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Kuwait Amir, Crown Prince receive Saudi Minister of State

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Monday Saudi Minister of State and Cabinet Member Turki bin Mohammad bin Fahad bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud and the accompanying delegation on their official visit to the country

The Saudi official conveyed greetings from King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud and the Prime Minister and Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud along with their wishes for His Highness the Amir's good health and for the result of King with their wishes for His Highness the Amir's good

health and for the people of Kuwait continued progress and prosperity. His Highness the Amir asked him to convey his greetings to King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, wishing them lasting health and well-

His Highness the Amir also prayed that Allah Almighty grants Saudi Arabia and its people further growth and prosperity under the wise leadership of King

The meeting was attended by Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, who is also head of the honorary delegation, along with the Director of the Amir's Office, retired Lieut General Jamal Mohammad Al-Theyab, and senior officials from the Amiri Diwan, including Undersecretary of the Amir Diwan, Sheikh Abdulaziz Meshal Mubarak Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Undersecretary of the Amiri Diwan for Foreign Affairs, Mazen Issa Al-Issa.

Also on Monday, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received Saudi Minister of State and Cabinet Member Prince Turki bin Mohammad bin Fahad bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud and the accompanying delegation at Bayan Palace, during their official visit to Kuwait.

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Amiri Diwan photo

HH the Amir receives Saudi Minister of State and Cabinet Member Turki bin Mohammad bin Fahad bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud



Crown Prince Diwan photo

HH the Crown Prince receives Saudi Minister of State and Cabinet Member Turki bin Mohammad bin Fahad bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud

Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

A well-chosen supervisory group, free of 'parachutes'

THE recent appointments of supervisory and executive leaders indicate a promising outlook, offering the potential for renewed success by empowering younger generations to take the lead in this new phase and reinvigorate institutions.

Just as recovery from illness is gradual for an individual, national reform is not an instantaneous process.

For the past thirty years, corruption has been perceived as deeply entrenched and nearly impossible to eliminate within Kuwait's institutions.

This widespread perception implies that genuine reform is unattainable and that capable professionals are often prevented from succeeding.

Instead, appointments have typically been secured through corrupt means, such as familial, tribal, or sectarian connections, often referred to as "parachutes", making nepotism the de facto standard for professional advancement in society

For decades, transactions relied on either a "recommendation" from an influential figure or the assurance that the person was "one of ours."

Bribery was widespread, influencing appointments, securing favors, awarding tenders, and inflating bank accounts.

There was no accountability, and the basic question, "Where did you get this money?" remained unanswered.

For years, Kuwait faced a harsh reality national resources were being depleted, proiects stalled, and only those approved by influential figures in institutions, the National Assembly, and elsewhere moved forward, despite weak attempts to curb corruption. During this period, public pleas went largely ignored, as attention was focused

solely on personal enrichment.

The situation, however, has now drastically changed. The new administration is committed to implementing reforms and enforcing accountability. This has led to the launch of "surgical" measures aimed at addressing long-standing problems within

Qualified individuals with proven expertise and a thorough understanding of management have been appointed to supervisory positions.

Recent appointments in various sectors, including the long-awaited municipal reform, the Public Authority for Manpower, the Ministry of Interior, and others, reflect careful selection and suitability.

Such appropriateness is particularly important given the harmful effects of past practices, where prolonged secondments and acting appointments resulted in hesitant and inconsistent decision-making, often driven by fear of negative repercussions.

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Kuwait moves to crush bank fraud

Financial crime unit begins work 2026

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: Attorney General Saad Al-Safran announced the establishment of the Banking Affairs Prosecution Office, which specializes in investigating banking crimes, including electronic fraud, bank forgery, and issuance of dud cheques, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Al-Safran explained that the rapid pace of financial transformations made the creation of this office an urgent necessity to enhance confidence in banking transactions. The coming

period will see a significant advancement in mechanisms for combating crimes in the banking sector and improving the efficiency of related procedures.

The selection of members for the Banking Affairs Prosecution Office will be based on objective criteria that focus on practical experience and professional competence, aiming to build an investigative and prosecutorial system capable of confronting modern banking crimes that are evolving rapidly.

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Day by Day

ONE day, a bull went wild while Antarah ibn Shad-

dad was standing before it,

and Antarah fled from the

that Antarah ibn Shaddad,

who was renowned for his

bravery, would run away

from a bull. They asked

him why he had fled when

he was known as the brav-

Antarah defended him-

Isn't this a logical justifi-

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

self, saying, "Who told you that the bull knew I was An-

tarah ibn Shaddad?'

People were astonished

charging animal.

est of men.

cation?



Photo by Rezk Tawfig

The Qatari Embassy in Kuwait marks the National Day of Qatar on Sunday in the presence of Kuwait's Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya.

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KUNA photo

Photo during the signing ceremony of an MoU between Kuwait Ports Authority (KPA) and Abu Dhabi Ports Group (AD Ports) on Monday.

Kuwait Ports Authority initials

historic UAE cooperation MoU

narcotics oversight KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15, (Agencies): In line with Decree-

Law No. 159/2025 on combating narcotics and psychotropic substances and regulating their use and trafficking, Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi has issued four ministerial decisions to strengthen the oversight and control of these substances, in line with the state's approach to establishing an integrated legislative system that protects society and enhances health security.

Kuwait strengthens

The first decision is related to the establishment of addiction rehabilitation centers. The second decision regulates the entities authorized to approve reports or prescriptions issued abroad for narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

The third decision governs the use and trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances within licensed governmental and private healthcare facilities.

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Kuwait 2025-26 plan boosts private sector

By Mohammad Ghanem Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: The 2025/2026 Development Plan

Report revealed the need to enact nine draft laws for the Dvnamic Private Sector Enhancement Program, one of the nine programs within the development plan, which includes 18 projects, eight strategic and eight enabling initiatives.

The important draft laws that must be enacted include the establishment of a public electricity and water authority, postal companies, and fixed-line telephone and international telecommunication companies.

These 18 projects are the most important development projects, foremost among them are the North Zour Power Plant (Phase Two and Phase Three), Khairan Power Plant (Phase One), economic zones and others.

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Municipal Council targets social cohesion through cafés initiative

By Inaas Awadh Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: Members of the Municipal Council Abdullah Al-Enezi and Fahd Al-Khunain have submitted a proposal to allocate sites for the establishment of traditional cafés in Mutlaa and Sabah Al-Ahmad residential cities, in coordination with the Public

Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW)

and the Ministry of Social Affairs. In the preamble of the proposal, the proponents pointed out that in light of the ongoing urban expansion-particularly in newly developed cities like Mutlaa and Sabah Al-Ahmad, there is an increasing need to establish social facilities with a heritage character to strengthen community cohesion and preserve cultural identity. They explained that traditional cafés were identified as an appropriate model in this regard, as they provide a social space that brings together different segments of society in a simple, authentic and traditional setting.

They stressed that the proposal offers multiple benefits, foremost among them is strengthening social ties, as traditional cafés serve as informal gathering places for friends and families, in addition to reviving folk heritage by reflecting the traditional Kuwaiti character and supporting the preservation of cultural heritage through their architectural design and activities. They added that such cafés could serve as venues for cultural and community events, including poetry evenings, discussion forums and traditional games.

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Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: The Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs has condemned the "terrorist" attack on a beach near the Australian City of Sydney, which claimed multiple casualties.

In a press statement, the ministry underlined that the State of Kuwait condemns such terrorist acts and restates its stance that rejects and denounces all forms of violence and terrorism. (KUNA)

- See Also Page 7

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Monday condemned the drone attacks on UN facilities in Sudan on Saturday, killing several UN personnel.

The ministry affirmed in a statement necessity of preserving Sudan's unity, stability, protecting the UN installations and the workers vis a vis such attacks. (KUNA)

Ministry tightens food truck 'rules'

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has called on owners of mobile food truck licenses to obtain smart licenses through the ministry's website, the "Commercial Registry Portal", and stressed the need to display the license prominently on the vehicle, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

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Sheikha Suad Al-Sabah awarded France's Order of Arts and Letters

National Investments Company Successfully Executed the IPO of Ac-

tion Energy Company, with Subscription Coverage Reaching 276 Million **KWD** and **Exceeding 5.0 Times the Offering Value**

Dr. Al-Mashaan, also the KPA Chairperson, said the MoU signing signaled keenness of the two countries' sagacious leaderships on boosting cooperation in vital sectors, namely the ports and affiliated logistical services The MoU constitutes "an institu-

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15, (KUNA):

Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura

Al-Mashaan, during her attendance

of the signing ceremony of a MoU

between Kuwait Ports Authority

(KPA) and Abu Dhabi Ports Group

(AD Ports) on Monday, said the

memo inking mirrored the two coun-

tries' solid and brotherly relations.

tional and practical framework to exchange expertise, transfer knowledge and information and develop cadres' skills," she said, indicating that the move would contribute to promoting

level of operational efficiency, boosting the Kuwaiti ports competition, backing up the state approach toward sustainable development and bolstering Kuwait's status as an effective regional logistical hub.

The memo signing is the corner stone for a clear executive course and depicted strategic partnership that will lead to programs and practical enterprises with forecast benefits "for our two countries and bolster integration and cooperation between them," Minister Al-Mashaan added.

For his part, Dr. Thani bin Ahmed Al-Zeyoudi, the United Arab Emirates' Minister of State for Foreign Trade, said during the ceremony that the State of Kuwait has bolstered its stature as a key trade partner for the

Continued on Page 5



Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Rather cold and partly cloudy to cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate northeasterly wind, with speeds of 06-32 km/h with a chance for scattered rain with a chance for fog forming at night.

Weather

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

Max Exp Min Rec

Kuwait City Kuwait Airport 12 09 10 12 11 Abdaly Bubyan 17 Jahra Failaka Island Salmiyah Ahmadi Nuwaisib



Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef and Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya at the cake-cutting ceremony.



Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times, Al-Seyassah newspapers Sulaiman Abdulaziz Al-Jarallah (extreme left) and other guests at the event.



Photos by Rizk Taufiq Diplomats, guests at the ceremony.

Acting PM, FM distinguished guests as Qatar Embassy in Kuwait marks National Day

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: The Qatari Embassy in Kuwait recently celebrated Qatar National Day, with the attendance of several high-ranking officials, including the act-

ing Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef and Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya. Several Arab and foreign ambassadors, along with heads of diplomatic missions, were also present.

Ambassador Ali Al Mahmoud and Oatari embassy diplomats welcomed the attendees and received their congratulations.

Following the celebration, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya issued a press statement through which he praised the deep-rooted, historical, and fraternal ties between Kuwait and Qatar, and highlighted the commitment of both nations to strengthening bilateral cooperation in various sectors.

Minister Al-Yahya also congratulated the Qatari government on its National Day, wishing continued progress and prosperity for its people under wise leadership.

He commended Doha for the outstanding organization and remarkable success of the 2025 Arab Cup.

Kuwait, Uzbekistan pledge boost in trade, tourism ties

We have created opportunities for Uzbek firms: Dr Al-Mukhaizeem

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, Minister of Finance, and acting Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem, affirmed Kuwait's commitment

strengthening cooperation with the Republic of Uzbekistan in various sectors to achieve economic prosperity and reinforce the bonds of friendship between the two nations.

In his speech at the

Al-Mukhaizeem second session of the Kuwaiti-Uzbek Joint Ministerial Committee for Trade, Economic, Scientific, and Technical Cooperation in Kuwait, Al-Mukhaizeem emphasized the importance of building on the tangible progress achieved between the two countries in a short period.

He explained that bilateral relations have seen significant development and a qualitative leap, due to continuous diplomatic efforts that reflect a shared commitment to deepening the framework of cooperation.

This cooperation was further strengthened following the visit of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, to Kuwait, which opened new horizons for economic partnership and strategic dialogue between the two

The work of the Joint Governmental Committee serves as a cornerstone of this cooperation, providing an effective institutional mechanism in various sectors while introducing new initiatives.

Governmental cooperation forms the basis for stability and long-term strategic direction, with the private sector acting as a major driver in turning agreements into job opportunities, investments, innovations, and economic activity.

The minister emphasized the commitment of both countries to creating a modern and stimulating business environment to enhance investor con-He highlighted the economic reforms in Uzbeki-

stan, which have helped modernize the country's investment frameworks. Dr. Al-Mukhaizeem stressed that Kuwait, which

is committed to diversifying its economy and developing its financial sector through global invest-

ment partnerships, has worked to create opportunities for Uzbek investors and companies.

He emphasized the pivotal role of the Kuwaiti-Uzbek Business Forum, which provides a direct platform for business leaders to forge partnerships, explore opportunities, and establish joint ventures, making the private sector an active contributor to shaping the future of bilateral relations.

He urged the private sector in both countries to realize this vision by benefiting from opportunities in the energy, infrastructure, logistics, and technology sectors, as well as in healthcare and financial services, including capital markets, investment funds, banks, and insurance.

Regarding tourism, Dr. Al-Mukhaizeem highlighted the growth in air travel between the two countries, describing it as a step toward strengthening cultural exchange and stimulating economic

He noted that promising sectors for cooperation include renewable energy, agriculture, and food security, supported through sustainable investment

He also pointed to the technology sector, including digital transformation and artificial intelligence, as well as education and scientific research, as important areas for collaboration.

The minister emphasized that this partnership is founded on mutual respect and shared interests, underlining Kuwait's commitment to global economic openness and sustainable development.



Member of Parliament and Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs of Malawi Joseph Mwanamvekha delivers the President's letter addressed to Kuwait's Amir His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Foreign Minister Abdullah

Kuwait Amir receives written letter from Malawi President

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Sunday a written letter from the President of the Republic of Malawi, Arthur Peter Mutharika, concerning frameworks for strengthening the close bilateral relations between the two nations and ways to enhance and develop cooperation

across various fields.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement that the message was received by Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya during his meeting with Joseph Mwanamvekha, Member of Parliament and Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs of Malawi, on the occasion of the latter's official visit to Kuwait.

'Asian Market' event sheds CAPT issues multiple light on Kuwait, ASEAN ties tenders for oil sector

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: Indonesian Ambassador to Kuwait Lina Mariana said the 'Asian Market' event, held at the Indonesian Embassy with the participation of ministers and representatives of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), reflects the strength of the cultural and human ties that bind Kuwait with ASEAN countries.

In her opening remarks, Mariana stated that the event coincides with the winter season and it is in line with the ongoing efforts of the ASEAN Committee in Kuwait to strengthen bonds of friendship and cooperation among member states, while improving communication and interaction between the peoples of

ASEAN and Kuwaiti societies. As chairperson of the ASEAN Committee in Kuwait, she pointed out that the event would not have been possible without the strong cooperation among committee members. She expressed her deep appreciation to all members of the committee for their dedication and collec-

tive efforts in ensuring the success of the event. She conveyed her sincere gratitude to the Kuwaiti government and people for their warm welcome and unwavering support in promoting cultural exchange and strengthening relations between nations. She affirmed that Kuwait stands as a leading example in hosting cultural initiatives, which foster mutual understanding and rapprochement among diverse cultures.

She said the 'Asian Market' event aims to introduce the Kuwaiti public to various aspects of ASEAN cultures through traditional cuisine, handicrafts and cultural performances, thereby, strengthening human connections and reinforcing mutual understanding between both sides.

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Sevassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: The Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) announced a tender for the supply of power to industrial lift pumps and remote vertical saturators in southern and eastern Kuwait, for the construction of stations 6, 10, and 12 for Kuwait Oil Company (KOC). The opening date of the tender is December 14, 2025, and the closing date is January 12, 2026.

CAPT also announced a separate tender for the supply of power to industrial lift pumps and remote vertical saturators in southern and eastern Kuwait, for the construction of stations 7, 9, and 11 for KOC. The opening date of this tender is December 14, 2025, and the closing date is March

A tender has also been announced for the supply of power to industrial lift pumps and remote vertical saturators in southern and eastern Kuwait for the construction of stations 8 and 13 for KOC. The opening date of this tender is December 14, 2025, and the closing date is March 15, 2026.

Meanwhile, CAPT announced the postponement of the Kuwait National Petroleum Company's tender for the construction, supply, installation, completion, and operation of 10 fuel stations in Al-Mutlaa City. The new deadline is January 11, 2026, instead of December 28, 2025.

The Higher Procurement Committee for Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's tenders and its subsidiaries also announced a local tender for Kuwait Oil Tanker Company (KOTC) for the provision of specialized marine services for KOTC's marine agency branch. The deadline for submitting bids is January 10, and the tender is limited to 28

The committee also announced a tender for KOTC to provide hotel accommodation and meals for the company's fleet crew. Tender documents are available from the date of this announcement in the official gazette "Kuwait Alyoum", and the deadline for submitting bids is February



People are biggest losers

By Ahmad alsarraf

MY Iraqi colleague, Alaa Al-Lami, published an article about the democratic experience in three successful Western countries, comparing it to the failed democracies in some of our Arab coun-

avoided addressing the pressing issues, at least in the first part of his article.

He explained Belgian society is composed, ethnically

alsarraf and linguistically, of two main groups - Flemish and Walloon speakers, and French speak-

There is also a German-speaking minority along with other smaller mi-

The majority of Belgians are Catholic (31 percent). Protestants and Orthodox Christians make up three percent, and Muslims constitute 6.7 percent. Sixty percent of the population is not known to have any religious affilia-

Belgium is a federal state with a multi-party political system, but no single party can gain power on its own due to linguistic diversity and a fragmented electorate. As a result, governments are always formed through coalitions, with an opposition in place.

Belgium's system of government, like Switzerland's, is not consociational, except in the sense that governing coalitions are formed between major parties divided along linguistic, rather than sectarian or religious, lines.

The Netherlands has a similar system to Belgium's. It is a pluralistic democracy that encourages the formation of coalition governments between major parties within a long-standing tradition of tolerance, despite its constantly changing political arena. Dutch parties have a national presence and reach,

rather than a sectarian or ethnic one. Native Dutch people make up 80 percent of the population, along with other indigenous ethnic groups such as the Frisians, with the remainder of the population consisting of people of European origin and immigrants from the developing world.

Importantly, around 60 percent of voters do not vote for religious reasons. Sweden's experience is different and far removed from the pre-state consociational democracy, even though Swedish society is among the most complex in Europe. The national composition of Sweden includes Swedes,

Swedish Finns and Tornedalians. About 41.2 percent of the population is Protestant, while 55.4 percent are non-religious. Sweden's political system is similar to Switzerland's, but without popular referendums.

who are North Germanic, along with

five officially recognized national mi-

norities which are Jews, Roma, Sámi,

Parliament is responsible for electing the Prime Minister, who then selects the Cabinet. The Prime Minister is accountable to Parliament for implementing the government's program,

and the judiciary is fully independent. Some compare democracy in our countries with democracy in Europe and conclude that the biggest problem lies in democracy itself. This conclu-

sion is entirely mistaken. The danger is not in democracy itself, but in a culture where loyalty is directed toward religion and sect rather

than the nation. Religious and sectarian loyalties should hold little weight in today's world if we truly wish to coexist with those who are different. We must understand that losing one's homeland

brings hunger and displacement. Preserving the homeland protects one's faith, religion, and beliefs. In a secure homeland, sustenance, safety, dignity, and freedom are ensured.

However, how can the culture of a people be changed without suffering, especially when it is impossible to make everyday life a paradise or guarantee entry into paradise?

email: a.alsarraf@alqabas.com.kw

400KV power line to serve Khairan

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

the Khairan, Wafra, and Sulaibiya power

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: The Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy has allocated KD 20 million for a major infrastructure project in the current fiscal year, which involves the supply and installation of 400-kilovolt overhead power lines to serve

According to informed sources, the project is a core component of the ministry's development plan. Ît forms part of one of nine programs aimed at building a robust and sustain-

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: Municipal Council

members Fahad Al-Abduljader, Ismail Behbe-

hani and Saud Al-Kandari submitted a proposal

to license basements for government clinics,

schools and similar public institutions located

The proposed basements will be allocated for

various purposes like parking, shelters or other

uses that support the operational needs of the

in private residential areas.

aforementioned entities.

The primary objective of these overhead

The planned overhead lines are essential components of the overall electricity transmission network, and are responsible for reliably transferring power from generation facilities to secondary substations near resi-

able infrastructure in the country.

lines is to expand the high-voltage and extrahigh-voltage electricity networks. Given the continuously rising demand for electricity in the targeted areas, the project is vital for ensuring a continuous power supply and preventing potential outages.

Proposal to license basements for schools and clinics The proponents explained that mounting pressure on public services, limited land availability and high population density necessitate the reassessment of existing building regula-

tions. They said such a review will enable gov-

ernment institutions to strengthen their opera-

tional efficiency by making optimal use of the

space available within their premises. The proposal allows government schools, clinics, service centers and comparable public facilities to apply for licenses to construct one or more basement levels in their sites. These basements could be designated for visitor and

defense units in line with the requirements of the Ministry of Defense, or any other use approved by the executive authority. The proponents emphasized that the proposal

safe shelters consistent with the standards of a

staff parking, establishment of shelters and civil

aims to increase parking capacity without the need to allocate additional land, support government efforts to enhance service quality for citizens, ensure optimal utilization of stateowned land, reduce waste, ease traffic congestion around schools and clinics, and provide

diwaniya 🕐 چيوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

HH the PM, do something, traffic chaos drains nation

"I WOULD like to address this message to His Highness the Prime Minister and the esteemed ministers concerning a national plan to tackle the traffic crisis. I specifically address His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah, the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Higher Education, the Minister of Public Works; and every dedicated official working for the benefit of Kuwait," columnist Bassam Fahad Thunayan Al-**Ghanim** wrote

for Al-Seyassah

daily.
"Traffic congestion is no longer merely a daily inconvenience or a passing issue that can be overlooked. It has escalated into a national crisis



that drains soci- Bassam Al-Ghanim

etal energy, wastes valuable working hours, and consumes precious time that could otherwise be invested in education and productive en-

"With the same scene repeating every morning, everyone is calling for a radical solution and asking whether Kuwait can ever breathe freely again.

"I affirm: Yes, we can. Solutions do not always require launching massive projects costing billions of dinars. Sometimes, intelligent organization and restructuring of working hours in schools and other institutions can make a difference.

"There are successful examples, such as Prince Sultan University in Saudi Arabia, which decided to dedicate one day a week to online education. This simple measure helped reduce traffic congestion and improve the flow of vehicles.

"Your Highness the Prime Minister and esteemed ministers, I present this practical vision based on Kuwait's realities and the experiences of the region and the world. These are low-cost proposals with a significant impact that can be implemented immediately.

"First - Half of morning traffic originates from schools and universities, making it the largest contributor to congestion. I propose allocating one day a week for online learning for each educational stage, according to a schedule that avoids creating additional pressure. For example, Sunday for Kuwait University and private universities, Monday for the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) and private institutes, Tuesday for high schools, and Wednesday for intermediate and primary schools.

'This measure could reduce traffic by 40 to 50 percent, enhance students' and teachers' readiness for digital learning, and establish a flexible national model that can be relied upon in emergencies.

"Second - Allocate one day a week for online work in each ministry, based on a coordinated schedule. This would reduce the number of cars on the road by thousands and make digital transformation a tangible reality.

"Third - Stagger work start times. This low-cost measure can have a major impact. For example, some businesses could start at 7:00am, others at 7:30am, some at 8:00am, and universities at 9:00am.

"Such an arrangement would reduce peak traffic congestion and improve overall traffic flow.

"Fourth - Adopt flexible working hours. This global system allows employees to choose their arrival time while adhering to the required number of work hours. It improves productivity, reduces congestion, and can be easily implemented using modern fingerprint systems.

"Fifth - Implement internal transportation. Universities and major ministries can provide internal shuttle buses to reduce the daily traffic of thousands of cars. This system is already successfully used in universities throughout the region and the world.

"Sixth - Adopt immediate traffic solutions, such as allowing the use of emergency lanes during peak hours, dedicating lanes for buses and emergency vehicles, operating a smart traffic signal control room, constructing multi-story parking garages, and expanding the capacity of government parking facilities.

"Seventh - Online education and remote work have become a national necessity. Following the COVID-19 experience, these practices are no longer temporary measures but essential skills that must be firmly established. Allocating one day per week for online education ensures Kuwait's readiness for any future emergencies.

"In conclusion, I address this message to His Highness the Prime Minister and the esteemed Ministers. Kuwait is small in size but great in ambition. It is unacceptable for the nation to be drained by traffic congestion or have its development

"The solutions are within your hands, and require only courageous decisions, wise vision, and effective coordination.

