

Pages 15 & 16



Scan the QR code to access
the Arab Times WhatsApp Channel

MONDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2025 / RAJAB 9, 1447 AH

emergency number 112

NO. 19091

16 PAGES

150 FILS

KUWAIT CRIMINALIZES UNLICENSED MONEY EXCHANGE, SETS FINES

Vehicle inspection centers get grace

PART abolished, responsibilities transferred to ministries

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah issued Ministerial Decree No. 2570/2025, amending certain provisions of Ministerial Decree No. 2753/2024, which regulates the authorization of companies and institutions to conduct technical inspections for the renewal of private vehicle licenses, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The decree amends Article 11 of the previous decree, granting technical inspection centers covered by its provisions a six-month grace period to adjust their operations and comply with the new requirements. This six-month period begins from the date the decree is implemented. The decree also authorizes the Director General of the General Traffic Department to extend the grace period for an additional duration not exceeding ten months. Meanwhile, Decree-Law No. 162/2025, which criminalizes unlicensed money exchange activities, has been published in the official gazette Kuwait Al-Youm and will come into force one month after its publication.

The new decree-law adds a new Article 12 bis to the Law Regulating Commercial Licenses, issued under Law No. 111/2013.

Continued on Page 5



Opinion

■ Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

Like father, like son, O glorious Morocco!

THE unique traditions of Morocco are vital to the strong bonds between the ruling family and the citizens. As a result, special occasions have become important opportunities to showcase the deep-rooted relationship shared by the people, the king and the princes.

The most recent manifestation was the visit of Crown Prince Hassan III to Marrakech. The event gave citizens a chance to express their loyalty to the monarchy and it highlighted the accessible nature of the prince.

Security measures were minimal, proving that the young prince was comfortable and felt 'at home' among his people, hence, an extravagant security display was unnecessary.

Furthermore, his involvement in the opening of the Africa Cup of Nations underscored his deep affection for the Moroccan people.

The visit of King Mohammed VI to Marrakech, including his city tour, served as a significant source of reassurance for the Moroccan people, as well as for Arab, Gulf and foreign investors.

The recognized economic and social stability of Morocco positively influences investors, along with the widely acknowledged fact that the vision

of King Mohammed VI for the kingdom is focused on fostering a sound investment environment.

This is achieved by welcoming all investors and taking advantage of the strategic geographical position of Morocco, which functions not only as a gateway to Africa but also as a crucial link between Arab, African and European nations.

Hence, the Kingdom operates under intense political and economic scrutiny, a reality that the Royal Palace acknowledges. Consequently, the Palace approaches all events and occasions with complete transparency.

The genuine and spontaneous public reaction serves as a crucial indicator for gauging the sentiments of local, Arab and international investors, thereby, adopting an environment that attracts numerous investment opportunities.

Continued on Page 5

Follow me on:

■ @Ahmedaljarallah

■ Ahmed aljarallah

■ ahmed@aljarallah.com



Scan QR code
to visit the
website:
aljarallah.com

Kuwait braces for frost, near-zero lows



Photo by Rezk Tawfiq

Kuwait City skyline under partly cloudy skies with scattered rain on Sunday.

Temperatures plummet Tuesday

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: Director of the Meteorological Department Dhirar Al-Ali says the country will experience a noticeable drop in temperatures in the coming days, starting Tuesday, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

He explained to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the weather will be cool to cold during the day and cold to very cold at night, with chances of frost forming early Wednesday morning in some desert and agricultural areas.

On Sunday morning, the country was affected by

scattered rain and thunderstorms in some areas, particularly along the coast, due to the influence of a weak surface low extending over northern Kuwait. This was followed by the advancement of a high-pressure system accompanied by a cold air mass arriving from the northwest.

This cold air mass will lead to a significant drop in temperatures on Tuesday, accompanied by northerly winds reaching speeds of over 60 kilometers per hour. These winds may cause dust storms and reduced horizontal visibility in some areas,

while sea waves could rise above seven feet.

The expected daytime temperatures will range between 12°C and 15°. Temperatures on early Wednesday morning are expected to drop to between 2°C and 5°C, possibly lower in some desert and agricultural areas, with a chance of frost formation.

Temperatures are expected to gradually rise starting Thursday, with maximum temperatures ranging from 18°C to 20°C and minimum temperatures between 6°C and 9°C.

Fraud, forgery lead to citizenship revocation

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: Cabinet Resolution No. 1657/2025, revoking the Kuwaiti citizenship certificates of four individuals, as well as those who acquired citizenship through dependency, was published in the official gazette "Kuwait Al-Youm" on Sunday, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The Cabinet's decision was based on Article 21 bis (a) of the Kuwaiti Nationality Law and its amendments, which states, "A Kuwaiti citizenship certificate shall be revoked if it is found to have been granted unlawfully based on fraud, false statements, or perjury. Citizenship shall be revoked by a decision of the Cabinet upon the presentation of the Minister of Interior."

It is worth highlighting that the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef chaired the meeting held recently by the Higher Committee for Kuwaiti Citizenship Investigations, which decided to revoke the citizenship of several individuals, pending their submission to the Cabinet.

The cases included revocations due to fraud, false statements, and forgery, several individuals who acquired citizenship under Article 8, one case under Article 7 (for the higher interest of Kuwait), and a case involving a naturalized citizen who had performed distinguished service.

Continued on Page 5

Kuwait leads in telecom

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: A new milestone reinforced the position of Kuwait as one of the leading countries in the telecommunications sector.

The recent report released by the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) on the mobile network experience for 2025 showed that Kuwait is at the forefront internationally in terms of mobile telecommunications network quality and performance, elevating its networks to the level of a global benchmark. These networks are considered the standard of efficiency, dependability and extensive nationwide coverage.

The newspaper obtained a copy of the report, which was published within the framework of the Mobile Telecommunications Network Coverage Measurement Project (Phase Two). It revealed that Kuwait achieved outstanding outcomes when compared with other countries around the world. All three local telecommunications operators succeeded in recording scores exceeding 800 points under the adopted evaluation methodology, placing them within the 'excellent' classification. Globally, only one other country has been able to attain this level of performance.

Continued on Page 5

Silver skyrockets to KD 875 per kilogram

Kuwait gold hits record KD 44.30 per gram

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28, (KUNA): Gold prices in Kuwait surged to record levels last week, with 24-karat gold reaching KD 44.30 (around \$135) per gram and 22-karat gold at KD 40.61 (around \$124) per gram, while silver hit KD 875 per kilogram (around \$2,868). The increase was driven by rising global prices and currency market fluctuations, according to a report by Dar Al-Sabaek.

Globally, gold prices climbed to \$4,550 per ounce before closing at \$4,531, as investors sought safe-haven assets amid escalating geopolitical tensions and growing expectations of U.S. interest rate cuts.

A specialized report issued on Sunday by Dar Al-Sabaek explained that investors are closely monitoring the U.S. ban on Venezuelan oil shipments and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, which has heightened global market anxiety.

Markets are anticipating two potential U.S. interest rate cuts of 0.25 percent each next year, driven by declining inflation and relative improvements in certain labor market indicators, despite divisions among Federal Reserve officials over the future direction of monetary policy.

Gold has surged more than 70 percent since the beginning of the year, marking its largest annual increase since 1979, supported by strong purchases from central banks and continued inflows into exchange-traded funds (ETFs). Silver also performed impressively, gaining over 170 percent after recovering from earlier volatility caused by tariffs and trade policies. Industrial demand, particularly from the solar energy sector, along with active investment demand, has helped sustain the momentum.

Recent surveys show that 57 percent of individual investors expect silver prices to surpass \$100 per ounce in 2026, with experts noting that further gains are possible, though natural price corrections may occur following rapid increases. Some major banks and institutions have adopted a cautious approach as prices near historic highs, but overall market momentum is expected to continue.

Analysts project a balanced outlook, with some predicting temporary stabilization or limited decline mid-year before the upward trend resumes.

Continued on Page 5

Newswatch

CAIRO: Twenty-one states, including Kuwait, have declared in the strongest terms the Israeli occupation's recognition of the Somali-land region as an independent state.

This recognition constitutes a blatant violation of international law and the UN Charter, which respect the sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of states, the signing countries said in a joint statement on Saturday.

The statement was signed by foreign ministers of Egypt, Kuwait, Algeria, Comoros, Djibouti, Gambia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Maldives, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Turkey, and Yemen, in addition to a representative of the 57-member state Organization of Islamic Cooperation. (KUNA)

Information Minister affirms strategic vision to advance Kuwait media sector

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28, (KUNA): Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi affirmed that the Ministry of Information is moving forward with a clear strategic vision aimed at developing the national media system and enhancing the quality of content and major events.

In a statement following a meeting with ministry leaders, Al-Mutairi discussed final preparations for the closing ceremony of the Kuwait Grand Media Award (Shira'a), preparations for the media event accompanying the French Super Cup match, and arrangements

for the visual showcase of Kuwait Television's Ramadan programming.

He stressed that aligning planning with execution is a core pillar of the ministry's current approach, reflecting Kuwait's image and keeping pace with rapid changes in the media sector.

Al-Mutairi highlighted the Shira'a Award as a key national initiative supporting excellence and creativity in media and noted that the French Super Cup media event underscores the ministry's drive to strengthen media presence at major sporting events.

The minister also emphasized efforts to improve Ramadan programming in content and presentation using modern production techniques, and praised ministry teams for working together to deliver a media image that reflects Kuwait's regional and international standing.



Al-Mutairi

Kuwait plans energy services pricing law

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: The Development Plan report revealed the inclusion of the "Energy Services Pricing Law" in the current annual plan for 2025/2026 fiscal year.

The Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy has been tasked with preparing the draft law, which is one of 14 draft laws still under review by government agencies and ministries.

In its latest report, the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development classified the draft law as one of the important pieces of legislation contributing to the fifth of the nine development plan programs. This program aims to restructure the government apparatus to create an interactive government, enhance integrity and transparency, support the private sector and digital transformation, improve performance, and meet citizens' needs.

Continued on Page 5



NBK dominated Kuwait's digital landscape in 2025, setting unprecedented record highs

Prayer Timings

Fajr 05:16 Asr 14:39
Sunrise .. 06:41 Maghrib .. 16:58
Zohr 11:49 Isha 18:20

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Mild with light to moderate freshening at times over coastal areas northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 06-26 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear with a chance for light fog forming at night.

Weather

By Night: Rather cold to cold with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 06-26 km/h with a chance for light fog forming over some areas.

Station Max Exp Min Rec

Kuwait City	21	17
Kuwait Airport	23	15
Abdaly	22	11
Bubyan	18	14
Jahra	22	13
Failaka Island	21	15
Salmiyah	21	19

Tajikistan envoy extends New Year greetings to leadership

Tajikistan, Kuwait ties deep-rooted, robust

On the occasion of the New Year, the Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan to the State of Kuwait, H.E. Zubidullah Zubidov, extended his sincere congratulations and best wishes to His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, may God protect him, and to His Highness the Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Ambassador Zubidov wished Their Highnesses continued good health and well-being, and extended his best wishes to the leadership, government, and people of the State of Kuwait for continued security, stability, progress, and prosperity.

The Ambassador affirmed that relations between the Republic of Tajikistan and the State of Kuwait are deep-rooted and robust, founded on mutual respect and shared understanding. He noted the steady development witnessed in bilateral relations across political, economic, and developmental fields, reflecting the shared commitment of

the leadership of both friendly countries to strengthening cooperation and expanding areas of partnership.



Dr. Zubidullah Zubidov

His Highness the Amir, and his commitment to building a modern state and advancing sustainable development, in a manner that benefits Kuwaiti citizens and enhances Kuwait's regional and international standing.

He further praised the comprehensive development and reform process taking place in the State of Kuwait across various sectors, stressing that these achievements reflect the forward-looking and visionary leadership of

Ambassador Zubidov also highlighted the esteemed position the State of Kuwait enjoys in the Republic of Tajikistan, in recognition of its prominent humanitarian and developmental role, as well as its constructive efforts at the regional and international levels in supporting stability and development.

He pointed out that the coming phase holds promising opportunities to further enhance cooperation between the two countries in the fields of investment, sustainable development, and cultural exchange, in a way that deepens the historical and humanitarian ties between the two friendly peoples and serves their mutual interests.

The Ambassador concluded his statement by expressing the Republic of Tajikistan's aspiration to continue coordination and consultation with the State of Kuwait in the New Year, and to further advance bilateral relations toward broader horizons, reinforcing strategic partnership and consolidating bonds of friendship and cooperation between the two friendly countries.



His Highness the Amir



His Highness the Crown Prince

Amir and Crown Prince audiences

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace on Sunday. His Highness the Amir then welcomed His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace on Sunday.

His Highness also received First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace on Sunday.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace on Sunday.

His Highness the Crown Prince received First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace on Sunday.

Allow farmers to sell ‘produce’ directly to citizens, KFU urged

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef has issued directives to take the necessary measures to allow farmers to sell their produce directly to citizens at the locations designated by the Kuwait Farmers Union for subsidized fruits and vegetables, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an official statement, the Ministry of Interior explained that these directives are aimed at fulfilling the purpose of these locations and helping to reduce fruit and vegetable prices. Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef issued these directives during a surprise inspection tour, which included the Kuwait Farmers Union's designated sales locations in Fahad Al-Ahmad, Andalous, and Jahra.



Sheikh Fahad

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef stressed that firm and immediate action must be taken against anyone found violating regulations, harming public funds, or disrupting the subsidy system.

These field visits are part of a clear strategy to uphold the principles of integrity and transparency, strengthen field oversight, and firmly address any attempts to harm the public interest or exploit subsidies provided to citizens. The primary goal of these measures is to protect consumers, ensure access to products at fair prices, and maintain the subsidy system in a way that serves citizens and supports market stability.

The inspection tour, which aims to identify weaknesses and address any violations to ensure fairness in supply and pricing, was made following the discovery of serious administrative and financial irregularities, including the acceptance of bribes from some commercial companies in exchange for product placement and priority within cooperative societies.

Envoy extends warm New Year wishes

Türkiye, Kuwait ties grew in '25

As we bid farewell to the past year and welcome the New Year, I extend my warmest wishes for peace, prosperity, and happiness to the leadership of the State of Kuwait, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, esteemed ministers, local authorities, civil society organizations, and the fraternal people of Kuwait.

The past year has been remarkable for the deepening of relations between Türkiye and Kuwait, highlighted by the historic visit of H.E. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to Kuwait, which reaffirmed our shared commitment to friendship and cooperation. These achievements were made possible through the invaluable support



Sonmez

and facilitation of Kuwait's visionary leadership under H.H. Amir Sheikh Meshal Al Ahmed Al Jaber Al Sabah and the dedication of Kuwaiti institutions.

To the people of Kuwait, we express our heartfelt gratitude for your genuine warmth, hospitality, and unwavering spirit of friendship. We deeply value the bonds that unite our nations beyond diplomacy—bonds of mutual respect, cultural affinity, and shared aspirations for peace and prosperity.

On behalf of the Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye in Kuwait, I convey our deepest appreciation for these efforts and look forward to further enhancing our collaboration in the coming year. May 2026 bring continued success, harmony, and opportunities for both our nations and the world.

Tuba Nur Sonmez

Türkiye Ambassador to Kuwait

Submit report on mobile number portability: CITRA

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: Under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Union of Cooperative Societies, the cooperative societies have started shifting to digital operations by entering the consumer delivery sector.

This move aims to intensify the presence of cooperatives in the market, and align with modern trends in electronic services and evolving consumer purchasing behaviors. Delivery Companies Committee Chairman Abdulaziz Al-Faleh confirmed that a number of cooperative societies have started working with a local delivery platform, which offers its services to cooperatives free of charge. He said this collaboration provides cooperatives with the opportunity to compete with the commercial delivery applications, which have become widespread in the country.

Al-Faleh described this experience as a major economic transformation for the cooperative sector, as it helps reduce operational pressure on cooperatives, enables better supply management, improves returns for shareholders, and contributes to creating a more balanced and fair environment among service providers.

He explained that the success of this initiative could play a vital role in controlling prices and improving the quality of services delivered to consumers. He stressed that expanding digital transformation efforts will help establish sustainable, technology-driven business models that strengthen the competitiveness of cooperative societies in the next stage.

Considering Farwaniya Cooperative Society was the first cooperative to implement this transformation,



Al-Faleh

Other Voices

Hospital management, endowments, and DDI

By Ahmad alsarraf

In an old interview, former MP Nabil Al-Fadhel said, “We must change our approach to managing government hospitals and make them run like any five-star hotel. The state of most of our hospitals is deplorable”.

What Al-Fadhel said is largely accurate. It is wrong to entrust the management of a large

hospital to someone whose qualifications are limited to being a doctor with a relatively long period of practice. Often, such individuals are not innovative in their work because if they were, they might not have accepted the administrative position. This is not to say there aren't a few exceptions.

What is happening in the Ministry of Health mirrors practices in several other entities, such as appointing military personnel to manage civilian technical sectors in security agencies like the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defense, and the National Guard.

Another example is assigning a religious figure to manage and invest endowment funds, rather than appointing an expert specialized in investment.

Having a doctor lead the medical staff and oversee treatment management allows the Ministry of Health greater flexibility in appointing general managers for hospitals, whether they hold specialized management degrees or are proven administrators.

The physician in charge of the medical and treatment departments should not be burdened with other administrative tasks, such as coordi-



alsarraf

nating with cleaning companies, managing food supplies, overseeing security, handling laundry, or disposing of contaminated materials.

I did not expect the strong negative reactions to my article about the Dasman Diabetes Institute, particularly regarding the fact that the majority of its patients are expatriates and that it does not provide the same level of care to Kuwaiti patients.

What many failed to realize is that the Dasman Diabetes Institute is primarily a research institute, and secondarily a treatment and experimental center. Patients who refuse to participate in the institute's trials are not accepted. The institute was established to monitor this serious disease, which is prevalent among Kuwaiti citizens, to conduct safe research and experiments, and to develop results that benefit both the patients and society. Any patient has the right to withdraw from the experiment at any time.

Therefore, the institute accepts only Kuwaiti citizens, likely to ensure continuous monitoring of their condition over an extended period.

According to an informed source, the institute's distinction is largely attributed to its Board of Trustees, and especially to its first chairman, Dr. Hilal Al-Sayer, who served for 14 years.

The institute's first director, Dr. Kazem Behbehani, managed it efficiently for six years before being succeeded by Dr. Qais Al-Duwairi, who served for eight years. Following this, the distinguished physician Dr. Faisal Al-Rifai was appointed acting Director of the Dasman Diabetes Institute. Under his leadership, the institute transitioned to a corporate structure, allowing greater flexibility in increasing revenue from grants and donations that are essential to sustaining its services and supporting research on diabetes and its serious health complications.

□ □ □

email: a.alsarraf@alqabas.com.kw



Al-Seyassah photo

One of the illegal structures is pulled down by the Municipality in Mubarak Al-Kabeer.

Municipality pulls down 4 illegal buildings in Mubarak Al-Kabeer

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: The Public Relations Department has affirmed the continued implementation of field inspection campaigns by safety department teams across all six governorates to ensure compliance with approved demolition regulations. These campaigns aim to monitor adherence to established laws and procedures governing the demolition of residential, investment, commercial, and industrial buildings, which must be carried out by licensed demolition contractors and in accordance with the permit system is-

sued by Kuwait Municipality, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Salah Al-Rashidi, Director of the Safety Department at the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate Municipality branch, stated that the department's inspection team conducted a field tour that led to the inspection of four properties undergoing demolition. The properties were found to be in violation of safety requirements, prompting intervention to prevent potential accidents and to safeguard the well-being of workers and nearby residents.

Subsidized food for Kuwaitis only

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry is preparing to implement the Cabinet's November 8th decision to restrict subsidized food rations to eligible Kuwaiti citizens, with the state treasury expected to save approximately 50 million dinars annually, reports Al-Rai daily quoting informed sources.

Officials at the ministry are currently reviewing the implementation mechanism and preparing a comprehensive plan that includes arranging con-

sumption quantities, determining subsidy values, managing the strategic reserve, and identifying categories of individuals excluded from the program. Those whose citizenship was previously revoked but later restored will continue to receive their subsidies.

Data from the ministry shows that as of the end of September, the number of ration cards reached 273,730, up from 267,670 during the same period in 2024, a growth of 2.26 percent.

Treat your father well, 'late apologies' in vain

"A WOMAN once said, "After years of marriage, I discovered that it is often the man who sacrifices everything he has for his wife, children, mother, sister, father, and grandchildren. He sacrifices his youth and health for his family, working tirelessly, sometimes late into the night, while enduring the reproaches of his parents and the reprimands of his boss", columnist **Ahmad Al-Dawas** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"She went on to say, "A father is the only person in the world who truly wishes for his children to surpass him in every way. He tolerates his children stepping on his toes when they are young and stepping on his heart when they are grown. A father gives his children the very best he has, indeed, everything he has.



Ahmad Al-Dawas

"If a mother carries her children for nine months in her womb, a father carries his children in his mind and thoughts for a lifetime. Therefore, respect every man and every father in your life, for you will never truly appreciate him. How many sacrifices does he make for you? Something comes to your mind, so you call him during his work hours. He answers and greets you warmly, without letting you know what he may be going through. Perhaps his boss reprimanded him, a colleague upset him, or your expenses are weighing heavily on him. You say, "Dad, bring me some strawberry juice" and he replies, "Of course, just be a good boy and don't bother your mother." He comes home exhausted from work, the heat, and the traffic, having forgotten your request. You ask, "Dad, where's the juice?" Without hesitation, he goes out again to get it for you, setting aside his own exhaustion.

"If you are late one day, he gets worried and calls you. You feel he is bothering you, and you may not answer if he calls repeatedly. When you finally come home, he scolds you to instill a sense of responsibility, continuing his role in raising you. You raise your voice at him and hurt him with your words. Your responses silence him, not out of fear, but out of shock. Yesterday, in his youth, he carried you on his shoulders, and today you are taller than him. Yesterday, you stammered and mispronounced words, and today no one can silence you. You forget that no matter how much he may annoy you, he is your father. Just as he carried you through childhood and tolerated your mistakes, bear with him in his illness and old age. Treat him well, for others long for the chance to see him again. They asked me, "Which man do you love?" I replied, "The one who waited for me for nine months, welcomed me with joy, and raised me at the expense of his own health. My apologies to all men, for no one is like a father".

"I have said this before, "Treat your father well, for others long to see him again." Truly, after a father passes away, the heart is torn apart by sorrow and grief over his loss. In 1968, when I was 18, my parents gave me a gift, which was a black-and-white photograph of me. They had it retouched in color, and that hurt their feelings. I asked, "Why did the photographer add color?" I did not like the gift. Fifty-seven years later, with a heavy heart for not making amends, I write to you with tears of sorrow and regret.

"We say this because the role of journalism in society is not limited to publishing news and information, important as that is for the public. Journalism also carries a vital educational and formative role. Its message can influence political decision-makers, contribute to human development, expose corruption and societal problems, and encourage economic progress."

Also:

"The distribution of powers in countries is not a random matter, as oversight is essential and must be distributed among multiple authorities to prevent corruption from taking root and to ensure that institutions do not become personal possessions," columnist **Eng. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Since the inception of political systems, oversight has been an integral part of correcting flaws in practice, ensuring a diversity of ideas, precise implementation, sound legislation, and swift justice. This is why I chose the title of this article - "Multiple minds are better than one."

"As the saying goes, "He who consults will not be disappointed." This principle is applied even in countries with a single presidential system. In such systems, teams of advisors in various fields work on drafting laws and their implementing regulations. In other countries, powers are distributed so that all branches of government participate in decision-making. The issuance of the executive regulations for health insurance fees and the exemptions stipulated by law included some proposals that had been presented in previous National Assemblies. I discovered that some proposals dated back to 1963 and were never adopted, despite their potential benefit to Kuwait.

"Even after the Iraqi invasion and the subsequent liberation, many beneficial proposals emerged, as the post-liberation period was marked by a surge of patriotic sentiment that motivated everyone to serve their country. Unfortunately, these proposals were overlooked and not treated as a national service or a matter of public interest. Today, with the government holding both legislative and executive powers, there is an oppor-

tunity to review the dozens of proposals in the National Assembly's archives and select those that are truly beneficial to the people and the state.

"No matter what ideas the executive branch presents, they still require development, even when aimed at serving the national interest. There is much that can form a strong foundation for progress based on a shared vision. Not all practices in the National Assembly are driven by conflict or self-interest; some are genuinely beneficial. Political disagreements exist in every country, and their purpose should be to achieve the best interests of the state and its people.

"Differences of opinion are natural, as long as everyone is committed to the common goal of prioritizing the national interest. Therefore, listening to different viewpoints is essential, as everyone sees things from a particular perspective. When ideas converge, they produce a valuable and insightful outcome. The presence of the press, social media, civil society organizations, legislative and municipal councils, and other entities serves the fundamental goal of developing the state and its people.

"For example, when the amendment to health insurance fees was published, one newspaper highlighted observations that could be considered valid. Returning to history and learning from the legacy of our predecessors is the best solution to any problem. Did the government's advisory team review the National Assembly's archives and make use of the previous proposals?"

□ □ □

"In-egg grafting and in-barn hatching are among the most notable modern innovations gaining increasing attention in the poultry industry due to the effective solutions they provide, contributing to improved flock health and greater production efficiency," former president of Kuwait Poultry Farmers Association **Mohammad Ibrahim Al-Furaih** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"A farmer in Belgium applied these two techniques over an eighteen-month period. He explained his motivations and the results of his experiment in 2022, when he received his first batch of one-day-old Ross 308 chicks, as is typical in the traditional system. However, following the hatchery's recommendation to try an egg distribution system, which is hatching eggs directly inside the barn, he decided to implement the idea with his subsequent flocks.

"The farmer received incubated eggs at nineteen days old, which were quickly transferred to the barn using specialized equipment, without requiring any additional investment.

"He prepared the barn in the usual traditional manner but added a coarser layer of wood shavings in the designated egg-laying areas. After the eggs were laid, the hatching process was monitored via a digital platform that allowed real-time tracking of eggshell temperature and climate conditions within the barn, enabling rapid intervention when necessary. This system provided the breeder with considerable peace of mind and contributed to excellent hatching results and high-quality chicks.

