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia (KSA). These awards celebrate excellence and innovation in the heart of next-generation mobile networks, the 5G Core.

In recent years, as an integral part of its '4WARD-Progress with Purpose' corporate strategy, Zain has invested heavily on rolling out 5G-Advanced (5G-A), achieving continuous innovation in network technology deployment, service development, and core network intelligence. Both Zain Kuwait and Zain KSA were among the first nations globally to launch 5G-Advanced commercially in mid-2025, reinforcing both country's leadership in providing high-performance digital infrastructure.

Mohammad Al Murshed, Zain Group Chief Technology Officer commented, "As a company from the region and for the region, Zain is continually enhancing its technology capabilities that drives momentum in enhancing the customer experience, digital transformation, and industrial diversification of the markets we proudly serve."

He added, "Whether through technical breakthroughs, architectural innovation, efficiency optimization, service enablement, or strategic business models, Zain is focused in shaping the digital infrastructure of the future, unlocking new possibilities and powering the shift toward intelligent connectivity."

The 5G core awards judging panel



Zain scoops two major global awards at the 'Informa 5G Core Excellence and Innovation Awards'.

- Recognized for 'Best 5G-Advanced Service Innovation' and 'Best 5G-Advanced Technology Breakthrough' in Kuwait and KSA
- Zain Group driving momentum into the customer experience, digital transformation, and industrial diversification of the region
- Unlocking new possibilities and powering the shift toward intelligent connectivity

recognized Zain Kuwait for several innovations:

■ Building a new Calling Network and Piloting AI Translation Services. As the first operator in Kuwait to commercialize VoNR (Voice over New Radio), ZainKuwait collaborated with Huawei to build a new calling network based on the VoNR network with an open, plug-in-based approach. Taken the lead

in completing the pilot of Arabic intelligent translation services, this innovation breaks down language barriers, providing over 8 million travelers visiting Kuwait annually this service, thereby facilitating smoother communication between the local community and international friends.

■ Launching the "Call Screen Lighting" Featured Service: During the

Arabian Gulf Cup in late 2024, Zain innovatively integrated sports events with new calling services to launch the "Call Screen Lighting" feature. When users call Zain's customer service, the call screen automatically displayed Gulf Cup football match promotional videos. This initiative not only enabled users to obtain real-time event information promptly but also provided a direction for subsequent business expansion.

■ As the first telecom operator globally to launch nationwide VoNR: This revolutionary technology offers Zain's customers, without any additional cost, an unprecedented experience side by side with ultra-fast internet while making crystal-clear voice calls on compatible smartphones without interruption.

For Zain KSA, the judging panel recognized the operator's 5G-A Fixed-Mobile Convergence Technology breakthrough:

■ The commercial deployment of 5.5G-Advanced through the Mobile Home architecture by using Multi-Access Edge Computing (MEC), showcased Zain KSA's inherent scalability and future-readiness. The enhancement in the operator's customer experience was a result of significantly reduced latency compared to traditional internet-based access, overcoming public internet bandwidth constraints and providing high-throughput, stable connection for game streaming and other services. This breakthrough is further supporting the development of the Kingdom's esports and gaming industry.

These many 5.5G-Advanced technology initiatives across Zain Kuwait and Zain KSA highlight Zain Group's achievements and innovation leadership in driving meaningful connectivity and creating systemic change for the individual, enterprises and government bodies it proudly serves. ENDS

Reaffirming its commitment to environmental sustainability & UN ESG principles

Gulf Bank leads major cleanup in AlMutlaa desert

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: As part of its continuous efforts to champion environmental stewardship and in recognition of International Volunteer Day, Gulf Bank participated in a major cleanup campaign in the AlMutlaa desert area. The initiative was organized in collaboration with the Trashtag team, the American University of Kuwait (AUK), and supported by more than 70 dedicated volunteers.

During the campaign, volunteers successfully collected and packed 96 bags of waste, helping to restore one of Kuwait's key natural landscapes while raising public awareness on responsible waste disposal, recycling practices, and environmental conservation.

The Sawaad AlKhaleej volunteer team reflects Gulf Bank's commitment to social sustainability and community-building. Its members regularly participate in environmental campaigns, beach cleanups, charitable activities, emergency response initiatives, and other community support efforts that advance Kuwait's sustainable development aspirations.

Aligned with UN ESG and Sustainable Development Goals

Gulf Bank's involvement in the Al-Mutlaa cleanup aligns with the Bank's broader strategy to integrate Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles across its operations. This includes supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

The Bank continues to embed sustainability in its internal processes through responsible resource consumption, digital transformation to minimize paper usage, enhanced recycling initiatives, and sustained support for environmental preservation projects. These efforts reflect Gulf Bank's commitment to combating pollution, mitigating climate change, and contributing to biodiversity protection.

Collective Action for a Sustainable Future



A group photo of the campaign participants and the Gulf Volunteer Team.



Members of the Gulf Bank team cleaning the area.



Gulf Bank believes that environmental protection is a shared responsibility. The success of the Al-Mutlaa cleanup campaign reinforces the power of collective action and highlights the impact that individuals and institutions can achieve when working together toward a cleaner and more environmentally balanced future.

At the conclusion of the campaign, Gulf Bank extended its appreciation to all volunteers from the Sawaad AlKhaleej team for their dedication and contribution, reaffirming the Bank's ongoing commitment to leading and supporting environmental sus-

tainability initiatives.

Encouraging Responsible Camping Practices

As part of its commitment to fostering a culture of environmental responsibility, Gulf Bank also urged campers and visitors of Kuwait's deserts to preserve natural spaces by adopting responsible behaviors. The Bank emphasized the importance of reducing waste, avoiding harmful disposal practices, and ensuring that all materials brought to camping sites are collected and removed upon departure. Protecting Kuwait's desert environment requires collective vigilance, and Gulf Bank encouraged the community to

take simple yet impactful steps that safeguard these natural areas for future generations.

About Sawaad AlKhaleej
Sawaad AlKhaleej is Gulf Bank's dedicated volunteer program, designed to advance the Bank's social and environmental impact. The initiative brings together employees, customers, and partners to participate in activities such as environmental cleanups, recycling and sustainability drives, charitable initiatives, emergency support efforts, and youth engagement programs. It reinforces Gulf Bank's commitment to responsible citizenship, ESG principles, and community resilience.

Airline to boost Hajj, Umrah and leisure travel

Jazeera Airways KSA wins GACA charter license

RIYADH, Dec 10: Jazeera Airways KSA, a subsidiary of Jazeera Airways, was today awarded a national non-scheduled (charter) air carrier tender by the General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The airline is now authorized to operate both domestic and international charter services from Saudi Arabia.

This new license aligns closely with Jazeera Airways' broader strategy to expand aviation programs that strengthen regional and international connectivity, introduce new routes, and enhance the customer experience. Through its charter services, Jazeera Airways will offer improved travel options for Hajj and Umrah pilgrims, as well as group and leisure travelers.

Awad Alsulami, Executive Vice President for Economic Policies & Logistics Services at GACA, stated: "The Aviation Program is opening the charter market to new operators, driving competition and attracting additional investment into the sector. This tender award marks an important step in diversifying our aviation offering and supporting the sector's broader transformation, while expanding flexible connectivity options that meet the Kingdom's growing travel needs."

The tender award also represents a significant milestone in growing aviation capacity across the Kingdom, reinforcing national connectivity and supporting the Saudi Aviation Program under the National Transport and Logistics Strategy, in line with Vision 2030 objectives, including the Tourism Strategy and broader economic diversification goals.

Commenting on the announcement, Marwan Boodai, Chairman of



Jazeera Airways strengthens regional connectivity with Saudi Charter License.

Jazeera Airways, said: "It is an honor to be awarded the national charter tender by GACA. This recognition reflects the trust placed in Jazeera Airways to expand on its existing contributions to Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. Charter aviation plays a vital role in advancing tourism, enabling economic diversification, and supporting the development of future talent. As a low-cost airline, we are proud to be part of a platform that will open new opportunities—creating jobs, strengthening connectivity, attracting investment, and delivering reliable, customer-focused travel solutions across the Kingdom."

Under GACA's charter aviation program, and subject to completing the required licensing phases, Jazeera Airways, as a licensed operator, is expected to serve up to 33 destinations, provide approximately 1.4 million seats, operate a fleet of 7 aircraft, and create around 420 direct jobs, delivering meaningful economic and employment impact across Saudi Arabia's aviation ecosystem.

Following the tender award, Jazeera Airways will now begin the economic and technical certification processes in coordination with GACA ahead of commencing commercial charter operations.

As Saudi Arabia's aviation and tourism sectors continue to expand rapidly, Jazeera Airways remains committed to building long-term partnerships that support national priorities, stimulate economic growth, and deliver safe, efficient, and customer-centric aviation solutions across the Kingdom and the wider region.

Expanding on the Bank's efforts to foster an innovation-driven Great Place to Work® culture

Burgan Bank organizes 'Values Unlocked': An interactive AR team-building event

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: As part of its all-encompassing digital transformation strategy and commitment to offering its employees a dynamic and memorable work experience, Burgan Bank organized an interactive augmented reality (AR) treasure hunt at Al-Shaheed Park. Titled "Values Unlocked" ownership, Transparency, Teamwork & Passion, the event was designed to engage 300 employees from 60 teams across departments with Burgan Bank's values, strategy, vision, and mission through a fun, immersive format. The activation created an inviting atmosphere that reinforced a one-team spirit and reinforced communication among employees outside the traditional work setting.

The AR team-building event underscored Burgan Bank's commitment to adopting creative, technology-supported solutions inline with its forward-looking digital transformation strategy. With "Values Unlocked", this digital-first approach aligns seamlessly with the Bank's robust learning and talent development strategy as well as people-centric work culture – both of which continue to leverage the latest technologies to deliver impactful learning experiences and build lasting connections.

"Values Unlocked was more than just a recreational activity; it was an expression of our culture and a reflection of our commitment to Burgan Bank's staff," commented Mr. Naqeeb Amin, General Manager – Human Resources Development Group at Burgan Bank. "The event was designed to strengthen the spirit of teamwork, engagement, and strategic thinking, while also providing an opportunity for colleagues to bond outside the traditional work environment. It was built as part of our action plan, which we based on the feedback received from the Great Place to Work® survey."

He added: "We remain committed to listening attentively to our employees and creating outstanding experiences that align with their aspirations, further enriching our values-driven workplace culture and delivering impactful employee engagement programs."



Group shot of Burgan Bank employees participating in the event.



Bank staff preparing for the treasure hunt.



Crowning the winners of the treasure hunt competition.

The cross-functional teams competed in a series of interactive challenges that relied on essential skills such as critical thinking and creative problem solving to advance through the treasure hunt and finish among the winning teams. The first-place team won a prize of KD 750, followed by the second – place team who won KD 250, whereas the third-place team won a prize of KD 100 and trophies in recognition of their participation.

Besides organizing team building events such as "Values Unlocked", Burgan Bank remains committed to upholding its balanced and encouraging work environment throughout the year by designing spaces, beginning with the MR floor where employees can bond and form genuine connections, as well as rolling out various in-house initiatives that aim to educate, engage, and entertain employees in correspondence with the Bank's values and strategies, furthering its mission to become an employer of choice.

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

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

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

Burgan Bank has achieved the LEED v4.1 O+M: EB Gold Certification for its Head Office in Kuwait City. The Bank has also obtained the ISO/IEC 27001:2022 Information Security Management Systems certificate (ISMS), ISO/IEC 27701:2019 Privacy Information Management Systems (PIMS), ISO/IEC 20000-1:2018 Information Technology Service Management System (ITSMS) and was re-certified with the prestigious ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System (QMS), making it one of the few banks in the GCC and Kuwait to receive such certification for five consecutive times. At the same time, the Bank has the distinction of being the only Bank in Kuwait to have won the JP Morgan Chase Quality Recognition Award for twenty consecutive years. Moreover, in a testament to its dedication to the development of its human capital, Burgan Bank is the first bank in Kuwait to be certified as a Great Place to Work®, earning the distinct honor in 2023.

Burgan Bank is a majority-owned subsidiary of KIPCO (Kuwait Projects Company), one of the largest holding companies in the MENA region.

Rising supply & sluggish outlook for global economy weigh on oil prices

By National Bank of Kuwait

Oil prices have held in the lower \$60s/bbl range over the past month, with geopolitical developments providing the main upside impetus against a backdrop of oversupply.

Global oil demand growth is seen sluggish amid economic headwinds in key oil consuming nations, such as the US and China.

The IEA forecasts demand to grow by only 800 kb/d in 2025-26, well below historical norms, and easily outstripped by forecasts of robust supply growth and gains from the Americas and OPEC+ especially.

OPEC+ confirmed recently its decision to pause output hikes in Q1 26 to accommodate seasonal weakness and slow the pace of inventory builds. Looking ahead, barring any geopolitical or sanctions-related disruptions to oil flows, which could be amplified by eroding global spare production capacity, or stronger-than-expected global economic growth, oil prices are expected to average in the mid-60s, with risks skewed to the downside.

Markets: Rising supply, demand fears, and dwindling geopolitical risk premium weigh on prices in Q4

Oil prices are currently on a four-month streak of losses and have struggled to trade above the \$60-65/bbl range, amid softening oil demand and supply gains from both OPEC+ and non-OPEC producers. (Chart 1.) Oil's geopolitical risk premium has also waned in recent months, with the Trump administration orchestrating one ceasefire between Israel and Hamas and looking to conclude another between Russia and Ukraine.

Lower prices likely factored into OPEC-8's policy decision in November, reaffirmed in early December, to pause output hikes in Q1 2026. OPEC cited winter "seasonality" as its reason. Reflecting these dynamics, the Brent futures curve edged closer to contango, where the near-term oil price is lower than the future price, and hinting at higher incoming supply.

Bearish speculator positioning has picked up in recent weeks and is closing in October's record high, with 'net length' (the difference between the number of long and short contracts) dropping to its lowest point this year in Q3. (Chart 2.)