"The people of Kuwait deserve roads free from congestion, days without wasted time, and a society that works and produces efficiently. Every citizen deserves to see the country advance confidently toward the future, beginning with practical steps implemented today.

Also:

"Let us take a break for a few moments and ponder over these questions", columnist Sheikh Ali Al-Jaber Al-Ahmad wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"Why doesn't our government consider issuing a KD 50 or KD 40 banknote to make saving and occasional payments easier?

"Why are the clocks in watch shops and showrooms always set to ten past ten? "Why do flight attendants ask passengers to open their window shades during takeoff and landing?

"Why don't we see Kuwaiti fans wearing traditional dress in the stands, unlike fans in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries who adhere to their national attire both at home and abroad?

"Why do some men wear sneakers with their dishdashas and agals, especially at formal events?

"Why doesn't the Ministry of Islamic Affairs reduce the interval between the call to prayer and the start of the prayer from twenty minutes to ten minutes at the Ali Al-Ghanim Mosque, particularly when people gather to offer condolences for multiple funerals, to ease the situation and save time when transporting the deceased to the cemetery?

"Why do female artists and others make so many public statements? What benefit is there in them beyond defamation and the exposure of their privacy? "What benefit or outcome does the viewer gain from such ridiculous statements?

"Why is it that during any meal, whether at home or in a restaurant, a person looks at the plate of the person sitting next to them? Is it merely a habit, or a deliberate attempt to identify the food so they can ask about it, try it, or later comment on how much was eaten?

"Why... and why... and why? "If only the old days would return. Hearts were pure then. Today, everyone is both an oppressor and oppressed. Intentions have become insincere.

"May God protect Kuwait, its people, and its leadership from all evil and harm."

"Social media was buzzing with the scandal surrounding "The Nation's Endowment," run by the so-called "bankrupt Muslim Brotherhood" in Turkiye. The organization reportedly raised one billion dollars for Gaza through a conference and an accompanying media campaign, yet not a single penny of these funds reached the people of Gaza," columnist Hamad Salem Al-Marri wrote for Al-Seyassah

"At the beginning of 2024, Hamas media figure Khaled Hassan accused "The Nation's Endowment" of misappropriating donations meant for Gaza. Hamas later issued a statement confirming his claims and warned against dealing with certain charitable organizations including "The Nation's Endowment," "Al-Aqsa Platform," and "We Are All Maryam", stating that they divert donations intended for Gaza. Hamas accused the Waqf (Islamic endowment) after discovering that its administrators had withdrawn large sums of donations and transferred them to Europe through Turkish banks and accounts belonging to figures affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood among Arab citizens of Israel. Hamas was unable to resolve the issue with the Waqf, which refused to respond to inquiries about why these funds were being transferred instead of being spent on the people of Gaza.

"The Muslim Brotherhood and its supporters tried to deny the accusations and attack anyone who exposed the theft, particularly the Kuwaiti branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. Unfortunately, the Kuwaiti members have become like parrots, repeating whatever they are told. In reality, the Muslim Brotherhood treats them as mere tools for generating money, using the Palestinian cause as a commodity to be traded, just like all other members of the Muslim Brotherhood. However, one of the Muslim Brotherhood's ideo-



logues, Dr. Ali al-Qaradaghi, head of the so-called "International Union of Muslim Scholconfirmed ars, disagreement between Hamas and the "Nation's Endowment," explaining why he

did not participate

Hamad Al-Marri in the conference organized by it to

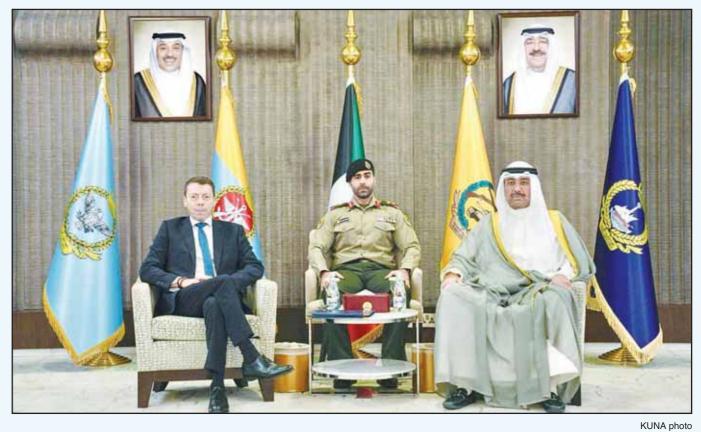
collect donations for Gaza. "This serves as evidence of the misappropriation of these funds and their failure to reach the people of Gaza, as Hamas's statement confirmed that the disagreement arose because the donations were not reaching their intended recipients and were being diverted to accounts in Eu-

"Nizar Bilal Rayyan, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, confirmed in a post on the X platform that he asked the former head of Hamas's political bureau, Ismail Haniyeh, about the movement's statement exposing the "Nation's Endowment." Haniyeh responded verbatim, "This is an endowment of thieves," confirming the accuracy of the reports about them. This theft is not unusual for the Muslim Brotherhood, as they are following in the footsteps of those who came before them in exploiting the Palestinian cause. Former President Yasser Arafat died leaving his daughter, Zahwa Arafat, an estate estimated at ten billion dollars.

"The New York Times reported that the combined wealth of Hamas's three leaders - Ismail Haniyeh, Khaled Meshaal, and Mousa Abu Marzouk - is estimated at eleven billion dollars. All of Hamas's political leaders live in luxury, residing in lavish villas and hotels in Turkiye and Qatar, while their children attend the most prestigious private schools and universities around the world. Where did all this money come from?

"Meanwhile, the suffering and poverty of the Palestinian people continue to grow, their cause is increasingly exploited politically and financially, and the Muslim Brotherhood continues to collect donations in their name. I pray that God relieves their distress.'

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty



Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah receives the Trade Envoy of the United Kingdom to the State of Kuwait, Lord

Defense Minister, UK official discuss vital issues

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15, (KUNA): Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah met on Monday with the Trade Envoy of the United Kingdom to the State of Kuwait, Lord Iain McNicol, discussing with him a number of issues of mutual interest.

Attending the meeting were officials from the Defense and Foreign Ministries, in addition to Ambassador of the UK to Kuwait, Qudsi Rasheed.



Farwaniya Governorate photo Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah presents a certificate of appreciation to a KFF of-

KFF, MPW officials win praise for their efforts

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah honored several officials from the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) at fire stations and the Prevention and Licensing Department at the General Fire Department in Farwaniya, as well as officials from the Ministry of Public Works (MPW), in recognition of their dedicated efforts and significant role in supporting public safety and improving services and infrastructure.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, Governor Sheikh Athbi highlighted the crucial role played by KFF and the Ministry of Public Works in protecting lives and property, addressing service challenges, and enhancing the readiness of vital facilities.

tion between government agencies, which serves the public interest and benefits both citizens and residents. Sheikh Athbi highlighted that the recognition reflects the

He praised the spirit of cooperation and ongoing coordina-

overnorate's commitment to supporting national talent and motivating employees. Also, the honored officials expressed their gratitude to the

governor, reaffirming their continued dedication to national service and cooperation with Farwaniya Governorate to enhance services and achieve public safety.

Some staff exempted

MoJ sets 7 hours daily routine for all departs

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: The Ministry of Justice has issued a ministerial decree outlining official working hours and attendance procedures, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The decree specifies that official working hours for all sectors of the ministry, including its general departments, affiliated administrations, and other organizational units, will be seven hours daily from Sunday to Thursday. Employees may arrive at any time between 7:00am and

8:00am, and leave after completing seven hours of work, based on their arrival time, without affecting the legally mandated The decree exempts employees who are subject to reduced working hours for any legal reason and those under the system

of unpaid partial absence. Their arrival and departure times will be determined according to special regulations. It also clarifies the rules for calculating grace periods, stating

that these periods are not counted toward the start of the workday after the last arrival time. Any minutes of lateness beyond the end of the grace period

will be counted toward the start of the workday. Meanwhile, official working hours at service centers are set at seven hours daily, from 7:00am to 2:00pm, with a grace period at the beginning and end of the workday as determined by legal regulations.

It also specifies working hours for employees under the unpaid partial absence system, according to four approved timeframes. Employees are required to verify their presence at the workplace during official hours using fingerprint attendance.

Nazaha praises rise in declaration of assets

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: The Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) announced its ongoing monitoring of compliance by individuals subject to financial disclosure requirements, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Citing recent statistics, Nazaha noted a significant decrease in the number of individuals who failed to submit their financial disclosure statements, dropping to just 17 in November, compared to 177 in June.

Nazaha expressed its appreciation for the commitment shown by individuals in meeting the legal deadlines for financial disclosure.

No injuries in blaze: Six fire squads on Saturday put out a fire that broke out at premises of a company for plastic treatment in Amghara, Kuwait Fire Force said in a statement, reports KUNA.

The firefighters had scrambled to the scene immediately after receiving the alert and managed to contain the blazes, the KFF statement said. No serious injuries were reported.

Many lawyers face penalties

Man acquitted in verbal spat

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff **KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: The** Lawyers Disciplinary Chamber at the Court of First Instance, chaired by Judge Abdullah Al-Osaimi, issued a series of disciplinary rulings in cases filed by the Kuwait Lawvers Association.

The decisions include harsh penalties and sanctions imposed on several lawyers, while others were acquitted after the Chamber determined that the accusations against them were malicious and unsubstantiated.

The Chamber ordered the removal of one lawyer from the roll of practicing lawyers due to final judgments issued against im in cases involving moral turnitude and breach of trust-offenses deemed incompatible with the standards of integrity and good conduct required for the legal profes-

It suspended another lawyer from practicing law for one year after convicting him of failing to show due respect to the judiciary, as he used inappropriate and offensive language about a judge in a defense memorandum.

In a separate case, the Chamber ordered the removal of a lawyer from the roll after it was established that he collected fees from clients without taking any legal action or handling the agreed cases.

The rulings included the suspension of other lawyers for periods of one year and six months, after it was proven that they failed to file cases despite signing contracts and receiving fees.

On the other hand, the court acquitted several lawyers after concluding that the complaints lodged against them were malicious, unfounded and lacking any legal

Citizen acquitted: The Misdemeanor Section in the Court of Appeals overturned the ruling of a lower court, which fined a citizen accused of verbal abuse and insult

Guirgian gathering. The higher court made the decision based on the arguments presented by Attorney Inam Haidar, lawyer for the defendant.

in a dispute over a parked vehicle during:

According to the case file, the complainant reported that she was publicly insulted by the defendant after an altercation at the entrance to her neighborhood.



Ministry of Health and the Kuwaiti Zakat House sign a cooperation agreement to equip and maintain a rehabilitation



The Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, the Minister of Finance and Acting Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, with the UK Trade Commissioner to the State of Kuwait.

MoH and Zakat House seal rehab center deal

center for treating addiction patients

Agreement boosts addiction treatment

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15, (KUNA): The Ministry of Health and the Kuwaiti Zakat House signed on Sunday a cooperation agreement to help equip, renovate, and maintain a rehabilitation center for addiction patients.

The deal reflects the state's commitment to strengthening the rehabilitative healthcare system and preserve the approach of community partnership in addressing health issues with humanitarian, social, and security dimensions. In a press statement, the Ministry of Health said the agree-

ment was signed in the presence and support of the Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Yosif Al-Sabah, Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, and the Health Undersecretary of the Ministry, Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi.

The statement added that the agreement stems from the principle of social solidarity and shared national responsibility and embodies the integration of government efforts and community support. The deal will also contribute to confronting the growing challenges associated with addiction disorders and mitigating their effects on individuals and society within a balanced institutional framework that considers health, social, and security factors simultaneously.

PAI sets deadline for plot fee payments

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: The Public Authority for Industry (PAI) emphasized that beneficiaries of plots under its supervision must pay the due fees by March 31, 2026, within a maximum period of one month from the date of this announcement, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

PAI explained that failure to pay within the specified deadline will result in several measures, including publishing notices in daily newspapers naming defaulters, suspend-

ing all transactions related to the unpaid vouchers with PAI and relevant government entities, and taking administrative action to close the vouchers. These measures may also include pursuing legal action to withdraw the vouchers and terminate their contracts.

The authority urged all concerned parties to make timely payments to avoid any legal or administrative consequences.

Kuwait seeks British expertise for aviation

Minister Al-Mukhaizeem, UK Trade Commissioner hold economic talks

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15, (KUNA): Kuwait's Acting Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Sabeeh Al-Mukhaizeem on Sunday held talks with the United Kingdom's Trade Commissioner to Kuwait.

The minister's discussions with Lord Iain McNicol dealt

with ways to enhance bilateral relations within the framework of the historic and strategic partnership that unites the two countries.

In a press statement issued on Sunday, the Ministry of Finance said the meeting included an exchange of views on a number of economic and investment issues of mutual interest and ways to develop them during the coming phase.

The ministry added that the discussions also reviewed strategic and development efforts and plans in both countries, as well as the potential contribution of each side to supporting and implementing these plans in line with available capabilities, in a manner that serves the mutual interests of both parties.

The statement noted that views were also exchanged on

opportunities for cooperation in several vital sectors, including investment, sustainable energy, information technology, and the transport sector. The meeting further addressed current priorities and projects, along with prospects for future cooperation in these areas.

The meeting was attended by the Ambassador of the UK

and Northern Ireland to Kuwait, Qudsi Rasheed and a number of officials from the Ministry of Finance and the British Embassy in Kuwait.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the Public Authority for Civil Aviation Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Al-Humoud Al-Sabah

Civil Aviation Authority photo The head of Civil Aviation during his meeting at his office with the British Trade Commissioner to the country.

on Sunday held talks with the United Kingdom's Trade Commissioner to Kuwait Lord Iain McNicol on ways to enhance cooperation in the field of civil aviation.

The DGCA said in a statement to KUNA that the meeting also addressed air traffic control training, qualification of specialized staff, development of infrastructure and operational services, as well as strengthening public-private partnerships in strategic projects at Kuwait International Airport.

The meeting comes within the framework of boosting Kuwaiti-British relations and the authority's keenness to benefit from British expertise in supporting current and future civil aviation projects.

KAPP cleared to re-tender State assets

CAPT OKs KD44.486m tender for Doha West power plant upgrade

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: The Board of Directors of the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT), at its meeting last Wednesday, approved by majority vote the request of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy to award the tender for the maintenance of gas turbines and their accessories at the Doha West Power Generation and Water Desalination Plant.

The tender was awarded to the lowest bidder that met all stipulated terms and technical specifications, with a total value of KD44.486 million.

The tender is aimed at modernizing and upgrading the plant, as well as enhancing its operational efficiency. The plant is one of the main facilities operated by the ministry and is relied upon for electricity generation and water desalination. It has an installed production capacity of 2,541 megawatts, generated through eight steam turbine units with a capacity of 300 megawatts each, totaling 2,400 megawatts, in addition to five gas turbines with a capacity of 28.2 megawatts each or a combined capacity of 141 megawatts.

In a related development, CAPT announced the change of the deadline for the submission of bids for the operation and maintenance of Shagaya photovoltaic

power plant to Jan 13, instead of Jan 16. It also approved the postponement of the bid submission deadline for the upgrade of eight steam boilers at the Subiya power plant until Jan 6.

It approved the request of the ministry

to award the contract for the operation and maintenance of the power generation and water desalination plants to Al-Daw Engineering General Trading and Contracting Company, which submitted the lowest bid that met all requirements, with a total contract value of KD12.826 million.

Meanwhile, the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) has approved the

request of Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP) to issue a tender for conducting consultancy studies on retendering projects situated on state-owned real estate.

KAPP will carry out the work through a

public tender process, in accordance with Article 17 of the Public Tenders Law.

The winning consultant, after complet-

The winning consultant, after completing the tendering process up to the awarding of the contract, will prepare separate documents for 23 projects slated for retendering to investors. The objective is to significantly boost revenues from these properties, particularly since KAPP previously generated substantial revenues by re-tendering several state-owned properties, in exchange for investment rights at rates exceeding 50 times their original value.

Nawaf Al-Ahmad, Khairan projects approved

Mega housing cities set to rise

By Mohammad Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: The Nawaf Al-Ahmad and Al-Khairan housing city projects are on the verge of implementation, considering the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) already awarded consultancy service contracts for detailed studies, planning, design and the preparation of tender documents for the construction and maintenance of main roads and infrastructure networks in both cities.

According to data obtained by the newspaper, the two cities are expected to provide approximately 115,000 diversified housing units, incorporating the latest building technologies and infrastructure systems to meet the needs of Kuwaiti families and expand housing options.

PAHW announced that seven firms passed the technical evaluation, achieving

a success rate of 70 percent or higher, in the consultancy services competition for Khairan City, with the contract awarded to one of these firms. In the case of Nawaf Al-Ahmad City, six firms met the same technical threshold and the contract was awarded to one of these firms.

It revealed that Khairan City covers an area of 135 square kilometers and will include an estimated 60,000 housing units, while Nawaf Al-Ahmad City has an area of 125 square kilometers and is expected to provide around 55,000 housing units for citizens.

It also affirmed that applicants for the consultancy services competition must have won international planning or design awards within the past 10 years, with proven experience in planning or design, accredited by Kuwait Municipality, and meet several other criteria aimed at ensuring the quality, efficiency and accuracy of the projects.

MoE issues 10 tenders for textbooks

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: The Ministry of Education has announced ten tenders for the typesetting, layout, printing, and supply of new textbooks for grades 2 through 11, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The tenders are open to contractors accredited by the Ministry of Education. Applicants, whether individuals

or companies, must be registered in the Commercial Register and with the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT), must provide a recent certificate as proof of registration.

The ministry affirmed that these tenders are indivisible, and bidders are not allowed to submit alternative offers.





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Strengthening bilateral cooperation

Kuwait's Acting PM Sheikh Fahad hosts Saudi Minister

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15, (KUNA): Acting Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace on Monday Saudi Minister of State and Cabinet Member Turki bin Mohammad bin Fahad bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud and the accompanying delegation.

The meeting discussed bilateral relations and ways to develop them in line with the desires of both countries' leaderships and peoples.

Present at the meeting were the head of the honorary delegation and Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Chief of the Prime Minister's Diwan Abdulaziz Al-Dakheel, and the Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait, Prince Sultan bin Saad bin Khaled





His Excellency the Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, received at Bayan Palace Monday His Royal Highness Prince Turki bin Mohammed bin Fahd bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Minister of State and Member of the Council of Ministers of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and his accompanying delegation, on the occasion of his visit to the country. The meeting was also attended by the Minister of Defense and Head of the accompanying delegation of honor, Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

Sheikha Suad Al-Sabah awarded France's Order of Arts and Letters

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15, (KUNA): The French Republic, represented by the Ministry of Culture, awarded Kuwait's renowned economist, writer and poet Sheikha Dr. Suad Al-Sabah the Order of Arts and Letters, Officer rank, on Sunday in recognition of her significant cultural and intellectual contributions in France and around the world. In an award-giving ceremony,

French Ambassador to Kuwait, Olivier Gauvin, told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that Sheikha Suad Al-Sabah is an exceptional figure who has helped promote the values of freedom and human dignity and defending women and youth rights. "And her poetic and intellectual

voice has transcended geographical boundaries to reach a global audience," the Ambassador Gauvin said.

Gauvin pointed out that Sheikha Dr. Suad was among the first female voices in the Arabian Gulf region to enrich modern Arabic poetry with poems that blended profound humanism, social awareness, and a commitment to major issues.

"Her poetry collections, which have been translated into several languages including French, have resonated widely with readers around the world," he said.

He admired Sheikha Dr. Suad Al-Sabah's intellectual, economic, and cultural contributions, noting that she was the first Kuwaiti woman to earn a doctorate in development and planning sciences.

"Through her writings and stances, she contributed to raising social and political awareness and documenting significant milestones in Kuwait's history," Ambassador Gauvin stated.

He underlined that Dr. Suad Al-Sabah's establishment of the Suad Al-Sabah Publishing and Distribution House and the Suad Al-Sabah Foundation for Intellectual Creativity have served Arab creativity and encouraged generations of writers, researchers, and artists.

The French ambassador emphasized that "culture is a powerful force for change, not merely an in-

tellectual luxury."

He stated that honoring Sheikha Dr. Suad Al-Sabah comes "in recognition of her distinguished creative and intellectual career and her



French Ambassador to Kuwait, Olivier Gauvin, presents the Order of Arts and Letters to Sheikha Dr. Suad Mohammed Al-Sabah.

unwavering commitment to serving culture, freedom of thought, and dialogue among peoples.'

He added that this special occasion represents a significant milestone in the ongoing cooperation between the State of Kuwait and the French Republic, particularly in the fields of culture and science.

"This honor provides an opportunity to build further partnerships between the two countries in collaboration with Sheikha Dr. Suad Al-Sabah," the ambassador said.

"It also sends a positive message to all Kuwaitis interested in the French language, literature, and science," he said, stressing that "France is keen to expand cooperation and friendship with influential cultural and intellectual figures in the State of Kuwait."

For her part, Sheikha Dr. Suad Al-Sabah expressed her deep gratitude and pride in receiving the French Order of Arts and Letters (Officer rank).

She stated that this is honoring is not only for her but also for the Arab culture, the Arabic language, and the role of Arab women in the fields of creativity and thought.

"This order represents recognition of the value of culture and art as a human force that is capable of influencing and transforming. Culture is not a luxury; rather, it is the beating heart of the nation and one of the foundations of true progress,"

She noted that her cultural and intellectual experience was influ-

she clarified.

enced by what she learned in the French capital Paris, which she saw as a model for cities that celebrate art, philosophy, and beauty, and place the creative and talented individuals in their rightful position

She stressed that "nations that honor their creative minds lay the foundations for a brighter future.

Sheikh Dr. Suad Al-Sabah added that this honor represents a message of appreciation for Arab women who have broken the wall of silence and proven their presence in the fields of thought and creativity.

She dedicated this honor to the State of Kuwait and to its children and grandchildren, to the children of Gaza, "to women who are defending their rights, and to the youth on whom hopes are pinned for building a future worthy of their aspirations"

She affirmed that culture is a language of rapprochement between peoples and humanity remains the central issue uniting the world.

She expressed her hope that this award would serve as an incentive to her to do more to serve humanity.

Sheikha Dr. Suad Al-Sabah (born 1942) is an esteemed Kuwaiti economist, writer, and poet, as well as a prominent member of the ruling Al-Sabah family. She is recognized as a significant figure in Kuwaiti intellectual and cultural life and a longtime advocate for women's rights and education.

She completed a degree in economics and politics at Cairo University in 1973 and a doctorate in economics from University of Surrey in the United Kingdom in 1981.

She is a member of the executive committee of the World Muslim Women Organization for South West Asia, and is on the board of trustees and executive committee of the Arab Intellectuals Forum.

France's Order of Arts and Letters (Ordre des Arts et des Lettres) is a prestigious government honor, established in 1957, to recognize eminent artists, writers, and people who have contributed significantly to furthering the arts in France and throughout the world. The award is given at three levels: commander, officer, knight.

Kuwait calls for stronger youth capacity-building

Ambassador Jawaher urges joint programs

JEDDAH, Dec 15, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Ambassador Sheikha Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah on Monday underscored the importance of strengthening cooperation within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to develop joint programs that build youth capacities.

Ambassador Al-Sabah made the remarks during a high-level meeting, held as part of the 26th regular session of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission of the OIC at the organization's headquarters in Jeddah.

She thanked the commission for addressing a topic that speaks directly to the realities of many OIC member states, stressing that youth are key partners in peacebuilding, recovery,

Referring to Kuwait's experience following the 1990 invasion, Al-Sabah said the crisis highlighted the vital role young people can play in the most difficult circumstances, noting their contributions to defending the country, organizing community efforts and restoring essential services after liberation.

Ambassador Sheikha Jawaher pointed to the difficult humanitarian conditions facing several OIC member states, including Palestine, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Syria and Libya, where young people continue to face poverty, displacement, disrupted education and limited job opportunities. She emphasized Kuwait's stance that integrating youth into relief and recovery efforts is not optional but a strategic necessity for achieving stability and sustainable development.

She explained that, in line with its regional and international humanitarian role, Kuwait supports youth-focused initiatives through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), partnerships with the United Nations, and regional and bilateral programs.

These efforts include rebuilding schools, hospitals and community centers, providing educational and training scholarships, financing youth entrepreneurship and innovation.

