



Amir, Crown Prince receive head of UNAMI
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Kuwait boosts security ahead of New Year's celebrations

By Munif Naif
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: Director of the Reports Department at the Central Operations Sector in the Ministry of Interior Colonel Abdullah Salem Al-Lamee' says the ministry has stepped up its security measures for New Year's celebrations by implementing a comprehensive preparedness plan.

He affirmed the enhanced security preparedness is aimed to ensure the safety of

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Temperatures to plunge as cold spell hits Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30, (Agencies): Acting Meteorology Department Director Dharar Al-Ali said Kuwait will be hit by a cold wave starting Tuesday, with stronger northwesterly winds that could blow dust and reduce visibility in some areas, and a chance of frost early Wednesday.

Speaking to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), he said forecasts show a stronger high pressure system, bringing a clear drop in temperatures and northwesterly winds of over 50 kilometers per hour.

Dusty winds may also raise sea waves above six feet, with weath-

er cool to cold during the day and cold to very cold at night, he explained.

Today's highs were expected between 16-18 degrees Celsius, with lows early Wednesday between two and five degrees Celsius, he noted.

Additionally, Wednesday's highs are forecast between 13-15 degrees Celsius, with frost possible at dawn, he mentioned.

Temperatures were expected to rise gradually from Thursday, with highs between 18-20 degrees Celsius and lows between six and nine degrees Celsius.

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Kuwait City shivers under a cold Tuesday sky in the final two days of 2025, with the Liberation Tower rising proudly above the crisp, clear streets below.

Photo by Rezk Tawfiq



Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

Dear government, bureaucracy is too long and obstructive

FOLLOWING the liberation of Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion, the country entered a new and unfamiliar phase that was marked by the creation of numerous public institutions. Many of these entities were established to distribute positions and secure political and electoral loyalty.

A report from several years ago indicated that around 100 public institutions had overlapping jurisdictions with ministries and other government bodies. This overlap contributed to a further decline in government productivity and hindered the work of the private sector.

Instead of streamlining procedures, the bureaucratic process expanded, turning transactions that once took one or two days into processes that now require weeks, thus negatively affecting companies and individuals alike.

Meanwhile, the report published recently in the daily on merging some government bodies and abolishing others is completely accurate.

In today's technological age, there is no need for so many documents, signatures, and such bureaucratic procedures that impede government productivity. Standardizing government services saves both time and money as well as increases institutional efficiency.

It is surprising that one ministry might grant a license for an activity, while another ministry prohibits it, or a third body suspends it for various reasons, as though each entity operates like an independent state.

For instance, the Minister of Information and Culture, whose portfolio includes tourism, allowed landowners to establish facilities such

as chalets and other amenities that contribute to what is globally known as "agritourism". However, the Ministry of Finance and its affiliated bodies later objected, causing people to lose the money they had invested in these projects. Other countries have allowed the establishment of such facilities for decades.

The creation of this large number of public bodies was not primarily intended to provide jobs for citizens, but rather to secure electoral loyalty, serve the private interests of influential figures, and award contracts that do not benefit public finances, but instead increase waste and entrench corruption.

For example, there are approximately 19 bodies tasked with oversight and combating corruption. The oversight authorities discovered that corruption and illicit enrichment were widespread in some of these institutions. It was found that some were merely tools to create senior positions the state did not need, but were for serving personal interests instead.

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Cheaters risk zero grades, expulsion

Kuwait enforces strict exam rules

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: The Ministry of Education announced the final procedures to be applied to students who violate examination regulations, whether through actions listed in the relevant decision or any other conduct that may affect the proper administration of exams, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The ministry specified the procedures based on the academic term and the nature of the violation as follows:

1. If the violation occurs during the first academic term examinations, the student will receive a zero grade for both the exam (practical and written) and the coursework for the subject in which the violation occurred.

2. If the violation occurs during the second academic term examinations, the student will receive a zero grade for both the exam (practical and written) and the coursework for all subjects, and the student will be considered to have failed.

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His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chairs the weekly Cabinet meeting on Tuesday.

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KPC awards Oracle contract

KOC implements strategy to save nearly KD 1 billion

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) is continuing to implement its strategy aimed at rationalizing spending while enhancing work processes, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to informed sources, KOC is working diligently to increase profits in the coming years through this

strategy, which is expected to boost oil and gas production in the near future.

