



Amir receives CEO of CARIRS  
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## Bahraini King highlights strong bond with Kuwait

MANAMA, Dec 22, (KUNA): Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa has affirmed the deeply rooted and fraternal historical ties that bind the Kingdom of Bahrain and the State of Kuwait – ties that are growing stronger and more distinguished thanks to the mutual commitment to enhancing and consolidating them.

According to Bahrain News Agency (BNA), the remarks came during the King's reception of Kuwaiti Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, who was visiting the Kingdom.

The King praised the close cooperation and joint efforts, particularly in the media, cultural, and youth sectors, which are witnessing growth and development to achieve what is best for both countries and their brotherly peoples.

The King also commended the significant role played by His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in supporting and strengthening Bahraini Kuwaiti relations in all fields.

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Left: Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa receives Kuwait's Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi. Right: Bahrain's Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa with Kuwait's Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi.

KUNA photos



### Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

## Is the goal to eat the grapes, or to fight the guard?

THE Cabinet and His Highness the Prime Minister should reflect on this question. Instead of hindering the livelihoods of citizens and imposing restrictions on factory owners, farmers, and investors with usufruct rights, would it not be more effective to implement a strategic incentive plan?

Such a plan would encourage greater investment in all sectors and stimulate the national economy.

This question is particularly relevant at a time when Kuwait appears to be moving backward, while its Gulf counterparts and many other countries are actively supporting business.

These countries grant investors and industrialists extensive facilities to boost national production, expand the domestic economy, and reduce burdens.

This support encourages increased local investment by enabling the development of projects through the adoption of the latest technology and innovation in industry and other fields.

A recent health insurance regulation issued by the Ministry of Health in the past two days is expected by its drafters to generate hundreds of millions for the treasury. However, this measure is likely to be counterproductive and may further fuel inflation.

The added cost will compel workers to demand higher wages, prompting manufacturers to raise product prices. Ultimately, this will negatively affect

consumers, who may reduce their spending as a result.

Raising fees will increase costs for businesses, such as factories and institutions, whether they employ 100 or 200 workers, as this change affects all economic sectors. This directly impacts consumers by reducing purchasing power and increasing the cost of living.

When fees on imported goods or services are raised, this typically leads to higher final prices, thereby limiting what individuals can afford to buy.

The national economy is being harmed by several factors. Recently, the suspension of licenses for industrial, agricultural, and service-related land has become a major concern, often triggered when owners are only one or two months late in paying fees.

These lands were initially undeveloped desert, and the current beneficiaries are the ones who took the initiative to develop and cultivate them by establishing essential factories, farms, and service facilities. Should these individuals not be acknowledged and rewarded

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## Council revamps ad rules

## Philippines, Sri Lanka embassies granted diplomatic quarter plots

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: The Municipal Council, in its regular session held on Monday, presided over by Vice Chairman Khalid Al-Mutairi, approved a proposal submitted by member Munira Al-Amir to establish a special regulation covering government land allocation procedures and their detailed decisions.

The measure aims to organize one of the Council's most important powers within a clear and comprehensive framework. Al-Amir emphasized that the regulation stems from the need to unify and standardize land allocation procedures by consolidating previous decisions and practices.

She noted that the proposal was prompted by weaknesses in the integration of past decisions, which have affected follow-up, oversight, and

implementation, particularly given the involvement of multiple government entities in the process.

After approximately three hours of deliberations, the Municipal Council adopted a draft amendment to Ministerial Resolution No. 599/2023 on advertising regulations.

The amendment introduces several regulatory changes, including definitions for media outlets, electronic screens, and advertising websites, as well as the establishment of lighting standards and requirements for consistent brand names. It also sets a maximum height of five meters for advertising signs, regulates the use of light boxes on shop fronts, and imposes annual fees of KD 40 for advertisements on delivery bikes and KD 100 for commercial advertisements via advertising companies.

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Photo by Rezk Tawfiq

Municipal Council in session on Monday.

# Kuwait, China strengthen partnership with port deal



PM Diwan photos

Top: HH the PM and Cabinet members. Above left: HH the PM addressing the ceremony. Above right: Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan shakes hands with the Vice President of China Communications Construction Company Limited, Chen Zhong.

## Agreement reflects leadership's development resolve

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah witnessed the signing of the engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) contract for the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project.

The contract was signed by the Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan on behalf of Kuwait, and by the Vice President of China Communications Construction Company Limited, Chen Zhong, on behalf of China.

During the ceremony, His Highness the Prime Minister highlighted the depth of Kuwaiti-Chinese relations, which are based on a solid historical foundation of

political trust, mutual respect, and shared interests.

He explained that the relations, built on the wise leadership of both countries and a shared political will to enhance cooperation across various fields, have now reached a new milestone with the signing of the EPC contract to complete the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project. The occasion coincides with the second anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad assuming the reins of power in the country, reflecting visionary guidance and a steadfast commitment to achieving developmental milestones. The Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project serves as a strategic cornerstone for Kuwait's economic development. The project strengthens the country's role in regional and international trade, facilitates logistical integration with neighboring nations, and enhances connectivity between ports, regional hubs, and global supply chains, thereby supporting intra-regional trade and expanding economic cooperation.

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## Petrochemicals seen 'rebounding' in 2026

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: The third consecutive interest rate cut by the US Federal Reserve this year was expected to have a positive impact on the local and global petrochemical sectors, say sources.

Sources explained that high interest rates in recent years contributed to rising inflation levels, which led to higher prices for petrochemical feedstock and negatively affected the industry's performance. Sources expect the sector to recover from the losses incurred over the past three years and to return to profitability next year.

Fuel prices, geopolitical developments, and Chinese competition were identified as key factors behind the sector's stagnation. Sources confirmed that Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) intends to expand its petrochemical activities through new acquisitions scheduled for 2026.

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## Al-Rai crash exposes drug-impaired driver

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: A young man was arrested after a two-vehicle collision in Al-Rai, after authorities discovered he was under the influence of drugs and in possession of approximately 20 small bags of suspected narcotics.

The incident unfolded when the Operations Room of the Ministry of Interior received a report about the accident. Security personnel who arrived at the scene observed that one of the drivers appeared impaired. A subsequent search led to the discovery of the suspected drugs.

The driver was taken into custody, and the seized items were documented. The suspect has been referred with the evidence to the relevant authorities for further legal action.



9 NBK further strengthens its leadership in consumer & digital banking



Prayer Timings

Fajr .....	05:13	Asr .....	14:36
Sunrise ..	06:38	Maghrib ..	16:54
Zohr .....	11:46	Isha .....	18:16

# Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

**By Day:** Mild and partly cloudy with light to moderate southeasterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-28 km/h with a chance for fog forming at night.

Weather

**By Night:** Cold and partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate southeasterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-28 km/h with a chance for fog forming over some areas.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	19	10
Kuwait Airport	21	08
Abdaly	21	06
Bubyan	16	04
Jahra	21	10
Failaka Island	18	08

## KUWAIT HAS MADE TREMENDOUS PROGRESS IN SHEIKH MESHAL'S RULE

### PM Diwan Chief, GCC envoys congratulate HH the Amir

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22, (KUNA): Head of the Prime Minister's Diwan Abdulaziz Al-Dakheel extended his highest congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the second anniversary of assuming power.

In a press statement, he expressed deep pride in the Amir's leadership, praising efforts to strengthen Kuwait's standing, wishing him further progress and prosperity.

**EPA congratulates**

Acting Director General of the Public Authority for the Environment (EPA) Nouf Behbehani on Sunday congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the second anniversary of his assumption of power.

Behbehani told KUNA that His Highness' leadership is guided by a firm vision and notable contributions that have helped advance sustainable development pathways across the country.

She said the two year journey reflected His Highness the Amir's wise vision for progress, stability, and prosperity, as well as strengthened environmental protection efforts, support for sustainability initiatives and the empowerment of Kuwaiti women.

**FIU Chief**

Kuwait's Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) Chief Dr. Hamad Al-Mekrad congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-



Abdulaziz Al-Dakheel



Nouf Behbehani



Dr. Hamad Al-Mekrad

Ahmad Al-Jaber AlSabah on the second anniversary of his accession to power. In remarks to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Al-Mekrad commended the progress and development Kuwait has seen under His Highness the Amir's leadership, as well as the security and stability achieved through his guidance and vision, wishing His Highness the Amir lasting health.

**GCC Chief**

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary General Jassem Al-Budaiwi conveyed on Saturday his warmest congratulations to His Highness the Amir heikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the second anniversary of assumption of power.

Al-Budaiwi prayed to Allah to grant His Highness abundant health and well-being and guide him to continue to lead Kuwait toward further progress and prosperity and to

broader horizons.

He also prayed to Allah to protect Kuwait and its people, and maintain security and stability to the country, under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the His Highness Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Since the assumption of power, His Highness the Amir has been keen on strengthening the state's institutions and boosting security and stability as well as backing the path of sustainable and comprehensive development, Al-Budaiwi told KUNA in a statement.

His Highness the Amir also has been eager to continue efforts aiming to develop government performance and cement the principles of justice and the rule of law, and contributed to enhancing Kuwait's position on all levels in a manner that aligns with Ku-

waitis' aspirations, he stated.

GCC Secretariat highly commended His Highness the Amir's pivotal role played in bolstering the path of joint Gulf action, Al-Budaiwi said.

He referred to His Highness the Amir's directives to him, during a meeting, on boosting the Gulf action and exerting several efforts and removing obstacles.

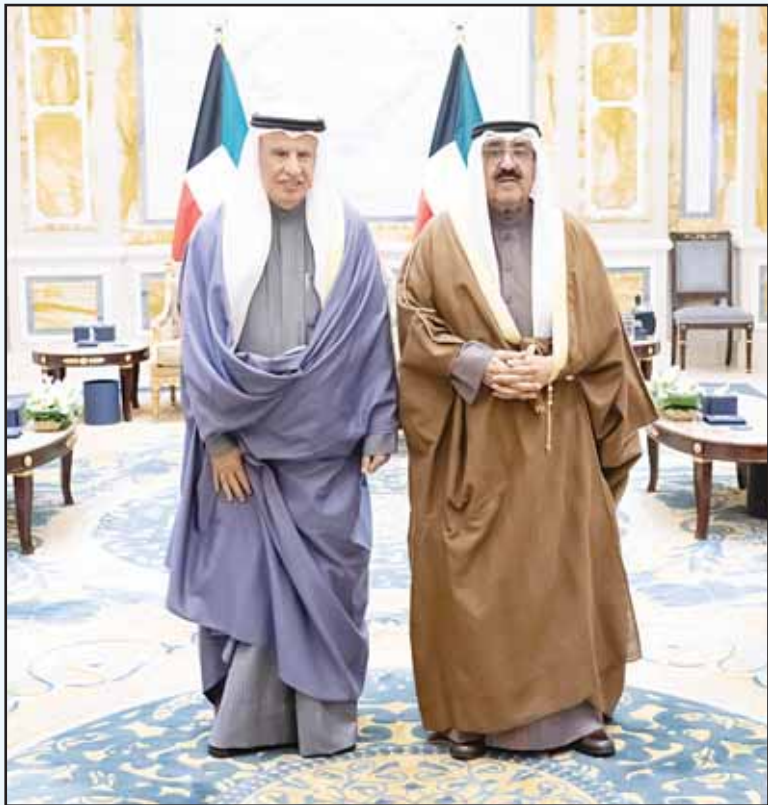
In addition, GCC chief extolled the key role played by His Highness the Amir while leading the 45th session of the GCC Supreme Council.

He further extolled His Highness the Amir's directives to all Kuwait's ministries and institutions to permanently work to push joint Gulf action paths, and boost integration among all fields as well as support initiatives that bolster integration among GCC members, the statement concluded.

**Envoys congratulate**

GCC states' ambassadors congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the second anniversary of his proclamation as the Amir of the State of Kuwait.

Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad Al-Saud, on his behalf and in the name of the Saudi diplomatic mission and the Saudi citizens, expressed felicitations and addressed blessings to His Highness the Amir on the occasion, praising the achievements made during his rule.



Amiri Diwan photo  
His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives at Bayan Palace, Monday, the CEO of Central Agency for Remedying Illegal Resident Status (CARIRS), Saleh Al-Fadhala.

## Amir receives CEO of CARIRS

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan

Palace, Monday, the CEO of Central Agency for Remedying Illegal Residents Status (CARIRS), Saleh Al-Fadhala.

### Bid to strengthen rules, laws

## Minister grants judicial power to staff in cooperative affairs

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah issued a ministerial decree granting judicial authority to 11 employees at the General Administration of Cooperative Affairs.

The decision is part of the ministry's efforts to strengthen oversight and ensure strict enforcement of the law in the cooperative sector.

In a press statement, Al-Huwailah explained that the decree reflects the ministry's commitment to activating field oversight mechanisms and dealing with

crimes and violations punishable under Law No. 24/1979 on cooperative societies and its amendments. Granting judicial arrest authority to these specialized personnel in their official capacities is an important step to enhance transparency, protect the rights of shareholders and consumers, and ensure cooperative societies adhere to relevant regulations. The decision was based on laws and decrees that regulate civil service, the provisions governing the operation of cooperative societies, and the approved regulations for judicial officers in the sector.

Al-Huwailah affirmed the ministry's commitment to enforcing the law without leniency and monitoring any violations that could harm cooperative work.

### Other Voices

## The quiet & powerful envoy

By Ahmad alsarraf

MY acquaintance with my friend, Ambassador Suleiman Al-Fassam (Abu Talal), began at the home of our late friend, Khalid Abdul Latif Al-Shaya. Our meetings continued for several years until the sudden passing of our host, and the twists and engagements of life gradually separated us.

Abu Talal was a serious man who rarely smiled and spoke very little. When he did speak, it was with wisdom, precision, and dignity, qualities shaped by his character and honed through his long and distinguished diplomatic career.

Brother Suleiman Al-Fassam's career in diplomacy began after completing his training at the Indian Diplomatic Institute, Sabur House. He was first assigned to Jeddah, where the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs was located, as King Faisal preferred it over the capital, Riyadh. Two years later, he was transferred to Washington, D.C. He then served as consul in Dubai before being posted to South Yemen, where he was eventually appointed ambassador to the Socialist Republic.

His nine-year tenure in Yemen was perhaps the most tumultuous and remarkable period of his diplomatic career, and arguably the most challenging. Abu Talal witnessed firsthand the complex tapestry of Yemeni society, observing conflicts between leaders of the South and North and their endless struggles for power. He also witnessed the activities of Palestinian organizations and the infighting among members of the same party, all competing for power.

After two years as ambassador in this chaotic and turbulent country, Abu Talal left South Yemen to assume his post as Kuwait's ambassador to Jordan. This period was perhaps the most delicate, and possibly the most dangerous, of his dip-



alsarraf

lomatic career. The government, the majority of Jordanians, and many Palestinians were opposed to Kuwait.

In his memoirs, Ambassador Al-Fassam recounts his interactions with King Hussein, accurately describing the king's personality and his skill in thwarting all coup attempts against his rule, whether by Ba'athists or Nasserists. Jordan's support for Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and its backing of Saddam Hussein strained Al-Fassam's relationship with both the Jordanian leadership and the Jordanian people. He recalls an incident in which King Hussein interrupted him during a speech at a meeting with Arab ambassadors and left the meeting in anger after Al-Fassam strongly refuted Jordan's false claims.

Ambassador Al-Fassam also recounts his meeting with King Hussein on February 26, 1991, following the liberation of Kuwait, when the king requested the restructuring of relations between the two countries. However, shortly thereafter, Kuwait decided to withdraw its ambassadors from all opposing countries, most notably Jordan.

The diaries of my friend Suleiman Al-Fassam are rich and truly worth reading, offering valuable insights into history. It is regrettable that so few Kuwaiti ambassadors have taken the time to document their experiences for posterity.

Al-Fassam's experiences, along with those of other ambassadors, demonstrate that the prestige and warm welcome an ambassador receives, wherever they go, represent only the positive side of the role. In reality, diplomacy is a demanding profession that requires extensive experience, skill, understanding, and the ability to act appropriately in the most challenging circumstances.

An ambassador represents their country's leader before the leader of the host nation. Therefore, they must choose their words carefully, think before speaking, and know when to remain silent.

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# Visas in line with Malta's, EU laws

Kuwaitis live, visit here: envoy

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: Ambassador of Malta to the State of Kuwait Prof. Dr. George A. Said-Zammit highlighted the "excellent" and strong bilateral relationship between Malta and Kuwait, encompassing political and humanitarian cooperation.**



Dr. Said-Zammit

larly in tourism, cultural exchange, and trade.

He cited a recent tourism promotion event, in which several Kuwaiti tour operators and travel agents participated, as a successful example of this collaboration.

Ambassador Dr. Said-Zammit explained that Malta's appeal to Kuwaiti tourists lies in its natural beauty, including its coastline and sea, historical sites, archaeological landmarks, and the cultural, linguistic, and historical ties between the two countries. Feedback from Kuwaiti participants was overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing admiration for Malta's diverse offerings and beauty. The joint promotional efforts have been successful, with many attendees expressing a strong desire to revisit Malta.

Regarding the possibility of launching direct flights between Kuwait and Malta, Ambassador Dr. Said-Zammit explained that work on this matter is still ongoing. The procedures require time and the completion of necessary permits through official channels

in both countries, but there is hope about reaching a future agreement in this regard.

Concerning visa procedures, the ambassador clarified that they are governed by Maltese national legislation and European Union regulations.

He noted that all applications undergo official review before a decision is made, emphasizing the commitment to follow the applicable rules despite concerns about the short visa duration.

Ambassador Dr. Said-Zammit revealed that more than 200 Kuwaitis reside in or visit Malta annually, including students and their families, and emphasized the importance of strengthening the tourism sector and increasing the number of Kuwaiti visitors in the coming period.

He added that around 100 Kuwaiti students are currently studying in Malta in various academic disciplines.

Regarding official visits, the ambassador announced the possibility of a Maltese trade delegation visiting Kuwait in February, clarifying that the visit aims to explore opportunities for trade and investment cooperation and discuss the exchange of products between the two countries for promoting mutual interests and opening new avenues for economic collaboration.

He emphasized the depth of his personal connection with Kuwait, describing the country as his "second home."

He shared that when preparing to visit Kuwait, he tells his family that he is "going to his second home", which reflects his affection and respect for Kuwait and its people.

In conclusion, Ambassador Dr. Said-Zammit addressed Kuwaiti citizens, affirming that Malta, like Kuwait, is a country with a positive spirit and friendly people, assuring that Kuwaiti visitors will feel welcome and comfortable.

He added, "Based on past experiences, many Kuwaitis who have visited Malta have expressed their desire to return a second and third time, which is the best evidence of the success of these efforts."

Expats hurt each other in altercation

## Two suicides ... one jumps to death & other hangs himself

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: Two expatriates have died by suicide in separate incidents in Hawally and the Capital Governorates, which prompted investigations by authorities to determine the circumstances, reports Al-Anba daily.

In Hawally Governorate, an Arab expatriate died by jumping from a building. Security patrols and ambulance crews rushed to the location immediately after receiving information about the incident, and found the man deceased at the scene. His body was transported by forensic investigators for further legal procedures, and a case was registered.

In Capital Governorate, an Asian expatriate took his life by hanging inside his sponsor's home. Security forces arrived immediately, and pulled down the body which they referred to the Forensics Medicine Department. A case was registered.

Authorities have launched investigations into both incidents to determine the motives and circumstances, and have summoned relevant individuals for questioning.

□ □ □

**Verbal to physical fight:** Maidan Hawally Police Station registered an assault Case

No. 239/2025, after a Pakistani expatriate reported being attacked by an Egyptian expatriate, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to security sources from the Criminal Security Sector's Hawally Investigation Department, detectives launched an immediate investigation after receiving the complaint from the Pakistani expatriate.

The Egyptian expatriate was summoned and he admitted that a verbal argument with the complainant escalated into a physical altercation. He revealed that he had punched the complainant in the face, after which the complainant struck him with an ashtray on the table, causing a head injury.

The complainant, however, denied the defendant's account, claiming that he had intervened to break up a separate fight involving the defendant, who then assaulted him, adding that he was injured by a cigarette lighter during the incident.

Initial investigations revealed that the Egyptian suspect was responsible for the assault. The victim sustained a head wound that required five stitches, according to a medical report from Mubarak Hospital.

Following the investigation, the suspect was referred to the relevant authorities for further legal action.

## Kuwait is a model of coexistence – Hazim

By Bassam Al-Qassas

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: His Eminence, Metropolitan Ghattas Hazim, the ruling Greek Orthodox Metropolitan of Baghdad, Kuwait, and their Dependencies, says the State of Kuwait is a leading model of coexistence, love, and openness among all segments of society.



Ghattas Hazim

lomatic and a number of citizens and residents, Metropolitan Ghattas Hazim stated that Christmas "is a celebration for all humanity, as it reminds us of love and calls us to be instruments of peace and joy."

He explained that true faith is shown through accepting and loving others, not merely coexisting with them. Human virtues are only complete in the presence of others.

Metropolitan Ghattas Hazim said, "A person cannot love if they remain closed in on themselves, because our relationship with God is directly reflected in our relationship with others."

He highlighted that the message of Christmas is universal, as God "came and addressed everyone without exception, calling for peace, joy, and love among humankind."

Metropolitan Ghattas Hazim noted the coincidence of Christmas celebrations with the second anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad's accession to power, affirming that His Highness "is always present in our hearts and prayers" and that this occasion is "dear to the heart of every Kuwaiti and everyone who lives on the land of Kuwait."

He praised the character of His Highness the Amir, describing him as "a distinguished leader, marked by his openness, love, and sincere concern for the nation's well-being."

Metropolitan Ghattas Hazim prayed to God to protect and preserve His Highness the Amir, safeguard Kuwait and its people from all harm, and continue to bless them with security and stability.

Meanwhile, Rima Al-Khalidi, wife of the Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait and Vice President of the Executive Council of the International Women's Group, extended her warmest congratulations and best wishes on behalf of the President of the Executive Council, Marika Konchlamaashvili, and all Council members on the occasion of the upcoming Christmas holiday.

She said, "Reflecting on the occasion of Christmas, celebrated by millions of believers around the world, this holy event carries a message of love and peace from the land of peace and love - the city of Nazareth, where the Virgin Mary announced the birth of Jesus Christ, the city of Bethlehem, which is the birthplace of Jesus Christ, and Jerusalem, the city from which Jesus Christ rose."

## Drifters injure traffic cop on duty in Al-Wafra farms

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: The Ministry of Interior has arrested two individuals involved in a hit-and-run incident that injured a traffic officer while he was on duty in the Al-Wafra Farms Area of Ahmadi Governorate. It has also impounded two vehicles that were previously seized for reckless driving, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an official statement, the ministry explained that the incident occurred on Thursday evening, December 18, after authorities received a report of a hit-and-run.

Patrol teams arrived at the scene and discovered that officers had been attempting to apprehend the driver of a Nissan-Z with no license plates, who was driving recklessly.

During the arrest attempt, the suspect fled on foot and then got into another vehicle, a Land Cruiser, also without license plates. While trying to escape, the Land Cruiser struck one of the officers, causing lacerations to his hands and left leg.

The officer was taken to the emergency department of Sabah Al-Ahmadi Hospital where he received treatment, and was later discharged in stable condition.

The ministry affirmed that reckless driving, fleeing from law enforcement, and assaulting officers are serious violations that threaten public safety.

It confirmed that strict legal measures will be taken against offenders, including vehicle impoundment and referral of suspects to the relevant authorities.



# diwaniya

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

## Wise leadership and unwavering resolve

"WE commemorate the second anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's accession to power, amid the beautiful weather of December, as beautiful as His Highness's heart and his love for his country and its people," Kuwaiti writer **Faisal Al-Muzayen** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"From my early childhood, while accompanying my father (May God have mercy on him) on visits to princes and sheikhs, and during their reciprocal visits to my father at his diwaniya in Kaifan, I witnessed the depth of the relationship between us, as well as the mutual love and respect. I saw and heard the genuine love these princes and sheikhs held for Kuwait and its people, and their sincere concern for their welfare.



Faisal Al-Muzayen

"During the honor of meeting His Highness last Ramadan, I sensed and witnessed this deep-rooted historical legacy that our fathers and grandfathers passed down to us, from the era of Sheikh Mubarak Al-Kabeer, through Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber and the other Amirs of Kuwait (May God have mercy on them), until we reached His Highness the Amir (May God protect him). It is a legacy defined by love for Kuwait and its people, and by a steadfast commitment to the well-being of its citizens.

"The honor of meeting His Highness was a confirmation of what was already known, something I had witnessed along with my father since those early days, and which our forefathers spoke of regarding the family's love for its loyal people.

"His Highness is a leader with an exceptional and unique vision. He is a military and security figure, meticulous, decisive, and just. He seeks to restore the country to its former glory while taking into account the changes of time and generations. He wants Kuwait to preserve the values, customs, traditions, and kindness of its original people, while at the same time keeping pace with modernity. In other words, he believes that development and modernization must advance in parallel with the values of the authentic Kuwaiti people.

"His Highness assumed the reins of power at a divinely ordained time to rescue and uplift Kuwait. The nation needed a skilled surgeon to heal the wounds accumulated over decades. The process may be painful, but it is for the good of the country and its people, now and in the future.

"From a neutral perspective, the signs of reform are becoming increasingly evident. Many long-delayed and stalled projects, such as road repairs, have been completed, and the new Kuwait International Airport project is nearing completion. We are also witnessing a tangible sense of justice, based on the clear principle that no one is above the law.

"We have also seen bilateral agreements signed with several countries in various fields, alongside the development, strengthening, and consolidation of relations within the Gulf Cooperation Council with all its member states, as well as enhanced regional and international relations. These developments are positive and serve Kuwait's national interests.