She reaffirmed Kuwait's commitment to empowering young men and women in peacebuilding programs, in line with UN Security Council Resolutions 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security and 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

Ambassador Al-Sabah is heading Kuwait's delegation to the 26th regular session of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation

The State of Kuwait Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Ambassador Sheikha Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah held talks on Monday with Dr. Hadi Al-Yami, Executive Director of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) on bilateral cooperation in the field of human

The talks took place on the sidelines of Sheikha Jawaher Al-



Ambassador Sheikha Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah, Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs, during a high-level meeting of the 26th regular session of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission of the OIC.

Sabah's chairing of the Kuwaiti delegation participating in the 26th regular session of the OIC's Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission, which began on Sunday at the organization's headquarters in Jeddah. During the meeting, Dr. Al-Yami praised Kuwait's role in

supporting the human rights agenda within the commission and expressed his aspiration to enhance cooperation with member states to further develop the commission's working mechanisms in line with international human rights standards The Kuwaiti delegation participating in the second day of the

26th regular session includes Deputy Permanent Representative and Counselor at Kuwait's mission to the OIC Turki Al-Daihani, as well as Diplomatic Attache at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Zainab Mansouri. Ambassador Sheikha Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah, the State of Kuwait Assistant Foreign Minister for Human

Rights, held talks on Monday with tional Human Rights Commission Maryam Al-Attiyah on cooperation in the human rights sphere. Al-Attiyah is also member of the Independent Permanent

Human Rights Commission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The meeting between Sheikha Jawaher and Al-Attiyah was

held on sidelines of the 26th regular session of the OIC-affiliated permanent committee. Sheikha Jawaher headed the Kuwaiti delegation partaking in the session.

Sheikha Jawaher and Al-Attiyah examined, during their meeting, the commission planned tasks in the forseeable future, ideas for building potentials and securing human rights experts.

The Kuwaiti delegation includes the deputy permanent delegate and adviser at the Kuwaiti mission at the OIC, Turki Al-Daihani, and the Diplomatic Attache at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Zainab Al-Mansouri.

Continued from Page 1

A well-chosen

Kuwait possesses a wealth of qualified citizens, precisely what is needed at this pivotal moment.

The challenges of the past three decades, characterized by widespread, cross-sector corruption, require a massive and sustained effort to pull the nation out of its current predicament. Now is the time for both the state and its people to fully capitalize on on-

going reform initiatives, ensuring that no missteps undermine the progress already made or the successes that lie ahead. The appointment of competent and committed national figures is a critical responsibility that rests squarely with the Cabinet. This is essential to con-

fronting and reversing the persistent decline that has affected all aspects of This deterioration was previously highlighted, notably in a November 20, 2022 editorial titled "O Rulers... Study the Story of the Armenian

Youth Sinan.' The central message of that piece, which recounted the story of the Armenian architect and Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, was that "those who excel at destruction are incapable of building". Unfortunately, that warning

went unheeded. Today, however, a shift is underway. The leadership's determination to restore Kuwait's pioneering role is beginning to translate into tangible steps toward reform.

Kuwait moves

The Banking Affairs Prosecution Office will prepare periodic analytical studies and reports to monitor banking crime methods and develop practical solutions to mitigate them, establishing itself as a primary source of information and analysis in this field.

The office will also launch legal awareness programs, as needed, to educate the public about digital crimes and the procedures in place to combat them. It will work to activate initiatives that enhance the ability to monitor the emerging patterns of these crimes and intervene quickly to mitigate their impact. This move represents a significant step in safeguarding the national economy, securing financial transactions for individuals and institutions, and establishing a stable and secure economic environment.

The Banking Affairs Prosecution Office is scheduled to begin operations

Municipal Council

They pointed out that the proposal, once implemented, will generate job opportunities, support small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and provide a safe and modest environment for the elderly and for individuals seeking tranquility and privacy.

Ministry tightens

It affirmed that the smart license includes all regulatory approvals and can be verified electronically.

The ministry insisted that license holders must comply with these instructions by December 31, 2025, warning that failure to obtain or properly display the license will result in penalties in accordance with regulatory procedures.

Kuwait Ports

UAE; the second top commercial partner for Kuwait globally, the first at the Arab and Gulf levels, receiving 20 percent of Kuwait's non-oil exports.

The Kuwaiti exports to the UAE were valued at 8.38 billion dirhams (USD 6.10 billion) in the first nine months of the current year -- rising by 6.7 percent compared to the past year's corresponding period, Dr. Al-Zeyoudi

The MoU signing aims at developing and operating the containers' processes at the Kuwaiti Al-Shuaiba Port, he revealed.

The historic and strategic partnership between Kuwait and the UAE reflects the brotherly relations "that bond our two countries," he said, adding that it would back up the Kuwaiti port trade movement and logistical services for benefit of the Kuwaiti economy and the regional maritime navigation

Also speaking at the event was Sheikh Khaled Salem Al-Sabah, the KPA Director General, who affirmed that signing the memo was in line with the leadership's vision for boosting the brotherly ties with IAE and the KPA strategy to overhaul its operations and lgistical tasks, thus backing up the external trade, activating the supplies chain and increasing exports and imports as well as luring direct invest-

According to the memo, the Abu Dhabi Ports Group will prepare technical, environmental and financial studies for the enterprise, while the KPA will set a venue of the project and facilitate the licences' issuance for executing the venture.

Captain Mohammad Jumaa Al-Shamsi, the CEO of the Abu Dhabi Ports Group, said "this cooperation depicts the close partnership" between

the two ports' authorities. The Âbu Dhabi group, as a leading supplier of logisitical, commercial solutions and an international developer of ports, marine stations and infrastructures, will employ its substantial expertise to ensure the venture success, Capt. Shamsi added.

Kuwait strengthens

The fourth decision sets controls and regulations for admitting individuals to addiction treatment and rehabilitation centers and for monitoring the operations of these centers.

In a press release, the Ministry of Health explained that the first decision designates the Al-Sulaibiya Youth Center building as a specialized facility for the rehabilitation and treatment of addiction patients, in accordance with Article 3 of Decree Law No. 159/2025. The center will be named the "Addiction Rehabilitation Center."

This move reflects the state's commitment to an integrated treatment approach for addiction, combining specialized healthcare with psychological and social rehabilitation to enhance recovery and support the safe reintegration of patients into society.

The second decision establishes a clear regulatory framework for approving medical reports and prescriptions for narcotic and psychotropic substances brought from abroad. It allows the entry of specific quantities for personal treatment within controlled time frames, provided the medical documents are certified by official Kuwaiti authorities abroad, either in writing or through approved electronic channels.

The third decision regulates the use and trade of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances within licensed governmental and private healthcare facilities. It establishes clear controls, including the requirement to obtain prior authorization for import, export, or transport, and sets standards for the medical prescription and dispensing of these substances in approved quanti-

The decision also obliges licensed entities to document all incoming and outgoing supplies in official records within designated time frames and outlines rules for doctors' possession of certain substances in emergencies. as well as their handling in hospitals, health centers, and research laborato-

The fourth decision establishes a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework for admitting addicts or drug users to treatment and rehabilitation centers, either through voluntary admission, referral by family or employer, or a directive from the competent health authorities. All procedures will maintain strict confidentiality and protect the privacy of cases. The decision outlines reporting protocols, defines the role of the Public Prosecution and courts in detention instead of initiating criminal proceedings or imposing penalties, and sets detention periods of up to three months by Public Prosecution decision or up to one year by judicial ruling, with the possibility of early release upon recovery, as confirmed by an approved medical report.

The Ministry of Health affirmed that these four decisions constitute an integrated regulatory framework, reflecting the state's commitment to protecting society from the dangers of drugs and psychotropic substances while ensuring patients' rights to safe, structured treatment and strengthening the public health system in line with the highest professional and legislative standards.

Kuwait Amir,

The visiting Saudi Prince conveyed the greetings of Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud and Saudi Prime Minister and Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, along with their wishes for His Highness the Crown Prince's good health and for Kuwait and its people continued progress and prosperity under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad AlJaber Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Crown Prince asked the Saudi Prince to convey his greetings to King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, wishing them lasting health and praying to Allah Almighty for further development and prosperity for Saudi Arabia and its people under the Saudi King's wise leadership.

The meeting was attended by the Head of His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, who is also head of the honorary delegation, and senior officials.

Kuwait 2025-26

The amount allocated for them in the current fiscal year, with estimated investments, reached KD126.184 million.

the report, indicating that the draft laws are as follows: ■ Draft law amending Law No.

The newspaper obtained a copy of

116/2014 on public-private partner-■ Amendment of Law No. 100/2015 on establishing the Public Authority

for Youth ■ Law on establishing the Kuwait Technical and Entrepreneurship Complex Free Zone

■ Amendment of the Industry Law ■ Amendment of Kuwaiti Import Law

No. 43/1964 ■ Draft law on establishing a public

electricity and water authority ■ Draft law on establishing a postal

■ Draft law on establishing a fixedline telephone and international com-

munications company ■ Draft law on amending certain provisions of Law No. 37/2010 on the regulation of privatization programs and processes

Sánchez defies populism

Spain pursues inclusive approach to migration

MADRID, Dec 15, (AP): With most European leaders talking tougher about immigration amid a rise in far-right populism and Trump administration warnings that they could face "civilizational erasure" unless they tighten their borders, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez stands apart.

The Iberian nation has taken in millions of people from Latin America and

Africa in recent years, and the leftist Sánchez regularly extols financial and social benefits that immigrants who legally come to Spain bring to the eurozone's fourth-largest economy.



Spain's choice, Sánchez often says, is between "being an open and prosperous country

or a closed and poor one. His words stand in stark contrast to other Western leaders, and so far, his bet seems to be paying off. Spain's economy has grown faster than any other EU nation for a second year in a row, due in part to newcomers boosting its aging workforce.

"Today, Spain's progress and strong economic situation owe much to the contribution of the migrants who have come to Spain to develop their life projects," Sánchez said in July after antimigrant clashes rocked a small southern Spanish town.

Sánchez's immigration approach, including his remarks about immigrants' contributions to Spanish society, is consistent with those of the country's past progressive governments, said Anna Terrón Cusi, a senior fellow at the Migration Policy Institute think tank who previously worked on immigration policy for multiple Spanish governments, including Sánchez's.

"What has changed a lot internally is that there is now very anti-immigration rhetoric from Vox, especially against Muslim immigrants," she said, referring to the far-right Spanish party that has been polling third, behind the ruling Socialists and center-right People's Party. "But Sánchez, unlike other European leaders, responds by directly and strongly confronting this narra-

Centrist leaders across Europe are facing rising pressure from antiimmigrant far-right parties, despite a significant decrease in illegal border crossings into the EU over the past



Runners participate in a Christmas themed Santa Run in San Jose, California, the United States on Dec. 14, 2025. (Xinhua)

Zelenskyy engages US, Germany in high-stakes talks

Ukraine offers NATO compromise, rejects ceding territory



German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier welcomes Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the Bellevue Palace in Berlin, Germany, Monday, Dec. 15, 2025. (AP)

BERLIN, Dec 15, (AP): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Sunday voiced readiness to drop his country's bid to join NATO in exchange for Western security guarantees, but rejected the U.S. push for ceding territory to Russia as he held talks with U.S. envoys on ending the

Zelenskyy sat down with U.S. President Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's sonin-law Jared Kushner. The Ukrainian leader posted pictures of the negotiating table with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz sitting next to him facing the U.S. del-

Responding to journalists' questions in audio clips on a WhatsApp group chat before the talks, Zelenskyy said that since the U.S. and some European nations had rejected Ukraine's push to join NATO, Kyiv expects the West to offer a set of guarantees similar to those offered to the al-

"These security guarantees are an opportunity to prevent another wave of Russian aggression," he said. "And this is already a compromise on our part.'

Russian President Vladimir Putin has cast Ukraine's bid to join NATO as a major threat to Moscow's security and a reason for launching the full-scale invasion in February 2022. The Kremlin has demanded that Ukraine renounce the bid for the alliance membership as part of any prospective peace settlement.

Zelenskyy emphasized that any security assurances would need to be legally binding and supported by the U.S. Congress, adding that he expected an update from his team following a meeting between Ukrainian and U.S.

military officials in Stuttgart, Germany. The U.S. government said in a social media post on Witkoff's account after the five-hour meeting that "a lot of progress was made.'

Washington has tried for months to navigate the demands of each side as Trump presses for a swift end to Russia's war and grows increasingly exasperated by delays. The search for possible compromises has run into major obstacles, including control of Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, which is mostly occupied by Russian

Putin wants Ukraine to withdraw its forces from the part of the Donetsk region still under its control among the key conditions for peace, a demand rejected by Kyiv.

Zelenskyy said that the U.S. had floated an idea for Ukraine to withdraw from the Donetsk and create a demilitarized free economic zone there, a proposal he rejected as unworkable.

"I do not consider this fair, because who will manage this economic zone?" he said. "If we are talking about some buffer zone along the line of contact, if we are talking about some economic zone and we believe that only a police mission should be there and troops should withdraw, then the question is very simple. If Ukrainian troops withdraw 5-10 kilometers, for example, then why do Russian troops not withdraw deeper into the occupied territories by the same distance?

Zelenskyy described the issue as "very sensitive" and insisted on a freeze along the line of contact, saying that "today a fair possible option is we stand where we stand."

Putin's foreign affairs adviser Yuri Ushakov told the business daily Kommersant that Russian police and national guard would stay in parts of the Donetsk region even if they become a demilitarized zone under a prospective peace plan.

Europe

Pope decries jail crisis: Pope Leo XIV criticized prison overcrowding and insufficient inmate rehabilitation programs on Sunday as he celebrated a special Mass for detainees, guards and their families in the final event of the Vatican's 2025 Holy Year.

The Vatican said an estimated 6,000 people signed up to participate in the weekend pilgrimage, including representatives from big detention facilities in Italy and prison volunteers, wardens and prison chaplains from 90 countries.

Included were a few groups of inmates who received special permission to participate, according to the Italian penitentiary chaplain's association.

In his homily, Leo acknowledged the oftentimes poor conditions prisoners face even in wealthier countries. He called for a sense of charity and forgiveness to prevail for prisoners and those responsible for guarding them.

"Here, we can mention overcrowding, insufficient commitment to guarantee stable educational programs for rehabilitation and job opportunities," he said, adding that patience and forgiveness are needed.

"On a more personal level, let us not forget the weight of the past, the wounds to be healed in body and heart, the disappointments, the infinite patience that is needed with oneself and with others when embarking on paths of conversion, and the temptation to give up or to no longer forgive," he said.

As the last big event of the 2025 Jubilee, the Mass in many ways closed out the Holy Year that Pope Francis inaugurated Christmas Eve 2024, which had as its main thrust transmitting a message of hope especially for those on society's margins. (AP)

'Deepen mutual trust': Chinese ambassador to Germany Deng Hongbo has called on China and Germany to deepen mutual trust

friendship.

At a symposium held on Friday, German guests recounted stories of mutual assistance between the two peoples, citing examples like German businessman John Rabe's efforts to protect Chinese civilians during the Nanjing Massacre and

Shanghai opening its door to Jewish refugees during World War II.

Noting that this period of history deserves to be remembered by the people of both countries, they said that the two sides should carry forward their friendship, strengthen exchanges and mutual learning, deepen win-win cooperation, and work together to pursue common development and build peace.

Both sides should cherish these valuable experiences, adhere to the positioning of partners, deepen mutual trust through cooperation and jointly write a new chapter of bi-lateral friendship, said the Chinese ambassador. (Xinhua)

Pavel taps new cabinet: Czech President Petr Pavel on Monday appointed a new cabinet led by Prime Minister Andrej Babis, completing the government formation after October's parliamentary elections.

The appointment marks Babis' return to the national administration power as leader of the ANO party, who previously served as prime minister from 2017 to 2021.

Babis was sworn in as prime minister on Dec. 9, promising to make the Czech Republic "the best place on our planet.

The new cabinet is a coalition consisting of the prime minister and 15 ministers from Babis' ANO party, the Freedom and Direct Democracy party (SPD) and the Motorists for Themselves. The coali-



European Commissioner for Enlargement Marta Kos speaks with the media as she arrives for a meeting of EU foreign ministers at the European Council building in Brussels, Monday, Dec. 15, 2025. (AP)

tion holds a majority of 108 seats in the 200-member Chamber of Deputies.

Under the coalition agreement, the ANO party secures eight ministerial posts, such as the finance minister and the interior minister, in addition to the position of prime minister. The Motorists party heads four ministries, including the foreign ministry, while the SPD takes three, including the defense minis-

Four cabinet members also serve as deputy prime ministers, including Karel Havlicek and Alena Schillerova from ANO, Petr Macinka from the Motorists party, and Jaromir Zuna, nominated by the SPD. (Xinhua)

Magyar leads protest: Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's main challenger on Saturday led tens of thousands of demonstrators through the streets of Budapest in a protest over alleged child abuse in state-run juvenile institutions, an issue that has already shaken Orbán's government following a scandal last year.

The demonstration, called by Orbán's top rival, Péter Magyar, came in response to videos published this week depicting employees of a juvenile correction facility in Budapest physically abusing children housed there. The former head of the facility, who is in police custody on suspicion of operating a prostitution ring among other crimes, has also been accused of subjecting minors to physical and sexual abuse.

Police raided the correction center this week, though critics have accused Orbán's government of failing to act despite reports of misconduct going back years. Magyar, whose center-right Tisza party is polling ahead of Orbán's Fidesz in most independent surveys, has jumped on the case and accused the government of failing to protect vulnerable children, and called on Orbán to resign. Elections are expected to take place in April.

The Hungarian government's communications office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The crowd Saturday gathered in cold temperatures in central Budapest and marched solemnly across the Danube River. Many marchers lit torches as dusk fell, and began climbing toward Orbán's offices on Castle Hill. (AP)

Lawmakers urge measures as risks rise from exploitation

Extremists weaponize AI for global reach

WASHINGTON, Dec 15, (AP): As the rest of the world rushes to harness the power of artificial intelligence, militant groups also are experimenting with the technology, even if they aren't sure exactly what to do with it.

For extremist organizations, AI could be a powerful tool for recruiting new members, churning out realistic deepfake images and refining their cyberattacks, national security experts and spy agencies have warned.

Someone posting on a pro-Islamic State group website last month urged other IS supporters to make AI part of their operations. "One of the best things about AI is how easy it is to use," the user wrote in English.

"Some intelligence agencies worry that AI will contribute (to) recruiting, the user continued. "So make their

nightmares into reality IS, which had seized territory in Iraq and Syria years ago but is now a decentralized alliance of militant groups that share a violent ideology, realized years ago that social media could be a potent tool for recruitment and disinformation, so it's not surprising that the group is testing out AI, national security experts say.

For loose-knit, poorly resourced extremist groups - or even an individual bad actor with a web connection - AI can be used to pump out propaganda or deepfakes at scale, widening their reach and expanding their influence.

"For any adversary, AI really makes it much easier to do things," said John Laliberte, a former vulnerability researcher at the National Security Agency who is now CEO of cybersecurity firm ClearVector. "With AI, even a small group that doesn't have a lot of money is still able to make an impact."

Militant groups began using AI as soon as programs like ChatGPT became widely accessible. In the years since, they have increasingly used generative AI programs to create realisticlooking photos and video.

When strapped to social media algorithms, this fake content can help recruit new believers, confuse or frighten enemies and spread propaganda at a scale unimaginable just a few years ago.

Such groups spread fake images two years ago of the Israel-Hamas war depicting bloodied, abandoned babies in bombed-out buildings. The images spurred outrage and polarization while obscuring the war's actual horrors. Violent groups in the Middle East used the photos to recruit new members, as did antisemitic hate groups in the U.S.

and elsewhere. Something similar happened last year after an attack claimed by an IS affiliate killed nearly 140 people at a concert venue in Russia. In the days after the shooting, AI-crafted propaganda videos circulated widely on discussion boards and social media, seeking new recruits.

IS also has created deepfake audio recordings of its own leaders reciting scripture and used AI to quickly translate messages into multiple languages, according to researchers at SITE Intelligence Group, a firm that tracks extremist activities and has investigated IS' evolving use of AI.

Cybersecurity

Such groups lag behind China, Russia or Iran and still view the more sophisticated uses of AI as "aspirational," according to Marcus Fowler, a former CIA agent who is now CEO at Darktrace Federal, a cybersecurity firm that works with the federal government.

But the risks are too high to ignore and are likely to grow as the use of cheap, powerful AI expands, he said.

Hackers are already using synthetic audio and video for phishing campaigns, in which they try to impersonate a senior business or government leader to gain access to sensitive networks. They also can use AI to write malicious code or automate some aspects of cyberattacks.

More concerning is the possibility that militant groups may try to use AI to help produce biological or chemical weapons, making up for a lack of technical expertise. That risk was included in the Department of Homeland Security's updated Homeland Threat Assessment, released earlier this year.

"ISIS got on Twitter early and found ways to use social media to their advantage," Fowler said. "They are always looking for the next thing to add to their arsenal.

Lawmakers have floated several proposals, saying there's an urgent need to

Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, said, for instance, that the U.S. must make it easier for AI developers to share information about how their products are being used by bad actors, whether they are extremists, criminal hackers or foreign spies.

with the public release of ChatGPT, that the same fascination and experimentation with generative AI the public has had would also apply to a range of malign actors," Warner said. During a recent hearing on extrem-

"It has been obvious since late 2022.

ist threats, House lawmakers learned that IS and al-Qaida have held training workshops to help supporters learn to use AI.

Legislation that passed the U.S. House last month would require homeland security officials to assess the AI risks posed by such groups each year.

Guarding against the malicious use of AI is no different from preparing for more conventional attacks, said Rep. August Pfluger, R-Texas, the bill's



Demonstrators chant pro-Islamic State slogans as they carry the group's flags in front of the provincial government headquarters in Mosul, 225 miles (360 kilometers) northwest of Baghdad on June 16, 2014. (AP)

Nation mourns victims of Bondi Beach tragedy

Australia moves to tighten gun laws after Sydney mass shooting

SYDNEY, Dec 15, (AP): Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Monday proposed tougher national gun laws after a mass shooting targeted a Hanukkah celebration on Sydney's Bondi Beach, leaving at least 15 people dead.

Albanese said he would propose new restrictions, including limiting the number of guns a licensed owner can obtain. His proposals were announced after the authorities revealed that the older of the two gunmen - who were a father and son - had held a gun license for a decade and amassed his six guns legally.

"The government is prepared to take whatever action is necessary. Included in that is the need for tougher gun laws," Albanese told reporters.

"People's circumstances can change. People can be radicalized over a period of time. Licenses should not be in perpetuity," he added. At least 38 people were being treat-

At least 38 people were being treated in hospitals after the massacre on Sunday, when the two shooters fired indiscriminately on the beachfront festivities. Those killed included a 10-year-old girl, a rabbi and a Holocaust survivor.

The horror at Australia's most popular beach was the deadliest shooting in almost three decades in a country with strict gun control laws primarily aimed at removing rapid-fire rifles from circulation. Albanese called the massacre an act of antisemitic terrorism that struck at the heart of the nation.

He pledged swift change, planning on Monday afternoon to present his gun law proposals to a national cabinet meeting that includes state leaders. Some of the measures would also require state legislation.

"Some laws are commonwealth and some laws are implemented by the states," the Australian leader said. "What we want to do is to make sure that we're all completely on the same



People gather around a tribute for shooting victims outside the Bondi Pavilion at Sydney's Bondi Beach, Monday, Dec. 15, 2025, a day after a shooting.

page.

Christopher Minns, premier of New South Wales where Sydney is the state capital, agreed with Albanese that gun licenses should not be granted in per-

Minns said his state's gun laws would change, but he could not yet detail how.

"It means introducing a bill to Parliament to - I mean to be really blunt - make it more difficult to get these horrifying weapons that have no practical use in our community," Minns told repoters.

"If you're not a farmer, you're not involved in agriculture, why do you

need these massive weapons that put the public in danger and make life dangerous and difficult for New South Wales Police?" Minns asked.

Australia's gun laws were revised after a 1996 massacre in the Tasmanian town of Port Arthur, where a lone gunman killed 35 people.

Meanwhile, the massacre provoked

Meanwhile, the massacre provoked questions about whether Albanese and his government had done enough to curb rising antisemitism. Jewish leaders and the massacre's survivors expressed fear and fury as they questioned why the men hadn't been detected before they opened fire.

"There's been a heap of inaction,"

said Lawrence Stand, a Sydney man who raced to a Bar Mitzvah celebration in Bondi when the violence erupted to find his 12-year-old daughter. "But the citizens, so ther failure."