"In-the-egg (ITO) vaccination proved highly effective. The eggs arrived at the hatchery pre-vaccinated against common diseases such as Gumboro and Marek's disease, as well as some non-communicable diseases. This eliminated the need for the breeder to administer vaccinations inside the barn, whether by spraying or via drinking water, which are methods that previously required significant time and precision, and often resulted in post-vaccination declines. These issues were completely resolved with the adoption of ITO.

"The benefits of in-barn hatching were immediately apparent, as the chicks had access to water and feed right after hatching, without the stress of transport or handling within the hatchery. The chicks were calmer, healthier, and began growing immediately, unlike in traditional systems where early-hatched chicks may wait up to 36 hours before receiving food and water.

"Although the production cycle in the barn was extended by two days due to receiving 19-day-old eggs, the breeder managed to maintain more than seven cycles annually by reducing the sterilization period between cycles and taking advantage of reduced heat loss from the shorter incubation period.

"These improvements were reflected in the flock's health, with a significant reduction in antibiotic use. Technical results improved dramatically, with mortality rates dropping to just 1.5 percent, and birds reaching a final weight of 2.8 to 2.9 kilograms at 41 days old. The feed conversion ratio ranged between 1.45 and 1.50, figures that the feed company ranked among the best among its clients' farms.

"The experiment required no additional costs or new equipment. The breeder confirms that the extra work involved in receiving the eggs is minimal, even less than the effort needed when receiving day-old chicks.

"Considering the high quality of the results, the reduced stress levels, and the ease of managing the process, the breeder believes that adopting in-barn hatching and in-egg grafting was a pivotal decision. It elevated his farm to a higher level of quality and efficiency, creating a production model perfectly aligned with his professional goals."

— Compiled by Simi K.Kutty



Maintenance work on Road 251 in Mubarak Al-Kabeer in full swing. Inset: Dr Noura Al-Mashaan

Road 251 repairs, cleaning of drains expedited

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan stated that ministry teams are continuing fieldwork on Road 251 in Mubarak Al-Kabeer as part of the new contracts for comprehensive road maintenance, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

She affirmed that this work is included in the ministry's plan to enhance infrastructure efficiency and improve the quality of services provided to citizens.

Dr. Al-Mashaan noted that the ongoing work includes laying the final five-centimeter layer of asphalt (Type 3) and complet-

ing the associated infrastructure tasks, adding that the work also involves cleaning storm water drainage and sewage networks to ensure their readiness and operational efficiency.

She emphasized the ministry's commitment to adhering to established timelines and approved quality standards, highlighting that continuous field monitoring aims to expedite the pace of completion and ensure the work meets the highest technical specifications.

EPA issues citations for harming nature in south and overgrazing

Violators face heavy fines: official

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: **Judicial officers from the Environment Public Authority (EPA), with the cooperation of the Ministry of Interior, recorded five violations during an environmental campaign in the southern region near Nuwaiseeb, reports Al-Seyassah daily.**

Several citations were issued for violations related to the use of construction materials harmful to the natural environment and for overgrazing in areas not designated for grazing.

Director of Public Relations and Media at

EPA, Sheikha Al-Ibrahim, told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Saturday that the campaign was carried out based on a report from the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) with the aim of ensuring compliance with environmental regulations and adherence to Articles 40 and 41 of the Environmental Protection Law.

She explained that Article 40 stipulates, "It is prohibited for anyone who frequents desert areas for the purpose of setting up camps or for any other purpose to engage in any activity that could harm the soil, affect its

natural properties, or pollute it in a way that impacts its productivity."

The penalty for violating Article 40 ranges from KD 250 to KD 5,000, in addition to requiring the violator to remove the traces of the violation. If the violator fails to do so, the EPA will remove them at the violator's expense.

Article 41 prohibits "direct grazing or the exploitation of land for irrigated agriculture or any other activity that could harm the quantity or quality of vegetation cover in any area, leading to desertification or the degradation of the desert environment."

The same article forbids the destruction of crops, plants, and trees, picking flowers in squares, streets, and public facilities, and uprooting trees and wild plants in public spaces. The penalty for violating Article 41 ranges from KD 250 to KD 5,000.

KD 222m allocated for rainwater drainage projects

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: The Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) has requested the Ministry of Public Works to make some amendments to the tender for the construction, completion, operation, and maintenance of rainwater drainage systems in four residential areas before it is released for bidding, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

According to sources from the Ministry

of Public Works, the tender, valued at an estimated KD 222 million, will cover the Sabah Al-Ahmad, South Sabah Al-Ahmad, Al-Khairan, and Al-Wafra residential areas.

The projects aim to reduce surface runoff, prevent flooding in streets and urban areas, replenish groundwater, provide alternative water sources for agricultural

irrigation, and improve water quality by filtering pollutants such as oils, minerals, and sediments before they reach the sea or groundwater.

The sources said these projects also offer economic and operational benefits, including reducing reliance on treated water for non-potable uses and easing the burden on wastewater treatment plants.

Six children found to be fraudulent in single file

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: The Higher Committee for Citizenship Affairs has uncovered six cases of fraudulent registration in a single file previously belonging to a deceased man. The file, which includes 19 sons and daughters, had already seen four children stripped of their citizenship after investigations confirmed they were not biologically related to the deceased father, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

According to informed sources, two additional children were now scientifically proven not to be the deceased man's sons, raising the total number of fraudulent registrations to 6 out of 19.

One of the newly identified cases involves a son born in 1964, listed as alive in Kuwaiti records. Investigations revealed he had left Kuwait in 1995 and never returned. DNA tests conducted on his children residing in Kuwait, compared to the alleged uncles, confirmed there was no familial relationship. Additional evidence from his Gulf nationality documents corroborated the findings. The family had not reported his death in Kuwait due to discrepancies between his Gulf and Kuwaiti names, fearing exposure of the forgery. He has five children, with a total of 17 dependents registered on his file.

The second son, born in 1967, left Kuwait in May 2025. DNA comparisons with the 13 legitimate siblings confirmed he is not related to them. He has 11 children registered on his file, with a total of 17 dependents.

The investigations highlight the complexity of fraudulent claims in citizenship files, as six of the 19 children in this file were registered without legitimate familial ties. The case is still under review by the Higher Committee, with legal procedures ongoing against the identified forgers.

Unknown succumbs to car hit near 'Al-Jabriya'

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: An unidentified man died when a vehicle hit him along the Fourth Ring Road near Al-Jabriya.

A security source informed the newspaper that the Operations Unit at the Ministry of Interior received a report about the hit-and-run accident on the Fourth Ring Road near Jabriya. Security and ambulance personnel rushed to the accident site. Upon arrival, they found that the accident resulted in the death of a man who was not carrying any identification document.

The source confirmed that the body was referred to the Forensic Medicine Department.

A case was registered and investigations are ongoing to establish the circumstances that led to the fatal accident.

Special Buffet

LARGEST SPREAD IN TOWN

Child Buffet	Adult Buffet
KD 4.250	KD 7.450
KD 3.400	KD 5.960

EVERY THURSDAY DINNER ONLY 6 PM TO 11 PM	EVERY FRIDAY LUNCH & DINNER 12:30 PM TO 4:30 PM & 6 PM TO 11 PM	EVERY SATURDAY LUNCH ONLY 12:30 PM TO 4:30 PM
--	--	---

AVAILABLE AT HAWALLY BRANCH
BEIRUT ST, LULU AL WATAN COMPLEX, OPPOSITE CBK
22626782 ☎ 22626783

AVAILABLE AT FAHAHEEL BRANCH
1ST FLOOR, AL HOOR BUILDING
BLOCK NO.11, BEHIND TO CENTERPOINT
23911175 ☎ 23911174

Health ministry launches online radiation licensing

RAIS+ boosts radiation oversight and safety

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: Minister of Health Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi has launched the digital radiology licensing service at the Radiation Protection Department in the Public Health Sector in the Health Ministry.

This service allows healthcare practitioners to submit applications for issuing and renewing personal radiology licenses electronically, eliminating the need for in-person visits. This speeds up processing, improves service quality, and enhances user experience in line

with the digital transformation strategy of the ministry.

Al-Awadhi launched the service when he visited the Radiation Protection Department's main building recently to review workflow as the department started receiving visitors in recent weeks. Undersecretary of the ministry Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, Assistant Undersecretary for Public Health Affairs Dr. Al-Mundhir Al-Hasawi, and Director of the Farwaniya Health District Dr. Mohammad Al-Rashidi accompanied the minister during the visit.

The minister was also briefed on the commencement of the first phase of the International Atomic Energy Agency's 'Regulatory Authority Information System+' (RAIS+) program. This integrated system improves oversight and regulation capabilities for radiation sources and ensures compliance with radiation safety requirements through more efficient data management and intelligent monitoring in accordance with international standards. This will positively impact the protection of workers, the public, and the environment.

In a press statement, Dr. Nasser Al-Juwaisseri, Director of the Radiation Protection Department, affirmed that the department is striving to automate its services and expand the digital transformation in all of its operations, as per the digital governance strategy of the ministry. He disclosed that the next phase will include completing the remaining stages of the RAIS+ program, guaranteeing staff readiness, and developing electronic services to ensure efficient performance and the sustainability of the highest radiation safety standards in the country.



Kuwait Health Minister Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi (center) and senior officials pose with staff at the Radiation Protection Department during the launch of the Digital Radiation Licensing Service, part of the ministry's digital transformation initiatives.



One night stay in a Queen Bed Cabana for 2 persons inclusive of Breakfast Rack rate	BHD 46.000
One night stay in a Two Bedroom Chalet for 4 persons inclusive of Breakfast Rack rate	BHD 102.800 net

Terms & conditions apply*

Tel: +973 17701201 - Ext. 351 | Email: reservation@albander.com | www.albander.com | @albanderhotelandresort



2025 highlights Kuwait's year of milestones.

Vision 2035 in focus

Kuwait's 2025 year in review

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28, (KUNA): Kuwait has witnessed many events throughout 2025, including in the political, economic, security, social affairs and health fields, among which the signing of the completion operations of Mubarak A-Kabeer Port with China. Following are major events of the year.

His Highness the Amir:

Jan 4: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was represented by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah in the final match of the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup (Khaleeji Zain 26) between Oman and Bahrain at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium.

Jan 12: The Sanabel Society for Orphans in Bahrain selected His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as the "Honorary Gulf Leadership Figure" for 2024.

Jan 13: His Highness the Amir signed a Decree appointing Dr. Adel Al-Zamel as Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy.

Jan 14: His Highness the Amir flew to the United Kingdom at a personal invitation from King Charles III.

Feb 2: His Highness the Amir patronized and attended the flag-hoisting ceremony at Bayan Palace.

Feb 2: His Highness the Amir signed a Decree appointing Professor Dr. Dina Al-Mailem as rector of Kuwait University for a four-year term.

Feb 4: Amiri Decree issued for a cabinet reshuffle, appointing Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah as First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, and Sheikh Abdullah Ali Al-Sabah as Minister of Defense.

Feb 12: His Highness the Amir, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, attended the graduation ceremony of the 50th batch of cadets from Ali Al-Sabah Military College.

Feb 17: The Amir received Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev during his official visit to Kuwait.

Feb 19: His Highness the Amir attended the graduation of the 47th batch of police cadets at Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences.

Feb 20: His Highness the Amir traveled to Saudi Arabia to attend a consultative meeting with GCC leaders, King of Jordan and President of Egypt.

Feb 24: His Highness the Amir attended the national operetta ceremony (The Fifth Wall).

March 1: His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince received Ramadan well-wishers at the Al-Sabah family diwan in Bayan Palace.

March 10: Amiri Decree issued accepting the resignation of Dr. Mahmoud Bushehri, Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, and appointing Dr. Nora Al-Mashaan as Acting Minister.

March 10: His Highness the Amir, accompanied by His Highness the

Crown Prince and Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Sabah, visited the Ministry of Defense.

March 11: His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince visited Headquarters of Kuwait Fire Force and Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Building at the Ministry of Interior.

March 16: His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince and Acting Prime Minister visited the Supreme Judicial Council.

March 23: His Highness the Amir gave a speech marking the last 10 days of Ramadhan. He congratulated the people on the holy month, called for adherence to international principles, achieving justice in citizenship issues, strengthening national identity and constitutional authority, combating corruption, and expediting national development projects, especially in health, education and housing. He also reaffirmed Kuwait's diplomatic positions, especially its steadfast support for the Palestinian cause.

March 24: Amiri Decree issued appointing Sabeeh Al-Mukhaizeem as Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy.

April 7: His Highness the Amir receives at Bayan Palace the UAE Minister of State for Youth Affairs Dr. Sultan Al Neyadi, and Emirati astronauts Nora Al-Matrooshi and Mohammad Al-Mulla, on the occasion of their visit to the country.

April 7: Amiri Decree issued to cancel payment of cash to government employees in return for their accumulated annual leave days.

April 7: His Highness the Amir receives at Bayan Palace the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Dr. Nader Al-Jallal, who introduced newly appointed President of Kuwait University, Dr. Dina Al-Mailem.

April 14: Amiri Decree issued to form the Board of Commissioners of the Capital Markets Authority, appointing Imad Tefouni as Chairman, Rayan Al-Zaid as Deputy Chair, and three members: Tareq Shehab, Thamer Al-Nisf and Hessa Al-Roumi for a renewable four-year term.

April 14: His Highness the Amir receives Egyptian President Abdel-fattah Al-Sisi during his state visit to Kuwait.

April 30: His Highness the Amir attends a ceremony honoring top graduates from undergraduate and postgraduate programs for the academic years 2021-22 and 2022-23 at Kuwait University, held at Al-Danah Theater in Sabah Al-Salem University City.

May 7: His Highness the Amir attends a ceremony honoring outstanding graduates from colleges and institutes of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training for the 2023-24 academic year, held at the new main theater of the Authority in Shuwaikh.

To be continued tomorrow

Ministry consolidates roads oversight

MPW to submit new organizational structure after dissolution of PART

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: The Ministry of Public Works is set to submit its new organizational structure to the Civil Service Commission (CSC) in the coming days, consolidating full control over the roads sector, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to informed sources, this submission follows the dissolution of the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART). The roads sector will be fully transferred to the Ministry of Public Works and incorporated into the new organizational structure, aiming to enhance integrated management of infrastructure projects.

The new structure was prepared in line with CSC's guidelines to ensure clear responsibilities and streamlined administrative processes.

Once CSC approves the new structure, the implementation phase will

begin for enhancing performance efficiency and accelerating project completion, thus reflecting the government's commitment to reorganizing executive bodies for optimal results in the infrastructure sector.

The new structure is in line with the ministry's focus on improving institutional performance and keeping pace with modern technological and scientific developments. It incorporates specialized disciplines and advanced units within the administration to strengthen the digitization of government services and the application of best engineering and technical practices. The reform represents a strategic step by the government to clarify powers and responsibilities, boost institutional efficiency, and improve technical and administrative supervision and follow-up.

LOCAL

PAI sets up stakeholder grievance committee

Commerce Minister Al-Ajeel tightens industrial oversight

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: Minister of Commerce and Industry and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Industry (PAI) Khalifa Al-Ajeel formed a grievance committee emanating from the Board of Directors of PAI, indicating its respon-

sibilities include adjudicating grievances submitted by stakeholders in accordance with the Industry Law, its executive regulations and their amendments.

Ministerial Decree No. 54/2025, published in the official gazette, 'Kuwait Al-Youm', on Sunday, stipulates the formation of the committee with five representatives from Kuwait Municipality, Kuwait General Administration of Customs (KGAC) and the industri-

al sector, in addition to the director general of PAI. The decree indicates that the committee members are selected based on their qualifications and job titles, not their personal status, and that the chairman and vice chairman will be chosen from among its members at the first meeting.

The decision, comprising 15 articles, assigned the director general of PAI—who also serves as committee rapporteur—to oversee the work of the committee's secretariat. This includes preparing the draft agenda,

recording minutes of meetings, coordinating the necessary procedures for committee meetings, and communicating committee decisions to relevant departments and stakeholders.

In another decision, Al-Ajeel re-activated the Standing Committee of PAI under the name, "Standing Committee for the Appointment of Conformity Assessment Bodies." This committee is chaired by the director of the Accreditation Affairs Department and consists of nine representatives from PAI and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

According to Ministerial Decision No. 57/2025, following are the tasks of the committee:

q Establish minimum standards and requirements for evaluating and appointing conformity assessment bodies—inspection and certification bodies for products, laboratories and other related entities—to carry out the activities necessary to implement the requirements of technical regulations and appointment documents.

q Review and update appointment regulations and guidelines.

q Study applications and documents submitted by conformity as-

essment bodies.

The director general of PAI also issued a decision to close seven industrial plots in Al-Rai, because their owners committed serious violations, such as non-compliance with safety conditions, dilapidated buildings, obstacles at emergency exits, obstacles in firefighting equipment, and industrial licensing conditions.

The Authority gave the violators one month to remove the violations, and confirmed that more severe penalties will be imposed if the violations are not removed within the specified period.

Other Voices

Opinion vs offense

By Nasser Al-Hajeri

Today, it feels harder than ever to share an opinion without someone feeling offended. A simple comment can quickly turn into anger. A different view is often seen as a personal attack. This change in how we speak to each other should concern us all.

Having an opinion does not mean showing disrespect. People come from different backgrounds, cultures, and life experiences. Naturally, they will see things differently.

Disagreement is not a sign of hatred. It is a normal part of human life. In fact, progress has always depended on people questioning ideas and offering new ones.

The problem begins when opinions are treated as insults. Many people now listen only to reply, not to understand. Social media has made this worse. Short posts and quick reactions leave little room for context or calm discussion. A single sentence can be taken out of meaning and spread widely within minutes. Once emotions take over, reason often disappears.

There is also a growing fear of speaking openly. Some people stay silent, not because they have nothing to say, but because they worry about being misunderstood or judged. This silence is dangerous. When honest voices disappear, only extreme views remain. This creates division instead of understanding.

Respect does not require agreement. It requires listening. We can disagree while still being polite. We can challenge ideas without attacking people. When we confuse offense with opinion, we weaken public dialogue. We also deny ourselves the chance to learn from each other.

Societies grow stronger when people can speak freely and responsibly. This does not mean saying anything without care. Words matter. Tone matters. But so does intent. Not every uncomfortable idea is meant to harm. Sometimes it is meant to improve, question, or reflect reality.

If we want healthier conversations, we must separate opinion from offense. We must allow space for calm disagreement. Learning to accept different views is not a weakness. It is a sign of confidence and maturity. In the end, the ability to disagree respectfully may be one of the most important skills we need today.



Al-Hajeri

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: The U.S. Embassy's Chargé d'Affaires, Steven Butler, described the "Cars and Coffee" event as a unique celebration combining automotive passion with coffee culture for creating stronger community ties.

His remarks come at a time when the United States is preparing for year-long celebrations marking the 250th anniversary of its founding.

Speaking at the event held recently at the embassy, Butler highlighted the American automotive industry's long history of inspiring people globally.

He expressed pride in showcasing this heritage through the diverse display of modern and classic cars, and specifically praised the participants for the exceptional quality and variety of vehicles, which reflected their owners' dedication and attention to detail.

Following the car display, awards for "Best New Car" and "Best Classic Car" were presented.

Butler congratulated the winners and expressed his gratitude to the event's partners, exhibitors, and volunteers. He credited their dedication and creativity as essential to the event's success and smooth execution.

In his closing remarks, Butler thanked all attendees for participating, and expressed his hope that such events would continue to foster dialogue and strengthen community engagement.

He concluded by wishing everyone an enjoyable experience, celebrating the shared passion for cars, friendly conversations, and community spirit.

Meanwhile, Stuart Turner, spokesperson for the U.S. Embassy, explained



Acting US Embassy Chief Steven Butler and Spokesperson Stuart Turner during the event.



US Embassy photos Butler inspects one of the cars participating in the exhibition.

that the "Cars and Coffee" event was organized to celebrate American culture. It aimed to showcase the innovation and creativity of American products, with a particular emphasis on the

automotive sector.

The exhibition showcased both classic and modern American vehicles, highlighting the nation's manufacturing legacy and technological advance-

ments.

In addition to the car exhibition, an open-air entertainment area was set up, complete with food trucks and complimentary activities for children, taking advantage of the pleasant weather and promoting cultural exchange.

Turner said organizing the event also helped compensate for the postponement of the annual U.S. Independence Day celebration, which is normally held in November but has been rescheduled to the spring.

He emphasized the embassy's commitment to hosting events that celebrate American culture and provide a welcoming environment for local community members and friends to participate.

In addition, Turner stated that the event serves as an early introduction to the upcoming Independence Day celebrations and offers a preview of several major U.S.-related events planned for the near future, including the World Cup.

Turner expressed hope that these activities would successfully spark interest among both American and Kuwaiti audiences.

Elaborating on the event's concept, he explained that "Cars and Coffee" originated in California as an informal weekend gathering where car enthusiasts would meet to share their passion for automobiles over a cup of coffee.

He also acknowledged the local "Cars and Coffee Kuwait" group, which regularly organizes similar meetups, and expressed the embassy's strong interest in exploring potential future collaborations with them.

Continued from Page 1

Like father,

Despite his youth, Prince Hassan III is fully cognizant of the great responsibility entrusted to him. He interacts with his people with remarkable ease and spontaneity, having been nurtured by a royal heritage culminating in the independence movement.

This movement was spearheaded by King Mohammed V (may Allah have mercy on him) and his then-Crown Prince, Hassan II (may Allah have mercy on him).

Since that time, Morocco has been adhering to the 'King and People's Revolution' principle, which strengthened national unity that is embodied in the person of the King and the shared will of the throne and the people for liberation.

This enduring bond is celebrated through annual events and is articulated in the King's Throne Day speeches. In these speeches, the King presents the concerns of the people to officials, highlights shortcomings in implementation and demands rectification of such shortcomings.

The deep affection characterizing the relationship between King Mohammed VI and the Moroccan people was adopted by the Crown Prince in his interactions with the populace.

Therefore, each of his actions demands careful consideration for its broader implications—not just domestically, but also regionally and internationally. These steps are understood to signify advancement in economic, investment and political developments.

The visit of Crown Prince Moulay Hassan to Jemaa el-Fna Square in Marrakech showcased the royal family's commitment to this vital cultural and heritage site. During his tour, he observed the diverse activities and interacted casually with the crowd.

This emphasized their focus on not just maintaining, but developing the square as well. They stressed its value not just as a tourist spot, thus, positioning it as a proud cultural legacy and a source of national unity and enrichment for the Kingdom.

Thus, the Crown Prince's recent visit to Marrakech, marked by his active participation in local affairs and the heartfelt, spontaneous popular chant, "Like father, like son," powerfully demonstrated the national unity and strong bond between the Moroccan people and the Royal Family.

His presence made a profound and positive impression globally and among those who engage with the Kingdom.

Recognized universally as a Crown Prince of sharp intellect and a cherished connection with his nation, he is an incessant source of joy for the Moroccan people and for all those involved with this politically astute and wise Kingdom.

Vehicle inspection

The explanatory memorandum states that money exchangers engage in activities that impact the volume of cash flows to and from the country, with no oversight of foreign transfers. Many countries have enacted legislation to regulate the money exchange profession, placing those working in this field under the supervision of the Central Bank. In Kuwait, despite the long history of the profession, there has been no independent law regulating it.

The justification for the draft law is that "the Ministry of Commerce and Industry grants licenses to practice the money exchange profession in accordance with the Law Regulating Commercial Shop Licenses, issued under Law No. 111/2013, and sometimes the license includes conducting money exchange activities alongside other commercial and real estate activities". Many natural and legal persons practice money exchange activities without obtaining a license, which harms the economic interests of the State of Kuwait," due to the absence of a law regulating commercial shop licenses and penalizing violators.

The first paragraph of the new Article 12 bis stipulates that any natural person who engages in money exchange activities, such as buying, selling, exchanging, or transferring local or foreign currencies within or outside the country for the benefit of the public, without obtaining a license shall be punished by imprisonment for up to six months, a fine of up to KD 3,000, or by one of these two penalties.

The second paragraph specifies that any private sector legal entity engaging in these activities without a license shall be fined no less than KD 5,000 and no more than KD 20,000. The establishment or its branches used to commit the offense may also be ordered closed.

The decree-law will come into effect one month after its publication date of December 28, 2025.

In a separate development, the official gazette "Kuwait Al-Youm" has published Decree Law No. 163/2025, which repealed Law No. 115/2014 concerning the establishment of the

Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART) and transferred its responsibilities and departments to the Ministry of Public Works and the Ministry of Interior.

According to the accompanying explanatory memorandum, the decision is based on the government's policy to merge and abolish certain government bodies, institutions, and entities. The aim is to develop government services, ensure their effectiveness and balance, prevent overlapping responsibilities, reduce public expenditures, avoid additional burdens on the state budget, streamline procedures, and expedite paperwork.

The memorandum affirmed that practical experience has shown that PART, established under Law No. 115/2014, failed to achieve its objectives, including the establishment, supervision, and maintenance of a modern, safe, and economical land transport system.

The decree stipulated the transfer of departments previously under PART to the Ministry of Public Works, except for the Land Transport Department and the Traffic Bank Project Supervision Department, which were transferred to the Ministry of Interior.

According to the decree, the Ministry of Public Works and the Ministry of Interior assume all rights and obligations of PART, with the assets and movable property of the transferred departments being handed over to the respective ministries.

Regarding financial matters, the decree mandated the preparation of the final accounts for PART's budget for the period from April 1, 2025, until the decree's effective date. The budget will then be transferred to the Ministry of Public Works and the Ministry of Interior, according to the departments being transferred, in coordination with the Ministry of Finance.

The decree affirmed the preservation of the employment rights of PART staff. It also authorized the Minister of Public Works to issue decisions transferring employees to the ministry or other entities within a period not exceeding six months, while ensuring that all their rights and job grades are maintained.

Fraud, forgery

According to informed sources, those affected by the Higher Committee's decision include a man currently serving a three-year sentence

in the Central Prison. He was arrested at the end of April after being found to have managed approximately 16 fake social media accounts used to spread rumors and defame several citizens in exchange for money. He is the son of a naturalized citizen and was working in coordination with another individual outside Kuwait, who was later apprehended. The second suspect was arrested through Interpol, and both are currently held in the Central Prison.