"An agreement was reached with China on the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project, a cornerstone of a long-awaited economic boom. His Highness possesses a sharp developmental and economic vision, coupled with a strong commitment to safeguarding public funds. This ensures that the economy operates under the rule of law and that the Kuwaiti economy remains strong and resilient. Moreover, the fight against financial, administrative, and moral corruption is being carried out effectively and in a balanced manner by oversight and security agencies, within a reform process that shows no favoritism to anyone.

"On the security front, the enforcement of the law has become a tangible reality, from traffic regulations to combating drug trafficking. These measures have had a clear and positive impact, evident to all, along with several other decisions and laws that have influenced people's behavior and strengthened their adherence to the law. Despite this firmness, mercy and compassion are still shown to those who deserve it, in accordance with the circumstances of each case.

"These laws are being reviewed to avoid any negative aspects, which is a positive step for which those responsible deserve appreciation, as laws are meant to serve, protect, and stabilize society. The achievements are many, but I will not elaborate further to save time.

"In short, His Highness has restored the concept of work and institutional discipline, where the rule of law prevails without favoritism.

"We congratulate His Highness the Amir (May God protect and preserve him) on the second anniversary of his accession to power. We pray that God grants him continued health, well-being, and a long life, and preserves him as a treasured asset for Kuwait and its people."

Also:

"Drugs are among the most serious challenges facing societies due to

their devastating effects on individuals, families, security, and social stability. Therefore, it has become necessary to impose tougher penalties for drug-related crimes as an essential measure to deter traffickers and dealers and to protect society from the spread of this scourge," Kuwaiti lawyer **Dr. Abdul-lah Al-Tarji** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"However, relying on punishment alone will not achieve the desired outcome unless it is accompanied by a comprehensive treatment system that tackles the root causes of the problem, foremost among them addiction as a disease that requires specialized treatment and care.

"Addiction is not merely a moral failing, but a complex medical condition involving intertwined psychological, social, and health factors. This reality necessitates the establishment of specialized centers and hospitals capable of providing comprehensive treatment and rehabilitation programs that help addicts recover and regain their ability to lead normal lives.

"Opening such centers represents a true lifeline for thousands of individuals in need of medical and psychological support, rather than relying solely on punishment, which may ultimately exacerbate the problem.

"The importance of these centers lies in their ability to reduce relapse rates through long-term follow-up and rehabilitation programs, which help reintegrate recovering addicts into society as productive members, thereby alleviating the burden on security institutions and prisons. These treatment programs also help reduce the social and economic costs associated with continued addiction without effective intervention.

"The simultaneous enforcement of stricter penalties and the establishment of addiction treatment centers achieves a necessary balance between deterrence and rehabilitation. On one hand, a clear and decisive message is sent to dealers and traffickers. On the other hand, hope is offered to addicts for treatment and recovery, rather than leaving them to sink deeper into delinquency.

"In this context, investing in specialized hospitals and centers becomes a national imperative, no less important than enacting deterrent laws. A safe society is one that protects its citizens through punishment when necessary and through treatment when it is the most effective course of action. This approach establishes a comprehensive strategy for combating drugs, based on prevention, treatment, and deterrence, and lays the foundation for a safer and more stable future for society as a whole."

"We were raised in Kuwait to support the oppressed and those who struggle for their rights. For this reason, Kuwait and its people have always been committed to backing the Palestinian resistance against the Israeli occupation," columnist **Eng. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Kuwait has also supported the Algerian resistance, the liberation of Sinai, and many other national and Islamic causes. Rooted in Arab and Islamic values, this support extended to the resistance in Lebanon against Israel from 1982 onward, as it was a struggle for the freedom of the land and its people.

In 2000, the joy of the Kuwaiti people at the defeat of the Israeli forces in southern Lebanon was perhaps equal to their joy at the liberation of Kuwait from the Iraqi occupation.

"The victory of the Lebanese resistance in 2006 was significant, but it has given way to several disappointments since 2011, when the Lebanese Hezbollah militia shifted the targets of its weapons. Instead of focusing on resisting Israeli forces, Hezbollah turned Syria into a battlefield that claimed the lives of thousands of Syrians, acting as a weapon in the hands of Bashar al-Assad's regime.

When any power abandons its righteous course or raises slogans of righteousness for nefarious purposes, it brings about serious questions about the true political ideology it follows.

"Here, I am not referring to religious ideology, but to the strategic objectives of an armed group that once legitimately resisted an enemy, only to later become a gun for hire, targeting even its own supporters at the command of its patrons. This change in perception of some Lebanese resistance factions became clear when their hands were stained with the blood of Syrians, Yemenis, and Gulf citizens. The true nature of Hezbollah was exposed when it became a tool in the hands of regional powers.

"When I saw the picture of Hezbollah's Chief of Staff, Haitham al-Tabtabaie, circulating on most social media platforms while he was in Yemen, I wondered - How can a resistance fighter accept killing his innocent Arab brothers? Is it a sense of Arab impotence that has allowed some resistance groups to become agents of others? I vividly recall that in the 1970s, at the height of the Lebanese Civil War, many Lebanese were outraged by the statement of Palestinian leader Salah Khalaf, who said, "The liberation of Jerusalem passes through Jounieh."

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty

## Court acquits 'royal' in forgery of probe report

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: The Criminal Court has acquitted Sheikh Khalid Al-Jarrah of charges of forging a prosecution investigation report in the "Ministry of Interior Expenses" case, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

Sheikh Khalid Al-Jarrah was accused of providing false information regarding the repayment of funds misappropriated from the Ministry of Interior's secret expenditures.

Following the court's ruling, the Public Prosecution has closed the case.

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**Marriage annulled:** The Court of Appeals upheld the ruling of a lower court, which annulled a marriage contract due to the defendant's proven deception and concealment of fundamental defects at the time of the marriage.

The ruling included obligating the defendant to pay the plaintiff KD4,350 as compensation for material and moral damages, in addition to court costs and KD100 in attorney's fees for the lawsuit filed by Attorney Sarah Al-Junaie.

This ruling reaffirms the established legal precedent that deception in a marriage contract is a legitimate ground for annulment, provided the court determines that one party violated the principle of good faith and concealed significant defects that could have altered the other party's intention at the time of signing the contract.

KUNA photo  
Assistant Undersecretary for Supporting Security Services Major General Ali Al-Adwani during the inspection visit to Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences.

## Well-qualified police force can do better job: official

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22, (KUNA): Assistant Undersecretary for Supporting Security Services Major General Ali Al-Adwani affirmed on Monday keenness on strengthening education and academic roles to prepare qualified national cadres capable of safeguarding Kuwait's security and stability.

Ministry of Interior said in a statement that the remarks came during Al-Adwani's inspection visit to Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences (SAASS), as part of efforts to develop education and training sys-

tems.

During the visit, he reviewed the progress of academic and training programs at the SAASS, in addition to examining the student numbers and the appropriate examination mechanisms.

The visit also included a review of the academic status of students studying at military colleges in Gulf Cooperation Council countries (GCC), as well as discussions on development plans to advance education and training at SAASS.

# Probe begins as 123 degrees of gov't workers found fake

Payback time ... Syrian jailed 7 years, fined KD 350,000

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

**KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: The Court of Appeals sentenced a Syrian defendant to seven years in prison and imposed a fine of KD 350,000, representing the value of the salaries he unlawfully received after he was appointed as an employee at the Ministry of Defense following his fraudulent acquisition of Kuwaiti citizenship.**

The court chose not to punish another Syrian defendant, the brother of the first, in the same case.

The case came to light after a Syrian resident reported that, as a child, he had overheard his father discussing an agreement with a Kuwaiti citizen to obtain citizenship for his two sons in exchange for money. The agreement involved falsely adding them to the citizen's file as his own children.

The Nationality Affairs Investigation Department conducted extensive investigations, which produced forensic evidence, including DNA tests, confirming the defendants' guilt and proving their Syrian nationality.

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**123 degrees forged:** The Criminal Security Department's Anti-Forgery and Counterfeiting Division has launched an investigation into 123 suspected cases of forged university degrees be-

longing to male and female government employees, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The probe follows information received from the Ministry of Higher Education raising concerns about the authenticity of certain academic certificates.

In response, legal and technical procedures have been initiated to verify the validity of the documents and confirm that the data and official seals from the issuing universities are legitimate.

The Anti-Forgery and Counterfeiting Department immediately began examining the suspected documents, scrutinizing technical details, and coordinating with relevant authorities as part of standard procedures for handling academic forgery cases. The International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) has been contacted to verify the authenticity of the certificates and university seals, confirm the accreditation of the issuing universities, and validate the graduation records through official channels established for international cooperation.

Investigations in this regard are ongoing and that legal action will be taken against anyone found involved in suspected forgery.

Security authorities affirmed that they will not tolerate any attempts to undermine the credibility of academic certificates or damage public trust in the education system, noting that the integrity of academic qualifications is a fundamental pillar of fair employment and the protection of the public interest.

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**Kuwaiti woman arrested:** The Ministry of Interior has announced the arrest of a Kuwaiti woman for posting content on social media deemed offen-

sive to public morals, as part of ongoing efforts to combat cybercrime and protect societal values, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

In an official statement, the ministry explained that the Criminal Security Sector, through the General Department of Criminal Investigation's Cybercrime Department, detected a video containing phrases and questions that violated public decency and contradicted the values and traditions of Kuwaiti society. The woman was summoned and she admitted to filming and posting the video.

The Public Prosecution confirmed that the content constituted a criminal offense and referred the woman to the Media Prosecution for further legal action.

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**Drug pills with bedoun:** Officers from Jahra Security Directorate arrested an illegal resident (bedoun) in his 30s in possession of 770 Lyrica pills intended for sale, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

According to security sources, the arrest took place during the first week of implementation of the new drug law, which imposes severe penalties including the death penalty and life imprisonment for drug traffickers.

Jahra officers, while patrolling Al-Qasr, noticed a vehicle violating traffic regulations. The vehicle was stopped, and they searched the driver and the vehicle. They discovered the pills while searching his vehicle. The suspect was referred with the seized pills to the Drug Control General Department for necessary legal action. The sources affirmed that the suspect will be investigated, and if found guilty of trafficking, he will face the appropriate penalties under the new law.



File photo: Sewage water, garbage litter streets in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh.

## First phase of demolitions in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh ends

By Munif Naif  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: The Public Relations Department at Kuwait Municipality announced the completion of the demolition of dilapidated and unsafe buildings in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, following the expiration of the demolition deadline granted to their owners, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

The department explained that the demolition campaign, which began on November 24, targeted 60 properties.

The remaining properties will be demolished according to the established schedule, in coordination with the relevant authorities.

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**GTD targets hospitals:** Traffic campaigns conducted by the General Traffic Department at hospitals in all governorates resulted in the issuance of 178 citations for parking and traffic obstruction violations within 24 hours.

A security source told the newspaper that 55 violation citations were issued at Jaber Hospital, 24 at Farwaniya Hospital, 50 at Adan Hospital and 49 at Jahra Hospital.

The source urged hospital visitors to park only in designated areas to avoid traffic violations or vehicle impoundment.

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# Ministry expands online access for wedding halls

Easier booking via Sahel app

By Fares Ghaleb  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: Dr. Sayed Issa, the acting Assistant Undersecretary for Financial and Administrative Affairs and Director General of the Department of Planning and Administrative Development at the Ministry of Social Affairs, announced that 10 wedding halls will soon be added to the “Sahel” application.

These halls, which are located in the Capital, Farwaniya, Hawally, and Jahra governorates, will be included in the application as part of the ministry’s efforts to develop community services and make them more accessible to citizens.

In a statement to reporters, Dr. Issa explained that the 10 halls will be added to the Sahel application after obtaining the necessary permits from the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) within the coming days. The ministry’s Public Services Department has completed all requirements and handled all observations from KFF regarding these halls.

This will allow for electronic booking according to the approved mechanism, ensuring a more organized process for using the halls and enabling

citizens to easily reserve them for their events, thereby providing an efficient community service.

He stressed that these services reflect the ongoing commitment of Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah, and Undersecretary Dr. Khaled Al-Ajmi, who prioritize expediting implementation of service projects and their integration with modern electronic systems, which will positively impact the experience for beneficiaries.

Dr. Issa affirmed that the ministry is continuing to develop its wedding halls in terms of organization, operation, and maintenance to ensure equitable distribution of services and meet the community’s needs.

He emphasized full compliance with the technical specifications and safety requirements approved by the relevant authorities.

He explained that the halls to be added to the application, in coordination with the IT Department, are distributed across four governorates:

- one hall in Capital Governorate (Dashti Wedding Hall in Dasma)
- five halls in Farwaniya Governorate (Abu Rumayyah Wedding Hall in Andalous, Ibdah Askar Al-Harbash

Wedding Hall in Rabia, Al-Riggae Wedding Hall in Al-Riggae, Mubarak Al-Haifi Wedding Hall in Andalous, and Al-Omariya Wedding Hall in Farwaniya).

■ two halls in Hawally Governorate (Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Wedding Hall in Salwa and Sheikhha Sabeeka Al-Sabah Wedding Hall in Jabriya)

■ Dr. Issa emphasized that the ministry is committed to serving citizens by providing its wedding halls for celebrations in their respective areas and maintaining them to ensure their readiness and continued use.

He explained that the ministry has instructed cooperative societies to fulfill their social responsibility by carrying out minor operational maintenance on the halls. This maintenance is limited to repairing minor technical issues, such as lighting or small electrical faults, and does not include major renovations. The initiative is part of the ministry’s efforts to serve residents and meet their needs in local areas.

Dr. Issa revealed that the number of wedding halls currently affiliated with the ministry and available for service and booking through the Sahel application is 24, adding that the total will reach 34 with the addition of the ten new halls, which enhances the ministry’s ability to meet citizens’ needs and expand the scope of services in various governorates.

## Reforms aim to unify hospital oversight

# MoH appoints key medical heads

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi issued ministerial decrees for appointing heads of medical departments in several hospitals and specialized centers, with the aim of strengthening clinical governance and unifying oversight mechanisms in line with the Ministry of Health’s organizational structure and defined responsibilities.

These appointments are part of ongoing institutional reforms to implement the new organizational structure of the ministry, clarify leadership roles, and ensure effective management within healthcare facilities.

Appointments were made based on professional criteria, including compe-

tence, experience, and specialization, in line with the ministry’s strategic directions for developing healthcare services.

The appointed heads of medical departments are:

- Dr. Awsan Mohammed Al-Muhaini at Al-Amiri Hospital,
- Dr. Moudhi Haged Al-Mutairi at Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital,
- Dr. Niran Ahmed Al-Naqeeb at Adan Hospital,
- Dr. Ahmed Ali Al-Dousari at Farwaniya Hospital,
- Dr. Aseel Mohammed Al-Awadhi at

- Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital,
- Dr. Iman Mubarak Al-Enezi at Al-Sabah Hospital,
- Dr. Abdulrahman Zaben Al-Shammari at Jahra Hospital,
- Dr. Fahad Malfi Al-Rashidi at Kuwait Cancer Control Center,
- Dr. Lamia Ahmed Al-Sarraf at Ibn Sina Hospital,
- Dr. Jamal Abdulkarim Al-Fadhli at Chest Diseases Hospital,
- Dr. Rania Adel Al-Badr at Maternity Hospital,
- Dr. Jamal Mohammed Jamal at Physical Medicine Hospital,
- Dr. Mohammed Abdulrasoul Khaja at Sabah Al-Ahmad Kidney and Urology Center,
- Dr. Osama Ali Al-Baqsam at the new Infectious Diseases Hospital,
- Dr. Mubarak Amer Al-Omairi at Al-Razi Hospital

# Ministry readies Cancer Center for operation with key appointments

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: As part of the preparatory steps for the inauguration and operation of the new Kuwait Cancer Control Center, and for launching an advanced operational phase that supports international medical collaboration with Gustave Roussy Hospital in France, Minister of Health Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi issued several ministerial decisions on appointing the director of the Center and the head of the Medical Board, as well as approving the leadership of the medical, technical and administrative departments.

These measures are within the comprehensive readiness plan aimed at commencing operations in accordance with the highest standards of quality and medical governance.

The ministerial decisions are as follows:

- Appointment of Dr. Khaled Hilal Eidan Al-Khaldi as Director of Kuwait Cancer Control Center,

- Secondment of Dr. Fahd Malfi Mufleh Al-Rashidi as Head of the Medical Board at the Center,
- Appointment of Dr. Muath Ahmed Mohammed Al-Nassar as Head of the Chemotherapy Department,
- Appointment of Dr. Yasser Mohammed Hassan Ramadan as Head of the Radiotherapy Department,
- Appointment of Dr. Amal Yousef Saleh Abdullah as Head of the Surgery Department,
- Appointment of Dr. Abdulaziz Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Hamada as Head of the Hematology Department,
- Appointment of Dr. Dalal Abdulsoul Habib Al-Matrouk as Head of the Anesthesia and Intensive Care Department,
- Appointment of Dr. Mashaal Issa Yaqoub Bandar as Head of the Radiology Department,
- Appointment of Dr. Abdullah Issa Akbar Mohammed Ali as Head of the Laboratories Department,
- Appointment of Dr. Abdulredha Abbas Ismail as Head of the Nuclear

- Medicine Department,
- Secondment of Dalal Nasser Kreidi Al-Anzi as Head of the Health Informatics and Treatment Coordination Department,
- Secondment of Dr. Al-Anoud Faisal Fahad Al-Smail as Head of the Clinical Nutrition Department,
- Secondment of Ali Hassan Eidan Mohammed Al-Mahmoud as Head of the Public Relations Department,
- Secondment of Eng. Mahmoud Mohammed Gholoum Al-Khaja as Head of the Engineering Affairs Department,
- Secondment of Eng. Yaqoub Mohammed Al-Farij as Head of the Bio-medical Engineering Department,
- Secondment of Huda Mubarak Ahmed Abdulrahman as Head of the Sterilization Department,
- Secondment of Eid Habab Attallah Al-Mutairi as Head of the Nursing Department,
- Secondment of Hanaa Ahmed Khamis Jassim as Head of the Physiotherapy Department.

## Fahaheel Road lane closed for maintenance

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: The General Traffic Department announced the closure of the right lane on King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al-Saud Road (Fahaheel Road) opposite the Abu Futaira for traffic coming from Kuwait City toward Fahaheel, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

It stated that the exit from Abu Futaira toward Ahmadi will also be closed.

The department clarified that the closure will begin on Sunday, December 21 and continue until Wednesday, December 24 to carry out maintenance work.

## Kuwait secures dual recognition

# Informatics Award announces five innovative winners of 25th edition

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22, (KUNA): His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah Informatics Award announced on Sunday five winners of the prize in its 25th edition, recognizing leadership and excellence in digital transformation at local and international levels.

In a statement to KUNA, Kuwait received two awards, the first for the government digital platform Sahel and the second awarded to the late Mohammed Abdulrahman Al-Sharekh, a pioneering Kuwaiti technologist, in recognition of a lifelong record of innovation.

Al-Sharekh, a Kuwaiti visionary founder of Sakhr Software Company, which introduced the Arabic language into the world of computers, was selected for his achievements as well as for inspiring generations of researchers, programmers and entrepreneurs across the Arab world.

Sahel Application was awarded as one of Kuwait’s most significant digital transformation projects, developed in record time as an integrated government platform, becoming a model for accessibility, transparency and citizen-focused digital services, with more than 2.3 million users completing over 100 million transactions.

The statement added that Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain were also selected.

Saudi Arabia’s selection was attributed to achievements of platforms such as Absher, Tawakkalna, Nafath and Etimad, alongside expansion in 5G



KUNA photo  
The late Mohammed Abdulrahman Al-Sharekh, winner of the Informatics Award.

networks and Artificial Intelligence initiatives, ranking sixth globally and third in Asia.

The UAE was recognized for building an advanced ecosystem unified government services and smart cities in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, placing it among the world’s top performers in proactive services and government integration, ranking 11th globally and fourth in Asia. Bahrain’s award reflected progress through its national e-government portal and participatory platforms such as Tawasul, in addition to its emergence as a regional hub for cloud computing and financial technologies, ranking 18th globally and sixth in Asia.

The results highlight a great progress in digital transformation across Kuwait and the region, stressing that winners were selected through, transparent criteria and detailed evaluation of achievements.





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Farwaniya Governorate photo  
Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah with the Arab Open University officials.

## Sheikh Athbi lauds academic contributions

# Farwaniya Governor hosts university officials

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received on Sunday morning the Director of the Arab Open University, Dr. Salah Al-Hammadi, along with Dean of the College of Administrative Studies Dr. Mohammed Al-Loghani, Public Relations and Media Officer Ghazi Al-Anzi, and Fahd Al-Anzi from the Community Engagement Department.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, the discussions during the meeting focused on several topics of mutual interest as well as ways to enhance cooperation between Farwaniya

Governorate and educational institutions to serve the local community and support the development process.

Governor Sheikh Athbi highlighted the vital role of universities in preparing national talent and praised the Arab Open University’s efforts in developing the educational process and strengthening community partnerships.

At the end of the meeting, Dr. Al-Hammadi thanked the governor for the warm reception, and affirmed the university’s commitment to further collaboration with the Farwaniya Governorate in both educational and community fields.



LOCAL



President of the Global Council for the Arabic Language Dr. Laila Al-Sabaan



Participation of the Kuwaiti Heritage Society.



Photo from the forum.



Seham Al-Azmi, Director General of Kuwait National Library



Some of the rare books in the exhibition.

KUNA photos

Lectures and exhibitions underline region’s rich civilizational history

Kuwait’s National Library hosts GCC Forum on Arabic Language

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22, (KUNA): The National Library of Kuwait on Monday hosted the Gulf Cooperation Council Forum - Capitals of Arab Culture, to mark World Arabic Language Day, coinciding with Kuwait being named Arab Capital of Culture and Media for 2025.

President of the Global Council for the Arabic Language Dr. Laila Al-Sabaan told KUNA that the celebration reflects the global status of Arabic as a cultural and civilizational bridge among peoples.

She noted that the forum brings together council members from GCC states and was organized in cooperation with Kuwait National Library and the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL).

Al-Sabaan said the forum aims to strengthen shared cultural ties and promote cooperation among GCC countries, stressing that cultural heritage remains a lasting legacy for future generations. Director General of Kuwait National Library Seham Al-Azmi said the forum seeks to enhance cultural

relations among GCC states, emphasizing the importance of preserving the Arabic language as a cornerstone of Arab identity amid global challenges. The forum’s program included lectures on cultural development in GCC countries, delivered by academics from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Yemen. Activities will continue on Tuesday. An accompanying exhibition organized by the Kuwait Heritage Society showcased rare Arabic books and magazines, including publications documenting Kuwait’s history.

Japan-Kuwait relations in 2025

By H.E. MUKAI Kenichiro  
Ambassador of Japan

IT has been a year since I presented my credentials to His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the occasion of the second anniversary of His Highness’s assuming power. His Highness’s wise leadership and commitment to the welfare and renaissance of Kuwait and its people are greatly admirable.



H.E. MUKAI Kenichiro  
Ambassador of Japan

Majesty the Emperor of Japan. This highest honor granted to foreign nationals was awarded in recognition of His Highness’s outstanding contributions to strengthening and promoting the friendly relations between Japan and Kuwait throughout his distinguished service as Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Chief of the Amiri Diwan, and Prime Minister.

EXPO 2025 OSAKA, KANSAI, JAPAN

This year indeed witnessed a grassroots-level deepening of familiarity with Kuwaiti culture throughout Japan. I believe 2025 offered an opportunity for Japanese people to feel closer to Kuwait, especially at the Expo 2025 Osaka, the Kuwait Pavilion, which featured desert sand and a planetarium, became a hot topic among the Japanese public and was widely covered on media. I myself visited the pavilion with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and was impressed to see so many people lining up for the pavilion and enjoying the amazing exhibits.

Warm and fulfilling interactions

During my first year in office, I met people from all fields and different backgrounds – politics, economics, culture, science, and education – and was moved by their hospitality, openness and flexibility toward different cultures.

Beyond formal meetings, I visited many diwaniyas allowing me to meet many individuals. Through these numerous interactions, I am convinced that Japan and Kuwait still hold significant potential for developing further cooperation. In existing fields like energy and water, I believe we can deepen collaboration by leveraging the technologies managed by Japanese companies and we can expand the field of cooperation more and more.

In 2026, I would like to continue enjoying the local culture while deepening interactions with people active in diverse fields, and to forge more concrete cooperation shoulder to shoulder with Kuwaiti people.

Finally, I sincerely wish His Highness the Amir good health and well-being, and the State of Kuwait further progress and prosperity.

Is the

for their contributions rather than being penalized? Allowing these lands to revert to desert status cannot be the path to genuine economic stimulation.

Many Gulf countries actively incentivize industrialists in relation to usufruct rights. Saudi Arabia, for example, has frozen land plot fees for five years and offered numerous additional benefits to investors, successfully spurring industrial development and attracting foreign investment.

The UAE, Oman, and Bahrain have adopted similar approaches. In stark contrast, Kuwait maintains strict, and even increasingly obstructive, regulations on usufruct rights. This restrictive policy negatively impacts all business sectors and can lead to serious operational challenges, such as delays in meeting monthly obligations, including salary payments.

Internationally, in both developed and developing nations, fee structures are designed to encourage production, as the core objective is to diversify state revenue streams. These fees are typically structured to facilitate, not hinder, industrialists, farmers, and service providers. Land plots are sold to investors and beneficiaries, which is fundamentally different from the situation here, where severe penalties are imposed merely for delays in rental payments.

Your Highness, Your Excellencies, we must revisit the fundamental question - why not ease the burden on both investors and the general public to stimulate economic growth, in line with the practices of other Gulf nations?