An investigat vchin said, into "

government."
"I think the federal government

has made a number of missteps on antisemitism," Alex Ryvchin, spokesperson for the Australian Council of Executive Jewry, told reporters gathered on Monday near the site of the massacre. "I think when an attack such as what we saw yesterday takes place the paramount and fundamental duty of government is the protection of its

people were warned about this. ... And

still not enough has been done by our

citizens, so there's been an immense failure."

An investigation was needed, Ryvchin said, into "how that was allowed to take place." Those investigations were beginning to unfold Monday.

Little was publicly confirmed about the men. Police said they were a father and son but wouldn't supply their names.

The father, 50, who was shot dead, had a gun license that allowed him to legally acquire the six firearms recovered from his property and also held a gun club membership, New South Wales Police Commissioner Mal Lanvon said.

The particular gun license he held entitled an adult with a "genuine reason" to own a rifle or shotgun. Accepted reasons include target shooting, recreational hunting and vermin control, but self-defense is not an accepted reason.

The man arrived in Australia in 1998 on a student visa, authorities said, and was an Australian resident when he died. Officials wouldn't confirm what country he had migrated from.

His 24-year-old Australian-born son, who was shot and wounded, is being treated at a hospital. Lanyon said the man "may well" face criminal charges and police wouldn't divulge what they knew about him to avoid marring a prosecution case against him.

Albanese confirmed that Australia's main domestic spy agency, the Australian Security Intelligence Agency, had investigated the son for six months in 2019.

Australian Broadcasting Corp. reported that ASIO had examined the son's ties to a Sydney-based Islamic State group cell. Albanese did not describe the associates, but said ASIO was interested in them rather than the

son.

"He was examined on the basis of being associated with others and the assessment was made that there was no indication of any ongoing threat or threat of him engaging in violence," Albanese said.

None of the dead or wounded victims have been formally named by the authorities. Identities of those killed, who ranged in age from 10 to 87, began to emerge in news reports Monday.

Among them was Rabbi Eli Schlanger, assistant rabbi at Chabad of Bondi and an organizer of the family Hanukkah event that was targeted, according to Chabad, an Orthodox Jewish movement that runs outreach worldwide and sponsors events during major Jewish holidays.

Hong Kong court convicts former media tycoon Lai

HONG KONG, Dec 15, (AP): **Jimmy Lai,** the pro-democracy former Hong Kong media mogul and outspoken critic of Beijing, was convicted in a landmark national security trial in the city's court on Monday, which could send him to prison for the rest of his life.

Three government-vetted judges found Lai, 78, guilty of conspiring with others to collude with foreign forces to endanger national

security and conspiracy to publish seditious articles. He pleaded not guilty to all charges.



Lai

curity law that was implemented following massive anti-government protests in 2019. During his five years in custody, much of it in solitary confinement, Lai has been convicted of several lesser offenses and appears to have grown more frail and thinner.

Lai's trial, conducted without a jury, has been closely monitored by the U.S., Britain, the European Union and political observers as a barometer of media freedom and judicial independence in the former British colony, which returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

Reading from an 855-page verdict, Judge Esther Toh said that Lai had extended a "constant invitation" to the U.S. to help bring

down the Chinese government with the excuse of helping Hong Kongers.

Lai's lawyers admitted during the trial that he had called for sanctions before the law took effect, but insisted he dropped these calls to comply with the law.

But the judges ruled that Lai had never wavered in his intention to destabilize the ruling Chinese Communist Party, "continuing though in a less explicit way."

Tob. said the court was satis-

Toh said the court was satisfied that Lai was the mastermind of the conspiracies and that Lai's evidence was at times contradictory and unreliable. The judges ruled that the only reasonable inference from the evidence was that Lai's only intent, both before and after the security law, was to seek the downfall of the ruling Communist Party even at the sacrifice of the people of China and

Hong Kong.

"This was the ultimate aim of the conspiracies and secessionist publications," they wrote. Among the attendees were Lai's wife and son, and Hong Kong's Roman Catholic Cardinal Joseph Zen. Lai pressed his lips and nodded to his family before being escorted out of the courtroom by guards.

His verdict is also a test for Beijing's diplomatic ties. U.S. President Donald Trump said he has raised the case with China, and U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer has said his government has made it a priority to secure the release of Lai, who is a British citizen.

The founder of the now-defunct pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily will be sentenced on a later day.

Hard-line agenda raises governance concerns

Chile shifts sharply right with Kast victory





Left: Supporters of Jose Antonio Kast, presidential candidate of the opposition Republican Party, celebrate after he won the presidential runoff election in Santiago, Chile, Sunday, Dec. 14, 2025. Right: Presidential candidate Jose Antonio Kast, of the opposition Republican Party, and his wife Maria Pia Adriasola wave to supporters after winning the presidential runoff election in Santiago, Chile on Sunday. (AP)

SANTIAGO, Chile, Dec 15, (AP): Chile's ultraconservative former lawmaker José Antonio Kast secured a stunning victory in the presidential election Sunday, defeating the candidate of the centerleft governing coalition and setting the stage for the country's most right-wing government in 35 years of democracy.

Kast won 58.2% of the votes as Chileans overwhelmingly embraced his pledge to crack down on increased crime, deport hundreds of thousands of immigrants without legal status and revive the sluggish economy of one of Latin America's most stable and prosperous nations. Kast's supporters erupted into cheers in the street as results trickled in, shouting his name and honking horns.

His challenger, communist candidate Jeannette Jara, clinched 41.8% of the vote.

"Chile needs order - order in the streets, in the state, in the priorities that have been lost," Kast bellowed in a lengthy victory speech that included his tough-on-crime talking points but lacked his usual vitriol. When his supporters interrupted him to boo Jara, he cut them off and snapped, "Respect!" - an about-face from his persona on the campaign trail.

Kast hailed his decisive margin of victory on Sunday, saying it provided him with a "broad mandate" that was also "a tremendous responsibility."

"We are inviting you on a journey to recover values for a proper and healthy life," he said. "It won't be easy. It requires everyone's commitment."

Speaking at a public square in Chile's capital of Santiago, Jara, who served as labor minister in the center-left government of President Gabriel Boric,

encouraged her supporters not to be deterred by the

"It is in defeat that we learn the most," Jara said shortly after calling Kast to concede the election and congratulate him on his successful campaign.

Chileans are not alone in their demand for radical change.

Kast's election represents the latest in a string of votes that have turfed out incumbent governments across Latin America, vaulting right-wing leaders to power from Argentina to Bolivia as U.S. President Donald Trump looks to assert American dominance in the Western Hemisphere, in many cases punishing rivals and rewarding allies.

Argentina's President Javier Milei, a radical libertarian closely aligned with Trump, was first to congratulate Kast on his victory.

"The left recedes," he wrote on social media with a map of all the South American countries that had recently veered to the right.

The Trump administration was also quick to praise Kast. "Under his leadership, we are confident Chile will advance shared priorities to include strengthening public security, ending illegal immigration and revitalizing our commercial relationship," U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said.

The victory for Kast signaled a new era for Chile, representing the first radical right-wing president since the country returned to democracy in 1990, following the bloody dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet. Centrist parties on the right and the left have largely alternated power in the decades since.

On the surface, the two candidates in this tense

presidential runoff could not have been more different, fundamentally disagreeing on weighty matters of the economy, social issues and the very purpose of government.

A lifelong member of Chile's Communist Party

who pioneered popular social welfare measures in Boric's government and hails from a working-class family that protested against Pinochet's 1973-1990 military dictatorship, Jara was a dramatic foil to her rival.

Kast, in contrast, is a devout Catholic and father

of nine whose German-born father was a registered member of Adolf Hitler's Nazi party and whose brother served as a minister in the dictatorship. Kast's moral conservatism, including fierce op-

Kast's moral conservatism, including fierce opposition to same-sex marriage and abortion without exception, has drawn parallels to Brazil's now-incarcerated ex-President Jair Bolsonaro and was rejected by many in the increasingly socially liberal country during his past two failed presidential bids.

But throughout Boric's tenure, fears about uncontrolled illegal migration and unprecedented organized crime roiled the country, dominating this election and fueling support for a hard-line approach to insecurity.

Today his supporters run the gamut, including business people enthused about his free-market instincts, middle-class families scared of venturing out at night for fear of carjackings and extreme right-wing activists who glorify the military dictatorship.

Among those attending Kast's victory speech late Sunday were young Chileans raising framed photos of Pinochet.

Delhi air turns hazardous, emergency curbs enforced

NEW DELHI, Dec 15, (Xinhua): The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) in India on Sunday invoked Stage 4 of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in Delhi and the surrounding areas, as a thick blanket of smog was seen over the region since Saturday.

Strictest anti-air pollution measures have been put in place in the region as the Air Quality Index (AQI) crossed the 450-mark since Saturday, which was termed hazardous for the locals.

As per Stage 4 of GRAP, construction activities were banned, schools were directed to run in hybrid mode,

government and private offices were told to work with 50 percent staff capacity, and entry of vehicles belonging to certain categories was restricted in the Indian capital. Over the past several years, Delhi and the surrounding areas have been grappling with air pollution, especially during the winter months from November to February. The number of people suffering from lung-related diseases rose manyfold during these months.

Meanwhile several collisions

Meanwhile, several collisions among vehicles were reported from different places in northern India amid foggy conditions on Sunday morning.



People walk through a public park in a dense smog-covered morning in New Delhi, India, Monday, Dec. 15, 2025. (AP)

Asia

Blizzard batters Hokkaido: A rapidly developing low-pressure system has brought a blizzard to Hokkaido on Monday, with violent winds and heavy snowfall also affecting parts of northeastern Japan, causing disruptions to transportation and prompting warnings of storm surges and flood risks from high

According to the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA), gusts of wind recorded over a three-hour period up to 6 a.m. on Monday reached about 32.9 meters per second in the city of Abashiri and 32.7 meters per second in Kushiro, both in Hokkaido.

Snowfall has intensified across Hokkaido. Snowfall in the six hours through 6 a.m. on Monday reached 49 cm in Engaru Town, and 40 cm in Kitami City. As of 6 a.m., snow depth stood at 172 cm in the Hakkoda mountain range in Aomori Prefecture, and 59 cm at Obihiro Airport.

The JMA forecasted stormy conditions to continue, with very strong winds accompanied by snow or rain across Hokkaido and the Tohoku region. Heavy snowfall is expected mainly in Hokkaido, with up to 40 cm forecast in some areas over the 24 hours through Tuesday morning. (Xinhua)

Thailand election Feb 8: Thailand's Election Commission on Monday announced it has approved a plan to hold the country's general election for members of the House of Representatives on Feb. 8, 2026.

The announcement follows a royal decree dissolving the lower house of parliament, which took effect last Friday, mandating the commission to organize a general election. (Xinhua)

(Xinhua)

Thai airstrikes widen, says Cambodia: Thai military forces' attack on Cambodia in the 4th Military Region has entered further deep into Cambodian sovereign territory, said the Cambodian Ministry of Defense on Monday.

The Thai military forces have expanded their airstrikes to a location in northwest Cambodia's Siem



The silhouette of a person is reflected on a store's window beside Japanese characters reading 'the world' Monday, Dec. 15, 2025, in Tokyo. (AP)

Reap province, the ministry said in a press release, adding that the Thai military used an F-16 fighter jet to drop two bombs near a displaced civilian camp in the province at 10:00 a.m. on Monday local time.

The fresh border conflict with Thailand has left 12 Cambodian civilians dead and 74 others injured as of 6 p.m. local time on Sunday, Cambodia's Interior Ministry Spokesperson Touch Sokhak said at a press briefing on Monday. (Xinhua)

y. (Xinnua)

Japan stabbing injures 2: Japanese police said Monday they arrested a man in connection with the alleged stabbing of two people at an entertainment complex housing the female pop music group HKT48 in the southern city of Fukuoka, leaving them with non-life-threatening injuries.

Fukuoka police said they arrested a 30-year-old suspect for allegedly stabbing a 44-year-old man in the chest at the facility on Sunday with what appeared to be a kitchen knife.

Police said they are investigating the case as possible attempted murder but declined to give further details, including the suspect's motives, and they also

did not comment on the second stabbing.

Kyodo News agency and other Japanese media said the injured man, who worked for the HKT48 theater inside the complex, was stabbed when he saw the suspect in an unauthorized area and told him to

The suspect also allegedly stabbed a 27-year-old woman in the back in an elevator hall at the facility before he fled the scene, media reports said. (AP)

Boursa Kuwait closes lower

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait ended Monday's session with broad declines across its indices. The general market index fell by 62.51 points, or 0.69 percent, to close at 9,020.96 points. Trading activity reached 336.17 million shares across 21.758 cash transactions, with a total value

of KD 94.3 million (around USD 287.6 mil-

The main market index slid 60.02 points, or 0.72 percent, to finish at 8,286.29 points. It saw 163.8 million shares change hands through 11,010 transactions worth KD 30.11 million (approximately USD 91.8 million).





National Investments Company Successfully Executed the IPO of **Action Energy Company, with Subscription Coverage Reaching** 276 Million KWD and Exceeding 5.0 Times the Offering Value

Trading of Action Energy Company shares on the Premier Market of Boursa Kuwait will begin as of 17 December 2025



National Investments Company (NIC) announced the completion of the private placement and the successful listing procedures of Action Energy Company on the Premier Market of Boursa Kuwait, following the approvals of the Capital Markets Authority and Boursa Kuwait. This comes in preparation for the commencement of trading in the company's shares starting Wednesday, 17 December 2025.

The Company affirmed that the offering was executed in line

Fahad Abdulrahman Al Mukhaizim:

- We are proud of the trust placed in us by Action Energy Company to serve as the exclusive listing advisor, exclusive subscription agent, joint lead coordinator, and joint IPO manager.
- National Investments Company dedicated a specialized team to oversee all logistical and marketing aspects related to the offering process.
- The successful listing of Action Energy Company reflects our long-standing track record of achievements, further strengthening the company's position as one of the most prominent players in the financial and investment services sector locally and regionally.

with the highest standards and witnessed strong interest from local and international investors. Subscription orders exceeded the offered amount by more than 5.0 times, with an initial coverage value of KWD 276 million. A total of 94.5 million new shares were issued and 165.5 million existing shares were reoffered at a unified price of 212 fils per share of Action Energy Company to eligible investors during the period from 23 November 2025 to 7 December 2025. Following the offering,

Action Energy Company's issued

and paid-up share capital amounted to KWD 56.65 million.

In this context, Mr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizim, Board Member and Chief Executive Officer of National Investments Company (NIC), said that the company is proud to take on the roles of exclusive listing advisor for the Premier Market of Boursa Kuwait, exclusive subscription agent, joint lead coordinator, and joint subscription manager in a process considered one of the most prominent IPOs in the local market. He added that this success enhances National Investments Company's position in the financial and investment services sector at the regional level.

AlMukhaizim highlighted that the offering attracted interest from a broad range of global long-only asset managers, international investment platforms, sovereignlinked institutions, and prominent regional investors, underscoring the quality of Action Energy Company's fundamentals and the growing appeal of Kuwait's capital markets.

He praised the strong cooperation from the Capital Markets Authority, Boursa Kuwait, and Kuwait Clearing Company, noting that the smooth procedures significantly contributed to the efficient execution of the offering and listing. This reflects the support of the financial ecosystem in encouraging the listing of robust and well-capitalized companies.

He added that Action Energy Company is recognized as one of the leading entities in drilling services, oil and gas well maintenance, rig management, and specialized oilfield servicesfactors that attracted investor interest and generated demand surpassing the offered quantities.

AlMukhaizim concluded by affirming that the successful completion of the subscription process builds upon National Investments Company's distinguished record in managing high-quality offerings and listings, including those of Boursa Kuwait Company, Ali AlGhanim Sons Automotive Company, and Beyout Investment Group, among other strategic transactions in the region.

ACICO reshapes board as strategic investors enter

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: ACICO Group announced its new Board of Directors elected at its Ordinary General Assembly Meeting convened on the morning of 14 December 2025. The fol-

- lowing directors were elected:

 Mr. Ahmed Ghassan Al-Khaled
- Ms. Ghaida Ghassan Al-Khaled ■ Mr. Waleed Khaled Yaqoub Madani
- Mr. Bader Mohammed Al-Oattan ■ Mr. Emad Abdullah Al-Essa
- Mr. Bandar Sulaiman Al-Jarallah ■ Mr. Khaled Saeed Esbaitah
- Mr. Fawaz Salem Al-Mudhaf

The newly elected Board convened on the same day to appoint the Chairman and Vice Chairman, resulting in the

election of: ■ Mr. Emad Abdullah Al-Essa as

Chairman of the Board ■ Mr. Ahmed Ghassan Al-Khaled as Vice Chairman of the Board Strong Ownership Structure to

Support the Next Phase The election of the new Board comes as a group of strategic investors acquire

ownership in the Company. The new investors comprise of companies with extensive experience in the Kuwaiti and regional markets, as well as proven expertise across industry, asset management and financial services. This diversification of the investor

base is expected to strengthen ACICO's capital position and support its expansion plans, including its strategy to develop state-led real estate projects. It will also provide the Group with a stronger network of relationships, contributing to more efficient execution of government and private sector projects, particularly in infrastructure and construction materials. The entry of these investors adds significant value to AC-ICO's expansion journey and enhances

its ability to accelerate growth plans and achieve its strategic objectives for the

Continued Vision and Growth

On this occasion, the Company's shareholders extended their appreciation and gratitude to the previous Board of Directors for their dedicated efforts in redefining the Company's strategy and laying a solid foundation for a new phase of sustainable growth.

Commenting on the outcome, the newly elected Board of Directors stated:"We are proud of the trust placed in us by the shareholders to lead this pivotal next phase. We assume our responsibilities today for a company that stands on solid foundations. As the new Board, we are committed to continuing this journey and building on it through an ambitious vision aimed at strengthening ACICO's position as a key partner in the construction materials and contracting sectors, and as an active contributor to Kuwait's economic growth."

The Board added: "ACICO's diversified business portfolio, the quality of its regionally approved products, and the expertise of its teams spanning more than 35 years represent key strengths that give us the confidence and capability to move steadily toward new horizons of innovation and development, while continuing to support national projects within Kuwait and beyond."

The Board further confirmed that the coming phase will see a comprehensive review of the Company's five-year strategic plan, with the aim of aligning it with the country's future development plan and increasing collaboration to maximize returns for shareholders. The Company will also focus on enhancing operational efficiency, developing production capacity, and increasing market share through entry into new projects.



ACICO Group elects new Board of Directors.

Supporting 'This Is Your Role' environmental initiative

Zain backs national volunteer campaign for sustainability

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: Zain Kuwait supported 'This is Your Role', a volunteer campaign organized by the Ministry of Social Affairs in collaboration with several public and private sector entities and volunteer groups. The campaign promoted environmental responsibility, a culture of sustainability, and national belonging among school students across Kuwait's governorates.

Zain joined the campaign's closing ceremony, attended by the Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila; the Minister of Education Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei; Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Humoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah; Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor and Acting Hawalli Governor Sheikh Sabah Bader Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, as well as Corporate Relations Department Man-

ager at Zain Kuwait Hamad Al-Musaibeeh. Zain's support for this initiative stems from its commitment to strengthening a culture of sustainability and embedding positive behaviors related to environmental protection, safeguarding public facilities, and the responsible use of resources. This contributes to shifting sustainability from awareness messages into tangible daily practices led by everyone in the community, starting with schoolchildren.

The campaign saw broad participation that reflected a strong model of national partnership. Students, supported by educational bodies, volunteer teams, government entities, and governorates, joined efforts in a path aimed at deepening the sense of responsibility and active citizenship, and reinforcing that protecting Kuwait's environment is a shared duty that becomes



Minister Amthal Al-Huwaila, Minister Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei, Sheikh Humoud Al-Jaber, and Sheikh Sabah Al-Bader honor Hamad Al-Musaibeeh in recognition of Zain's support.

strongest when society works hand in hand.

Zain continues to support such initiatives under its comprehensive sustainability strategy, which focuses on mitigating the impacts of climate change and achieving carbon neutrality through practical initiatives and local environmental partnerships, empowering youth with sustainability skills, integrating ESG practices into its operations, and investing in innovative eco-friendly technologies.

Through its various community efforts, Zain also works to translate its commitments into impact-measured initiatives that contribute to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those related to responsible consumption and production, climate action, education, and partnerships. The company continues to strengthen its vision for building a more sustainable economy by improving resource efficiency and activating circular economy principles.

Seamless banking via smart branches & KFHOnline

KFH expands smart branch network across Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: In line with its commitment to meeting customer needs and keeping pace with the latest technologies, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) offers through its smart branches leading banking services that are convenient, secure, and seamless, ensuring the highest standards of excellence.

These efforts affirm KFH's leadership in digital transformation and innovation, enabling the Bank to offer digital financial and banking solutions that add value to customer experience.

KFH is keen to strengthen the presence of its smart branches, which are currently 11 spreading across Kuwait. Customers can find these branchesin The Avenues and the co-op societies of Ishbiliya, Jabriya, Mangaf, Sabah Al-Ahmad, Al-Salam, and Abu Fatira. The branches are also located in Shuwaikh KFH Auto Showroom, Al-Khiran Mall branch, as well as Abdullah Al-Salem and Airport

Thanks to their success and ease of accessto various bankingtransactions, KFH aims to increase the number of its smart branches to meet the needs of customers in most areas of Kuwait.

Additionally, KFH continues to strengthen its



A KFH branch

service delivery channels through smart branches, KFHOnline application, social media platforms, as well as through robotic and AI technologies, among many other innovative alternatives to traditional banking channels.

Through its network of electronic branches across Kuwait, customers are able to access a wide range of interactive banking services such as Murabahatransactions, requesting credit and prepaid cards, updating

personal data and mobile number, activating cards, instant cheque book printing, instant card issuance, receiving 10gram gold bullions, opening accounts, buying and selling gold, and cardless cash withdrawals via mobile using a QR code, civil ID, or mobile number, among other fast and secure financing and banking transactions.

Affirming its leadership in digital innovation, KFH comprehensively updated its ATMs and KFHOnline mobile app, featuring a sleek modern design and smart services. Currently, KFHOnline provides over 200 banking services.

The e-banking transactions also include instant virtual prepaid card issuance, checking the PINs of the credit and debit cards, opening an additional bank account online without having to visit the branch, temporarily suspending cards, opening deposits, adding beneficiaries, balance inquiry, requesting financing, checking the financing obligations and the number of installments, reviewing investment plans, receiving account balances and deposits summary, in addition to managing children's accounts through Baiti account, in addition to many other online e-services.

Officials launch simulator project to boost pilot training

Jazeera Airways marks major training milestone with British trade delegation visit

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: Jazeera Airways today welcomed a high-level British delegation to its headquarters in Kuwait, marking an important milestone in UK–Kuwait aviation cooperation and reinforcing the airline's continued investment in advanced aviation training infrastructure.

The delegation led by Lord Iain McNicol of West Kilbride, United Kingdom's Trade Envoy to Kuwait, Jordan and Palestine, Qudsi Rasheed OBE, British Ambassador (Designate) to the State of Kuwait and Naz Demir, Country Director – Trade, was received by Marwan Boodai, Chairman of Jazeera Airways, alongside Barathan Pasupathi, Chief Executive Officer, and Capt. Ayman AlShammari, Chief Operating Officer.

Lord Iain McNicol of West Kilbride said: "Kuwait's first A320neo full flight simulator marks a major milestone in UK–Kuwait aviation collaboration. Manufactured in the United Kingdom by Acron Aviation, this state of the art capability will sharpen skills, enhance safety, and expand in country training capacity in Kuwait. We are proud to

capacity in Kuwait. We are proud to champion partnerships like this and to see British expertise supporting Jazeera Airways' growth while strengthening connectivity, trade, and tourism between our countries. As Jazeera considers launching direct services to the UK – subject to regulatory approvals – this will deepen people to people links between our countries, creating more opportunities for students, families, and businesses to travel, meet, and collaborate."

During the visit, the delegation joined Jazeera Airways' leadership for a ground-breaking ceremony marking the designated site where the airline's new A320neo Full Flight Simulator will be located. Scheduled to be operational in early 2026, the A320neo R7e Full Flight Simulator, the first of its kind in Kuwait, has been



Jazeera Airways welcomes British delegation to strengthen aviation ties.

manufactured by Acron Aviation in the United Kingdom.

Commenting on the occasion, Marwan Boodai, Chairman of Jazeera Airways, said: "It is an honor to welcome Lord Iain McNicol of West Kilbride and British Ambassador (Designate) Qudsi Rasheed OBE to Jazeera Airways as we mark this important milestone. The introduction of Kuwait's first A320neo full flight simulator is a strategic investment that reflects our long-term commitment to building world-class aviation capabilities in Kuwait. As Jazeera celebrates 20 years of flying this year, we are pleased to also mark a collaboration that strengthens UK–Kuwait ties while advancing aviation excellence in Kuwait and the wider region."