It was explained in an official document that KOC is focused on improving work efficiency and controlling expenditures. The company has launched several initiatives to streamline costs and refine methods for estimating capital expenses for drilling projects, with

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Interior personnel checked for drugs

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ministry of Interior, represented by the General Department of Criminal Evidence, has carried out the first phase of implementing random testing to detect use of narcotic substances and psychotropic drugs among its personnel.

The measure comes within a comprehensive plan aimed at strengthening job discipline and reinforcing the principle of role model conduct and responsibility across security sectors, the ministry said in a press statement Tuesday.

The ministry said the first phase of

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Kuwait eyes smooth relocation of cancer center to new facility

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi recently held a comprehensive meeting with the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Cancer Control Center (KCCC).

The meeting focused on strategizing the relocation to the new KCCC building and maximizing the benefits of the collaborative memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed with the internationally recognized Gustave Roussy Hospital. Discussions included the latest progress on the new facility, which is being designed to meet the highest international

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Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi speaks during a meeting with the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Cancer Control Center (KCCC).



Group photo with Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi during a meeting with the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Cancer Control Center (KCCC).

Ministry of Health photos



Photo during the MoU signing between KIJS and KRCS.

Judicial institute, Red Crescent sign cooperation memorandum

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30, (KUNA): The Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies (KIJS) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on Tuesday with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) to enhance cooperation, exchange expertise, and develop human resources through specialized training programs.

After the signing, KIJS's Director General First Attorney General Counselor Bader Al-Massad told KUNA that the MoU establishes a structured institutional framework for joint cooperation between the two entities, it aims to unify efforts in areas of mutual interest, serv-

ing shared national and humanitarian goals.

Al-Massad emphasized that the MoU focuses on supporting legal training and development, raising legal awareness in society, and exchanging scientific and research expertise by organizing joint training programs, courses, and workshops.

He noted that this cooperation strengthens the humanitarian mission undertaken by KRCS by supporting it with a legal and knowledge-based dimension, aligning with the academic and training role of KIJS.

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NBK deepened its longstanding community ties & further cemented its leadership in social responsibility

Prayer Timings			
Fajr	05:17	Asr	14:41
Sunrise ..	06:42	Maghrib ..	16:59
Zohr	11:50	Isha	18:21

Local

Expected weather for next 24

hrs:
By Day: Rather cold to cold with light to moderate northwesterly wind changing to light variable wind, with speeds of 06-35 km/h and some scattered clouds

Weather

will appear.
By Night: Cold to very cold with light variable wind changing to light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speed of 06-30 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	18	13
Kuwait Airport	18	10
Abdaly	17	12
Bubyan	17	13
Jahra	18	12
Failaka Island	16	12
Salmiyah	18	17

Amir, Crown Prince receive head of UNAMI



Amiri Diwan photo
His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Al-Hassan.

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, received on Tuesday the UN Secretary General's Special Representative for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Al-Hassan, on the occasion of the end of his tenure and mandate of the mission.



Crown Prince Diwan photo
His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah receives Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Al-Hassan.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also received the UN Secretary General's Special Representative for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Al-Hassan, on the occasion of the end of his tenure and mandate of the mission.

Kuwait, Turkiye eye ties boost

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30, (KUNA): His Highness the Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah discussed, in a phone call on Monday, with the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan relations between the State of Kuwait and the friendly Republic of Turkiye and how to upgrade them to sever interests of both nations and their

peoples.
His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also reviewed with President Erdogan the latest important regional and international developments of common interest. His Highness the Crown Prince also conveyed to Turkish President the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Joint efforts cut ‘drug addiction’

Chronic disease curable: Dr Al-Shatti

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30, (KUNA): Health and field data in Kuwait confirm that efforts to confront drug addiction and substance abuse are achieving notable progress through an integrated national system combining specialized treatment, updated legislation, and family protection mechanisms aimed at reducing relapse, strengthening recovery, and supporting social stability.

This system is anchored in the pivotal role of the Addiction Treatment Center under the Ministry of Health, alongside specialized civil society organizations including Bashayer Al-Khair Association, supported by legislative amendments reinforcing treatment pathways, expanding alternatives to imprisonment, and protecting informants and families.