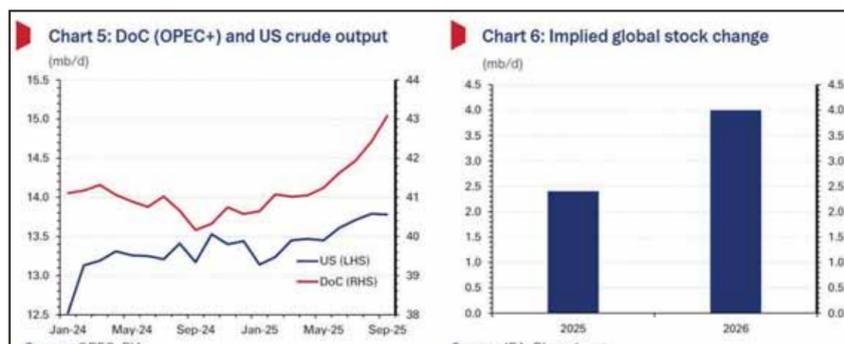
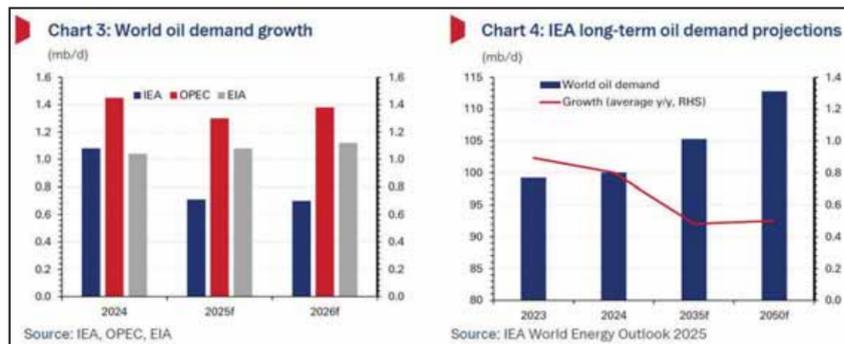
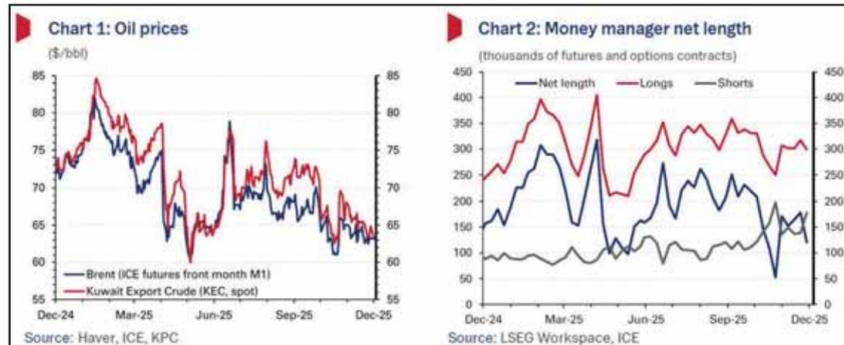
Oil demand: Growth to remain subdued amid a softer macroeconomic environment

Oil demand growth is expected to remain sluggish in the near term, weighed down by a weaker global economy affected by trade tariff friction and interest rate uncertainty.

While the International Energy Agency (IEA) did raise its global oil consumption growth projection for 2025 and 2026 in its November report to around 800 kb/d y/y on average, the rate remains well down on historical norms. (Chart 3.) In contrast, OPEC maintained its robust oil consumption growth estimates of 1.3 mb/d and 1.4 mb/d for this year and next, respectively, citing transportation fuels and petrochemicals as key growth drivers.

The IEA also in November released its World Energy Outlook 2025. The annual publication, which maps scenarios of oil and energy use over the long term, surprised in its reinstatement of a 'Current Policies

Scenario' that sees oil demand growing through 2050, having previously forecast 'peak' oil con-



sumption by 2030. OPEC welcomed the turn, calling it a "rendezvous with reality" that vindicates its own long-held view on oil demand and removes the disincentive for sustained investment in oil and gas that it had warned against.

In the IEA's new analysis, assuming no shift from current policies, oil demand will continue increasing right through to 2050 (at an annual average of close to 500 kb/d), where it will reach almost 113 mb/d (+12.8 mb/d from 2024). Driving oil gains will be fuel use for transportation and petrochemicals (feedstock) in emerging markets. That said, increasing electrification remains oil's most important headwind. OPEC sees oil demand rising to 2050, albeit settling at a higher level of 123 mb/d.

Supply: OPEC+ pauses output increases for Q1 2026; non-OPEC+ production keeps rising

OPEC+ announced a pause in its program of

supply increases for Q1 2026, having aggressively unwound the first tranche of members' voluntary cuts (2.2 mb/d from 2024) a year ahead of schedule and then proceeded to do the same with the second tranche of cuts (1.65 mb/d from 2023), albeit at a less rapid pace (+137 kb/d per month in October-December).

That said, actual supply gains have trailed promised increases due to a combination of compensatory cuts and difficulties in raising production, with OPEC-8 only managing to return about 77% (2.0 mb/d vs 2.6 mb/d) of the barrels that were promised on paper.

Iraq, especially, has had to demonstrate adherence to compensatory cuts given how much it had overproduced in previous months, but the UAE, Oman, Russia and Kazakhstan are also obligated to work through these cuts in 2026. With this in mind, and allied to capacity constraints, we think

OPEC-8 will likely underdeliver on supply in 2026 even if it resumes unwinding cuts after Q1.

OPEC also announced in December the appointment of an independent third-party oil consulting firm to assess members' maximum sustainable production capacity next year.

The move is significant because members' production baselines and quotas from 2027 will be based off this assessment, leaving producers inclined to inflate their actual production capacity to secure a higher quota little scope to do so.

According to OPEC secondary sources, Declaration of Cooperation (DoC) production (OPEC+, includes quota-exempt Iran, Libya, and Venezuela) reached 43.0 mb/d in October, up almost 2 mb/d since April. (Chart 5.) The increases were driven mostly by OPEC-8 members Saudi Arabia (+1.04 mb/d), the UAE (+423 kb/d) and Russia (+412 kb/d).

US crude production was estimated to have exceeded 13.8 mb/d in November, according to the Energy Information Administration (EIA). (Chart 5.) However, for 2026, the EIA sees a first decline in US crude production since pandemic-affected 2021, albeit only a slight one of 13 kb/d, which would bring year average output to 13.58 mb/d.

Pessimism regarding the US oil sector has risen in recent months amid Trump administration policy uncertainty, which was cited in the recent Dallas Fed energy survey as the main damper on investment, especially as WTI prices hover near or below shale well-drilling breakeven prices. The IEA, though, still sees the US and others driving non-DoC supply growth of 1.2 mb/d in 2026 from an estimated 1.7 mb/d in 2025.

Market balance and price outlook: Expected supply overhang in 2026, downside risks predominate

Oil market fundamentals point to a widening surplus in 2026, from around 2.4 mb/d in 2025 to just over 4 mb/d, the IEA has estimated. (Chart 6.) Non-OPEC+ supply growth by itself (without factoring in OPEC+ increases) is anticipated to outpace oil demand growth.

This is evident in the IEA's "call on OPEC+", the amount OPEC+ has to produce to balance the oil market, which for next year stands at 39.9 mb/d, roughly 3 mb/d below OPEC+'s actual production in October 2025.

Pressure on oil prices (and the risk to our 2026 average forecast of \$65/bbl) is predominantly to the downside, and more so if a peace deal is brokered between Moscow and Kiev.

At this juncture, this still looks out of reach due to Putin's demands, and even if an agreement materialized and oil sanctions were lifted, supply gains may not be as strong as anticipated given that Russian oil supplies were already flowing fairly freely (to China and India especially) – albeit at heavily discounted prices under the US/EU/G7 price cap – and given that production from any shut-in or idled wells will not be incentivized strongly amid current weak price signals. On the upside, the global economy could outperform expectations, perhaps due to an easing in trade frictions, or benefit from weaker oil prices.

Also, expected supply gains may not fully materialize due to a combination of geopolitics-linked outages, lower oil prices, or production capacity constraints.

Roshni Nadar Malhotra – One of India’s most influential women in business & philanthropy

By Chaitali B. Roy
Special to the Arab Times

When Roshni Nadar Malhotra walked into the Waldorf Astoria in Kuwait City for the Indian Business and Professional Council’s (IBPC) 24th Year Celebrations, the energy in the room shifted. The attendees, who were seasoned professionals, young entrepreneurs, and community leaders, had gathered to meet a woman who not only heads one of India’s most influential global technology companies - HCL Technologies, but also embodies the values of purposeful leadership, sustainability, and social transformation.

The IBPC, which recently celebrated its 24th anniversary, is a non-profit voluntary association whose membership includes leading members of the Indian business community, senior corporate executives and professionals from the private sector and also senior managers of Indian public sector undertakings in Kuwait. In addition to promoting business ties between India and Kuwait, IBPC also strengthens cultural relations between the two countries. The highlight of the evening was the IBPC awards that honoured Indian and Kuwaiti personalities who have contributed to strengthening business and cultural ties between the two countries. Over the years, the IBPC awards have set standards and encouraged excellence in both the workplace and community service.

For Roshni, returning to Kuwait after 15 years felt like stepping into an entirely new landscape. “It’s changed a lot since then, lots of development... a little more traffic, a lot of cars. It’s great,” she said with a smile, noting the country’s rapid advancement and modernisation. This juxtaposition of returning to a place transformed while she herself has transformed the organisation she leads sets the tone for her journey as Chairperson of HCL Technologies and as one of India’s most influential women in business and philanthropy.

HCL’s story is inseparable from that of its founder, Shiv Nadar, Roshni’s father. At the IBPC event, Nadar Malhotra recounts the extraordinary origins of the company - a narrative marked by vision, timing, and unshakeable belief. “HCL was founded by my father, Mr Shiv Nadar, in 1976. It was a very interesting time in India. The economy was closed, IBM and Coca-Cola were leaving India, and my father and his fellow co-founders decided to build India’s first indigenous PCs,” she explained. The company started with a humble ₹1.83 lakhs and today stands as a multinational giant with over \$14 billion in revenue and a market cap of more than \$50 billion. As Roshni notes, “It’s been a phenomenal journey.”

In 2020, when Roshni Nadar Malhotra took over as Chairperson, she became the first woman to lead a major Indian IT company. But she approaches her role with humility and clarity: “I haven’t stepped into his shoes. I think I stand on his shoulders.” For her, leadership is less about inheriting authority and more about expanding vision. Technology evolves rapidly, and so must leadership. “We have to adapt. We have to change. HCL is a very different company today,” she said, pointing to the company’s growth from \$8 billion to \$14 billion in revenue over just a few years. But she acknowledges the symbolic power of her position. “There isn’t another tech company in India that has a woman chair. So that’s good, that’s what’s different,” she said, earning applause from the audience.

In regions like India and the Middle East, where women in boardrooms remain limited, her rise serves as both an inspiration and a challenge to the traditional corporate ecosystem. Roshni’s leadership extends far beyond the corporate sphere. She is also a central force behind the Shiv Nadar Foundation and The Habitats Trust, dedicated to conservation and sustainability.

Roshni Nadar Malhotra’s journey is a reflection of India’s own evolution - bold, resilient, and aspirational. From the pioneering days of indigenous computing to her leadership in global AI transformation, her stewardship of HCL



Roshni Nadar Malhotra speaking to the audience at a recent IBPC event in Kuwait.

aligns with the needs of a rapidly shifting world. In Kuwait, she not only celebrated IBPC’s milestone but also reaffirmed the shared destiny of regions striving for technological and social advancement. And as she said with characteristic calm confidence:

“It’s important to stay the course.” In an exclusive interview with Arab Times, Roshni Nadar Malhotra shared her thoughts on the role of powerful women in social development, the shifts necessary to nurture female talent and the need to empower men to embrace gender equality, and for the Indo-Gulf region to collaborate more on social development, particularly in women’s skill-building, entrepreneurship, and leadership training.

Arab Times: As someone who leads both a major global enterprise and significant philanthropic initiatives, how do you believe women in positions of influence can reshape the ecosystem of social development, particularly in education, skill-building, and community leadership to create lasting, systemic change?

Roshni N Malhotra: In my own experience, women tend to approach development work with a sharper focus on long-term impact rather than short-lived interventions. At HCL Foundation and through our education initiatives, I have seen how women-led teams bring a deep understanding of community needs, especially in areas such as schooling, health, and livelihoods.

When women in leadership insist on accountability, measurable outcomes, and quality, the entire system benefits. What creates lasting change is not scale alone. It is sustained engagement and a clear understanding of how social challenges influence one another. Women in positions of influence have the ability to connect these dots and ensure that progress is both inclusive and durable.

AT: You’ve led in spaces, technology, governance, and philanthropy, where women globally are still underrepresented. What shifts do you think are necessary in both Indian and Middle Eastern corporate cultures to create leadership pipelines that genuinely nurture female talent beyond token representation?

Roshni N Malhotra: In the corporate world, I have learnt that policies matter, but culture matters more. At HCLTech, for example, we have seen that women grow when they are given important roles and backed them with trust. The combination of opportunity and belief is powerful. In both India and the

Middle East, organisations need to consciously remove the invisible barriers that slow down women’s careers. Simple things make a difference. Transparent evaluations. Supportive managers. Return-to-work programmes that genuinely help women rebuild their careers. And role models who show that leadership is not defined by gender.

Leadership pipelines succeed when companies stop viewing gender diversity as a compliance requirement and start treating it as a serious investment in capability.

AT: Considering HCL’s work and your philanthropic focus on education, how can technology be used not just to educate girls, but to help them transcend generational and geographic barriers—especially in regions where traditional gender roles remain deeply entrenched?

Roshni N Malhotra: Technology becomes truly transformative when it improves access, quality, and confidence. Digital tools can bring learning to communities that have historically been excluded, but technology alone cannot shift mindsets. It must be paired with strong local engagement, supportive families, and reliable infrastructure. Across our work in India, technology has fundamentally altered what girls can aspire to. I have met students who first encountered coding through a mobile lab or discovered robotics in a government school classroom. These experiences do more than educate. They change the child’s sense of what is possible.

However, technology alone does not shift the existing norms. You need community agreement. You need parents who see the value of digital literacy. You need teachers who are confident enough to facilitate it. Once those pieces align, technology becomes a bridge between where girls are and where they want to go, regardless of their geography or circumstances.

AT: Since empowerment can’t be achieved by women alone, what do you believe is the most effective way to bring men, especially boy into the conversation around gender equality, both in India and in socially conservative regions like the Middle East?

Roshni N Malhotra: Engaging men is central to advancing gender equality. The most effective way is to start early. Boys need to see equality as normal, not as an exception. Schools, families, and community programs play an important role in shaping this mindset. During field visits, I have noticed that when boys grow up seeing girls access opportunities, equality becomes normalised for them. You cannot force this conversation; it must be built through consistent exposure. Schools, especially government schools, are powerful spaces for this because they influence attitudes early.