The sources confirmed the committee's commitment to continuing its crackdown on fake accounts and prosecuting those responsible for spreading false information and violating individuals' privacy.

They stressed that the committee's decisions included revoking the citizenship of a former MP's uncle, who had been fraudulently registered as his brother, as well as another individual registered under the name of a former MP's father.

Kuwait gold

Demand driven by technological infrastructure, artificial intelligence, and clean energy is expected to remain a key factor supporting precious metals. At the same time, some analysts caution that the current commodity market boom may be followed by a short-term contraction before another upward phase.

From a technical perspective, gold and silver maintain a strong upward trajectory, with support levels providing potential pivot points during any price corrections. These levels reflect investors' continued reliance on precious metals for hedging and risk diversification amid global uncertainty.

Dar Al-Sabaek clarified that an ounce, used in precious metals trading, equals 31.103 grams, while a standard ounce of mass equals 28.349 grams.

Kuwait plans

In this regard, oil expert Kamel Al-Harami emphasized that the current price of 2 fils per kilowatt-hour for private residences is extremely low, noting that this rate has remained unchanged for decades, resulting in significant electricity waste.

He stressed the need to enact a law for energy service pricing based on

consumption tiers.

Al-Harami explained that consumers who can afford higher electricity bills should be free to use as much as they wish, but they must bear the full cost. Citizens are not so impoverished as to require subsidized electricity and food that costs the state millions of dinars. Subsidized electricity has led to continuous waste and depletion of state resources, with some citizens even leaving lights and air conditioners on while traveling abroad.

Meanwhile, economist Hajjaj Boukhadour highlighted the necessity of an energy pricing law to prevent electricity prices from being determined based on personal opinions.

He stressed that all countries have laws and regulations governing electricity pricing.

Boukhadour explained that the law aims to rationalize consumption, reduce waste in electricity and water usage, and ensure fairness among all segments of society. It is illogical for someone with multiple properties to pay the same rate as someone with only one. The wealthy should contribute proportionally compared to those with limited incomes.

He stressed that the law would generate economic returns that could be used to improve the operational efficiency of electricity and water facilities.

Boukhadour noted that the state allocates approximately KD 2 billion to KD 3 billion annually to energy subsidies, emphasizing that proper pricing of energy services would free up these funds for other development projects.

Kuwait leads

According to the report, Kuwait registered one of the highest results worldwide under the methodology used to calculate performance indicators for voice, data, video, browsing, coverage and reliability services, obtaining a unified comprehensive score of 832 points. This result exceeded that of all participating countries except for a single operator in another country, positioning the Kuwaiti telecommunications market among the top-performing markets internationally based on the most recent available data.

With regard to infrastructure, the report highlighted the extensive spread of 5G network coverage throughout the country. Coverage levels rated 'good' and above, ranging from 93.87

percent to 95.67 percent in all operators, reflecting a high degree of preparedness and a strong infrastructure capable of ensuring dependable service access throughout the country.

It also affirmed the stability and reliability of 4G (LTE) network coverage, with coverage rated 'good' and above, ranging from 96.5 percent to 99.21 percent among the three operators. This demonstrates the breadth of coverage and the quality of services provided in densely populated urban areas and more remote locations.

It stated that the field measurement campaign covered a total distance of 14,852 kilometers, including cities, remote areas and highways. A total of 266,088 test samples were collected, comprising 14,148 samples for voice services and 251,940 samples for data services, ensuring that the results are accurate and comprehensive.

In this context, CITRA reiterated its commitment to guarantee the delivery of mobile telecommunications services at the highest standards of quality and reliability. It affirmed the implementation of a comprehensive national campaign to measure and compare network performance to support the digital transformation efforts and the objectives of Kuwait Vision 2035.

The Authority revealed that the measurement activities were conducted between July 3 and Oct 2, 2025, and covered a wide range of operating environments, including urban and remote areas, highways, islands and indoor locations. More than 18,000 voice tests and 250,000 data tests were conducted in accordance with international standards approved by the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), in cooperation with two leading companies specializing in measurement, testing and secure communications.

CITRA confirmed its ongoing efforts to strengthen transparency, encourage improvement and development initiatives, and ensure the continuous delivery of telecommunications services that meet the expectations of users throughout the country. It added that mobile networks are subject to continuous development by telecommunications companies through expansion and infrastructure upgrades, thereby, affirming Kuwait's leadership in the telecommunications sector at the regional and global levels.



A screen shows many flights cancelled due to a snowstorm at LaGuardia Airport in New York, the United States, on Dec. 26, 2025. A snowstorm hit New York on Friday, which has caused flight delays and cancellations. (Xinhua)

Winter storm snarls holiday travel across US Northeast, Great Lakes

BOSTON, Dec 28, (AP): More than a thousand flights were canceled or delayed across the Northeast and Great Lakes regions due to snow as thousands took to roads and airports during the busy travel period between Christmas and New Year's.

New York City received about 4 inches (10.2 centimeters) of snow Friday night into early Saturday - slightly under what some forecasts had predicted. At least 1,500 flights were canceled from Friday night, according to flight-tracking service FlightAware. But by the morning, both the roads and the skies were clearing.

"The storm is definitely winding down, a little bit of flurries across the Northeast this morning," said Bob Oravec, a Maryland-based forecaster at the National Weather Service.

Oravec said the storm was moving from the northwest toward the Southeast, with the largest snowfall in the New York City area reaching over 6 inches (15 centimeters) in central eastern Long Island. Farther north in the Catskills, communities saw as much as 10 inches (25 centimeters).

Newark Liberty International, John F. Kennedy International and LaGuardia airports posted snow warnings on the social media platform X on Friday cautioning that weather conditions could cause flight disruptions.

The National Weather Service warned of hazardous travel conditions from the Great Lakes through the northern mid-Atlantic and southern New England, with the potential for tree damage and power outages.

In Times Square, workers in red jumpsuits worked to clear the sludge- and powder-coated streets and sidewalks using shovels and snowblowers.

Jennifer Yokley, who was there on a holiday trip from North Carolina, said she was excited to see snow accumulating as it dusted buildings, trees and signs throughout the city.

"I think it was absolutely beautiful," she said.

Payton Baker and Kolby Gray, who were visiting from West Virginia, said the snow was a Christmas surprise for their third anniversary trip.

"Well, it's very cold, and it was very unexpected," Baker said, her breath visible in the winter air. "The city is working pretty well to get all the roads salted and everything, so it's all right."

Ahead of the storm, New York Gov. Kathy Hochul declared a state of emergency for more than half the state. Acting New Jersey Gov. Tahesha Way also declared a state of emergency for that state.

"This storm will cause dangerous road conditions and impact holiday travel," Way said in a statement. "We are urging travelers to avoid travel during the storm and allow crews to tend to the roads. Drivers should plan their travel accordingly, monitor conditions and road closures, and follow all safety protocols."

Kurti urges voter turnout

Kosovo holds snap vote amid political deadlock

PRISTINA, Dec 28, (AP): Voters in Kosovo cast ballots on Sunday in an early parliamentary election in hopes of breaking a political deadlock that has gripped the small Balkan nation for much of this year.

The snap vote was scheduled after Prime Minister Albin Kurti's governing Vetevendosje, or Self-Determination, party failed to win a majority despite winning the most votes in a Feb.9 election.

The deadlock marked the first time Kosovo could not form a government since it declared independence from Serbia in 2008 following a 1998-99 war that ended in a NATO intervention.

The prime minister's party is again the favorite in the race, but it is unclear whether it will manage to muster a majority this time in the 120-member parliament, after other mainstream parties refused an alliance.

After voting Sunday, Kurti urged Kosovo's 1.9 million voters to turn out in large numbers to grant "more legitimacy for our institutions."

"Once the election result is known, we will do our best to constitute a new parliament as soon as possible and to proceed with the election of the new government," he said.

According to Kosovo's election laws, 20 parliamentary seats are automatically assigned to ethnic Serb representatives and other minority parties.

Another inconclusive vote would further deepen the crisis. Kosovo has not approved a budget for next year, sparking concern over the already poor economy in the country of 2 million people.

Lawmakers also are set to elect a new president in March as current President Vjosa Osmani's mandate expires in early April. If this fails too, another snap election must be held.

The main opposition parties are the Democratic League of Kosovo and the Democratic Party of Kosovo. They have accused Kurti of authoritarianism and of alienating Kosovo's U.S. and European Union allies since he came to power in 2021.

Lumir Abdixhiku from the Democratic League of Kosovo urged voters to "move away from the gloom, the deadlock and the division that has accompanied us for these years."

A former political prisoner during Serbia's rule in Kosovo, the 50-year-old Kurti has taken a tough stand in talks mediated by the European Union on normalizing relations with Belgrade. In response, the EU and the United States imposed punitive measures.

Kurti has promised to buy military equipment to boost security.

No reliable pre-election polls have been published. Kurti's party at the previous election won around 42% of the votes while the two main rival parties had together around 40%. Analysts say that even the slightest changes in numbers on Sunday could prove decisive for the future distribution of power.



A woman casts her vote in early parliamentary election in Kosovo's capital Pristina, Sunday, Dec. 28, 2025. (AP)

Canada offers USD 1.8 billion for Ukraine reconstruction

Trump-Zelenskyy meeting faces elusive peace goals

WEST PALM BEACH, Florida, Dec 28, (AP): US President Donald Trump will host his Ukrainian counterpart, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, on Sunday to try to close out a peace agreement that would end nearly four years of war that began with Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

The two will meet at Mar-a-Lago, Trump's private club in Palm Beach, Florida, where the U.S. president is spending the holidays and has an agenda mostly filled with daily rounds of golf. Zelenskyy said the two planned to discuss security and economic agreements and he will raise "territorial issues" as Moscow and Kyiv remain fiercely at odds over the fate of the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine.

In the days before the meeting, Russia has intensified its attacks on Ukraine's capital, using missiles and drones to attack Kyiv and try to increase the pressure on Zelenskyy.

"Ukraine is willing to do whatever it takes to stop this war," Zelenskyy posted Saturday on X. "We need to be strong at the negotiating table."

In response to the attacks, he wrote: "We want peace, and Russia demonstrates a desire to continue the war. If the whole world - Europe and America - is on our side, together we will stop" Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In a meeting with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on Saturday, Zelenskyy said the key to peace is "pressure on Russia and sufficient, strong support for Ukraine." To that end, Carney announced \$2.5 billion Canadian (US\$1.8 billion) more in economic assistance from his government to help Ukraine rebuild.

Denouncing the "barbarism" of Russia's latest attacks on Kyiv, Carney credited both Zelenskyy and Trump with creating the conditions for a "just and lasting peace" at a crucial moment.

Trump and Zelenskyy sitting down face-to-face also underscored the apparent progress made by Trump's top negotiators in recent weeks as the sides traded draft peace plans and continued to shape a proposal to end the fighting. Zelenskyy told reporters Friday that the 20-point draft proposal negotiators have discussed is "about 90% ready" - echoing a figure, and the optimism, that U.S. officials conveyed when Trump's chief negotiators met with Zelenskyy in Berlin earlier this month.

During the recent talks, the U.S. agreed to offer certain security guarantees to Ukraine similar to those offered to other members of NATO. The proposal came as Zelenskyy said he



Rescuers work on the scene of a multi-storey apartment building damaged during a Russian massive missile and drone attack in Kyiv, Ukraine, Saturday, Dec. 27, 2025. (AP)

U.S. include questions surrounding territory, the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant and funding for Ukraine's post-war recovery. He said there also are outstanding technical matters related to security guarantees and monitoring mechanisms.

Ukraine has conveyed its position to the U.S., Zelenskyy said, adding that Trump administration officials would relay that to Russia.

Zelenskyy also said last week that he would be willing to withdraw troops from Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland as part of a plan to end the war, if Russia also pulls back and the area becomes a demilitarized zone monitored by international forces.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters Friday that the Kremlin had already been in contact with U.S.

"It was agreed upon to continue the dialogue," he said.

Putin has publicly said he wants all the areas in four key regions that have been captured by his forces, as well as the Crimean Peninsula, illegally annexed in 2014, to be recognized as Russian territory. He also has insisted that Ukraine withdraw from some areas in eastern Ukraine that Moscow's forces haven't captured. Kyiv has publicly rejected all those demands.

The Kremlin also wants Ukraine to abandon its bid to join NATO. It warned that it wouldn't accept the deployment of any troops from members of the military alliance and would view them as a "legitimate target."

Putin also has said Ukraine must limit the size of its army and give official status to the Russian language, demands he has made from the outset of the conflict.

Putin's foreign affairs adviser, Yuri Ushakov, told the business daily Kommersant this month that Russian police and national guard would stay in parts of Donetsk -- one of the two major areas, along with Luhansk, that make up the Donbas region - even if they become a demilitarized zone under a prospective peace plan.

Ushakov cautioned that trying to reach a compromise could take a long time. He said U.S. proposals that took into account Russian demands had been "worsened" by alterations proposed by Ukraine and its European allies.

Trump has been somewhat receptive to Putin's demands, making the case that the Russian president can be persuaded to end the war if Kyiv agrees to cede Ukrainian land in the Donbas region and if Western powers offer economic incentives to bring Russia back into the global economy.

Europe

Macron approval rating dips: French President Emmanuel Macron's approval rating has fallen to only 25 percent, returning to its lowest level since he took office in 2017, a survey has showed.

A poll carried out by Toluna-Harris Interactive for French news channel LCI showed on Friday that Macron's approval rating dropped by four points from November, matching the historic low previously recorded in October 2025.

By contrast, approval ratings for Prime Minister Sebastian Lecornu remained broadly stable. The poll found that 34 percent approved of Lecornu's performance, down one point from the previous month but largely unchanged since September.

The survey was conducted online from Dec. 22 to Oct. 23 among a representative sample of 1,099 French adults. (Xinhua)

❑ ❑ ❑

3 quit from mine ban treaty: Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania on Saturday officially withdrew from the Ottawa Convention, an international treaty that bans the use of anti-personnel landmines.

Diana Eglite, press secretary of the Latvian Foreign Ministry, said Latvia had submitted its withdrawal documents from the mine ban treaty to the UN secretary-general six months ago.

Lithuanian Defense Minister Robertas Kaunas said, "The decision to leave the Ottawa Convention was driven by the need to strengthen deterrence and defense capabilities."

The three Baltic nations officially submitted their withdrawal notices from the Ottawa Convention to the UN secretary-general on June 27. They cited evolving national security needs as the primary reason for their coordinated decision to exit the Convention.

Under the treaty's rules, withdrawal becomes effective six months after each country's formal notification is received by the UN secretary-general.

The Ottawa Convention was signed in 1997 and entered into force in 1999. Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia joined the Convention in 2003, 2004 and 2005, respectively. (Xinhua)

❑ ❑ ❑

Ex-Georgian defense minister detained: The Tbilisi City Court on Saturday ordered pretrial detention for Bacho Akhalaia, a former Georgian defense minister, on accusations of his involvement in an attempted government overthrow earlier this year, according to local media.

The court hearing was conducted behind closed doors. The Prosecutor's Office stated the closed session was necessary to prevent the disclosure of sensitive personal information regarding employees of the State Security Service (SSS).

While family members and political representatives gathered at the courthouse, Akhalaia's wife, Ani Nadareishvili, was barred from the proceedings. The presiding judge noted that her legal status -- whether as a witness or a defendant -- remains under determination.

Akhalaia was arrested by the SSS on Thursday. Investigators allege that the former official coordinated the events of Oct. 4 in Tbilisi, which authorities have characterized as an attempt to forcibly overthrow the government. According to the SSS, evidence suggests Akhalaia directed the unrest through various internet-based communication applications.

Under Georgia's criminal code, Akhalaia is charged with organizing and leading group violence. If convicted, he faces a maximum sentence of nine years in prison.

The charges against Akhalaia are linked to mass disturbances in the Georgian capital on Oct. 4, when an opposition rally escalated into a violent attempt to storm the presidential residence. Police forces were deployed to use special measures to restore public order after the protest turned into a clash with law enforcement.

Akhalaia was a prominent figure in the previous United National Movement (UNM) administration. He served as the head of the Penitentiary Department from 2005 to 2009, before holding the portfolios of Minister of Defence (2009-2012) and briefly serving as the Minister of Internal Affairs in late 2012. (Xinhua)



People shop at a Christmas market at Piazza Navona in Rome, Italy, Dec. 27, 2025. (Xinhua)

Former Colorado clerk seeks state relief

Election data breach case tests pardon limits

DENVER, Dec 28, (AP): Former Colorado elections clerk Tina Peters is asking the state appeals court to recognize President Donald Trump's pardon of her state convictions as valid.

In a motion, Peters' lawyers said the Colorado appeals court no longer has jurisdiction over her case because of a Dec. 5 pardon issued by Trump. They also asked the court to release her from prison because of the pardon.

Peters, the former Mesa County, Colorado clerk, was convicted of state crimes there for orchestrating a data breach scheme driven by false claims about voting machine fraud in the 2020 presidential race. Trump's pardon power does not extend to state crimes.

In the court filing, Peters' lawyers argued that President George Washington issued pardons to people convicted of both state and federal crimes in the Whiskey Rebellion in 1795. They urged the state appeals court to issue a ruling quickly. The court is set to hear arguments from lawyers in Peters' appeal of her conviction on Jan. 14.

The appeals court ruled Wednesday that lawyers from the state attorney general's office, which is defending the conviction, could respond to Peters' arguments by Jan. 8.

The office of Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser declined to comment. Weiser previously dismissed it when Trump announced it Dec. 11.

"The idea that a president could pardon someone tried and convicted in state court has no precedent in American law, would be an outrageous departure from what our constitution requires, and will not hold up," he said in statement then.

If the appeals court rules the pardon isn't valid, one of Peters' attorneys, Peter Ticktin, said she could appeal that issue to the U.S. Supreme Court while the state court continues to consider Peters' appeal of her conviction.

Another Peters attorney, John Case, has asked the state prison system to release Peters based on Trump's pardon but the state refused, according to an email included in the appeals court filing.

Earlier this month, Peters lost a bid in federal court to be released from

prison while her state appeal is considered.

Peters claims that the state judge who sentenced her to nine years behind bars violated her First Amendment rights by punishing her for making allegations about election fraud.

During Peters' October 2024 sentencing, Judge Matthew Barrett called Peters a "charlatan" and said she posed a danger to the community for spreading lies about voting and undermining the democratic process.

Peters was unapologetic and insisted that everything she did was geared toward trying to prove what she believed was fraud. She claimed her actions were done for the greater good.



Candidate Tina Peters speaks during a debate for the state leadership position, Feb. 25, 2023, in Hudson, Colo. (AP)



President Nicolas Maduro joins a rally marking the anniversary of the Battle of Santa Ines, which took place during Venezuela's 19th-century Federal War, in Caracas, Venezuela, Dec. 10, 2025. (AP)

Deported migrants seek justice

Venezuelan President Maduro signals ‘openness’ to US talks

CARACAS, Dec 28, (Agencies): Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has expressed willingness to hold dialogue with the United States on the basis of mutual respect, provided that the United States gives up interference in Venezuela.

In a televised speech, Maduro said that if the U.S. side is willing to engage in dialogue with Venezuela on the basis of mutual respect and abandon its failed attempts to interfere in Venezuela over the past 25 years, he will welcome it and seek a path toward peace, cooperation and prosperity.

The president also criticized the United States for its sustained smear campaigns against the Venezuelan government, its destabilizing efforts in Venezuela, and its attempts to overthrow the leadership.

He called on the U.S. media to report the real situation of Venezuela after truly understanding the country.

For months, the United States has deployed large-scale air and naval forces in Caribbean waters near Venezuela under the guise of combating so-called “narco-terrorism.” It has sunk about 30 so-called “drug trafficking ships” in the Ca-

ribbean and the eastern Pacific, causing more than 100 deaths.

In other news, men who were part of the group of Venezuelan migrants that the United States government transferred earlier this year to a prison in El Salvador demanded justice on Friday, days after a federal judge in Washington ruled that the Trump administration must give them legal due process.

The men told reporters in Venezuela’s capital that they hope legal organizations can push their claims in court. Their press conference was organized by Venezuela’s government, which had previously said it had retained legal services for the immigrants.

On Monday, a federal judge ordered the U.S. government to give legal due process to the 252 Venezuelan men, either by providing court hearings or returning them to the U.S. The ruling opens a path for the men to challenge the Trump administration’s allegation that they are members of the Tren de Aragua gang and subject to removal under an 18th century wartime law.

The men have repeatedly said they were physically and psychologically tortured while at the notorious Salvadoran prison.

Junta ally set to dominate Parliament

Myanmar holds first election since 2021 military takeover

YANGON, Dec 28, (AP): Voters went to the polls Sunday for the initial phase of Myanmar’s first general election in five years, held under the supervision of its military government while a civil war rages throughout much of the country.

Final results will not be known until after two more rounds of voting are completed later in January. It is widely expected that Min Aung Hlaing, the general who has ruled the country with an iron hand since an army takeover in 2021, will then assume the presidency.

The military government has presented the vote as a return to electoral democracy, but its bid for legitimacy is marred by bans on formerly popular opposition parties and reports that soldiers have used threats to force voters to participate.

While more than 4,800 candidates from 57 parties are competing for seats in national and regional legislatures, only six are competing nationwide with the possibility to gain political clout in Parliament. The well-organized and funded Union Solidarity and Development Party, with its support from the military, is by far the strongest contender.

Voting is taking place in three phases, with Sunday’s first round being held in 102 of Myanmar’s 330 townships. The second phase will take place Jan. 11, and the third on Jan. 25. Final results are expected to be announced by February.

Critics charge that the election is designed to add a facade of legitimacy to military rule that began when the military ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021. It blocked her National League for Democracy party from serving a second term despite winning a landslide victory in the 2020 election.

They argue that the results will lack legitimacy due to the exclusion of major parties and limits on freedom of speech and an atmosphere of repression.

The expected victory of the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party makes the nominal transition to civilian rule a chimera, say opponents of military rule and independent analysts.

“An election organized by a junta that continues to bomb civilians, jail political leaders, and criminalize all



Voters check information at a polling station in Yangon, Myanmar, Dec. 28, 2025. (Xinhua)

forms of dissent is not an election - it is a theater of the absurd performed at gunpoint,” Tom Andrews, the U.N.-appointed human rights expert for Myanmar, posted on X.

However, holding the election may provide an excuse for neighbors like China, India and Thailand to continue their support, claiming the election promotes stability. Western nations have maintained sanctions against Myanmar’s ruling generals due to their anti-democratic actions and the brutal war against their opponents.

Voters on Saturday expressed mixed feelings.

Khin Marlar, 51, who voted at a polling station in Yangon’s Kyauktada township, said she felt she needed to vote because she hoped that peace would follow afterward. She explained that she had fled her village in the town of Thauंगा in the central Mandalay region due to the fighting.

“I am voting with the feeling that I will go back to my village when it is peaceful,” she told The Associated Press.

A resident of southern Mon state, who asked to be identified only by her first name, Khin, for fear of arrest by the military, told The Associated Press she felt compelled to go to a polling station because of pressure from local authorities.

“I have to go and vote even though I don’t want to, because soldiers showed up with guns to our village to pressure us yesterday,” Khin said. There were reports ahead of the voting from independent media and rights groups that officials and the military used such threats to compel people to vote.

Suu Kyi, Myanmar’s 80-year-old former leader, and her party are not participating in the polls. She is serving a 27-year prison term on charges widely viewed as spurious and politically motivated. Her party, the National League for Democracy, was dissolved in 2023 after refusing to register under new military rules.

Other parties also refused to register or declined to run under condi-

tions they deem unfair, and opposition groups have called for a voter boycott.

Amael Vier, an analyst for the Asian Network for Free Elections, noted a lack of genuine choice, pointing out that 73% of voters in 2020 cast ballots for parties that no longer exist.

Mobilizing opposition is difficult under the military’s repression. According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, more than 22,000 people are currently detained for political offenses, and over 7,600 civilians have been killed by security forces since they seized power in 2021.

Armed resistance arose after the army used lethal force to crush non-violent protests against its 2021 takeover. The ensuing civil war has left more than 3.6 million people displaced, according to the U.N.

A new Election Protection Law imposes harsh penalties and restrictions for virtually all public criticism of the polls.

Touadéra vote could cement Russia’s role in CAR

Central African Republic’s incumbent president eyes third term in key elections

BANGUI, Central African Republic, Dec 28, (AP): Voters in the Central African Republic (CAR) are electing a new president and federal lawmakers Sunday, with incumbent President Faustin Archange Touadéra seen as likely to win a third term after trying to stabilize the country with the help of Russian mercenaries.

Touadéra is one of Russia’s closest allies in Africa and analysts say a third term win for him would likely consolidate Russia’s security and economic interests in the country even as Moscow faces growing scrutiny over its mercenaries’ roles in Africa.

The Central African Republic was among the first in Africa to welcome Russia-backed forces, with Moscow seeking to help protect authorities and fight armed groups. Tensions, though, have grown this year over Moscow’s demand to replace the private Wagner mercenary group with the Russian military unit Africa Corps.

Some 2.4 million voters are registered to vote in Sunday’s national elections, which is unprecedented in scope as it combines the presidential, legislative, regional and municipal ballots.

There were initial delays with voting starting an hour late in some polling stations mostly in outlying districts of the capital, Bangui. Some voters also said they couldn’t find their names on the electoral rolls, or where they are to vote.

“When we arrived, no one was



Left: A man casts his ballot during the presidential election in Bangui, Central African Republic, Sunday, Dec. 28, 2025. Right: Voters look for their names on a registration list at a polling station during the presidential election in Bangui, Central African Republic, Sunday. (AP)



ready. With these delays, we risk voting until 8 p.m.,” said Barthélemy Wadenguende, a voter in Bangui.

Provisional results are expected in a week’s time. A runoff will be held if no presidential candidate gets more than 50% of the votes cast.

Touadéra faces challenges from six candidates, including prominent opposition figures Anicet-Georges Dologuélé and Henri-Marie Dondra, both former prime ministers. The election is being held without the main op-

position coalition, the Republican Bloc for the Defense of the Constitution, which said in October that it will boycott the election after denouncing what it called an unequal political environment. Neither Dologuélé nor Dondra are part of it.

Analysts say Touadéra is a clear favorite after consolidating his control of state institutions in recent years, and due to the absence of strong opposition.