Specialists agree that integrating therapeutic, preventive, security, and legislative efforts offers a more effective foundation for addressing addiction from a treatment-oriented rather than punitive approach, reducing health, social, and economic burdens while preserving public security and societal cohesion.

Director of the Ministry of Health's Addiction Treatment Center, Dr. Hussein Al-Shatti, told KUNA that the center constitutes a core pillar in combating drug abuse



Dr. Al-Shatti

by providing comprehensive, graduated treatment programs based on scientific principles viewing addiction as a chronic, treatable disease.

Dr. Al-Shatti explained that the center consists of two buildings, with the older housing detoxification and initial assessment phases, while the newer building serves as a halfway house for advanced treatment, with total capacity exceeding 500 beds across wards.

Patients

He added that the center receives patients aged 21 and above, both citizens and residents, beginning treatment with detoxification lasting one to two weeks under medical supervision, followed by an assessment evaluating psychological, behavioral, and social conditions to determine individualized treatment plans.

Dr. Al-Shatti said advanced treatment includes outpatient clinics, continuing care, and halfway house programs, noting that continuing care requires daily attendance for tests, therapy sessions, and consultations while patients continue work and normal daily responsibilities.

He noted that the halfway house offers an open therapeutic environment simulating community life by assigning daily responsibilities such as hygiene, cleanliness, food preparation, and service, enabling patients to gradually restore responsibility and reintegrate as productive community members.

Dr. Al-Shatti stressed that addiction is a chronic behavioral disease and relapse should not be considered treatment failure but an expected part of recovery, with treatment aiming to reduce relapse frequency, extend intervals, and minimize severity.

He cited studies showing recovery rates reaching approximately 80 percent in early addiction stages and 40 percent in advanced cases, while first-year relapse may reach 60 percent, declining significantly with long-term follow-up and sustained recovery.

Other Voices

Things seem promising, but journey is still long

THE first thing that impressed me in Lebanon was one morning in 1956, while I was in my room in Bhamdoun. I watched the clouds gently drifting into the "ghoutit" (a type of rain cloud), as if they were saying "Bonjour" (good morning). It was then that I realized Lebanon is not just ghoutita, but something far more complex.

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By Ahmad alsarraf

The Public Prosecutor of North Lebanon has ordered a judicial investigation into a video filmed by a teacher. The video shows female students at a school in Tripoli being asked, "Would you like to take a picture with a Christmas tree?" The students refused, explaining that they considered it acting like non-Muslims.

The video has circulated widely throughout Lebanon, causing a major uproar, despite the fact that the girls are young and their statements should not be taken as definitive.

Supporters have chanted slogans in support of the girls, including, "I was a Muslim and I will remain a Muslim." These demonstrations have raised concerns about potential threats to the rights of others, who make up the majority in their religious and sectarian diversity, rights that are constitutionally protected.

The controversy is escalating on social media, with accusations against the teacher for allegedly inciting hatred toward followers of other faiths. This is not surprising, as he is known more as a "preacher" than a teacher, especially after defending his actions as part of teaching children about their religion.

It is clear that this is not really about a plastic tree in a country weighed down by mountains of problems, tragedies, corruption scandals, the constant risk of internal and external conflict, and the collapse of infrastructure, healthcare, and education systems, not

to mention currency instability, water shortages, and power outages.

How can the Lebanese ignore all these pressing issues and crises, and instead focus on the perceived impropriety of an eight-year-old girl taking a picture with a Christmas tree?

In 1988, Hollywood produced the film "The Last Temptation of Christ," which contained offensive depictions of Jesus Christ. Several demonstrations erupted in protest against the film's content, and it subsequently failed commercially and was withdrawn from theaters.

At the time, the Archbishop of London declared that Christianity, with more than 2.3 billion followers, which is nearly a third of the world's population, was not worth following if a third-rate film could sway its believers.

What applied to that film also applies to the plastic tree, whose placement in the lobbies of several hotels has drawn the ire of some hardliners.

Islam is a religion followed by 1.5 billion Muslims, a community that has remained strong for over 1,400 years, during which it defeated thousands of enemies and invaders. I personally witnessed this unjustified panic beginning in the 1960s, when the head of a religious party at the time ordered dozens of tenants in clothing stores in his buildings to remove mannequin heads from their shop windows.

The owners of other stores followed suit, and this practice continued for many years.