Engaging fathers is equally important. They are often the decision-makers in conservative settings. When they see that educating girls improves family stability and income potential, their participation becomes far more active. Ultimately, gender equality becomes sustainable only when men understand that it strengthens entire communities, not just women.

AT: Given the strong India-Gulf relationship, what opportunities do you see for collaboration between the two regions on social development, particularly in women’s skill-building, entrepreneurship, and leadership training?

Roshni N Malhotra: India and the Gulf share a long-standing partnership, and both regions are now investing heavily in technology, skills, and education. I see clear opportunities for collaboration in digital skilling models, particularly those that have worked well in India. Our experience shows that when training is flexible, linked to industry needs, and accessible to women, participation increases significantly.

There is also potential for joint programmes in entrepreneurship and leadership development. Many women in both regions are ready to scale their skills but need structured support, networks, and mentorship. A collaborative approach between governments, corporates, and foundations can help create these pathways and build a more inclusive workforce on both sides.

Fed set to cut rates

Markets eye Powell’s next move

WASHINGTON, Dec 10, (AP): The Federal Reserve will almost certainly reduce its key interest rate Wednesday, but the bigger question for financial markets and the economy is what signals Chair Jerome Powell may send regarding the central bank’s next steps.

It would be the third cut in a row and bring the Fed’s key rate to about 3.6%, the lowest in nearly three years. For Americans struggling with high borrowing costs for homes, cars, and other large purchases, this year’s rate cuts could reduce those costs over time - though it’s not guaranteed. Mortgage rates in particular are also influenced by financial markets.

This week’s meeting could pre-empt a much cloudier path for the Fed in 2026. The government shutdown has delayed two months of jobs and inflation data, leaving the Fed with much less information on hiring and inflation than it is used to. Powell’s term as chair ends in May and President Donald Trump will nominate a replacement, possibly as soon as this month, who will almost certainly push for lower borrowing costs. Yet the new chair could face resistance from other Fed officials.

In addition to a likely rate cut, the Fed could signal that the bar for another reduction when they next meet in late January will be higher than it has been this fall. A year ago, after implementing a third rate cut at its December meeting, the Fed indicated it would likely keep rates unchanged in the coming months. It didn’t cut again until September.

“They would love to take a pass (in January), push it off to March, and just



Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell speaks at a news conference after the Federal Open Market Committee meeting Oct. 29, 2025, at the Federal Reserve Board Building in Washington. (AP)

wait for a couple of more inflation reports to come in,” Tom Porcelli, chief economist at Wells Fargo, said.

The Fed’s 19-member rate-setting committee is deeply divided between those who support reducing rates to bolster hiring and those who’d prefer to keep rates unchanged because inflation remains above the central bank’s 2% target. Higher borrowing costs can slow spending and the economy and reduce price increases.

The government said last week in a delayed report that the Fed’s preferred inflation gauge remained elevated in September, with both overall and core prices rising 2.8% from a year earlier.

The lack of economic data has contributed to the divisions. But by their January meeting, they’ll have up to three months of backlogged reports to consider. If those figures show that hiring has remained weak, or that layoffs have spiked, the Fed could reduce rates again in January.

By contrast, if they show hiring has stabilized while inflation remains elevated, they may hold off on additional cuts for several months.

On Wednesday, the Fed will also issue its quarterly set of economic projections, which include forecasts for where they will set rates at the end of this year and next. Economists expect just one rate reduction next year, as they did in September.

Yet the projections will likely carry much less weight this year, since a new chair will probably push for more reductions. And if the economy weakens, more officials will support reductions.

In an interview with Politico published Tuesday, Trump said “yes” when asked if reducing rates “immediately” was a litmus test for his new Fed chair. Trump has hinted that he will likely pick Kevin Hassett, his top economic adviser.

Hassett has often called for lower borrowing costs, but this week has been more circumspect. In an interview Tuesday on CNBC, when asked how many more rate cuts he would support, Hassett did not give a specific answer and said, “What you need to do is watch the data.”

Stronger domestic demand key to sustainable growth

IMF urges China to address economic imbalances as trade surplus hits \$1 tn

HONG KONG, Dec 10, (AP): The head of the International Monetary Fund has urged China to fix its economic imbalances, saying the country of 1.4 billion people is too big to rely on exports for its growth.

China’s global exports have been rising while shipments to the United States have contracted after President Donald Trump hiked taxes on imports from China and many other countries. Earlier this week, Beijing reported its trade surplus for 2025 had already exceeded a record \$1 trillion.

IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said the heavy reliance on exports risks provoking more moves by its trading partners to curb imports from China.

“(China’s) continuing to depend on export-led growth risks furthering global trade tensions,” Georgieva told a press conference on Wednesday. “China is now too big to rely on exports as a source for growth... and (it has) a large domestic market that can be a big aspiration for growth in the years to come.”

At a high-level meeting in October aimed at drawing up plans for the next five years, China’s leaders highlighted the need to boost domestic consumption. The ruling Communist Party has long sought to rebalance the economy away from heavy dependence both on exports and on massive investment in infrastructure.

But the COVID-19 pandemic intervened, along with a prolonged downturn in the real estate market that has slowed activity for that once powerful engine for growth. Meanwhile, Beijing has pushed hard to expand manufacturing in high-tech industries, struggling to rein in excessive capacity in some areas such as automaking.



Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director, International Monetary Fund (IMF) speaks at a briefing at the conclusion of the annual assessment of the Chinese economy in Beijing, China, Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2025. (AP)

Morgan Stanley recently predicted that by 2030, China’s market share in global exports could reach 16.5%, up from about 15% currently, supported by its advanced manufacturing and high-growth segments like robotics, electric vehicles and batteries.

Georgieva was visiting Beijing for an annual economic forum involving the heads of major international organizations. The IMF also was concluding its annual review of China.

Softening domestic consumption and demand in China has contributed to a weakened yuan versus the dollar and other currencies. That has made China’s exports cheaper compared with those of other countries, reinforcing trade imbalances.

The IMF said comprehensive policies are needed to encourage Chinese people to spend more.

While China’s market is huge and still growing at a nearly 5% annual pace, domestic demand has

weakened as consumers cut back on spending due to job and income losses during and after the pandemic.

The years-long property downturn also has hit household wealth, crimping shoppers’ appetites for spending and sapping demand for imports, amplifying the trade imbalance.

Helping to offset the decline in exports to the U.S., China is selling more in other countries in Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia and Europe. That has led to complaints from China’s trading partners as its imports have failed to keep pace.

Wednesday, the EU Chamber of Commerce in China also warned its substantial trade surplus is raising worries.

The IMF’s remarks followed Chinese Premier Li Qiang’s comments to the international group of financial experts Tuesday that higher tariffs have “dealt a severe blow” to the global economy.

Trump focuses on prices but sparks controversy with immigration remarks

Economic anxiety clouds Trump’s midterm strategy in Pennsylvania

MOUNT POCONO, Dec 10, (AP): On the road in Pennsylvania on Tuesday, President Donald Trump tried to emphasize his focus on combating inflation, yet the issue that has damaged his popularity couldn’t quite command his full attention.

The president told the crowd gathered at a casino and resort in Mount Pocono that inflation was no longer a problem and that Democrats had used the term “affordability” as a “hoax” to hurt his reputation. But his remarks weaved wildly to include grievances he first raised behind closed doors in his first term in 2018 - and later denied saying - asking why the U.S. doesn’t have more immigrants from Scandinavia.

“Why is it we only take people from s-hole countries, right?” Trump said on-stage. “Why can’t we have some people from Norway, Sweden, just a few?”

Trump said he objected to taking immigrants from “hellholes like Afghanistan, Haiti, Somalia and many other countries.” He added for emphasis that those places “are a disaster, right? Filthy, dirty, disgusting, ridden with crime.”

Tuesday’s gathering in the swing state - and in a competitive House district - was an official White House event, yet it seemed more like one of his signature campaign rallies that his chief of staff said he would hold regularly ahead of next year’s midterms. But instead of being in an arena that could draw several thousand attendees, it was held in a conference center ballroom at the Mount Airy Casino Resort in Mount Pocono, a small town of about 3,000 residents.

Following dismal results for Republicans in last month’s off-cycle elections, the White House has sought to convince voters that the economy will emerge stronger next year and that any anxieties over inflation have nothing to do with Trump.

He displayed a chart comparing price increases under his predecessor, Joe

Biden, to prices under his own watch to argue his case. But the overall inflation rate has climbed since he announced broad tariffs in April and left many Americans worried about their grocery, utility and housing bills.

“I have no higher priority than making America affordable again,” Trump said. “They caused the high prices and we’re bringing them down.”

As the president spoke, his party’s political vulnerabilities were further seen as Miami voters chose Eileen Higgins to be their first Democratic mayor in nearly 30 years. Higgins defeated the Trump-endorsed Republican Emilio Gonzalez.

The president’s reception in the county hosting his Tuesday rally showed he could still appeal to the base, but it was unable to settle questions of whether he could hold together his 2024 coalition. Monroe County flipped to Trump last year after having backed Biden in 2020, helping the Republican win the swing state of Pennsylvania and return to the White House after a four-year hiatus.

As home to the Pocono Mountains, the county has largely relied on tourism for skiing, hiking, hunting and other activities as a source of jobs. Its proximity to New York City - under two hours by car - has also attracted people seeking more affordable housing.

But what seems undeniable - even to Trump supporters in Monroe County - is that inflation seems to be here to stay.

Lou Heddy, a retired maintenance mechanic who voted for Trump last year, said he’s noticed in the past month alone that his and his wife’s grocery bills have risen from \$175 to \$200, and he’s not sure Trump can bring food prices down.

“Once the prices get up for food, they don’t ever come back down. That’s just the way I feel. I don’t know how the hell he would do it,” said Heddy, 72.

But Suzanne Vena, a Democratic voter, blames Trump’s tariffs for making life more expensive, as she struggles with rising bills for food, rent and electricity on a fixed income. She remembers Trump saying that he would stop inflation.

“That’s what we were originally told,” said Vena, 66. “Did I believe it? That’s another question. I did not.”

The area Trump visited could help decide control of the House in next year’s midterm elections.

Trump held his rally in a congressional district held by first-term Republican Rep. Rob Bresnahan, who is a top target of Democrats. Scranton Mayor Paige Cagnetti, a Democrat, is running for the nomination to challenge him.

Speaking to the crowd before Trump, Bresnahan said the administration was working to lower costs, but voters “aren’t asking for partisan arguments - they’re asking for results.”

It’s not clear if Trump can motivate voters in Monroe County to show up in next year’s election if they’re worried about inflation.

Nick Riley, 38, said he’s cutting back on luxuries, like going out to eat, as he absorbs higher bills for food and electricity and is living a hard time finding a good deal on a used car. Riley voted for Trump in 2020, but he sat out the 2024 election and plans to do so again next year.

“We’re all broke. It doesn’t matter whether you support Republicans or support Democrats,” Riley said. “We’re all broke, and we’re all feeling it.”

White House chief of staff Susie Wiles said on the online conservative talk show “The Mom View” that Trump would be on the campaign trail next year to engage supporters who otherwise might sit out a congressional race.

Audience enthusiasm has been visible both online and in theaters

Blockbuster run for 'Zootopia 2' underscores China's market scale, openness

BEIJING, Dec 10, (Xinhua): "Theaters are packed once again," wrote Yin Hong, vice chairman of the China Film Association and a professor at Tsinghua University, on social media, sharing photos of a thronged cinema lobby.

China's year-end box office has roared back to life with a fervor usually seen during the Chinese New Year holiday. The surge -- driven largely by Disney's "Zootopia 2" -- is bringing fresh momentum into a market that had languished since October.

The sequel opened day-and-date with North America on Nov. 26. It has since amassed 3.1 billion yuan (438 million U.S. dollars) in China, which accounts for about 47 percent of its current global total and doubles its North American earnings, according to Wednesday's data from ticketing platform Maoyan. It is now the highest-grossing imported animated film in Chinese history.

The film has smashed multiple records, including a one-day haul of 738 million yuan on Nov. 29, the biggest single-day gross ever for an imported title in China. It is also the first imported title since 2022's "Avatar: The Way of Water" to cross the 1-billion-yuan mark in China. Both box office trackers Maoyan and



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)

Beacon project its final China tally to reach about 3.8 billion yuan.

Industry analysts say the late-year surge reinforces two realities: China's massive con-

sumer base remains capable of lifting films to heights unmatched anywhere else, and the market continues to show remarkable openness to both homegrown and imported works.

The year's narrative was kicked off by "Ne Zha 2," the domestic animated hit from the January Spring Festival holiday that became a global sensation. Its 15.4 billion yuan haul became the highest gross ever for a film in any single market worldwide, drawing 324 million admissions and topping global animation box office charts. Its success, coming amid uncertainty fueled by streaming competition and shifting audience habits, injected much-needed optimism into the industry.

"China's market is able to support a film exceeding 15 billion yuan. What great works could it not make possible?" said Mao Yu, deputy director of the China Film Administration, at a forum earlier this year. He also noted that China's decades-long reforms have created a mature ecosystem capable of sustaining high-concept productions and diverse genres, demonstrating the "advantages of a super-large market." Together, "Ne Zha 2" and "Zootopia 2" -- the year's top two animated titles -- have turned 2025 into a banner year for animation in China while challenging simplistic narratives of a market increasingly favoring local titles and turning its back on Hollywood's fading charm. Instead, analysts

say, quality is winning.

Audience enthusiasm has been visible both online and in theaters, with parents posting photos of children posing with Judy Hopps and Nick Wilde cutouts. More than 78 million tickets have been sold for "Zootopia 2" in China -- the highest admission figure ever for an imported animated film -- and the sequel holds a strong 8.4 out of 10 rating on review platform Douban.

Chinese commentators believe the film's outsize success in China compared with North America reflects the market's consumption potential as well as its openness. "It highlights the enormous market foundation and consumption demand in China," said Zhang Jinfeng, deputy editor-in-chief of China Film News, in a television interview. It reflects Chinese cinema's "open, inclusive attitude toward globally advanced cinematic achievements," he said, adding that China has become "a key engine for global box-office growth." China remains the world's second-largest film market, contributing nearly a quarter of the 27.9-billion-U.S. dollar year-to-date global box office, just behind North America's 28.5 percent, according to Maoyan data as of Wednesday.