The state-of-the-art simulator represents a significant upgrade to Jazeera Air-

ways' training capabilities, enabling enhanced in-country pilot training, and reducing reliance on overseas facilities. Jazeera currently flies to more than 70 destinations and serves around 5 million passengers with a fleet of 23 aircraft. Training future pilots will support Jazeera's next phase of network growth to more than 100 destinations and over 10 million passengers in the next five years. Jazeera will also expand its fleet with a firm order book of 26 Airbus aircraft, comprising 18 A320neo and 8 A321.

During the meeting, the delegation also discussed broader areas of mutual interest such a building connectivity and further strengthening trade and investment link between the two countries

In response to strong and growing demand for Kuwait–UK travel, Jazeera Airways is exploring the launch of direct flights to London with Luton Airport, which are subject to regulatory approvals. As the airline works through the approval process, this potential new route underscores their ongoing commitment to expanding its network, responding to customer demand, and supporting Kuwait and UK's bilateral aviation

and tourism development.

With the recent award of a national non-scheduled (charter) air carrier approval by the General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Jazeera is authorized to operate domestic and international charter services from the Kingdom. This further reinforces the airline's role in supporting regional connectivity, tourism, and economic growth.

Jazeera Airways continues to invest in infrastructure, partnerships, and people as part of its long-term growth strategy, reinforcing Kuwait's position as a regional aviation hub and supporting the development of local talent.

'ATMs now our digital front door'

ABK upgrades ATMs to deliver faster, smarter digital banking

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) continues to keep pace with the latest technological advancements in the banking sector, reaffirming its commitment to providing modern solutions, services, and products to all customer segments. These enhancements aim to help customers complete their financial and banking transactions with greater ease and speed, 24 hours a day.

As part of its digital transformation plans, ABK continues to upgrade its nationwide ATM network, enhancing the quality and security of the services delivered. This includes new software improvements and an enhanced user interface designed to make self-service banking faster, easier, and more intuitive.

Customers can now benefit from a wide range of additional ATM services, including Cardless cash withdrawals, selecting preferred banknote denominations when withdrawing cash, performing domestic and international transfers directly through ATMs, paying credit

car ing bild vie all to am vic

Johair Marafi

card bills, recharging or settling mobile phone bills, and viewing balances for all accounts linked to their debit card, among other ser-

These newly added features enhance the quality of ABK's ATM offering and directly reflect the

Bank's commitment to providing customers with greater convenience and independence in completing their transactions anytime and anywherewithout relying on branch timings, ultimately boosting customer satisfaction and loy-

Commenting on this, **Johair Marafi**, General Manager of Retail Banking at ABK, said, "In an era of rapid digital advancement, ATMs have become the Bank's front door. Enhancing their services and enriching them with modern technologies is a fundamental commitment we uphold to earn customer satisfaction"

Marafi added that investing in the reliability, security, and user-friend-liness of ABK's ATMs reinforces the Bank's competitive position in the market. She added, "By offering more personalized options across our ATMs, we enable customers to complete their everyday banking needs swiftly and effortlessly."

She emphasized that ATM development is an integral part of ABK's broader digital transformation program, which focuses on improving speed, reliability, and convenience across all customer touchpoints. Marafi encouraged customers to experience the upgraded ATMs,



ABK transforms ATMs into 24/7 minibranches.

especially as these enhancements align with the recently revamped ABK Mobile App, which now offers an expanded suite of features to meet customer needs around the clear.

Marafi added that the ATM upgrades reflect ABK's commitment to providing a unified, fully integrated, and distinctive digital banking experience across its various platforms, including the enhanced ABK Mobile Appensuring the Bank remains at the forefront of technological innovation in the industry.

She further explained that the new ATMs now offer personalized service menus tailored to the customer segmentcovering all customers, Al-Nokhba clients as well as Private Banking clients. These enhancements were specially designed to support diverse financial goals and lifestyles, ensuring customers receive customized services and guidance aligned with their unique needs. This contributes to a smoother banking experience, easier financial management, and stronger loyalty toward the Bank

Marafi noted that continuous upgrades have effectively transformed ABK's ATMs into mini-branches operating 24/7. She stressed that this represents a direct investment in the customer experience, leading to higher satisfaction levels and supporting the Bank's ability to meet its strategic objectives.

She concluded, "Today's customers expect instant and always-available banking. Upgrading our ATMs ensures we meet these expectations, strengthening their trust in the services we provide. We will continue investing in the development of our digital channels to attract more customers, especially those who prioritize fast, secure, and convenient banking solutions."

Kuwait real estate trading value plunges 19.6% to KD 94.9 million

Private and investment sectors see slower activity

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: The real estate market recorded 4.4 percent decline in the number of transactions -- six fewer deals, as well as 19.6 percent drop in trading value to KD23.2 million during the second week of December, compared with the first week of the month.

The newspaper obtained a copy of the weekly report issued by the Real Estate Registration and Documentation Departments at the Ministry of Justice, indicating that the to-

tal number of real estate transactions on Dec 7-11 reached 128, with an aggregate value of KD94.9 million, compared to 134 transactions valued at KD118.1 million in the first week of December.

Private real estate had 69 transactions in the second week, with a total value of KD33.9 million, down from 93 transactions worth KD35.2 million in the preceding week -- 25.8 percent decline in transaction volume or 24 fewer deals, and 3.6 percent decrease in value, amounting to KD1.3 million.

Meanwhile, the investment sector recorded 33 transactions totaling KD31 million, compared to 36 transactions valued at KD35.2 million in the previous week. This is a modest contraction in investment activity of 8.3 percent in

transaction volume, or three transactions, and 11.9 percent reduction in value, equivalent to KD4.2 million.

In contrast, the commercial sector had a quantitative and qualitative divergence. The number of transactions rose sharply to 25 deals valued at KD26.9 million in the second week, compared to just two transactions worth KD46.3 million in the first week. Despite the significant increase in transaction volume, the overall value declined, underscoring sustained demand for medium and small commercial properties.

As for the coastal strip properties, shops and craft workshops, these sectors remained absent from trading activity, while warehouses returned to the market in the second week, registering a single transaction valued at KD1.4 million after several weeks of inactivity.

Advances digital inclusion at UN-patroned tech event

stc boosts disability empowerment through Assistive Technologies for Special Needs '25

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced its sponsorship and participation in the 2nd International Conference and Forum on Assistive Technologies for Special Needs (ASTN'25). The event was held under the patronage of H.E. Dr. Amthal Al Huwailah, Minister of Social Affairs, the United Nations (UN), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), with the honorary patronage from the National Diwan for Human Rights, and is co-located with the 10th International Conference on ICT Accessibility (ICTA'25). stc's participation in the conference further build on its ongoing commitment to enable digital transformation in Kuwait by providing technology and digital accessibility.

Participating speakers in the conference included H.E. Ambassador Ghada Eltahir, UN Resident Coordinator – State of Kuwait, Prof. Khaled Al-Begain, President of KCST, Dr. Khalifaa Al-Hila, Deputy Director General at the Public Authority for Disability Affairs (PADA), Eng. Anowd Muthaib, Chief Transformation and Synergies Officer at stc, with Faisal Al-Mousawi moderating the conference.

Taking place from December 7th to the 10th at the Kuwait College of Science and Technology (KCST), ICTA'25 and ASTN'25 welcomed a lineup of specialized entities from Kuwait and abroad operating within assistive technology, artificial intelligence, and inclusive digital education. The conference program covered a range of topics that included E-Accessibility and Inclusive Technologies, AI and Accessibility, Smart and Pervasive Systems for Accessibility, Open and Inclusive Digital Education, Emerging Trends in Computing and Accessibility, and Advanced Interfaces & Breakthrough Tech for Accessibility. These were discussed in workshops, panel discussion, and keynote speeches. The objective of the conference was to exchange global insights and promote innovative solutions that will promote greater inclusivity and



A group photo of the participants during the conference ceremony.

accessibility to diverse technologies.

stc indicated that its participation aligns with its commitment to support inclusive innovation and accessibility initiatives that empower individuals with disabilities. Throughout the event, stc participated in conference discussions on the role of assistive technologies in enhancing digital access, represented by Eng. Muthaib. She shared her insights on enabling technology-driven solutions that cater and empower individuals with disabilities. Additionally, the Company participated in the exhibition with a dedicated booth showcasing its digital solutions that enhance user accessibility, while highlighting stc's broader strategy to enable digital transformation. stc launched an awareness campaign as well to support the cause across its digital platforms to encourage knowledge-sharing and community engagement surrounding this vital field.

stc emphasized that supporting platforms like ATSN'25 and ICTA'25 aligns with its strategic vision to strengthen digital inclusion, accelerate innovation, and contribute to building a more accessible future for individuals with special needs in Kuwait. The Company stated that such initiatives align with



stc, represented by Eng. Anowd Muthaib, Chief Transformation and Synergies Officer (right), is honored by H.E. Dr. Amthal Al Huwailah, Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs (center).

the core pillars of its comprehensive CSR and sustainability frameworks, highlighting that digital empowerment can significantly improve quality of life and provide learning opportunities for people with disabilities. Through its continued involvement in such initiatives, stewill continue to explore collaborations between companies within the private and public sector to drive awareness on important topics that serve community needs.

In cooperation with the Kuwait Fund for Development

Arab Planning Institute launches Corporate Governance workshops

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: The Arab Planning Institute launched a series of training workshops on Corporate Governance at its head-quarters, organized for the Kuwait Fund for Development in cooperation with the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development. The first workshop was held on Sunday, 14 December 2025.

The workshops are scheduled to take place over a five-day period, with each session targeting a different group of participants. The program is delivered by Dr. Adnan Al-Enzi, Governance and E-Government Supervisor at the Administrative Development Sector of the

General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development.

The opening session was attended by Mr. Rashaid Al-Bader, Acting Deputy Director General of the Kuwait Fund for Development, and Dr. Bader Al-Shammari. Representing the Arab Planning Institute were Dr. Adel Abdulla Al-Waqayan, Director General of the Institute, Dr. Waleed Abdelmawla, Deputy Director General, and Mr. Karim Darwish, Director of the Administrative Apparatus at the Arab Planning Institute.

In their remarks, speakers underscored the importance of institutionalizing corporate gov-

ernance principles and highlighted their vital role in enhancing efficiency, transparency, and sustainability within development institutions.

The organization of these workshops reflects the strength of institutional cooperation between the Arab Planning Institute, the Kuwait Fund for Development, and the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development. This partnership contributes to strengthening institutional capacities, supporting development efforts, and advancing the quality of development services and programs provided by the Institute, both regionally and within the State of Kuwait.



Group photo during the workshop.

The understanding & managing behavioral biases of individual investors in context of wealth management

By NBK Wealth

Traditional finance theory assumes that investors behave rationally and make objective decisions that maximize expected utility. In reality, investment behavior frequently departs from this ideal. Decisions are shaped by emotion, perception, memory, and psychological tendencies that influence how risk and uncertainty are interpreted.

Behavioral finance seeks to explain these deviations by examining the psychological forces that shape decision making. Behavioral biases are not occasional anomalies but persistent patterns that influence how investors perceive markets, assess opportunity, and respond to volatility. They represent a structural risk to portfolio outcomes and long term wealth creation.

Understanding these biases is therefore central to effective wealth management. The advisor's role extends beyond portfolio construction to guiding clients through uncertainty, mitigating emotionally driven decisions, and maintaining alignment between long term

strategy and short term behavior.

Behavioral Biases and Decision Making

Investor behavior is shaped by upbringing, life experiences, education, social environment, and exposure to financial crises. Experiences during formative years often have a lasting impact on risk tolerance. Investors who experienced significant losses during



market downturns frequently retain a heightened aversion to risk, even when market conditions and portfolio structures evolve.

Most investors rely on mental shortcuts to simplify complex decisions. While these shortcuts provide efficiency, they often lead to suboptimal outcomes. Behavioral biases emerge from this process and shape how capital is allocated, how performance is interpreted, and how consistently investors adhere to their investment strategy.

Classification of Behavioral Biases

Behavioral biases generally fall into two categories. Cognitive biases which result from errors in reasoning and information processing, and emotional biases which arise from instinctive emotional responses. This distinction is critical in wealth management, as it determines whether behavior can be moderated through education or must be accommodated through portfolio design.

Key Behavior Biases in Wealth Management

While all biases influence investor behavior, three are particularly impactful in contemporary wealth management practice: loss aversion, mental accounting, and con-

firmation bias.

Loss aversion causes investors to fear losses more than they value gains. This leads to premature profit taking and reluctance to sell underperforming assets in the hope of avoiding realized losses, disrupting portfolio discipline and weakening long term compounding. During volatile periods, emotional responses intensify and encourage defensive positioning that undermines long term returns.

Mental accounting results in compartmentalized thinking, where assets are viewed in isolation rather than as part of an integrated portfolio. Investors, for example, differentiate between income portfolios, growth portfolios, and speculative investments without considering the overall portfolio risk profile. While this provides psychological comfort, it leads to inefficient asset allocation and inconsistent risk exposure. Over time, it erodes diversification quality and risk adjusted returns.

Confirmation bias drives inves-

tors to seek information that supports existing beliefs while ignoring contradictory evidence. This distorts objective decision making, entrenches flawed strategies, and delays corrective action, often resulting in avoidable losses.

Managing Behavior Biases in Practice

Behavioral biases represent one of the most underestimated risks in wealth management. They influence how investors respond to uncertainty and remain committed to long term strategies. A sophisticated wealth management framework recognizes that optimal portfolios must reflect both quantitative logic and human behavior. Advisors who integrate behavioral insight do more than manage capital. They preserve discipline, alignment, and sustainable long term outcomes.

Effective management of behavioral biases requires balancing education with adaptation. Cognitive biases may be moderated through structured guidance and objective reasoning, while emotional biases often require thoughtful portfolio design and communication.

Advisors can support clients by reinforcing long term perspectives, contextualizing short term volatility, and discouraging excessive portfolio monitoring. Transparent communication and careful framing help preserve discipline especially in periods of stress. In some cases, limited deviation from optimal allocation may be appropriate to ensure behavioral sustainability.

Tariffs 101: What they are & why they matter

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

By Kent Jones

Babson College

The U.S. Supreme Court is currently reviewing a case to determine whether President Donald Trump's global tariffs are legal.

Until recently, tariffs rarely made headlines. Yet today, they play a major role in U.S. economic policy, affecting the prices of everything from groceries to autos to holiday gifts, as well as the outlook for unemployment, inflation and even recession.

I'm an economist who studies trade policy, and I've found that many people have questions about tariffs. This primer explains what they are, what effects they have, and why governments impose them.

Tariffs are taxes on imports of goods, usually for purposes of protecting particular domestic industries from import competition. When an American business imports goods, U.S. Customs and Border Protection sends it a tariff bill that the company must pay before the merchandise can enter the country.

Because tariffs raise costs for U.S. importers, those companies usually pass the expense on to their customers by raising prices. Sometimes, importers choose to absorb part of the tariff's cost so consumers don't switch to more affordable competing products. However, firms with low profit margins may risk going out of business if they do that for very long. In general, the longer tariffs are in place, the more likely companies are to pass the costs on to customers.

Importers can also ask foreign suppliers to absorb some of the tariff cost by lowering their export price. But exporters don't have an incentive to do that if they can sell to other countries at a higher price

a higher price. Studies of Trump's 2025 tariffs suggest that U.S. consumers and importers are already paying the price, with little evidence that foreign suppliers have borne any of the burden. After six months of the tariffs, importers are absorbing as much as 80% of the cost, which suggests that they believe the tariffs will be temporary. If the Supreme Court allows the Trump tariffs to continue, the burden on consumers

will likely increase.

While tariffs apply only to imports, they tend to indirectly boost the prices of domestically produced goods, too. That's because tariffs reduce demand for imports, which in turn increases the demand for substitutes. This allows domestic producers to raise their prices as well.

The U.S. Constitution assigns all tariff- and tax-making power to Congress. Early in U.S. history, tariffs were used to finance the federal government. Especially after the Civil War, when U.S. manufacturing was growing rapidly, tariffs were used to shield U.S. industries from foreign competition.

The introduction of the individual income tax in 1913 displaced tariffs as the main source of U.S. tax revenue. The last major U.S. tariff law was the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930, which established an average tariff rate of 20% on all imports by 1933.

Those tariffs sparked foreign retaliation and a global trade war during the Great Depression. After World War II, the U.S. led the formation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, or GATT, which promoted tariff reduction policies as the key to economic stability and growth. As a result, global average tariff rates dropped from around 40% in 1947 to 3.5% in 2024. The U.S. average tariff rate fell to 2.5% that year, while about 60% of all U.S.

imports entered duty-free.
While Congress is officially responsible for tariffs, it can delegate emergency tariff power to the president

for quick action as long as boundaries constitutional are followed. The current Supreme Court case involves Trump's use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, or IEEPA, to unilaterally change all U.S. general tariff rates and duration, country by country, by executive order. The controversy stems from the claim that Trump has overstepped his constitutional authority granted by that act, which does not mention tariffs or specifically authorize the president to impose them.

In my view, though, the bigger question is whether tariffs are good or bad policy. The disastrous experience of the tariff war during the Great Depression led to a broad global consensus favoring freer trade and lower tariffs. Research in economics and political science tends to back up this view, although tariffs have never disappeared as a policy tool, particularly for developing countries with limited sources of tax revenue and the desire to protect their fledgling industries from imports.

Yet Trump has resurrected tariffs not only as a protectionist device, but also as a source of government revenue for the world's largest economy. In fact, Trump insists that tariffs can replace individual income taxes, a view contested by most economists.

Most of Trump's tariffs have a protectionist purpose: to favor domestic industries by raising import prices and shifting demand to domestically produced goods. The aim is to increase domestic output and employment in tariff-protected industries, whose success is presumably more valuable to the economy than the open market allows. The success of this approach depends on labor, capital and long-term investment flowing into protected sectors in ways that improve their efficiency, growth and employment.

Critics argue that tariffs come with trade-offs: Favoring one set of industries necessarily disfavors others, and it raises prices for consumers. Manipulating prices and demand results in market inefficiency, as the U.S. economy produces more goods that are less efficiently made and fewer that are more efficiently made. In addition, U.S. tariffs have already resulted in foreign retaliatory trade actions, damaging U.S. exporters.

Trump's tariffs also carry an uncertainty cost because he is constantly threatening, changing, canceling and reinstating them. Companies and financiers tend to invest in protected industries only if tariff levels are predictable. But Trump's negotiating strategy has involved numerous reversals and new threats, making it difficult for investors to calculate the value of those commitments. One study estimates that such uncertainty has actually reduced U.S. investment by 4.4% in 2025.

A major, if underappreciated, cost of Trump's tariffs is that they have violated U.S. global trade agreements and GATT rules on nondiscrimination and tariffbinding. This has made the U.S. a less reliable trading partner. The U.S. had previously championed this system, which brought stability and cooperation to global trade relations. Now that the U.S. is conducting trade policy through unilateral tariff hikes and antagonistic rhetoric, its trading partners are already beginning to look for new, more stable and growing trade relationships.

So what's next? Trump has vowed to use other emergency tariff measures if the Supreme Court strikes down his IEEPA tariffs. So as long as Congress is unwilling to step in, it's likely that an aggressive U.S. tariff regime will continue, regardless of the court's judgment. That means public awareness of tariffs - and of who pays them and what they change - will remain crucial for understanding the direction of the U.S. economy. (AP)

KPC exempts operations staff from unified promotion system

Union efforts secure oil sector promotion system waiver

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: The CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Sheikh Nawaf Al-Saud Al-Sabah has officially approved an exemption for the operations departments of the Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) from the standard unified promotions system.

This decision comes five weeks after the KPC Labor Relations Committee gave its initial approval

According to informed sources, the CEO's approval, which was formalized two days ago, followed significant efforts by the CEO of KNPC Wadha Al-Khatib, in coordination with union leaders. The exemption applies across the sector for employees in operations departments of oil companies but is limited to employees in grades

17 and above.

The sources attributed the exclusion of operations department staff in oil companies from the unified promotions system to the difficulty of aligning it with the nature of their work, particularly in the refineries of KNPC and Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC), both of which are headed by Al-Khatib.

They said the Petroleum and Petrochemical Workers Union played a major role in this regard by sending a letter to the KPC CEO on July 8, and stressing the importance of addressing the promotion system for all grades in the oil sector and requesting the formation of a joint committee to review any circular before its issuance to ensure the public interest and the smooth functioning of operations. KPC responded to the union's letter on July 15, 2025, addressing the union's demands.

The sources affirmed that KPC is committed to resolving all difficulties and concerns faced by oil sector workers and finding appropriate solutions, given their essential role in advancing the oil industry, due to which it will not tolerate any

infringement on the rights of national workers in the oil sector, whether in its subsidiaries or in the private oil sector.

They indicated that the exemption of operations departments from the promotion system, due to their field and technical roles in the oil sector, is based on the unique nature of their work, which is incompatible with the unified promotion system implemented in September 2024.

It is worth highlighting that KPC issued the new unified promotion system for positions at grades 17 and above.

The circular issued by Sheikh Nawaf Al-Saud stated that the mechanism proposed by the Labor Relations Committee would be applied.

During its meeting No. 7/2024 held on August 21, 2024, to evaluate candidates in the unified system for jobs at grades 17 and above in the oil sector, KPC confirmed that nomination applications as of September 1, 2024, would no longer be evaluated using the previously applied 360-degree method. Based on the new mechanism, points for the preference (quota) elements were redistributed.

Al-Roumi highlights market volatility at AEO meeting

Oil prices may rise soon, says Kuwaiti minister

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Oil Tareq Al-Roumi said Sunday that it is uneasy to control global oil market prices or subject them to a fixed equation, terming the current fall in market prices as a "sudden drop".

Speaking to reporters after chairing the 115th ministerial meeting of the Arab Energy Organization (AEO), he said, "The oil market is perplexing, as previous studies showed a rise or stability in global oil market prices, which

contradicts the current reality."

However, the Kuwaiti minister of oil expected that world oil prices would rise in the coming days.

Meanwhile, Al-Roumi hoped that there would be new oil discoveries in the country amid very positive exploration indications.

Concerning Kuwait's possible major petrochemical projects, he said he looks forward to implementing several projects, pointing out a petrochemical acquisition contract signed in the People's Republic of China, along with several future projects being under consideration, including a petrochemical complex in the Sultanate of Oman.

The Kuwaiti minister of oil chaired the 115th ministerial meeting of the Arab Energy Organization (AEO) earlier in the day.

Hassett pledges data-driven decisions if appointed Fed Chair

Trump's Federal pick Hassett affirms independence

WASHINGTON, Dec 15, (AP): A leading candidate to be President Donald Trump's choice for Federal Reserve chair said that he would present the president's views to Fed officials for their consideration but they could reject them if they chose when making decisions on interest rates.

Kevin Hassett, in an interview Sunday on CBS News' "Face the Nation," said he would continue to speak with Trump if he becomes the Fed chair. But when asked if Trump's opinions on interest rates would have "equal weighting" with members of the Fed's interest-rate setting committee, Hassett replied, "No, he would have no weight."

weight."

"His opinion matters if it's good, if it's based on data," Hassett continued. "And then if you go to the committee and you say, well, the president made this argument and that's a really sound argument, I think, what do you think? If they reject it, then they'll vote in a different way."

Hassett's comments come as Trump is reportedly in final interviews with potential replacements for the Fed's current chair, Jerome Powell. Trump has emphasized that



Director of the National Economic Council Kevin Hassett departs after a television interview at the White House, Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2025, in Washington. (AP)

he expects whomever he nominates to lead the Fed will sharply lower the central bank's key rate, which currently stands at about 3.6%. Trump has said it should be cut to 1% or lower, a view almost no economist shares. Trump's outspokenness has

raised concerns about the Fed's independence from day-to-day politics under any chair he appoints.

Until Trump's first election in 2016, presidents of both parties for several decades had avoided commenting publicly on Fed decisions,

and usually refrained from doing so privately as well. Economists generally believe that a politically independent Fed is better at combating inflation, because it can take unpopular steps to keep prices down, such as raise interest rates.

On Friday, however, Trump said that he "certainly should have a role in talking to whoever the head of the Fed is" about rates.

"I've done great. I've made a lot of money, I'm very successful," he said. "I think my voice should be heard."

heard."