Playing the piano in hotel lounges was prohibited without a permit that had to be renewed monthly. This permit expired at the end of November, and a new one was issued in December for only 23 days, apparently to prevent hotels from playing the piano during the Christmas and New Year periods.

Strangely, this regulation remained in place for more than half a century before being recently abolished, thanks to the efforts of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah. Things seem promising, but the journey is still long.

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KUNA photo
Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Shuraiaan during his visit to the Supply and Logistics Department.

Army chief stresses hard work, continuous training

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: Kuwait Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Shuraiaan emphasized the importance of continuous training and improving the efficiency of technical and administrative personnel, as well as the ongoing development of systems to meet the army's needs and enhance its readiness for various missions and duties, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press release issued on Monday by the

General Staff, Lieutenant General Al-Shuraiaan carried out an inspection visit to the Supply and Logistics Department, during which he reviewed the workflow and procedures in various support and logistics areas.

He commended the notable improvements in performance and organization within the department, and praised the efforts of the Supply and Logistics personnel in modernizing the work system.

Lieutenant General Al-Shuraiaan also received a comprehensive briefing on current tasks and duties, as well as future plans to further enhance the efficiency of the supply and logistics system.

Lieutenant General Al-Shuraiaan was received by the Assistant Chief of the General Staff for Supply and Logistics, Major General Engineer Salah Al-Azmi, along with several senior officers of the Kuwait Army.

Breakthroughs, stability challenges

Gaza, Syria, Lebanon ends tumultuous 2025 for Arabs

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30, (KUNA): Amid major breakthroughs and stability challenges, Arab countries saw developments in 2025, including a deal ending Gaza's war, Syria's return to the Arab fold lifting sanctions, and Lebanon's deadlock broken by Joseph Aoun as president.

Meanwhile, the Sudanese crisis continued producing grave humanitarian and security repercussions as the conflict entered its third year, while Libya remained vulnerable to tensions, and the Moroccan Sahara issue resurfaced following a Security Council decision.

Throughout the year, the Arab world intensified efforts supporting the Palestinian cause and the two-state solution amid Gazas genocidal war since October 2023, holding successive emergency meetings including the Arab Palestine Summit and Arab League sessions.

Conference

Outcomes of a high-level international conference hosted by the United Nations in New York last September on peacefully settling the Palestinian issue and implementing the two-state solution reflected international consensus on advancing the two-state solution.

The UN Security Council adopted the US President Donald Trump's plan to end the Gaza war, establishing an international force for disarmament and reconstruction, alongside landmark recognitions of the State of Palestine by several countries.

The Palestinian people showed exceptional steadfastness against Israeli occupation aggression, as Arab states firmly rejected forced displacement and genocide, while Gaza endured catastrophic humanitarian deterioration, with tens of thousands killed and wounded, and destruction across services.

In the framework of Arab economic and development integration, 2025 saw the announcement of a comprehensive Arab food security strategy during the fifth Arab Eco-

nomie and Social Development Summit in May, as well as approval of establishing the Arab Customs Affairs Council in early July.

In a unified Arab response to Israel's recognition of Somaliland's secession from Somalia, the Arab League session adopted measures to cooperate with Somalia, the African Union and the United Nations, and urge Security Council action.

Arab League efforts also included updating the Arab Model Law on combating drugs and psychotropic substances, and strengthening cooperation with international blocs, particularly within the Arab sphere, through a memorandum of understanding with the Gulf Organization for Research and Development.

The Leagues agenda highlighted rising Arab interest in soft power and human development, launching the ninth Arab Media Excellence Award, hosting a forum on language and identity in the age of artificial intelligence, and promoting internet safety awareness.

Lebanon ended a prolonged presidential vacuum in 2025 with the election of President Joseph Aoun, followed by government formation and the launch of key reforms targeting the banking sector, judicial independence, and banking secrecy laws.

The government also secured IMF emergency financial support and held municipal elections in May, marking the first local polls since 2016 despite ongoing political and economic pressures.

Meanwhile, security tensions persisted along the southern border as Israeli forces continued ceasefire violations, prompting intensified Lebanese army deployment in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1701. Iraq pursued ongoing efforts throughout the year to enhance security and economic stability, hosting major Arab events including the Arab Economic and Social Development Summit, which featured 18 Arab political, economic, and security initiatives.