Obituary

A life of joy and passion

Malo, soulful tenor and Mavericks frontman, dies

NEW YORK, Dec 10, (AP): Raul Malo, the soulful tenor and frontman of the genre-defying, Grammy-winning band The Mavericks, has died. He was 60.

Malo died, his wife, Betty Malo, posted on his Facebook page. He had been battling cancer. The frontman of The Mavericks had documented his health journey on social media since he disclosed in June 2024 that he was receiving treatment for colon cancer.

In September 2025, Malo said on Instagram that he was battling LMD, or leptomeningeal disease, a rare complication when cancer spreads to membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord.

The diagnosis forced The Mavericks to cancel dates with Dwight Yoakam in the middle of a joint tour. Malo left home in Nashville, Tennessee, to seek treatment in Houston, keeping his fans updated along his health journey.

"He was called to do another gig - this time in the sky - and he's flying high like an eagle," Betty Malo wrote. "No one embodied life and love, joy and passion, family, friends, music, and adventure the way our beloved Raul did. Now he will look down on us, lighting the way and reminding us to savor every moment."

Malo's band praised his deep commitment to the "preservation of the multilingual American musical repertoire" and his steadfast championing of "music education as an inspiration for every child across America and throughout the world."

Born Raul Francisco Martínez-Malo Jr. in Miami to Cuban parents, he co-founded The Mavericks in 1989 with drummer Paul Deakin and bass guitarist Robert Reynolds. Their self-titled debut album was released the following year on the independent, Miami-based label Y&T Music.

Soaring

Some call the band alt-country. Others describe it as Americana, roots, Latin, Tejano or swing. It's all of the above and more, driven by songs written by Malo, his expansive guitar style and his broad vocal range, from a soaring, velvety baritone to operatic high notes.

His musical prowess was in the blend, also incorporating rock, traditional country and surf. In the early days in Miami, The Mavericks played punk and rock clubs to get their sound out there.

"I grew up in a household where we listened to all kinds of music," Malo said in a 2020 NPR interview. "I just remember it was a celebration of all these cultures."

At that time, The Mavericks had just released an all-Spanish album, "En Español," featuring original songs and classic Latin American standards. In 2002, Malo released an all-Spanish album for children, "el Cancionero de la Familia Volume 1," featuring vocals from his sister, Carol, wife, Betty, and mother, Norma, along with other guests.

The band has taken on various iterations over the years as some members came and went. The Mavericks also disbanded a couple of times. Malo put out a dozen or so solo albums and collaboration projects as well, including his instrumental "Say Less," "You're Only Lonely" and "Sinners & Saints."

The Mavericks released their 13th studio album, "Moon & Stars," in 2024. Between that and their debut, the band received a Grammy, two Country Music Association awards and three Academy of Country Music Awards.

Raul has a BMI award for songwriting, for "All You Ever Do Is Bring Me Down," and was nominated for several solo Grammys, including one for his album "Lucky One" and another for his work with the Latin supergroup "Los Super Seven."

He is survived by his wife of 34 years, Betty; sons Dino, Victor, and Max, mother Norma, sister Carol, and Mavericks bandmates Paul Deakin, Eddie Perez, and Jerry Dale McFadden.



In this file photo, Raul Malo of The Mavericks performs at the Americana Honors & Awards in Nashville, Tenn. (AP)

Film



This image released by The Forge shows Imogen Poots in a scene from 'The Chronology of Water.' (AP)

'We didn't want to let the other one down'

Poots, Stewart ignite in 'The Chronology of Water'

NEW YORK, Dec 10, (AP): Imogen Poots has been thinking about a Sam Shepard quote: "People here have become the people they're pretending to be."

Those 10 words, from a poem in his "Motel Chronicles" collection, are kind of about her character in "Hedda," the quietly courageous Thea. But they're also kind of about everything. After 20 years of acting in movies, television and on the stage, Poots is having a clarifying moment. And Shepard's words somehow get to the heart of it all: the disorienting paradox of attempting to work as an artist in a big industry like Hollywood and preserving your soul in the process.

"I was always clear about what I wanted to do professionally, if only I could get there, in independent cinema and theater," Poots told The Associated Press in a recent interview. "But only in the last two years, something's clicked."

The 36-year-old English actor has always managed to elegantly navigate her way through the distracting noise of franchises and fame and find the types of interesting filmmakers, stories and projects she'd always dreamed of, working with the likes of Peter Bogdanovich, Terrence Malick, Philip Seymour Hoffman and Imelda Staunton along the way.

But this year has been particularly special with three films that she's enormously proud to be part of: sharing the screen with the great Nina Hoss in Nia DaCosta's fiery "Hedda" (streaming on Prime Video), delving into the throes of an affair, with Brett Goldstein, in the romantic drama "All of

You" (streaming on Apple TV) and giving herself over to what may just be remembered as a defining performance in Kristen Stewart's directorial debut, "The Chronology of Water" (in theaters in Los Angeles and New York, nationwide on Jan. 9).

"You can make these films that simply don't find their home, or don't find the right home. And that can be quite devastating," Poots said. "I feel really lucky that each of these projects found the place that understood what they had in their hands."

While all three films had independent spirits, it's "The Chronology of Water" that was the biggest unknown - a daring and provocative adaptation of Lidia Yuknavitch's memoir about escaping an abusive home, dashed dreams of competitive swimming and losing herself in sex, drugs and alcohol before finding her voice through writing.

"This person's life is so rich with inconsistencies and successes and sabotage. She's kind of like the weather," Poots said. "It's a very present film, despite the fact it's about memory and reframing that. It really is about being completely present, sometimes too present, like egregiously present in proximity to someone's life and someone's body."

The intensity of it required total trust in Stewart, an artist she'd only admired from a few degrees away until they decided to dive into the deep end together. Work didn't stop at wrap, she said. It was always spilling out over texts and calls and videos. And it all just felt right, a creative collaboration like she'd never experienced before.

"The two of us only know how to do it this way, which is to completely hurl yourself into it," Poots said. "The stakes were so high for one another. We didn't want to let the other one down."

Someone said something recently to Stewart that she found very illuminating: They never bring the baggage of knowing that Poots has been in other movies when watching her in something. It's like they're always meeting her anew.

"It's because she's not like an 'actress,'" Stewart said. "She's like giving you her life, and it's full and it's so generous ... you never really know where it's going to go because she's, she's not planning it. She's genuinely just falling."

If there had been any hesitation, Stewart said, there's no way it would have worked. On screen, Poots just feels alive. And that's exactly what Stewart needed: a person who knows how to live life, unselfishly.

Poots finds it a little embarrassing, even pointless, to talk about the craft of acting. She winces when she hears words like "brave" tossed around about her performance. Is it, she wonders?

"It's my body, it's my voice. That does feel very exposing," Poots said. "But at the same time, what are you going to do? Like, you have this one life. And one day, if I make it that far, I'll be an old woman and I'll be like, 'It's good that you did something that mattered to you.'"

At the film's world premiere at Cannes earlier this year, both Stewart and Poots sat there shaking - vibrating for one another, wanting the other to soar.

Families taking back power from big tech companies

Social media ban for children under 16 starts in Australia

MELBOURNE, Australia, Dec 10, (AP): Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese welcomed a world-first social media ban for children younger than 16 that took effect Wednesday as families taking back power from tech giants but warned the implementation would be difficult.

Many children posted farewell messages, while parents reported distraught children discovering they'd been shut out of platforms as the landmark law took effect. Some young children reported fooling the platforms' age estimation technology by drawing on facial hair. Parents and older siblings are also expected to help some children circumvent the restrictions.

"This is the day when Australian families are taking back power from these big tech companies and they're asserting the right of kids to be kids and for parents to have greater peace of mind," Albanese told the Australian Broadcasting Corp.

"This reform will change lives. For Australian kids ... allowing them to just have their childhood. For Australian parents, enabling them to have greater peace of mind. But also for the global community, who are looking at Australia and



Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese reacts as he cooks on a barbecue with Minister for Communications Anika Wells, left, at an event to mark the beginning of the social media ban for children under 16 years of age, at Kirribilli House in Sydney, Australia. (AP)

saying: well, if Australia can do it, why can't we?" Albanese later told a gathering of reform supporters at his official Sydney residence, including parents who blame social media for a child's suicide.

Facebook, Instagram, Kick, Reddit, Snapchat, Threads, TikTok, X, YouTube and Twitch face fines of up to 49.5 million Australian dollars (\$32.9 million) from Wednesday if they fail to take reasonable steps to remove the accounts of Australian children younger than 16.

The ban will be enforced by Australia's eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant. She said the platforms already had the technology and personal data about their users to enforce the age restriction with precision.

She would send the 10 targeted platforms on Thursday notices demanding information on how the age restriction was being implemented and how many accounts had been closed.

"We will provide information to the public before Christmas on how these age restrictions are being implemented and whether preliminarily we see them working," Inman Grant said.



Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Antiquities and Museums at the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), Mohammad bin Reda.



The nomination was led by the State of Qatar with the participation of Kuwait, other Gulf Cooperation Council countries.



KUNA photos
Participants of the 20th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage pose for a group photo.

UNESCO inscribes 'Bisht' as joint Arab intangible cultural heritage

Kuwait submits 'Diwaniya' file for UNESCO intangible heritage listing

NEW DELHI, Dec 10, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait has submitted the "Diwaniya" file - as an individual nomination - for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The submission was presented during the 20th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage - held in New Delhi between December 8 and 13.

Kuwait's delegation was headed by Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Antiquities and Museums at the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), Mohammad bin Reda, who participated in the committee sessions and meetings.

In his speech, he described the day as "an exceptional milestone in Kuwait's cultural journey," noting that this is the first individual nomination submitted by Kuwait to the international committee.

He added that the Diwaniya - a deep-rooted social institution in Kuwaiti society - represents a genuine cultural social space of hospitality, and serves as a platform for dialogue among community members.

He affirmed that the nomination reflects Kuwait's deep commitment to preserving its cultural heritage, safeguarding its national identity, and ensuring its transmission to future generations.

He also expressed the State of Kuwait's pride in choosing Kuwait City as the capital of Arab culture and media for the year 2025, explaining that this selection reflects Kuwait's deep-rooted cultural heritage, highlighting Kuwaiti identity.

Also expressing congratulations was former head of the intangible heritage files team at NCCAL, Sheikha Farah Ali Al Sabah, who noted that work on the file began soon after Kuwait joined the 2003 UNESCO Convention and continued despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Kuwaiti delegation also included Al-Anoud Al-Khamis and Fajr Al-Haddad from NCCAL's Antiquities and Museums Department, and Maseera Al-Enzi representing the Sadu House, who participated in committee discussions and activities.

The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on Wednesday inscribed "Bisht: Skills and Practices" as a joint Arab element on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The nomination was led by the State of Qatar with the participation of Kuwait, other Gulf Cooperation Council countries, Jordan, Iraq, and Syria.

The announcement was made during the 20th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, held in New Delhi from December 8 to 13.

Kuwait's delegation was headed by Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Antiquities and Museums at the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), Mohammad bin Reda, who participated in the committee sessions and meetings. The inscription of the bisht reflects Arab cooperation in preparing the nomination and highlights the shared cultural heritage of the participating countries, as well as their commitment to safeguarding it for future generations.

The bisht is traditionally worn during national, official, and social occasions, and showcases precise hand-sewing and traditional embroidery passed down through generations.

Kuwait has previously inscribed six cultural elements on UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage: henna (2024), date palms (2022), the Sadu educational program (2022), Arabic calligraphy (2021), and traditional Sadu weaving (2020).

Through these inscriptions, Kuwait affirms its commitment to its cultural strategy, promoting national identity, safeguarding intangible heritage, supporting international cooperation, sharing expertise, and highlighting its cultural role globally. The Kuwaiti delegation also included Al-Anoud Al-Khamis and Fajr Al-Haddad from NCCAL's Antiquities and Museums Department, and Maseera Al-Enzi representing the Sadu House, who participated in committee discussions and activities.

Warner Bros takeover battle

Tencent withdrew to avoid CFIUS scrutiny: Paramount

BANGKOK, Dec 10, (AP): Paramount Skydance says the Chinese gaming and social media giant Tencent Holdings withdrew from its bid to buy Warner Bros Discovery to avert a possible national security review.

Paramount's revised filing with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission of its takeover bid said the Chinese company had dropped its \$1 billion financing commitment out of concern, since it would be a "non-U.S. equity financing source," that its bid might be subject to a review by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, known as CFIUS. That was even though approval by CFIUS or by the Federal Communications Commission was not a condition of the bid.

The SEC filing, dated Monday, said that foreign sovereign wealth funds of Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi and Qatar, which are providing \$24 billion for Paramount's bid, had agreed to give up a right to participate in Warner Bros' management to avoid the additional scrutiny.

On Monday, Paramount launched a hostile \$77.9 billion takeover offer for Warner Bros. Discovery, competing with rival bidder Netflix to buy the company behind HBO, CNN and a famed movie studio.

Big deals that involve foreign companies are sometimes subject to national security reviews by CFIUS, a U.S. government group chaired by the Treasury Secretary that studies mergers for national-security reasons. It has the power to force companies to change ownership structures or divest completely from the U.S.

Under former President Joe Biden as well as President Donald Trump, the Treasury Department has sought to strengthen its powers as national security concerns related to foreign investment have increased.

Tencent is among dozens of Chinese companies that the U.S. Defense Department has included in a list of companies it said have ties to China's military. Tencent, whose shares are listed in Hong Kong, denies that.

Based in the southern technology and financial hub of Shenzhen, Tencent owns the League of Legends developer Riot Games and has ties with other big U.S. entertainment brands. It also has a streaming deal with the National Basketball Association.

It is the world's largest equity investor in online games and a major entertainment and social media company, operating the WeChat messaging and payments service in popular China and with Chinese emigrants abroad. Tencent has a market capitalization of over \$700 billion, according to Hong Kong's stock exchange.

There was no immediate comment from Tencent.

Met Gala



Beyoncé, left, accepts the Innovator Award as presenter Stevie Wonder (partially seen) looks on during the iHeartRadio Music Awards in Los Angeles. (AP)

Fashion icons unite

Beyoncé, Venus, Kidman and Wintour to co-chair next Met Gala

NEW YORK, Dec 10, (AP): The new Met Gala co-chairs have been announced, and it's a high-powered quartet: Beyoncé, Venus Williams and Nicole Kidman will join Vogue's Anna Wintour in hosting the star-packed event next May.