The Wall Street Journal reported Friday that Kevin Warsh, a fellow at the right-leaning Hoover Institution and former Fed governor, is Trump's current favorite to replace Powell, whose term ends next May. But Trump has previously hinted that he

would pick Hassett.
"I think the two Kevins are great,"

Trump told the Journal.

Hassett, for his part, on Sunday said that "in the end, the job of the Fed is to be independent."

"In the end, it's a committee that votes," he said. "And I'd be happy to talk to the president every day until both of us are dead because it's so

Features



Relatively quiet weekend in theaters

'Zootopia 2' reclaims No. 1 spot at box office, grosses \$1 billion worldwide

NEW YORK, Dec 15, (AP): "Zootopia 2" regained the No. 1 spot at the domestic box office with \$26.3 million in its third weekend of release, according to studio estimates Sunday, as The Walt Disney Co. animated sequel became the year's second film to gross \$1 billion worldwide.

With "Avatar: Fire and Ash" arriving Friday, it was a relatively quiet weekend in theaters. There were no major new releases, leaving holdovers "Zootopia 2" and "Five Nights at Freddy's 2" to duke it out for the top spot.

The edge went to "Zootopia 2," which has quickly amassed \$1.14 billion in global ticket sales thanks significantly to its enormous success in China. There, it's grossed \$502.4 million, making "Zootopia 2" the biggest Hollywood hit in the country in years.

The only other 2025 Hollywood title to surpass \$1 billion worldwide was Disney's "Lilo & Stitch" (\$1.04 billion). The highest grossing movie of the year, though, is the Chinese blockbuster "Ne Zha 2," which collected nearly \$2 billion just in China.

In its second weekend of release, the Universal Pictures and Blumhouse Productions

sequel "Five Nights at Freddy's 2" collected \$15.4 million, a brutal drop of 70% from its above-expectations debut. Still, with a domestic total of \$95.5 million, the \$36 million production is a big win for Blumhouse, adding another horror franchise to its portfolio.

The weekend's most notable new release was James L. Brook's "Ella McCay," his first directed film in 15 years. "Ella McCay" earned a scant \$2.1 million from 2,500 locations, making it one of the year's worst wide releases.

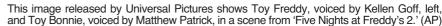
But box-office expectations weren't high coming in from "Ella McCay," a comic drama about a 34-year-old woman (newcomer Emma Mackey) who becomes governor of her home state. Reviews (22% "fresh" on Rotten Tomatoes) were poor, and the kind of award-winning comic dramas movies that Brooks ("Terms of Endearment," "Broadcast News") has long specialized in today seldom find large audiences in theaters. "Ella McCay," featuring a supporting cast including Jamie Lee Curtis, Ayo Edebiri and Woody Harrelson, cost \$35 million to make.

With overall ticket sales on the year running close to even with last year's disappoint-

ing grosses, according to Comscore data, Hollywood will be hoping the coming holiday corridor, traditionally the busiest moviegoing period of the year, ends 2025 on a high note. Movies on tap include "Avatar: Fire and Ash," "The SpongeBob Movie: Search for SquarePants," "Marty Supreme," "Anaconda" and "Song Sung Blue."

With final domestic figures being released Monday, this list factors in the estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore:

- 1. "Zootopia 2," \$26.3 million. 2. "Five Nights at Freddy's 2," \$19.5 mil-
- lion.
 3. "Wicked: For Good," \$8.6 million.
- 4. "Dhurandhar," \$3.5 million.
 5. "Now You See Me: Now You Don't,"
- 5. "Now You See Me: Now You Don't," \$2.4 million.
- 6. "Jujutsu Kaisen: Execution," \$2.1 mil-
- 7. "Ella McCay," \$ 2.1 million. 8. "Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2000), \$1.9 million.
- 9. "Eternity," \$1.8 million. 10. "Hamnet," \$1.5 million.





Obituaries

Authorities probing 'apparent homicide'

Hollywood icon Reiner and wife found dead

LOS ANGELES, Dec 15, (AP): Rob Reiner, the son of a comedy giant who went on to become one, himself, as one of the preeminent filmmakers of his generation with movies such as "The Princess Bride," "When Harry Met Sally ..." and "This Is Spinal Tap," has died. He was 78.

Reiner and his wife, Michele Singer, were found dead Sunday at their home in the Brentwood neighborhood of Los Angeles. A law enforcement official briefed on the investigation confirmed that Reiner and Singer were the victims. The official could not publicly discuss details of the investigation and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Authorities were investigating an "apparent homicide," said Capt. Mike Bland with the Los Angeles Police Department. The Los Angeles Fire Department said it responded to a medical aid request shortly after 3:30 p.m.

shortly after 3:30 p.m.
Reiner grew up thinking his father, Carl Reiner, didn't understand him or find him funny. But the younger Reiner would in many ways follow in his father's footsteps, working both in front and behind the camera, in comedies that stretched from broad sketch work

to accomplished dramedies.
"My father thought, 'Oh, my God, this poor kid is worried about being in the shadow of a famous father," Reiner said, recalling the temptation to change his name to "60 Minutes" in October. "And he says, 'What do you want to change your name to?' And I said, 'Carl.' I

just wanted to be like him."

After starting out as a writer for "The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour," Reiner's breakthrough came when he was, at age 23, cast in Norman Lear's "All in the Family" as Archie Bunker's liberal sonin-law, Michael "Meathead" Stivic. But by the 1980s, Reiner began as a feature film director, churning out some of the most beloved films of that, or any, era. His first film, the largely improvised 1984 cult classic "This Is Spinal Tap," remains the urtext mockumentary.

After the 1985 John Cusack summer comedy, "The Sure Thing," Reiner made "Stand By Me" (1986), "The Princess Bride" (1987) and "When Harry Met Sally ..." (1989), a four-year stretch that resulted in a trio of American classics, all of them among the most often quoted movies of the 20th century

Presence

For the next four decades, Reiner, a warm and gregarious presence on screen and an outspoken liberal advocate off it, remained a constant fixture in Hollywood. The production company he co-founded, Castle Rock Entertainment, launched an enviable string of hits, including "Seinfeld" and "The Shawshank Redemption." By the turn of the century, its success rate had fallen considerably, but Reiner revived it earlier this decade. This fall, Reiner and Castle Rock released the long-in-coming sequel "Spinal Tap II: The End Continues."

All the while, Reiner was one of the film industry's most passionate Democrat activists, regularly hosting fundraisers and campaigning for liberal issues. He was co-founder of the American Foundation for Equal Rights, which challenged in court California's ban on same-sex marriage, Proposition 8. He also chaired the campaign for Prop 10, a California initiative to fund early childhood development services with a tax on tobacco products. Reiner was also a critic of President

Donald Trump.
That ran in the family, too. Reiner's father opposed the Communist



In this file photo, Rob Reiner and Michele Reiner arrive on the red carpet at the State Department for the Kennedy Center Honors gala dinner in Washington. (AP)

hunt of McCarthyism in the 1950s and his mother, Estelle Reiner, a singer and actor, protested the Vietnam War

"If you're a nepo baby, doors will open," Reiner told the Guardian in 2024. "But you have to deliver. If you don't deliver, the door will close just as fast as it

Robert Reiner was born in the Bronx on March 6, 1947. As a young man, he quickly set out to follow his father into entertainment. He studied at the University of California, Los Angeles film school and, in the 1960s, began appearing in small parts in various television shows.

Surprise

But when Lear saw Reiner as a key cast member in "All in the Family," it came as a surprise to the elder Reiner.

"Norman says to my dad, 'You know, this kid is really funny.' And I think my dad said, 'What? That kid? That kid? He's sullen. He sits quiet. He doesn't, you know, he's not funny.' He didn't think I was anyway," Reiner told "60 Minutes."

On "All in the Family," Reiner served as a pivotal foil to Carroll O'Connor's bigoted, conservative Archie Bunker. Reiner was five times nominated for an Emmy for his performance on the show, winning in 1974 and 1978. In Lear, Reiner also found a mentor. He called him "a second father."

"It wasn't just that he hired me for 'All in the Family," Reiner told "American Masters" in 2005. "It was that I saw, in how he conducted his life, that there was room to be an activist as well. That you could use your celebrity, your good fortune, to help make some change."

Lear also helped launch Reiner as a filmmaker. He put \$7.5 million of his own money to help finance "Stand By Me," Reiner's adaptation of the Stephen King novella "The Body." The movie, about four boys who go looking for the dead body of a missing boy, became a coming-of-age classic, made breakthroughs of its young cast (particularly River Phoenix) and even earned the praise of King.

With his stock rising, Reiner devoted himself to adapting William Goldman's 1973's "The Princess Bride," a book Reiner had loved since his father gave him a copy as a gift. Everyone from François Truffaut to Robert Redford had considered adapting Goldman's book, but it ultimately fell to Reiner (from Goldman's own script) to capture the unique comic tone of "The Princess Bride." But only once he had Goldman's blessing.





Kate Winslet attends the special screening of 'Goodbye June' at The Whitby Hotel in New York. (AP)

Kate makes directorial debut

Winslet explores death and family in 'Goodbye June'

NEW YORK, Dec 15, (AP): Kate Winslet is due a very thoughtful Christmas gift this year. The veteran actor made a pretty extraordinary maternal gesture, directing, producing and starring in a film her son, Joe Anders, wrote, "Goodbye June," which is in limited release this weekend and streaming on Netflix

While it might be worth pointing out that the script originated in a screenwriting class, there will be no nepo baby jokes here. Put alongside most of the Christmas offerings on Netflix, which seem to veer more toward the secret princess/fantasy/romance side of things, and aren't even attempting to be, well, very good, "Goodbye June" is an admirably solid, if generic, drama about family and death with a very distinguished cast.

Terminal illness, estranged adult siblings and hospital rooms are certainly not going to be everyone's cup of tea around the holidays, but you probably already know by this point whether this is an experience you want to sign up for. It remains a mystery why so many holiday movies feel the need to include a dying mother. Perhaps it's because, from an emotional standpoint, it rarely misses.

Unlike, say "The Family Stone" however, "Goodbye June" actually places the audience in that most unpleasant of settings: The hospital. It begins with a nightmare scenario, with the elderly mother, June (Helen Mirren) collapsing as the kettle cries out on the stove. Her grown son Connor (Johnny Flynn) finds her, collects his father Bernie (Timothy Spall), and they race off to the hospital, forgetting to turn off the tap in the sink before they leave. "Goodbye June" has an eye for the mundane details that make up everyday life that all seem so small in the face of loss.

Soon, they're greeted by the rest of June and Bernie's daughters, Julia (Winslet), a successful, busy and exhausted mom of three, Molly (Andrea Riseborough), a hippie mom of many who resents Julia and can't accept that

her mother is dying, and Helen (Toni Collette), who likes crystals. The four grown children are wildly unprepared to deal with their mother's decline. Molly, perhaps the most baffling character, shoos away the palliative care workers, insisting on taking June home immediately.

June calmly telling her kids that she

June, calmly telling her kids that she would rather stay in the hospital than go home, is a balm in all of the craziness. At least one person is ready to face it all head on.

all head on.

Certainly this is a story about how



This image released by Netflix shows actor-director Kate Winslet (right) on the set of 'Goodbye June'. (AP)

so many people aren't ready to deal with the one inevitability in life, and how imminent grief affects everyone differently. But the script doesn't do a character like Molly many favors. Her smug rejection of reality borders on annoying and the eventual explanation of why she's been estranged from Julia for so many years doesn't help.

Winslet, making her feature directorial debut, isn't doing anything flashy here, with stylish choices or long takes, like Anders' father Sam Mendes might. She shoots it simply, which is fitting for the story. This is a piece about characters and Winslet gives her actors space to build people that by and large feel pretty real - the standouts are really Flynn, as the sensitive son still living at home and closest to his parents, and Spall, believably oblivious in that charmingly British way.

The story progresses in mostly expected ways, with each child getting their own moment with mom before the end. Aside from several questionable choices to make the audience wonder whether or not June has died, and a nurse character named Angel (Fisayo Akinade), "Goodbye June" does also have moments of grace, humor and insight.

"Goodbye June," a Netflix release in select theaters Friday, streaming on Dec. 24, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for "language." Running time: 114 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

Belarusians, Chinese unite in grief & hope at film premiere

MINSK, Dec 15, (Xinhua): The Belarusian premiere of the Chinese historical film "Dead To Rights," which depicts the horrific events of the 1937 Nanjing Massacre, became a profound moment of shared historical reflection and solidority.

torical reflection and solidarity.

Held at the Pioneer Cinema in Minsk on the eve of China's national memorial day for the victims of the Nanjing Massacre, the screening attracted a diverse audience of over 200 people, including students, government officials and workers, who gathered in solemn

remembrance of this dark chapter in human history.

Based on historical accounts, the film graphically portrays the systematic atrocities committed by Japanese militarist forces during the six-week massacre, in which an estimated 300,000 Chinese civilians and unarmed soldiers were killed.

From the opening scenes to the final credits, the cinematic portrayal held the audience in rapt attention. The emotional weight was palpable throughout the screening, as viewers reacted with distress, anguish and deep empathy. Many were moved to tears during the particularly brutal sequences depicting the suffering of women and children.

For many Belarusian viewers, the tragedy of Nanjing resonated profoundly with their own national trauma. During World War II, Belarus lost approximately one-third of its population. Belarusian stage director Vera Tkachenko, visibly shaken after the screening, said this



People attend the premiere of the Chinese historical film 'Dead To Rights' in Minsk, Belarus.

film reveals the brutal truth about the Nanjing Massacre that must be known and remembered.

"The systematic violence against civilians, the destruction of cultural heritage, and the immense

human suffering must never be forgotten," she said.

Tkachenko also shared a personal connection to wartime loss, noting that her great-grandfather never returned from the Battle of Stalingrad. "Just as China remembers Nanjing, Belarus remembers Khatyn and the countless other villages destroyed during the war," she said, adding that Belarusians share the pain

of the Chinese people from that devastating conflict. Vadim Borovik, a deputy of the Minsk City Council who has previously visited the Memorial Hall of the Victims of the Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders, said the film's historical authenticity left a

profound impact on him.

"Seeing the brutal depiction of Japanese fascists' violence against civilians made my heart bleed," he said. "The experiences shown on screen -- the mass executions, torture of prisoners and destruction of homes -- resonate with our own history of occupation and suffering.

Film

Film is an emotional chronicle of Ito's battle against the authorities and larger society

Japan premiere marks turning point for Oscar-nominated documentary 'Black Box Diaries'

TOKYO, Dec 15, (AP): "Black Box Diaries," a documentary in which Japanese journalist Shiori Ito investigates her own assault case and the barriers she faced in pursuing justice, has been screened widely abroad since its 2024 festival debut and earned an Oscar nomination early this year.

It finally premiered in Japan, a longdelayed domestic release that began with a single-theater run.

In Japan, assault victims are often stigmatized and silenced. But the barrier to the film's release at home was largely the result of a legal dispute over her use of some interviews and footage of witnesses and involved parties without their consent.

The 102-minute film was screened to a full house on Friday at the T. Joy Prince Shinagawa, a large cinema complex in downtown Tokyo.

Ito expressed relief that she could finally share her story with an audience in her home country.

"Until last night, I was afraid if the film is going to come out or not," she told The Associated Press after the screening. "The reason I made this film is because I want to talk about this issue openly in Japan. It's been like my little love letter to Japan, so I'm just so happy that this day came finally."

Ito, who went public with what she says happened to her in 2015, has become the face of Japan's slow moving #MeToo movement. She is the first Japanese director to be nominated for an Oscar in the category of documentary feature film. The film is based on a 2017 book she wrote, "Black Box."

As an intern in 2015, Ito was seeking a position at private TBS Television and met one of its senior journalists, Noriyuki Yamaguchi, who became her alleged assailant. She has said in her book and film that she became dizzy during a dinner they had together and passed out in a restroom. She said Yamaguchi took her to his hotel room and raped her while she was incapacitated, and continued the assault even when she woke up in pain and told him to

Ito filed a criminal complaint with police, but it took weeks to persuade



Director Shiori Itõ speaks after the Japan premiere of 'Black Box Diaries' at a cinema in Tokyo. (AP)

them to start investigating. Prosecutors eventually dropped the case, without telling her why. In the film, a police investigator tells her a planned arrest was halted by higher-ups.

A taxi driver who dropped Ito and Yamaguchi at the hotel recounts in the film that Ito repeatedly asked to be dropped off at a nearby train station. A hotel security camera footage showed a man recognizable as Yamaguchi pulling Ito out of a taxi and dragging her into the hotel as she struggled to walk - key evidence to get a police investigation started, Ito said.

The film is an emotional chronicle of her battle against the authorities and the larger society. Not only was the alleged assailant's expected arrest suddenly dropped, but documents she requested were blacked out, she said. "It really was a black box," she said.

That led to suspicions by Ito and her supporters that powerful people exerted influence. In 2017, Ito filed a complaint against prosecutors, then filed a suit against Yamaguchi seeking 11 million yen (\$70,530) in damages.

In 2022 the Supreme Court ruled that Ito was forced to have non-consensual ... and ordered Yamaguchi to pay her 3.3 million yen (\$21,290). Yamaguchi denied the allegation, saying the ... was consensual. He filed a counter suit demanding Ito pay him 13 million yen (\$83,350) for allegedly damaging his reputation, but that case was dismissed.

Ito said she wrote the book to shed light on the taboo surrounding assault, and that her journalistic pursuit of evidence helped her keep some distance from her own trauma. She then made the film to tell a more personal story. It was challenging but the process helped her heal, she said.

"I'm sure (the audience) will realize it's our story, it's our everyday life story," she said. "Through this film, I really wish for other people to start slowly opening black boxes around them."

Ito and distributor Toei Agency say they hope a positive audience reception would help the film to be shown at more theaters.

Koyuki Azuma, an audience member who said she survived sexual abuse by her father, said she was concerned it might cause her discomfort, but instead felt encouraged by Ito's struggle and pursuit of truth.

"I was cheering her as I watched it," Azuma said. "I think it will have a positive impact on Japan's society.'

Eurovision '26 to feature 35 countries despite boycott



In this file photo, Nemo of Switzerland, who performed the song The Code, celebrates holding the trophy after winning the Grand Final of the Eurovision Song Contest in Malmo, Sweden. (AP)

GENEVA, Dec 15, (AP): Organizers of the Eurovision Song Contest on Monday announced a final list of 35 countries that will take part in the glitzy pop-music gala next year, after five countries said they would boycott due to discord over Israel's participation.

Contest organizers announced the list for the 2026 finale, set to be held in Vienna in May, after five participants - Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Spain earlier this month announced plans

A total of 37 countries took part this year, when Austria's JJ won. Three countries – Bulgaria, Moldova and Romania – will return, after skipping the event for artistic or financial reasons in recent years.

The walkout by some of the contest's most stalwart and high-profile participants - Ireland shared the record of wins with Sweden - put political discord on center stage and has overshadowed the joyful, feelgood nature of the event.

Last week, the 2024 winner - non-binary singer Nemo of Switzerland who won with the non-operatic ode "The Code" announced plans to return the winner's trophy because Israel is being allowed to

Organizers this month decided to allow Israel to compete, despite protests about its conduct of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza and allegations that Israel manipulated the vote in favor of its contestants.

The European Broadcasting Union, a group of public broadcasters from 56 countries that runs the glitzy annual event, had sought to dispel concerns about vote-rigging – but the reforms announced weren't enough to satisfy the holdouts.

The musical extravaganza draws more than 100 million viewers every year – one of the world's most-watched programs – but has been roiled by the war in Gaza for the past two years, stirring protests outside the venues and forcing organizers to clamp down on political flag-

Experts say the boycott ahead of the event's 70th anniversary amounts to one of the biggest crises the contest has faced, at a time when many public broadcasters face funding pressures and social media has lured away some eyeballs.

Israeli officials have hailed the decision by most EBU member broadcasters who supported its right to participate and warned of a threat to freedom of expression by embroiling musicians in a politi-

Carey to perform at Milan

Cortina opening ceremony

committee said. "Music is a universal

language that attracts different sto-

ries and sensibilities, and intertwines

with the opening ceremony's theme

northern Italy, and simultaneous but

smaller opening ceremonies are to

be held in three mountain clusters as

Internationally acclaimed ballet

star Roberto Bolle will headline the

closing ceremony, which is slated for Verona's ancient Roman Arena on

The Games will be spread over

MILAN, Dec 15, (AP): Mariah Carey is going to add some American pop-

star pedigree to the opening ceremo-

ny for the upcoming Milan Cortina

The local organizing commit-

tee announced on Monday that the

56-year-old Carey – the "All I Want for Christmas is You" singer – is the

first international star named to per-

form in the Feb. 6 ceremony at Mi-

"Mariah Carey fully represents the emotional atmosphere that accompanies the run-up to the Games," the

lan's San Siro soccer stadium.

Winter Olympics.

Opera



Albert 'AJ' Rhodes Jr., left, and Joyce DiDonato appear during a rehearsal for Gian Carlo Theater in New York. (AP)

'It really is my favorite opera'

DiDonato brings childhood magic to life in 'Amahl and the Night Visitors'

NEW YORK, Dec 15, (AP): It seems all but unthinkable today: A major TV network hires a famous composer to write an original opera and broadcasts it live in prime time on Christmas Eve.

But it was a different world in the early days of television back in 1951 when Gian Carlo Menotti's "Amahl and the Night Visitors" premiered on NBC to an estimated audience of 5 million children and

With its tuneful score and uplifting story of a Christmas miracle, the opera - broadcast from a studio at NBC headquarters in Rockefeller Center - proved an immediate hit with viewers and critics. For many years it was repeated annually on TV, and to this day it's a favorite holiday offering for universities, churches, community theaters and professional companies across the U.S. and internationally

Now it's coming to New York's Lincoln Center Theater in a production that stars mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato, who normally displays her talents next door at the Metropolitan Opera House. "Amahl" opened Dec. 16 and runs through the

holidays for 23 performances, The title role is played by 12-year-old Albert "AJ" Rhodes Jr., who did a stint on Broadway as the young Simba in "The Lion

For director Kenny Leon, "Amahl" combines all the elements one could want from a holiday entertainment - and, for young children, it has the added benefit of being relatively short.

"It has everything great storytelling has," Leon said. "It has humor and laughter, it has drama, it has heart, it has dance, music, all packed together in less than an hour. That's a full evening."

For DiDonato, portraying Amahl's mother is not just another job. It's an emotional connection to a deeply personal memory that dates back to her childhood in Kansas.

"It really is my favorite opera," DiDonato said. "From as early as I can remember my father would pull out the original LP recording and play it Christmas morning. To this day, Christmas is not complete without that.

A couple of years ago she told Peter Gelb, the Met's general manager, that she would love to sing the role of Amahl's mother. But the cavernous, 3,800-seat opera house didn't seem the right place for a small-scale work that runs less than an hour, is scored for a chamber orchestra, and has a cast of just six soloists, two dancers and a small chorus.

"Gelb rightly noted it's too intimate a piece for the Met," DiDonato said. "But he worked with me on it quite closely to find the right spot for it."

Family-friendly

That turned out to be the Mitzi Newhouse, a 300seat house that is part of Lincoln Center Theater, where the new artistic director, Lear deBessonet, is eager to present family-friendly programming.

"Investing in young people and families is literally investing in the future," deBessonet said. "And there's no substitute for young people encountering the arts while they're at those developmental ages.

Menotti, who wrote both the music and libretto for "Amahl," had composed a number of successful operas, including "The Consul" and "The Medium," when NBC commissioned him for the Christmas broadcast. But, as he recalled at the time, he was struggling to find a story as the deadline approached.

Then a chance encounter with Hieronymus Bosch's "The Adoration of the Magi" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art unlocked memories of his childhood in Italy.

The title character in "Amahl" is a disabled child

The two-piano accompaniment had been used successfully in an earlier opera performed at the Mitzi Newhouse, "Intimate Apparel," a co-commission with the Met. "The wonderful discovery of that show was that

who lives in poverty with his mother. When the three

Wise Men stop by on their way to present gifts to

the baby Jesus, Amahl offers them his crutch in case

the infant might need it. Instantly, he is able to walk

heart," DiDonato said. "How important is that in to-

the music and entrusted the orchestration to his part-

ner, composer Samuel Barber. The Lincoln Center

production uses a version scored for two pianos, an

day's world? The important-est.

alternative authorized by Menotti.