Your Highness, would a more effective strategy not be to incentivize productivity and profitability, allowing the state to share in success through annual taxation or revenue participation? Why pursue a demotivating approach when more constructive and effective alternatives are available?

The current system for restaurants and entertainment venues operating under usufruct rights creates significant instability.

Each year brings anxiety for owners, who often silently pray, “May Allah help us make it through the next year.”

This situation exists because usufruct licenses are issued strictly on an annual basis, leaving businesses constantly exposed to legal action or closure over even minor violations.

The government should either sell the land to the current occupants or grant long-term extensions of usufruct rights, such as 50-year licenses, while imposing reasonable taxes.

Similarly, in areas such as the Shuwaikh Industrial Area, the land should either be sold to the current beneficiaries or the commercial revenue shared with them.

Current government procedures are ineffective, yielding minimal benefit and contributing little to the national economy.

The government must put an end to these manipulative and counterproductive practices.

Instead, the land should be sold through manageable installment plans, or the rental income should be distributed fairly.

Kuwait, China

His Highness Sheikh Ahmad affirmed that the project is a central pillar of the New Kuwait 2035 vision, contributing to economic diversification, boosting national income, creating quality job opportunities, and developing national capabilities in logistics, commerce, and related service sectors.

Meanwhile, Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan explained that implementation contracts for the remaining major development projects will be signed successively in the coming period, following the completion of all necessary procedures and coordination with relevant ministries, authorities, and regulatory bodies. This ensures that the projects are executed according to the highest technical and administrative standards.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Public Works, in an official statement, explained that the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project aims to enhance the capacity of Kuwaiti ports to meet current and future demand for container traffic and various types of goods to and from Kuwait. It also seeks to provide a strategic logistics gateway for transporting goods northward to neighboring countries without direct access to the Arabian Gulf, reinforcing Kuwait’s role as a regional hub for trade and maritime transport.

The signing ceremony was attended by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, government members, and senior officials from the Chinese state-owned company affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Transport.

The scope of work covers the renovation of existing facilities and a heliport.

The package signed is part of the construction and maintenance works for Phase Two of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project under an EPC contract. It includes the construction of a container yard, infrastructure, and buildings, as well as the repair and renovation of existing facilities and installations based on the results and recommendations from the Early Engineering Inspection (ECI) phase. The work also covers the cathodic protection (CP) system, ensuring its continued operation throughout the implementation period and until project handover.

The project’s scope of work is comprehensive, covering a wide range of design, supply, installation, and commissioning activities. This includes all necessary handling equipment and the construction of important facilities such as the Sky View Tower, a reverse osmosis (RO) desalination plant, a wastewater treatment plant, and a solid waste handling facility.

The project also involves major civil and marine works, including the construction of a sand barrier, designated areas for dredged material disposal, dredging of the port basin and the connecting channel at the port entrance, the small boat harbor, disposal works, and soil improvement works. A VIP heliport is also included in the overall scope.

It is worth mentioning that the executive contract to complete the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project is valued at KD 1.218 billion, as part of the first cooperation agreements with the People’s Republic of China.

Petrochemicals seen

This move is intended to strengthen its overseas petrochemical investments, particularly in countries with abundant natural gas resources, which represent a core feedstock for the industry. In addition, KPC’s continuous support for petrochemicals is expected to contribute to diversifying its revenue sources.

Sources revealed that KPC is focusing on the expansion of the local petrochemical industry, especially in light of recent offshore gas discoveries and the expected gas reserves from future fields. The petrochemical sector depends mainly on natural gas as a primary feedstock, in addition to inputs supplied by domestic refineries, which generate large volumes of naphtha, ethylene, propylene and benzene.

According to the sources, three major petrochemical projects are scheduled for completion next year. These include the fourth olefins project, which will be implemented by Kuwait Petroleum Chemicals Company (KPCC) in Kuwait, the planned petrochemical complex adjacent to the Duqm Refinery in Oman, and the initiative of KPC to encourage international companies to invest in the local petrochemical sector. These projects are driven by global population growth, rising demand for personal care products, and the expanding use of plastics in multiple industries like packaging, automotive manufacturing, aerospace and other sectors.

On the losses recorded by the sector in recent years, sources attributed the decline in net profit margins of global petrochemical producers, including GPIC-owned jointly by Bahrain, Kuwait and

Saudi Arabia with 33.3 percent stake each – to three main factors. First is the escalation of geopolitical tension, particularly in the Middle East since late 2013, which disrupted petrochemical shipping routes and tanker movements. Second is related to the surge in the prices of feedstock used in petrochemical production, resulting from the US Federal Reserve’s earlier interest rate hikes prior to their reduction this year, which directly pressured profit margins throughout the industry. Third is the intensified competition among petrochemical producers in Europe and Asia, which reduced global demand for imported petrochemical products, especially after the expansion of China into the sector in recent years by offering competitively priced products worldwide.

Philippines,

Additional provisions include a ban on advertisements on bridges, a minimum distance of 300 meters between billboards, and regulations on the size of projecting advertisements.

The Municipal Council approved a minimum annual fee of KD 75 per square meter for continuous electronic advertising sold through auctions, confirming that the fee applies to a full advertising license under the new regulations.

Furthermore, it approved the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ request to reorganize a section of the Diplomatic Quarter by subdividing plot number 44, covering 3,000 square meters, into two equal plots of 1,500 square meters each. These plots will be allocated to the embassies of the Philippines and Sri Lanka, in coordination with the Ministry of Finance’s State Property Department.

The Municipal Council also rejected Kuwait University’s request for an exemption from Clause 7 of Article 1 of Ministerial Resolution No. 206/2009 concerning the medical campus project in Sabah Al-Salem University City.

Meanwhile, Fahad Al-Abduljader, Head of the Legal and Financial Committee of the Municipal Council, stated that the amendments to the advertising regulations aim to organize the sector, enhance the urban arena, improve aesthetics, ensure efficient use of public and private spaces, safeguard public safety, and protect rights.

He explained that the amendments update advertisement definitions to cover all types, regulate general conditions, licensing procedures, and license durations, and mandate the removal of advertisements upon license expiration. The regulations also specify the locations and dimensions of advertisements in different areas.

The regulations prohibit certain advertisements, including promotions of tobacco and medicines without prior approval, and regulate seasonal and temporary advertisements as well as illuminated advertising boxes. They also establish criteria for qualifying and classifying advertising companies.

In addition, the Municipal Council approved the spring break for its members, which will last one month, from January 4 to February 3.

Bahraini King

The agency added that Minister Al-Mutairi conveyed to the King of Bahrain the greetings and appreciation on behalf of His Highness Amir, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and his best wishes for the continued progress and prosperity of the people of Bahrain.

The King of Bahrain, in turn, commended him with conveying his greetings and sincere wishes to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait for continued health and happiness, and for further development and prosperity for the State of Kuwait and its people.

The minister expressed his sincere thanks and gratitude to the Bahraini King for the warm welcome and generous hospitality, and his deep appreciation for His Majesty’s role and efforts in strengthening relations.

Meanwhile, Bahrain’s Crown

Prince and Prime Minister Prince Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa on Monday affirmed that the historic relations and close bonds between the Kingdom of Bahrain and the State of Kuwait are grounded in firm foundations of cooperation and enduring brotherly solidarity.

The Bahrain News Agency (BNA) said the remarks came during the Crown Prince’s meeting at Gudaibiya Palace with Kuwait’s Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, in the presence of Bahrain’s Minister of Finance and National Economy Salman bin Khalifa Al-Khalifa and senior officials.

The Crown Prince noted the steady growth and progress of bilateral cooperation across all fields, supported by the leadership of King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa and His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in pursuit of shared aspirations.

Al-Mutairi conveyed the greetings of His Highness Amir, Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and His Highness Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, wishing Bahrain continued progress and prosperity.

The Bahraini Crown Prince asked Al-Mutairi to relay his greetings to Kuwait’s leadership and expressed best wishes for Kuwait’s further advancement, underscoring the importance of expanding partnerships, mainly in media, culture, and youth to the benefit of both countries and peoples.

For his part, Al-Mutairi thanked the Crown Prince for his continued support in strengthening Bahraini-Kuwaiti relations and expressed appreciation for the warm hospitality, wishing Bahrain lasting success.

On Sunday, Kuwait’s Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, discussed with Bahrain’s Minister of Information, Dr. Ramzan Al-Noaimi, in Manama, ways to enhance bilateral cooperation between the two brotherly countries in the media and cultural fields.

This took place during a meeting at the Ministry’s headquarters, where Bahrain’s Minister of Information, Dr. Ramzan Al-Noaimi, received the Kuwaiti Minister of Information and Culture, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, on the occasion of his visit to the Kingdom along with his accompanying delegation.

During the meeting, the two ministers affirmed the depth of the close fraternal relations that unite Bahrain and Kuwait, rooted in longstanding historical ties and solid foundations of cooperation and integration, supported by the care and attention of the leaderships of the two brotherly countries.

Both sides emphasized the importance of exchanging expertise and experiences in a way that contributes to developing joint media work, strengthening its professional mission, and enhancing its presence at both the regional and international levels.

The meeting also addressed a number of issues of mutual interest, in addition to discussing developments in the media landscape, current challenges, and ways to enhance Gulf media coordination in line with the rapid transformations in the media sector.

On the sidelines of the meeting, Ministers Al-Mutairi and Al-Noaimi, along with a number of ministry officials, toured the Ministry of Information complex, which included the National Contact Center, the main studio of the News Center, and the Bahrain Radio building. The Kuwaiti Minister of Information and Culture expressed his thanks and appreciation to the Minister of Information for the warm reception.

Minister Al-Mutairi praised Bahrain for the notable development it is witnessing in the media sector and for the effective efforts it is making to strengthen joint Gulf media cooperation, in a manner that fulfills shared aspirations and serves the higher interests of the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council.



INTERNATIONAL

‘Symbol of power’

France to boost defense with new aircraft carrier

PARIS, Dec 22, (Agencies): France will build a new aircraft carrier with a capacity for 30 fighter jets and 2,000 sailors, French President Emmanuel Macron announced Sunday in what he described as “the display of our nation’s power in the service of freedom on the seas and amid the turbulence of our times.”

“In an age of predators, we must be strong in order to be feared, and especially strong at sea. This is why, in line with the last two military programming laws, and after a thorough and careful review, I have decided to equip France with a new aircraft carrier. The decision to launch the construction of this very large-scale program was taken this week,” Macron told French troops stationed in Abu Dhabi.

The new vessel is planned to be ready in 2038, replacing the aging Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier, which came into service in 2001. It will have a displacement of about 78,000 tons and a length of 310 meters (1,017 feet), compared to 42,000 tons and 261 meters (856 feet) for the Charles de Gaulle.

The new carrier would still be smaller than the USS Gerald Ford aircraft carrier, the largest warship in the world, which has a displacement of more than 100,000 tons and measures 1,100 feet (334 meters).



Macron

Like its predecessor, France’s new aircraft carrier will be nuclear-powered and equipped with French Rafale M fighter jets.

Macron said the project will benefit hundreds of suppliers, most of them small- and medium-sized businesses.

“I will personally guarantee this commitment in support of our companies, and I will visit the shipyard next February to meet them,” he said.

The new carrier will be able to engage in heavily armed, long-range deployments at short notice, repeatedly and for extended periods of time, the French defense ministry said on its website.

In 2023, the cost of a new aircraft carrier was estimated at about 10 billion euros (\$11.7 billion) by Sébastien Lecornu, defense minister at the time and now French prime minister.

Macron has announced 6.5 billion euros (\$7.6 billion) in extra military spending in the next two years. He said France will aim to spend 64 billion euros on defense in 2027, the last year of his second term, double the level of 32 billion euros when he became president in 2017.

France’s military currently comprises around 200,000 active personnel and over 40,000 reservists, making it the second-largest in the European Union, just behind Poland. France wants to increase the number of reservists to 80,000 by 2030.

On Tuesday, French lawmakers gave final approval to the country’s 2026 social security budget, with 247 votes in favor and 232 against in the National Assembly.

The social security budget is one of two key financial bills that must be passed by the end of this year.

This was the final round of voting on the social security budget in the lower house. The bill had earlier been narrowly approved by the National Assembly on Dec. 9 by a margin of 13 votes but was rejected outright by the Senate on Dec. 12.

Under constitutional procedures, the draft was returned to deputies for a final vote.

Trump appoints envoy

Denmark FM insists on Greenland sovereignty

COPENHAGEN, Dec 22, (AP): The Danish foreign minister said Monday his country insists that everyone, including the United States, must respect “the territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Denmark” after President Donald Trump announced the appointment of Louisiana’s governor as the U.S. special envoy to Greenland.

Trump called repeatedly during his presidential transition and the early months of his second term for U.S. jurisdiction over Greenland, a vast, semi-autonomous territory of Denmark, and has not ruled out military force to take control of the mineral-rich, strategically located Arctic island. In March, Vice President JD Vance visited a remote U.S. military base in Greenland and accused Denmark of underinvesting there.

The issue gradually drifted out of the headlines but, in August, Danish officials summoned the U.S. ambassador following a report that at least three people with connections to Trump had carried out covert influence operations in Greenland. Denmark is a

NATO ally of the United States.

On Sunday, Trump announced the appointment of Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry as special envoy to Greenland. He said that “Jeff understands how essential Greenland is to our National Security, and will strongly advance our Country’s Interests for the Safety, Security, and Survival of our Allies, and indeed, the World.”

Landry wrote in a post on X that “it’s an honor to serve you in this volunteer position to make Greenland a part of the U.S.”

Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen said in a brief statement emailed by his ministry that “the appointment confirms the continued American interest in Greenland.”

“However, we insist that everyone - including the U.S. - must show respect for the territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Denmark,” he added.

Earlier this month, the Danish Defense Intelligence Service said in an annual report that the U.S. is using its economic power to “assert its will” and threaten military force against friend and foe alike.

Kremlin orders probe

Moscow car explosion claims Russian general

MOSCOW, Dec 22, (AP): A Russian general was killed Monday morning after an explosive device detonated underneath his car in Moscow, and investigators said Ukraine could be behind the attack, the third such killing of a senior military officer in a year.

Lt. Gen. Fanil Sarvarov, head of the Operational Training Directorate of the Russian Armed Forces’ General Staff, died from his injuries, said Svetlana Petrenko, the spokesperson for Russia’s Investigative Committee, the nation’s top criminal investigation agency.

“Investigators are pursuing numerous lines of inquiry regarding the murder. One of these is that the crime was orchestrated by Ukrainian intelligence services,” Petrenko said.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that President Vladimir Putin had been immediately informed about Sarvarov’s killing.

The Defense Ministry said that Sarvarov had previously fought in Chechnya and taken part in Moscow’s military campaign in Syria.



This image taken from video provided by Investigative Committee of Moscow on Monday, Dec. 22, 2025, shows the scene where Lt. Gen. Fanil Sarvarov, head of the Operational Training Directorate of the Russian Armed Forces General Staff, was killed by an explosive device placed under his car in Moscow. (AP)



St Paul's Cathedral choristers light candles as they practice ahead of their Christmas schedule, in the quire of St Paul's Cathedral in London, Monday, Dec. 22, 2025. (AP)

Trump administration recalling nearly 30 career diplomats from ambassadorial posts

WASHINGTON, Dec 22, (AP): The Trump administration is recalling nearly 30 career diplomats from ambassadorial and other senior embassy posts as it moves to reshape the U.S. diplomatic posture abroad with personnel deemed fully supportive of President Donald Trump’s “America First” priorities.

The chiefs of mission in at least 29 countries were informed last week that their tenures would end in January, according to two State Department officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal personnel moves.

All of them had taken up their posts in the Biden administration but had survived an initial purge in the early months of Trump’s second term that targeted mainly political appointees. That changed on Wednesday when they began to receive notices from officials in

Washington about their imminent departures.

Ambassadors serve at the pleasure of the president although they typically remain at their posts for three to four years. Those affected by the shake-up are not losing their foreign service jobs but will be returning to Washington for other assignments should they wish to take them, the officials said.

The State Department declined to comment on specific numbers or ambassadors affected, but defended the changes, calling them “a standard process in any administration.” It noted that an ambassador is “a personal representative of the president and it is the president’s right to ensure that he has individuals in these countries who advance the America First agenda.”

Africa is the continent most af-

fected by the removals, with ambassadors from 13 countries being removed: Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Mauritius, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia and Uganda.

Second is Asia, with ambassadorial changes coming to six countries: Fiji, Laos, the Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and Vietnam affected.

Four countries in Europe (Armenia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Slovakia) are affected; as are two each in the Middle East (Algeria and Egypt); South and Central Asia (Nepal and Sri Lanka); and the Western Hemisphere (Guatemala and Suriname).

Politico was the first to report on the ambassadorial recalls, which have drawn concern from some lawmakers and the union representing American diplomats.



In this long exposure photo, a string of SpaceX StarLink satellites passes over an old stone house near Florence, Kan., on May 6, 2021. (AP)

Starlink in crosshairs: How Russia could attack Elon Musk’s conquering of space

LONDON, Dec 22, (AP): Two NATO-nation intelligence services suspect Russia is developing a new anti-satellite weapon to target Elon Musk’s Starlink constellation with destructive orbiting clouds of shrapnel, with the aim of reining in Western space superiority that has helped Ukraine on the battlefield.

Intelligence findings seen by The Associated Press say the so-called “zone-effect” weapon would seek to flood Starlink orbits with hundreds of thousands of high-density pellets, potentially disabling multiple satellites at once but also risking catastrophic collateral damage to other orbiting systems.

Analysts who haven’t seen the findings say they doubt such a weapon could work without causing uncontrollable chaos in space for companies and countries, including Russia and its ally China, that rely on thousands of orbiting satellites for communications, defense and other vital needs.

Such repercussions, including risks to its own space systems, could steer Moscow away from deploying or using such a weapon, analysts said.

“I don’t buy it. Like, I really don’t,” said Victoria Samson, a space-security specialist at the Secure World Foundation who leads the Colorado-based nongovernmental organization’s annual study of anti-satellite systems. “I would be very surprised, frankly, if they were to do something like that.” But the commander of the Canadian

military’s Space Division, Brig. Gen. Christopher Horner, said such Russian work cannot be ruled out in light of previous U.S. allegations that Russia also has been pursuing an indiscriminate nuclear, space-based weapon.

“I can’t say I’ve been briefed on that type of system. But it’s not implausible,” he said. “If the reporting on the nuclear weapons system is accurate and that they’re willing to develop that and willing to go to that end, well it wouldn’t strike me as shocking that something just short of that,

but equally damaging, is within their wheelhouse of development.”

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov didn’t respond to messages from the AP seeking comment. Russia has previously called for United Nations efforts to stop the orbital deployment of weapons and President Vladimir Putin has said Moscow has no intention of deploying nuclear space weapons.

The intelligence findings were shown to the AP on condition that the services involved were not identified and the news organization was not

able to independently verify the findings’ conclusions.

The U.S. Space Force didn’t respond to e-mailed questions. The French military’s Space Command said in a statement to the AP that it could not comment on the findings but said, “We can inform you that Russia has, in recent years, been multiplying irresponsible, dangerous, and even hostile actions in space.”

Russia views Starlink in particular as a grave threat, the findings indicate. The thousands of low-orbiting satellites have been pivotal for Ukraine’s survival against Russia’s full-scale invasion, now in its fourth year.

Starlink’s high-speed internet service is used by Ukrainian forces for battlefield communications, weapons targeting and other roles and by civilians and government officials where Russian strikes have affected communications.

Russian officials repeatedly have warned that commercial satellites serving Ukraine’s military could be legitimate targets. This month, Russia said it has fielded a new ground-based missile system, the S-500, which is capable of hitting low-orbit targets.

Unlike a missile that Russia tested in 2021 to destroy a defunct Cold War-era satellite, the new weapon in development would target multiple Starlinks at once, with pellets possibly released by yet-to-be launched formations of small satellites, the intelligence findings say.

America

**SF outage mostly resolved:** Power was restored Sunday to the bulk of the 130,000 homes and businesses in San Francisco impacted by a massive outage a day earlier that caused major disruptions in the city.

About 17,000 customers remained without power as of noon Sunday, Pacific Gas and Electric Co. said. PG&E said earlier its crews were working to restore electricity in several neighborhoods and small areas of downtown San Francisco following Saturday’s outage.

PG&E in a statement said it expects to restore power to remaining customers no later than 2 p.m. Monday.

“The damage from the fire in our substation was significant and extensive, and the repairs and safe restoration will be complex,” the utility said, referring to the substation at 8th and Mission streets. That fire has been blamed for some of the blackouts. The outage remains under investigation.

PG&E said it mobilized additional engineers and electricians to help with restoration efforts.

“This is a very complex work plan and will require the highest amount of safety focus to ensure safe work actions,” PG&E said. No injuries have been reported. (AP)

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**Colorado gov slams Trump ‘tactics’:** Colorado Gov. Jared Polis accused President Donald Trump of playing “political games” Sunday after the Trump administration denied disaster declaration requests following wildfires and flooding in the state earlier this year.

Polis’ office said he received late Saturday two denial letters from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The letters follow requests for major disaster declarations following wildfires and mudslides in August and what Polis had described as “historic flooding” across southwest Colorado in October.

Polis and Colorado’s U.S. senators, fellow Democrats Michael Bennet and John Hickenlooper, decried the denials. Polis said the state would appeal.

“Coloradans impacted by the Elk and Lee fires and the flooding in Southwestern Colorado deserve better than the political games President Trump is playing,” he said in a statement. (AP)

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**ICE agent fires shots at man:** An Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent fired shots Sunday at a Cuban immigrant living in the U.S. illegally after the man struck the agent and another one with an SUV in Minnesota’s state capital, the Department of Homeland Security said.

The man also bit an ICE agent as officers subdued him outside his apartment in St. Paul after he tried to flee on foot, Assistant Homeland Security Secretary Tricia McLaughlin said in an email.

The man wasn’t hurt, and the injuries received by the agents struck by the SUV were not life-threatening, though he and the agents were taken to the hospital for evaluation, McLaughlin said.

Tensions have been rising in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area as federal authorities continue an immigration crackdown. Last week, ICE agents and protesters clashed in neighboring Minneapolis. (AP)



Elon Musk attends the Saudi Investment Forum at the Kennedy Center, Wednesday, Nov. 19, 2025, in Washington. (AP)





In this photo released by the Semarang Search and Rescue Office, rescuers carry a survivor of a deadly bus crash on a stretcher, in Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia, Monday, Dec. 22, 2025. (AP)

Bus lost control, hits concrete barrier

Indonesia bus tragedy claims 16 lives

JAKARTA, Dec 22, (AP): A passenger bus crash killed at least 16 people on Indonesia’s main island of Java just after midnight Monday, officials said.

The bus carrying 34 people lost control on a toll road and struck a concrete barrier before rolling onto its side, said Budiono, a search and rescue agency chief who goes by single name like many Indonesians.

The inter-province bus was traveling from the capital Jakarta to the country’s ancient royal city of Yogyakarta when it overturned while entering a curved exit ramp at the Krapyak toll way in Central Java’s Semarang city, he said.

“The forceful impact threw several passengers and left them trapped against the bus body,” Budiono said.

Police and rescue teams arrived about 40 minutes after the accident and recovered the bodies of six passengers who died at the scene. Another 10 people died on the way to a hospital or while being

treated, Budiono said.

The 18 victims being treated at two nearby hospitals included five people in critical condition and 13 in serious condition, he said.

Television news reports showed the yellow bus overturned on its side and surrounded by National Search and Rescue Agency personnel, police and passersby as ambulances transported victims and the dead away from the accident scene.

Witnesses told authorities the bus was traveling at high speed before the driver lost control, Central Java Police Chief Ribut Hari Wibowo said at Dr. Karyadi General Hospital in Semarang where the bodies were being identified.

The driver was a substitute who sustained serious injuries but was able to communicate while under medical care, he said.

“We are still investigating the cause of the crash and questioning the injured substitute driver,” Wibowo said, adding that police planned to test the driver for prohibited substances including drugs.

Southeast Asian ministers meet to address conflict

Thailand and Cambodia to resume border talks for a lasting ceasefire

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 22, (AP): Thailand and Cambodia will resume talks later this week to work toward a more durable ceasefire along their border, Thailand’s foreign minister said Monday, stressing that progress depends on detailed bilateral negotiations rather than public declarations that internationalize the dispute.

A ceasefire agreement in October was rushed to ensure it could be witnessed by U.S. President Donald Trump and lacked sufficient details to ensure the deal to end the armed conflict would hold, Thai Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuanketkeow said Monday after an Association of Southeast Asian Nations foreign ministers’ meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

While Cambodia has publicly said it is ready for an unconditional ceasefire, Bangkok never received any direct proposal and Thailand believed such statements were aimed at increasing international pressure rather than resolving the issue, Sihasak said following the meeting that was arranged to seek ways to end the crisis.

The general border committee involving both nations will meet Wednesday to iron out detailed measures toward a lasting ceasefire, he said.

“This time, let’s thrash out the details and make sure the ceasefire reflect the situation on the ground and the ceasefire is one that really holds, and both sides are going to fully respect the ceasefire,” Sihasak told a news conference.

The border conflict escalated into deadly combat two weeks ago and derailed the agreement promoted by Trump, which ended five days of fighting in July. The agreement was brokered by Malaysia and pushed through under pressure from Trump, who threatened to withhold trade privileges unless Thailand and Cambodia agreed. The ceasefire was formalized with more detail at an October regional summit in Malaysia attended by Trump.

The fighting has drawn international concern. The U.S. Department of State on Sunday released a statement calling for Thailand and Cambodia to “end hostilities, withdraw heavy weapons, cease emplacement of landmines, and fully implement the Kuala Lumpur Peace Accords, which include mechanisms to accelerate humanitarian demining and address border issues.”

The fighting is a result of a dispute over patches of territory claimed by both nations along their shared border.