Williams, who has never hosted before, takes the role seven years after her younger sister and fellow tennis champion, Serena, was co-chair. Beyoncé was honorary chair in 2013, and Kidman co-chaired in 2003 and 2005. Wintour, of course, oversees the annual event, a fundraiser that last year brought a record \$31 million to the coffers of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute.

The museum on Wednesday also announced a gala host committee, chaired by designer Anthony Vaccarello and filmmaker Zoë Kravitz, and including musicians Sabrina Carpenter, Doja Cat, LISA, Sam Smith and Yseult; dancer Misty Copeland; actors Teyana Taylor, Elizabeth Debicki, Gwendoline Christie and Lena Dunham; basketball player A'ja Wilson; models Alex Consani, Paloma Elsesser and Lauren Wasser; Vogue editor Chloe Malle; and artist Anna Weyant.

Yet to be announced: the dress code for the May 4 gala. But it will dovetail with the theme of "Costume Art," announced last month as the institute's next spring exhibit.

The exhibit aims to celebrate "the



This combination of photos shows Nicole Kidman, left, and Venus Williams. (AP)

dressed body" as it appears in art through the centuries. It will do that by pairing garments with objects from across the museum to show how fashion has long been intertwined with different art forms.

"It's a show that can really live in fascinating ways at the museum and can pull

from all different areas of our collection - paintings, sculpture, drawings," the museum's CEO and director, Max Hollein, said in an interview last month.

The show, overseen as always by the Costume Institute's curator in charge, Andrew Bolton, will be organized the-

matically by different body types. It will include the "Naked Body" and the "Classical Body," for example, but also less traditional themes like the "Pregnant Body" and the "Aging Body."

The new exhibit will also have a splashy new home. "Costume Art" will inaugurate new gallery space occupying some 12,000 square feet (1,115 square meters), right off the museum's Great Hall - giving fashion a prominent space in the museum and also helping to control congestion at the heavily attended exhibits.

The new Conde M. Nast galleries - created from what was formerly the museum's retail store - will house not only all spring Costume Institute exhibits, but other shows from different parts of the museum.

Bolton has said the gallery space "will mark a pivotal moment for the department, one that acknowledges the critical role fashion plays not only within art history but also within contemporary culture."

Venus Williams returned to competition in July at age 45 after nearly 1 1/2 years away from the tour, though she had never retired. She became the oldest player to play singles at the U.S. Open since 1981. Serena Williams, meanwhile, recently threw cold water on the idea that she might be preparing to return to tennis.

"Costume Art" opens to the public May 10, 2026, and runs until Jan. 10, 2027.

Variety

LONDON: Sophie Kinsella, the author of "Confessions of a Shopaholic" and a series of millions-selling rom-com sequels, died Monday, her family said. She was 55 and had been diagnosed with brain cancer.

The family said in a statement on Kinsella's Instagram account: "We are heartbroken to announce the passing this morning of our beloved Sophie (aka Mad-dy, aka Mummy). She died peacefully, with her final days filled with her true loves: family and music and warmth and Christmas and joy."

"We can't imagine what life will be like without her radiance and love of life," Kinsella, who also published under her real name, Madeleine Wickham, announced in April 2024 that she had been diagnosed in late 2022 with glioblastoma, an aggressive form of brain cancer. (AP)

PARIS: Thieves who stole more than \$100 million in crown jewels from the Louvre in October escaped with barely 30 seconds to spare, a French Senate inquiry said Wednesday, as lawmakers detailed a cascade of security failures that allowed the gang to slip away in broad daylight.

The parliamentary probe, ordered after the embarrassing Oct. 19 heist, found that only one of two cameras covering the break-in point was functioning and that security staff lacked enough screens to monitor footage in real time. When the alarm finally sounded, police were initially dispatched to the wrong location, investigators told senators. (AP)

NEW YORK: Diana Ross has been named the headliner on "Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve."

The pop icon will perform a medley of hits on New Year's Eve in New York City including "I'm Coming Out" and "Upside Down," anchoring a telecast with 39 artists appearing across New York, Las Vegas, Chicago, Puerto Rico and more.

"Together we begin a new year. Let's embrace a new beginning, new opportunities, new joy - a celebration of love, where we all come together as we begin 2026," Ross said in a statement.

Other performers include Mariah Carey, Post Malone, Chappell Roan, Demi Lovato and Maren Morris, as well as 50 Cent, Charlie Puth, OneRepublic and Pitbull. (AP)

Dr. Zubaid says new laboratory test can identify patients who may develop heart failure

4,000 deaths occur annually in Kuwait due to cardiovascular diseases: Dr. Al-Dhahi

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Dr. Mohamed Zubaid, Consultant Cardiologist and Vice President of the Kuwait Heart Association, affirmed that heart failure is a widespread condition, noting that it requires urgent medical attention and often necessitates repeated hospital visits.

Zubaid stated that the conference focuses on utilizing specific diagnostic tools that help physicians assess the likelihood of heart failure among patients with diabetes. He explained that the goal of treatment is early detection to prevent diabetic patients from developing heart failure.

He added that early detection is achieved through a simple blood test that measures a specific protein in the bloodstream. This laboratory test is easy and straightforward, and when its level is elevated, it indicates pressure on the heart and a possible risk of heart failure—or that the patient may already be affected without knowing it.

Zubaid noted: "Most of the time, we treat diseases that have already occurred, and patients come to us already suffering from the condition. At the same time, we are always concerned with early screening, and we pay great attention to modern technologies that help detect disease before it develops. This test is important because it allows us to identify the condition early and treat diabetic patients before their condition worsens. This is a key aspect of prevention and early detection."

He continued, explaining that early screening alerts the treating physician and diabetic patient to the possibility of heart failure, prompting the physician to begin a series of steps to determine the stage of the disease—such as performing an echocardiogram or ECG—and then initiating appropriate treatment. He clarified that heart failure is of two types: one where the heart muscle becomes weak, causing fluid buildup in the body and lungs; and another where the heart muscle is not weak but its physiological movement is impaired, leading to increased pressure inside the heart muscle and eventually fluid accumulation in the body and lungs.



Photos from the event

For his part, Dr. Waleed Al-Dhahi, Consultant Endocrinologist and President of the Kuwait Diabetes Association, stated: "At today's conference, we discussed the strong link between cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Kuwait has among the highest global rates of diabetes—reaching 25%—in addition to rising rates of heart disease."

Al-Dhahi added in a press statement

during the conference organized by Roche Diagnostics Kuwait "Unmasking Heart Failure" in partnership with the Kuwait Heart Foundation.

He said that the discussions focused on heart failure associated with diabetes and how to manage and prevent it—particularly within primary care settings.

Al-Dhahi emphasized that several



risk factors contribute to heart failure, including diabetes, obesity, smoking, aging, and hypertension. He noted that multiple methods exist to detect heart muscle dysfunction, including understanding risk factors and conducting simple laboratory tests that can detect the condition before it occurs—helping reduce the likelihood of heart failure that might ultimately lead to the

need for a heart transplant.

He pointed out that the rate of heart disease is 80 cases per 100,000 people, with around 4,000 deaths annually in Kuwait due to cardiovascular disease. He added that heart muscle disease is ten times more common among diabetic patients compared to others, smoking prevalence is 20%, and hypertension affects approximately 43% of the

population.

In the same context, Dr. Hessa Al-Ansari, Senior Family Medicine Specialist and Chair of the Non-Communicable Diseases Committee in Primary Healthcare Centers, spoke about early screening programs in primary care. She highlighted the integration of heart failure screening into clinical practice for diabetic patients, noting that this test is now available and being fully adopted in primary care across Kuwait. This allows for early diagnosis and timely intervention before complications develop, representing a major step toward improving care quality and preventing advanced cardiac complications.

Meanwhile, Dr. Bader Al-Ayyad, Head of Advanced Heart Failure and Heart Transplant Unit at Adan Hospital, stated that this forum marks an important step toward enhancing the quality of heart failure care in Kuwait, by bringing together experts from various specialties to exchange knowledge and update evidence-based practices. He emphasized that such collaboration fosters a comprehensive national healthcare system that prioritizes patient safety, early diagnosis, advanced treatment, and multidisciplinary support.

Dr. Al-Ayyad stressed that heart failure treatments have advanced significantly in recent years, resulting in improved patient outcomes and quality of life. He noted that with modern therapies and close follow-up, healthcare providers can now achieve much better results in reducing complications and enhancing patient well-being.

Dr. Mohammed Farouq, Consultant Cardiologist at Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital, presented the experience of implementing the STRONG-HF protocol at the hospital—an initiative considered pioneering at the national level. This global study aims to improve patient outcomes after hospital discharge through intensive follow-up and medication adjustment. He emphasized that the experience represents a national success story in applying international standards within Kuwait's healthcare system.

Amiri Hospital hosts French medical team to train 130 nurses on Fistula dialysis technique

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Amiri Hospital hosted a French team from the University of Bordeaux, led by Dr. Olivier Joan Bayo and Nurse Anne-Julie Gibault, aiming to enhance the efficiency of the hospital's intensive care unit, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an official statement, the Ministry of Health explained that a training program was conducted for over 130 nurses to teach them the technique of dialysis using a Fistula. The program was organized under the auspices of the Anesthesia,

Intensive Care, and Pain Management Department, in collaboration with the Nursing Services Department. It included scientific lectures and hands-on workshops conducted by the visiting team.

The workshops covered the mechanisms for using the technique, safety standards, and methods for closely monitoring acute kidney failure cases with the aim to elevate healthcare quality and improve treatment outcomes for patients in the intensive care unit.

FDA opens safety review of injectable RSV drugs approved for babies and toddlers

WASHINGTON, Dec 10, (AP): Food and Drug Administration officials have opened a safety review of two injectable drugs used to protect babies and toddlers from RSV, the respiratory virus that sends thousands of American children to the hospital each year. The long-acting drugs from Merck and Sanofi are not vaccines, but the government review comes as health officials and advisers under Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. roll back recommendations on routine childhood vaccinations.

A spokesman for Kennedy described the inquiry as a routine safety evaluation and said the FDA "will update product labeling if warranted by the totality of the evidence." The two drugmakers said in separate statements that they haven't seen any new safety signals with their medications, which were approved in recent years for infants and young children facing RSV.

The drugs are essentially laboratory-made versions of natural antibodies that help the immune system fight off RSV. The FDA has approved vaccines for older patients and pregnant women but not babies or children, making the injections a first-line treatment for youngsters against the seasonal virus.

A spokesperson for Merck, maker of Enflonisa, said company representatives met with the FDA last week. "We expect questions from the FDA, and we want them to ask," the company said. "We believe deeply in the importance of transparency and we value the FDA's rigorous review of our clinical data of all of our products."

Merck's injection is approved to protect babies before or during their first RSV season, which typically lasts five months. A spokesperson for Sanofi said it regularly submits any potential safety concerns to the FDA for review, but hasn't seen any new signals with its drug across more than 50 studies.

"At this time, no safety issue has been identified from clinical studies of (Beyfortus) or from post-marketing experience with more than 6 million babies immunized worldwide," the company said in a statement. An infection with



The US Food and Drug Administration building is seen behind FDA logos at a bus stop on the agency's campus in Silver Spring, Md on Aug 2, 2018. (AP)

RSV is a coldlike nuisance for most healthy people, but it can be life-threatening for the very young and the elderly.

In 2023, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advisers recommended the antibody shots for infants born just before or during the RSV season - if the birth mother wasn't vaccinated late in pregnancy. The panel also recommended a dose for some 8- to 19-month-olds at higher risk of a serious illness from RSV.

Since taking over the Department of Health and Human Services, Kennedy replaced every member of the CDC committee, which also makes vaccine recommendations.

Last week, the panel urged an end to routine newborn vaccination against hepatitis B, a virus that can cause liver failure or liver cancer. The decision triggered swift backlash from numerous medical and scientific professional societies.

Separately, officials at the FDA have been scrutinizing the safety of vaccines, particularly COVID-19 shots, and floated plans for a wholesale overhaul of the agency's decades-old approach to approving and reviewing vaccines.

Study establishes molecular link between tumor metabolism and drug engagement in cancer cells

MADISON, Wisconsin, Dec 10, (BUSINESS WIRE): A new study published in *reveals technological advances that accelerate breakthroughs in precision medicine. Conducted as a collaboration between Promega, the Center for Advanced Study of Drug Action at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, and the Centre for Medicines Discovery at the University of Oxford, the work leverages bioluminescent NanoBRET® Target Engagement (TE) technology developed by Promega to characterize inhibitors that selectively target cancer cells without harming noncancerous cells. Their results demonstrate a connection between drug efficacy and tumor metabolic state, offering a mechanistic bridge between cancer metabolism and precision oncology.*

"The methods in this study enable us to characterize inhibitors that bind much more tightly in tumor cells with specific mutations," says **Ani Michaud**, Sr Research Scientist at Promega and co-first author of the

paper. "To our knowledge, this is the first time anyone has characterized this type of uncompetitive inhibitor mechanism directly in live cells."

The published study focuses on a gene-regulating protein called PRMT5, which has long been considered a top target for drug discovery. In normal cells, PRMT5 interacts with a molecule called SAM. However, in the tumor cells of approximately 10-15% of cancers, a deletion of the MTAP gene leads to PRMT5 interacting with the molecule MTA instead, reducing its function. This difference creates a key vulnerability for targeting cancer cells with a mutation to MTAP while leaving normal cells unaffected.

The University of Oxford team de-

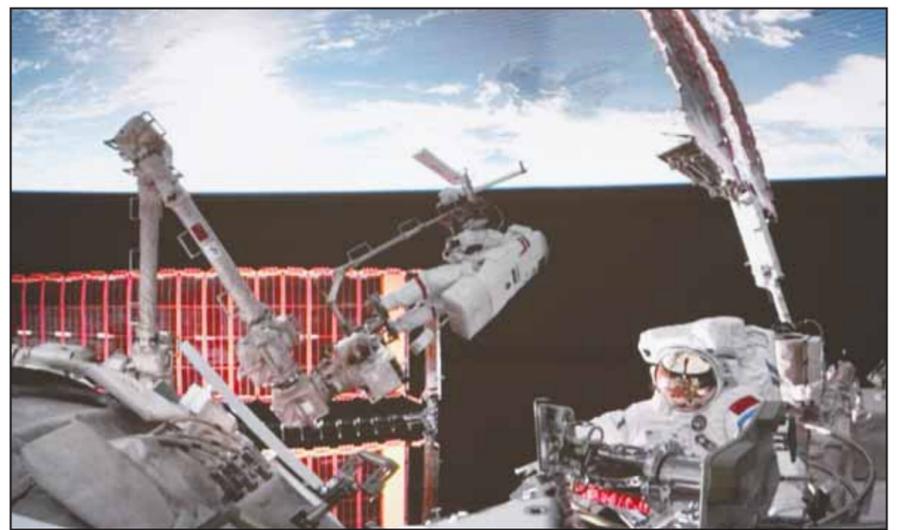
signed and developed CBH-002, a cell-permeable BRET probe that binds to a genetically encoded PRMT5-NanoLuc biosensor to report drug target engagement in live cells.