"It's a story of selflessness and giving from the

Once Menotti had his plot, he rushed to complete

the sound created by two pianos and voices in that space was incredibly powerful, and you didn't really need something else," deBessonet said. Though this is the theater's first family offering,

deBessonet is determined it won't be the last. Repeating "Amahl" in future years is one possibility, the way two other Lincoln Center institutions have annual holiday offerings: "The Nutcracker" at the New York City Ballet and an abridged version of Mozart's "The Magic Flute" at the Met.

But deBessonet also sees part of her mission as commissioning new works for the holiday season.

"I'm inspired by the story of how George Balanchine's 'Nutcracker' came about," she said. "Asking an artist at the very height of his craft to put that in the service of a work that would be highly engaging for children.
"One of the opportunities we have is to add to the

canon of work available for families.'

Variety

LONDON: British pop star Cliff Richard said Monday he has been given the all-clear after treatment for prostate cancer.

The 85-year-old singer joined calls for Britain to introduce a national screening program for the Richard told "Good Morning Britain" that he

was diagnosed a year ago after a health check for his insurance before a tour to Australia and New

He said "the good fortune was that it was not very old, and the other thing is that it has not metastasized.

Richard said the treatment was successful. but "I don't know whether it's going to come

He said it was "absolutely ridiculous" that Britain does not have a wide prostate cancer testing program. The state-funded National Health Service currently offers routine screening for breast, bowel and cervical cancer.

The U.K. National Screening Committee has recommended a targeted prostate cancer screening program for men with a genetic mutation that puts them at higher risk. (AP)

PARIS: Workers at the Louvre in Paris will on Monday vote to go on strike or continue talks with the government after months of mounting pressure on the world's most visited museum, which unions have described as being "in crisis."

Hundreds of employees will gather behind closed doors in a 500-seat auditorium inside the Paris landmark where unions will present the outcome of recent talks with Culture Minister Rachi-

da Dati before voting by a show of hands.

The outcome could again bring the vast institution to a standstill.

The crunch vote comes as the museum struggles with the aftermath of a daylight jewel heist and an earlier staff strike that abruptly shut the Louvre and stranded thousands of visitors beneath I.M. Pei's glass pyramid. Last month, the Louvre also announced the temporary closure of some employees' offices and one public gallery because of weakened floor beams. (AP)

LJUBLJANA: Nearly one-third of adult internet users in Slovenia regularly follow social media influencers engaged in promotional activities, according to a survey released Sunday by the Center for Social Informatics (CSI) at the Faculty of So-

cial Sciences, University of Ljubljana.

After surveying 1,262 adult internet users in May, the questionnaire found that 93 percent of respondents are familiar with influencers promoting products and services, and 31 percent follow them regularly. Instagram is the most popular platform, followed by

YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok. Respondents most often associate influencers with advertising and promotion. Although influencers can affect purchasing decisions, the CSI noted that their influence varies significantly

among individuals. According to the survey, foreign influencers have more followers than local ones, accounting for 54 percent of all mentions. Meanwhile, awareness of virtual influencers remains low. (Xinhua)



In this file photo, Mariah Carey performs during the BET Awards at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles. (AP)

The Conversation

Research using machine learning offers a new way

Can scientists detect life without knowing what it looks like?

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

By Amirali Aghazadeh,

Georgia Institute of Technology

When NASA scientists opened the sample return canister from the OSIRIS-REx asteroid sample mission in late 2023, they found something astonishing.

Dust and rock collected from the asteroid Bennu contained many of life's building blocks, including all five nucleobases used in DNA and RNA, 14 of the 20 amino acids found in proteins, and a rich collection of other organic molecules. These are built primarily from carbon and hydrogen, and they often form the backbone of life's chemistry.

For decades, scientists have predicted that early asteroids may have delivered the ingredients of life to Earth, and these findings seemed like promising evidence.

Even more surprising, these amino acids from Bennu were split almost evenly between "left-handed" and "right-handed" forms. Amino acids come in two mirror-image configurations, just like our left and right hands, called chiral forms.

On Earth, almost all biology requires the left-handed versions. If scientists had found a strong left-handed excess in Bennu, it would have suggested that life's molecular asymmetry might have been inherited directly from space. Instead, the near-equal mixture points to a different story: Life's left-handed preference emerged later, through processes on Earth, rather than being preimprinted in the material delivered by asteroids.

If space rocks can carry familiar ingredients but not the chemical "signature" that life leaves behind, then identifying the true signs of biology becomes extremely complicated



Many carbon-rich meteorites contain ingredients commonly found in life,

These discoveries raise a deeper question - one that becomes more urgent as new missions target Mars, the Martian moons and the ocean

of our solar system: How do researchers detect life when the chemistry alone begins to look "lifelike"? If nonliving materials can produce rich, organized mixtures of organic molecules, then the traditional signs we use to recognize biology may no longer be enough.

As a computational scientist studying biological signatures, I face this challenge directly. In my astrobiology work, I ask how to determine whether a collection of molecules was formed by complex geochemistry or by extraterrestrial biology, when exploring other

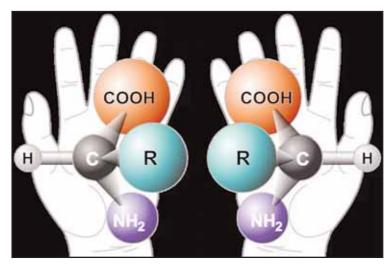
In a new study in the journal PNAS Nexus, my colleagues and I developed a framework called LifeTracer to help answer this question. Instead of searching for a single molecule or structure that proves the presence of biology, we attempted to classify how likely mixtures of compounds preserved in rocks and meteorites were to contain traces of life by examining the full chemical patterns they contain.

The key idea behind our framework is that life produces molecules with purpose, while nonliving chemistry does not. Cells must store energy, build membranes and transmit information. Abiotic chemistry produced by nonliving chemical processes, even when abundant, follows different rules because it is not shaped by metabolism or evolution.

Traditional biosignature approaches focus on searching for specific compounds, such as certain amino acids or lipid structures, or for chiral preferences, like left-handed-

These signals can be powerful, but they are based entirely on the molecular patterns used by life on Earth. If we assume that alien life uses the same chemistry, we risk missing biology that is similar - but not identical - to our own, or misidentifying nonliving chemistry as a sign of life.

The Bennu results highlight this problem. The asteroid sample contained molecules familiar to life, yet nothing within it appears to have been alive.



A 'chiral' molecule is one that is not superposable with another that is its mirror image, even if you rotate it.

To reduce the risk of assuming these molecules indicate life, we assembled a unique dataset of organic materials right at the dividing line between life and nonlife. We used samples from eight carbon-rich meteorites that preserve abiotic chemistry from the early solar system, as well as 10 samples of soils and sedimentary materials from Earth, containing the degraded remnants of biological molecules from past or present life. Each sample contained tens of thousands of organic molecules, many present in low abundance and many whose structures could not be fully identified.

At NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, our team of scientists crushed each sample, added solvent and heated it to extract the organics - this process is like brewing tea. Then, we took the "tea" containing the extracted organics and passed it through two filtering columns that separated the complex mixture of organic molecules. Then, the organics were pushed into a chamber where we bombarded them with electrons until they broke into smaller frag-

Traditionally, chemists use these

mass fragments as puzzle pieces to reconstruct each molecular structure, but having tens of thousands of compounds in each sample presented a challenge

LifeTracer is a unique approach for data analysis: It works by taking in the fragmented puzzle pieces and analyzing them to find specific patterns, rather than reconstructing each structure.

It characterizes those puzzle pieces by their mass and two other chemical properties and then organizes them into a large matrix describing the set of molecules present in each sample. It then trains a machine learning model to distinguish between the meteorites and the terrestrial materials from Earth's surface, based on the type of molecules present in each.

One of the most common forms of machine learning is called supervised learning. It works by taking many input and output pairs as examples and learns a rule to go from input to output. Even with only 18 samples as those examples, LifeTracer performed remarkably well. It consistently separated abiotic from biotic origins.

What mattered most to LifeTracer was not the presence of a specific molecule but the overall distribution of chemical fingerprints found in each sample. Meteorite samples tended to contain more volatile compounds - they evaporate or break apart more easily - which reflected the type of chemistry most common in the cold environment of space.

Some types of molecules, called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, were present in both groups, but they had distinctive structural differences that the model could parse. A sulfurcontaining compound, 1,2,4-trithiolane, emerged as a strong marker for abiotic samples, while terrestrial materials contained products formed through biological process.

These discoveries suggest that the contrast between life and nonlife is not defined by a single chemical clue but by how an entire suite of organic molecules is organized. By focusing on patterns rather than assumptions about which molecules life "should" use, approaches like LifeTracer open up new possibilities for evaluating samples returned from missions to Mars, its moons Phobos and Deimos, Jupiter's moon Europa and Saturn's moon Enceladus.

Future samples will likely contain mixtures of organics from multiple sources, some biological and some not. Instead of relying only on a few familiar molecules, we can now assess whether the whole chemical landscape looks more like biology or random geochemistry.

LifeTracer is not a universal life detector. Rather, it provides a foundation for interpreting complex organic mixtures. The Bennu findings remind us that life-friendly chemistry may be widespread across the solar system, but that chemistry alone does not equal biology.

To tell the difference, scientists will need all the tools we can build not only better spacecraft and instruments, but also smarter ways to read the stories written in the molecules they bring home. (AP)

Moderation and ventilation reduce indoor pollutant

A worker prints the batch number of Tibetan medicine in Lhasa, southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region, April 16, 2024. (Xinhua)

Ancient herbal thrive

Tibetan medicine gets a makeover

LHASA, Dec 15, (Xinhua): After completing a herbal bath at a Tibetan hospital in southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region, Tsewang Dondrup was preparing to undergo Horme therapy -- a traditional Tibetan treatment similar to moxibustion -- under his doctor's guidance.

The Tibetan, in his 50s, travels regularly to receive the Tibetan medicinal bath treatment at the Mainling Tibetan Hospital in the city of Mainling, which is over 400 kilometers east of the regional capital Lhasa. There, he finds relief for his chronic knee pain through the traditional method.

"The treatment effect is even better in combination with a hot compress," said his doctor, Pasang

Officially called the Lum medicinal bathing of Sowa Rigpa, the Tibetan medicinal bath is described in "The Four Treatises of Tibetan Medicine," the most influential foundational work on traditional Tibetan medicine written between the 8th and 12th centuries. The herbal bath was inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2018.

The Tibetan term "Sowa Rigpa" translates to "the knowledge of recuperation," while "Lum" refers to traditional knowledge and practices of bathing in natural hot springs, herbal water or steam to restore balance between the mind and body and to promote wellness while treating various ailments

Pasang Tsering said that the hospital established a Tibetan medicinal bath department in 2019, which has been popular for its individually tailored formulas, high efficacy rates and minimal

Statistics from the regional health commission show that Xizang had 64 Tibetan medical institutions and a total of 2,780 beds in public Tibetan hospitals in 2024, with annual patient visits exceeding 1.27 million in the region, home to a population of about 3.65 million.

In the city of Shannan, some 100 kilometers from Lhasa, six enterprises are engaged in herb plantation, creating more than 140 jobs.

Phupa, general manager of one of these companies, explained that it used to gather wild medicinal herbs from nearby mountains. To protect the local ecosystem, the company began exploring methods of artificial cultivation.

"After five years of trials, we have successfully cultivated 16 types of medicinal herbs, including safflower and costus," he said. Unlike the past, when medicine was produced based on pharmacists' experience, Tibetan medicine producers now use modern pharmaceutical technology to standardize produc-

tion, ensuring consistent quality. Zhu Rongzu, director of the Nyingchi manufacturing center of the leading Tibetan medicine company Qizheng, said that the company's iconic pain-relief patches had generated 1.6 billion yuan (226.5 million U.S. dollars) in sales in 2024, with overseas markets contributing over 2.8 million yuan as the product continued to expand globally.

Scented candles and fireplaces hidden risks

BALTIMORE, Maryland, Dec 15, (AP): The warm spices in gingerbread, the woodsy aroma of pine and fir trees, and the fruity tang of mulled wine are smells synonymous with the holiday season. Many people enjoy lighting candles, incense and fireplaces in their homes to evoke the moods associated with these festive fragrances. Burning scented products may create

a cozy ambiance, and in the case of fireplaces, provide light and heat, but some experts want people to consider how doing so contributes to the quality of the air indoors. All flames release chemicals that may cause allergy-like symptoms or contribute to long-term respiratory problems if they are inhaled in sufficient quantities.

However, people don't have to stop sitting by the hearth or get rid of products like perfumed candles and essential oil diffusers, said Dr. Meredith McCormack, director of the pulmonary and critical care medicine division at John Hopkins University's medical school. Instead, she recommends taking precautions to control the pollutants in their homes.

"Clean air is fragrance free," said Mc-Cormack, who has studied air quality and lung health for more than 20 years. "If having seasonal scents is part of your tradition or evokes feelings of nostalgia, maybe think about it in moderation."

People in the Northern Hemisphere tend to spend more time indoors during the end-of-year holidays, when temperatures are colder. Indoor air can be significantly more polluted than outdoor air because pollutants get trapped inside and concentrated without proper ventilation or filtration, according to the American Lung

For example, active fireplaces and gas appliances release tiny airborne particles that can get into the lungs and chemicals like nitrogen dioxide, a major component of smog, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Cleaning products, air fresheners and candles also emit air pollutants at varying concentrations.

The risk fragrances and other air pollutants may pose to respiratory health depends on the source, the length and intensity of a person's exposure, and individual health, McCormack said.

pollutants have no smell, so unscented products still can affect indoor air quality, Polluted air affects everyone but not

equally. Children, older adults, minority

populations and people of low socioeco-

It is also important to note that some



Rocking chairs sit in front of a stone fireplace in the lobby of the Grove Park Inn in Asheville, N.C., on Feb. 2, 2015. Inset: This Nov. 1, 2017 photos shows a scented candle produced by Bristol, Tenn., resident Jessie Duckett at her home business. (AP)

nomic status are more likely to be affected by poor air quality because of either physiological vulnerabilities or higher exposure, according to the environmental agency.

Children are more susceptible to air pollution because of their lung size, which means they get a greater dose of exposure relative to their body size, McCormack said. Pollutants inside the home also post a greater hazard to people with heart or lung conditions, including asthma, she

Signs of respiratory irritation include coughing, shortness of breath, headaches, a runny nose and sneezing. Experts advise stopping use of pollutant-releasing products or immediately ventilating rooms if symptoms occur.

"The more risk factors you have, the more harmful air pollution or poor air quality indoors can be," McCormack said. Ellen Wilkowe burns candles with scents like vanilla and cinnamon when she does yoga, writes or when she is showering at her home in New Jersey. Her teenage daughter, on the other hand, likes more seasonally scented candles like gingerbread.

'The candle has a calming presence. They are also very symbolic and used in rituals and many religions," she said.

Wilkowe said she leans toward candles made with soy-based waxes instead of petroleum-based paraffin. Experts note that all lit candles give off air pollutants regardless of what they are made of. Buying products with fewer ingredi-

ents, opening windows if the temperatures allow, and using air purifiers with HEPA filters are ways to reduce exposure to any pollutants from indoor fireplaces, appli-

ances and candle displays, McCormack said. She also recommends switching on kitchen exhaust fans before starting a gas-powered stovetop and using the back burners so the vent can more easily suck

Setting polite boundaries with guests who smoke cigarettes or other tobacco products is also a good idea, she said.

"Small improvements in air quality can have measurable health benefits," McCormack said. "Similarly to if we exercise and eat a little better, we can be healthier.'

Rachael Lewis-Abbott, a member of the Indoor Air Quality Association, an organization for professionals who identify and address air quality problems, said people don't usually notice what they are breathing in until problems like gas leaks

or mold develop. "It is out of sight, out of mind," she said.

Pakistan kicks off final anti-polio vaccination drive

ISLAMABAD, Dec. 15, (Xinhua): Pakistan on Monday kicked off the last nationwide polio campaign of 2025, targeting 45.5 million children under the age of five, according to the National Emergency Operations Center (NEOC).

The week-long drive will continue till Dec. 21, said NEOC officials, adding that more than 400,000 frontline polio workers will take part in the campaign.

Pakistan and Afghanistan remain the last two countries in the world where polio continues to exist, with new

cases being reported every year.

The health officials urged parents, caregivers, public representatives and community leaders to actively support the nationwide polio vaccination campaign to rootout the crippling disease.

A.J. Ewart among 5 players to earn PGA cards at Q-school

Novak, Coughlin win mixed team at Grant Thornton Invitational

NAPLES, Fla., Dec 15, (AP): Andrew Novak made three straight birdies on the back nine and Lauren Coughlin finished off their 9-under 63 in modified fourballs for a three-shot victory in the Grant Thornton Invitational, the second team title this year for No-

They were challenged primarily by Chris Gotterup and Jennifer Kupcho until the par-5 17th at Tiburon Golf Club.

Gotterup and Kupcho both missed the green in tough spots and had to work hard for par. Novak and Coughlin were in the final group behind them, and Novak poured in a 6-foot birdie putt that gave them a a two-shot lead going to the final hole.

Coughlin's birdie putt helped them set a tournament record at 28-under 188. They finished three ahead of Gotterup and Kupcho (63), Denny McCarthy and Nelly Korda (63), and Michael Brennan and Charley

Novak also won the Zurich Classic of New Orleans with Ben Griffin.

A.J. Ewart of Canada shot a 4-under 66 on the Dye Valley course at TPC Sawgrass and was one of five players who earned PGA Tour cards through the 72hole qualifying tournament. Dylan Wu got the final card, holing a 15-foot birdie putt on the first suddendeath playoff hole against Ben Silverman. Wu made a 30-foot eagle putt on the 16th hole and shot 66.

Ewart finished at 14-under 266. Adam Svensson of Canada (66), Alejandro Tosti of Argentina (67) and Marcel Rozo of Colombia (69) tied for second and got the other three cards. Rozo had a tough par on the final hole to avoid a playoff.

The next 40 players and ties at Q-school have full Korn Ferry Tour cards for 2026.

Jayden Schaper ended a duel with defending champion Shaun Norris by hitting hybrid out of a fairway bunker to 18 feet in a playoff and holing the eagle putt from just off the 18th green to win Alfred Dunhill Championship for his first European tour title.

Schaper, a runner-up last week in the Nedbank Golf Challenge, chipped in for birdie on the 16th hole and

closed with a 4-under 67. Norris shot 62 in the final round to match him at 16-under 198.

Norris missed a 30-foot eagle attempt in the playoff that set the stage for Schaper.

The tournament was shortened to 54 holes because of rain that washed out the third round on Saturday at Royal Johannesburg Club.

Marc Leishman birdied his final hole to salvage a 4-under 76 to win the Victorian PGA Championship by one shot for his first title in his native Australia in 17 years. Bjorn Hellgren of Sweden holed a 6-foot birdie putt on the final hole for a 5-under 67 for a oneshot victory over Jack Thompson in the Saudi Open, giving Hellgren his first Asian Tour title.

Marseille beats Monaco

Lens claims Christmas top spot

PARIS, Dec 15, (AP): Striker Odsonne Édouard scored with a header in each half as Lens beat Nice 2-0 at home on Sunday to move back ahead of Paris Saint-Germain at the top of Ligue 1.

Édouard gave surprise front-runner Lens a 15th-minute lead with a brilliant glancing header from Matthieu Udol's cross and nodded in another left-wing cross from Udol in the 57th.

It was a sixth straight French league win and ninth in 10 games for Lens.
The northern club is one point ahead

of defending champion PSG after 16 rounds and five points ahead of thirdplaced Marseille and fourth-placed Lille, which are separated by goal difference after both won on Sunday.

Next weekend sees French Cup

matches, before Ligue 1 resumes in early January. "We'll try to stay there as long as possible. One thing is for certain: we will be top at Christmas, which is great for all the families and the people from the region," Lens coach Pierre Sage said. "Udol has assisted on three goals in two games. The first goal was amazing, the cross was good but the header was awe-

Marseille stayed third by beating Monaco 1-0 at home after Lille had won 4-3 at Auxerre earlier Sunday.

Ligue 1 top scorer Mason Greenwood notched his 11th goal for Marseille this season with a curler into the top right corner from near the penalty spot, after being well set up by midfielder Pierre-Emile Höjbjerg in the 82nd. Lamine Camara thought he had opened the scoring for Monaco shortly after halftime with a fine shot from just outside the penalty area. But the goal was ruled out for an earlier offside from Monaco forward Folarin Balo-

Greenwood went close with a strike midway through the second half and

made no mistake with his next chance.

Although Marseille remains an inconsistent side, fans have been entertained at Stade Velodrome under attack-minded coach Roberto De Zerbi. Statistician Opta said Marseille's 56 league goals scored in 2025 is its third

highest home tally ever in a year.

The start of the match was delayed by a few minutes to clear the air after Marseille fans lit many flares in the

it was a ninth straight defeat in all competitions for a Nice side in total disarray. The losing run is the longest in Nice's history.

Despite considerable backing from

chemicals giant Ineos, which took over six years ago, Nice is unable to find the right formula and some fans have confronted the players

Nice is 13th in Ligue 1 and also last in the Europa League group stage after losing all six games so far.

A chaotic match saw four players sent off - two from each side.

Lille led early on through Iceland midfielder Hakon Haraldsson but had central defender Nathan Ngoy sent off in the 39th, then conceded an equalizer when striker Lassine Sinayoko struck in the 57th.

Three minutes later, Auxerre defender Clément Apka was shown a second yellow card and both sides had 10 men.

Auxerre went ahead in the 66th when Lille center back Chancel Mbemba scored into his own net while trying to clear the ball.

A frantic spell followed. Midfielder Nabil Bentaleb netted with a powerful strike to make it 2-2 in the 77th and Lille went in front moments later when 18-year-old substitute Soriba Diaoune grabbed his first career goal after replacing 39-year-old veteran Olivier Giroud -France's all-time leading scorer with





India routs South Africa to

Rana claims 2-34 in four overs



India's captain Suryakumar Yadav plays a shot during the third T20 cricket match between India and South Africa in Dharamshala, India. (AP)



Monaco's Takumi Minamino, left, and Marseille's Nayef Aguerd eye the ball during the French League One soccer match between Marseille and Monaco in Marseille, France, Sunday, Dec. 14, 2025. (AP)

DHARAMSHALA. India, Dec 15, (AP): Aiden Markram helped South Africa avoid another unwanted batting record but it wasn't enough to stop India winning a lopsided third Twenty20 match by seven wickets on Sunday.

Put into bat, South Africa rallied from 7-3 to 117 all out in 20 overs and India replied with 120-3 in 15.5 overs under the floodlights at Dharamsala to take a 2-1 lead in the five-match

South Africa had looked in danger of scoring fewer runs than its series-opening 74, the team's worst total in T20 cricket, before Markram's defiant knock. The South Africa captain hit two sixes and six fours in his 46-ball innings before he was caught behind against pacer Arshdeep Singh (2-13 in four overs).

Harshit Rana claimed 2-34 in four overs after replacing Jasprit Bumrah, who missed the game for personal reasons. Kuldeep Yadav took 2-12 in two overs, including

the wicket of Ottneil Baartman off the final ball of South Africa's in-

India made light work of the chase. Openers Abhishek Sharma (35 runs off 18 balls) and Shubman Gill took the hosts to 43 without loss after 3.1 overs, the same stage at which South Africa was 7-3.

Sharma and Gill shared an opening stand of 60, which was ended by Markram's running catch from Sharma off the bowling of Corbin Bosch. Gill was bowled by Marco Jansen for a run-a-ball 28. South Africa quick Lungi Ngidi (1-23) dismissed India captain Suryakumar Yadav, who was caught by

Baartman for 12.

Tilak Varma (26 not out) and Shivam Dube (10 not out) took India home in the latest twist in an unpredictable series. South Africa won the second T20 by 51 runs after losing the first match by 101

The fourth T20 is on Wednesday at Lucknow.

The 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 end to the final in 2024.

India won the ODI series against South Africa 2-1 after losing the test series 2-0.

Corinthians met Vasco in Copa do Brasil final

Toluca wins consecutive Liga MX championships

MEXICO CITY, Dec 15, (Xinhua): Mexico international winger Alexis Vega converted the decisive spot kick as Toluca clinched backto-back Liga MX titles on Sunday by beating Tigres UANL 9-8 on penalties.

Fernando Gorriaran struck early at Toluca's Nemesio Diez stadium to give Tigres UANL a 2-0 lead on aggregate in the Apertura final. But Toluca leveled the tie through goals either side of halftime from Helinho and Paulinho.

Thirty minutes of extra time failed to break the deadlock as the match went to a shootout.

Both sides converted eight of their first nine attempts before Toluca's Luis Garcia saved consecutive attempts from goalkeeper Nahuel Guzman and Argentine winger Angel Correa.