Southeast Asian foreign ministers gathered Monday in the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur for a special meeting to discuss an ongoing border conflict between Thailand and Cambodia that escalated into deadly combat two weeks ago.

The meeting marked the second time this year that the regional Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, served as a platform to promote de-escalation between its two member states.

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Thailand’s Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuanketkeow speaks during a news conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Monday, Dec. 22, 2025, after a special meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers to discuss an ongoing border conflict between Thailand and Cambodia. (AP)

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Thai Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuanketkeow said on social media Sunday that he spoke with the U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and conveyed “Thailand’s strong intention to work toward a ceasefire and outlined our clear path forward.”

Thailand will engage constructively at Monday’s meeting in Kuala Lumpur, he said.

Cambodia’s Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn plans to attend the meeting, the country’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement Sunday, reaffirming its position of “resolving differences and disputes through all peaceful means, dialogue and diplomacy.”



Photos show Nepalese police detain protesters during an anti-government rally in Kathmandu, Nepal, Monday, Dec. 22, 2025. (AP)



In this photo released by the Inter Services Public Relations, Pakistan’s Chief of Defense Forces and Army Chief Gen. Asim Munir speaks during a ceremony at the joint military command headquarters in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, Monday, Dec. 8, 2025. (AP)

Saudi awards top honor to Pakistan’s army chief

ISLAMABAD, Dec 22, (AP): Saudi Arabia has awarded its highest national honor to Pakistan’s army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, during his visit to Riyadh, Pakistan’s military said Monday, underscoring deepening ties between the two countries, including cooperation on counterterrorism.

Munir received the King Abdulaziz Medal of the Excellent Class on Sunday, months after Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman signed a defense pact with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif highlighting the longstanding strategic relationship between the two countries.

In September, Defense Minister Khawaja Mohammad Asif said his nation’s nuclear program “will be made available” to Saudi Arabia if needed under the countries’ new defense pact.

Munir’s visit to Saudi Arabia and other Islamic countries is his first since his promotion to Pakistan’s newly created post of chief of defense forces, aimed at improving coordination among the army, navy, and air force.

Saudi Arabia has maintained close economic, religious, and security ties with Pakistan for decades.

Munir rose to prominence earlier

this year after Pakistan said it repelled India in a four-day border conflict. The nuclear-armed rivals exchanged tit-for-tat strikes in May following an Indian operation targeting militants inside Pakistan, which New Delhi accused of involvement in the killing of 26 tourists in India-controlled Kashmir.

The confrontation eased after U.S. President Donald Trump announced that India and Pakistan had agreed to a full and immediate ceasefire.

In a statement, Pakistan’s military said the conferring of the award upon Munir “underscores the depth of Pakistan-Saudi Arabia relations and the shared determination of both nations to strengthen further strategic cooperation in pursuit of regional and global peace.”

It said the honor recognizes Munir’s military service, leadership and efforts in advancing defense cooperation, strategic coordination and institutional links between the two nations.

During meetings with Saudi officials on Sunday, the two sides discussed regional security, defense and military cooperation, strategic collaboration and evolving geopolitical challenges, the military said. Both countries reaffirmed their “deep-rooted, historic and brotherly relations.”

130 schoolchildren and staff abducted in Nigeria released

ABUJA, Dec 22, (AP): Some 130 schoolchildren and staff abducted from a Nigerian Catholic school last month by gunmen have been released, police said Sunday.

Gunmen seized at least 303 schoolchildren and 12 teachers in Nigeria’s north-central Niger state when they attacked St. Mary’s Catholic School in the Papiri community on Nov. 21.

Fifty escaped in the hours that followed and 100 schoolchildren were freed earlier this month.

Niger State police spokesperson Wasiu Abiodun said in a statement that “the remaining batch of the abducted students” has now been released.

“A total number of 130 victims including the staff have been released,” Abiodun said.

When asked about the 35 unaccounted for schoolchildren and missing teachers, Abiodun told The Associated Press: “Further details will be communicated.”

Presidential spokesperson Bayo Onanuga said in a post on X that the “remaining 130 schoolchildren abducted” have been released.

He said the released schoolchildren would arrive in Minna, the Niger state capital, on Monday and rejoin their parents for Christmas.

“The freedom of the schoolchildren followed a military intelligence driven operation,” Onanuga

said.

Sunday Dare, another spokesperson for Nigeria’s President Bola Tinubu also said 130 schoolchildren were released and that none are left in captivity, in a post on X.

No group has claimed responsibility for the Nov. 21 abduction, but locals blamed armed gangs that target schools and travelers in kidnappings for ransoms across Nigeria’s conflict-battered north.

The Niger state attack was among a spate of recent mass abductions in Nigeria, and happened four days after 25 schoolchildren were seized in similar circumstances in neighboring Kebbi state’s Maga town. A church in southern Kwara state was also attacked around the same time and the 38 worshippers abducted in that attack last month were freed.

Bola Tinubu had been under pressure at home and from U.S. President Donald Trump, who has alleged that Christians are being targeted in Nigeria’s security crisis.

Nigerian authorities usually do not say much about rescue efforts and arrests in such cases are rare. Analysts believe that’s because ransoms are usually paid. Officials do not admit payment of ransoms.



Freed students of St. Mary’s Catholic School are reunited with their parents in Papiri community, Nigeria, Tuesday, Dec. 9, 2025. (AP)

LatAm

**Xi congratulates Chile’s Kast:** Chinese President Xi Jinping on Monday sent a congratulatory message to Jose Antonio Kast on his election as Chile’s president.

Xi pointed out that Chile is the first South American country to have established diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China, and the two countries have always adhered to mutual respect, equality, mutual benefit and win-win cooperation.

The two countries understand and support each other on issues concerning their respective core interests and major concerns, while practical cooperation in various fields has yielded fruitful outcomes and brought tangible benefits to the two peoples, Xi said.

Noting that China-Chile ties have long been at the forefront of China’s relations with Latin American countries, Xi said that continuously advancing the development of bilateral relations enjoys a broad consensus shared by various sectors in both countries.

Xi said he places great importance on the growth of China-Chile relations and is ready to work with President-elect Kast to carry forward traditional friendship, elevate the China-Chile comprehensive strategic partnership to new heights, and deliver more benefits to the two peoples. (Xinhua)

**China slams vessels seizure:** The arbitrary seizure of foreign vessels by the United States constitutes a serious violation of international law, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said on Monday.

Spokesperson Lin Jian made the remarks in response to a media query regarding the U.S. Coast Guard’s seizure of an oil tanker on Dec. 20 local time, with a White House official claiming the vessel belonged to a so-called “shadow fleet.”

“China always opposes illegal unilateral sanctions that lack a basis in international law and are not authorized by the United Nations Security Council. It also opposes any actions that violate the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, infringe on the sovereignty and security of other countries, or constitute acts of unilateral bullying,” Lin told a daily press briefing.

Venezuela has the right to independently develop mutually beneficial cooperation with other countries, and China believes that the international community understands and supports Venezuela’s position on safeguarding its legitimate rights and interests, Lin added. (Xinhua)

**Attack kills 7 Colombian soldiers:** At least seven Colombian soldiers were killed and 30 wounded after a guerrilla group on Thursday attacked a military base in the country’s northeastern city of Aguachica, the national army said Friday.

In this “terrorist act,” the National Liberation Army (ELN) used drones equipped with explosives, violating human rights and international humanitarian law by putting populations at extreme risk, it said.

“It happened due to a lack of advanced anti-drone systems,” Colombian President Gustavo Petro said on the social platform X, adding that the immediate purchase of the systems is ordered to block such attacks by illegal armed groups. (Xinhua)



## CBK issues KD 100 mln bonds, tawarruq

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22, (KUNA): The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced on Monday that it issued bonds and related tawarruq estimated at KD 100 million (about USD 330 million) for a six-month term. The securities bear a return rate of 3.750 percent, the central bank told KUNA in a statement.

# Business

New MoU to foster innovation, sustainable finance, and cross-border collaboration

## Boursa Kuwait and TISE sign MoU to strengthen financial cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: Boursa Kuwait, a leading regional exchange classified as an emerging market on major global indices, announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with The International Stock Exchange Group Limited (TISE) today, as part of its ongoing commitment to strengthening the position of the Kuwaiti capital market as an attractive destination for regional financial and investment activity.

TISE is a regulated exchange offering a growing range of financial products. Headquartered in Guernsey, it maintains a presence and has members based in key international financial centers, including Dublin, Jersey and London.

The MoU, signed by Boursa Kuwait CEO Mr. Mohammad Saud Al-Osaimi and Mr. Cees Vermaas, CEO of TISE, aims to enhance technical and knowledge-based cooperation between the two parties. It also seeks to explore opportunities for financial market development through the exchange of expertise, collaboration in the innovation of new financial products and support for sustainable finance initiatives.

It comes as part of Boursa Kuwait's ongoing efforts to strengthen its international presence and reinforce the Kuwaiti capital market's reputation as a trusted destination for regional and international investors. The MoU also reaffirms both parties' commitment to deepening collaboration and exploring new areas of mutual interest between the two markets.

"The signing of this MoU reaffirms Boursa Kuwait's commitment to fostering international cooperation and exchanging expertise with global financial institutions, further enhancing the Kuwaiti capital market's position as an attractive investment destination in the region. This partnership represents a significant step toward exploring opportunities for developing financial products, supporting sustainable finance initiatives, and sharing knowledge in areas such as financial technology and market infrastructure," said Boursa Kuwait CEO Mr. Mohammad Saud Al-Osaimi.

He added that Boursa Kuwait believes strengthening cooperation with global exchanges and international organizations opens new horizons for the development of the Kuwaiti capital market and enhances its competitiveness regionally and globally.

"This aligns with the company's vision to support national economic growth and broaden the base of both local and international investors," he said.

The signing of the MoU between Boursa Kuwait and TISE comes amid



Mohammad Al-Osaimi



Cees Vermaas

growing ties between the State of Kuwait and Guernsey. It follows a similar MoU signed in August 2025 between the Capital Markets Authority of Kuwait and the Guernsey Financial Services Commission, which underscored both parties' commitment to strengthening regulatory cooperation and exchanging expertise to advance regulatory frameworks and enhance supervisory efficiency and governance.

"We are pleased to sign this MoU with Boursa Kuwait, as we share a common vision of developing a more interconnected and sustainable financial environment. Through knowledge sharing and the exploration of opportunities for collaboration in areas such as specialized listings and innovative products, we aim to create new investment opportunities," said Mr. Cees Vermaas, CEO of TISE.

"We look forward to working alongside one of the most prominent exchanges in the Middle East to promote market integration and connect global investors with the promising opportunities in Kuwait and the wider region," he added.

There are more than 4,500 securities listed on TISE, with a total market value exceeding £750 billion and an issuer base that includes companies and institutions from over 35 countries worldwide.

TISE is a major European professional bond market, and a leader in listing debt securities including private equity debt, high yield bonds, securitizations and Islamic finance products, including sukuk. TISE also accounts for more than 45% of all listed UK Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) and caters for a wide range of sustainable finance products.

### About Boursa Kuwait:

The establishment of Boursa Kuwait in 2014 marked the first step in the privatization project of the Kuwait Stock Exchange, which was founded in 1977 as the first exchange in the Gulf Cooperation Council region and was reorganized in 1983 as an independent financial institution. The transitional phase began in 2016, with Boursa Kuwait officially assuming the responsibilities and operations of the Kuwait Stock Exchange, replacing it with an official license in the same year after the successful completion of the transitional phase. This ensured that Boursa Kuwait developed the infrastructure and operated according to best practices and international standards. It commenced the creation of an advanced, reliable trading platform built on efficiency, credibility, and transparency to serve all asset classes with a focus on the interests of traders and the national economy.

Boursa Kuwait has undertaken various market reforms as part of its comprehensive plans to enhance it in several stages. It succeeded in introducing innovative investment tools, enhancing transparency, and restructuring the market to increase its liquidity and competitiveness, based on its mission-focused strategy, which emphasizes developing the market to meet international standards. The company's developmental and improvement efforts have also contributed to the reclassification of the Kuwait market as an «emerging market» among key global index providers, enhancing Kuwait's position as a leading regional financial center.

In a pioneering step in Kuwait's privatization field, the privatization of Boursa Kuwait was successful, conducted in two stages. The first stage was in February 2019 when a consortium of Kuwaiti investment companies and a global exchange operator won the privatization bid, acquiring a 44% stake in the company.

In December 2019, the privatization process was completed through the public offering of a 50% stake owned by the Capital Markets Authority to Kuwaiti citizens, with the offering oversubscribed by more than 850%. Boursa Kuwait is listed on the «Premier Market» under the name «Boursa».

## Strengthening cybersecurity awareness in collaboration with CBK

## ABK promotes financial awareness on Kuwait TV

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: As part of its awareness-driven mission aimed at achieving financial inclusion across all segments of the Kuwaiti market, Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) participated in a television interview on Kuwait Television to discuss the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign. The campaign is held in cooperation with the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Banking Association, with the objective of educating bank customers about their rights and responsibilities when conducting various banking transactions.

On this occasion, Ali Bu Hamad, Head of Complaints & Customer Protection at ABK, took part in an interview on the program 'Sabah Al-Khair Ya Kuwait', where he outlined the key objectives of the campaign. The discussion focused primarily on raising viewers' awareness about the Centralized Virtual Chamber, ways to protect themselves from financial and banking fraud, the importance of not sharing personal information with any third party, maintaining the confidentiality of personal data, and adopting the highest security standards when choosing passwords and other security measures.

The episode also introduced the main goals of the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign, which include providing sufficient knowledge on the importance of safely benefiting from various banking services, products, and solutions, methods of combating banking



Ali Bu Hamad taking part in an interview on the program 'Sabah Al-Khair Ya Kuwait'.



fraud, as well as key savings and investment practices, among other topics.

Viewers were advised not to click on suspicious links, avoid using untrusted websites, and rely solely on approved company websites and applications when making online purchases.



Bu Hamad encouraged everyone to follow the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign and its content published across bank branches, social media platforms, and official websites, while remaining vigilant when entering OTP codes to complete payment transactions. It was emphasized that ABK provides

the highest security standards for customer service in line with leading banking industry practices, continuously investing in the enhancement of its digital and electronic systems to safeguard customer data.

The interview also highlighted the role of the Centralized Virtual Chamber, which was established under the guidance of the Central Bank of Kuwait in cooperation with the Kuwait Banking Association. All banks participate alongside relevant authorities in Kuwait to analyze and study fraud cases, identify the latest methods used to target customers, and assist concerned entities in preparing and publishing awareness materials continuously and swiftly regarding emerging threats and ways to counter them.

The study further contributes to identifying countries with the highest rates of fraud and data and account theft, enabling swift decisions to block transactions originating from those countries and prevent the registration of customer cards on electronic wallets associated with them, thereby protecting customers from suspicious activities.

This comes as ABK continues its full support for the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign, reinforcing its position as a responsible banking institution committed to customer protection, delivering the best banking services in the market, and keeping pace with the ongoing changes in the banking industry.

## Kuwait's average oil price plunges to \$71.76 in 2025

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22, (KUNA): Kuwait's average oil price recorded USD 71.76 during the first 10 months of this year, compared to an average of USD 82.01 pb in 2024, as reported by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

The report showed a drop in the average price of the OPEC crude basket in October 2025 by USD 5.19 pb on a monthly basis down to USD 65.5, while the Kuwaiti oil price fell USD 6.16 to USD 66 in the same month, compared to USD 72.16 in September.

The fall in oil prices came though global economic growth forecasts have remained at three percent this year and 3.1 percent next year, driven by projections of a rise in global oil demand, exceeding earlier estimates of USD 1.3 million barrels per day.

The remarkable global economic activity in the third quarter of this year has buoyed the positive global economic growth forecasts that have emerged since the first half of the year, following lessened uncertainty about trade between the United States and its Asian partners, chiefly China.

In addition, the favorable meetings held in Washington with its Asian partners last October have contributed to establishing trade stability, while the U.S. economy has maintained its vibrant growth despite government shutdown and official data delay.

Those meetings have culminated in the consolidation of the trade agreement between the US and Japan and the conclusion of fresh agreements with Southeast Asian economies amid a one-year truce with China, which is anticipated to resume its rare earth exports, while the US is cutting additional tariffs by 10 percent on Chinese goods.

Although new US tariffs were imposed on specific sectors, strong US consumer spending, eased monetary arrangements and expansionary financial measures have also helped in the continuation of expected growth for 2025.

Regarding global oil demand, OPEC expected it to grow by 1.3 million barrels per day (bpd) this year, keeping September estimates unchanged, but with slight changes in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) member states' data for the last three quarters.

It also predicted OPEC's oil demand to grow by 0.1 million bpd against 1.2 million bpd in non-member states, driven by demands in China and India.

Global oil demand growth forecasts for 2026 remained at 1.4 million bpd, including 0.1 million barrels from the organization's member states and 1.3 million barrels from non-member states, led by other Asian economies, followed by India and China.

Locally, Kuwait's average oil output rose to 2.4 million bpd in the third quarter of this year, compared to 2.431 million bpd in the second quarter. It also kept going up from 2.492 million bpd in August on a monthly basis to 2.515 million bpd in September, hitting its highest level of 2.525 million bpd in August.

Meanwhile, US crude oil imports fell by eight percent in October down to 5.6 million bpd in their lowest level since 2020, while exports nosedived by four percent to 4.2 million bpd in the highest level in eight months.

In Europe, crude oil imports went up in September, driven by increased flows from the US, which offset a drop in Russian supplies, while product imports stabilized owing to an equilibrium between higher imports of liquefied petroleum gas and fuel oil and lower imports of jet fuel.

Japan kept increasing its oil imports to 2.4 million bpd in September, as Chinese imports remained strong despite a fall on a monthly basis to 11.5 million bpd, up four percent, compared to last year.

India's imports soared to 4.9 million bpd in September, exceeding the last five years' average, while its product imports jumped to their highest level in 10 months and exports hit their highest level in a year, buoyed by a surge in flows to Europe and Middle East. The report showed a fall in demand for the Declaration of Cooperation countries' crude oil by 0.1 million bpd in September to 42.4 million bpd, up 0.3 million bpd, compared to 2024 estimates. Demand for 2026 is also projected to go down to 43 million bpd, down 0.1 million

As part of Diraya campaign

## KFH warns customers against AI-powered fraud attempts

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: As part of its ongoing support to Diraya campaign, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has encouraged customers to remain alert of the new means of fraud that take advantage of AI technologies.

KFH noted that new scam attempts involve the use of advanced AI tools to replicate the voices of real individuals with a high degree of accuracy. These voice imitations are used to contact friends or family members through phone calls or social media, often accompanied by urgent requests to transfer money. The lifelike nature of these interactions may give the impression of authenticity and credibility.

KFH advises verifying the identity of any person requesting a financial transaction. The Bank also highlighted that fraudsters may use psychological tactics to create a sense of urgency or fear. For example, some may send messages claiming suspicious activity or potential account breaches, prompting recipients to share sensitive information such as



OTPs or card numbers.

KFH stressed the importance of continued proactive caution to safeguard personal information and prevent victims falling to such crimes. KFH also encourages customers to treat any request to share banking details via phone or social media with care, as these attempts are fraudulent means targeting customers banking data. Additionally, KFH urges customers to check the authenticity of websites before entering any personal information.

KFH reaffirmed its commitment to promoting financial literacy under the Diraya campaign, launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) in cooperation with Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) and local banks. These efforts are evident through providing guidance, tips, and educational content to help customers avoid phishing and online fraud, protect their personal information, enhance their financial literacy, and make well-informed investment decisions.

## KIPIC launches tender for sale of used oil drums

## KPC announces KOTC tender for navigational supplies

By Najeh Bilal  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) announced the launching of a tender for the sale of empty and used drums containing lubricating oil at Zour Refinery.

In a statement published on the official gazette, 'Kuwait Al-Youm', KIPIC revealed that the tender is open from Dec 23, 2025 to Feb 17, 2026.

On the other hand, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) announced a public tender on behalf of Kuwait Oil Tankers Company (KOTC) for the supply of navigational charts, navigational notices, and maritime publications for the fleet of the company.

KPC said the tender documents can be obtained from KOTC via email following the publication of the announcement in the official gazette, indicating that the deadline for submitting bids is Feb 3, 2026.

KOTC also announced the extension of the bid submission deadline for its tender to supply chemicals and gas cylinders for its fleet until Jan 27, 2026, instead of Dec 16, 2025.

In addition, the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) announced the following:

■ Postponement of the bid submission deadline for the tender on the installation of a condenser at the BS-171 gas booster station operated by Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) until Jan 13, 2026, instead of Dec 23, 2025.

■ Postponement of the deadline for submitting bids for the KOC tender on the construction of three new 123 kV substations in Maqwa C, Burgan H and I, along with the connection of their feeders to 123 kV overhead transmission lines in the southern and eastern parts of the country. The new deadline for this tender is Jan 13, 2026, instead of Dec 23, 2025.

■ Postponement of the bid submission deadline for another KOC tender on the construction of three 123 kV substations in Ahmadi F, Burgan F and G, with their feeders connected to 123 kV overhead lines in the southern and eastern parts of Kuwait, indicating the new deadline is Jan 20, 2026, instead of Dec 23, 2025.

■ Postponement of the deadline for submitting bids for a tender issued by Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) on the improvement of facilities for importing and storing desalinated water at Mina Al-Ahmadi Refinery until Jan 25, 2026, instead of Jan 3, 2026.

By Najeh Bilal  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: Deputy Chief Executive Officer for Mina Al-Ahmadi Refinery at Kuwait National Petroleum Corporation (KNPC) Shujaa Salem Al-Ajmi has implemented organizational changes in the refinery.

The newspaper obtained a copy of the decision, indicating that these changes include the following:

- Transfer of Saad Mohammad Al-Ajmi to serve as Head of Operations for Area 13 (5-TRAIN), reporting directly to the Head of Operations for Area 13.
- Appointment of Khaled Mohammad Abdullah as Head of Operations for Area 8 (PLCR), reporting directly to the Head of Operations for Area 8.
- Appointment of Saud Thari Al-

Rashidi as Head of Area 4 (CDUs), reporting directly to the Head of Operations for Area 4.

- Appointment of Ahmed Adel Al-Baloushi as Head of Area 5 (HP Utilities), reporting directly to the Head of Operations for Area 5.
- Transfer of Nasser Bader Hajieh to serve as Head of Operations for LPG Train-1 and the Common Unit in the Seventh Area, reporting directly to the Head of the Seventh Area Operations Team.
- Transfer of Ahmed Faraj Al-Nuaim to serve as Head of the Operations Section of the Sixth Area (ERU), reporting directly to the Head of the Sixth Area Operations Team.
- Transfer of Adel Majed Al-Mutairi to serve as Head of the Operations Section (HPs/HR), reporting directly to the Head of the Fourth Area Operations Team.





Signing ceremony for the acquisition agreement with Upayments.



Signing an exclusive partnership agreement with Harrods.



NBK launches NBK – Aura Credit Cards and NBK – Aura Prepaid Cards.



The executive management of the National Bank of Kuwait at the launch ceremony of the 'Al Manzel' program.

Through a wide range of innovative initiatives, products, & cross-continental strategic partnerships in 2025

## NBK further strengthens its leadership in consumer & digital banking

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: Throughout 2025, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continued to reinforce its leading position locally and regionally, delivering an exceptional banking experience that not only reflects customers' needs today, but also fulfills their aspirations for tomorrow.

From expanding its portfolio of products and services, raising the number of cards offered to more than 22 through collaborations with leading global brands such as "Avios," "Harrods," and "Aura", to the continued enhancement of NBK Mobile Banking, increasing the number of services available through the platform to more than 200, alongside the redesign of traditional branches to meet evolving customer needs, and the launch of FinTech services to strengthen the digital economy and financial inclusion in Kuwait, NBK successfully achieved a series of qualitative milestones this year and set new benchmarks for banking services in Kuwait and the region.

Mr. Mohammed Al-Othman, Chief Executive Officer of the Consumer and Digital Banking Group at NBK said: "In 2025, NBK's message was clear: "NBK does not merely keep pace with change ...it is the force that shapes it. This was reflected in an unprecedented portfolio of digital initiatives, innovative products, and cross-continental strategic partnerships launched by the Consumer and Digital Banking Group this year, moving beyond the concept of traditional banking toward broader horizons of leadership and innovation."

"Leadership in banking for NBK is no longer confined to being first to introduce innovative products, services, and solutions; it extends to shaping the direction the entire banking sector should follow. In this context, NBK continues to reinforce its leadership position by setting new benchmarks for banking services in Kuwait and the region, underscoring its pivotal role in driving development and innovation across the financial sector," Al-Othman added.

"Everything we offer our customers in terms of products and services is grounded in rigorous research based on a thorough assessment of market needs, alongside leveraging our advanced data analytics capabilities to translate customer needs into innovative products and services," he highlighted.

Al-Othman noted that the achievements delivered by NBK Group's Consumer and Digital Banking arm are the result of a strategy launched several years ago, aimed at transforming NBK into a leading force in digital services. He affirmed that this strategy has exceeded expectations, including reshaping the very concept and experience of the customer, migrating the majority of daily transactions to digital channels, building what is regarded as the strongest digital infrastructure in the region, and enhancing speed and reliability while adhering to the highest standards of cybersecurity. He also highlighted the Bank's growing success in earning the trust of the millennial generation through "Weyay" Bank, with its market share among this segment expanding steadily day after day.

He added that these efforts were crowned with prestigious global awards, most notably NBK's recognition as the World's Best Bank for Innovation and Transformation, an unprecedented achievement for Kuwait's banking sector.