Dr Elisabeth Mira Rothweiler, Post-doctoral Researcher, Centre for Medicines Discovery, University of Oxford and co-first author, says: "CBH-002 could measure various PRMT5 inhibitor types in live cells, prompting us to test its sensitivity to the cofactor SAM. When we discovered the probe's ability to sense metabolite levels, it established its utility as a metabolic biosensor. Through collaboration with Promega, we demonstrated how MTA influences drug selectivity, revealing why certain inhibitors are so effective in MTAP-deleted cancers."

Dr Rothweiler's research further enables a strategy for developing molecules that exploit the metabolic vulnerabilities specific to MTAP-deleted cancers, potentially offering highly targeted treatments with minimal effects on healthy tissue.



Michaud



This screen image captured at Beijing Aerospace Control Center on Dec 9 shows Shenzhou-21 astronauts Zhang Lu and Wu Fei (right) performing extravehicular activities outside China's orbiting space station. (Xinhua)

Shenzhou-21 astronauts complete first series of extravehicular activities

BEIJING, Dec 10, (Xinhua): The Shenzhou-21 crew aboard China's orbiting space station completed their mission's first series of extravehicular activities on Tuesday, according to the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA).

The astronaut trio -- Zhang Lu, Wu Fei and Zhang Hongzhang -- worked for approximately eight hours and completed their tasks at 6:45 p.m. (Beijing Time), assisted by the space station's robotic arm and a team on Earth. Wu Fei is the youngest Chinese astronaut to carry out an extravehicular mission to date.

Zhang Lu and Wu Fei, tasked with conducting spacewalk

operations, completed the inspection and photography of the Shenzhou-20 return capsule's viewport window, the installation of a debris capture device for the space station, and the replacement of the multilayer cover on the thermal control adapter, according to the CMSA.

During the Shenzhou-21 crewed mission, planned extravehicular activities involving crew and applied payloads will also be conducted, as will scientific experiments and technical tests.

Depending on the situation determined, the crew may also undertake protective operations on the damaged window of the Shenzhou-20 spacecraft, according to the CMSA.

Southeast Asia embraces offshore wind power as Trump bashes renewable energy

HANOI, Vietnam, Dec 10, (AP): Southeast Asia is a bright spot for the embattled offshore wind industry as it reels from U.S. President Donald Trump's push against renewable energy.

The White House's policy pivot has thrown billions of dollars' worth of US offshore wind projects into turmoil. Industry interest and investment are looking elsewhere, and developing regions with ample wind resources, like Southeast Asia, have the most to gain from this likely reshuffling, analysts say.

Wind energy is essential to efforts to curb climate change, scientists say, as global temperatures drift perilously higher. Offshore wind, which uses turbines installed in the sea, is set to grow rapidly because it can harness stronger, steadier ocean winds to generate clean electricity, the International Energy Agency says.

Southeast Asia, with its archipelago nations, long coastlines and consistently windy seas, is emerging as one of the world's most promising regions for this technology. As energy demand continues to rise, the Philippines and Vietnam are building policy momentum that proponents hope will spur interest across the region.

Those moves could turn Southeast Asia into a model for other developing nations seeking to use wind energy as an alternative to fossil fuels, said Rebecca Williams, with the Global Wind Energy Council.

"Asia and Southeast Asia are a be-



Participants wear wind turbine headgear to raise peoples awareness on renewable energy, fix their costumes during the Global Day of Action Against Climate Change on Dec 8, 2007 in suburban Quezon City, north of Manila, Philippines. (AP)

con of hope for the industry," she said. Trump has actively sought to kill the U.S. offshore wind industry, one of his presidential campaign promises.

He opposes using renewable energy, particularly offshore wind, and prioritizes burning fossil fuels for electricity, contending that climate change is a hoax.

The White House has halted construction on major offshore wind farms, revoked and paused permits,

canceled plans to use large areas of federal waters for wind energy and cut \$679 million in federal funding for a dozen projects — a complete reversal from former President Joe Biden's Administration.

Trump's anti-renewable energy stance has shaken U.S. confidence in offshore wind projects. That has kickstarted an industry-wide search for other places to invest.

SPORTS

South Africa dismissed for 74 in lowest T20 total as India wins series opener by 101 runs



India's Tilak Varma plays a shot during the first T20 International cricket match between India and South Africa in Cuttack, India. (AP)

Pandya smashes unbeaten 59

CUTTACK, India, Dec 10, (AP): South Africa was all out for its lowest-ever total in Twenty20 cricket, scoring only 74 as India won the series opener by 101 runs.

Hardik Pandya smashed an unbeaten 59 off 28 balls and India scored 175-6 after losing the toss.

South Africa never got its chase off the ground and collapsed from 45-3 to 74 all out in 12.3 overs with India's six bowlers getting at least a wicket each, in-

cluding Pandya (1-16).

South Africa's previous lowest T20 total of 87 was also against India, in 2022.

India had lost openers Abhishek Sharma (17) and Shubman Gill (4) cheaply before Pandya helped to revive India from 78-4 in the 12th over. The allrounder hit four sixes and six fours.

Left-arm spinner Axar Patel returned figures of 2-7 in two overs, including an early breakthrough when he bowled South Africa captain Aiden Markram for 14. Dewald Brevis top scored for the visitors with a 14-ball 22.

Arshdeep Singh (2-14), Varun Chakravarthy (2-19) and pacer Jasprit Bumrah (2-17) were among India's wicket-takers with Bumrah reaching 100 wickets in the format.

Lungi Ngidi took 3-31 in four overs for South Africa. The second T20 is at New Chandigarh on Thursday. The five-match series is in preparation for the T20 World Cup in India in February. India is the defending champion after beating South Africa in a gripping final in 2024.

India won the ODI series against South Africa 2-1 after losing the test series 2-0.

Arsenal and Juve win

Real Madrid beats Wolfsburg in Women's Champions League

LONDON, Dec 10, (AP): Linda Caicedo raced clear from halfway to score the goal that clinched Real Madrid a 2-0 win over Wolfsburg in the Women's Champions League, while there were also victories for defending champion Arsenal and Juventus.

Paris Saint-Germain stayed winless after five rounds after a 0-0 draw with OH Leuven, however, and cannot now progress to the knockout stage with one match remaining.

The 20-year-old Caicedo, regarded as one of the top younger players in the women's game, recently signed a long-term deal with Madrid and showcased her talents with the second goal against Wolfsburg.

Played through by Caroline Weir, the Colombia striker outpaced the last defender after setting off inside her own half, rounded the goalkeeper, and slotted home a finish in the 67th minute. That added to the opening goal in the 19th by Maria Méndez for Madrid, which finished the match with nine players.

Maëlle Lakrar collected a second yellow card in first-half stoppage time, while Iris Santiago received a straight red in second-half stoppage time.

Madrid moved above Wolfsburg and into third place - one of the four automatic qualifying places - with the win and is assured of at least a spot in the playoffs.

So is Arsenal after a 1-0 home win over Twente, secured thanks to Beth Mead's deflected 10th-minute strike.

Juventus, meanwhile, thrashed St. Pölten 5-0 and climbed to second place, on the same points as Madrid and first-place Barcelona, which plays Benfica on Wednesday in its game in hand.

Cristiana Girelli scored two of Juve's goals - one of which was from the penalty spot.

PSG, a two-time runner-up and a semifinalist as recently as two seasons ago, will not even make it to the playoffs.

The home draw with Leuven was PSG's first point of the campaign and the French club cannot now make the top 12.



Arsenal's Lotte Wubben-Moy, left, and FC Twente's Jaimy Ravensbergen in action during the Women's Champions League soccer match between Arsenal and FC Twente in London. (AP)

'No, I have not changed my mind'

NASCAR chairman refuses to budge on team charters

CHARLOTTE, N.C., Dec 10, (AP): NASCAR Chairman Jim France testified Tuesday in Michael Jordan's federal antitrust lawsuit against his family that he still has not changed his mind on granting teams permanent charters, and evidence showed he entered negotiations on a new revenue-sharing agreement determined to thwart teams' efforts for a better deal from the stock car series.

France was the final witness called by attorneys for Jordan's 23XI Racing and Front Row Motorsports on the seventh day of the trial. Those race teams have accused NASCAR of being a monopolistic bully that engages in anticompetitive business practices.

Also called Tuesday was Hall of Fame team owner Richard Childress, who testified that he only signed the 2025 revenue-sharing agreement because refusing to do so would have put Richard Childress Racing out of business.

NASCAR Commissioner Steve Phelps testified to the frustrating two-plus years of negotiations between the top motorsports series in the United States and its race teams. The plaintiffs introduced several documents detailing communication between NASCAR executives that showed France was stubbornly opposed to granting teams permanent charters throughout the process.

The charter system is equivalent to the franchise model used in other sports. In NASCAR, a charter guarantees cars a spot in the 40-car field each week, as well as specified financial terms.

Asked by plaintiffs' attorney Jeffrey Kessler if he has changed his stance on making charters permanent, France said, "No, I have not."

Kessler later introduced a summary of notes from the first meeting of NASCAR executives on how they would approach negotiations with the teams over the new agreements. Steve O'Donnell, now the president of NASCAR, wrote in those notes, "Jim's overarching comments - we are in a competition. We are going to win."

France's position never changed, even though - as evidence showed - he received pleas from Hall of Fame team owners Joe Gibbs, Rick Hendrick, Jack Roush and Roger Penske. All four are close personal friends, France said on the stand Tuesday.

France became chairman of the series his father founded in 1948 following the 2019 resignation of his nephew, Brian. NASCAR has always been privately owned by the Florida-based family, and Brian France negotiated the initial charter system that began in 2016 as a response to teams complaining they were bleeding money at an unsustainable rate.

Jim France, who is 81, was soft-spoken on the stand and needed many questions repeated, and he said on numerous topics that he was either unable to recall, did not remember or was not sure - even in response to evidence introduced that the France Family Trust received \$400 million in distributions from 2021 through 2024 and that NASCAR is valued at \$5 billion.

He wasn't sure of the title his niece, Lesa France Kennedy, holds with NASCAR, or the ownership percentages between the two. Evidence showed Jim France owns 54% of NASCAR, while France Kennedy, the vice chair, owns 36%. France also testified he believes he is paid in "the \$3.5 million range" as chairman.

Childress spoke to the pressure he felt to sign the charter agreement. "I would not have signed those charters if I was financially able to do what I do," the six-time championship winning owner testified. "We are a blue-collar operation."

Childress has participated in NASCAR for 60 years and has a long-time personal relationship with the Frances. He testified that he pleaded with Jim France for the charters to be made permanent instead of renewable, and France re-



In this file photo, CEO and Chairman of NASCAR Jim France, right, along with the Executive Vice President of NASCAR Lesa Kennedy announce the Landmark Award to Edsel Ford II at the Hall of Fame induction ceremony in Charlotte. (AP)

frused. Childress testified he supports the charter system because before its implementation race teams "were worth 10 cents on the dollar at most. We didn't have nothing."

He admitted that the charters added value to his team, but said the equity falls short of its financial potential if the charters were permanent. An economist testified that NASCAR owes 23XI and Front Row \$364.7 million in damages, and that NASCAR shorted 36 chartered teams \$1.06 billion from 2021-24.

When Childress' October declaration of his support for charters was introduced, Childress insisted NASCAR attorney Christopher Yates also show the jury language added to the statement in which Childress pushes for the charters to be permanent.

Childress said he added those sentences to the declaration, which had been pre-written for him to sign.

NASCAR commissioner Phelps noted that Jordan's financial advisor would not compromise on key issues in the negotiations. Phelps, who was president of NASCAR during the negotiations, said Jordan right-hand man Curtis Polk was the lead representative for the teams and held firm in their demand for increased revenue, permanent charters, a voice in governance and one-third of any new revenue streams.

The deal finally presented to the teams in September 2024 did not include permanent charters or a voice in governance, but NASCAR gave the teams a firm deadline to accept its final offer or forfeit their charters.

23XI Racing, owned by Jordan, Polk and three-time Daytona 500 winner Denny Hamlin, and Front Row Motorsports, owned by Bob Jenkins, were the only two teams out of 15 organizations that refused to sign. They sued instead.

Phelps, promoted to become NASCAR's first commissioner earlier this year, testified that he worked hard to get the teams the best deal possible. But he said the teams' initial request for \$720 million in guaranteed revenue would have put NASCAR out of business.

At the same time, Polk would not budge, either.

"It was one of the most challenging and longest negotiations I've ever been part of," said Phelps, who admitted he didn't particularly enjoy negotiating with Polk, who was at the time the representative for the "Team Negotiating Council."

'I'm not the best yet, but I'm working to get there'

Oly hopeful cross-country skier tries to put India on the winter sports map

NEW DELHI, Dec 10, (AP): Most of Bhavani Thekkada's competitors grew up on skis. She grew up on a coffee farm - in southern India.

So as a cross-country skier, she's a little behind.

Thekkada has been hitting European tracks in recent weeks trying to keep her Olympic dream alive. She's a longshot to qualify for the Milan Cortina Winter Games, but she's reaching some other goals along the way.

"I will be really grateful and happy if even one person out there in India is inspired by my journey and wants to do skiing, which already people are - I've been getting a lot of messages," the 30-year-old Thekkada told The Associated Press in an interview.

Thekkada is chronicling her journey on social media and making headlines back home. Her bronze medal in a 5-kilometer race in Chile in September, even though just a handful of athletes competed, was hailed as India's first international medal in women's cross-country skiing.

Last month's 10-kilometer World Cup race in Finland was a reality check. In an elite field, Thekkada finished last among 81 athletes, more than 16 minutes behind the winner, Frida Karlsson of Sweden. U.S. star Jessie Diggins finished fifth.

"The top 80 girls who were competing with me had a whole team with them. They had coaches, they had wax technicians, they had managers," said Thekkada, who has won several national titles in India. "I was standing there with a few years of skiing (experience)... a couple of hours of training with some coaches."