Backed by Russia, he has hinged his campaign on efforts to achieve peace,

stability and economic recovery in the country of about 5.5 million people, long battered by conflict.

The landlocked country has been plagued by fighting between pro-government forces and armed groups, particularly since 2013 when predominantly Muslim rebels seized power and forced then President François Bozizé from office. A 2019 peace deal only partially lessened the fighting, and some of the 14 armed groups that signed it later withdrew from the agreement and continued their fighting.

“Our country has suffered greatly from brutal regime changes, a cycle that repeats itself every ten years. I call on the people of the Central African Republic to choose the stability of institutions and a prosperous Central African Republic,” Touadéra told The Associated Press in a recent interview.

Touadéra’s closest challenger is believed to be Dologuélé, a candidate in the 2016 and 2020 elections who has promised in his campaigns to “restore a damaged Central African Republic.”

His priorities include sustained peace and economic recovery based on agriculture and other key sectors.

“President Touadéra destroyed everything. Our programme is a solid summary to get the country out of poverty. What country is this that produces nothing and exports almost nothing, except beer? We must revive the economy,” he said in a recent interview.

Analysts say the most important factor for voters is the country’s security situation.

The United Nations peacekeeping mission, MINUSCA, present in the country since 2014, has been crucial with election logistics in the past. It currently has around 14,000 military personnel and 3,000 police members who will help guard election sites.

The vast but sparsely populated nation is crisscrossed by dense forests, rivers and bad roads, and the electoral body faced challenges getting election materials to some hard-to-reach communities.

In November, the U.N. Security Council extended the mission by a year but said its presence would scale down due to budget constraints.

“Because of the peace deals, United Nations peacekeeping efforts and security support from Wagner and from the Rwandans, the country is in a more secure place than it was during the last electoral cycle in 2020,” said Lewis Mudge, the Central Africa director at Human Rights Watch.

6.6 magnitude quake hits waters off Taiwan

Russia recognizes Taiwan as integral part of China: FM

MOSCOW, Dec 28, (Agencies): Taiwan is an integral part of China, and Russia opposes Taiwan’s independence in any form, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Sunday.

In an interview with TASS, Lavrov said that Russia’s principled position on the Taiwan question is well known and unchanged. “Russia recognizes Taiwan as an integral part of China and stands against the island’s independence in any form.”

As the top Russian diplomat noted, Russia consistently regards the Taiwan question as an internal affair of China and recognizes China’s legitimate basis for safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Lavrov also said in the interview that Japan’s course toward militarization could negatively affect stability in the region.

“Recently, the Japanese leadership has been seeking to accelerate the country’s militarization. The detrimental influence of such an approach on the regional stability is obvious,” he said.

Also:

TAIPEI: The U.S. Geological Survey says a magnitude 6.6 earthquake hit Taiwan just off its northeast coast late Saturday.

The earthquake took place at 11:05 p.m. local time, 32 kilometers



Exterior tiles on a pedestrian bridge are damaged after an earthquake in New Taipei City, southeast China’s Taiwan, Dec. 27, 2025. (Xinhua)

(20 miles) from the coastal town of Yilan. Tremors were felt across the island, including in the capital of Taipei, where buildings shook from the shock.

One resident in Yilan County described how a building shook first vertically and then horizontally.

“It kept on shaking for a while. Then I ran out, but most people did not run out. I was scared,” he said.

The epicenter was 70 kilometers

(43 miles) deep, and there were no immediate reports of widespread damage or casualties. Local television showed hanging TVs swaying inside an office building, and spilled cleaning products and broken bottles that had fallen off supermarket shelves.

In a social media post, Taiwanese President William Lai Ching-te urged residents to be alert for possible aftershocks.

Subcontinent

Hundreds held in Delhi sweep: In the run-up to the New Year celebrations, police in the Indian capital Delhi have arrested hundreds of people besides seizing weapons and drugs during an extensive crackdown to prevent criminal activities during the festive rush, officials said Saturday.

The police made the arrests during a special drive launched on Friday night focused on vulnerable areas across the city. The drive, according to police, is part of the police’s sustained and focused efforts to curb and check organized crime in the city.

“Police have arrested over 280 accused under the Excise Act, Arms Act, Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, and Gambling Act as part of the special drive to crack the whip on criminal activities,” a police official said.

“During the operation, 504 persons were apprehended under preventive measures, and more than a hundred individuals of bad character were also taken into custody,” the official said. Reports said recoveries also included 21 country-made pistols, 20 live cartridges and 27 knives. (Xinhua)

Military op kills 4 militants: Pakistani security forces killed four militants during an intelligence-based operation in the Panjgur district of the country’s southwest Balochistan province, the military said on Saturday.

Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of the Pakistani military, said the operation was launched on Friday following intelligence reports about militant presence.

Security forces engaged the suspected location, which led to a firefight that killed four militants, said the ISPR.

ISPR said that weapons, ammunition and explosives were recovered from the killed militants, who had been involved in multiple terrorist activities.

The military added that clearance operations are underway to eliminate any remaining militants in the area. (Xinhua)

Afghan farmers get FAO aid: The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has distributed 87,400 wheat cultivation packages to farming

families across Afghanistan, the agency said on Sunday.

“Certified wheat seeds, paired with quality fertilizer, have proven to produce higher yields than traditional varieties, helping families grow more food, feed communities and earn income,” the FAO said in a statement. (Xinhua)

ARCS distributes cash assistance: The Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) has distributed more than 22 million Afghanis (over 333,000 U.S. dollars) in cash assistance to families who recently returned to eastern Afghanistan’s Ghazni province, local media outlet Tolo news reported on Sunday.

According to the report, around 1,300 families who returned from neighboring Pakistan and Iran received financial support in the province. Each family was provided with 17,000 Afghanis to help meet their immediate needs. Beneficiaries welcomed the assistance as the aid will help them cope with the challenges of resettlement.

As thousands of Afghan families continue to return from neighboring countries, many face urgent needs for basic services and livelihoods. In response, the ARCS has launched several humanitarian initiatives in various provinces to support returnees during this critical period. (Xinhua)



Afghan refugees wait to register in a camp near the Torkham Pakistan-Afghanistan border in Torkham, Afghanistan, Saturday, Nov. 4, 2023. (AP)

Boursa Kuwait closes higher

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait ended Sunday's trading session with a slight overall uptick, as the general index rose 5.47 points, or 0.06 percent, to close at 8,983.54 points. Activity on the exchange totaled 154.6 million traded shares across 11,752 cash transactions, generating a value of KD 42.18 million (around USD 128.6 million).

The main market led the gains, adding 46.59 points, or 0.56 percent, to settle at 8,323.10 points. Trading on this segment involved 74.8 million shares through 6,312 cash transactions, with a total value of KD 15 million (approximately USD 45.7 million).

With 2.37 million followers across its social media platforms and engagements exceeding 3.31 million

NBK dominated Kuwait’s digital landscape in 2025, setting unprecedented record highs

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: As the curtain draws on 2025, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has firmly consolidated its position as the most visible and influential Kuwaiti bank across social media platforms. Its digital channels recorded a qualitative leap, reaching a record 2.37 million followers, an increase of 400,000 compared to the end of 2024, while total engagements surpassed 3.31 million.

These figures reflect the strength of the content delivered and its role in enriching the Bank's digital experience for both customers and the wider community. They are also the result of an innovative vision that brings together creativity and value creation for users, reinforcing NBK's leadership of the digital landscape within the banking sector.

In a year marked by an accelerated pace of digital transformation, NBK succeeded in strengthening its presence across its digital channels, which have evolved into the primary destination for information and banking services, as well as a space for genuine dialogue and interaction that reflects the Bank's commitment to effective engagement with the public.

This success was not coincidental, but rather the result of a series of creative campaigns that left a clear imprint on the Bank's social media audiences. These included the Father's Day initiative, the Bank's branch campaign on TikTok, and the distinctive engagement generated by the "Shop via NBK Mobile Banking" campaign, in addition to the educational videos and awareness-driven content under the "Let's Be Aware" campaign, which recorded more than 5 million views, underscoring the Bank's leading role in promoting financial literacy and strengthening community awareness.

NBK's achievements were not confined to social media platforms alone, but extended to its website, which recorded a marked performance surge in 2025. The website attracted more than 4.4 million visits and nearly 7 million page views, alongside a notable increase in average session duration, which reached three minutes, representing a rise of almost 6% year on year.

This performance reflects a clear enhancement in user experience, driven by the new ideas and design innovations introduced by the Bank throughout the year.

The updates included a redesign of the loans sections to make them simpler and more seamless, alongside the launch of new layouts for business banking pages that deliver a streamlined and enhanced user experience, facilitating easy access to all relevant information.

This was complemented by the introduction of dedicated sustainability sections that highlight the Bank's commitment to environmental protection and showcase its efforts and achievements in social responsibility, as well as a new design for the investments section



Abdulmohsen Al-Rushaid

- Al-Rushaid:
- A surge in followers and engagement levels reflects the community's growing trust in our digital channels
 - We successfully developed our platforms into interactive ecosystems that enrich the customer experience and respond more effectively to their needs
 - Our performance metrics demonstrate the success of a strategy that combines creativity with value added for audiences
 - The website recorded more than 4.4 million visits and 7 million page views
 - The "Let's Be Aware" campaign surpassed 5 million views
 - Every new follower and every interaction stands as a testament to our success in building stronger, more sustainable relationships with our customers

that clearly and comprehensively presents all of the Bank's products and investment solutions. The updates also emphasized a mobile-first design approach, with 89% of visitors accessing the website via mobile devices, resulting in a more intuitive and interactive browsing experience.

Furthermore, NBK launched a dedicated page on its website for the "Al Manzel" program – the largest specialized program offering financing solutions for home renovation and refurbishment – featuring a distinctive design that brings together all the offers and rewards available to the Bank's customers under the program.

On this occasion, Abdulmohsen Al-Rushaid, Senior Vice President - Head of Digital Communications at NBK, said: "2025 marked a defining milestone in our digital journey.

We successfully advanced our platforms to become interactive environments that enrich the customer experience and respond more effectively to evolving needs. We are proud of these achievements, which reflect our commitment to fostering meaningful and impactful engagement with our customers, employees, and other stakeholders, driven by our conviction in the importance of communication as a catalyst for innovation and the foundation for building strong, transparent, and trust-based relationships."

"We are always committed to delivering genuine value to our customers through proactive engagement and initiatives that resonate with their daily lives. The figures we have achieved reflect the community's trust in NBK; every new follower and every interaction is an indicator of our success in building stronger and more sustainable relationships with our customers. This is what ultimately cements our leadership of the digital landscape," he added.

Al-Rushaid emphasized that these achievements represent the culmination of the efforts of NBK's Digital Communications team, which worked throughout the year to develop and implement effective communication strategies that delivered a positive impact on the Bank's business.

He noted that the progress achieved in 2025 provides a solid foundation for a new phase of innovation and engagement, adding that as 2026 begins, the Bank renews its commitment to strengthening its digital presence and further developing its tools to ensure the continuity of its leadership as a trusted partner and a first-choice institution in the digital space.

NBK maintains a strong presence across major social media platforms, including Facebook, X, Snapchat, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube, reflecting its commitment to keeping pace with ongoing developments in order to meet the evolving needs and preferences of its customers, as well as its continuous drive to activate meaningful engagement with its audiences across these platforms.



Loyac 'Winter Leadership Retreat' participants with chaperones.

Teens build leadership & teamwork skills

KIPCO sponsors Loyac youth leadership retreat in Thailand

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: Sponsored by KIPCO – Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) – nine teens between the ages of 15 and 17 embarked on Loyac's 'Winter Leadership Retreat' in Thailand.

The eight-day retreat is held as part of KIPCO's ongoing partnership with Loyac, a local non-profit organization that aims to empower youth to become impactful leaders in society. The program incorporates Loyac's flagship '7 Habits for Highly Effective Teens' workshop by Franklin Covey, in addition to activities that reinforce teamwork and leadership, foster personal independence and build connections with peers.

During five days spent in Chiang Mai's 'Horizon Village' and three days in Bangkok, and under the supervision of chaperones, the teens took part in a variety of activities including a Muay Thai training session, Thai cooking class, ziplining and traditional bamboo fan weaving. The events of each day were designed to align with the 7 Habits that the teens were being trained on.

Ms Sumayah Al Mulla, Assistant Manager for Corporate Communications and Investor Relations, represented KIPCO and was one of the chaperones of the trip. She said: "At KIPCO, we believe that investing in youth is an investment in the future of our nation. Empowering the next generation is a cornerstone of our corporate social responsibility, and we are committed to providing opportunities that help them grow and thrive.

This 'Winter Leadership Retreat' is more than just an experience; it's a unique platform designed to inspire teenagers and equip them with essential skills such as leadership, teamwork, problem-solving and resilience, all while stepping outside their comfort zones. We see in every participant a potential leader, and we are confident that the positive impact of this experience will extend to their personal lives and their future contributions to building their community and the future of Kuwait."

The card can be issued via KFHOnline app

KFH offers Virtual Rewards Prepaid Card

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) new Virtual Rewards Prepaid Card from, which can be instantly issued 24/7 through KFHOnline app to all customers, has garnered positive customer response and engagement. This is reflected in the high demand to issue the new card and benefit from its various features.

The card also offers faster and a more flexible digital banking experience, enabling customers to manage their online purchases with ease. Customers can issue the card through the mobile app and add it directly to their digital wallets. Accordingly, they will have control and security for both local and international online and point-of-sale shopping. The card is fully digital, consisting of 16 digits similar to regular cards, along with a CVV security code and an expiration date.

The recently launched product accommodates customers' evolving needs and lifestyle, offering them a distinguished and seamless payment experience that is both easy and secure.

In addition to the flexible payment options customized according to customers' needs, whether for online shopping, bill payments, or in-store purchases, the card has broader environmental and social impacts. These include reducing plastic waste and eliminating paper usage. It also contributes to lower carbon emissions by reducing in-person card delivery.



KFH card offers convenience and security with innovative payment experience.

Gold, silver hit record highs as yen strengthens & dollar slips

By National Bank of Kuwait

The global economic landscape at the close of 2025 presents a striking paradox of robust U.S. domestic activity set against a deteriorating currency and mounting international headwinds. In the United States, the economy demonstrated remarkable resilience as preliminary Q3 GDP growth surged to an annualized 4.3%, far outstripping market expectations to mark the fastest expansion in two years. Accompanying this growth, the labor market remains a pillar of stability; despite seasonal volatility, initial jobless claims fell to 214,000, signalling that while hiring has become more selective, layoffs remain at historically low levels. However, this domestic strength has failed to bolster the U.S. Dollar, which remained anchored at 97.9 its weakest level since early October. The "greenback" is currently on track for its most dismal annual performance since 2017, having declined nearly 10% this year as investors look past current growth figures to bet on aggressive Federal Reserve rate reductions in 2026, a move further exacerbated by safe-haven capital fleeing to metals amid concerns over tariff-induced volatility and threats to central bank independence. In stark contrast, Canada's economic momentum has hit a significant roadblock, with official data revealing a 0.3% contraction in October the most substantial monthly decline in nearly three years. This downturn was largely a byproduct of external pressures and domestic unrest, as the manufacturing sector buckled under the weight of new U.S. tariffs imposed in mid-October, causing machinery and wood product output to plummet. These challenges were compounded by a nationwide postal strike and labor disruptions in the Alberta education sector, aligning with Bank of Canada Governor Tiff Macklem's earlier warnings of a sluggish fourth quarter. While a marginal 0.1% rebound is expected for November, the lack of underlying momentum has led analysts to believe that market expectations for interest rate hikes were premature, with any potential tightening now pushed as far back as mid-2026. This transatlantic divergence is further highlighted by the Euro holding firm above \$1.17 on an upgraded growth outlook and the Japanese Yen strengthening past 155 as the BOJ pursues a tightening path. This climate of policy uncertainty and geopolitical tension has ultimately triggered a historic "super-cycle" in precious metals; gold has skyrocketed 70% this year to a record \$4,530 per ounce, while silver has seen a staggering 158% year-to-date surge, breaching \$75 as investors aggressively hedge against a weakening dollar and a fragmenting global trade order.

United States

The U.S. economy showed remarkable resilience in the third quarter, with GDP expanding at an annualized 4.3% U.S. economic growth surprised

Currencies	Previous Week Levels			This Week's Expected Range			3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.1777	1.1760	1.1796	1.1771	1.1700	1.1900	1.1823
GBP	1.3516	1.3473	1.3527	1.3495	1.3375	1.3600	1.3498
JPY	155.89	155.73	156.73	156.54	154.30	157.00	155.32
CHF	0.7862	0.7862	0.7903	0.7891	0.7800	0.7990	0.7818

to the upside in Q3, expanding at an annualized 4.3%, the fastest pace in two years and well above market expectations. Strong consumer spending was the primary driver, alongside solid gains in exports and a rebound in government expenditure. Personal consumption expenditures rose sharply, reflecting strength across both goods and services, while business investment continued to grow, while at a slower pace. Housing-related investment remained a drag, though its negative impact was offset by improved trade dynamics and reduced inventory headwinds. Overall, the data reinforced the resilience of the U.S. economy despite tighter financial conditions.

U.S. labor market remains stable with initial jobless claims at a low 214,000, continuing claims have risen to 1.92 million

U.S. initial jobless claims fell by 10,000 to 214,000 in the week ending December 20, coming in below expectations of 224,000 and marking one of the lowest readings this year despite seasonal volatility. However, continuing claims rose for a second consecutive week to 1.92 million, reinforcing the view that the U.S. labor market remains stable, characterized by subdued hiring alongside low levels of layoffs.

The Greenback was last seen trading at 98.022

Canada economic output contracted by 0.3% in October, the most significant monthly drop in nearly three years

According to official data released on Tuesday, Canada's economic output contracted by 0.3% in October, a decline that surpassed analysts' projections of a 0.2% dip and marked the most significant monthly contraction in nearly three years, dating back to December 2022. This downturn was primarily driven by a 0.7% decrease in the goods sector and a 0.2% contraction in services. However, preliminary estimates from Statistics Canada suggest a modest rebound of 0.1% is anticipated for November. The October weakness aligns with recent comments from Bank of Canada Governor Tiff Macklem, who on December 10 foreshadowed sluggish growth for the fourth quarter. The manufacturing sector was notably hard hit, falling 1.5%, with machinery output plummeting 6.9% and wood product manufacturing collapsing 7.3% the steepest drop since April 2020 following the imposition of new U.S. tariffs in mid-October. Additionally, service industries were disrupted by a nationwide Canada Post strike and a teachers' strike in Alberta. Despite this pronounced slowdown, market observers, such as Capital Economics' Deputy Chief North America Economist Stephen Brown, believe the data is

unlikely to fundamentally alter the monetary policy trajectory. He noted that the economy's lack of momentum supports the view that financial markets may have been overly aggressive in anticipating interest rate hikes for the coming year, even as money markets currently price in a single 25-basis-point increase, most likely not until July 2026.

The USD/CAD currency pair was last seen trading at 1.3671.

Asia-Pacific

Japan's Finance Minister Satoshi Katayama issues a warning that Tokyo has a "free hand" to intervene in the currency market to curb speculative depreciation.

In a firm declaration on Tuesday, Finance Minister Satoshi Katayama asserted that Japan retains full discretion to address disorderly currency movements, issuing Tokyo's most stringent warning to date about its readiness to intervene in the foreign exchange market to curb the yen's steep depreciation. Katayama emphasized that recent declines "absolutely do not reflect fundamentals," attributing the excessive volatility to speculative trading. She stated that, in line with September's bilateral agreement with the United States, the government is prepared to "take appropriate action against excessive moves." Her comments, largely echoing sentiments she expressed in a Bloomberg interview a day earlier, prompted the yen to strengthen to around 156 per dollar, though it remained near the 11-month low of 157.78 reached on Friday. The September U.S.-Japan joint statement reaffirmed a commitment to market determined exchange rates while acknowledging that interventions could be warranted to counter extreme volatility a clause Japanese officials interpret as granting leeway to act when swings diverge from economic fundamentals. Tokyo last intervened in July 2024 after the yen slid to a 38-year low of 161.96 per dollar. Analysts, suggest that if the dollar advances beyond 158 yen, further intervention is likely. A weak yen complicates policy by boosting import costs and inflation, straining households. Katayama's sharper tone marked a shift from her Monday remarks, where she stopped short of labelling recent moves as misaligned. This comes despite the Bank of Japan's landmark rate hike to 0.75% on Friday the highest in three decades which failed to sustain yen support as markets perceived Governor Kazuo Ueda's communications as indicating no imminent further tightening.

The USD/JPY currency pair was last seen trading at 156.54.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti Dinar
USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30520

Warba launches ‘PULSE’ to strengthen culture of operational excellence & grow employee capabilities with Lean Six Sigma

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: In a strategic step aimed at building a corporate culture founded on continued growth and improving operational efficiency across all levels, Warba Bank launched “PULSE”, a comprehensive initiative designed to elevate service quality by fostering a culture of improvement. PULSE focuses on investing in employees and empowering them to develop their capabilities, analyze processes and improve performance using Lean Six Sigma methodologies and globally recognized improvement tools.

The initiative reflects Warba Bank’s commitment to investing in human capital and equipping its teams with the tools needed to deliver an exceptional banking experience for customers. It also represents a key pillar supporting the Bank’s transformation phase by unifying quality and efficiency standards across all operations.

Commenting on the launch, **Ms. Maali A. Al-Rasheed**, Chief Human Resources & General Services Officer at Warba Bank, stated:“The launch of PULSE represents more than a training program; it is a strategic investment in the Bank’s vision and future culture. We firmly believe that investing in our people is the best investment in the Bank’s future and in the experience we deliver to our customers.”

On her part, **Ms. Layali Mustafa Al-Fahad**, Chief Operations Officer at Warba Bank, affirmed:“By equipping our teams with global best practices in efficiency and quality, and by fostering a corporate culture centered on innovation, excellenceand customer focus, the initiative serves as a catalyst for empowering employees to identify improvement opportunities and lead change from within their teams. This will be directly reflected in faster, more accurate and more reliable services for our retail and corporate customers. Through PULSE, we



Warba Bank unveils PULSE to build next-generation Lean Six Sigma leaders.

are establishing a unified way of working that makes efficiency and continuous improvement an integral part of our daily identity.”

A Comprehensive Program to Build a New Generation of Efficiency Experts

PULSE, an acronym for Performance • Uplift • Lean • Strategy • Execution, offers a structured, multi-level development program aimed at building employee capabilities in Lean Six Sigma methodologies. The program delivers intensive hands-on training, advanced problem-solving tools and applied improvement projects, enabling employees to identify process improvement opportunities, analyze root causes, design innovative solutions and measure impact to ensure sustainable improvement.

The Bank’s Operational Excellence Department leads the initiative, while the Lean Management Unit is responsible for delivering training and development programs, managing improvement projects, and providing ongoing technical support and guidance to teams. This integrated approach ensures the establishment of strong foundations for a culture of continuous improvement as a core operating principle across all departments of the Bank.

Global Methodologies in Service of the Customer

PULSE is built on two globally recognized methodologies. The first is Lean, which focuses on increasing customer value by eliminating waste and non-value-

added activities, leading to faster processes and lower costs. The second is Six Sigma, a data- and statistics-driven methodology that enhances process quality to the highest possible standards, ensuring superior levels of quality and reliability.

By integrating these two methodologies, PULSE aims to equip employees with the ability to achieve the optimal balance between speed and quality.

A Direct and Tangible Impact on Customer Experience

This initiative confirms that strengthening internal capabilities directly and tangibly enhances customer experience. Through training employees in Lean Six Sigma methodologies, Warba Bank will be able to deliver faster services, improve reliabilityand provide a smoother and more efficient banking experience. For corporate customers, this translates into streamlined transactions and enhanced operational support, while for individual customers, it reflects the Bank’s commitment to investing in its people, elevating service standards, and building a more agile institution that responds effectively to evolving customer needs.

Global Expertise to Ensure Best Practices

To ensure the application of global best practices, the Bank is leveraging the expertise of leading internationally certified Lean Six Sigma professionals holding Executive Master Black Belt credentials, who provide advanced and specialized guidance. Working with global experts ensures that PULSE operates as a world-class development platform, comparable to the best capability-building programs in leading international financial institutions, and equips participants with practical, applied insights drawn from global best practices.

The launch of PULSE represents Warba Bank’s long-term commitment to investing in its employees, enhancing performanceand strengthening a culture of excellence in line with its strategic objectives and its vision, “Let’s Own Tomorrow.”

Warba Bank is among the banks that have achieved remarkable success in a short period, securing a leading position in Islamic digital banking services. It is also among the local banks with the largest number of shareholders, bringing it closer to all segments of society. This achievement further reinforces the Bank’s standing as a trusted financial partner that combines innovation with social responsibility in delivering best-in-class financial products and services.

Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Morocco, and Qatar draw 79% of Capex

Dhaman: Arab food and beverage sector has attracted 516 FDI projects with Capex of \$22 billion over 22 years

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: The Arab Investment & Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (Dhaman) revealed that the Arab region’s food and beverage sector attracted 516 foreign direct investment (FDI) projects with Capex of \$22 billion and 93000 jobs between January 2003 and December 2024.

In its third sectoral report for 2025 on the Arab food and beverage sector, issued at its headquarters in the State of Kuwait today, Dhaman said that five Arab countries: Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Morocco and Qatar attracted 421 FDI projects, making up 82% of the total, with Capex of more than \$17 billion, or 79%. These projects created 71000 jobs, accounting for 76% of the total.

The report is based on four main pillars: 1- Sales until 2029, 2- Arab foreign tradefor 2024, 3- FDI projects (2003-2024), 4- Assessment of the sector’s investment and business risks in 2024. It

showed that the U.S. has been the region’s top food and beverage investor over the past 22 years with 74 projects or 14% of the total, and Capex of approximately \$4 billion or 18% of the total, creating more than 14000 jobs.

The report showed that the food and beverage sector’s top 10 foreign investors accounted for around 15% of FDI projects, 32% of Capex and 29% of total new jobs. Swiss Nestlé Company has been in the forefront with 14 projects, while Ukrainian NIBULON Company has ranked first in Capex and jobs with \$2 billion and 6000 jobs.