### New Strategy

Al-Othman stated: "At NBK, we are not content with merely building the best banking app or launching the latest card; rather, we seek to redefine the entire financial landscape and transform banking from simple transactional platforms into a fully integrated ecosystem of intelligent solutions that seamlessly blend into our customers' daily lives. This is the essence of our ambitious new five-year strategy through 2030, which we launched this year, grounded in a firm conviction that customer expectations have fundamentally changed. Customers no longer benchmark their banking experience solely against global FinTech platforms, but against the evolution of services across all sectors worldwide. They now expect personalized services, delivered with simplicity and speed."

He explained that "the new strategy reflects this transformation, as it moves us beyond mere digitization of services toward a model in which banking is customer-centric and fundamentally data-driven."

Al-Othman continued: "This transformation is not merely a slogan, but a way



Mohammed Al-Othman

### Al-Othman:

- NBK does not merely keep pace with change ...it is the force that shapes it
- Our leadership extends beyond being first to market with products and services to setting the direction the banking sector should follow
- In 2025, we continued to establish new benchmarks for banking services in Kuwait and across the region
- Through our new strategy, we seek to redefine the entire financial landscape
- We aim to transform banking from simple transactional platforms into a fully integrated ecosystem of intelligent solutions
- The new strategy moves us beyond mere digitization toward customer-centric, data-driven banking services
- An additional 50 services and features were introduced to NBK Mobile Banking, bringing the total to 200 services
- Mobile transactions increased fourteen-fold, while the number of mobile users rose by 300%
- The cards portfolio was expanded to include more than 22 cards through high-quality partnerships with leading brands
- Branches were redesigned to align with evolving customer needs, reinforcing an approach centered on building personal relationships and delivering comprehensive solutions
- The acquisition of UPayments represents a strategic step that supports the digital transformation of payments
- "Al Manzel" stands as the largest specialized program offering home renovation and refurbishment financing solutions, supported by more than 40 partners
- We launched FinTech services to strengthen Kuwait's digital economy and enable FinTech companies to deliver innovative and secure payment solutions
- POS Financing marked the first point-of-sale financing service in Kuwait, supporting SMEs
- "Weyay" Bank doubled its customer base among the 15–23 age group and launched the first fully integrated digital financing solution



Mohammed Al-Othman speaking during the launch of new strategy for the Personal and Digital Banking Group.



National Bank of Kuwait wins 7 awards from MEED magazine.



NBK mobile online banking.



National Bank of Kuwait – Aura card



Weyay - Kuwait's first fully digital loans

of operating. Through our new strategy, we stop viewing data as static numbers in rigid tables and instead treat it as the voice of the customer, one we listen to clearly and respond to effectively. Imagine a bank that does not merely process your daily transactions, but anticipates your future needs and responds to them before you even ask." He noted that through advanced analytics and artificial intelligence, which has become a core pillar of the Group's strategy, NBK is able to deliver more tailored products, deeper financial insights for customers, and more prudent risk management.

He emphasized that today's customers seek solutions tailored to their lives, whether in payments, lending, or wealth management, underscoring that every product now introduced by NBK is designed around customer behavior, preferences, and different life stages.

Al-Othman added that the new strategy, extending through 2030, focuses on comprehensive FinTech services that integrate AI-powered tools, digital lending, advanced payment systems, and financial inclusion solutions, with the aim of driving Kuwait's digital economy in line with the objectives of Kuwait Vision 2035.

Absolute Dominance Across Digital Channels

The Consumer and Digital Banking

Group has driven a genuine transformation in the customer experience by shifting the majority of daily banking transactions to digital channels. Transactions executed through NBK Mobile Banking now account for approximately 90% of the Bank's total banking transactions.

This reflects NBK's steadfast commitment to delivering a seamless and fully integrated digital banking experience, as well as its continuous enhancement of the NBK Mobile Banking App, positioning the application as the primary channel for customers' banking transactions.

In 2025, more than 50 new services and features were added to the application, including full end-to-end digital onboarding (E2E Onboarding), bringing the total number of services offered to over 200. This expansion reflects sustained and substantial investment in this flagship banking application.

This investment resulted in a fourteen-fold increase in mobile transactions and a 300% rise in the number of mobile users, translating into customer satisfaction levels reaching 93%, while the application's rating climbed to 4.7.

Leadership in Cards and Global Partnerships

To enrich the banking experience and deliver value beyond expectations, NBK expanded its cards portfolio in 2025 to in-

clude more than 22 cards through high-quality partnerships with leading global brands.

Key partnerships included the first exclusive partnership locally and regionally with Harrods, London, in collaboration with Visa, offering customers an exceptional rewards experience. NBK also signed an exclusive partnership with Alshaya Group, under which it launched NBK–Aura Credit Cards and NBK–Aura Prepaid Cards, enabling customers to earn up to 8% Aura points redeemable across more than 50 global brands. In addition, the Bank extended its exclusive partnership with Xcite Electronics until 2026, maintaining benefits for KWT Visa Infinite cardholders, including 10% KWT points and a 2% instant discount. The Bank also launched the "Tap To Add Card + PIN" service.

Such partnerships and newly launched services contributed to a 400% increase in card spending.

In addition, NBK expanded Al Jawhara account to include NBK employees and children, resulting in a 25% increase in Al Jawhara Junior accounts.

### Branch Redesign

Despite its strong focus on digital channels, NBK has not overlooked the importance of branches. The Bank has redesigned its branch network to align

with evolving customer needs, while enhancing productivity and embedding an approach centered on building personal relationships and delivering comprehensive solutions, including international banking and corporate services. This reflects NBK's firm belief that digital and traditional channels are complementary, not competing.

### The Acquisition of UPayments

2025 marked a major strategic milestone with NBK's acquisition of UPayments, becoming the first transaction of its kind in Kuwait involving a bank acquiring a FinTech company.

The acquisition aims to deliver instant digital payment solutions through strategic integration of the complementary expertise and capabilities of NBK and UPayments, thereby strengthening and accelerating the digital transformation of payments.

### Al Manzel Program

NBK recently launched the "Al Manzel" Program, the largest specialized initiative dedicated to providing financing solutions for home renovation and refurbishment.

This initiative forms part of the Bank's commitment to supporting its customers in building, renovating, and upgrading their homes, by offering flexible and comprehensive financing solutions in

collaboration with more than 40 partners from specialized companies across construction, interior design, furniture, home appliances, and related sectors.

### Launch of FinTech Services

In a move that reflects its vision to redefine the financial landscape through innovation, collaboration, and technological leadership, NBK launched FinTech services during 2025. The initiative aims to strengthen the digital economy and financial inclusion in Kuwait, while enabling FinTech companies to leverage the Bank's robust infrastructure to deliver innovative and secure payment solutions, and to support entrepreneurship and innovators in developing smart financial solutions.

### Supporting SMEs

Throughout 2025, the Consumer and Digital Banking Group continued to focus on developing products that address market gaps and support key social and economic segments. These offerings represented a direct translation of market needs, informed by in-depth research and precise customer feedback.

In line with its leadership in supporting Kuwait's economic development, NBK launched Kuwait's first point-of-sale financing service (POS Financing), designed specifically for small and medium-sized enterprises. Eligible businesses can obtain financing of up to KD 30,000 based on their monthly sales volumes processed through POS terminals. Reaffirming its role in supporting SMEs as the backbone of the national economy, the Bank was awarded Best Bank for SMEs in Kuwait by MEED magazine.

"Weyay" Bank... Notable Achievements

"Weyay" Bank—the first digital bank established in Kuwait—continued to deliver remarkable achievements throughout 2025, reinforcing its position as the preferred choice for the youth segment. The Bank more than doubled its customer base within the 15–23 age group, leveraging advanced digital solutions specifically designed to meet the needs of young customers, who account for approximately 60% of Kuwait's population. This momentum further strengthened Weyay's market share.

Weyay Bank also launched its first fully integrated end-to-end digital loan, initially offered exclusively to NBK employees, in addition to introducing in-app chat support to enhance customer experience and accelerate digital service delivery.

### Prestigious Awards

NBK crowned the achievements of its Consumer and Digital Banking Group during 2025 by securing a series of prestigious international awards.

Among these accolades were multiple honors from MEED, the region's leading platform for evaluating projects and financial sectors. These included the Mena Retail Banker of the Year in Kuwait, Best Loan Offering in the Middle East and North Africa, Best Contactless Payments Experience in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as Best Bank for SMEs in Kuwait for the third consecutive year.

NBK also received the award for Best Online Product Offering in Kuwait from Global Finance magazine.

Meanwhile, "Weyay" Bank crowned its achievements during the year by winning the Best Digital Bank in Kuwait award from Euromoney, as well as the Best Digital-Only Bank award from Global Finance for 2025. In addition, it was honored with the Most Innovative Product in the Middle East and North Africa award for the "Jeel" Card, designed for the 8–14 age group and aimed at instilling concepts of financial responsibility and saving within a safe and thoughtfully designed digital environment, further underscoring Weyay's leadership in delivering a fully integrated digital banking experience.

### Closest to its customers

NBK aims to be the financial partner best prepared for the future of banking, remaining consistently close to its customers by anticipating their needs and fulfilling their aspirations with the highest standards of quality and innovation.

2025 was not merely a year of achievements; it represented a significant milestone in strengthening trust with customers and the community, while reaffirming NBK's role in supporting the national economy.

NBK believes that the accomplishments realized over the past period will enable it to transition smoothly and confidently into the next phase of growth, continuing to stand as the trusted safe haven its clients rely on.



# Global monetary policy paths persist to diverge

By National Bank of Kuwait

Global markets reflected a mixture of easing inflation trends and varied central bank actions. In the U.S., headline CPI slowed to 2.7% in November while core inflation fell to 2.6%, its lowest since March 2021, reinforcing the disinflation narrative despite ongoing data disruptions from the government shutdown. The labor market showed modest resilience with payrolls rising 64K in November, though prior revisions and continued federal job losses softened the outlook, while manufacturing momentum cooled as the flash PMI slipped to a five-month low. In Canada, inflation held at 2.2%, supported by lower energy and easing shelter costs, but firm core inflation kept the Bank of Canada cautious. In the UK, inflation eased to 3.2% and weakening growth prompted a narrowly split 25bp rate cut from the Bank of England, with further easing firmly data dependent. The ECB kept rates unchanged, stressing flexibility amid uncertainty, while the Bank of Japan lifted rates to 0.75%, its highest since 1995, continuing its gradual policy normalization while maintaining accommodative financial conditions.

## North America

### U.S. Core Inflation Drops to Lowest Level Since March 2021

U.S. inflation continued to ease late in 2025, with headline CPI slowing to 2.7% in November, the lowest since July, while core inflation fell to 2.6%, marking its lowest level since March 2021 and undershooting market expectations. Price pressures were driven mainly by energy, food, and shelter, alongside increases in medical care, household furnishings, recreation, and used vehicles, while apparel and new vehicles saw only modest gains. Data disruptions persisted due to the 43-day government shutdown, leaving October CPI unreported and November monthly figures unavailable, though the BLS estimated prices rose 0.2% over the two-month period from September to November.

### Non-Farm Employment Change

U.S. non-farm payrolls rose by 64K in November, beating expectations of a 50K gain and reversing October's revised 105K decline. Hiring was led by health care (+46K), construction (+28K), and social assistance (+18K), while transportation and warehousing shed 18K jobs. Federal government employment continued to fall (-6K) following a sharp 162K drop in October, reflecting deferred buyouts tied to efforts to reduce government headcount. Meanwhile, payrolls were revised lower, with August cut to -26K and September reduced to +108K, tempering the overall labor market picture.

### Manufacturing in the U.S. Hits a 5-Month Low

The S&P Global U.S. Flash Manufacturing PMI eased to 51.8 in December 2025, a five-month low, indicating a slower improvement in manufacturing conditions. Production growth softened, new orders declined for the first time in a year, and input inventory accumulation slowed, pointing to cooling demand momentum. Offsetting this weakness, employment recorded its strongest rise since August, while supplier delivery times lengthened the most since September, suggesting some lingering supply-side pressures.

The U.S. dollar index was last seen trading at 98.599.

### Inflation in Canada Holds Steady

Canada's headline inflation held steady at 2.2% y/y in November, coming in slightly below market expectations of 2.3% and continuing its gradual convergence toward the Bank of Canada's 2% target. The stability in headline prices was largely supported by weaker energy costs, with gasoline prices falling 7.8% y/y, although monthly pressures emerged due to refinery disruptions. Shelter inflation showed welcome easing, as rent growth slowed to 4.7% from 5.2%, offering some relief on housing-related costs. However, food inflation reaccelerated sharply, with grocery prices rising 4.7% y/y, driven by higher fresh produce and food preparation costs. Meanwhile, services inflation remains uneven, highlighted by a 12.7% surge in cellular service prices amid reduced promotional activity. Importantly, core inflation remained firm at 2.6%, reinforcing the Bank of Canada's cautious stance despite improving headline trends.

The USD/CAD currency pair was last seen trading at 1.3801.

## United Kingdom

### Narrowly Split Decision Sees the BoE Cut Rates

The Bank of England lowered the Bank Rate by 25 basis points to 3.75%, its lowest level since 2022 and the first rate cut since August, as easing inflation and increasing signs of economic weakness prompted policymakers to begin loosening policy. The decision was narrowly split, with five members voting for the cut and four favoring no change, a less dovish outcome than markets had expected that led investors to scale back expectations for further rate reductions. The Monetary Policy Committee emphasized that any additional easing will be guided by incoming inflation data, noting that the overall degree of policy restrictiveness has already started to diminish. The move followed a slowdown in UK inflation to 3.2% in November, its lowest level in eight months and below the BoE's forecast, alongside a second consecutive monthly contraction in GDP and cooling private-sector wage growth.

### Inflation in the UK Drops

UK inflation eased to 3.2% in November 2025, the lowest level in eight months and below both market expectations and the Bank of England's forecast. The slowdown was driven mainly by lower food prices, particularly bread and cereals, alongside easing costs for alcohol, tobacco, transport, housing, and utilities. Services inflation also moderated, coming in slightly below central bank projections. On a monthly basis, CPI fell 0.2%, marking the largest decline since mid-2024 and reinforcing signs of easing price pressures across the economy.

The GBP/USD currency pair was last seen trading at 1.3375.

## Eurozone

### ECB Rates Remain Unchanged

The ECB left interest rates unchanged for a fourth consecutive meeting in December 2025, keeping the main refinancing rate at 2.15% and the deposit facility rate at 2.0%, in line with expectations. Policymakers reiterated a data-dependent, meeting-by-meeting approach, with President Lagarde noting that there was no discussion of either rate hikes or cuts and stressing that the ECB has no pre-determined policy path or forward guidance amid high uncertainty. Updated projections showed a modestly improved growth outlook through 2027, while inflation is expected to gradually converge toward the 2% target, with the 2026 inflation forecast revised slightly higher, mainly reflecting continued strength in services prices.

The EUR/USD currency pair was last seen trading at 1.1708.

## Asia-Pacific

### Japan Borrowing Costs at Their Highest Levels Since 1995

The Bank of Japan raised its key short-term policy rate by 25 basis points to 0.75% at its December meeting, taking borrowing costs to their highest level since September 1995 and in line with market expectations, as the central bank continued its gradual shift away from decades of ultra-loose monetary policy. The move marked the BoJ's second rate hike this year following a similar increase in January, reflecting growing confidence that the economy can sustain higher rates amid improving corporate profitability and steady wage growth. Policymakers reiterated their expectation that firms will continue to deliver meaningful pay increases into 2026, helping support domestic demand and inflation dynamics. At the same time, the board emphasized that real interest rates remain "significantly negative" and that overall financial conditions are still broadly accommodative, signaling that policy remains supportive despite the normalization steps. The BoJ stressed that further rate increases will depend on whether the economic and inflation outlook outlined in its October projections materialize, and it forecast that core inflation will temporarily ease below the 2% target through the first half of fiscal year 2026 before gradually firming thereafter.

The USD/JPY currency pair was last seen trading at 157.75.

## Kuwait

### Kuwaiti Dinar

USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30545.

## Senior ALSAYER leaders 65+ shine in Gulf Bank & NBK Runs

# ALSAYER Group mobilizes 150+ employees for Kuwait's 2025 Marathons, advancing wellness and community engagement

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: ALSAYER Group reaffirmed its commitment to employee well being and social responsibility by encouraging broad staff participation in two of Kuwait's flagship running events this season: the Gulf Bank 642 Marathon on November 29, 2025 and the NBK Run 2025 on December 13, 2025. In line with its inclusive culture, the Group supported participation by fully reimbursing entry fees for employees and families, making healthy living more accessible and community driven.

More than 150 employees from across business units embraced the challenge, stepping away from routine to champion fitness and team spirit. ALSAYER runners took on multiple distances – including 21KM, 10KM, and 5KM – and represented a wide range of roles and ages. Notably, senior leaders aged 65+ joined the start line and competed strongly within their age categories – underscoring that determination and resilience have no age limit.

“Over the years, ALSAYER Group has cultivated a culture that inspires people to continually improve and aim for excellence,” said Engineer Nehad Al Haj Ali, Group Manager, Corporate Excellence. “You can see it in the happiness and confidence of our runners; every kilometer they conquer reflects a mindset of pushing boundaries, growing



Photos during the marathons.

stronger, and elevating performance – at work and beyond.”

Both the Gulf Bank 642 Marathon and the NBK Run 2025 offered a

powerful platform for ALSAYER employees to come together, build social bonds, and prioritize holistic well being. Beyond race day, ALSAYER views such initiatives as

catalysts for lasting, positive behavior change – encouraging individuals and families to adopt healthier habits that strengthen the wider community.

# Menzies expands European presence with new license at BRU

LONDON, Dec 22: Menzies Aviation, the leading service partner to the world's airports and airlines, has been awarded a seven-year freighter handling license at Brussels Airport (BRU) in Belgium.

The start of operations at BRU brings Belgium into Menzies Aviation's growing global network of more than 350 airports in 65 countries. It highlights the company's continued momentum and focus on expanding its freighter handling and airside service capabilities across key international hubs.

Brussels Airport is recognised as a critical European gateway for freighter operations, supporting significant freighter traffic across pharmaceutical, perishables, and high-value logistics corridors. With this new licence, Menzies aims to elevate standards in aircraft turnaround management, streamline ground handling processes,



Menzies Aviation expands into Belgium.

and deliver safe, reliable, and consistent performance for airline customers

operating dedicated freighter services at the airport.

Under the new license, Menzies has launched operations for LATAM Cargo, supporting 15 weekly turns across three daily flights, five days a week, connecting Belgium with the carrier's expanding network between Europe and Latin America. LATAM's growing footprint in Europe reflects rising demand for high-quality, reliable handling solutions, and Menzies is well positioned to support this momentum.

Miguel Gomez Sjunnesson, Executive Vice President Europe, Menzies Aviation, said: “The award of this license highlights the strength of our freighter handling expertise, and launching operations with LATAM's expanding freighter schedule at BRU sets a strong foundation for the years ahead. Our teams are focused on delivering safe, efficient, high-quality service as we scale up, and we're committed to raising service standards for all our customers at this critical cargo hub.”

# China slaps provisional tariffs on EU dairy products

HONG KONG, Dec 22, (AP): China will impose up to 42.7% of provisional tariffs on dairy products including milk and cheese imported from the European Union, its Commerce Ministry said Monday.

The elevated duties, which take effect Tuesday, were based on preliminary results from an investigation opened by China's Commerce Ministry in August 2024 as tensions between Beijing and Brussels flared. Beijing reviewed subsidies provided by EU countries for their dairy and other farm products.

Beijing's probe was launched as part of tit-for-tat measures as the EU investigated Chinese subsidies on electric vehicles, and later imposed tariffs as high as 45.3% on China-made EVs.

China had initiated other probes into European brandy and pork imports as counter measures for the EU's tariffs on Chinese EVs. It had also urged the EU to scrap its EV tariffs. The temporary duties on EU dairy imports will range from 21.9% to 42.7%, according to the Commerce Ministry, and will cover a basket of dairy products, including fresh and processed cheese, blue cheese, milk, and cream with a

fat content exceeding 10% by weight.

The ministry said preliminary findings from its investigation determined that subsidies provided by the EU and EU member states for their dairy products had damaged China's dairy industry.

The European Commission, which manages trade talks and issues on behalf of the 27 EU member countries, expressed concern over the tariffs.

“The commission's assessment is that the investigation is based on questionable allegations and insufficient evidence, and that the measures are therefore unjustified and unwarranted,” spokesperson Olof Gill said.

Gill told reporters that the commission is examining the reasoning behind the move and intends to provide comments to the Chinese authorities.

Beijing's probe into EU dairy products covered subsidies given under the EU's Common Agricultural Policy and subsidies offered to farmers by EU countries including Italy, Ireland and Finland, the Commerce Ministry said in August 2024.

China's relationship with the EU is fractious, with

the Chinese trade surplus with the EU recently coming into the spotlight. The EU runs a significant trade deficit with China, at more than 300 billion euros (\$352 billion) last year.

Last week, Beijing announced it was imposing up to 19.8% tariffs on EU pork imports - significantly lower than preliminary tariffs of up to 62.4%.

It accused the EU of dumping pork and pig by-products in the country, selling them at cheap prices which in turn harmed its domestic pork industry.

In July, Beijing also announced up to 34.9% tariffs on brandy imported from the EU - including cognac from France - although several major brandy brands had received exemptions.

Gill said the EU remains committed to good trade and investment ties with China.

“But in order for that to meaningfully happen, there is a list of issues and concerns that the European Union has had going back many months and even years that we would require China to address, in terms of overcapacity, in terms of unfair use of trade instruments, in terms of trade deficit, and so on,” he said.

## Festive décor and family fun light up LuLu's seasonal celebrations

# LuLu launches ‘Seasonal Delights’ festive celebrations

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: LuLu Hypermarket ushered in the festive season with the grand launch of its Seasonal Delights celebrations at the Al Rai outlet on 20 December, marking the occasion with a special Choco Week cake-cutting ceremony. The ceremonial cutting of the cake was jointly carried out by GTRC officials and LuLu Hypermarket's top management, symbolising the beginning of a season filled with joy, celebration, and sweet indulgence. The event was inaugurated by the senior management of LuLu Hypermarket Kuwait and witnessed enthusiastic participation from customers, families, and well-wishers.

The celebrations created a vibrant and joyful atmosphere, featuring a series of engaging activities designed to delight visitors of all ages. One of the highlights of the evening was the Little Santa Contest, where young participants spread festive cheer with their charming performances. Adding to the excitement, children took part in creative competitions such as Christmas Tree Decoration and Cake Decoration, showcasing imagination, colour, and festive flair.

The Al Rai hypermarket was transformed into a festive destination with eye-catching seasonal décor, twinkling lights, and lively entertainment. The ambience was further enhanced by cheerful Christmas music and live performances, creating a warm and celebratory shopping experience that truly captured the spirit of the season.

As part of the festivities, LuLu Hypermarket also announced exclusive year-end promotions across all its outlets, offering customers exceptional value on a wide range of products. From festive essentials and gourmet treats to thoughtful gift options, shoppers can enjoy attractive deals that make holiday shopping both rewarding



Photos during the campaign.

and enjoyable.

Customers are invited to visit any LuLu Hypermarket outlet to experi-

ence the Seasonal Delights celebrations and take advantage of special year-end offers, making LuLu the per-

fect destination to celebrate the festive season and welcome the New Year in style.



‘In the 1990s, it was plausible’

## Modern airport rules make ‘Home Alone 2’ adventure impossible

WASHINGTON, Dec 22, (AP): Panic erupts in the McCallister household as soon as the day begins. The parents’ alarm clock never rings, bags and coats spill across the floor, and the family barrels out the door to catch a flight to Florida.

The pandemonium intensifies at the airport. There, the McCallisters must dodge fellow holiday travelers and luggage as they sprint to their gate while final boarding calls echo overhead. Amid the mayhem, 10-year-old Kevin accidentally boards the wrong plane and finds himself alone in New York City just days before Christmas.

More than 30 years after “Home Alone” turned travel chaos into comedy, the frantic opening scenes of the movie’s 1992 sequel still hit close to home, especially as the busy year-end travel period gets underway. But would Kevin McCallister still end up “Lost in New York” in 2025?

In an age of federal airport security checkpoints and digitized air travel, the fictional character played by Macaulay Culkin almost certainly wouldn’t have gotten onto a commercial airliner by himself, said Sheldon Jacobson, who studies air travel operations and security and whose research contributed to the design of TSA PreCheck.

“In the 1990s, it was plausible,” Sheldon said. “It was close enough to plausible that people weren’t rolling their eyes at it, but this would not happen today.”

The Sept. 11, 2001, attacks fundamentally changed how Americans move through airports, ushering the creation of the Transportation Security Administration, government-run security screenings, mandatory ID checks and restricted gate access. Before 9/11, travelers could head straight to their plane with little more than a paper ticket. Now, every passenger and bag is screened, names are checked against flight manifests and access beyond security checkpoints is tightly controlled.

Even the paper tickets that made Kevin’s mix-up possible are largely a thing of the past. In the film, Kevin frantically trails a man wearing a coat like his father’s to the wrong gate at Chicago O’Hare International Airport, then crashes into an



Linda Zimmerman of Bailey, Colo., wears holiday garb as she waits in the main terminal for the arrival of her daughter and granddaughters on a delayed flight from Minnesota with her 4-year-old Cavalier King Charles spaniel named Petunia in Denver International Airport in Denver. (AP)

airline agent, sending both his ticket and a stack of boarding passes fluttering to the floor. Kevin explains that his family is already on the plane and he doesn’t want to get left behind.

“Do you have a boarding pass?” the agent asks. Kevin gestures to the pile of paper tickets and is ultimately allowed onto the plane.

Today, boarding passes are tied to specific passengers, often stored on smartphones and scanned at the gate to confirm travelers are on the correct flight. The stricter unaccompanied minor policies and fees of airlines would add yet another layer of protection today, Jacobson said.