Being an Olympic qualification season, eligibility is flexible enough that Thekkada could get on the start line. The goal is not beating opponents - rather it's closing the time gap to improve her score.

"I may not be the best in the world but I'm really trying to be there," she said. "I might be a couple of minutes behind the top athletes, but then I'm also a couple of years behind (in the) training they've had."

Thekkada had a similar result at last weekend's 10-kilometer World Cup race in Trondheim, Norway, which leaves the upcoming event in Davos, Switzerland, as her last chance to unlock an Olympic quota spot for India.

Largely self-funded, Thekkada operates mostly independently, so she was grateful when several national teams lent a hand in Trondheim. The Canadians and Chileans helped with waxing and training, and the Italians transported her equipment, she said.

And during the race, she heard from Diggins. "Jessie was out there cheering the loudest for me during the race. It really meant a lot to me," Thekkada said in an update on Instagram.

Besides media coverage in India, a member of Parliament from her Karnataka region, Tejasvi Surya, wrote on X: "Her feats make her an inspiration for the young generation."

Thekkada has used her growing public profile to nudge Indian leaders. After her podium finish in Chile, she wrote on X: "I hope at least now

the government starts noticing (and) supporting the winter sports athletes," and tagged Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Alpine skier Arif Khan was the only Indian to compete at the 2022 Beijing Games.

Only two Indian women - Shailaja Kumar and Neha Ahuja - have competed at the Winter Games, according to the Olympics' website.

Thekkada didn't see snow until she was 20. She had become interested in mountaineering "after watching some Bollywood movies," she said. As a mountaineering instructor in the Himalayas, she also picked up Alpine skiing.

And then she watched the 2018 Pyeongchang Games, where Marit Björgen become the most-decorated Winter Olympian. The Norway great had given birth a couple of years before.

"Her journey fascinated me," Thekkada said. "I've seen in the Indian community that 'women can't do that. Once you have a baby, once you are 30-plus, you can't do this.' It really motivated me so much."



In this file photo, Bhavani Thekkada Nanjunda, of India, Khadijah Ismail, of Malaysia, and Mariana Cabrita, of Portugal, from left, compete in the cross-country women's 7.5 km Interval Start Classic qualification race at the Nordic World Ski Championships in Trondheim, Norway. (AP)

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION

In compliance with the publication requirement and pursuant to the OCRG Memorandum Circular No. 2013-1, Guidelines in the Implementation of the Administrative Order No. 1 Series of 2012 (IRR on R.A. 10172), a notice is hereby served to the public that JOSE CASANARES MARAVILLAS has filed with this office a petition for correction in the sex from MALE to FEMALE in the birth certificate of YEOJ DAG-UMAN MARAVILLAS, who was born on 28 DECEMBER 2017 at State of Kuwait and whose parents are JOSE CASANARES MARAVILLAS and FERRY RAQUILYN OZARRAGA DAG-UMAN. Any person adversely affected by said petition may file his written opposition with this Office not later than fourteen (14) days from the date of this notice.

Curling has a strong bond with Winter Olympics co-host Cortina

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, Italy, Dec 10, (AP): Curling could not have a more fitting host city for the upcoming Olympics than Cortina d'Ampezzo.

The town in the Dolomites is home to Italy's first curling gold medalist, defending mixed doubles champion Stefania Constantini. And Mayor Gianluca Lorenzi is a former member of Italy's national team - and the son of the sport's founding father in Italy.

"I'm certainly going to have a reserved seat for every day of the competition," Lorenzi said in a recent interview with The Associated Press, inferring that he would rather be at the curling venue than welcoming the vari-

ous heads of state and VIPs expected in Cortina during the games.

Add to that the venue to be used for curling at the Feb. 6-22 Milan Cortina Winter Games will be the wooden arena that hosted the opening and closing ceremonies of the 1956 Olympics in Cortina and was also used for a scene in the James Bond film "For Your Eyes Only," and it's clear that spectators are in for something special.

"In Cortina, everybody (has) tried curling at least once," Constantini said. Constantini's mother, Monica Dalus, is a member of Cortina's city council.

"Whenever Stefi is competing, we message each other to

keep track of her," the mayor said of Dalus.

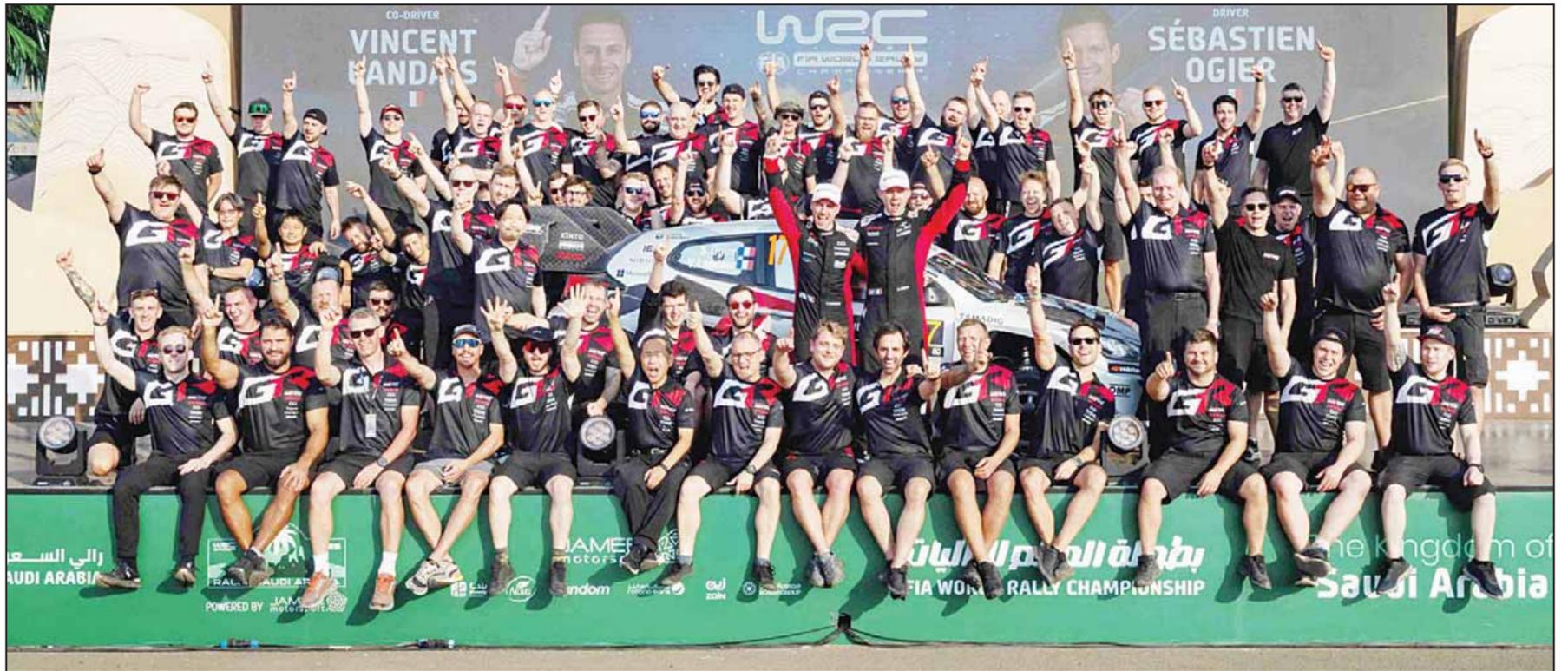
Constantini's status makes her a logical choice to be one of Italy's unprecedented four flag bearers for the part of the opening ceremony that will be held in Cortina.

Only she doesn't see it that way. Because at 26, Constantini is still relatively young for a curler.

"I'm still at the start of my career and I've got many more goals that I want to achieve. There are many athletes who are further along in their careers, who have already won a ton and provided Italy with amazing emotions. So maybe they deserve this great honor," Constantini told the AP.

Jeddah delivers some of the toughest conditions of the season

Ogier clinches record-equaling ninth world title with TOYOTA GAZOO Racing at Rally Saudi Arabia



TOYOTA GAZOO Racing World Rally Team celebrates a thrilling season finale at the first-ever Rally Saudi Arabia.

JEDDAH, Dec 10: TOYOTA GAZOO Racing World Rally Team (TGR-WRT) celebrated a thrilling season finale at the first-ever Rally Saudi Arabia, where Sébastien Ogier and co-driver Vincent Landais secured third place in the No. 17 Toyota GR YARIS Rally1 to clinch the 2025 FIA World Rally Championship. This marks Ogier's ninth world title, equaling the all-time record, and the first co-drivers' championship crown for Landais.

The result continues a dominant era for TGR-WRT: it is the sixth time in seven years that a TGR crew has been crowned world champions, and the fourth time in five years that the team and Toyota have swept all three championships, having already clinched the manufac-

urers' crown in October's Central European Rally. In total, it is the 10th drivers' title achieved at the wheel of a Toyota.

Akio Toyoda, TGR-WRT Chairman, commented: "Wow! He is surely strong! When I watch Seb, that's the thought that comes to mind. Congratulations on the ninth championship, and congratulations to Vincent on his first title as well! Juha, Jari-Matti, and everyone in the team, thank you so much for the hard work this season and bringing the manufacturers' championship. I hope everybody takes a good rest for a while. Merry Christmas!"

Rally Saudi Arabia in Jeddah delivered some of the toughest conditions of the season, combining loose desert sand with rocky mountain stages and high temperatures that



Sébastien Ogier and co-driver Vincent Landais celebrate on the podium.

pushed both drivers and vehicles to the limit. Ogier and Landais maintained a consistent and calculated pace from the outset, avoiding the heavy time losses that affected many competitors across the abrasive surface. Their disciplined strategy paid off on the final day, securing third place overall and the vital championship points needed to decide the title after a season featuring six victories and 10 podiums from 11 starts.

Over the years, Toyota has been participating in many different forms of motorsports, including Formula One, the World Endurance Championship (WEC), and the Nürburgring 24 "Hours endurance race. Toyota's participation in these events was overseen by separate entities within the company until April 2015, when Toyota established TGR, "to con-

solidate all of its motorsports activities under one in-house brand. Representing "Toyota's belief that 'the roads build the people, and the people build the cars,' TGR highlights the role of motorsports as a fundamental pillar of Toyota's commitment to making 'ever-better' cars. Harnessing years of experience gained under the extreme conditions of various motorsports events, TGR aims to forge new technologies and solutions that bring the freedom, adventure, and joy of driving to everyone.

Race Notes:

- No. 17 Toyota GR YARIS Rally1 (Sébastien Ogier and Vincent Landais)
- Position: 3rd
- Time: 3 hours, 22 minutes, and 20.6seconds

Qadsia & Qurain hunt key wins in basketball league

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Qadsia and Qurain are aiming to recover from last-round defeats as the basketball league continues. Today, Qadsia will face Al-Sahel at 5:00 PM in the seventh round, followed by Qurain taking on Al-Arabi at 7:30 PM. Both matches will be held at the Kuwait Basketball Federation Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Indoor Hall Complex.

The league features a three-division format, with the top four teams advancing to the semifinals. The semifinals are played in a best-of-three playoff system: the first-place team faces the fourth-place team, and the second-place team faces the third-place team. The first team to win two matches advances to the final.

Qadsia currently sits fourth with 8 points from 3 wins and 2 losses, tied with Al-Salibkhat and Al-Nasr. They come into today's game after a loss to league leaders Kuwait. Despite facing the lower-ranked Al-Sahel, who are seventh with 7 points, Qadsia is expected to play with full intensity as the race for a semifinal spot remains highly competitive.

Qurain, in third place with 9 points from 3 wins and 3 losses, will take on Al-Arabi, who are last with 6 points from 6 defeats.



Players in action on the basketball court.

Qurain is determined not to drop any points in their quest to secure a top-four finish. They have played one more match than Qadsia, as their previous game against Al-Salibkhat was postponed due to the participation of Al-Salibkhat's Iranian player Solar Monji with his national team in the Asian qualifiers.

\$67K prize up for grabs

Sahara Show Jumping Championship begins

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: The Kuwait Equestrian Federation recently elected rider Shaker Al-Kazemi as Vice President of the Board of Directors to complete the current term, succeeding rider Yusuf Al-Sabah. Federation President Masoud Hayat expressed his gratitude to Sheikh Yusuf Al-Sabah for his distinguished contributions and dedicated support in advancing equestrian sports in Kuwait.

The Sahara International Show Jumping Championship officially begins today at 12:00 PM and will run for three days at the Sahara Resort, featuring total prize money of \$67,000 for the winners.

The championship is managed by Walid Al-Jassim and Sheikh Sabah Al-Sabah, with rider Mohammed Al-Bahbahani overseeing the stables. International judge Lama Abdelal will officiate the event, while chief international judge Nizar Al-Mustafa leads the judging committee, which also includes Raghad Al-Dabbous, Ibtisam Al-Arouri, and foreign judge Ines Beigel.



Rider prepares for championship action.

This season features ten clubs

Kuwait & Kazma open volleyball season

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: The Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Indoor Hall Complex will host the opening of the 59th edition of the volleyball league today, featuring two exciting matches. The first match will see Al-Salibkhat take on Al-Nasr at 5:30 PM, followed by defending champions Kuwait Club facing Kazma at 7:30 PM.

The league format begins with a single preliminary round. The top six teams will advance to the Premier Division, divided into three groups, with the first-place team in the preliminary round earning a bonus for its strong performance. Teams finishing seventh to tenth, along with the youth national team, will compete in the First Division, also organized into three groups.

This season features ten clubs: Kuwait Club, Qadsia, Kazma, Burgan, Al-Shabab, Al-Arabi, Al-Nasr, Al-Salibkhat, Al-Sahel, and Al-Yarmouk.

Kuwait Club recently won the Union Championship, the season's first tournament. Qadsia remains the most successful club in league history with 23 titles, followed by Kuwait Club and Kazma with 15 each, Al-Arabi with 4, and Al-Jahra with one.

The new season is expected to see fierce competition among the top contenders — Kuwait, Qadsia, and Kazma — as they aim to secure more titles. Meanwhile, Burgan, Al-Arabi, and Al-Shabab will look to play the role of dark horses, while Al-Salibkhat, Al-Nasr, Al-Sahel, and Al-Yarmouk face an uphill battle to challenge for the top spots.