At the level of inter-Arab investment in the sector, it said that 12 Arab countries have invested in 108 inter-Arab projects, representing around 21% of total FDI projects in the sector over 22 years, implemented by 65 companies with Capex of \$6.5 billion or 30% of total FDI projects in the sector, and created nearly 28000 jobs. UAE topped the list with 45% of

the total inter-Arab projects and 58% of Capex.

Regarding risks and rewards for business and investment in food and beverages in 14 Arab countries, monitored by Fitch Ratings’ risk and reward indicators, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Qatar led the Arab ranking as the most attractive countries in view of investment in the sector during 2024, followed by Oman, Bahrain, Algeria, Morocco and Kuwait respectively.

The report expected food and non-alcoholic beverage sales in the Arab region (16 countries) to surge by 8.6% to surpass \$430 billion by the end of 2025, making up 4.2% of the global total, a figure which is projected to exceed \$560 billion by 2029.

The report noted a significant geographical concentration of food and non-alcoholic beverage sales in the Arab region, with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, UAE and Iraq having roughly 77% of total sales by the end of 2025. Regarding product distribution, it said that meat and poultry topped the list with 27% of total food sales in 16 Arab countries, amounting to about \$106 billion by the end of 2025, followed by cereals, pasta and baked goods with \$63 billion, making up 16%.

The report also showed that the Arab region’s average annual spending per capita on food and non-alcoholic beverages is likely to increase by 7.2% to exceed \$1,845 by the end of 2025, thus approaching the global figure of \$2048. It is expected to keep going up to around \$2255 by the end of 2029.

It expected the average Arab expenditure on food and non-alcoholic beverages to hit 25.8% of total household expenditure in Arab countries (13 countries), exceeding the global average of 24.2%.

Concerning Arab external trade in food and non-alcoholic beverages, it indicated that it increased by more than15% to approximately \$195 billion in 2024) with UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq and Morocco accounting for 70%(due to a hike in Arab food and non-alcoholic exports by 18% to \$56 billion and imports by 14% to \$139 billion during the same year.

The report added that the top 10 exporting countries to the region accounted for around 53% of its food and non-alcoholic beverage imports at a value of \$73.5 billion, with Brazil leading with \$16.5 billion or 12% of the total. Comparatively, the top 10 importing countries from the region made up 60% of total Arab food and non-alcoholic beverage exports at a value of \$33.5 billion. Saudi Arabia came first as the region’s top importer with \$6.6 billion or 12% of overall Arab exports.

Based in Kuwait, the Arab Investment & Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (Dhaman) was established in 1974 as a multilateral institution that comprises all Arab countries and four joint Arab financial institutions. It provides specialized insurance services against credit and political risks with a view to facilitating the inflow of foreign direct investments into Arab countries and promoting Arab exports and imports.

Govt endorses to repay deposits

Lebanon moves on long-delayed banking reform

BEIRUT, Dec 28, (AP): Lebanon’s Cabinet on Friday approved a draft law to determine the extent of losses suffered by Lebanese banks during the country’s financial meltdown in 2019 and provide a mechanism to return depositors’ funds that were wiped out at the time.

The financial collapse, which wiped out billions in savings and left many unable to access their funds, was part of a fiscal crisis that followed decades of corruption, financial mismanagement and nefarious profiteering.

The draft legislation, which still has to be approved by parliament to become law, marked the first move by the government to try and return funds to individual depositors whose bank accounts were frozen.

Thirteen ministers voted in favor and nine against the draft law, dubbed “financial gap law.” During the Cabinet meeting, a sit-in protest outside the government headquarters demanded action and expressed skepticism over the legislation.

It remained unclear when Lebanon’s parliament could take up the draft. Its passage in the assembly could face delays - a pattern seen with many previous efforts to reform the financial system.

There has been an ongoing blame game over who is ultimately responsible for Lebanon’s economic crisis and the evaporation of people’s deposits.

Banks have blamed government corruption, while critics argue that the banks operated a Ponzi-like scheme, using new deposits to pay off earlier depositors rather than maintaining adequate reserves.

The former central bank governor, Riad Salameh, who is wanted internationally on corruption charges, has claimed he consistently opposed such practices.

Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam issued a statement after the Cabinet meeting, promising that once the legislation is in place, smaller depositors - who “comprise 85% of depositors” - will receive their full deposits over four years, while larger depositors will recover their money more gradually - first up to \$100,000 in cash.

The remainder of the large depos-

its will be converted into tradable bonds backed by the Central Bank’s revenues and assets, which total around \$50 billion, Salam said.

He rejected accusations that the bonds were “worthless,” adding that large depositors can recover a part of their funds every year. “For example, a depositor with \$3 million could recover about \$60,000 per year,” he said.

Salam also said there was a clause in the law ensuring accountability, and denied claims the law was a “forgive and forget” measure.

The bill will offer a legislative framework for restructuring Lebanon’s battered financial sector after years of paralysis among political groups, banks and the central bank governor.

It touches on measures that the International Monetary Fund has long sought, including clear rules for returning depositors’ funds, restructuring bank liabilities and improving transparency.

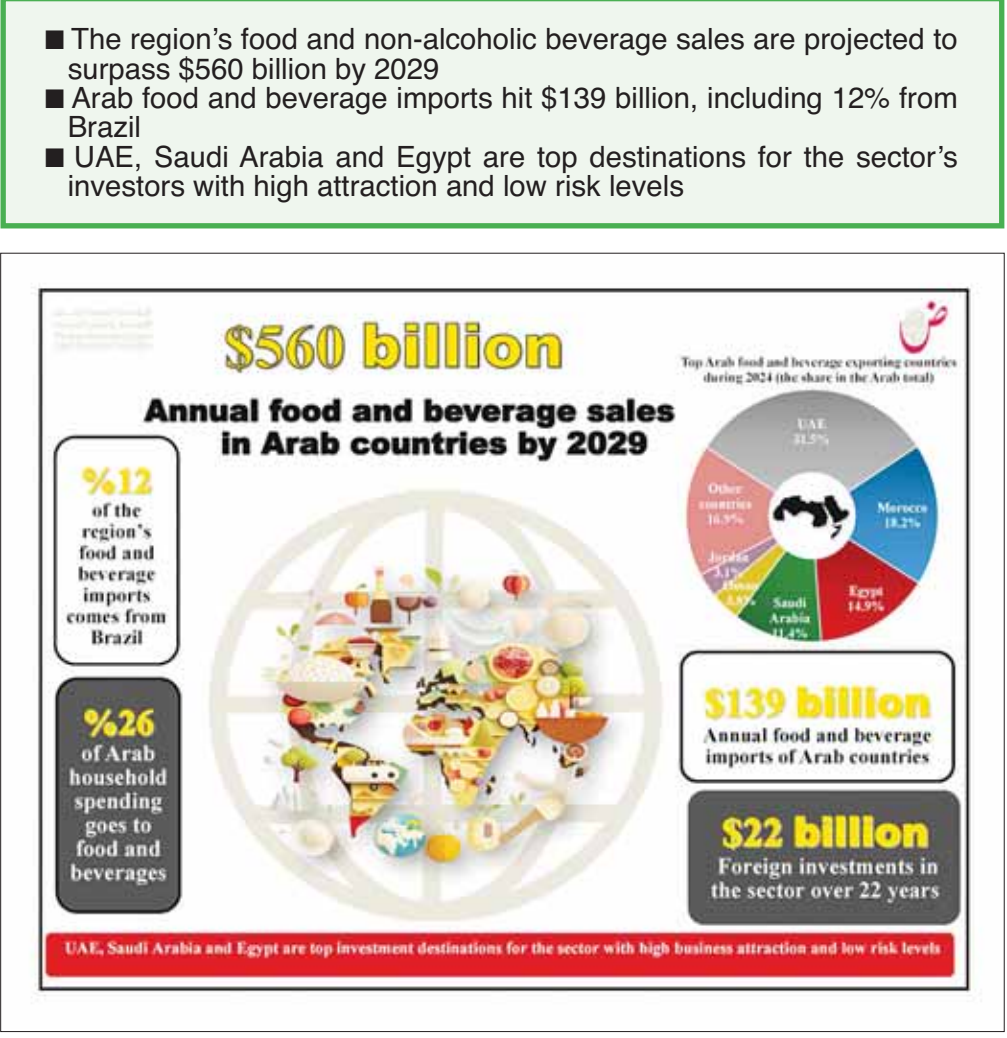
The IMF has previously expressed frustration over more than half a decade of talks with Lebanon that have yet to produce an approved recovery plan aimed at reforming the economy and restoring investor confidence.

The Lebanese currency has lost over 90% of its value against the dollar, leaving over half the population in poverty

Lebanon’s financial woes were compounded by Israel’s war with the Lebanese militant Hezbollah group that ended with a U.S.-brokered ceasefire last November. A World Bank report has said that the estimated cost of reconstruction and recovery for Lebanon following the 14-month war is about \$11 billion.

Lebanon’s recently elected President Joseph Aoun and Salam, the prime minister, have pledged to implement reforms, including tackling the long-standing economic crisis.

The crisis has been so severe that for years the country has relied largely on a cash-based economy, with widespread public distrust of banks and low levels of investment.



MTA phases in OMNY system citywide

MetroCard era ends as NYC fully adopts OMNY

NEW YORK, Dec 28, (AP): When the MetroCard replaced the New York City subway token in 1994, the swipeable plastic card infused much-needed modernity into one of the world’s oldest and largest transit systems.

Now, more than three decades later, the gold-hued fare card and its notoriously finicky magnetic strip are following the token into retirement.

The last day to buy or refill a MetroCard is Dec. 31, 2025, as the transit system fully transitions to OMNY, a contactless payment system that allows riders to tap their credit card, phone or other smart device to pay fares, much like they do for other everyday purchases.

Transit officials say more than 90% of subway and bus trips are now paid using the tap-and-go system, introduced in 2019.

Major cities around the world, including London and Singapore, have long used similar contactless systems. In the U.S., San Francisco launched a pay-go system earlier this year, joining Chicago and others.

The humble MetroCard may have outlasted its useful life, but in its day it was revolutionary, says Jodi Shapiro, curator at the New York Transit Museum in Brooklyn, which opened an exhibit earlier this month reflecting on the MetroCard’s legacy.

Before MetroCards, bus and subway riders relied on tokens, the brass-colored coins introduced in 1953 that were purchased from station booths. When the subway opened in 1904, paper tickets cost just a nickel, or about \$1.82 in today’s dollars.

“There was a resistance to change from tokens to something else because tokens work,” Shapiro said on a recent visit to the museum, housed underground in a decommissioned subway station. “MetroCards introduced a whole other level of thinking for New Yorkers.”

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority launched public campaigns to teach commuters how to swipe the originally blue-colored cards correctly, hoping to avoid the dreaded error message or lost fares. Officials even briefly toyed with the idea of an quirky mascot, the Cardvaark, before coming to their senses.

The cards quickly became collectors items as the transit system rolled out special commemorative editions marking major events, such as the “Subway Series” between baseball’s New York Mets and the New York Yankees in the 2000 World Series. At the time, a fare cost \$1.50.

Artists from David Bowie and Olivia Rodrigo to seminal New York hip hop acts, such as the Wu-Tang Clan, the Notorious B.I.G. and LL Cool J, have also graced the plastic card over the years, as have iconic New York shows like Seinfeld and Law & Order.



A subway rider swipes his MetroCard in a turnstile as he enters the 34th St. subway station, July 23, 2007, in New York. (AP)

“For me, the most special cards are cards which present New York City to the world,” said Lev Radin, a collector in the Bronx. “Not only photos of landmarks, skylines, but also about people who live and make New York special.”

Perfecting the correct angle and velocity of the MetroCard swipe also became something of a point of pride separating real New Yorkers from those just visiting.

During her failed 2016 presidential campaign, Hillary Clinton, a former U.S. Senator from New York, took an excruciating five swipes at a Bronx turnstile. In fairness, her chief Democratic opponent at the time, U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont, a native Brooklynite, didn’t even appear to realize tokens had been discontinued.

Unlike the MetroCard rollout, OMNY has required little adjustment.

Riders reluctant to use a credit card or smart device can purchase an OMNY card they can reload, similar to a MetroCard. Existing MetroCards will also continue to work into 2026, allowing riders to use remaining balances.

MTA spokespersons declined to comment, pointing instead to their many public statements as the deadline approaches.

The agency has said the changeover saves at

least \$20 million annually in MetroCard-related costs.

The new system also allows unlimited free rides within a seven-day period because the fare is capped after 12 rides. It’ll max out at \$35 a week once the fare rises to \$3 in January.

Still, new changes come with tradeoffs, with some critics raising concerns about data collection and surveillance.

Near Times Square on a recent morning, Ronald Minor was among the dwindling group of “strap-hangers” still swiping MetroCards.

The 70-year-old Manhattan resident said he’s sad to see them go. He has an OMNY card but found the vending machines to reload it more cumbersome.

“It’s hard for the elders,” Minor said as he caught a train to Brooklyn. “Don’t push us aside and make it like we don’t count. You push these machines away, you push us away.”

John Sacchetti, another MetroCard user at the Port Authority stop, said he likes being able to see his balance as he swipes through a turnstile so he knows how much he’s been spending on rides.

“It’s just like everything else, just something to get used to,” he said as he headed uptown. “Once I get used to it, I think it’ll be okay.”

Public favors pension reform to include all workers

Majority of Germans demand pension system overhaul

BERLIN, Dec 28, (Xinhua): A public opinion poll released on Sunday shows that a strong majority of Germans believe the country’s statutory pension system requires a fundamental overhaul, while confidence in the current governing coalition to deliver such reform remains low.

According to the survey conducted by the Civey Institute for the Funke media group, 82 percent of respondents said comprehensive pension reform is necessary. Only 9 percent disagreed, while another 9 percent were undecided.

Despite broad public support for reform, just 20 percent of those surveyed said they trust a coalition government of the conservative CDUC-SU bloc and the center-left Social Democratic Party to implement major changes. By contrast, 69 percent expressed skepticism, and 11 percent had

no clear opinion.

Germany’s pension system is coming under increasing strain as the number of retirees rises and the number of contributors declines. Reflecting these concerns, 60 percent of respondents supported linking retirement eligibility to the number of contribution years rather than maintaining a fixed retirement age.

Support was even stronger for expanding the contributor base. The poll found that 81 percent favor requiring civil servants, self-employed workers and members of parliament to pay into the statutory pension system.

The online survey was conducted between Dec. 16 and Dec. 22 among about 5,000 respondents aged 18 and over.

China-Africa cooperation powers industrial takeoff

Africa moves from dependency to industrial power

For decades, Africa has been described as the continent of the future -- a phrase that captures both hope and frustration. The continent holds immense natural wealth, a young and ambitious population, and a growing consumer market. Yet, industrialization -- the true foundation of sustainable prosperity -- has often lagged behind.

The central question remains: how can Africa finally achieve its long-delayed industrial breakthrough, and which partners can help turn that vision into reality?

The traditional model of dependence on raw material exports has kept many African economies vulnerable to external shocks. When commodity prices fall, government revenues shrink, currencies depreciate and public projects stall.

The lesson is clear: Africa must move up the value chain, processing and manufacturing its own resources domestically. The road to industrialization, however, requires more than ambition; it demands infrastructure, technology transfer, reliable financing, and above all, genuine partnerships built on mutual respect.

Over the past two decades, a quiet transformation has been taking shape across the continent. Roads, railways, ports and industrial parks are emerging in places where there was once only untapped potential.

These developments are not the result of charity or aid, but of collaboration with nations and institutions that view Africa as an equal partner, not a passive recipient. Increasingly, African countries are turning toward partners

who offer practical solutions and tangible results rather than conditional promises.

The most successful collaborations are those grounded in shared benefit -- trade that empowers, investments that create local jobs and infrastructure that links communities. In Kenya, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Tanzania, industrial parks and manufacturing hubs are reshaping local economies. What sets these initiatives apart is their focus on building local capacity: training African engineers, technicians and entrepreneurs who will continue the work long after the initial investments have been made.

This shift in mindset -- from aid dependency to partnership -- is perhaps the most powerful driver of Africa’s industrial takeoff. Rather than seeking handouts, African nations are asserting their agency, negotiating deals that serve their own development agendas.

The partners who understand and respect this new African confidence are the ones who will thrive alongside it.

In recent years, China’s engagement with Africa has been at the center of this transformation. Though often misunderstood in Western discourse, China’s approach has been grounded in infrastructure-driven cooperation -- an area where Africa’s needs have long been unmet. From railways connecting inland cities to coastal ports, to renewable energy projects powering industrial clusters, these initiatives have laid the groundwork for Africa’s long-term growth.

More importantly, these projects embody the principle of “win-win cooperation” -- a

relationship in which both sides gain through trade, technology and shared development.

While Western critics often focus on the issue of debt, such narratives overlook the bigger picture. Investment, by its nature, carries cost, but it also builds capacity. The question is not whether Africa should borrow, but whether those investments create true value that endures.

Many African leaders have learned to distinguish between loans that produce dependency and those that build self-reliance. The difference lies in whether the financing supports real industries, creates jobs and fosters skill development. On these fronts, Africa’s partnerships with nations that prioritize tangible outcomes are paying off.

Ultimately, Africa’s industrial future will be written by Africans, but it will also be shaped by the quality of their international partnerships. The world is watching a new generation of African leaders and entrepreneurs who are redefining what it means to engage globally.

They are looking not for lectures, but for collaboration; not for aid, but for opportunity. The partners who recognize this shift and respect Africa’s aspirations will find in this continent not a charity case, but a confident co-builder of the global future. The continent is choosing partners that deliver results, respect sovereignty and share its vision of inclusive growth. In this emerging era of cooperation, Africa’s industrial takeoff is no longer a dream -- it is a process already in motion, and Africa’s rise is not only inevitable, but unstoppable. (Xinhua)

Battery boom powers graphite mining

US graphite mining revives amid China supply concerns

GOUVERNEUR, Dec 28, (AP): Graphite mines in the United States largely closed down seven decades ago. Mining the ubiquitous mineral found in everything from nuclear reactors to pencils seemed to make little sense when it could be imported inexpensively from other nations, especially China.

That view is changing now.

Demand for graphite, a key material in the lithium-ion batteries that power everything from phones to electric cars, is surging as trade tensions with China persist. With federal officials concerned about the steady supply of a number of critical minerals, several companies have plans to mine graphite.

In New York, Titan Mining Corp. has mined a limited amount of ore from a deposit in snowy woods about 25 miles (40 kilometers) from the Canadian border, aiming for commercial sales by 2028. Company officials believe the geopolitical winds are at their backs to sell graphite concentrate for high-tech, industrial and military uses. That could include heat-resistant coatings in factories, anodes in large lithium-ion batteries connected to electrical grids and lubricants for military vehicles, according to the company.

“We believe there is a real opportunity here,” said company CEO Rita Adiani. “We have the ability to supply a significant portion of U.S. needs. And that’s largely because you can’t see China now as a reliable supply-chain partner.”

Trade tensions with China rose this year as President Donald Trump’s administration imposed higher tariffs, though those tensions eased somewhat after Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping met in October during a regional economic summit in South Korea.

The northern New York deposit is in a rural region with a rich history of graphite, iron ore and garnet mining. The iconic yellow Ticonderoga pencil was named for a town several hours east of this deposit where graphite was mined long ago.

Titan’s Joel Rheault recently held up a rock from the newly mined area. It was an ordinary-looking flecked fragment of schist, glinting slightly in the sun. But it was comprised of roughly 3% graphite.

“You can see how gray the rock is here,” said Rheault, the company’s vice president of operations. “That’s because of that graphite.”

Applications

Graphite can conduct electricity and withstand high temperatures, making it useful for a host of commercial and military applications. As such, the Department of Energy has said the need for graphite is critical, and the Department of the Interior lists it as one of 60 “critical minerals,” along with more than a dozen rare earth elements.

Forecasters also expect global graphite demand to continue soaring in the next decade, alongside the battery boom. That includes both mined, or “natural,” graphite and manufactured, or “synthetic,” graphite, which tends to be purer but pricier. Lithium-ion batteries’ anodes can use a mix of both.

China dominance in supplying both of natural and synthetic graphite has worried U.S. policymakers for years. Concerns spiked recently when China placed new export controls on graphite and several other minerals, only to relax them for a year.

Federal officials trying to shore up supply chains for critical minerals like graphite included a tax credit for critical mineral production in the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act. More recently, the Trump administration struck critical mineral deals with other countries to diversify supplies. It also has emphasized critical minerals through government funding and streamlined reviews.

“What’s happening now needs to happen,” said Gregory Keoleian, co-director of the Center for Sustainable Systems at the University of Michigan. “I think you just don’t want to be completely reliant on other countries when you have resources that you could develop.”

Most U.S. graphite mines were closed by the 1950s.

Right now, no U.S. graphite mines regularly produce a commercial product, according to the U.S. Geological Survey National Minerals Information Center.

But the center says the Titan mine is one of five active projects, including two in Alabama and one each in Montana and Alaska. Westwater Resources this fall announced it retained an engineering firm to lead the permitting process for mine development at the Coosa Deposit in Alabama. The Graphite One Inc. project in Alaska is at the site of what state officials say is the largest known large-flake graphite deposit in the United States.

“When we are sitting with one of the largest graphite deposits in the entire world ... there’s no reason why we need to rely on China for our graphite,” said Anthony Huston, president and CEO of Graphite One.

Titan has an advantage because its New York graphite deposit was discovered several years ago at the site of its existing zinc mine. The company was able to start limited graphite mining under its current permits while seeking additional permits for full-scale mining.

The federal government this fall approved the New York mine for fast-tracked permitting, saying it would “build a strategically significant domestic supply chain for graphite.” The U.S. Export-Import Bank also said it would consider lending up to \$120 million for construction and pledged \$5.5 million for a feasibility study.

Titan expects to eventually produce about 40,000 metric tonnes (44,092 tons) of graphite concentrate a year, which the company says is roughly half the current U.S. demand for natural graphite.

“We have indications, effectively, that 100% of the output from this facility could be sold,” Adiani said.



Joel Rheault, vice president of operations for Titan Mining Corp., holds a rock containing graphite at a mine, Nov. 20, 2025, in Gouverneur, N.Y. (AP)

Bolivia lifts restrictions on satellite companies like Starlink to upgrade its internet connectivity

LA PAZ, Dec 28, (AP): Bolivia’s new government issued a decree that will allow global satellite internet companies such as Starlink or Kuiper to provide internet access across the Andean nation as it tries to upgrade its technology and speed up its notoriously slow connectivity rates.

Bolivia’s centrist President Rodrigo Paz signed the decree, which waives the restrictions placed on international satellite companies by the socialist administration of his predecessor, Luis Arce.

Last year, Arce’s government refused to grant a license to SpaceX, which owns Starlink, to operate in Bolivia, citing data protection and national sovereignty concerns.

For years, Bolivia has tried to improve internet access in remote areas with a satellite purchased from China during the government of left-wing leader Evo Morales. When the satellite was acquired in 2013, Morales promised it would “enlighten the people, after years of living in obscurity.”

However, the Chinese satellite, known as the Tupac Katari, failed to significantly speed up internet connections on mobile phones or in homes, because it relies on geostationary technology and orbits Earth at a distance of about 35,000 kilometers (about 21,800 miles) from the surface.

In contrast, satellites used by Starlink orbit the planet at a distance of 550 kilometers (some 340 miles). Modern satellites used by Starlink and its competitors stay closer to Earth, which enables them to transmit data at faster rates.

A report published in November by Ookla, a connectivity intelligence company, found that Bolivia had the slowest internet speed for mobile phones and fixed broadband in South America. Brazil is the regional leader in internet speed.

On Tuesday, the Bolivian president said that by granting licenses to international satellite companies, he is hoping to “reduce the digital divide” and guarantee access to high quality connectivity for Bolivians.

The slow connectivity rates in Bolivia stymie simple tasks such as conference calls, and also make it harder to conduct more complex operations online, including cloud computing.

“We became spectators while the rest of the world advanced,” said Paz, who was elected in October. “But that is over. With new technologies we will be able to make up for lost time.”

Paz also said international companies - including Tesla, Amazon, Tether and Orcacle - plan to invest in data centers that Bolivia will set up near the cities of El Alto and Cochabamba.

The president has been trying to draw international investment to Bolivia, as part of an effort to overcome an economic crisis, characterized by severe shortages of U.S. dollars.

Earlier this week, Paz signed a decree to eliminate fuel subsidies that had hobbled public finances and worsened the dollar shortages. Labor unions across the Andean nation took to the streets on Monday to protest the elimination of the fuel subsidies.

'It's going to be one for the ages'

Times Square to feature special patriotic crystal ball on New Year's Eve

NEW YORK, Dec 28, (AP): After the crystal ball drops on New Year's Eve in New York City, it will rise again, sparkling in red, white and blue to usher in 2026 and kick off months of celebrations for the nation's upcoming 250th birthday.

The patriotic touches at this year's Times Square gathering, including a second confetti drop, will offer an early glimpse of what's ahead: hundreds of events and programs, big and small, planned nationwide to mark the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

"I'm telling you right now, whatever you're imagining, it's going to be much more than that," said America250 Chair Rosie Rios, who oversees the bipartisan commission created by Congress in 2016 to organize the semiquincentennial anniversary. "It's going to be one for the ages, the most inspirational celebration this country and maybe the world has ever seen."

Rios and her group worked with the Times Square Alliance business district and One Times Square, the building from where the ball is dropped, to make the changes to this year's ceremonies. They're also planning a second ball drop event on July 3, the eve of the nation's birthday, "in the same beautiful style that Times Square knows how to do it," Rios said.

It will mark the first time in 120 years there will be ball drop in Times Square that doesn't occur on New Year's Eve, she said.

A New Year's Eve ball was first dropped in Times Square in 1907. Built by a young immigrant metalworker named Jacob Starr, the 700-pound (318-kilogram), 5-foot- (1.5-meter-) diameter ball was made of iron and wood and featured 100 25-watt light bulbs. Last year, the Constellation Ball, the ninth and largest version, was unveiled. It measured about 12



This image provided by America250 in December 2025 shows the New Year's Eve ball designed for the U.S.'s 250th year. (AP)

feet (3.7 meters) in diameter and weighs nearly 12,000 pounds (5,400 kilograms).

The only years when no ball drop occurred were 1942 and 1943, when the

city instituted a nightly "dimout" during World War II to protect itself from attacks. Crowds instead celebrated the new year with a moment of silence followed by chimes rung from the base of One Times Square.