In the movie, the gate agent walks Kevin down the jet bridge and asks if he spots his family onboard. Kevin points to the stranger he’s mistaken for his father. The agent waves him on, tells him to grab an empty seat and that’s that.

Unaccompanied minors are closely tracked today. Most carriers require children under a certain age, often 14 or younger, to be formally registered as unaccompanied minors if they aren’t traveling with an adult, Jacobson said. That comes with special paperwork and airline staff members who are assigned to escort a child through the airport, to their seat on the plane and off the plane at their destination.

The Biden administration proposed a rule last year to ban airlines from charging families additional fees to sit together on flights and requiring them to seat children ages 13 and under next to an accompanying adult when adjacent seating is available at booking. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said earlier this month he had no update on the proposal.

Even if every current safeguard somehow failed, a passenger on the wrong plane would get noticed quickly, Jacobson said. Flight attendants review passenger counts and special-service lists before departure. A 10-year-old boy missing from one flight and an extra child on another would trigger immediate alarms.

In other words, the movie magic holds up 33 years after “Home Alone 2: Lost in New York” came out. The logistics do not, Jacobson said.

“We take for granted that we had those freedoms back then that we don’t have today, for good reason,” he said. “We had to give up those freedoms in exchange for other freedoms, like safer air travel.”

### Warner takeover fight

## Regulatory hurdles ahead for Netflix and Paramount

LOS ANGELES, Dec 22, (AP): Warner Bros. Discovery is in the middle of a Hollywood tug-of-war between Netflix and Paramount. And chances are it’ll be a long, bumpy regulatory road ahead for either buyer.

Warner’s board on Wednesday urged shareholders to back the deal it struck with Netflix to sell its studio and streaming business for \$72 billion. Meanwhile, Skydance-owned Paramount is moving forward with its hostile \$77.9 billion bid for a full takeover of the company, including networks like CNN.

In both scenarios, a merger would likely trigger a review by the U.S. Justice Department, which could sue to block the transaction or request changes. But other countries and entities could challenge either acquisition, too.

Politics is also expected to come into play under U.S. President Donald Trump, who has made unprecedented suggestions about his personal involvement on whether a deal will go through.

The process could drag on for more than a year, if not longer. But regardless of who wins, new ownership of Warner properties would drastically reshape the industry - impacting movie-making, streaming platforms and the broader media landscape.

Here’s what we know.

The buyout target - Warner Bros. Discovery - is a 102-year-old Hollywood giant. It is one of the “big five” studios, producing titles ranging from “Harry Potter” to “Superman.” And its cable operations include top networks like CNN and Discovery. Warner also owns DC Studios and HBO Max.

Paramount, which closed its own \$8 billion merger with Skydance just months ago, is also one of Hollywood’s remaining legacy studios - with a blockbuster lineup including “Top Gun” and “The Godfather.” Beyond traditional film and TV production, it owns networks like CBS, MTV and Nickelodeon, as well as the Paramount+ streaming service.

For Netflix, streaming is its bread and butter, accounting for 20% of the U.S. market for on-demand subscriptions, according to data from streaming guide JustWatch. That compares to 13% for HBO Max and 7% for Paramount+. But Netflix has also built up its own production arm, rolling out popular titles like “Squid Game” and “Stranger Things.” Netflix is the biggest of the three companies, with a market capitalization of around \$430 billion as of mid-December. Warner Bros. Discovery is about \$70 billion, while Paramount Skydance trails at closer to \$14 billion.

### Dominance

Paramount has already pointed to Netflix’s streaming dominance, arguing that bringing the platform under the same roof as HBO Max would squash competition and give it “overwhelming” market share. But Netflix has maintained its merger will give consumers more choice, allowing it to offer more plans and titles for customers to choose from Warner’s catalog.

Antitrust experts expect Paramount and Netflix to try to convince regulators that they’re not just up against more traditional rival subscriptions, but broader video libraries across the internet.

YouTube is at the top of the list, and Netflix is already laying the groundwork to show Google’s streaming platform dominance in terms of viewing hours, which, according to media analytics firm Nielsen, accounted for nearly 13% of viewership this fall compared with 8% for Netflix.

Jim Speta, a professor at Northwestern University’s Pritzker School of Law, expects both companies to say that a merger is “necessary for them to compete against YouTube.” “The broader you make the market that we’re thinking about, the less the merger looks anti-competitive,” Speta said.

Meanwhile, others will argue that either merger is bad for consumers. While content libraries may broaden, a case could be made about a combined company wielding its power to control prices - or adding more subscription hoops for consumers to jump through to watch certain titles.

Among concerns, “the range of available content on the streaming services might decrease,” said Scott Wagner, head of antitrust practice at law firm Bilzin Sumberg. He pointed to older movies in particular that could potentially see shorter streaming windows across platforms.

If successful, Paramount’s takeover would combine two of Hollywood’s “big five” studios. And while Netflix has agreed to uphold Warner’s contractual obligations for theatrical releases in its proposed acquisition, critics are skeptical given its reliance on online streaming.

Some trade groups have warned that the consequences of either deal could include job losses. Layoffs tied to restructuring are common following a merger and wouldn’t likely draw antitrust scrutiny, but Speta notes competition concerns could still arise if a company “becomes so big that it has purchasing power” and is deemed to control wages more broadly.



A Netflix sign and the company's logo are displayed atop buildings in Los Angeles. (AP)

### Film



This image released by 20th Century Studios shows Quaritch, performed by Stephen Lang, in a scene from ‘Avatar: Fire and Ash.’ (AP)

Film launches with \$88m domestically, \$345m worldwide

## ‘Avatar: Fire and Ash’ opens big globally

NEW YORK, Dec 22, (AP): “Avatar: Fire and Ash” opened with \$345 million in worldwide sales, according to studio estimates Sunday, notching the second-best global debut of the year and potentially putting James Cameron on course to set yet more blockbuster records.

Sixteen years into the “Avatar” saga, Pandora is still abundant in box-office riches. “Fire and Ash,” the third film in Cameron’s science-fiction franchise, launched with \$88 million domestically and \$257 million internationally. The only film to open bigger in 2025 was “Zootopia 2” (\$497.2 million over three days). In the coming weeks, “Fire and Ash” will have the significant benefit of the highly lucrative holiday moviegoing corridor.

But there was a tad less fanfare to this “Avatar” film, coming three years after “Avatar: The Way of Water.” That film launched in 2022 with a massive \$435 million globally and \$134 million in North America. Domestically, “Fire and Ash” fell a hefty 35% from the previous installment. Reviews for “Fire and Ash” were also more mixed, scoring a series-low 68% “fresh” score on Rotten Tomatoes.

Yet those quibbles are only a product of the lofty standards of “Avatar.” The first two films rank as two of the three biggest box-office films of all time. To reach those heights, the “Avatar” films have depended on legs more than huge openings.

“Avatar” (2009), opened with \$77 million domestically but held the top spot for seven weeks. It ultimately grossed \$2.92 billion worldwide. “The Way of Water” also held strong to eventually tally \$2.3 billion globally.

“The openings are not what the ‘Avatar’ movies are about,” said David A. Gross, a film consultant who publishes a newsletter on box office numbers. “It’s what they do after they open that made them the no. 2 and no. 3 biggest films of all time.”

For “Fire and Ash” to follow in those footsteps, it will need robust ticket sales to continue for weeks. Working in its favor so far: strong word-of-mouth. Audiences gave it

an “A” CinemaScore.

In interviews, Cameron has repeatedly said “Fire and Ash” needs to perform well for there to be subsequent “Avatar” films. (Four and five are already written but not greenlit.) These are exceptionally expensive movies to make. With a production budget of at least \$400 million, “Fire and Ash” is one of the costliest movies ever made.

“James Cameron is not known for his low budget movies,” said Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst for Comscore. “You can’t exactly create the world of Pandora on the cheap. If you’re going to have a 3D movie, an epic film that’s three hours and 17 minutes, it’s a huge buy-in of money, time, resources, and then you have to hope the audience wants to once again go along on that ride.”

“Fire and Ash” was especially boosted by premium format showings, which accounted for 66% of its opening weekend. A narrow majority of moviegoers (56%) chose to watch it in 3D.

The “Avatar” films have always been especially popular overseas. “Fire and Ash” was strongest in China, where its \$57.6 million opening weekend surpassed the two previous movies.

“Fire and Ash” didn’t have the weekend entirely to itself. A trio of other new wide releases made it into theaters in hopes of offering some counterprogramming: Lionsgate’s “The Housemaid,” Angel Studios’ “David” and Paramount Pictures’ “The SpongeBob Movie: Search for SquarePants.”

In the race for second place, “David” came out on top. The animated tale of David and Goliath collected \$22 million from 3,118 theaters, notching the best opening weekend for Angel Studios, the Christian-oriented studio that emerged with 2023’s surprise hit “Sound of Freedom.”

“The Housemaid,” Paul Feig’s twisty psychological thriller starring Sydney Sweeney and Amanda Seyfried, opened with \$19 million 3,015 theaters. The Lionsgate release, which cost about \$35 million to make, is set up well to be one of the top R-rated options in theaters over the

holidays. Based on Freida McFadden’s bestselling novel, it stars Sweeney as a woman with a troubled past who becomes a live-in maid for a wealthy family.

Trailing the pack was “The SpongeBob Movie: Search for SquarePants,” which collected \$16 million from 3,557 theaters. The G-rated film, based on the Nickelodeon TV series, is the first “SpongeBob” theatrical movie since 2015’s “The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out of Water.”

All of this weekend’s new films will hope the ticket sales keep rolling in over the upcoming Christmas break. Starting Dec. 25, they’ll need to contend with some new wide releases, including A24’s “Marty Supreme,” with Timothée Chalamet; Focus Features’ “Song Sung Blue,” with Hugh Jackman and Kate Hudson; and Sony’s “Anaconda,” with Jack Black and Paul Rudd.

Before expanding on Christmas, “Marty Supreme” opened in six theaters over the weekend, grossing \$875,000 or \$145,000 per theater. That was good enough for not only the best per-theater average of the year, but the best since 2016 and a new high mark for A24. The film, directed by Josh Safdie and starring Chalamet as an aspiring table tennis player in 1950s New York, is the most expensive ever for A24.

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. “Avatar: Fire and Ash,” \$88 million.
2. “David,” \$22 million.
3. “The Housemaid,” \$19 million.
4. “The SpongeBob Movie: Search for SquarePants,” \$16 million.
5. “Zootopia 2,” \$14.5 million.
6. “Five Nights at Freddy’s 2,” \$7.3 million.
7. “Wicked: For Good,” \$4.3 million.
8. “Dhurandhar,” \$2.5 million.
9. “Marty Supreme,” \$875,000.
10. “Hamnet,” \$850,000.

than usual on Friday.

“Every Winter Solstice, we are flooded with people. And today, within hours of opening, we had already sold 4,000 to 5,000 servings,” a staff member surnamed Liu told Xinhua as he packed orders, adding that they had begun preparing ingredients for the Winter Solstice rush two months in advance.

Tangyuan are commonly filled with sweet ingredients such as peanuts or black sesame, or savory fillings like minced pork, and served in warm soup. In Taipei, local shops have also developed innovative variations based on traditional flavors.

Also located on the Tonghua Street block, one trendy shop is famous for its signature “ice and fire tangyuan,” which are freshly cooked and served atop shaved ice, finished with a drizzle of osmanthus syrup.

Its owner, a 25-year-old man surnamed He, said that the glutinous rice balls it sells are more similar to yu-anxiao, which are made by repeatedly rolling the filling in dry glutinous rice flour, while tangyuan are made by wrapping filling in dough. “These yu-anxiao have a crystal-clear outer layer, and they are chewier,” he said.

Behind the countless bowls of tangyuan enjoyed on any single day is both people’s love of the dish and their appreciation for the solar terms that are an important part of traditional Chinese culture. (Xinhua)

### Variety

**LONDON:** Chris Rea, the singer and songwriter best known for the hit “Driving Home for Christmas,” has died at 74, his family said.

Rea died in the hospital following a short illness, according to a statement from his family to Britain’s Press Association news agency.

Rea found fame in the 1980s in Britain with hits such as “Fool (If You Think It’s Over)” and “Let’s Dance.”

Two of his studio albums, “The Road to Hell” in 1989 and “Auberge” in 1991, went to number one in the country.

“Driving Home for Christmas,” first released in 1986, became one of the U.K.’s most loved festive songs and featured in a Marks and Spencer’s TV advertisement this year.

The musician was born in 1951 in Middlesbrough, in northeast England, to an Italian father and Irish mother.

He had suffered from health problems including pancreatic cancer, and in 2016 he suffered a stroke. (AP)



**LOS ANGELES:** James Ransone, the actor who played

Ziggy Sobotka in the HBO series “The Wire” and appeared in many other TV shows and movies, has died. He was 46.

The Los Angeles County Medical Examiner’s office said in online records that Ransone died by suicide.

Ransone’s film credits include “It: Chapter Two,” “The Black Phone” and “Black Phone 2,” and he appeared in TV shows including the cop drama “Bosch” and “Poker Face.”

Messages seeking comment were left for representatives of Ransone on Sunday, as well as with a spokesperson for the medical examiner’s office. (AP)



**TAIPEI:** The 2025 Winter Solstice, the last of the 24 Chinese solar terms in a year, falls on Sunday and is being celebrated across the Taiwan region with the tradition of eating tangyuan -- glutinous rice balls which symbolize reunion and good fortune.

In Taipei, sales at tangyuan stores surged significantly in the days leading up to the Winter Solstice. On Friday, long queues for tangyuan were seen at shop entrances even past noon.

On the Tonghua Street block, where people flock for traditional street foods in Taipei, a well-known local tangyuan shop saw at least 10 times more customers





A man demonstrates Arabic calligraphy during an event marking World Arabic Language Day at the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization in Cairo, Egypt. (Xinhua)



A man demonstrates Arabic calligraphy during an event marking World Arabic Language Day at the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization in Cairo. (Xinhua)



A musician performs during an event marking World Arabic Language Day at the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization in Cairo, Egypt. (Xinhua)

# Cultural event held in Cairo to celebrate World Arabic Language Day

CAIRO, Dec 22, (Xinhua) – A three-day cultural event marking World Arabic Language Day kicked off on Sunday in Egypt’s capital Cairo.

Held at the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (NMEC) with the theme of “A Renewed Heritage in a Radiant Script,” the event features exhibitions, live music performances with traditional Arabic instruments, seminars, and interactive workshops that highlight the enduring legacy and evolving art of the Arabic alphabet, according to Nancy Ammar, the museum’s events co-

ordinator.

El Tayeb Abbas, CEO of the NMEC, said the event underscored how the museum’s collections reflect Egypt’s deep historical ties to the Arabic language, with artifacts bearing inscriptions and calligraphy illustrating its role in documenting the country’s journey, particularly during the Islamic era.

“The Arabic alphabet is essential for preserving the language and our cultural identity,” said Amany Abdel-Fattah, an Arabic calligrapher attending the event.

He emphasized the Arabic language’s role as a carrier of knowledge, literature and tradition across generations.

The event was held in cooperation with Egypt’s Al-Azhar University and the Embassy of Oman in Cairo.

World Arabic Language Day is observed annually on Dec. 18 to mark the United Nations General Assembly’s 1973 decision to recognize Arabic as the UN’s sixth official language.

## Archaeology

### Pivotal breakthrough in Paleolithic archaeology

# Researchers uncover record-high evidence of ancient human activity on Tibetan Plateau



Left: This undated combo photo shows front and back views of a stone artifact unearthed from the Tsungqen Co site in Daocheng County, Garze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, southwest China's Sichuan Province. Right: This undated combo photo shows front, back and side views of a stone artifact unearthed from the Tsungqen Co site in Daocheng County, Garze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, southwest China's Sichuan Province. (Xinhua)

CHENGDU, Dec 22, (Xinhua) – Chinese archaeologists have uncovered a significant Paleolithic site at an unprecedented altitude on the eastern Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, offering fresh insights into early human migration and adaptability, according to the Sichuan Provincial Cultural Heritage Administration.

Located near Tsungqen Co, a highland lake in Daocheng County, Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Garze, Sichuan Province, the site represents the highest-altitude evidence of ancient human presence in the region to date.

Detailed findings were published in the journal *Palaeogeography, Palaeoclimatology, Palaeoecology* by a research team from Peking University and the Sichuan Provincial Cultural Relics and Archaeology Research Institute.

Tsungqen Co, meaning “big lake” in the local language, is one of numerous glacial lakes that formed after the Last Glacial Maximum through melting glaciers. These water bodies have long attracted diverse fauna, providing vital resources for ancient hunter-gatherer communities.

The newly discovered Tsungqen Co site, situated at an elevation exceeding 4,300 meters, forms part of the renowned Piluo site complex, which was honored as one of China’s top 10 archaeological discoveries of 2021.

While the main Piluo site, located at an average altitude of 3,750 meters and dating

back over 200,000 years, is recognized as the earliest, largest and most prolific Paleolithic site on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the Tsungqen Co site occupies an even higher elevation, with its earliest cultural layers dating to approximately 12,000 years ago.

Archaeologists unearthed over 190 stone artifacts at the Tsungqen Co site, with the assemblage predominantly comprising small-to-medium-sized tools. This collection reflects a sophisticated microlithic in-

dustry, showcasing refined manufacturing techniques that suggest specialized technological adaptations to the high-altitude environment.

The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, often referred to as the “Third Pole” due to its extreme elevation, low oxygen levels and frigid temperatures, has traditionally been regarded as a formidable challenge for human survival and expansion. The discovery of the Tsungqen Co site marks a pivotal break-

through in Paleolithic archaeology on the eastern flank of the plateau, significantly advancing our understanding of human activity in high-altitude zones.

“This was not merely a temporary camp. More likely, it was a habitation site revisited repeatedly,” said Zheng Zhexuan, lead archaeologist of the Piluo site project and head of the Paleolithic Archaeology Institute at the Sichuan Provincial Cultural Relics and Archaeology Research Institute.

“It suggests that over ten thousand years ago, ancient populations already took advantage of warmer climatic phases to settle by highland lakes. They penetrated and persisted in this high-altitude region, demonstrating a relatively stable capacity to adapt to the plateau environment,” Zheng added.

Experts describe the Tsungqen Co site as a crucial “spatiotemporal key,” bridging a critical gap in the evidence chain of human activity on the “roof of the world.” This discovery provides invaluable material for investigating the dispersal routes of early modern humans in East Asia and their adaptive survival strategies under diverse ecological pressures.

Excavations and multidisciplinary research at the Piluo site are currently underway. Scientists are conducting comprehensive analyses in chronology, environmental archaeology, and related fields on the unearthed remains, aiming to reconstruct a more precise and nuanced understanding of ancient lifeways in this region.



This photo taken on Oct. 6, 2023 shows a view of the Tsungqen Co site in Daocheng County, Garze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, southwest China's Sichuan Province. (Xinhua)

## Food

### Unique opportunity

# Giant lazy Susans bring people together

McCOMB, Miss., Dec 22, (AP) – Over the course of a steaming-hot Southern lunch, served family-style on a giant lazy Susan, restaurant owner Andre Davis has watched people go from perfect strangers to lifelong friends.

His restaurant, The Dinner Bell in McComb, Mississippi, consists of just four tables. Large and circular, they seat upward of 15 people. In the center of each is a lazy Susan dotted with heaping platters of food, spinning back and forth as customers pile up their plates.

On any given day, anyone could be sitting around the table. Davis’ customer base ranges from European tourists to locals. The tables have hosted water treatment plant workers, church groups and once, according to Davis, British actor Hugh Bonneville.

“We’ve had people sitting together that had nothing in common but the table they were sitting at,” Davis said.

For restaurant goers, the rotating tables provide a unique opportunity to meet new people, hear different perspectives and bond over a shared enjoyment of classic Southern food and the restaurant’s famed fried eggplant.

“We’ve met doctors, lawyers, teachers,” said Wayne Dyson, a regular customer. “And find out that most people are all good people.”

“Especially if they’re eating,” he added.

Dyson and his wife have met countless people from all over the country in the 40 years they have been frequenting the restaurant. Over lunch earlier this month, the couple quickly bonded with a group of strangers, laughing like they had known each other for years.

Justin Monistere and his family stopped for lunch to celebrate his sister’s graduation from nursing school. By the time he left, he was referring to the Dysons as “mom” and “pop.”

“Today in time we don’t talk as people. It’s either through a message or phone,” he said, adding this is the first meal he has had since he was a kid where no one pulled out a cellphone. “I think that’s a great thing that they’re doing here.”

The unique dining style, which is also associated with Chinese restaurants, dates back to the early 20th century in Mississippi.

The family-style restaurants evolved along railroad tracks to more easily serve large numbers of people coming on and off trains, according to Charles Morgan, who owns the now-closed Revolving Tables Restaurant in Mendenhall.

The restaurant has been in Morgan’s family since it opened in 1915. He grew up listening to people talk politics and college football around an 18-seater table.

Both Morgan and Davis have watched similar restaurants close over the years, but a smattering remain across parts of the country.

“You sure don’t see too many of those anymore,” said Morgan, whose own restaurant closed when his father retired in 2001. He and his sister hope to reopen.

This type of dining, Davis said, isn’t for everyone. Some people retreat into their social shells, while others blossom.

Some days are quiet, with just a few regulars gathered around the table swapping farming tips. Other times, the restaurant is raucous as tour groups and families chatter with the courageous folks willing to spin the roulette wheel on who they would be sitting with that afternoon. Davis said he has seen people from all walks of life conversing. Some form friendships, others a simple sense of respect.

## Variety

**HOHHOT:** Hulunbuir in north China’s Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region was transformed into a stage for both ancient Mongolian traditions and winter motorsport on December 20, as two major winter festivals opened in the city on the same day.

The 21st Ice and Snow Naadam Festival raised its curtain in the morning on the frozen Yimin River in Hulunbuir, drawing nearly 10,000 participants including visitors from Russia, Mongolia and across China. Hours later, the 2025 Inner Mongolia Ice and Snow Hero Rally roared into life on ice tracks carved through some of the region’s most dramatic winter landscapes.

The dual launch marks the peak of Inner Mongolia’s 2025-26 winter tourism season, which features 159 winter events, 48 sporting competitions and 45 themed tourism routes.

For the first time in its history, the Ice and Snow Naadam - a winter adaptation of Mongolia’s traditional summer sporting festival - was held entirely on ice. The event occupied 70,000 square meters of frozen river, featuring camel caravans, horse racing, throat singing performances and traditional Mongolian wrestling.

Unlike previous single-day events, this year’s Naadam has shifted to a permanent operation model running through March, with daily performances, craft markets and cultural experiences available to visitors.

The Ice and Snow Hero Rally also opened on Saturday afternoon. Over the coming days, the rally will feature ice drift and snow jump competitions on professional tracks, and will move onto three national scenic routes that double as extreme racing circuits.

The rally operates under a dual model, hosting professional motorsport competitions while offering public

ice-driving experiences for amateur participants. (Xinhua)

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**NEW YORK:** A judge voided the conviction of one of the two men found guilty of the 2002 killing of Run-D.M.C. star Jam Master Jay, ruling that there wasn’t enough evidence that the man had a motive to kill the hip-hop luminary.

The reversal, which came as the judge upheld the other man’s conviction, marked another stunning and confounding turn in one of the hip-hop world’s most elusive cases. It stymied investigators for nearly two decades before two arrests were made in 2020, and authorities had hailed the 2024 convictions as finally getting justice for one of rap’s pioneers.

Jam Master Jay, born Jason Mizell, worked the turntables in Run-D.M.C. as the group helped hip-hop gain mainstream popularity in the 1980s with such hits as “It’s Tricky” and a fresh take on Aerosmith’s “Walk This Way.” His death followed the fatal shootings of Tupac Shakur in 1996 and The Notorious B.I.G. in 1997, forming a skein of tragic violence that took the lives of some of rap’s biggest talents at the turn of the millennium. Mizell was 37.

Nearly two years after the jury verdict in the case surrounding his death, the decision came from the same Brooklyn federal judge who presided over the trial. In Friday’s ruling, U.S. District Judge LaShann DeArcy Hall granted Karl Jordan Jr. an acquittal on the murder charges - a request she had denied when his lawyers made it during the trial.

An eyewitness testified that he saw Jordan shoot the DJ - his own godfather - in his Queens recording studio on Oct. 30, 2002. A onetime tenant in Jordan’s home also testified that he overheard Jordan admit to the killing. But during more than 18 months of post-verdict presentations, Jordan’s lawyers argued that the evidence didn’t support prosecutors’ claims about his alleged motive: revenge for a failed drug deal. (AP)

# Minaj surprises conservatives with praise for Trump and Vance

WASHINGTON, Dec 22, (AP) – Rapper Nicki Minaj on Sunday made a surprise appearance at a gathering of conservatives in Arizona that was memorializing late activist Charlie Kirk, and used her time on stage to praise President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance, calling them “role models” for young men.

The rap star was interviewed at Turning Point USA’s AmericaFest convention by Erika Kirk, the widow of Charlie Kirk, about her newly found support for Trump - someone she had condemned in the past - and about her actions denouncing violence against Christians in Nigeria.

The Grammy-nominated rapper’s recent alignment with the Make America Great Again movement has caught some interest because of her past criticism of Trump even when the artist’s own political ideology had been difficult to pin down. But her appearance Sunday at the flagship event for the powerful conservative youth organization may shore up her status as a MAGA acolyte.

Minaj mocked California Gov. Gavin Newsom, referring to him as New-scum, a nickname Trump gave him. Newsom, a Democrat, has 2028 prospects. Minaj expressed admiration for the Republican president and Vance, who received an endorsement from Erika Kirk despite the fact he has not said whether he will run for president. Kirk took over as leader of Turning Point.