Federation says pride fest contradicts our values

Egypt and Iran oppose Seattle pride game

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates, Dec 10, (AP): Egypt and Iran, two Middle East nations that target gays and lesbians, have complained to FIFA over a World Cup soccer match in Seattle that is planned to celebrate LGBTQ+ Pride.

Leaders in the nation's soccer federations publicly rebuked the idea of playing the match June 26 at Seattle Stadium, which local organizers say will include a "once-in-a-lifetime moment to showcase and celebrate LGBTQIA+ communities in Washington."

In Egypt, the soccer federation issued a statement late Tuesday saying it sent a letter to FIFA "categorically rejecting any activities related to supporting homosexuality during the match."

Seattle PrideFest has been organized in the city since 2007 by a nonprofit which designated the June 26 game for celebration before FIFA made the World Cup draw Friday.

FIFA chose Saturday to allocate the Egypt-Iran game to Seattle instead of Vancouver, where the teams' group rivals Belgium and New Zealand will play at the same time.

Already, organizers in Seattle have promoted an art contest for the game, including one entry of a rainbow-flagged sun rising over Mount Rainier as a crab goalie goes for a soccer ball while holding a cup of coffee in its pincers.

"With matches on Juneteenth and pride, we get

to show the world that in Seattle, everyone is welcome," Seattle's Mayor-elect Kate Wilson wrote on social media. "What an incredible honor!"

FIFA controls only stadiums and official fan zones in World Cup host cities and should have no formal authority over community events like Seattle PrideFest. FIFA declined comment Tuesday to the Associated Press, and did not address a question if it would consider switching the Belgium-New Zealand game to Seattle.

In Iran, where gays and lesbians can face the death penalty, the president of Iran's Football Federation Mehdi Taj criticized scheduling the match during an interview aired on state television late Monday. Taj said Iran would bring up the issue during a FIFA Council meeting in Qatar next week. The longest-serving member of the 37-person council chaired by FIFA President Gianni Infantino is Egypt's Hany Abo Rida.

"Both Egypt and we have objected, because this is an unreasonable and illogical move that essentially signals support for a particular group, and we must definitely address this point," Taj said. State TV on Tuesday confirmed a complaint would be sent to FIFA.

The Egypt soccer federation led by Ado Rida said of the pride celebration it "completely rejects such activities, which directly contradict the cultural, religious and social values in the region, especially in

Arab and Islamic societies."

It urged FIFA to stop the celebration to "avoid activities that may trigger cultural and religious sensitivity between the presented spectators of both countries, Egypt and Iran, especially as such activities contradict the cultures and religions of the two countries."

Iran had threatened to boycott the World Cup draw in Washington, DC over complaints about five of its nine-person delegation, including Taj, not getting visas to enter the United States.

Iranians are subject to a travel ban imposed by President Donald Trump's administration and the U.S. in the past has denied visas for those with ties to Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, like Taj. Iran ended up sending a smaller delegation including the team's coach.

Tensions remain high between Tehran and Washington over Iran's nuclear program, particularly after American warplanes bombed atomic sites in the country during Israel's 12-day war with the Islamic Republic in June. Unlike the 2022 World Cup, however, Iran is not scheduled to play the United States in the World Cup's opening matches.

Asked about the complaint Wednesday, Seattle's organizing committee said it was "moving forward as planned with our community programming outside the stadium during Pride weekend and throughout the tournament."

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New York Knicks' OG Anunoby (8) and Toronto Raptors' Sandro Mamukelashvili, left, vie for the ball during the second half of an NBA Cup basketball game in Toronto. (AP)

Sports

Liverpool back on track despite Salah absence



Bayern's Lennart Karl, left, scores his side's second goal during the Champions League opening phase soccer match between FC Bayern Munich and Sporting CP in Munich, Germany. (AP)

Barcelona and Bayern win

MILAN, Dec 10, (AP): Even from the penalty spot, Liverpool managed just fine without Mohamed Salah.

After leaving the Egyptian forward in England, Liverpool got a much-needed boost with a 1-0 win over Inter Milan in the Champions League. Barcelona and Bayern Munich celebrated comeback wins, and Chelsea lost.

With regular penalty taker Salah out of the squad following his public criticism of the club last week, Dominik Szoboszlai stepped up instead to score the 88th-minute penalty, which earned a 1-0 win over one of the competition's best-performing teams.

It was all the more valuable for coming after a run of one win in six games in all competitions for Arne Slot's under-pressure team, which moved up to eighth and is now back in contention for a direct spot in the round of 16. Inter dropped to fifth.

Liverpool's players thought they had taken the lead with Ibrahima Konate's header in the 31st minute. After a video review that lasted several minutes, it was ruled out for handball as Virgil van Dijk had earlier nodded the ball onto the arm of Hugo Ekitike.

Having taken away a goal from Liverpool, VAR came to the visitors' aid when it spotted that Alessandro Bastoni had tugged Florian Wirtz's shirt in the area, with the midfielder flailing to the ground. Szoboszlai converted the penalty.

Bayern's 17-year-old midfielder Lennart Karl produced an audacious bit of skill to continue his high-scoring start to life in the Champions League in a 3-1 win over Sporting Lisbon, which lifted Bayern to second behind Arsenal.

Karl scored his third goal in four career Champions League games, controlling a pass from Konrad Laimer in mid-air before volleying a shot from a tight angle over two onrushing defenders and past the goalkeeper.

It was part of a 12-minute, three-goal turnaround for Bayern after Joshua Kimmich's own goal handed Sporting the lead. Serge Gnabry leveled for Bayern when he was left unmarked at a corner in the 65th, before Karl scored Bayern's second in the 69th, and defender Jonathan Tah made it 3-1 in the 77th.

Widely viewed as German soccer's best young talent this season, Karl became Bayern's youngest-ever Champions League scorer in October on his first start in the competition.

Late on, Alphonso Davies came off the bench for the Canadian left back's first game since March after a serious knee injury.

Chelsea was beaten in the Champions League for the first time in nearly three months as Belgium forward Charles De Ketelaere set up the equalizer and scored an 83rd-minute winner as Atalanta came from behind to win 2-1.

Chelsea, which went ahead through Joao Pedro, dropped out of the top eight automatic qualifying spots to 11th with its second loss. It was a fourth win for Atalanta, which climbed to third.

Gianluca Scamacca made it 1-1 by heading home a cross from De Ketelaere, who then drove in a shot that Chelsea goalkeeper Robert Sanchez got a hand to but couldn't keep out.

'He's just a special man'

Messi becomes MLS' first back-to-back MVP winner

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla., Dec 10, (AP): Best player. Best team. Inter Miami's Lionel Messi is the unquestioned force in Major League Soccer right now, on a run like nobody else the league has ever seen.

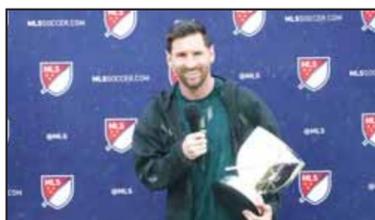
The 38-year-old Argentine star - and captain of the MLS Cup champions - has become the first back-to-back MVP in MLS history, getting announced Tuesday as this year's winner of the league's top individual honor.

Messi - thanking his teammates and saying he couldn't have won the award without them - accepted the trophy at the opening ceremony his Messi Cup youth tournament, which kicked off Tuesday. That's why the award announcement was delayed until after the season: Messi wanted kids to be part of it.

"He's a unicorn, man - not just for what he does on the field," MLS Commissioner Don Garber said Tuesday after the on-field ceremony in misty conditions. "He's just a special man."

The back-to-back MVPs represents another first for Messi in what seems like a never-ending list of his career accomplishments and was widely expected, almost assumed after he had a league-best 29 goals along with 19 assists during the regular season.

He also becomes just the second two-time MVP the league has ever seen, joining Preki, the winner of



Inter Miami forward Lionel Messi speaks after receiving the MLS MVP Award in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. (AP)

the award in 1997 and 2003. The other winners are all one-time MVP recipients.

"He was fantastic the whole season, with the numbers and also with the commitment," Inter Miami coach and longtime Messi teammate Javier Mascherano said after Saturday's MLS final.

Messi played in barely half of Inter Miami's regular-season games in 2024, and that sparked some doubt as to whether he deserved to win the MVP award.

He won a close vote last year. This year, there was

no debate.

Messi got 70.4% of the total vote - the biggest winning total since Toronto's Sebastian Giovinco in 2015. San Diego's Anders Dreyer was second with 11.2%, followed by LAFC's Denis Bouanga (7.3%), Cincinnati's Evander (4.8%) and Nashville's Sam Surridge (2.4%).

"There's something about the way he's wired," Garber said of Messi while attending an Inter Miami match earlier in this season's playoffs. "He's thinking about the game like nobody else ever has. His intensity and desire to win is what makes him the greatest of all time. There are a lot of really competitive players, but he has this special sauce, this dynamic that has him so focused on doing what he needs to do to win games."

This award joins dozens of other individual honors in Messi's career, including eight Ballon d'Or titles, eight Pichichi trophies as La Liga's top scorer, six La Liga best player nods, three Best FIFA Men's Player awards, three UEFA Men's Player of the Year wins, two FIFA World Cup Golden Balls and no fewer than 15 selections as Argentina's best player in a given year. He's also been part of winning 47 trophies for club and country - including the 2022 World Cup - making him the most decorated player the men's game has ever seen.

Orlando advances to last four

Knicks rout struggling Raptors to reach NBA Cup semis for first time

TORONTO, Dec 10, (AP): Jalen Brunson scored 35 points, Josh Hart added 21 and the New York Knicks advanced to the NBA Cup semifinals for the first time in three tries by beating the struggling Toronto Raptors 117-101 on Tuesday night.

Karl-Anthony Towns had 14 points and 16 rebounds for the Knicks, who will face Orlando in the semifinal round at Las Vegas on Saturday.

The Magic reached the semifinals by beating Miami earlier.

Towns returned after sitting out Sunday's home win over Orlando because of tightness in his left calf.

Mikal Bridges scored 15 points for New York and OG Anunoby had 13 against his former team.

The only team to reach the quarterfinals in all three years of the event, the Knicks had lost their previous two appearances by a combined 32 points. New York is 11-4 all-time in NBA Cup play.

Brunson's 26 points in the opening half were his most in any half this season.

Brandon Ingram scored 31 points and Jamal Sheard had a career-high 18 but the short-handed Raptors lost their fourth straight, all at home.

Scottie Barnes and Ja'Kobe Walter each scored 13 points for the Raptors, and Jakob Poeltl added 10.



Orlando Magic guard Desmond Bane (3) goes up to shoot as Miami Heat center Bam Adebayo (13) defends during the second half of an NBA Cup basketball game in Orlando, Fla. (AP)

Toronto went unbeaten in group stage play with all four wins coming during a stretch that saw the Raptors go 13-1. They're 1-6 since.

Ingram had 17 in the first quarter but the entire Raptors team couldn't combine to match that total in the second. Toronto missed 13 of its first 15 shot attempts and finished 5 for 21 in a disastrous frame that saw the Raptors outscored 34-13.

New York led 69-52 at the half.

Neither of Toronto's former Knicks was available. Immanuel Quickley sat because of an illness while RJ Barrett missed his ninth straight game because of a sprained right knee.

Meanwhile, Desmond Bane matched his season high with 37 points and the Orlando Magic advanced to the NBA Cup semifinals

with a 117-108 victory over the Miami Heat.

Jalen Suggs scored 20 points and Paolo Banchero added 18 points and seven rebounds for the Magic, who will play New York on Saturday in the semifinal round at Las Vegas.

Norman Powell led Miami with 21 points. Tyler Herro added 20 and Bam Adebayo and Andrew Wiggins each had 19 for the Heat, who have lost three times in Orlando this season.

Bane hit two 3-pointers and scored on a three-point play in the first 2:06 of the fourth quarter, stretching the Magic's six-point lead to 13. The Heat never got the margin under nine until the final minute.

The Magic played for the first time this season without Franz Wagner, who is expected to be out several weeks with a high ankle sprain.

The Heat made their first six shots and led 15-0 when Herro drove for a layup less than three minutes into the game. But Miami went cold and finished the game 8 for 33 (24.2%) from 3-point range. Herro missed all six of his 3-point attempts, including an open shot that could have cut the margin to four with 37 seconds left.

Bane made 6 of 9 3-pointers and the Magic shot 15 for 32 (46.9%).

Kuwaiti wheelchair fencers celebrate big wins in Iraq



Winners crowned.

BAGHDAD, Dec 10: Kuwait's Al-Erada Club delegation for wheelchair fencing returned home following a successful showing at the Baghdad International Fencing Tournament. The competition featured over 50 athletes representing 10 different clubs.

The Kuwaiti team captured three medals during the tournament. Fahad Aqeel earned a silver medal in the men's category after a tough battle against the world's number two-ranked fencer and also claimed gold in the under-23 youth category. Salem Abdulhadi secured another silver medal, finishing second in his category.

Duai Al-Hajri, Chairman of Al-Erada Club, praised the athletes' performance under coach Khalid Al-Sarraf, saying: "This is another remarkable achievement for our wheelchair fencing champions, adding to Kuwait's strong record in regional and international competitions. We look forward to even greater successes in upcoming tournaments."

Al-Hajri also emphasized the vital support the club receives from the Public Authority for Sports and the Paralympic Committee, which has been instrumental in the team's continued success.

Kuwait team aims for podium at World Powerboat Championship

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti speedboat team has set off for the United Arab Emirates to compete in the final round of the 2025 X CAT World Powerboat Championship at Sunset Beach, Jumeirah, from December 11-14.

Abdul Latif Al-Omani will lead the team aboard the boat Mouthir, assisted by Khalid Karam and Bader Al-Dosari, with coaches Mohamed Barakat and Adel Al-Misfer. The team is targeting a top-three finish following a strong performance in the previous round held in Kuwait last November.

Al-Omani had claimed second place in the first race of the previous round and was in contention for another top

finish before a collision prevented him from completing the second race.

Currently, UAE's Victory team leads the world standings and is close to securing the championship, ahead of the British team. The boat Mouthir carries a special legacy, previously owned by the late Sheikh Khalid Jaber Al-Al Al-Sabah, who tragically passed away during a 1997 Abu Dhabi race.

Ali Al-Shammari, Chairman of the Speedboats Committee at the Kuwaiti Marine Sports Club, thanked the Public Authority for Sports and the Marine Club's Board of Directors for their support and expressed hope for a strong showing by Kuwait in this prestigious international event.



The Kuwaiti speedboat delegation.