This year, the stroke of midnight will also mark the official launch of America Gives, a national service initiative created by America250. Organizers hope to make 2026 the largest year of volunteer hours ever aggregated in the country.

On the following day, America250 will participate in the New Years Day Rose Parade in Pasadena, California, with a float themed "Soaring Onward Together for 250 Years." It will feature three larger-than-life bald eagles representing the country's past, present and future.

"We want to ring in this new year from sea to shining sea. What better way to think about it than going from New York to California," Rios said. "This has to be community-driven, this has to be grassroots. We're going from Guam to Alaska, from Fairbanks to Philadelphia, and everything in between."

President Donald Trump has also announced the "Freedom 250" initiative to coordinate additional events for the 250th anniversary.

Rios said she sees the wide range of celebrations and programs planned for the coming months, from large fireworks displays and statewide potluck suppers to student contests and citizen oral histories, as an opportunity to unite a politically divided nation.

"If we can find something for everyone ... having those menus of options that people can pick and choose how they want to participate," she said. "That's how we're going to get to engaging 350 million Americans."

Obituary

'We are mourning a legend'

Brigitte Bardot dies at 91

PARIS, Dec 28, (AP): Brigitte Bardot, who became one of the greatest screen sirens of the 20th century and later a militant animal rights activist and far-right supporter, has died. She was 91.

Bardot died Sunday at her home in southern France, according to Bruno Jacquelin, of the Brigitte Bardot Foundation for the protection of animals. Speaking to The Associated Press, he gave no cause of death, and said no arrangements have yet been made for funeral or memorial services. She had been hospitalized last month.

At the height of a cinema career that spanned some 28 films and three marriages, Bardot came to symbolize a nation bursting out of bourgeois respectability. Her tousled, blond hair, voluptuous figure and pouty irreverence made her one of France's best-known stars.

Such was her widespread appeal that in 1969 her features were chosen to be the model for "Marianne," the national emblem of France and the official Gallic seal. Bardot's face appeared on statues, postage stamps and even on coins.

"We are mourning a legend," French President Emmanuel Macron wrote Sunday on X.

Bardot's second career as an animal rights activist was equally sensational. She traveled to the Arctic to blow the whistle on the slaughter of baby seals; she condemned the use of animals in laboratory experiments.

"Man is an insatiable predator," Bardot told The Associated Press on her 73rd birthday, in 2007. "I don't care about my past glory. That means nothing in the face of an animal that suffers, since it has no power, no words to defend itself."

Her activism earned her compatriots' respect and, in 1985, she was awarded the Legion of Honor, the nation's highest recognition.

Later, however, she fell from public grace as her animal protection diatribes took on a decidedly extremist tone. She frequently decried the influx of immigrants into France, especially Muslims.

Bardot's 1992 marriage to fourth husband Bernard d'Ormale, a onetime adviser to National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, contributed to her political shift. She described Le Pen, an outspoken nationalist with multiple racism convictions of his own, as a "lovely, intelligent man."

In 2012, she wrote a letter in support of the presidential bid of Marine Le Pen, who now leads her father's renamed National Rally party. Le Pen paid homage Sunday to an "exceptional woman" who was "incredibly French."

Brigitte Anne-Marie Bardot was born Sept. 28, 1934, to a wealthy industrialist. A shy, secretive child, she studied classical ballet and was discovered by a family friend who put her on the cover of Elle magazine at age 14.

Generous

Bardot once described her childhood as "difficult" and said her father was a strict disciplinarian who would sometimes punish her with a horse whip.

The film was a box-office hit, and it made Bardot a superstar. Her girlish pout and tiny waist were often more appreciated than her talent.

"It's an embarrassment to have acted so badly," Bardot said of her early films. "I suffered a lot in the beginning. I was really treated like someone less than nothing."

Bardot's unabashed, off-screen love affair with co-star Jean-Louis Trintignant further shocked the nation. It eradicated the boundaries between her public and private life and turned her into a hot prize for paparazzi.

Bardot never adjusted to the limelight. She blamed the constant press attention for the suicide attempt that followed 10 months after the birth of her only child, Nicolas. Photographers had broken into her house two weeks before she gave birth to snap a picture of her pregnant.

Nicolas' father was Jacques Charrier, a French actor whom she married in 1959 but who never felt comfortable in his role as Monsieur Bardot. Bardot soon gave up her son to his father, and later said she had been chronically depressed and unready for the duties of being a mother.

"I was looking for roots then," she said in an interview. "I had none to offer."

In her 1996 autobiography "Initiales B.B.," she likened her pregnancy to "a tumor growing inside me," and described Charrier as "temperamental and abusive."

Bardot married her third husband, West German millionaire playboy Gunther Sachs, in 1966, but the relationship again ended in divorce three years later.

Among her films were "A Parisian" (1957); "In Case of Misfortune," in which she starred in 1958 with screen legend Jean Gabin; "The Truth" (1960); "Private Life" (1962); "A Ravishing Idiot" (1964); "Shalako" (1968); "Women" (1969); "The Bear And The Doll" (1970); "Rum Boulevard" (1971); and "Don Juan" (1973).

"It was never a great passion of mine," she said of filmmaking. "And it can be deadly sometimes. Marilyn (Monroe) perished because of it."

Bardot retired to her Riviera villa in St. Tropez at the age of 39 in 1973 after "The Woman Grabber."

She emerged a decade later with a new persona: An animal rights lobbyist, her face was wrinkled and her voice was deep following years of heavy smoking. She abandoned her jet-set life and sold off movie memorabilia and jewelry to create a foundation devoted exclusively to the prevention of animal cruelty.

Her activism knew no borders. She urged South Korea to ban the sale of dog meat and once wrote to U.S. President Bill Clinton asking why the U.S. Navy recaptured two dolphins it had released into the wild.

She attacked centuries-old French and Italian sporting traditions including the Palio, a free-for-all horse race, and campaigned on behalf of wolves, rabbits, kittens and turtle doves.



In this file photo, former French film star Brigitte Bardot attends a press conference in Brussels protesting against cruelty against animals in Europe, especially the cruelties practiced during festivities in Spain. (AP)

Film



Post-production technician Zhang Shiyu works at Dongyang Gewuzhizhi Culture Media in Dongyang, east China's Zhejiang Province.(Xinhua)

Finding and shaping winning stories is the next challenge

Filmmakers turn to AI to create epic scenes

HANGZHOU, Dec 28, (Xinhua): What is a filmmaker to do when they need to film epic battles

for a budget micro-short drama, but they have few actors and even less time? This is a worry of the past, with artificial intelligence (AI) now capable of summoning entire armies of digital performers.

This was a recent experience for post-production technician Zhang Shiyu. "Especially with the leap in AI large language models this year, the process has become smoother, more precise and strikingly efficient. What used to take me long days to create, AI can deliver in mere minutes with even greater continuity and realism," said Zhang, who works for Dongyang Gewuzhizhi Culture Media.

AI-generated high-quality visuals are seamlessly integrated into the editing pipeline. Through techniques like precise texture mapping, AI-enabled visual effects blend virtual elements with live-action footage, delivering realistic and visually striking results.

Zhang is not the only one at the company using AI to streamline micro-short drama production. "AI plays a crucial role in every step of post-production," said its chairman, Lu Caijian.

Hengdian World Studios -- often referred to as "China's Hollywood" -- is where the company is located, and it now has a solid industrial chain. "This year, we have prioritized integrating technology with film and television, powering the industry's growth," said Lu Pingping, deputy director of the Hengdian Film and Television Cultural Industry Development Service Center.

Lu noted that in one example, tech services firm Dongyang Yuanying Technology Co. established operations in Hengdian in October and has since

participated in the production of over 20 short dramas.

Lin Ju, Yuanying's operations manager, noted that AI is currently being used to create grand scenes, science fiction and fantasy genres, and to add special effects to footage that has already been shot.

For companies like Yuanying, which is in the process of developing an original series, the next challenge is finding and shaping winning stories. This is where the role of AI is expanding upstream into scriptwriting and project evaluation.

Influence

According to a report from the China Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers, AI is reshaping the industry's workflow everywhere from scriptwriting to marketing. Its influence transcends the role of a mere tool, actively redefining creative practices, industry structures and cultural values.

"AI significantly enhances production efficiency. But more importantly, AI is expanding the boundaries of visual expression. It is likely to give rise to entirely new cinematic styles and narrative methods that are unimaginable today," said Li Zhenlin, dean of the College of Film at the Shanghai Theatre Academy.

Some companies have even developed their own large language models to increase proficiency. Hangzhou-based Chinese media company Huace Group, for example, has developed an in-house AI model for script summarization, evaluation and creation.

Huace's resources -- which include 50,000 hours of film, television copyright assets, and

data accumulated over 30 years, such as scripts, evaluation reports and industry data -- are the core training data for the model.

It can produce rapid preliminary evaluations of novels of up to 1.2 million words. Tasks that previously took a human team 10 to 14 days can be completed by AI in just one or two hours. Combining AI screening and manual assessment, overall efficiency has increased by over 50 percent.

"The model helps efficiently identify suitable projects during the initial stages, and inspires creators by optimizing scripts," said Fu Binxing, president of Huace Group, noting that the company is refining the model's accuracy, which has reached about 90 percent, and enhancing the tool by following industry trends and expanding genre coverage.

"AI is not meant to replace humans. It has altered certain production processes, but in the short term, the core of creation is still people," Lin said. "What matters is the ability to harness AI. Screenwriters still need to control the visual language and final presentation of each shot." "For new directors, AI lowers the barriers to entry into the industry. They can use AI tools to translate their creative vision into visual presentations for investors and potential collaborators. Innovation is at the heart of filmmaking. By delegating routine assistant-like tasks to AI, people can be free to focus on true innovation," Fu said.

As AI dramatically increases the accessibility of creation and accelerates content output, protecting intellectual property with AI has become a parallel frontier. In response, the industry is deploying AI as a guardian.

Minnan-themed comedy show from Fujian entertains audience

TAIPEI, Dec 28, (Xinhua): A comedy show celebrating Minnan culture by performers from Fujian Province was staged in Kinmen on Saturday, entertaining the audience with stand-up comedy, sketches, Xiangsheng (crosstalk), and other art forms.

Performed at the arts and culture center of Kinmen's cultural affairs bureau, the show was jointly organized by the associations for cultural and tourism promotion and the performing arts industry of Fujian.

As a vital link between Fujian and Kinmen, Minnan culture, along with its dialect and everyday life, served as the central theme of most performances, humorously reflecting Minnan customs and traditions, from weddings to folk religion.

Wei He, the show's host and a comedy industry insider based in Xiamen, Fujian, said this was the first visit to Kinmen for most of the performers.

"We were initially worried about whether our

performing style would be well received by the local audience, but once the show began, we realized those worries were unnecessary, as the audience responded with great enthusiasm," she said.

Previously promoted on the social network, the Saturday show drew residents of all ages, from children to the elderly, as well as many students from nearby Quemoy University.

Tsan-yen, a university student, came to see the show at the invitation of several friends. He had never seen an in-person stand-up comedy show.

The 20-year-old said he was impressed by the Xiangsheng act about Minnan family letters, in which one performer imitated a Douyin livestream sales pitch in a funny way.

"I also watch Douyin in daily life, so it kind of resonated with me," he said.

To better connect with the audience, the performers incorporated a variety of Kinmen elements into the show, including Kinmen tribute

candy and kaoliang liquor. The show also featured traditional Minnan arts performed in the dialect, making them easily accessible to local viewers.

Hu Liwei, a marionette performer from Fujian's Quanzhou, presented a puppetry piece based on the classical act "The Little Monk's Descent into the Mountain" in the Minnan dialect.

"Here in Kinmen, the audience didn't need subtitles to follow the lyrics and lines, so the atmosphere was very lively, even beyond our expectations," he said.

Hu, 34, began to learn marionette art over 10 years ago. The Quanzhou marionette, a national intangible cultural heritage item, is believed to have become popular in the region at least 1,000 years ago and embodies many Minnan folk religions and customs.

"There are many more interesting elements in Quanzhou marionette art, and we hope to have the chance to present more of them to audiences here next time," he said.



A student practices Chinese martial arts at Golden Jet Myanmar, a Chinese martial arts center in Yangon, Myanmar. (Xinhua)



Students practice Chinese martial arts at Golden Jet Myanmar, a Chinese martial arts center in Yangon, Myanmar. (Xinhua)



Students practice Chinese martial arts at Golden Jet Myanmar, a Chinese martial arts center in Yangon, Myanmar. (Xinhua)

‘More than just getting healthy’

Kung Fu builds discipline & confidence among Myanmar’s young practitioners

YANGON, Dec 28, (Xinhua): With bare feet striking the foam floor in a steady rhythm, children roll, kick, and regain their balance with focused expressions far beyond their years inside a modest training hall in Myanmar. Here, Kung Fu is not just a physical exercise; it is a lesson in discipline, confidence, and perseverance.

Watching closely is U Khin Maung Nyein, 66, the founder of Golden Jet Myanmar, a Chinese martial arts center in Yangon. For 46 years, he has devoted his life to teaching Chinese martial arts, inspired by the Bruce Lee films that once captivated him as a teenager.

“At that time, Bruce Lee movies were very popular,” he said. “I watched many of them and wanted to learn martial arts.” That inspiration grew into a lifelong mission. Today, U Khin Maung Nyein teaches children and adults five days a week, believing that Kung Fu builds character as much as strength.

“The foundation usually takes about one year,” he explained. “If they master the foundation, the rest becomes easy.” Discipline is central to his teaching. He said martial arts help young people avoid harmful habits and instead develop consistency and self-control.

“When they learn martial arts, they don’t waste their time,” he said. “They be-

come fit and healthy. Kung Fu is more than just getting healthy.” Children form the majority of his students, though he emphasized the importance of parental support. Some attend year-round, while others join only during school holidays.

Fourteen-year-old Hnin Thazin Phyto has trained at the center for nine years. What began as curiosity became a defining part of her life.

“I saw the center and became interested, so I joined,” she said. “Now I feel fit and healthy.” She practices about three hours a week and has performed demonstrations at school events.

More importantly, she said Kung Fu taught her discipline and emotional strength.

“When I was young, I felt sad when I was scolded,” she said. “Here, we learn discipline.” The training has changed how she moves through daily life. She can lift heavy items, climb ladders easily, and handle physical tasks with confidence. She hopes to become a martial arts teacher one day and dreams of studying in China.

“By learning Kung Fu, I can defend myself now,” she said.

She admires Jackie Chan, another global symbol of Chinese martial arts. “He

does everything by himself,” she said. “Sometimes I try to imitate his movements.” Fifteen-year-old Ye Mahn joined the center four years ago for health reasons. “I was very small and often sick,” he said. “My mom sent me to become healthy and grow my body.” Now taller and stronger, he practices five days a week, about two hours each day. Though the training is demanding, he said it brings happiness and confidence.

“Sometimes I feel tired, but I feel happy,” he said. “Now I am fit and confident.” His advice to friends is simple: commitment matters. “Practice any sport seriously for at least five or six months,” he said. “You will see results.” Younger students echo the same mix of effort and joy. Ten-year-old Zwe Lin Htet practices three to four days a week.

“Sometimes, I feel tired, but I am happy,” he said, proudly showing forward rolls to his friends.

For U Khin Maung Nyein, these small transformations are the true rewards of teaching. Through repetition, discipline, and guidance, he believes Kung Fu gives children strength in the body, focus in the mind, and confidence to face the world.

Theatre



Actors stage a performance at the opening ceremony of the Seventh Tang Xianzu International Theatre Exchange Month in Fuzhou City, east China's Jiangxi Province. (Xinhua)

Young performers preserve 600-year-old art in Fuzhou

Centuries-old Kunqu opera finds new life with youthful energy

NANCHANG, Dec 28, (Xinhua): For 22-year-old Zou Yu, a student in the opera class at Fuzhou Vocational Technical College in east China’s Jiangxi Province, the day usually begins at 5 a.m.

Every day, she and her classmates undergo eight hours of intensive training, covering everything from basic skills and body movements to singing and stage rehearsals.

Studying the 600-year-old Kunqu Opera is by no means easy. Three years ago, she fell face-first during a back-throwing move, injuring her cheekbone and causing it to bleed.

“My parents cried and tried to persuade me to stop studying, but I remember how amazed I was when I watched ‘The Peony Pavilion’ for the first time,” she said. “That kind of beauty is worth preserving for a lifetime.” Written in 1598, the same year as Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet, Tang Xianzu’s “The Peony Pavilion” tells the tale of Du Liniang, a young woman from a wealthy family who falls asleep beside a peony pavilion and dreams of a romantic encounter with a young scholar named Liu Mengmei.

The 600-year-old Kunqu Opera, an elegant fusion of poetry, music, intricate costumes and graceful performance, was inscribed on UNESCO’s list of World Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2001.

Such intensive training stems not only from the students’ passion and love for Kunqu opera, but also from the urgency of preserving this traditional art.

“Around 2010, the opera development in Fuzhou faced a talent gap,” said Wu Lan, director of the city’s culture and art develop-

ment center.

According to Wu, at that time, the average age of professional opera performers in the city exceeded 48, and the proportion of young actors was less than 10 percent, with many local opera genres on the verge of loss.

A turning point came in 2016 when the city launched an opera inheritance and innovation project. One of the main initiatives was the launch of opera inheritance classes at Fuzhou Vocational Technical College.

According to the city’s finance bureau, from 2017 to 2024, a total of 6.8 million yuan (about 966,000 U.S. dollars) was allocated to support the opera classes and 198 young opera performers were sent to various local troupes after training at the school. Today, the proportion of young opera practitioners in Fuzhou has risen to 40 percent.

“In the past, it was always us who took the stage, but now the young people have grown up,” said Tang Guangming, a national-level representative inheritor of intangible cultural heritage.

In recent years, the local government has also funded free opera performances by commissioning private troupes in the city. In Linchuan District, 190 such performances were staged last year, supported by a government budget of 665,000 yuan.

Zhu Xudong’s troupe is among those that have benefited from the initiative. In 2021, when Zhu’s troupe began performing in the Wenchangli historic area, ticket prices kept many elderly audience members away.

Thanks to local government subsidies, however, elders now bring their own chairs, and young parents bring their babies to enjoy the performances for free.

“It’s like a cultural feast. The performances are so wonderful and I feel particularly good after watching the opera performances,” said Cheng Wen, a local resident who often brings her two-year-old kid to watch the performances.

“My original aspiration has always been to spread and pass on the profound theatrical culture of Fuzhou,” Zhu said.

In 2016, to mark the 400th anniversary of Tang Xianzu’s death, Fuzhou staged a live performance titled “Dreaming of the Peony Pavilion” in the Wenchangli historic area. The ancient streets from the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911) served as natural settings, with 12 real locations linking the three chapters of the performance.

“Through technological innovation and immersive scene recreation, the performance creates a meaningful dialogue between ancient opera and modern aesthetics,” said Li Hui, head of the performance’s operation team.

Since its public performance in 2018, it has attracted more than 450,000 viewers.

“Opera is not a sunset industry. Short videos and immersive experiences can bring it closer to audiences today,” said young opera practitioner Zhou Zhiqian, one of the performers who shares vlogs of their daily training to introduce the beauty of opera to more young people through new media.

Kuwait’s winter camping season revives popular heritage

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28, (KUNA): With the onset of winter, Kuwait’s camping season returns as a prominent expression of the country’s popular heritage and national identity, with camps spreading across the north and south of the country.

Running from November 15 until March 15, 2026, the season is more than a winter pastime; it is a social tradition that strengthens community bonds and reflects values of hospitality and togetherness, blending tradition with modern life.

Each year, Kuwaitis reaffirm their enduring connection to the desert, turning camps into a lifestyle centered on tranquility, social closeness, and recreational activities away from the city’s fast pace.

Culture

Creativity is no longer just for the elite

Digital culture spurs new generation of everyday writers

BEIJING, Dec 28, (Xinhua): Being both a delivery courier and a poet need not be a contradiction. In the pauses between orders, 56-year-old Wang Jibing turns the grit of daily work into poems he calls “sweet candy.” His poem “At Three in the Afternoon,” capturing a tender snapshot of a small eatery owner resting with her child, has resonated far beyond its original setting. Popular not only in China, it has also been published in Italian, and a related documentary was recently aired in Italy.

Earlier this month, Wang recounted the experience in an article for China’s flagship newspaper, People’s Daily. “I am filled with pride,” he wrote.

Stories like Wang’s point to a broader cultural change unfolding across China, where more ordinary people are stepping into the role of creators rather than just audiences. From memoirs by migrant workers to villagers staging self-written plays in public squares, grassroots creativity is increasingly visible.

Previously, artistic creation in China was largely the domain of a select few, with works often confined to galleries, theaters, or academic circles. Such everyday scenes as depicted in “At Three in the Afternoon” would have been hard to imagine.

Experts say that as China’s economy and society continue to develop, people are no longer satisfied with improvements in material living standards alone. Increasingly, they also seek emotional expression, cultural participation, and a richer spiritual life, creating fertile ground for everyday creativity to take root and flourish.

Earlier this year, an exhibition on workers’ literature opened in Dongguan, a manufacturing hub in south China’s Guangdong Province, showcasing cultural expressions shaped by more than 40 years of industrialization -- a period during which over 200 million people have lived and worked in the city since China’s reform and opening up.

Zheng Xiaoqiong, once an assembly-line worker in Dongguan, still regards the city as one of the roots of her creative work. She said that the city’s transition from labor-intensive manufacturing to high-tech industries, combined with rapid urban and demographic changes, has informed her recent novels.

“In this community, a group of migrant worker writers has emerged, and Guangdong was the first to see this phenomenon -- it was historically inevitable,” Liu Dongwu, an expert on migrant worker literature, said, noting that the vitality of today’s popular literature lies in its resonance with the times.

This wave of creativity has been enabled by long-term progress in education, literacy, and public cultural infrastructure. Over the past seven decades, China’s illiteracy rate has fallen from more than 80 percent to 2.67 percent, while new entrants to the workforce now receive an average of more than 13 years of schooling.

Public cultural services in the country have expanded as well, with community institutions, libraries and museums spreading across cities and rural areas -- most of them free to the public.

“Creativity does not belong to a few,” said Xie Youshun, chairman of the Guangdong Provincial Writers Association. “Anyone curious about life has the potential to turn feeling and imagination into art.” For Wang Jibing, this potential has never dimmed. He left middle school early and worked a series of jobs before becoming a part-time food delivery courier in Kunshan, east China’s Jiangsu Province, in 2018. To date, he has written over 6,000 poems and published five poetry collections.

“I’ve always loved literature, and I write whenever I get a chance,” Wang said, adding that his daily deliveries expose him to people from all walks of life and give him a constant source of inspiration.



A mother and daughter read at Guangzhou Library in Guangzhou, south China's Guangdong Province. (Xinhua)



A guest takes photos of a Dunhuang mural during the preview of the Dunhuang Culture and Art Public Benefit Exhibition in east China's Shanghai. (Xinhua)



KUNA photo
A dazzling aerial view of Kuwait's winter camps at night, where tradition meets modern lighting, creating a vibrant cultural landscape.

Draft law to boost birth rates

Fengyun-4 03 boosts weather monitoring capabilities

China’s first childcare services bill gains nationwide attention

BEIJING, Dec. 28, (Xinhua): China’s first childcare services bill has ignited significant discussion as it was submitted to the top legislature for review, marking the latest move in the nation’s efforts to foster a birth-friendly society.

The legislation, under review at this week’s session of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (NPC), aims to expand affordable childcare, lower the cost of raising children under the age of 3, and boost birth rates amid demographic challenges.

This marks a significant legislative breakthrough, said He Dan, head of the National Health Commission’s China Population and Development Research Center, emphasizing the gradual inclusion of affordable childcare services in the basic public services system.

Experts view that this move would provide a solid legal basis for introducing support measures in the future to reduce the burden of caregiving, strengthen support for childbirth, and ease the economic, social and psychological pressures on new parents.

China has recorded an overall declining fertility rate in recent years. In response, authorities have rolled out policies including a nationwide childcare subsidy program and free preschool education for children in their first year of kindergarten.

During Friday’s legislative deliberations, lawmaker Lyu Shiming described the childcare services bill as “timely and significant, addressing urgent public needs.”

Lawmakers from generations born in the 1950s and 1960s noted that public childcare services were common in factories, state-owned enterprises, and public institutions in the early years of the People’s Republic of China.

Following the reform and opening up in the late 1970s, private businesses increasingly took on the role of providing childcare services. Today, most of these services are offered by private institutions -- though often at high costs.

The average price of childcare services in China in 2023 is 1,978 yuan (about 281 U.S. dollars) per month, excluding meal expenses, and the average in first-tier cities such as Beijing and Shanghai exceeds 5,500 yuan.

Besides encouraging broader public participation, the draft proposed this time, nonetheless, particularly underscores the government’s primary role in developing childcare services.

Zhang Li, deputy dean of the Law School at the China University of Political Science and Law, highlighted a key provision requiring local governments to include childcare funding in their budgets and establish stable financing mechanisms.

During deliberations, lawmakers put forward targeted, professional suggestions.

Lyu, also head of the China Association of Volunteers for Persons with Disabilities, called for greater support for specialized institutions that serve children with physical, mental or intellectual disabilities.

The bill mandates that local governments prioritize services for families with children under 3 who have disabilities.

By adopting a demand-driven, problem-focused approach, the draft law aims to better regulate and develop the childcare sector by addressing existing and potential challenges related to service quality, provider qualifications, and institutional oversight. With the well-being of infants and toddlers at its core, the draft seeks to strengthen protections for their health and safety through professional, science-based care.

In response to these goals, Zhou Guangquan, vice chairman of the NPC Constitution and Law Committee, suggested that the draft should require regular safety training for leaders of childcare institutions.

Beyond the legislature, the bill has resonated with the public, becoming a trending topic on social media Weibo with over 5 million views by Friday.

One comment reads, “Safety and costs are key. With this law, parents can finally feel more at ease.” Another user notes, “This bill sends a strong message: Raising children isn’t just a responsibility for moms or families -- it’s something society as a whole has to step up and handle.”

Per China’s legislative procedure, the draft will have to undergo two or three readings before it can be ratified into law.