“This administration is full of people with heart and soul, and they make me proud of them. Our vice president, he makes me ... well, I love both of them,” Minaj said. “Both of them have a very uncanny ability to be someone that you relate to.”

Minaj’s appearance included an awkward moment when, in an attempt to praise Vance’s political skills, she described



Nicki Minaj speaks during Turning Point USA's AmericaFest in Phoenix. (AP)

him as an “assassin.”

She paused, seemingly regretting her word choice, and after Kirk appeared to wipe a tear from one of her eyes, the artist put her hand over her mouth while the crowd murmured.

“If the internet wants to clip it, who cares? I love this woman,” said Erika Kirk, who became a widow when Charlie Kirk was assassinated in September.

Last month, the rapper shared a message posted by Trump on his Truth Social network about potential actions to sanction Nigeria saying the government is failing to rein in the persecution of Christians in the West African country. Experts and residents say the violence that has long plagued Nigeria isn’t so simply explained.



Early screening and AI-powered monitoring to curb growing crisis

Diabetes cases in Kuwait set to hit 30% by 2050, expert warns

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: The Chairman of the Kuwait Diabetes Society and Head of the Department of Internal Medicine at Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital, Dr. Waleed Al-Dhahi, revealed alarming statistics reflecting the growing diabetes crisis in Kuwait, explaining that the disease currently affects about 25% of the population, with projections indicating an increase to 30% by 2050, compared to only 7% in the 1990s.

This came during an event organized by Roche Diagnostics on diabetes at The Avenues Mall – Phase Two, under the sponsorship of the Kuwait Diabetes Society, aimed at raising public awareness of the importance of early screening for the disease.

In a press statement on this occasion, Dr. Al-Dhahi added that diabetes is particularly prevalent among those over the age of 60, with nearly two-thirds of this age group affected. He attributed this to several factors, most notably physical inactivity, poor dietary habits, smoking, and genetic predisposition. He stressed the importance of early screening, recommending HbA1c or fasting blood glucose testing every three to six months for patients with diabetes, and annually for individuals aged between 40 and 45 who carry risk factors for developing diabetes.

He said that advances in medical sensors supported by artificial intelligence have made these devices play a vital role in protecting patients with diabetes, as they provide accurate around-the-clock monitoring of glucose levels and enable early warnings of hypoglycemia or hyperglycemia before reaching dangerous stages, particularly during nighttime hours.

He explained that recent studies confirm that the use of these sensors contributes to improved disease control, lowering average HbA1c levels, and increasing the time glucose levels remain within the required healthy range, which may reduce the risk of chronic complications such

During a public awareness event highlighting the importance of early disease screening, sponsored by the Association:  
■ Al-Dahi: The prevalence of diabetes is expected to rise to 30% by 2050.  
■ The disease currently affects around 25% of the population, with future statistics indicating a worrying upward trend.  
■ It is widely prevalent among individuals over the age of 60, with nearly two-thirds of this age group affected.  
■ Advances in AI-supported medical sensors enhance protection and management for diabetes patients.  
■ Recent studies confirm that the use of these technologies helps maintain blood glucose levels within the normal range and has a positive impact on HbA1c levels.



as heart and kidney diseases, neuropathy, and diabetic foot.

He added that the sensors also reduce the need for frequent finger pricks and support more accurate daily decision-making related to nutrition and physical activity, positively reflecting on patient adherence and quality of life. He emphasized that adopting continuous glucose monitoring technologies has become a key preventive option and an important element in enhancing patient safety and reducing the health and economic burden of diabetes on society.

For its part, the organizing company (Roche Diagnostics Kuwait) stated that the initiative came as part of its efforts to raise community awareness about diabetes and encourage individuals to undergo early screening of blood glucose levels. Mall visitors were given the opportunity to receive a free diabetes test and learn about the latest innovations in continuous glucose monitoring.

The company added that the event witnessed wide public turnout, and participants who were found to have diabetes were provided with Accu-Chek SmartGuide – CGM devices to monitor glucose levels, helping them track their health status using artificial intelligence to accurately and continuously predict blood glucose levels and improve their daily quality of life.

Roche Diagnostics affirmed that this event reflects its ongoing commitment to supporting national efforts to enhance health awareness in Kuwaiti society and to contributing to the dissemination of knowledge about the importance of early diagnosis and accurate follow-up for patients with diabetes. The company praised the fruitful cooperation with the Kuwait Diabetes Society, which contributed to the success of the event and the achievement of its awareness and health objectives, within the framework of a partnership aimed at empowering individuals to better manage their health through modern technologies and innovation.



The event, organized by Roche Diagnostics at The Avenues Mall and sponsored by the Kuwait Diabetes Society, promotes early diabetes screening.

You finally got doctor’s appointment:  
Here’s how to get the most out of it

WASHINGTON, Dec 22, (AP): It’s not unusual for a 20-something to text Mom in a panic from the doctor’s office, seeking help answering a question. And patients of any age can struggle to recall all their medicines - or forget to mention a concern.

Getting the most out of a doctor’s visit requires some advance preparation. Even the professionals plan ahead.

“It is really hard - even for me as a doctor going to see my own family doctor - to remember the things that I wanted to bring up,” said Dr. Sarah Nosal, president of the American Academy of Family Physicians. “The worst is when you’ve had that moment with your doctor” only to recall another problem after walking out, she said. “You’ve lost that time.”

Her top tip: Bring a list of symptoms and questions to show at the start of the visit. The first item should be your top concern, but seeing the full list helps your doctor prioritize what’s most medically urgent.

“I’m actually going to be able to see, is there a red flag?” explained Nosal, who has some advice about prepping for a typical primary care visit.

Some illnesses require specialists like a cardiologist or rheumatologist. But regardless of your age or how healthy you are, research has long shown that a relationship with a primary care provider is important for overall health. It might be a family physician like Nosal, who cares for all ages, or an internist. Some patients choose gynecologists, geriatricians, or have a primary care team that includes nurse practitioners or physician assistants.

Primary care is more than preventive checkups to help avoid illness, such as vaccinations, cancer screenings or health advice. It also includes detecting and treating common problems like high blood pressure, and helping to find and coordinate specialty care.

“That ongoing relationship also helps me know your ‘normal,’” Nosal explained. “If something’s different or changes or you feel off, when you tell me that information and I also have known you over time, we can really figure out together what’s going on.”

Young adults navigating health care on their own for the first time may need help filling out forms with



An exam room at a medical clinic in Detroit on July 29, 2015. (AP)

their personal medical history. Have you ever had general anesthesia? Is your tetanus shot up to date?

If you still have access to the patient portal at your former pediatrician’s office, you can see records of vaccinations and prior illnesses, or you may have to request them or quiz parents.

For all ages, family medical history is critical - and needs regular updating. Ask what diseases your close relatives have had and how they fared. For example, if Type 2 diabetes runs in the family, or Grandma had a stroke, or someone had cancer at a young age, that information could help tailor your preventive care, Nosal said.

Filling out paperwork from home makes it easier to check medicine bottles for the name and dose. Include both prescription and over-the-counter medicines, pills or creams - and don’t forget vitamins and supplements.

Why are the latter important? Some can interact with prescription medicines. Nosal cited some patients whose longtime treatments quit working after they started taking turmeric, a spice also sold as a supplement.

Also before your visit, check if the doctor received records of recent lab tests, hospitalizations or visits to other health providers, since electronic medical records aren’t always automatically shared.

Some symptoms are bad enough to prompt an urgent visit. But if you’ve got a checkup coming, whether it’s routine or to follow up on health problems, start a list of questions in advance.

Notice a pain when you move

a certain way? Or chatting with a friend who just got a colonoscopy and wonder if you’re due? Pop those on your list right away, before you forget - and be specific in describing symptoms.

Nosal keeps a running list on her phone and, ahead of visits with her own doctor, sends it as a heads-up through her patient portal. Patients also can include their list on visit check-in forms.

The idea is to address the most urgent questions first, rather than patients running out of time before raising a key concern. Nosal said questions about mental or sexual health and wellness especially tend to come up at the last minute.

Whatever the medium, “please bring that list,” she said. “That’s the most critical of all pieces.”

People may know to ask questions about treatments, such as how well they work and what side effects to expect. But it’s also important to understand why a doctor makes a particular diagnosis or, conversely, isn’t as worried about a symptom as you might be.

Don’t hesitate to say, “Explain to me what else could be going on,” Nosal advised. “What would be the next step? How would you evaluate that for me, to know if it’s this or that?”

Most health advocacy groups also advise bringing along a friend or relative, especially if you have serious or multiple health problems. They can help ask questions and take notes.

“Whether you are 20 or you are 85, you will not remember everything from your medical visit,” Nosal said.

surgery in a calm and stable state,” Zhang said, noting that he participated in all procedures during the Chinese expert team’s visit.

Beyond surgery, Chinese medical staff also worked to strengthen operating room standards. Zhang Xiaoxia, head nurse of the operating theater, trained local nurses in aseptic procedures and introduced sterilization monitoring tools, integrating hygiene requirements into daily workflows.

Clinical innovation was also shared. A pediatric anesthesia assistance device developed by the Chinese team was used locally for the first time, improving intraoperative stability and reducing airway risks.

For Senegalese doctors, it had been an intense week built on earlier cooperation. Between August and September last year, Mbengue and his colleague Mamour Dieng completed a two-month training program in China. From Dec. 7 to 16 this year, a six-member Chinese expert team carried out on-site medical cooperation in Senegal. During the visit, the two sides jointly completed 36 ophthalmic surgeries, with Senegalese doctors independently performing key steps under light supervision.

“With continued practice, the technique becomes clearer and easier to han-

Early detection could reduce risk

Australian study raises hope  
for early stillbirth prevention

CANBERRA, Dec. 22, (Xinhua): Researchers in Australia have uncovered a biological process that could explain some stillbirths and pave the way for early detection and prevention.

The study reveals that the placenta, the vital lifeline between mother and baby, can age too quickly during pregnancy, compromising its ability to nourish the baby and increasing the risk of stillbirth, a media release from Australia’s Flinders University said Monday.

The team, led by Flinders University researchers, discovered that molecules called circular RNAs, which normally accumulate in ageing tissue, build up in the placenta far earlier than expected in cases of stillbirth, causing breaks and triggering cellular ageing, it said.

This premature ageing reduces the placenta’s capacity to support the growing baby, raising the risk of stillbirth, according to the study published



The researchers at Flinders University discovered the circular RNAs bind to DNA, triggering ageing and limiting the placenta’s ability to support the baby. (AP)

in the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

The team found that in stillbirth cases, the placenta appeared biologically older than expected for its gestational age, showing damaged DNA, worn cell structures, and high levels of

circular RNAs, said lead author Anya Arthurs from the Flinders Health and Medical Research Institute.

“When we reduced one of these molecules in placental cells, the damage slowed and ageing was delayed, showing these molecules aren’t just bystanders, but active drivers of the process,” Arthurs said, adding some of these circular RNAs can be measured in maternal blood as early as 15 to 16 weeks into pregnancy, suggesting potential for an early screening test.

Stillbirth affects about two million pregnancies worldwide each year, yet prevention has stalled as molecular placental ageing remains invisible under a microscope, the researchers said.

They said the findings could lead to new screening tools to prevent stillbirth and offer broader insights into how ageing processes, including those linked to diseases like Alzheimer’s, affect human health.

Healthcare outreach deepens ties

Chinese medical team provides free  
check-ups for Mozambique workers

MAPUTO, Dec 22, (Xinhua): The 26th Chinese medical team conducted a free health outreach on Saturday for workers at an industrial company in Maputo, Mozambique’s capital, providing on-site medical examinations that were widely praised by employees and company management.

During the outreach, Chinese medical professionals offered general health check-ups, including vision assess-



A member of the 25th Chinese medical team in Mozambique provides free medical service to a local resident in Maputo, Mozambique, June 12, 2025. (Xinhua)

ments, weight monitoring, and screenings for musculoskeletal and respiratory issues, alongside complementary treatments such as traditional Chinese acupuncture.

“It was very good. This way we can know how our health is,” said Rosa Mapanga, a worker of Revotech Industrial, Lda, after the examination. Dino Kuembo, the company’s general manager, said the initiative exceeded expectations.

“I am very happy and grateful for this campaign. When we received the news, everyone was happy,” he told Xinhua, emphasizing the importance of health monitoring in the company, given its operations involve chemical products and heavy machinery. Several workers added that they had never received free workplace medical check-ups, making the outreach especially significant.

“I can only say thank you,” said Jaime Maloca, an instructor at the company, after receiving medical guidance.

“Our objective is to provide medical examinations and consultations for local workers and companies free of charge,” said Chen Jialei, team leader of the 26th Chinese medical team to Mozambique.

The initiative reflects the spirit of China’s foreign medical assistance in strengthening people-to-people ties, Chen said, adding that the team will continue public welfare activities to contribute to a closer China-Mozambique friendship.

Under the operating lights: Chinese-Senegalese cooperation in pediatric eye surgery

DIAMNIADIO, Senegal, Dec 22, (Xinhua): Inside an operating room at the local National Children’s Hospital, the faint hum of a phacoemulsification machine accompanied a delicate pediatric eye surgery.

At the microscope sat Senegalese ophthalmologist Babacar Mbengue, his hands steady on the surgical probe. Beside him, visiting Chinese ophthalmologist Xue Ying from Fujian Provincial Hospital affiliated with Fuzhou University observed closely, offering brief guidance while leaving the main procedure to the local surgeon.

The congenital cataract surgery on an infant born earlier this year lasted nearly 50 minutes. According to a pre-arranged plan, Chinese and Senegalese doctors switched roles during key stages, combining hands-on practice with real-time instruction.

The hospital specializes in pediatric care, where cataract surgery requires higher precision and close coordination with anesthesia. Zhang Wenqing, an anesthesiologist with the 20th Chinese medical mission to Senegal, said children’s emotional responses can affect surgical stability.

“To reduce risks, we adjusted the anesthesia protocol, ensuring children enter

dle,” Mbengue said.

Dieng highlighted the shift from traditional extracapsular extraction to phacoemulsification, which requires smaller incisions and shortens recovery time. “With the equipment now in place, we are more confident in both the technique and clinical decision-making,” he said.

On Dec. 11, the Chinese side donated an operating microscope, a phacoemulsification unit, an ultrasound scanner and slit lamps to the hospital, further enhancing its pediatric ophthalmology capacity.

The cooperation extends beyond on-site visits. On Dec. 16, doctors from both countries held a video consultation with ophthalmologists in China to discuss complex pediatric cases. Cheng Dongfeng, head of the Chinese expert team, said remote support would continue after the team’s departure.

After the surgery, the child’s mother expressed her gratitude in Wolof, holding her baby tightly. Though her words were not translated, her emotions were clear to the medical staff. Soon, the operating room was prepared for another surgery. As the surgical instruments changed hands, the task of caring for patients, training staff and cooperation quietly continued.



Duffy breaks Hadlee's record with 23 in series

# New Zealand routs West Indies for series victory

MOUNT MAUNGANUI, New Zealand, Dec 22, (AP): Jacob Duffy took 5-42 as New Zealand bowled out the West Indies for 138 on a deteriorating fifth-day pitch to win the third test by 323 runs Monday and take the three-match series 2-0.

Duffy surpassed Richard Hadlee's New Zealand record of 80 wickets in a calendar year and finished the series with 23 wickets at an average of 15.4 including three five-wicket hauls. He bowled more than 154 overs as the workhorse of the New Zealand attack in the three tests.

"I saw that list at lunchtime and there were some cool names on there, so to be up there on any sort of list with those sort of names was special," Duffy, who was voted Player of the Series, said of his bowling record.

New Zealand's win ended a series in which both teams had to cope with significantly depleted pace attacks and in which a slew of batting records fell.

The West Indies were without Shamar Joseph and Alzarri Joseph. Duffy became New Zealand's pace spearhead after injuries sidelined Matt Henry, Will O'Rourke, Ben Sears, Kyle Jamieson, Nathan Smith and Blair Tuckner.

The third test was a feast for statisticians. Devon Conway made 227 and Tom

Latham 137 in a 323-run opening stand in New Zealand's first innings of 575-8 declared. Conway then made 100 and Latham 101 in a partnership of 192 in the second innings before New Zealand declared at 306-2, leaving West Indies a target of 462 to win after being bowled out for 420 in the first innings.

Conway was the 10th test player and first New Zealander to score a double-century and a century in the same match and he and Latham were the first openers to score centuries in both innings of a test.

Latham and Conway accumulated 515 runs across two innings, a record total for an opening pair. Latham also followed his father, Rod, by featuring in opening partnerships of more than 100 in both innings of a test.

"I don't think it's sunk in yet. It will take some time for me to get my head around what happened in this test match," Conway said, "but I'm really glad we got the win."

New Zealand faced some criticism for the lateness of its declarations in both innings on a pitch at Bay Oval which had been relatively docile for the first three days. Cracks had appeared and plates had begun to form by Day 4 and on the last day, the ball had begun to bounce irregularly.

Still, Brandon King and John Campbell survived 16 overs and scored 43 before stumps on the fourth day, leaving New Zealand needing to take all 10 wickets on the last day to win. Campbell and King then batted through the first hour Monday to frustrate the New Zealand bowlers. King reached his half-century from 63 balls.

But both openers were out within five balls - King for 67 and Campbell for a dogged 16 from 105 balls - and that provoked a slump that saw five wickets fall before lunch. Duffy took three of those, two with deliveries that lifted uncomfortably.

Duffy then dismissed Roston Chase after lunch with a ferocious ball that reared to shoulder height from just short of a length, giving Glenn Phillips his third catch of the day.

Shai Hope batted 78 balls for 3 runs and was out lbw, kicking away a full toss on his off stump to give Ajaz Patel his third wicket of the day. Patel had 85 career wickets coming into this test, which was his first in New Zealand for five years. His first wicket of the match was his first-ever wicket in a test in New Zealand.

Kemar Roach (4) batted with a hamstring injury and was bowled by a ball from Phillips which turned and took the inside edge.

# Kuchars win PNC Championship



Matt Kuchar, right, and his son Cameron Kuchar hold the championship belts after winning the PNC Championship golf tournament, Sunday, Dec. 21, 2025, in Orlando, Fla. (AP)

## Schaper takes Mauritius Open

**ORLANDO, Fla., Dec 22, (AP): Matt Kuchar couldn't imagine a better ending to a year when he lost his father than to finally win the PNC Championship with his son. There was no stopping them Sunday in a record-smashing performance that led to an 18-under 54 and a whopping seven-shot victory.**

The tournament that is all about family and fun ended with Kuchar wiping away tears as his voice cracked while speaking about how much it meant without his father, who died in February.

The finish was simply surreal to him.

Cameron Kuchar, who was able to use one tee box forward as a high school student, hammered another drive and watched his father hit 7-iron to 18 inches. Kuchar gave his son the honor of tapping in for the final touch on an unforgettable week for the Kuchar family. "I don't know if you believe in karma, if you believe in fate, whatever you believe in, there's something magical that does exist," Kuchar said as tears began to form. "I'm a believer in God that Dad is up above looking down, and what happened on 18, I could hardly stand up and hit a shot. For me to hit it to a foot, makes me think there's something more out there. Just miss Pops."

Peter Kuchar, who at one time was the top-ranked doubles tennis player in Florida, first became a pres-

ence on the golf scene when he caddied for his son when Kuchar won the U.S. Amateur in 1997, and when he was low amateur at the Masters and U.S. Open the following year.

He played with Kuchar at the PNC Championship before yielding the stage to Kuchar's sons.

Peter Kuchar died in February of a heart attack while swimming when he was on a Caribbean cruise with his wife, Meg, to celebrate her birthday.

Kuchar and his son each got the Willie Park Trophy, a red belt that Kuchar jokingly said would wear well with his tartan jacket he won from Harbour Town at the RBC Heritage.

The PNC Championship, which began in 1995 as the Father-Son Challenge, is for major champions and their children. It has been expanded over the years to include The Players Championship winners, senior and PGA major champions. Players have brought parents or daughters.

Kuchar, who won The Players Championship in 2012, said he keeps photos to go with the trophies from most of his nine PGA Tour victories. In early victories he could hold both sons. And then they were too big too hold. The most recent photo taken Sunday afternoon leaves him heartbroken.

"And now to have this shot with the family, it's clearly missing ... missing one," he said, pausing because his voice was so choked with emotion. "But it's special, very special."

So was their golf, and it was a runaway from the start. Cameron Kuchar, who has signed to play for TCU next year, birdied the first hole and his father

hit hybrid to 12 feet for eagle on the third. They made only two pars in the scramble format and countered that with two eagles. They finished at 33-under 111 to break the tournament record by five shots.

Lee Trevino delivered the highlight when the 86-year-old holed out from the fairway with a lob wedge for eagle on the 13th hole.

John Daly and John Daly II, a senior at Arkansas and the Southern Amateur champion, made eagle on the last hole for a 59 to tie for second with Davis Love III and Dru Love (58). Nelly Korda and her father, and Steve Stricker and his daughter, finished another shot behind.

All of them looked at scoreboards coming in and saw there was no chance of catching the Kuchars, certainly not on this day.

Turns out the Kuchar duo was even better - 36 holes, 33 under. Fate or otherwise, it was some remarkable golf. Twice before, they held the lead going into the final day and didn't hold it. On Sunday they started with a two-shot lead and ran away with it. It was their time.

Jayden Schaper made it back-to-back titles by winning the Mauritius Open in a playoff over Ryan Gerard, the American who flew across two oceans for the final event of the year and returns home with an invitation to the Masters.

Schaper birdied three of his last four holes for an 8-under 64, and then chipped in for eagle to win on the second playoff hole. He won last week in the Alfred Dunhill Championship in South Africa by making eagle in a playoff.

## Kane scores 30th club goal of season

# Bayern takes nine-point lead into Bundesliga winter break

HEIDENHEIM, Germany, Dec 22, (AP): Harry Kane scored his 30th club goal of the season as Bayern Munich shrugged off an injury and illness crisis to sweep past Heidenheim 4-0 and go into the Bundesliga's winter break with a nine-point lead.

Kane's stoppage-time goal took him to 30 in 25 games in all competitions for Bayern this season, 19 of them in the German league.

Bayern coach Vincent Kompany named a bench packed with youth players after his squad was diminished by injuries to several players including captain Manuel Neuer and Joshua Kimmich, a suspension for Konrad Laimer, Nicolas Jackson's absence at the Africa Cup of Nations and an illness affecting three players.

The starters made sure the game was under control long before any substitutes were needed.



St. Pauli's Joel Chirina Fujita, centre, Mainz's Jae-sung Lee and Mainz's Benedikt Hollerbach, left, fight for the ball during the Bundesliga soccer match between FSV Mainz 05 and FC St. Pauli, in Mainz, Germany. (AP)

Two defenders combined for Bayern's opening goal as Jonathan Tah headed a corner on for Josip Stanisic to nod in.

Heidenheim's fans called staying in the top division "our Christmas wish" in a giant banner shown before kickoff but their team didn't register a shot on target and goes into the winter break in 17th place in the 18-team Bundesliga.

Bayern's second goal was an extreme example of the defensive errors which have cost Heidenheim this year. Defender Patrick Mainka collided with his goalkeeper and the ball bounced around the box until Michael Olise finally jabbed it into the net.

Luis Díaz made sure of the win with a header off Stanisic's cross in the 86th before Kane made it 4-0.

Bayern hasn't lost to German opposition since March and has 13 wins and two draws from 15 Bundesliga games this season, averaging more than 3.6 goals per league game.

Borussia Dortmund is second, nine points off Kompany's team, with Bayer Leverkusen and Leipzig both three points further back.

## Change Name

I want to update the details in my passport as follows

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Father's name - Imtiyaz Nawaz Bhat

Mother's name - Sumira

In case of any objections, kindly contact passport office

# Nice finally ends 9-game losing streak with a win in the French Cup

PARIS, Dec 22, (AP): Nice finally ended a nine-game losing streak when it beat Saint-Etienne 2-1 at home to reach the last 32 of the French Cup on Sunday.

Striker Zoumana Diallo netted his first goal for Nice and midfielder Morgan Sanson scored the other goal to give Nice much-needed respite in what has been a tough season. Some fans even confronted the players after one defeat. Nice is 13th in Ligue 1 and last in the Europa League group stage after six straight defeats.

Elsewhere, Marseille showed its attacking prowess again in a 6-0 win at third-tier Bourg-en-Bresse, with club top scorer Mason Greenwood among six players to score. Coach Roberto De Zerbi's side has netted 56 league goals in 2025 - its third-highest home tally ever in a year.

In Sunday's other matches, top-tier sides Monaco, Nantes, Rennes, Lyon and Strasbourg all advanced, but Le Havre lost 2-0 at home to second-tier Amiens.

Five-time champion Lyon won 3-0 against Saint-Cyr-Collonges, an amateur side from the Lyon suburbs.

Record 16-time champion Paris Saint-Germain started its French Cup defense with a 4-0 win at fifth-tier Vendée Fontenay on Saturday.

Under-fire Celtic coach Wilfried Nancy has achieved his first win at the storied Scottish club to reduce some of the pressure on the Frenchman.

Midfielder Benjamin Nygren scored near the end of the first half for host Celtic, which still needed late goals from Kieran Tierney and James Forrest for

a 3-1 victory over 10-man Aberdeen in the Scottish Premiership. Nancy left Columbus Crew for Celtic but had lost his first four matches in charge - including a shock defeat in the Scottish League Cup final.

"I don't believe in luck but since I've been here I haven't had luck," Nancy said. "We have hit the post in almost every game, but the most important thing is the resilience of my players."

Nancy also said he could have delayed his early December arrival but wanted to assess his squad ahead of the January transfer window.