Vega then sent Guzman the wrong way as Toluca celebrated its 12th Mexican top-flight title.

Meanwhile, Corinthians and Vasco da Gama will meet in the Copa do Brasil final after winning their respective semifinals in penalty shootouts.

At Rio de Janeiro's Maracana Stadium, Uruguayan defender Jose Luis Rodriguez converted the decisive spot-kick as Vasco prevailed 4-3 in its shootout against local rival Fluminense.

Earlier, Paulo Henrique netted an own goal to gift Fluminense a 1-0 lead and leave the teams level



Toluca's Alexis Vega, top, lifts the trophy after winning the Mexican soccer league tournament against Tigres in Toluca, Mexico. (AP)

on aggregate.

With no extra-time, the match went straight to penalties after 90 minutes. Rayan, Victor Luis and Philippe Coutinho also converted in the shootout as Vasco reached the final for the first time since

In Sao Paulo, Hugo Souza saved two penalties as Corinthians prevailed 5-4 against Cruzeiro.

to give Cruzeiro the lead on aggregate but Matheus Bidu equalized Ecuadorian teenager Keny Arwith a 55th-minute header.

royo scored either side of halftime

In the shootout, Souza denied Gabriel Barbosa and Wallace before Breno Bidon converted his team's sixth attempt to send the Sao Paulo side into its eighth Copa do Brasil decider.

The first leg of the final will be played at Corinthians Arena on Wednesday with the return leg scheduled for Sao Januario Stadium next Sunday.

Vasco is vying for its second Copa do Brasil title while Corinthians is aiming to win the competition for a fourth time.

In Mexico City, Veteran Boca Juniors midfielder Ander Herrera could retire from football after an injury-wracked 2025, according to media reports in Argentina.

The 36-year-old made just 17 appearances across all competitions for Boca this year after his January move from Athletic Bilbao. His contract is due to expire in December next year but includes a unilateral termination clause allowing either party to end it this month.

TyC Sports reported that constant physical problems had prompted Herrera to consider calling time on a professional career that began at Zaragoza in 2009.

Boca Juniors failed to win a trophy in 2025 but qualified for next year's Copa Libertadores group stage for the first time since 2023.

Top riders set for Kuwait Show Jumping Champ'ship

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: The Kuwait Equestrian Club is ready to host the Kuwait International Show Jumping Championship, starting next Thursday at the Kuwait Equestrian Center in Subhan. The event will feature top riders from Arab, Gulf, and European countries.

The championship runs from December 18 to 20, under the sponsorship of Kuwait Equestrian Club, Al-Jarwai Company, and the Kuwait Equestrian Federation.

The event will be managed by international rider and federation secretary Ghazi Al-Jarwai, with Layth Al-Jassem and Jassim Al-Khalfan overseeing technical operations and stables, and Lama Abdelal providing live commentary.

Competition schedule:

Day 1: Events at 130 cm and 140

Friday: Two rounds at 130 cm



Jassim Al-Khalfan

and 140 cm

Saturday (Final Day): Two rounds at 135 cm and 145 cm

Kazma looks to secure crucial victory against Al-Muharraq

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 15: Kazma travels to Manama, Bahrain, tonight to take on Al-Muharraq in Round 4 of Group A of the West Asia Gulf Region Basketball Super League.

Group Standings Al-Ittihad (Saudi Arabia): 7 points (3 wins, 1 loss) – Group leaders Shabab Al-Ahli (UAE): 6 points (2

Kazma (Kuwait): 4 points (1 win, 2

Al-Muharraq (Bahrain): 4 points (1 win, 2 losses)

A victory tonight is crucial for Kazma, as it would significantly improve its chances of advancing to the next stage of the tournament. The Kuwaiti side opened the competition with a 95-81 win over Al-Muharraq at home, but later suffered defeats against Al-Ittihad (81-92) and Shabab Al-Ahli (65-68).

Kazma coach Bojan Lazic relies on a strong roster featuring Captain Ahmed Al-Bloushi, Abdulaziz Rey-



Kazma player controls the ball during a tense Super League clash.

han, Yousef Al-Bloushi, Abdulrahman Al-Sahoo, along with American imports Philip Green, Joguan Johnson, and Serbian Strahinja Mikovic.

Al-Muharraq, meanwhile, aims to avenge their opening-round loss to Kazma and capitalize on home-court advantage. The Bahraini side is led by

German coach Peter Schomers, former coach of Kuwait, and depends on foreign stars Nicholas West, Kerwin Roach, and Daniel Hamilton.

Inter leapfrogs Milan



Juventus' Jonathan David in action during the Serie A soccer match between Bologna and Juventus, in Bologna, Italy. (AP)

Udinese stuns Napoli

MILAN, Dec 15, (AP): Teenage defender Davide Bartesaghi scored his first senior goals but couldn't prevent AC Milan from being held to a 2-2 draw at home to Sassuolo and being overtaken at the top of Serie A by city rival Inter Milan on Sunday.

Inter won 2-1 at relegation-threatened Genoa to move a point ahead of Milan and two points above Napoli, which lost 1-0 at Udinese.

At San Siro, Ismaël Koné gave Sassuolo a surprise lead in the 13th minute but Milan leveled in the 34th as Ruben Loftus-Cheek rolled the ball across the area for Bartesaghi to power in from close range.

The 19-year-old Bartesaghi doubled his tally immediately after halftime when he ran onto Christopher Nkunku's smart pass and fired inside

Christian Pulisic and Loftus-Cheek both had goals disallowed for Milan before Sassuolo equalized in the 77th minute through substitute Armand Laurienté

Laurienté, who had changed the match when he came on, almost scored a stunning winner in the 88th minute following a solo run from his own half but his effort crashed off the left post. Napoli knew it could move atop the standings

following Milan's result.

However, it was Udinese that had the better of the chances and twice thought it had broken the deadlock only to have both goals struck off on video review.

Keinan Davis's strike was ruled out in the 52nd minute for offside and Nicolò Zaniolo also saw his effort chalked off in the 69th because there was a foul in the buildup.

Between those decisions, Udinese also hit the crossbar through Jakub Piotrowski.

The hosts finally broke the deadlock in the 73rd minute when Jurgen Ekkelenkamp curled a magnificent strike into the far top corner from outside

Rasmus Højlund should have leveled two minutes from time but he somehow fired over an open goal from point-blank range, while Lorenzo Lucca - who joined Napoli from Udinese in July - hit the post in stoppage time.

Instead it was Inter which moved into the sole lead of Serie A with what looked set to be a routine win, until the final 25 minutes.

Yann Bisseck got Inter off to a perfect start with an early goal and Lautaro Martínez doubled his side's advantage shortly before halftime.

Vitinha pulled one back for Genoa midway through the second half after squeezing his way through two defenders and rounding Inter goalkeeper Yann Sommer.

Genoa was two points off the relegation zone. Elsewhere, Juventus won 1-0 at 10-man Bologna to leapfrog its opponent into fifth place - one point below the top four.

Substitute Juan Cabal headed Juventus in front in the 64th, three minutes after coming off the bench. Bologna defender Torbjørn Heggem was shown a red card five minutes later for denying a clear scoring opportunity.

Gift Emmanuel Orban scored twice - including in stoppage time - as Hellas Verona won 2-1 at last-placed Fiorentina in a relegation battle to move to within two points of safety.

Fiorentina was without a win and eight points from safety. Its fans displayed a banner addressing their Verona counterparts with the words "whoever finishes last pays for the drinks."

Lindsey proves age is no barrier

Vonn considers staying on World Cup circuit at 41

WASHINGTON, Dec 15, (AP): They said she "should see a psychologist," had "gone completely mad" and hadn't "recognized the meaning and purpose of her other life"

away from skiing. Well, Lindsey Vonn's return to downhill racing on her titanium knee doesn't seem so

Not after she dominated the opening speed weekend of the Olympic season, won the first downhill by a huge margin and gained more points than any other skier over three days of World Cup racing. At age 41.

"All the people that didn't believe in me, I have to thank them because it really gives me a lot of motivation," Vonn said.

"I'm surprised that people haven't figured that out by now. That every time you talk bad about me it just makes me stronger and better and more motivated. So I would love for people to keep coming at me. It would be great. Motivate me even more.

A year ago, when Vonn was preparing to race again after nearly six years of retirement, two-time Olympic champion Michaela Dorfmeister suggested the American "should see a psychologist," adding on Austrian TV, "Does she want to kill herself?"

Austrian downhill great Franz Klammer said "she's gone completely mad" and four-time overall World Cup champion Pirmin Zurbriggen added that Vonn "hasn't recognized the meaning and purpose of her other life in recent years.

After all, the risks are high in a sport where skiers hurl themselves down icy mountains at speeds of 130 kph (80 mph) with little protection besides a helmet, a back protector and a safety air bag system under their suits.

But Vonn looked more composed and stable than skiers half her age on the Corviglia course in St. Moritz, Switzerland.

LeBron James shares solidarity with

When Vonn won Friday's downhill by 0.98 seconds - an eternity in a sport often decided by mere hundredths – she was emboldened enough to shape her hands in a sleeping gesture in the style of NBA star Stephen Curry's "Night, night" gesture. In other words, she felt she had just put

the rest of the field to rest when she became the oldest winner in World Cup history among men and women.

The performance and gesture got some attention in the NBA.

"40+ is the new 20. Well, until you wake up the next day!" 40-year-old Los Angeles Lakers star LeBron James said on Insta-Goggia's pacifier

Fellow downhiller Sofia Goggia, the 2018 Olympic champion, said on Friday that Vonn "took us all to school and left us with a pacifier (baby's dummy) in our mouths."

The next day, Goggia backed up her comments and put a pacifier in her mouth while standing next to Vonn.

Vonn also finished second in another downhill on Saturday despite a big mistake midway down, then placed fourth in a super-G on Sunday. In all, she earned a weekendbest 230 World Cup points - 60 more than Goggia and 85 more than Emma Aicher, the 22-year-old German who won Saturday's

She "raised the bar for every athlete in downhill and super-G," Goggia said.

Pushing back retirement Vonn's performance has her reconsider-

ing her plans. Instead of going back into retirement immediately after the Milan Cortina Winter Games in February, she'll likely ski on through the end of the World Cup season in

"I think I might need to change my ap-



United States' Lindsey Vonn gets emotional as she celebrates winning an alpine ski, women's World Cup downhill, in St. Moritz, Switzerland. (AP)

Freiburg holds 10-man Dortmund

Kane rescues Bayern in shock draw with Mainz

BERLIN, Dec 15, (AP): Harry Kane has rescued Bayern Munich from an embarrassing home defeat to the last-placed team in the Bundesliga. The England forward scored

a penalty in the 87th minute for

Bayern to draw 2-2 with Mainz on Sunday. Bayern is the runaway league leader and yet to lose a The visitors were playing their first league game under new coach Urs Fischer, back in the Bundesliga after enjoying great success with

ed last week to replace Bo Henriksen after Mainz's dismal start. Bayern dominated from the start and Lennart Karl - the team's newest star - opened the scoring in the 29th when he was well placed for a tap-in to Serge Gnabry's

Union Berlin. Fischer was appoint-

It was Bayern's 50th Bundesliga goal of the season, a record after just 14 rounds of the league.

But the home team failed to make more of its superiority and was shocked before the break when defender Kacper Potulski equalized. It was the 18-year-old Polish youth international's first Bundesliga goal in just his second

league appearance. The visiting fans were in



Stuttgart's Deniz Undav, left, plays the ball during the German Bundesliga soccer match between SV Werder Bremen and VfB Stuttgart in Bremen, Germany. (AP)

dreamland when Lee Jae-sung scored with a header to Stefan Bell's deep cross in the 67th, but there was still plenty of time for Bayern to respond.

Vincent Kompany sent on Senegal forward Nicolas Jackson for his last appearance before going to Morocco for the Africa Cup of Nations starting Dec. 21. Canada's Alphonso Davies had already

gone on for his first league appearance in nine months after recovering from a serious knee injury.

Potulski was penalized for holding Kane and the England forward dusted himself off for what was his league-leading 17th goal of the season.

Mainz managed to hold on for seven minutes of stoppage time to celebrate what felt like a win.

Bayern is now nine points clear of second-placed Leipzig, which lost to Union Berlin on Friday.

Freiburg forward Lucas Höler scored with a spectacular bicycle kick to hold 10-man Borussia Dortmund to a 1-1 draw.

Höler stopped Christian Günter's cross with his left boot, then turned and struck the ball with his right to send the ball in off the right post in the 75th minute, denying Dortmund the chance to move second.

The goal came a day after Bayer Leverkusen's Martin Terrier scored a contender for goal of the season on Saturday.

Dortmund had Jobe Bellingham sent off in the 53rd for a foul on Philipp Treu, who would have been through alone on goal after cutting out a poor pass from Dortmund goalkeeper Gregor Kobel.

Ramy Bensebaini had opened the scoring in the 31st after Freiburg's defense failed to deal with Yan Couto's free kick.

It's Dortmund's second consecutive draw after the disappointing 2-2 draw at Bodø/Glimt in the Champions League on Wednesday.

Jamie Leweling led Stuttgart to a 4-0 win at Werder Bremen in Sunday's late game with a goal and two assists.



16

Argentinia's soccer star Lionel Messi, center, and teammates Rodrigo De Paul, second right, and Luis Suarez, third right, pose with local soccer players and others during their India tour in New Delhi, India. (AP)

Sports

Madrid moves within four points of Barca

Pressure on Alonso eases

MADRID, Dec 15, (AP): Kylian Mbappé scored in his return from injury on Sunday, leading Real Madrid to a 2-1 win at Alaves in the Spanish league to relieve some of the pressure on coach Xabi Alonso.

Rodrygo also scored as Madrid moved back within four points of leader Barcelona, which beat Osasuna 2-0.

Madrid had won only two of its last eight games in all competitions and was coming off a 2-1 home loss to Manchester City in the Champions League, prompting learn from fans at the Santiago Bernaheu Stadium

"We are together in this, we keep fighting in the good and the bad moments," Alonso said. "The team competed well today. We started well and came away with the three points. It's fundamental to be united, it's the only way to remain solid and improve day-to-day."

Mbappé, who missed Madrid's match against City on Wednesday because of a minor injury, scored his 26th goal of the season for Madrid in all competitions after a good run on the left, passing a defender before firing into the top corner from just inside the area in the 24th minute.

Alaves equalized through Carlos Vicente in a 68th-minute breakaway, but Rodrygo put the visitors ahead again from close range after a run and assist by Vinícius Júnior.

It was Rodrygo's second goal of the season. He had scored for Madrid against City to end a nine-month scoring drought with the club.

Vinícius Júnior hugged Alonso after the goal in a rare show of public support

by the Brazilian toward the former Madrid player. The gesture came after media reports said the coach had lost the locker room.

Alaves, which stayed in 12th place, was coming off a win against Sociedad.

Goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois earned his 200th victory in 310 appearances with Madrid since he arrived in 2018. Defender Antonio Rüdiger played in his 100th Spanish league match with the club.

Alonso used 19-year-old Víctor Valdepeñas, from Madrid's "B" team, in the left back position because of injuries to the regular starters.

Second-to-last Oviedo fired coach Luis Carrión after a 4-0 loss at Sevilla.

The result extended Oviedo's winless streak to 10 matches in all competitions. Oviedo hasn't won since a 2-1 victory at Valencia in the Spanish league in September

Carrión leaves with Oviedo on 10 points from 16 matches.

Sevilla moved to ninth place with 20 points. Celta Vigo won its first home game of the season in the league by beating seventh-placed Athletic Bilbao 2-0.

The result moved the Vigo club to eighth place, one point behind Athletic. Nico Williams missed a late penalty kick for Athletic.



Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe, top, challenges for the ball during the Spanish La Liga soccer match between Alaves and Real Madrid in Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain. (AP)

The game between Levante and Villarreal originally scheduled for Sunday was postponed because of heavy rain in the Valencia region. The league said it made the decision after safety recommendations made by local authorities amid a weath-

er alert issued in the region.

Villarreal was in third place and has won six in a row in the league. Levante was last and has lost five straight league matches.

Kuwait finishes 4th at Powerboat World Championship in Dubai



Kuwaiti racers pose with officials after the race.

Arab Cup offers record \$36.5 million in prize

money, champion to take home \$7.1 million

ABU DHABI, Dec 15, (KUNA): Kuwait's powerboat team secured fourth place at the XCAT Powerboat World Championship 2025 in Dubai, competing against top racers from around the globe.

Speaking to KUNA, Ali Al-Shammali, Chairman of the Powerboats Committee at the Sea Sports Club, described the result as "satisfactory", noting that Kuwait's boat had a 300-horsepower engine, smaller

DOHA, Dec 15: The 2025 Arab

Cup in Oatar has become the rich-

est edition in the tournament's

history, with total prize money

reaching an unprecedented \$36.5

million – an increase of \$11 mil-

The champion will earn \$7.1

million, while the runner-up will

receive \$4.2 million. The third-

lion from the previous edition.

than many of the competing teams.

Al-Shammali praised the team's professionalism, highlighting the strong performances of Abdulatif Al-Omani, Khaled Karam, Bader Al-Dosari, Adel Al-Mesfer, and Mohammad Barakat.

He emphasized the importance of participating in international championships to elevate the skill level of the Kuwaiti powerboat team and prepare for future competitions.

place team pockets \$2.8 million,

and the fourth-place team gets \$2.1

Teams eliminated in the group

stage take home \$715,000, and

those advancing to the quarterfi-

nals earn \$1.7 million. The mas-

sive prize pool positions the Arab

Cup among the most lucrative in-

ternational football tournaments.

Hornets shut out Cavaliers in overtime

Lakers edge Suns after blown 20-point lead

PHOENIX, Dec 15, (AP): LeBron James made two free throws with 3.9 seconds left, Luka Doncic scored 29 points and the Los Angeles Lakers recovered from blowing a 20-point lead in the fourth quarter to top the Phoenix Suns.

Phoenix trailed 99-79 with 7:48 left, but took a 114-113 lead with 12.2 seconds left on Dillon Brooks' 3-pointer over James, who made contact with Brooks after the shot. Brooks bumped James on the way back down the court, earning his second technical foul and an ejection.

More importantly, it gave the Lakers a free throw, but James missed it.

On the ensuing possession, James was fouled on a 3-point attempt by Devin Booker with 3.9 seconds left. The 40-year-old James - who finished with 26 points - missed the first free throw but made the final two to give the Lakers a 115-114 lead.

Phoenix's Grayson Allen got up an awkward shot at the buzzer, but it was off the mark.

Jaxson Hayes threw down a powerful dunk over Phoenix's Oso Ighodaro to give the Lakers a 79-77 lead with 2:24 left in the third quarter. It was part of a 24-0 run over an eight-minute span in the third and fourth quarters that ended with a 95-77 advantage.

Trail Blazers 136, Warriors 131
In Portland, Jerami Grant and Shaedon Sharpe scored 35 points apiece and the Portland Trail Blazers snapped a three-game losing streak with a vic-

tory over the Golden State Warriors.
Stephen Curry had 48 points for the Warriors. He hit a season-high 12 3-pointers, the NBA-leading 28th time he's had 10 or more in a game.

In a back-and-fourth final quarter, Toumani Camara's alley oop dunk from Donovan Clingan tied it or the Blazers at 121, but Curry answered with a 3-pointer and a layup. Portland went up 127-126 but again

basket and free throw gave Portland a one-point lead and Deni Avdija added a pair of free throws with 19.9 seconds left to stretch it to 132-129.

Moses Moody dunked to get the Warriors to 134-131 with 13.2 seconds

Curry came back with a 3. Grant's

Warriors to 134-131 with 13.2 seconds to go but Grant's free throws pushed the lead to 136-131. Grant finished with a season-high seven 3-pointers.

Curry was playing in his second game after missing five straight with

Curry was playing in his second game after missing five straight with a left quadriceps contusion. He scored 39 points in Golden State's 127-120 loss at home to Minnesota on Friday night.

Hornets' 119, Cavaliers 111 OT

In Cleveland, Rookie Kon Knueppel scored 29 points, Brandon Miller added 25 and the Charlotte Hornets shut out Cleveland in overtime on their way to a rare road victory over the Cavaliers.

Knueppel, the No. 4 overall selection this year in the NBA draft, had his second straight strong performance after scoring a season-high 33 in a loss to Chicago on Friday night. Miller added a career-high 13 rebounds and six as-



Phoenix Suns forward Dillon Brooks, left, and Los Angeles Lakers guard Luka Doncic, right, battle for the ball during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Phoenix. (AP)

sists.

Miles Bridges had 20 points, 10 rebounds and six assists as Charlotte improved to just 3-10 away from home.

The Cavaliers missed all 10 shots in the five-minute overtime and Cleveland suffered another troubling loss for a team expected to contend for the Eastern Conference title.

Darius Garland scored 26 points and Donovan Mitchell added 17 for the Cavs, who have been plagued by inconsistency in the season's first two months.

Wizards 108, Pacers 89

In Indianapolis, Marvin Bagley III scored a season-high 23 points and grabbed 13 rebounds, and CJ McCollum scored 18 points as the Washington Wizards beat the Indiana Pacers for their first road win in nearly two months.

It was Bagley's second double-double of the season. Justin Champagnie added 13 points and 14 rebounds for Washington.

The Wizards snapped a four-game skid and improved to 2-11 on the road this season, with their only other away win coming Oct. 24 at Dallas.

And they did it with defense. The short-handed Pacers finished with their second-worst shooting percentage of the season (36.9%) and their third-worst mark from 3-point range (25.6%).

Nets 127, Bucks 82

In New York, Egor Demin scored 17 points, Noah Clowney added 16 and the Brooklyn Nets matched the franchise record for margin of victory, never trailing in a romp over the shorthanded Milwaukee Bucks.

The 45-point victory tied the team record set Jan. 9, 1993, against Washington while the team was playing in New Jersey. The Nets have won four of six after opening 3-13. At home, they have won three of four after starting 0-9.

Brooklyn coach Jordi Fernandez missed the game due to an illness. Assistant coach Steve Hetzel directed the team.

Gary Trent Jr. scored 20 points and Kyle Kuzma added 13 for the struggling Bucks They have lost three of four since star Giannis Antetokounmpo strained his right calf in the opening minutes of a win over Detroit on Dec. 3

Hawks 120, 76ers 117

In Atlanta, Dyson Daniels had 27 points and 10 rebounds, Onyeka Okongwu added 20 points and 15 rebounds and the Atlanta Hawks held off the Philadelphia 76ers.

Quentin Grimes had a chance to force overtime, but his 3-point attempt at the buzzer went in and out to dramatically give the Hawks their 15th win of the season.

Daniels was 13 of 19 from the field. Vít Krejci added 19 points, and Zaccharie Risacher had 15.

Paul George led Philadelphia with 35 points, VJ Edgecombe had 26 and Joel Embiid finished with 22 points and 14 rebounds. The 76ers led only once, at 47-46 in the second quarter.

Edgecombe kept the 76ers in it with 17 points in the third quarter as George and Joel Embiid watched from the bench

Timberwolves 117, Kings 103 In Minneapolis, Julius Randle had

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24 points and nine rebounds to lead Minnesota past the Sacramento Kings 117-103 on Sunday night in the Timberwolves' second straight game without star Anthony Edwards.

Jaden McDaniels scored 21 points and Naz Reid added 20 points and 11 rebounds for the Timberwolves (17-9). They have won seven of eight and exacted a measure of revenge for their 117-112 overtime loss at Sacramento on Nov. 24 when they blew a 10-point lead with less than three minutes left in regulation.

Donte DiVincenzo had 18 points, six assists and four steals and Bones Hyland pitched in 18 points in his second straight start for Edwards, the guard sidelined by soreness in his right foot. Point guard Mike Conley also was out with an Achilles injury. Rudy Gobert, who had 12 rebounds in 20 minutes, left in the third quarter because of what the team announced as personal reasons.

Pelicans 114, Bulls 104 Chicago, Trey Murphy III s

In Chicago, Trey Murphy III scored 20 points with 10 rebounds, rookie Jeremiah Fears added 20 points and the New Orleans Pelicans topped the Chicago Bulls on.

The last-place Pelicans won their second straight following a seven-game losing streak to improve to 5-22. They've beaten the Bulls twice this season.

Zion Williamson scored 18 points, including seven down the the stretch, in his return to the lineup to help the Pelicans pull away late. Jordan Poole had 16 for New Orleans, who outrebounded Chicago 53-43 and outscored the Bulls 60-46 in the paint.

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