In this file photo dated April 24, 2024, children exchange their toys during an activity at a Community Based Family Support (CBFS) center at the Jinxiu community of Xiling district, Yichang city of Central China’s Hubei province. (Xinhua)

Vietnam to provide free HPV and pneumococcal shots to children

HANOI, Dec 28, (Xinhua): Vietnam will offer free vaccinations to children against cervical cancer caused by human papillomavirus (HPV) and pneumococcal diseases from 2026, aiming to expand immunization coverage and ease the financial burden on parents, local media VnExpress reported Friday.

Free pneumococcal vaccines will be rolled out on a small scale from the first quarter next year, while

free HPV vaccination for 11-year-old girls will be offered from the third quarter. About 18,000 children will benefit from the scheme annually during 2026-2028.

Currently costing millions of Vietnamese dong per dose, the two vaccines will be added to the National Expanded Program on Immunization, helping ensure more equitable access to quality healthcare, particularly in disadvantaged regions.

China launches new meteorological satellite



A Long March-3B rocket carrying the Fengyun-4 03 Satellite blasts off from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in southwest China’s Sichuan Province, Dec. 27, 2025. The Satellite has entered its planned orbit. (Xinhua)

XICHANG, Dec. 28, (Xinhua): China on Saturday sent a new satellite into space from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in the country’s southwestern Sichuan Province.

The satellite, Fengyun-4 03, was launched by a Long March-3B rocket at 12:07 a.m. (Beijing Time) and has entered its planned orbit.

With this successful launch, China’s Fengyun meteorological satellite family -- now consisting of more than 20 satellites -- has gained a new member that is considered the most capable in terms of comprehensive observation capabilities.

According to the Shanghai Academy of Spaceflight Technology (SAST), the Fengyun-4 03 satellite is equipped with four Earth-observation instruments and two solar-observation instruments. It features a range of advanced capabilities, representing a substantial upgrade in observational performance, detection parameters and data transmission efficiency.

Among its instruments, the advanced geostationary radiation imager can now complete a full-disk scan of Earth in five minutes -- three times faster than the previous 15-minute cycle -- and is sensitive enough to detect atmospheric temperature variations as small as one-fiftieth of a degree Celsius from

thousands of kilometers away.

Another key payload, the geostationary interferometric infrared sounder, has enhanced its spatial resolution from 12 kilometers to 8 kilometers and can map temperature and humidity across China within one hour.

Its lightning imager captures 500 frames per second and can identify lightning events within a 30-gigabit-per-second data stream -- a processing feat comparable to screening 30 high-definition movies in one second to locate individual frames containing lightning signals.

According to the SAST, the Fengyun-4 series has progressively expanded China’s meteorological observation capacities.

China launched the Fengyun-4 01 satellite in December 2016, followed by the Fengyun-4 02 in June 2021. With the new Fengyun-4 03 satellite -- which enables inter-satellite coordination, high-speed data transmission, and broadcast functions -- the three satellites will now form an integrated and coordinated observation network.

SAST said that this enhanced network will significantly improve China’s capabilities in weather forecasting, meteorological disaster prevention, space-weather monitoring, and ecological-environment observation.

When ‘all-natural’ isn’t so healthy

Foods with healthy-sounding buzzwords could be hiding added sugar in plain sight

By Albert Stumm

Many consumers feel pride in avoiding the glazed pastries in the supermarket and instead opting for “all natural” granola that comes packed with extra protein. Same goes for low-fat yogurts “made with real fruit,” “organic” plant-based milks and bottled “superfood” smoothies.

Buyer beware: Healthy grocery buzzwords like those often cover up an unhealthy amount of sugar.

Added sugars are difficult to quickly spot because many companies use clever marketing to distract consumers, said Nicole Avena, a professor of neuroscience and psychiatry at Mount Sinai Medical School and Princeton University who has studied added sugars.

Avena said while some health-forward brands know people are starting to become aware of the hazards of added sugars, “a lot of the bigger brands don’t worry so much about people’s health.”

Here’s how to spot hidden sugars and what to do about it.

Along with saturated fat and salt, eating excess sugar is linked to heart disease, obesity, diabetes and other health risks.

The average American consumes 17 grams of added sugar a day, which adds up to 57 pounds (26 kilograms) per year, according to the American Heart Association. About half of that comes from beverages, but much of the rest is sneaked into cereal, salsa, prepared sandwiches, dairy products, bottled sauces and baked goods, including many brands of whole-grain bread.

To help control sugar intake, start by checking the nutrition label. Since 2021, food companies have been required to list the quantity of added sugars separately from total sugar content. But the plan backfired, Avena said.

Companies reduced common sweeteners like refined beet sugar and high-fructose corn syrup but added alternatives, such as monk fruit and the sugar alcohol erythritol, which aren’t considered “added sugars” under FDA regulations.

“Now our foods are even more sweet than they were back in 2020,” Avena said.

Collin Popp, a dietitian and professor at NYU Langone Health, said the current FDA recommendation allows for some flexibility. People should get no more than 10% of their calories from added sugar, which amounts to about 50 grams per day if eating



This photo illustration shows granulated sugar falling from a spoon, in Philadelphia, on Sept. 12, 2016. (AP)

2,000 calories, or a bit more than what’s in a typical can of soda.

But that might be too flexible, Popp said.

“I would actually like to see that be less than 5%, and closer to zero for some, if they have diabetes or prediabetes,” he said.

The key is to be mindful of what you’re eating, even if the product seems healthy or if the package is labeled organic, Popp said. Roasted nuts, plant-based milks and wasabi peas, for example, can include a surprising amount of added sugars. So can English muffins and Greek yogurt.

One Chobani black cherry yogurt, for example, has zero grams of fat but 9 grams of added sugar, or more than 2 teaspoons. Silk brand almond milk has 7 grams per cup.

Popp recommends taking control of how much sugar goes into your food. That could mean buying

plain yogurt and adding honey or berries, or asking the barista if you can put your own oat milk into your coffee.

Although they lower the calorie content of foods, artificial sweeteners like stevia and sugar alcohols may not be better because they can encourage people to overeat, Avena said. She said research shows that sweet flavors are what activate the reward center of the brain, not the sugar itself.

That’s not to write off sugar alternatives, including allulose for people with Type 1 diabetes since it doesn’t affect blood sugar.

But for the general public, minimizing dependence on the overall sweetness of food is key to improving health, she said.

“Don’t let the food companies decide how much sugar you’re eating,” Avena said. (AP)

The Conversation

New materials, old physics - science behind how your winter jacket keeps you warm

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

By Longji Cui and Wan Xiong
University of Colorado Boulder

As the weather grows cold this winter, you may be one of the many Americans pulling their winter jackets out of the closet. Not only can this extra layer keep you warm on a chilly day, but modern winter jackets are also a testament to centuries-old physics and cutting-edge materials science.

Winter jackets keep you warm by managing heat through the three classical modes of heat transfer - conduction, convection and radiation - all while remaining breathable so sweat can escape.

The physics has been around for centuries, yet modern material innovations represent a leap forward that let those principles shine.

Physicists like us who study heat transfer sometimes see thermal science as “settled.” Isaac Newton first described convective cooling, the heat loss driven by fluid motion that sweeps thermal energy away from a surface, in the early 18th century. Joseph Fourier’s 1822 analytical theory of heat then put conduction - the transfer of thermal energy through direct physical contact - on mathematical footing. Late-19th-century work by Josef Stefan and Ludwig Boltzmann, followed by the work of Max Planck at the dawn of the 20th century, made thermal radiation - the transfer of heat through electromagnetic waves - a pillar of modern physics.

All these principles inform modern materials design. Yet what feels new today are not the equations but the textiles. Over the last two decades, engineers have developed extremely thin synthetic fibers that trap heat more efficiently and treatments that make natural down repel water instead of soaking it up. They’ve designed breathable membranes full of tiny pores that let sweat escape, thin reflective layers that bounce your body heat back toward you, coatings that store and release heat as the temperature changes, and ultralight materials.

Together, these innovations give designers far more control over warmth, breathability and comfort than ever before. That’s why jackets now feel warmer, lighter and drier than anything Newton or Fourier could have imagined.



Modern winter jackets use a few time-honored physics principles to keep you warm. (AP)

Conduction is the direct flow of heat from your warm body into your colder surroundings. In winter, all that heat escaping your body makes you feel cold. Insulation fights conduction by trapping air in a web of tiny pockets, slowing the heat’s escape. It keeps the air still and lengthens the path heat must take to get out.

High-loft down makes up the expansive, fluffy clusters of feathers that create the volume inside a puffer jacket. Combined with modern synthetic fibers, the down immobilizes warm air and slows its escape. New types of fabrics infused with highly porous, ultralight materials called aerogels pack even more insulation into surprisingly slim layers.

A good winter jacket also needs to withstand wind, which can strip away the thin boundary layer of warm air that naturally forms around you. A jacket with a good outer shell blocks the wind’s pumping action with tightly woven

fabric that keeps heat in. Some jackets also have an outer layer of lamination that keeps water and cold air out, and a woven pattern that seals any paths heat might leak through around the cuffs, hems, flaps and collars.

The outer membrane layer on many jacket shells is both waterproof and breathable. It stops rain and snow from getting in, and it also lets your sweat escape as water vapor. This feature is key because insulation, such as down, stops working if it gets wet. It loses its fluff and can’t trap air, meaning you cool quickly. These shells also block wind, which protects the bubble of warm air your body creates. By stopping wind and water, the shell creates a calm, dry space for the insulation to do its job and keep you warm.

Even in still air, your body sheds heat by emitting invisible waves of heat energy. Modern jackets address this by using new types of cloth and technology that make the jacket’s inner surface reflect your body’s heat back toward you. This type of surface has a subtle space blanket effect that adds noticeable warmth without adding any bulk.

However, how jacket manufacturers apply that reflective material matters. Coating the entire material in metallic film would reflect lots of heat, but it wouldn’t allow sweat to escape, and you might overheat.

Some liners use a micro-dot pattern: The reflective dots bounce heat back while the gaps between them keep the material breathable and allow sweat to escape.

Another approach moves this technology to the outside of the garment. Some designs add a pattern of reflective material to the outer shell to keep heat from radiating out into the cold air.

When those exterior dots are a dark color, they can also absorb a touch of warmth from the sun. This effect is similar to window coatings that keep heat inside while taking advantage of sunlight to add more heat.

Warmth only matters if you stay dry. Sweat that can’t escape wets a jacket’s layer of insulation and accelerates heat loss. That’s why the best winter systems combine moisture-wicking inner fabrics with venting options and membranes whose pores let water vapor escape while keeping liquid water out.

Describing where heat travels throughout textiles remains challenging because, unlike light or electricity, heat diffuses through nearly everything. But new types of unique materials and surfaces with ultra-fine patterns are allowing scientists to better control how heat travels throughout textiles. (AP)

MCG groundsman concedes pitch error after Ashes chaos

Pakistan recalls Khan for T20 series in Sri Lanka

ISLAMABAD, Dec. 28, (AP): Pakistan has recalled allrounder Shadab Khan and included uncapped batter Khawaja Nafay in the 15-member squad for next month’s T20 series in Sri Lanka.

Shadab is playing for Sydney Thunder in the ongoing Big Bash League in Australia, but hasn’t featured in a T20 international since June when he played in the home series against Bangladesh.

The allrounder subsequently underwent shoulder surgery and after rehab, returned to action in the BBL this month.

As part of Pakistan’s rotation policy before finalizing its squad for the T20 World Cup in February and March, the selectors omitted Babar Azam, Haris Rauf and Shaheen Shah Afridi, who are also playing in the BBL. Pakistan is scheduled to play all its T20 World Cup games in Colombo, with India and Sri Lanka serving as joint hosts of the tournament.

The 23-year-old Nafay, who is also a part-time wicketkeeper, earned his maiden call-up to the national team after scoring 688 runs at a strike rate of 132.81 in 32 T20 matches.

Salman Ali Agha has been retained as captain after leading Pakistan in 34 T20 games this year.

The three-match series in Sri Lanka will be played at Dambulla on Jan. 7, 9 and 11. Pakistan is also scheduled to host Australia for three T20s next month before flying out to Colombo for the T20 World Cup.

Squad: Salman Ali Agha (captain), Abdul Samad, Abrar Ahmad, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Khawaja Nafay, Mohammad Nawaz, Salman Mirza, Mohammad Wasim, Naseem Shah, Sahibzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, Shadab Khan, Usman Khan, Usman Tariq.

Meanwhile, Melbourne Cricket Ground staff have admitted that the pitch prepared for the Boxing Day test was skewed too heavily in favor of bowlers, as an attempt to avoid a dull draw instead triggered a frantic two-day landslide of wickets.



Australia's Jake Weatherald is bowled by England's Ben Stokes on Day 2 of their Ashes cricket test match in Melbourne. (AP)

Curator Matt Page, recruited to inject “life” into the MCG deck following a lifeless 2017 Ashes stalemate, conceded Sunday that leaving 10mm of grass on the surface proved excessive. The decision resulted in 36 wickets falling across just 142 overs of play, leaving the surface under intense scrutiny from players and officials alike.

“I was in a state of shock after the first day... to see 20 wickets in a day,” Page said. “I’ve never been involved in a test match like it and hopefully never involved in a test match like it again.

“It was a roller-coaster ride for two days to see everything unfold.”

The result marked the first time in 129 years a series has produced multiple two-day finishes, following a similar result in the first Ashes test at Perth.

Despite a first win for England in Australia since 2011, captain Ben Stokes was scathing in his assessment, suggesting that other nations would face harsher consequences for such conditions.

“I’m pretty sure if that was somewhere else in the world there’d be hell on,” Stokes said to the BBC after the match ended Saturday. “With 36 wickets in less than two days and no total over 200, I think you can read into that a lot.

“If that was another condition somewhere else... you probably would get a pasting.”

Despite the criticism and the millions of dollars in refunds for ticketholders triggered by the early finish, Australian Travis Head, the leading run scorer for the series, defended the difficulty of the groundsman’s role.

“Everyone wants to see wickets. No one wants to see blokes get 300s, Head said. “There needs to be a balance and sometimes we’re going to see the balance like last week err to the batters and some weeks we’re going to see it to the bowlers.

“So I do feel for him especially, obviously, in terms of the Boxing Day test and the amount of people. It’s been highly talked about and it’s probably the most talked about Ashes series that we’ve seen for a long time in terms of the last three or four weeks around everything that everyone does.”

ICC match referee Jeff Crowe is expected to rate the surface this week, which takes into account feedback from both captains.

The fifth and final test of the series starts Jan. 4 at the Sydney Cricket Ground. Australia leads the series 3-1 and has retained the Ashes.



Sui Wenjing/Han Cong (bottom) of China perform during the pairs free skating at the National Figure Skating Championships in Harbin, China. (Xinhua)

Wang & Xinyu win ice dance

Sui and Han capture pairs gold at nationals

HARBIN, Dec 28, (Xinhua): Figure skating Olympic champions Sui Wenjing and Han Cong claimed the pairs title at the National Figure Skating Championships, while two-time Olympians Wang Shiyue and Liu Xinyu took the ice dance crown.

Sui and Han led both the short program and free skate, finishing with a total of 237.57 points to secure the victory. It was their second competition since returning to the ice more than three years after their Olympic triumph.

At the ISU Grand Prix Cup of China in October, Sui and Han finished third in their comeback debut, ranking first among all Chinese pairs.

Guo RuiZhang Yiwen and Zhang JiaxuanHuang Yihang won silver and bronze, respectively.

The Beijing Winter Olympic gold medalists SuiHan scored 151.60 points in the free skate to music from the Chinese dance drama “A Tapestry of a Legendary Land.” Despite a few early mistakes, the pair quickly settled into their performance and finished first in the segment.

“Although our performance wasn’t very smooth today, that actually gives us more room to improve,” Sui said. “It’s colder here, and we still need to make further adjustments in various aspects of our adaptation. I think all of this is valuable experience.” “We may not recover as quickly as we did when we were younger,” Han said. “That’s why we need these competitions to rediscover some of the experience we had before gradually.” Han decided in June to come out of retirement and reunite with Sui in pursuit of a possible 2026 Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics campaign.

“We have now secured the quota place for Milan, and I hope we can step onto the ice in good health,” Sui said. “In the coming weeks, we will continue to refine the details of our performance and strive to do better.”

Earlier in the day, the ice dance veteran duo Wang Shiyue and Liu Xinyu scored 120.65 points to top the free dance and finished with a total of 202.06 for a convincing victory.

Ren JunfeiXing Jianing and Xiao ZixiHe Linghao took silver and bronze, respectively.

“Compared with the China Cup, we’ve made progress,” Liu said. “Our movements and transitions are more fluid, and our spacing and speed have improved.” At the ISU Grand Prix Cup of China earlier this season, Wang and Liu were the top Chinese finishers, placing seventh overall.

The National Championships are one of the two key events used to determine China’s figure skating entries for the upcoming Winter Olympics. According to the selection regulations issued by the Winter Sports Management Center, Olympic selections are based on combined results from the 2025-2026 ISU Grand Prix Cup of China and the National Championships.

China has already secured one quota place in each of the four figure skating disciplines: men’s singles, women’s singles, pairs and ice dance.

“I think participating in the Winter Olympics is every athlete’s dream,” Wang Shiyue said.

“If we can represent our country for a third time, it would be a great honor. We will give our all and aim to deliver our best performance on the Olympic stage.” In the women’s short program, 14-year-old Jin Shuxian placed first with 69.08 points, while Zhang Ruiyang, who secured an Olympic berth for China at the ISU Figure Skating Olympic qualifier, finished second with 68.86. 2022 Beijing Winter Olympian Zhu Yi was third on 67.49.

Comanche clinches fifth line honors in Sydney to Hobart



In this photo provided by the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia, Comanche, center, is escorted by spectator craft as it crosses the finish line in Hobart, Australia to claim line honors in the Sydney Hobart yacht race. (AP)

LawConnect claims second, Scallywag third

HOBART, Australia, Dec 28, (AP): Master Lock Comanche has held off a determined challenge from SHK Scallywag 100 and defending champion LawConnect to claim line honors Sunday for the fifth time in the Sydney to Hobart yacht race.

The supermaxi arrived at the finish line near Constitution Dock in Hobart shortly after 6 p.m. local time Sunday in a time of two days, five hours, 3 minutes and 36 seconds, well behind the record set in 2017.

After briefly surrendering the lead earlier Sunday, Comanche regained the lead and extended it later Sunday after a swift passage up the River Derwent to seal its fifth title in the 80th running of the Sydney to Hobart yacht race, and first since 2022.

The victory marked a successful comeback for skippers Matt Allen and James Mayo after their 2024 race ended early with a damaged mainsail.

“We had a great lead during the race. It evaporated this morning and we had to have effectively have a

restart,” Allen said to reporters at Constitution Dock. “We’ve never seen anything like that in the Sydney to Hobart race where all the boats were so close together, really on day two.”

LawConnect, which was forced to contend with a broken mainsheet and halyard earlier in the race but managed to fix both issues and remain in pursuit, finished in second place. Scallywag held off Lucky 88, a New York Yacht Club entry skippered by Bryon Ehrhart, for third.

For a few hours Sunday, the race had its third leader, and first since the opening hours of the race, when Hong Kong yacht Scallywag 100, skippered by David Witt, took the lead as the three yachts reached the Tasmanian coastline early Sunday.

But Comanche wrested back control by taking a line closer to shore which paid dividends.

“We wanted to really defend from inside the coast, closer to the coastline, Allen said. “That eventually worked for us, the breeze filled in from inshore and we got the lead back and just extended throughout the day.

“Everyone stayed really calm. We stayed with the game plan and the game plan worked so it was fan-

tastic.”

As of Sunday evening, 33 yachts had retired from the starting fleet of 128. Two crew members - one each from Kraken 42S and Mistral - have suffered broken ribs during the race with both vessels making their way back to port.

LawConnect led the fleet out of Sydney harbor in search of its third straight line honors win. Overnight conditions Friday night were rough on the fleet, but not as dangerous as last year when two sailors died in storms on the first night.

On Friday, the fleet paid tribute to the victims of the Dec. 14 terror attack by scattering rose petals off the coast of Bondi Beach off Sydney as they passed the area early in the race.

LawConnect, owned by Australian tech millionaire Christian Beck, won last year’s event in 1 day, 13 hours, 35 minutes and 13 seconds for the 628-nautical mile (722 miles, 1,160 kilometers) race.

The race record set by LDV Comanche - 1 day, 9 hours, 15 minutes, 24 seconds - has stood since 2017 and only comes under threat in very strong downwind conditions.

Moroccan fans cry foul as sold-out AFCON stadiums see empty seats

RABAT, Morocco, Dec 28, (AP): Empty seats in sold-out stadiums. Out-of-reach prices on the black market.

Moroccan soccer fans, in particular, are being frustrated at the Africa Cup of Nations because many can’t get tickets for their own team’s games.

Morocco and neighboring Algeria were the only teams to have their group-stage tickets sell out, but again on Friday there were empty seats for the host nation’s match against Mali in the near 70,000-capacity Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium in Rabat.

“I tried to log in to the (ticketing) site early, but unfortunately many people logged in at the same time and I couldn’t get a place. It was completely full,” said Moroccan supporter Amin Mazraoui, who was waiting outside the stadium before kickoff.

Another fan named Hicham had the same experience, trying the official ticket portal but finding every game sold out almost as soon as he started looking. He was going to watch the match at home.

The official attendance for Friday’s game was given as 63,844 - more than had attended the opening game and ceremony in the same stadium.

Touts are being blamed for snapping up tickets to the matches they feel are likely to be most popular, sensing an opportunity to sell them on for as much as 10 times what they paid. Reports suggested 50-euro (\$59) tickets were



Fans watch from the stands during the Africa Cup of Nations Group B soccer match between Egypt and South Africa in Agadir, Morocco. (AP)

being offered for 500 (\$590).

“There are people connecting with 10 computers, maybe 15 computers connecting at the same time and buying a lot of places, so it’s because of them that we didn’t manage to get any seat,” Mazraoui told The Associated Press.

But all supporters (and journalists) have to provide identification through a local app called Yalla to get access to stadiums, and it seems the additional measures are making it more difficult for touts to transfer ticket-

ownership.

One fan who gave his name only as Khalid was lucky and said he paid 100 Moroccan dirhams (\$11) for his ticket to the game. Compared to nearby Europe, starting prices are far cheaper, while there’s no comparison to the asking prices for 2026 World Cup games.

On Wednesday, only 16,115 attended Algeria’s game against Sudan in the 22,000-capacity Moulay El Hassan Stadium in Rabat, which had been sold-out long before.

Some fans waited outside after hearing reports they’d be let in for free, then rushed the gates in an effort to get in once the game had started. Security at other stadiums has allowed free entrance after kickoff in order to increase attendance.

“They won’t open the gates for Morocco,” Mazraoui said.

The attendance at Congo’s match against Benin in the 18,000-capacity Stade El Barid in Rabat was corrected from 6,000 to 13,000.

Other games have seen little difference, with heavy rain also discouraging local fans from attending.

The 68,000-capacity Grand Stade de Tanger in Tangier felt mostly empty on Tuesday for Senegal’s match against Botswana despite 18,500 being in attendance.

The Confederation of African Football, the organizing authority, did not respond to a request for comment.

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION

In compliance with the publication requirement and pursuant to the OCRG

Memorandum Circular No. 2013-1. Guidelines in the Implementation of the Administrative Order No. 1 Series of 2012 (IRR on R.A. 10172), a notice is hereby served to the public that

Generose Melchor Panaligan has filed with this Office a petition for correction in the date of birth from 05 May 2018 to 17 May 2018.

In the birth certificate of

Adona Rose Melchor Panaligan, who was born on 05 May 2018 at State of Kuwait and whose parents are

Adonis Muelo Panaligan and Generose Melchor Panaligan.

Any person adversely affected by said petition may file his written opposition with this Office not later than fourteen (14) days from the date of this notice.

Season features 25 cups at the club

Bin Shakr boosts equestrian sport with Egyptian Arabian Horse races

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: Khalid Fahd Bin Shakr, owner of Al Safanat Stud, has been passionate about purebred Arabian horses with Egyptian bloodlines since 1995 and continues to actively support them, highlighting their global reputation.

He said, “Horse enthusiasts recently united to provide support for this beloved sport. This season, 25 cups are being organized at the Hunting and Equestrian Club, with prizes exceeding 55,000 dinars, encouraging stables to excel in this remarkable sport.”

Today marks the ninth meeting of the Al Safanat Stud Owner’s Cup, with several stables competing for first place. Bin Shakr also thanked the Hunting and Equestrian Club and the Supreme Racing Authority for their ongoing support of equestrian sports.



Khalid Fahd Bin Shakr, owner of Al Safanat Stud.

Kuwait Club seeks 9th consecutive victory

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: Kuwait Club looks to extend its unbeaten run in the basketbakk league when it faces Al-Arabi today at 5:00 PM at Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex. Kazma will follow at 7:30 PM against Al-Sulaibikhat.

The league leader, with 16 points from 8 wins, are heavily favored against Al-Arabi, who sits at the bottom with 8 points from 8 losses. The match may also give the coaching staff a chance to rotate younger players ahead of a key West Asia Super League clash against Saudi Arabia’s Al-Ula next week.

In the evening matchup, second-placed Kazma (14 points) meets fifth-placed Al-Sulaibikhat (12 points). Al-Sulaibikhat will aim to keep its playoff hopes alive, while Kazma seeks to maintain its upward momentum.