## Teams need to regroup and go again

# Chinese volleyball heading for reset after inconsistent 2025

BEIJING, Dec 22, (Xinhua): It felt like a rollercoaster for China's volleyball in 2025 - both men's and women's teams entered the first year of a new Olympic cycle on the right foot, but failed to end on a high note. For their respective goals at Los Angeles 2028, they need to dust themselves off, regroup and go again.

After a dismal campaign at Paris 2024, China's women volleyballers relaunched themselves in mid-April. Under new head coach Zhao Yong, the team sped up its rejuvenation by calling up many teenagers, some of whom even had no professional experience.

Though expectations for the youngsters were low, the team still provided a stunning display in the Women's Volleyball Nations League, making into the final phase with nine victories and three defeats in the preliminary legs. With less than three months of preparation together, this new-look team had already showed signs of cohesion and resilience.

However, China failed to maintain that momentum and came back down to earth at August's World Championship, suffering an early exit after a shock 3-1 defeat to France in the round of 16, despite a perfect record in the group stage.

With an average age of just 21.8 years, China's team is one of the youngest among the 32 participating outfits. While China's players gained valuable experience on the elite stage, the World Championships also served as a reality check that exposed the team's weaknesses.

Technically, the players lacked aggression in serving, mobility in blocking and cohesion. Mentally, the team appeared unprepared for the cutthroat nature of a knockout round immediately after the group stage and failed to anticipate the tactical adjustments made by an emerging France.

According to the new method of qualification for Los Angeles 2028, the winner of the 2026 Asian Championship will secure a spot automatically. As the host nation of the biennial cam-

paign, China by then will likely face a stiff challenge even on home court. Should Zhao's side book a ticket for the Olympic Games with two years to spare, it will certainly allow the team to prepare better for the tournament.

China's men's team almost shared the same fate. Under the guidance of Belgium's Vital Heynen, China marked its return to the Men's VNL with two victories and two defeats in the Xi'an leg, but only registered one win in the remaining eight matches. China also participated the following final phase as host, but was eliminated 3-1 by Brazil.

China's performance in the Men's World Championship was also underwhelming, with three consecutive defeats in the group stage and only one set win.

While China has demonstrated fighting spirit and attitude, and kept its status in the VNL, insiders have acknowledged the huge gap to the world's best teams. Besides the quality and intensity of training, the lack of a competitive atmosphere is also a significant factor limiting the team's improvement. The world's strongest teams usually rely on high-caliber matches to improve, whereas China depends more on intensified training regime. Players who are accustomed only to the rhythm of domestic matches are often overwhelmed when they reach the international stage.

Despite underwhelming performances, the Chinese Volleyball Association's desire to improve the situation remains unwavering, with its focus on a full structural rebuild rather than short-term survival. The association has encouraged players and coaches to gain experience overseas, allowing young players to grow and develop in the country's domestic league.

With three years remaining in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic cycle, there are hopes that Chinese volleyball can turn a corner if the country continues to improve its talent pool and increase the competitiveness of the domestic league.



In this file photo, players of China line up for the national anthem before the Preliminary Phase Pool F match against the Dominican Republic at the Volleyball Women's World Championship in Chiang Mai, Thailand. (Xinhua)

## Best of the Resst

**Neymar set for knee surgery:** Neymar will undergo keyhole surgery on Monday to repair a torn meniscus in his left knee, according to widespread media reports.

The 33-year-old Santos forward posted a photo on social media on Sunday in which he is seen lying on a hospital bed in the southeastern city of Belo Horizonte.

Reports said Brazil national team doctor Rodrigo Lasmar would carry out the procedure, which is expected to require a recovery period of around four weeks.

Earlier this month, Neymar revealed he had played the latter half of the 2025 Brazilian season carrying the injury but decided to play through pain to help Santos avoid relegation. The former Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain star made just 28 appearances for Santos across all competitions this year, scoring 11 goals and providing four assists. (Xinhua)

□ □ □

**Moreno joins River Plate from Palmeiras:** Argentina international midfielder Anibal Moreno has left Brazil's Palmeiras to join River Plate, the Buenos Aires club said.

Moreno signed a deal that runs until December 2029 after River agreed to pay Palmeiras a transfer fee reportedly worth seven million U.S. dollars.

"I'm very happy to join this family," Moreno said in a video posted on River's official website. "I want to tell you that I'll always give my all to help the club." River officials said the 26-year-old is expected to join the club's first-team squad for pre-season training on Monday. (Xinhua)



# Bulls outlast Hawks in highest-scoring game of season

Schroeder hits late 3, Kings stun Rockets

**ATLANTA, Dec 22, (AP):** **Matas Buzelis scored 28 points to lead nine Chicago players in double figures and the Bulls outlasted the Atlanta Hawks 152-150 in the highest-scoring game in the NBA this season.**

Chicago set season highs for points in a first half and game and held on in the closing seconds in the first of two straight games in Atlanta. The teams will meet again Tuesday night.

The Bulls also were involved in the previous highest-scoring game this season, a 150-147 double-overtime loss at Utah on Nov. 16. Golden State beat Denver 162-158 on Nov. 2, 1990 in the highest-scoring regulation game in NBA history.

The Bulls topped their previous high for points in a first half in taking an 83-73 halftime lead. They scored 72 first-half points in a 128-122 loss at Cleveland on Nov. 8. The Bulls also set a season scoring high for a game, topping their total in a 150-147 loss at Utah on Nov. 16.

Jalen Johnson led Atlanta with 36 points, and Trae Young had a season-high 35. The Hawks have lost three straight and seven of nine to fall back to .500 at 15-15.

Johnson's 3-pointer with five seconds remaining gave the Bulls a 151-150 lead. Buzelis made one of two free throws with 4.2 seconds remaining before Young missed a last-second jumper.

**Kings 125, Rockets 124, OT**

In Sacramento, Dennis Schroder made a 3-pointer with 2.2 seconds remaining in overtime, lifting the Sacramento Kings to victory over the Houston Rockets.

Schroder finished with 24 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists off the

bench to help the Kings rally after trailing by five in the final two minutes of regulation.

DeMar DeRozan had 27 points and nine assists, and Russell Westbrook added 21 points and 13 rebounds to help the Kings end a five-game skid. Keegan Murray scored 26 points while Maxime Raynaud had 12 points and 14 rebounds

Schroder's game-winner came 8 seconds after Houston's Jabari Smith Jr. made two of three free throws for a two-point lead.

Smith scored 18 points for the Rockets but had his string of four consecutive double-doubles ended. Alperen Sengun had 28 points and six rebounds, and Kevin Durant added 24 points and 10 rebounds but missed a jumper at the overtime buzzer.

**Spurs 124, Wizards 113**

In Washington, De'Aaron Fox scored 27 points and sank five 3-pointers to help the San Antonio Spurs ease to victory over the Washington Wizards.

Luke Kornet had 20 points and 12 rebounds, and Stephon Castle added 18 points and 11 assists as the Spurs won their sixth in seven games and second in four days against Washington.

Victor Wembanyama had 14 points and 12 rebounds in under 22 minutes as he continued his bench role for San Antonio since his return from a calf strain.

Bub Carrington scored 21 points for the Wizards, who rested starters Alex Sarr (adductor) and Khris Middleton (knee) after they both played in Saturday's 130-122 win at Memphis.

**Timberwolves 103, Bucks 100**

In Minneapolis, Anthony Edwards scored 24 points despite a poor night shooting and the Minnesota Timberwolves rode timely 3-pointers from Donte DiVincenzo and Terrence Shannon Jr. to beat Milwaukee Bucks.

Two days after closing out defending champion Oklahoma City in its third loss of the season, Edwards went



Chicago Bulls forward Zach Collins (12) gets fouled by Atlanta Hawks forward Zaccharie Risacher (10) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Atlanta. (AP)

7 for 24 from the field and 2 for 11 from 3-point range, leading six Wolves in double figures. DiVincenzo made 4 of 8 3-point attempts for 18 points, and Rudy Gobert had 11 points and 18 rebounds, becoming the 45th NBA player with 10,000 rebounds.

Edwards' driving layup with 21 seconds left gave Minnesota a 103-97 lead and sealed the Wolves' ninth win in their past 11 games.

Kevin Porter Jr. finished an assist short of a triple-double with 24 points,

10 rebounds and four steals in the Bucks' third straight loss. Bobby Portis and Ryan Rollins added 16 points apiece.

**Knicks 132, Heat 125**

In New York, Jalen Brunson scored a season-high 47 points and the New York Knicks overcame Karl-Anthony Towns' quiet night to beat the Miami Heat.

While Towns had just two points and six rebounds in 29 minutes, Mi-

kal Bridges scored 24 points on 6-of-7 3-point shooting, Josh Hart added 13 points and 10 rebounds and OG Anunoby scored all 18 of his points all in the second half. The Knicks improved to 20-8 overall and 14-2 at home.

Kel'el Ware had 28 points and 19 rebounds for Miami. The Heat have lost seven of eight to fall to 15-14.

With Towns held scoreless over the first 25:02, and posting his fewest points since joining the Knicks, Brunson, Bridges and Anunoby picked

up the slack, especially in the second half.

**Nets 96, Raptors 81**

In New York, Michael Porter Jr. scored 24 points, Noah Clowney added 19 and Brooklyn Nets overcame the Toronto Raptors.

Rookie Egor Demin had 16 points and Nic Claxton finished with 12 for the Nets, who led by 15 points in the third quarter, fell behind early in the fourth and then surged ahead again.

Al-Qadsia triumphs over Burgan

## Al-Sulaibikhat edges Al-Arabi in thrilling clash

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: Al-Sulaibikhat claimed a hard-fought 3-2 victory over Al-Arabi in the third round of the volleyball league, while Al-Qadsia secured a 3-1 win against Burgan.

The win took Al-Sulaibikhat to 8 points, sharing the top spot with Kuwait Club. Al-Arabi sits in third with 7 points, alongside Al-Qadsia, while Burgan remains at the bottom with just one point.

In the first match, Al-Arabi looked poised for a third consecutive win, taking the first two sets 28-26 and 25-22.

However, Al-Sulaibikhat bounced back, winning the next two sets 25-21 and 25-23 to force a decisive fifth set, which they clinched 15-11 for a crucial victory at the top of the table.

In the second match, Al-Qadsia dominated the opening set 25-16, before Burgan fought back to take the second 26-24.

The yellow-clad side returned strongly to secure the final two sets 25-16 and 25-21, earning all three points and marking their second win of the tournament.

The league format sees teams



Al-Sulaibikhat player spikes as Al-Arabi player rushes to defend.

compete in a preliminary round within a single division.

The top six teams advance to the Premier Division, split into three groups, with the champi-

onship awarded to the team with the most wins.

The team finishing first in the preliminary round earns an advantage in the next stage.

Teams ranked seventh to tenth, along with the youth national team, compete in the First Division, also divided into three groups.

## Kuwaiti jet ski riders shine at King of Thailand Cup in Pattaya

PATTAYA, Thailand, Dec 22, (KUNA): Kuwaiti jet ski riders Mohammad Bourabee, Mohammad Al-Baz, Yusuf Abdulrazzaq, and Rashed Al-Dawas delivered standout performances for the national team at the final round of the Jet Ski World Cup (King of Thailand Cup), held in Pattaya, Thailand.

Bourabee claimed first place in the GP Roundabout Pro category and finished third overall in the tournament standings. In the same event, Al-Baz secured third place, while Abdulrazzaq also completed the competition on the podium.

Meanwhile, Rashed Al-Dawas captured first place in the Stock Roundabout Pro-Am, and Fahad Al-Rayes topped the Superstock Roundabout Pro-Am category, adding to Kuwait's medal haul.

Speaking to KUNA, Bourabee said that despite the intense level of competition, he was able to achieve success, dedicating his victory to the State of Kuwait, its leadership, and its people. Al-Dawas credited his achievement to strong preparation, sustained effort, and determination, which enabled him to reach the top of the podium.

For his part, Abdulrazzaq expressed his gratitude to everyone who supported him throughout the competition, helping him secure a podium finish.

The King of Thailand Cup is regarded as one of the world's premier jet ski events, bringing together elite riders and serving as the final showdown for global champions.



Mohamed Bourabia and Youssef Al-Abdulrazzaq on the podium after their victory.



Racer Rashid Al-Dawas

## Triple gold for Al-Shuraifi as Kuwait claims 12 medals in Doha



KUNA photos  
Kuwaiti Weightlifting Federation President Talal Al-Jassar and Treasurer Fares Al-Nummas pose for a group photo alongside the national team's female athletes.

DOHA, Dec 22, (KUNA): Kuwait's national weightlifting team enjoyed an outstanding day on Sunday, collecting 12 medals — three gold, eight bronze, and one silver — at the West Asian Weightlifting Championship for youth, juniors, and seniors, currently underway in Doha and continuing until December 27.

Kuwaiti lifter Amal Al-Shuraifi delivered a dominant performance, capturing three gold medals in the snatch, clean and jerk, and overall total events.

Meanwhile, Fahad Al-Otaibi added nine medals to Kuwait's tally, winning eight bronze medals and one silver across multiple age categories. In the youth division, he claimed two bronze medals and one silver, followed by three bronze medals in the junior category and another three bronzes at the senior level.



Kuwait's Fahad Al-Otaibi on the podium with other winners.

The competitions in Doha feature three major events running concurrently: the 10th Qatar International Cup, the Arab Weightlifting Championship for youth, juniors, and seniors, and the West Asian Championship across age groups.

In the Arab Championship, Kuwaiti athlete Mohammed Al-Otaibi (born in 2010) secured a bronze medal in the 60kg category, along with additional bronze medals in the snatch event for both the junior and youth divisions.

Al-Otaibi also recorded further success at the West Asian Championship, winning two bronze medals and one silver in the youth category, three medals in the junior division, and an additional bronze medal in the snatch event at the senior level.

## Al-Ansari highlights Kuwait riders' equestrian success

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: Khaled Al-Ansari, Secretary-General of the Equestrian Club, praised the recent achievements of the club's riders, describing them as a clear reflection of the club's efforts to develop talent and elevate the level of competition. He said these successes demonstrate the club's vision of supporting show jumping and

nurturing a generation capable of excelling in both local and international tournaments.

Al-Ansari noted that the club is experiencing remarkable improvements in technical performance and results, attributing this progress to the collaborative efforts between the Kuwait Equestrian Federation and local clubs. He emphasized

that sustaining this growth requires continued support and the necessary resources to ensure long-term development in equestrian sports.

He also commended the standout performances of riders Fawaz Al-Rashed, Aws Al-Tanak, and Abdulrahman Al-Maddahka, who have delivered impressive results across multiple competitions.

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Aston Villa's Morgan Rogers, third left, scores their side's second goal of the game during the Premier League soccer match between Aston Villa and Manchester United, in Birmingham, England. (AP)

# Sports

Whites aim for new achievement

## Kuwait Club and Al-Arabi seek record-equaling Amir Cup

By Hassan Mosa  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, will graciously sponsor and attend the 63rd edition final of His Highness' Cup as Kuwait and Al-Arabi meet tonight at 6:45 PM at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium. This match is the postponed final from last season.

The winner has the chance to equal Al-Qadsia's record of 17 cup titles, with Kuwait Club and Al-Arabi currently holding 16 each. Kazma has lifted the trophy eight times, Salmiya and Yarmouk twice each, and Fahaheel once.

Last season, Al-Arabi was the only team to challenge Kuwait Club for official titles, but "the White" clinched both the Crown Prince Cup and the Zain Premier League, leaving Al-Arabi as runner-up. Al-Arabi, nicknamed "the Dean," won the Super Cup against Al-Qadsia. The two teams previously met in the third round of this season's Zain Premier League, ending in a 1-1 draw.

Kuwait Club began its cup campaign with a 3-0 win over Al-Ja-



Amir Cup trophy.

zeera, followed by 1-0 victories against Khaitan in the quarterfinals and Al-Qadsia in the semifinals.

Al-Arabi, meanwhile, faced tough battles, defeating Al-Sulaibikhat 4-3 on penalties after a 2-2 draw in the preliminary round, narrowly overcoming Al-Jahra 2-1 in the quarterfinals, and edging past Salmiya 1-0 in



Nebojsa, Al-Shatti, Al-Harbi, Al-Sanousi, and their colleague Waleed Al-Naif attend the press conference.

the semifinals.

Al-Arabi coach Nasser Al-Shatti is seeking his first title with the team. He aims to prevent Kuwait Club from achieving a perfect season while avenging last season's defeat. Al-Arabi enters the final on the back of a 2-1 league win over traditional rival Al-Qadsia, marking Al-Shatti's

first victory after replacing former coach Marco Alves.

Montenegrin coach Nebojsa and Kuwait Club aims to continue dominance, seeking another title and hoping to replicate the historic quadruple achieved in the 2015-2016 season. Kuwait Club currently leads the league by three points over



Players show sportsmanship.

Al-Arabi.

Key players to watch for Kuwait Club include international stars Youssef Nasser, Mohamed Daham, and Ahmed Al-Dhafiri, alongside foreign professionals Malick Zola (Congo), Yassine Kheneissi (Tunisia), Mehdi Barhamah (Morocco), Mohamed Marhoon (Bahrain), and

Amr Abdel-Fattah (Egypt).

Montenegrin coach Nebojsa Jovanovic expressed his excitement ahead of today's Amir Cup final, saying, "We are ready for the starting whistle. We respect Al-Arabi, and we respect ourselves as we aim to achieve a new milestone." The press conference was at Jaber Al-Ahmad Stadium.

Nebojsa expressed satisfaction with Kuwait's current performance and urged fans to fully support the team during the match. He confirmed that all players are ready, including new Ivorian signing Idrissa Dombia.

"The Amir Cup title is our target," he said, adding that he hopes his team will deliver an impressive performance on the big stage. The coach also noted the absence of club president Khaled Al-Ghanem and vice president of football affairs Adel Oqla as "a significant factor."

Meanwhile, Kuwait Club player Hammoud Al-Sanousi stressed the team's determination, saying, "We are focused on delivering a performance worthy of the club and bringing home this precious title."

## Morocco opens AFCON with win over Comoros to delight of fans & royalty



Performers take part in the opening ceremony of the Africa Cup of Nations and the opening Group A soccer match between Morocco and Comoros in Rabat, Morocco. (AP)

'This will be the best ever Africa Cup of Nations'

RABAT, Morocco, Dec 22, (AP): A spectacular bicycle kick earned royal approval for Ayoub El Kaabi as host Morocco opened the 35th Africa Cup of Nations with a 2-0 win over Comoros on Sunday.

Home fans including Moroccan Crown Prince Moulay Hassan, who greeted the players before kickoff, had endured a frustrating game as island nation Comoros, ranked 108th in the world, stubbornly held out against one of the tournament favorites.

Comoros goalkeeper Yannick Pandor even saved an early penalty from Soufiane Rahimi.

Brahim Diaz finally broke the deadlock in the 55th minute, setting off relieved celebrations around the stadium, before El Kaabi sealed the win with an overhead kick in the 74th.

The prince, watching from his royal box, was unable to conceal his delight as he applauded.

Morocco's quest to become a soccer superpower is a family affair. It was a passion for the prince's grandfather, Hassan II, and the current king, Mohammed VI, who oversaw one of the most aggressive buildouts in African sporting history to achieve his aim. The Kingdom is set to be a main co-host of the 2030 World Cup with Spain and Portugal.

Mohammed VI's portrait was beside Gianni Infantino as the FIFA president proclaimed in French before kickoff, "This will be the best ever Africa Cup of Nations!"

The only blemish from a Moroccan point of view was an early injury to team

captain Romain Saïss, who wiped away tears as he left the field.

"He felt something behind his knee but we don't know if it is muscular or something else," Morocco coach Walid Regragui said. "We hope it's not too serious and that we can get him back later."

Morocco's regular captain, Achraf Hakimi, remained among the substitutes after recovering from an ankle injury.

"We are being very careful with him," Regragui said.

Hakimi was well enough to show his African Footballer of the Year trophy to fans before kickoff.

Excitement had been building for hours Sunday and wintry showers failed to dampen the mood. Beninese artist Angélique Kidjo, Moroccan singer Jaylann and French-Moroccan rapper Lar-

tiste performed the tournament's official song for the first time during a spectacular light show for the opening ceremony.

But the highlight for the Moroccan fans - judging by the sea of smartphones to capture the moment - was the appearance just before kickoff of the king's eldest son beside Infantino and Patrice Motsepe, the president of the Confederation of African Football. Prince Moulay Hassan shook hands with the Comoros players and then posed for a photo with the Morocco team, seemingly unperturbed by heavy rainfall.

Morocco is backed by many to lift what would be just its second Africa Cup title 50 years after the first in 1976. The final is Jan. 18 next year.

Morocco is the highest-ranked African team at No. 11. The Atlas Lions, as the team is known, became the first from



Morocco's Jawad El Yamiqi tackles Comoros' Rafiki Saïd Ahamada during the Africa Cup of Nations Group A soccer match between Morocco and Comoros in Rabat, Morocco. (AP)

Africa to reach the World Cup semifinals in 2022.

Morocco still relied on goalkeeper Yassine "Bono" Bounou to deny Comoros' Rafiki Saïd a prompt equalizer after Diaz's opener.

"I am very proud of my players," Comoros coach Stefano Cusin said of his team's battling performance. "We have a lot of youngsters. I think we gave a good image of Comoros."

The opening match was played in Rabat's renovated almost 70,000-capacity Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium, one of nine venues across six cities that were constructed or renovated for the tournament.

The tournament mascot is a lion named Assad, inspired by the barbary lions that once prowled the mountains of north Africa. The last known photograph of a wild lion in Morocco was taken by French army photographer Marcelin Flandrin from a flight over the Atlas Mountains in 1925.

Egypt begins its bid for a record-extending eighth title - and Mohamed Salah's first - against Zimbabwe in Agadir on Monday. Defending champion Ivory Coast begins its title defense against Mozambique in Marrakech on Wednesday. Senegal and five-time champion Cameroon are also among the favorites, while Algeria was the only country apart from Morocco to have all its matches sold out already.

The future of the biennial tournament took a twist Saturday with the announcement it will move to a four-year cycle to bring it in line with the FIFA calendar.

"The AFCON every four years will be an event nobody wants to miss," Regragui said. "What I want is to see African football grow."

## Kuwait shooters hit the mark with silver at Arab Champ'ship

MUSCAT, Dec 22, (KUNA): Kuwait's national shooting team made a strong start at the Arab Pistol and Rifle Shooting Championship, which opened on Sunday in Muscat, Oman, by securing the silver medal in the women's 10m air rifle team event.

Bahrain claimed the gold medal, while Qatar finished third to take the bronze.

Secretary General of the Kuwaiti and Arab Shooting Federations and head of Kuwait's delegation, Obaid Al-Osaimi, told KUNA that shooters Maryam Arzuqi, Ritaaj Al-Ziyadi, and Fajr Al-Dhabib delivered an impressive performance, finishing second after fierce competition against teams from across the Arab world.

Al-Osaimi said the Kuwaiti women posted a total score of 1845.6 points, narrowly missing out on gold behind Bahrain. He described the result as an encouraging start, adding that it would serve as strong motivation for the team to pursue further achievements in the remaining events.

Kuwait is set to compete in several disciplines during the championship, which runs until December 26, including the 10m air rifle mixed team, 50m rifle three positions (men), 10m air pistol, and 25m pistol events for both men and women. Al-Osaimi expressed optimism that Kuwait's shooters would add more medals to their tally.

He also noted the championship's high level of competition, with participation from leading Arab shooters, as well as significant official attendance, including International Shooting Sport Federation President Luciano Rossi and officials from the Arab Shooting Federation.

Al-Osaimi reaffirmed the Kuwaiti Shooting Federation's commitment to fully supporting national team athletes and ensuring optimal preparation to achieve success at regional, continental, and international competitions.



KUNA photo

The Secretary General of the Kuwaiti and Arab Shooting Federations, Obaid Al-Osaimi, with International Shooting Sport Federation President Luciano Rossi and the winning female shooters.

## No margin for error as Al-Qadsia hosts Sitra in Gulf Club Champions

By Hassan Mosa  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: Al-Qadsia will be seeking a vital victory when they host Bahraini side Sitra tonight at 8:00 PM at Mohammed Al-Hamad Stadium in the fourth round of Group A in the Gulf Club Champions League. Earlier in the day, Iraqi club Zakho will face UAE's Al-Ain at 5:30 PM in the same group.

The Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation postponed the match by 24 hours at Al-Qadsia's request to avoid a scheduling conflict with the Amir Cup final.

Al-Qadsia has no margin for error if it hopes to advance to the semifinals, currently sitting last in Group A with just one point. Sitra occupy third place with two points, while Zakho lead the group with seven points, followed by Al-Ain with six.

Al-Qadsia has struggled in the first three matches, earning only a 1-1 draw with Sitra, and suffering defeats to Zakho (1-3) and Al-Ain (0-1).

The team's recent form in domestic competitions has been inconsistent, as they sit fourth in the Zain Premier League with 14 points—six behind leaders Kuwait, three behind Al-Arabi, and level on points with third-placed Kazma. Al-Qadsia also came off a 1-2 defeat to rivals Al-Arabi last Wednesday.

These setbacks have prompted criticism of head coach Nabil Maaloul and the foreign players, with Algerian Victor Lekhal the only standout performer. Meanwhile, the futures of Libyan Mohamed Soule, Egyptian Mahmoud Kahraba, and Congolese Nicenze Kiebo remain uncertain.

Al-Qadsia will be without goalkeeper Hameed Al-Qallaf, who is undergoing surgery after a complete knee cartilage tear, and suspended player Jassem Al-Matar. Positive news comes in the return of Victor Lekhal, Ahmed Al-Yahya, Youssef Al-Haqan, and goalkeeper Ali Jrag, whose fitness will be evaluated before the match.

Sitra, meanwhile, approach the game with only one objective: a win to keep their hopes of reaching the semifinals alive.