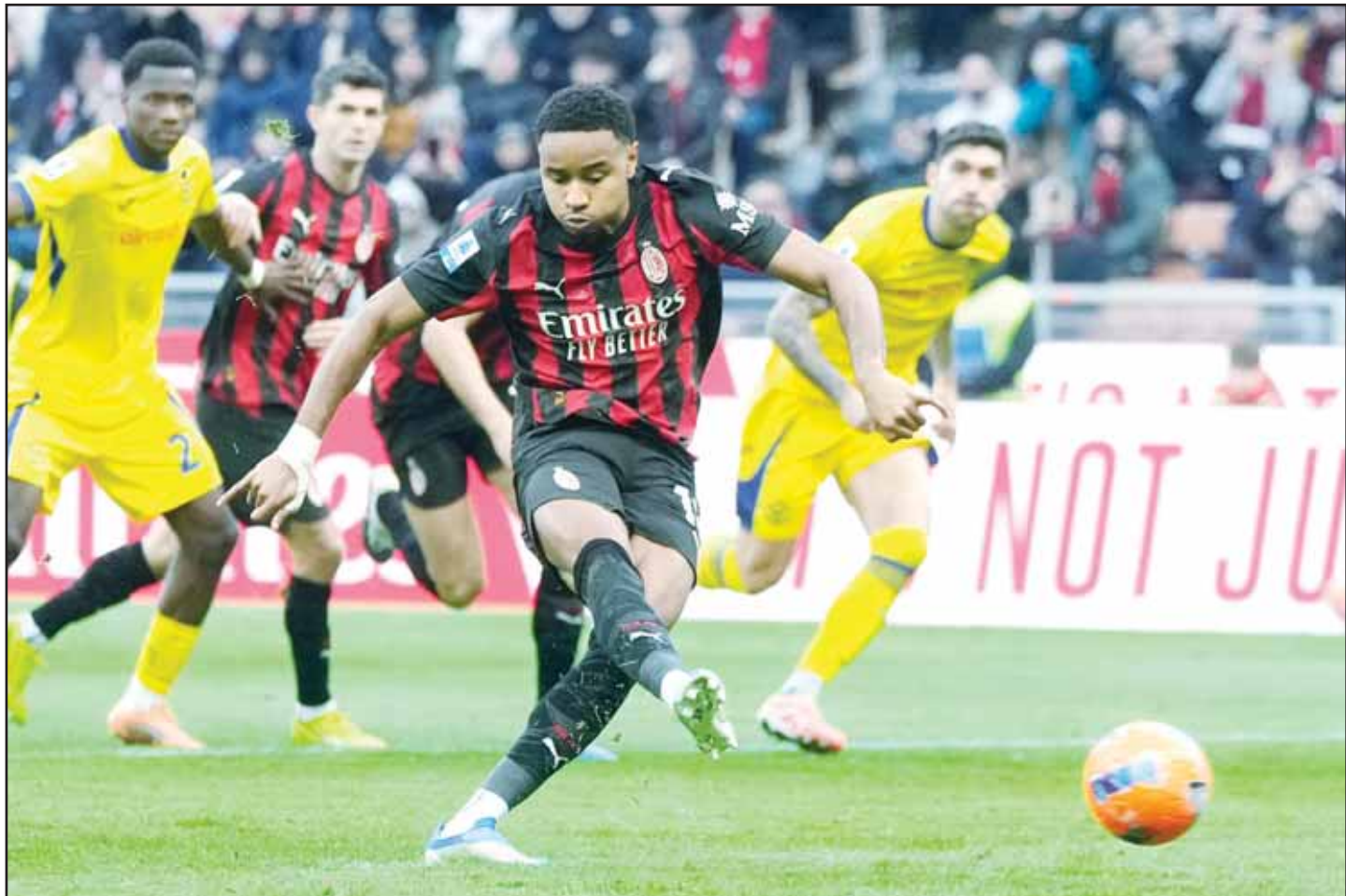
The league features a three-section format, with the top four teams advancing to a best-of-three semifinal playoff.



Kuwait Club player in action with the ball.

Milan closes 2025 on high as Pulisic continues stellar form

Juventus beat promoted Pisa



AC Milan’s Christopher Nkunku scores his side’s second goal from a penalty kick during a Serie A soccer match between AC Milan and Hellas Verona, in Milan, Italy. (AP)

MILAN, Dec 28, (AP): Christian Pulisic is on pace for the best season of his career - in a season that will conclude with a home World Cup for the United States.

The American standout scored the opening goal for AC Milan in a 3-0 victory over Hellas Verona in Serie A on Sunday to raise his total to 10 goals and two assists in 15 matches across all competitions with the Rossoneri.

The victory moved Milan atop the Italian league table, two points ahead of Inter Milan, which was visiting Atalanta later. Massimiliano Allegri’s Milan hasn’t lost in Serie A since getting beat by Cremonese in the season opener in August.

Pulisic was in the right place at the right time to volley in from close range in first-half added time following a corner from Luka Modric that was headed on by Adrien Rabiot.

After the break, Christopher Nkunku converted a penalty for his first Serie A goal and then added another four minutes later by knocking in the rebound of a shot from Modric that was turned onto the post by the goalkeeper.

Last season - his best so far - Pulisic produced 17 goals and 12 assists in 50 matches.

In all, Pulisic has been involved in 50 scores (31 goals and 19 assists) since joining Milan for the 2023-24 season. Over the same span, only Lautaro Martinez of rival Inter has been involved in more at 53.

The U.S. team will be counting on that type of production from Pulisic

before its home fans for the June 11-July 19 World Cup, which will also be co-hosted by Canada and Mexico.

Meanwhile, late goals from Pierre Kalulu and Kenan Yildiz earned Juventus a 2-0 win at promoted Pisa on Saturday as the Bianconeri won their third straight in Serie A.

It was a challenge for Luciano Spalletti’s side, though, as Pisa threatened by twice hitting the woodwork.

Following morale-boosting victories over Bologna and Roma, Juventus moved up to third place - four places higher than when Spalletti was hired to replace the fired Igor Tudor two months ago.

Edon Zeghrova provided a burst of energy for Juventus when he came on just after the hour mark and his work down the left flank led to Kalulu finishing off a counterattack from close range.

Yildiz then added another from close range in stoppage time.

Pisa’s 17-year-old winger Louis Thomas Buffon, the son of former Juventus captain Gianluigi Buffon, came on in the 85th for his fourth Serie A appearance.

Earlier, Como won 3-0 at Lecce to move up to sixth as Nico Paz netted his sixth of the season. Jacobo Ramon and Anastasios Douvikas added goals for the visitors.

Fiorentina’s crisis deepened with a 1-0 loss at Parma that left the Viola in last place. Oliver Sorensen scored shortly after the break for Parma, which moved five points clear of the drop zone.

Also, Udinese and Lazio drew 1-1; and Cagliari came back from a goal down to win 2-1 at Torino.

From gunshots to the Africa Cup

Sudanese players endure brutal war to bring hope

CASABLANCA, Morocco, Dec 28, (AP): When Sudan player Ammar Taifour first heard gunfire outside his hotel room, he shrugged it off and went back to sleep. He had a soccer match to play.

But hours later, gunfire erupted again and gunmen surrounded the hotel in Omdurman, central Sudan, trying to seize control of the area. Taifour, a 28-year-old American-Sudanese midfielder, didn’t realize the shots marked the beginning a brutal war that would claim tens of thousands of lives and displace millions.

“We saw them from the windows all around the hotel holding guns,” Taifour told The Associated Press at the Africa Cup of Nations this week. “They were shooting at army aircraft. It was completely unexpected.”

Taifour and his teammates, coaches and medical staff were trapped inside the hotel for more than two days, as food and water supplies ran low. They left only after the gunmen withdrew, and Taifour flew back to the United States, leaving his career in Sudan behind as he searched for a new team.

His experience mirrors that of other Sudanese players forced to flee the country, leaving family members behind in the war-torn African nation while attempting to pursue soccer careers at the highest level.

The war in Sudan was labeled by the U.N. as

the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. It erupted in April 2023 when a power struggle between the military and the powerful paramilitary Rapid Support Forces exploded into open fighting, with widespread mass killings and rapes, and ethnically motivated violence.

The conflict has killed more than 40,000 people according to U.N. figures, but aid groups say the true number could be many times higher. More



Sudan’s Mustafa Karshom, left, challenges for the ball with Algeria’s Baghdad Bounedjah during the Africa Cup of Nations Group E soccer match between Algeria and Sudan in Rabat, Morocco. (AP)

than 14 million people have been displaced, as disease outbreaks and famine spread in parts of the country.

But the Sudanese national team, known as the Falcons of Jediane, is persevering, and it qualified for the Africa Cup despite training and playing every qualifying game abroad. Sudan even defeated Ghana, denying the African powerhouse qualification for the four-week tournament.

For many Sudanese, the team has become a symbol of hope and unity and a rare source of joy to escape wartime hardship. Ahead of their team’s opening match against Algeria in the Moroccan capital Rabat, Sudanese supporters erupted in celebration, waving national flags and honking car horns. Hundreds chanted “Sudan!” and danced as they made their way to stadiums and fan zones.

“The war has destroyed many parts of the country and killed far too many innocent people,” national team player Mohamed Abuaagla told the AP.

“Playing and winning games brings happiness to our people back home. We are trying to plant a small seed of a smile in them, despite the hardships they are enduring.”

The players themselves have faced many challenges. With the league suspended due to the war, players were forced to play abroad, often in neighboring Libya.

Arsenal stays top

Calvert-Lewin salvages draw for Leeds Utd at Sunderland

LONDON, Dec 28, (AP): Dominic Calvert-Lewin scored for the sixth straight game to earn Leeds a 1-1 draw at Sunderland, which missed a chance to climb to fifth place in the Premier League.

By staying injury-free and being on the hottest streak of his career, Calvert-Lewin is pushing for a recall to the England squad in the lead-up to next summer’s World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

His equalizer at the Stadium of Light came in the 47th minute and was a trademark close-range, one-touch finish by Calvert-Lewin, who turned in a cross from U.S. forward Brenden Aaronson.

Simon Adingra gave Sunderland the lead in the 28th minute by running onto a clever pass behind the full back by Granit Xhaka and bending a right-foot shot inside the far post.

It was a match between two promoted teams, with seventh-place Sunderland faring the better on the season. Leeds is, though, now on a five-match unbeaten run and has moved seven points clear of the relegation zone.

Arsenal resisted a late fightback from Brighton to keep hold of first place in the Premier League and stay ahead of Manchester City.

City briefly held top spot after a 2-1 win at Nottingham Forest, but when Arsenal beat Brighton by the same score later in the day, it returned to the summit with a two-point advantage over Pep Guardiola’s team.

Liverpool’s resurgence continued with a 2-1 win of its own against last-place Wolverhampton, which set a new Premier League record for the longest winless run from the start of a season.

Another set piece goal and another own goal kept Arsenal at the top of the standings - but it required an outstanding save from David Raya to deny Brighton.

Martin Odegaard gave Mikel Arteta’s team a 14th-minute lead with a low shot from the edge of the area. And when Brighton’s Georginio Rutter headed a wicked Declan Rice corner into his own net seven minutes into the second half, Arsenal was in control.

But nerves began to spread around the Emirates when Diego Gomez pulled a goal back against the run of play in the 64th. Yankuba Minteh then hit a shot that was destined for the top corner until Raya stretched an arm to push it away.

“Their goal changed the momentum a little bit and they pressed us towards the end, but we got the three points and that’s all that matters,” Odegaard said. “Lots of positives



Sunderland’s Trai Hume, left, and Leeds United’s Gabriel Gudmundsson battle for the ball during the English Premier League soccer match in Sunderland, England. (AP)

and still some things we can improve, but overall a good game and another win.”

Arsenal has become a set piece specialist and in recent weeks it has benefited from a slew of own goals, with Rutter’s the latest to prove decisive.

It was the fourth time in as many games an opponent has scored an own goal against the league leader.

Rayan Cherki kept Manchester City’s Premier League title challenge powering on with a late winner at Nottingham Forest.

The France forward’s 83rd minute strike secured victory at the City Ground to make it six league wins in a row for Pep Guardiola’s team. City is on an eight-game winning run in all.

“Today is a big win,” Cherki told TNT Sports. “I’m proud of the team because this game is very complicated to win.”

It was Cherki’s second goal in three games and fifth overall. He also provided an assist with an intricate pass to Tijjani Reijnders to put City ahead three minutes into the second half.

Omari Hutchinson equalized for relegation-fighting Forest, which was holding out for a crucial point until Cherki fired through a crowded box for the winner.

Guardiola, who has won 12 league titles with Barcelona, Bayern Munich and City, looks like a man who believes his team is ready to regain the crown it surrendered to Liverpool last season. He joined in the celebrations with the traveling fans after the final whistle - acting conductor as they celebrated wildly after another win.

“When we won a lot of titles in Barcelona, Bayern Munich, here, you have a lot of games of this type,” he said. “The body language, how we celebrated, the connection with the fans is there.”

A fourth straight win for Liverpool and another sign that Florian Wirtz is finding his feet in England’s top flight.

ARAB TIMES

Kuwait's No.1 English Newspaper

For Subscriptions and Complaints

Please Call

51508991

51526559

NEWS



Senegal fans cheer during the Africa Cup of Nations Group D soccer match between Senegal and DR Congo in Tangier, Morocco. (AP)

Sports

Curling team takes third at Qatar International Open



Winners celebrate on the podium after the awarding ceremony.

DOHA, Dec 28: The Kuwait national curling team put in a strong showing at the Qatar International Open Championship, which concluded recently at the Ali bin Hamad Al-Attiyah Ice Arena in the Al Sadd district, finishing the tournament in third place.

The event featured 10 teams representing five countries, including Saudi Arabia, India, Belgium

and host nation Qatar.

Head of the delegation and board member of the Winter Games Club, Mohsen Al-Ma'sab, said national team players Saud Al-Kandari and Fatima Abdul Latif delivered an impressive performance in the mixed doubles competition. The pair secured two victories and suffered just one defeat in the

semifinals, earning third place overall.

Al-Ma'sab also noted that the Kuwaiti curling team claimed second place in the shot-accuracy discipline. In addition, Al-Kandari was named Best Male Player in the team category, while Fatima Abdul Latif received the Best Female Player award in the mixed doubles competition.

Free agents in focus

Kuwaiti clubs gear up for busy Jan transfer window

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28: With the winter transfer window set to open next Thursday, clubs are preparing for an active period, particularly on the domestic front, as several players enter the "free period," allowing them to sign for any club if renewal talks with their current teams fail.

Among the players entering free agency are Nasser Falih and Talal Al-Qaisi of Kazma; Badr Jamal, Mahdi Dashti and Fawaz Ayed of Al-Salmiya; Abdulrahman Al-Sherhan of Al-Arabi; and Saud Al-Qannai and Saad Al-Athab of Al-Shabab.

Kuwait SC was the first club to make a move, signing Ivorian midfielder Idrissa Doumbia as a replacement for Englishman Sam Morsy, whose performances fell short of expectations.

Meanwhile, Al-Arabi, signs point to upcoming changes among the foreign contingent, with Christopher John and Hashemi Fadiga the most likely to depart, while Nabil Marmouk could also be affected.

Al-Qadsia is expected to be the busiest club during the window. Libyan forward Mohamed Soula has already become the first departure, while Mahmoud Kahraba is also a candidate to see his contract terminated. Speculation continues over the possible exit of Congolese winger Neskens Kebano.

Jordanian international Ahmad Ersan tops the list of players with whom Al-Qadsia have opened negotiations.

On the local scene, Al-Qadsia star Eid Al-Rashidi has received several offers, most notably from Qatar SC, in addition to Iraqi clubs Al-Zawraa and Duhok. Rashed Al-Dosari has also attracted two local offers. Despite Al-Qadsia submitting a renewal proposal, the player believes the financial terms do not reflect his contributions.

Reports also suggest that Al-Shabab goalkeeper Saud Al-Qannai is close to joining Al-Qadsia, especially following the injury to Hamid Al-Qallaf.

Meanwhile, Al-Shabab has completed the signing of Estonian player Vastik Bogdan from the Slovenian top division, replacing Brazilian Kaike Augusto. Bogdan previously featured for the "Ahmadi sons" last season.

Al-Nasr, for their part, strengthened their squad by signing 19-year-old Syrian player Anas Al-Dahan from Al-Ahli Aleppo. The youngster was recently included in the Syrian national team squad for the Arab Cup held in Qatar.

Orlando rallies past Nuggets

Westbrook passes Johnson for 7th place in career assists as Kings edge Mavericks

SACRAMENTO, Calif., Dec. 28, (AP) — Russell Westbrook scored 21 points and moved past Magic Johnson for seventh place on the NBA's career assists list while leading the Sacramento Kings to a 113-107 win over the Dallas Mavericks.

Westbrook grabbed five rebounds, and his nine assists gave him 10,149 — eight more than Johnson.

The 37-year-old Westbrook also moved within nine points of tying Dominique Wilkins for 19th on the NBA's scoring chart while propelling Sacramento to its third victory in 13 games.

Dallas got within 111-107 with nine seconds remaining before DeMar DeRozan made two free throws to seal it.

Keon Ellis hit five 3-pointers and had 21 points, Maxime Raynaud added 19 points and Dennis Schroder scored 10. Rookie guard Nique Clifford had eight points and nine rebounds off the bench to help the Kings (8-23) to their fourth consecutive win over the Mavericks.

Cooper Flagg had 23 points, six rebounds and five assists but also committed five turnovers for Dallas (12-21). P.J. Washington had 17 points and four blocks, and Klay Thompson scored 14 points.

Magic 127, Nuggets 126

In Orlando, Anthony Black scored a career-high 38 points, Desmond Bane made two free throws with 6.9 seconds left and Orlando overcame another huge triple-double by Nikola Jokic to beat Denver.

Jokic had 34 points, 21 rebounds and 12 assists, his 180th triple-double and 16th of the season. Two nights after finishing with 56 points, 16 rebounds and 15 assists in a Christmas overtime victory over Minnesota, he pulled within one of Oscar Robertson for second on the NBA's career triple-doubles list.

Jamal Murray scored 24 points for Denver, but missed a long jump shot at the horn after Bane's free throws completed Orlando's comeback from a 17-point deficit.

Bane scored 15 of his 24 points in the fourth quarter for the Magic, who shot 67.4% in the second half.

Suns 123, Pelicans 114

In New Orleans, Devin Booker scored 20 points, including two clutch jumpers down the stretch, and Phoenix beat New Orleans for a two-game sweep of their back-to-back set.

Booker led seven Suns in double figures. Dillon Brooks had 18 points, Collin Gillespie scored 17, Jordan Goodwin added 16 and Royce O'Neale finished with 15.

Trey Murphy III had 24 points for the Pelicans, and Zion Williamson scored 22 off the bench on 8-of-11 shooting. Rookie center Derik Queen had 21 points and 11 rebounds, while Jeremiah Fears scored 18 and Saddiq Bey finished with 17.

The game got chippy in the third quarter after New Orleans went on a 12-2 run to cut the deficit to 73-71. Following a whistle, Pelicans guard Jose Alvarado and Phoenix center Mark Williams exchanged punches. Both were ejected.



Brooklyn Nets guard Cam Thomas (24) drives to the basket while Minnesota Timberwolves center Naz Reid (11) defends during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Minneapolis. (AP)

Rockets 117, Cavaliers 100

In Houston, Kevin Durant scored 30 points in three quarters to lead Houston to an easy win over Cleveland.

The Rockets won their second straight after they lost four of their previous five games.

Durant, who also had seven assists and four rebounds, didn't play in the fourth quarter with Houston up by 27 points after three.

The Cavaliers cut the lead to 12 on a basket by Darius Garland with about seven minutes left in the third quarter before Houston used a 15-0 run to make it 85-58 about two minutes later. After a dunk by Durant in that stretch, Cleveland coach Kenny Atkinson received a technical for yelling at the officials and Durant made the free throw.

Jabari Smith Jr. capped the run with a 3-pointer before Dean Wade made a 3 to give the Cavaliers their first points in more than four minutes.

Reserve Jaylon Tyson had 23 points and a career-high 14 rebounds. Donovan Mitchell added 16 points on 7-for-17 shooting for the Cavaliers, who dropped a second straight game and their fifth in the last seven games.

Heat 142, Pacers 116

In Miami, Andrew Wiggins and Jaime Jaquez Jr. each scored 28 points, and Miami ran away in the fourth quarter to Indiana.

Norman Powell scored 23 for the Heat, who won for the second consecutive night. Miami outscored Indiana 44-22 in the final quarter, after leading 98-94 going into the last 12 minutes.

Miami had 83 points in the second half, and had a 60-23 edge in bench scoring.

Nikola Jovic scored 19 for Miami, with the Heat outscoring Indiana by 35 points in his 25 minutes. The Heat scored at least 140 points for the sixth time this season and seventh time in 2025, after reaching 140 points seven times - combined - from 1988 through 2024.

Indiana's Aaron Nesmith returned after missing 19 games with a shoulder injury. He scored nine points in 19

minutes.

Bucks 112, Bulls 103

In Chicago, Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 29 points in his return from an eight-game absence, and Milwaukee snapped Chicago's five-game winning streak.

The two-time MVP, who had been sidelined by a right calf strain, added eight rebounds in his first game since Dec. 3. He played 25 minutes, which coach Doc Rivers saying before the game that the forward would have his minutes restricted.

Ryan Rollins scored 20 points and Bobby Portis added 17 points and 10 rebounds for Milwaukee, which had dropped six of eight.

Up 95-94 with about five minutes to play, Milwaukee got 3-pointers from Rollins and AJ Green during an 8-0 run that gave it some breathing room. The Bulls never got closer than three the rest of the night.

Nikola Vucevic and Coby White each scored 16 points and Josh Giddey added 13 for Chicago.

Nets 123, Timberwolves 107

In Minneapolis, Cam Thomas scored 30 points in his return after missing 20 games with a left hamstring strain, and Brooklyn beat Minnesota.

Michael Porter Jr. added 27 points and 10 rebounds for the Nets, who had six players score in double figures. Brooklyn (10-19) has won four of five and five of seven.

The Nets, who improved to 7-3 in December, are allowing an NBA-low 103.1 points per game this month.

Anthony Edwards led Minnesota (20-12) with 28 points, but the Timberwolves dropped back-to-back games for the third time this season. Minnesota lost 142-138 in overtime Thursday at Denver.

Jazz 127, Spurs 114

In San Antonio, Lauri Markkanen had 29 points, Keyonte George added 28 points and Utah held on to beat San Antonio, snapping the Spurs' league-high eight-game winning streak.

San Antonio center Victor Wembanyama marked his return to the starting lineup with 32 points, seven rebounds, five blocks and three assists in 27 minutes and 42 seconds. It was Wembanyama's first start since Nov. 14 against Golden State, when he suffered a strained left calf that led to a 12-game absence.

Utah has beaten two of the top three teams in the NBA on successive nights after knocking off Eastern Conference-leading Detroit 131-129 on Friday.

Walter Clayton Jr. scored 17 points and Jusuf Nurkic added 16 for the Jazz, who have won two straight after four consecutive losses.

Keldon Johnson added 27 points and 10 rebounds for San Antonio and Stephen Castle had 20 points.

Knicks 128, Hawks 125

In Atlanta, Karl-Anthony Towns scored a season-high 36 points with 16 rebounds, Jalen Brunson had 34 points and New York survived Atlanta's late comeback attempt to beat the Hawks.

The Hawks lost their sixth straight to wrap up a crushing 0-5 homestand. Atlanta is 5-11 overall at home.

Nigeria books last-16 place, Tunisia fightback falls short

Congo holds Senegal to 1-1 draw

RABAT, Morocco, Dec 28, (AP) — Victor Osimhen scored a rare Africa Cup of Nations goal and Nigeria booked its place in the knockout stage with an ultimately nervy 3-2 win over Tunisia.

The Super Eagles almost squandered a three-goal lead as Montassar Talbi pulled a goal back in the 74th minute and Ali Abdi converted a penalty in the 87th.

Osimhen missed two good chances with headers early on as the Nigeria made a good start, but he finally made one count before the break with a header to Ademola Lookman's cross.

It was just Osimhen's second Africa Cup goal in his career.

Nigeria was cruising after the break when Lookman set up Wilfred Ndidi for the second goal, then Osimhen set up Lookman in the 67th.

The Carthage Eagles somehow found a way back and threatened an unlikely comeback after Bright Osayi-Samuel was penalized for handball after a VAR check. Talbi scored the penalty and fans in the Complexe Sportif de Fès set off flares in delight.

Tunisia captain Ferjani Sassi headed just wide in stoppage time and the Nigeria players ultimately showed enough experience to see out the win.

Nigeria is assured of its place

in the last 16 with a maximum six points in Group C, three ahead of Tunisia while Tanzania and Uganda have a point each.

The top two progress automatically to the last 16, along with the best third-place finishers.

Uganda and Tanzania - two of the three co-hosts of the next tournament with Kenya - drew 1-1 in a frenetic early Group C game, a result that did little for either after opening losses.

Uganda's Allan Okello missed the chance to win the game when he struck a penalty well over in stoppage time, after a rain deluge had drenched the players and sent fans scampering for cover.

Tanzania's Simon Msuva put the Taifa Stars ahead with a penalty early in the second half, then Uche Ikepeazu equalized with a diving header late, just three minutes after going on as a substitute. That goal prompted the heavens to open, adding to the chaos of the final minutes as both sides pushed for a win to boost their hopes of progress.

The 17-year-old French-born Ibrahim Mbaye rejuvenated his team and provided the impetus for Sadio Mané to score in a 1-1 draw with Congo.

Senegal dominated possession and chances with Nicolas Jackson and Mané again missing good opportunities, as they did in the opening win against Botswana.

Cédric Bakambu pounced on the rebound to open the scoring for Con-

go in the 61st after Édouard Mendy had saved Théo Bongonda's initial shot.

Senegal coach Pape Thiaw reacted by sending on Mbaye and the 17-year-old made an immediate impact, though not before Bongonda could have made it 2-0 on a break.

Mbaye ran at the Congolese defenders and had an effort saved by goalkeeper Lionel Mpasí, with Mané tucking away the rebound to level in the 69th.

"We are not completely unhappy as the AFCON is always tough," Mané said. "It was a tough match and in this competition you cannot under-rate any team."

Mbaye was left free when Congo defender Arthur Masuaku pulled up with what looked like an Achilles injury. Masuaku was unable to continue, but Mbaye, who plays for Paris Saint-Germain, could get more opportunities to shine against Benin in Senegal's final group game.

Earlier, Yohan Roche's first-half strike was enough for Benin to beat Botswana 1-0 for its first ever Africa Cup win.

"It is a source of immense pride," Roche said. "We were aware of the people's expectations, and we managed to stay focused."

After two games, Senegal leads Group D with four points, ahead of Congo on goal difference, with Benin third on three, followed by Botswana with none.



Nigeria's Akor Adams, left, is challenged by Tunisia's Yan Valery during the Africa Cup of Nations Group C soccer match between Nigeria and Tunisia in Fez, Morocco. (AP)