— To be continued

Over 12,000 Kuwaitis are looking for employment

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: The total number of unemployed Kuwaitis and job seekers registered with the Civil Service Commission (CSC) and the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) reached 12,163 by the end of the first half of this year, reports Al-Rai daily.

According to a report issued by the Central Statistical Bureau, 6,863 unemployed Kuwaitis are registered with CSC, which handles applications from Kuwaitis seeking public sector employment. Of these, 3,503 are men (51 percent) and 3,360 are women. About 2,582 individuals have been registered for 12 months or more, 2,371 for six to 11 months, and 1,910 for one to five months.

The largest age group among the unemployed is between 20 and 29 years old, representing approximately 61.6 percent (4,234 individuals), highlighting that the majority are young people.

Regarding marital status, 58.3 percent of unemployed Kuwaitis (4,002 individuals) are unmarried, while 2,011 are married. The report also noted 819 divorced individuals and 31 widowed individuals among the unemployed.

Unmarried men represented the largest group of unemployed individuals, totaling 2,435 compared to 1,567 women. Among married individuals, 742 were men and 1,269 were women.

Education

Regarding education, a higher percentage of unemployed men hold university degrees, diplomas, or intermediate qualifications, while most unemployed women hold university or intermediate qualifications.

In total, 2,481 unemployed individuals are university graduates, 817 hold diplomas, and 793 are high school graduates. Female university graduates formed the largest group, totaling 1,552. Based on data from PAM, which registers Kuwaitis seeking employment in the private sector, the total number of job seekers reached 5,300, including 2,513 men and 2,787 women, representing 52.6 percent. Among them, 2,657 had been on the waiting list for less than a month, while 2,643 had been registered for one to five months.

The majority of unemployed Kuwaitis are aged 20-29, accounting for approximately 94.1 percent, or 4,987 individuals, indicating that most are young people. Unmarried individuals formed the largest group, representing 79.6 percent, totaling 4,217, including 1,895 women.

Regarding education, a higher percentage of unemployed men hold university degrees or diplomas, while most unemployed women are university graduates. In total, 2,948 are university graduates, 1,501 hold diplomas, and 261 are secondary school graduates.

Israeli recognition of ‘Somaliland’ illegitimate step

NEW YORK, Dec 30, (KUNA): The Arab Group at the UN expressed late Monday its refusal and utter condemnation of the Israeli occupation's step to recognize the so-called "Somaliland", saying that the procedure was illegitimate and one-sided.

Delivering the Group's statement during a UN session on Somalia, Acting Charge d'affaires at the Kuwaiti Permanent Mission in the UN Headquarters in New York, Minister Plenipotentiary Faisal Al-Enezi, said that the region northwest of Somalia was an integral part of the country, noting that any recognition of "Somaliland"

threatened regional and international peace and security.

The Israeli occupation's recognition was a stark violation of the unity of Somalia, international laws and norms, and the UN Charter, he asserted.

He accused the Israeli occupation of trying to change the geopolitical landscape in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden regions, which would affect security as well as commercial and international navigation.

He reaffirmed the Arab Group's stance with Somalia's legitimacy and right to defend its

lands according to Article 51 of the UN Charter, which affirms the inherent right of a UN member to self-defense if it suffers aggression against its lands.

Al-Enezi also expressed the Arab Group's refusal of any attempts to displace or forcibly expel the Palestinian people from their lands by using Somali soil to implement this nefarious Israeli occupation plan. He called on the UN Secretary Council to take responsibility and hold the Israeli occupation responsible for this action violating Somalia unity and threatening regional and international stability.

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A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Rights protection, robust economy go hand-in hand

“HUMAN rights should not be viewed solely as legal principles or political arrangements regulating freedoms, but as a central pillar of economic and social development. They are closely tied to building strong economies, achieving sustainable development, and improving the overall quality of life,” former Director General of the Arab Planning Institute **Dr. Bader Othman Malallah** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

“By protecting human rights, societies create the conditions necessary to unleash human potential, encourage innovation, and ensure long-term growth and social cohesion.



Dr. Bader Malallah

“At their core, human rights are developmental in nature. Modern economic thought increasingly recognizes well-being as the ultimate objective of development, aligning closely with the principles of human rights. Development is not limited to economic indicators such as growth rates or income levels, but it also encompasses education, health, dignity, equality, and participation. These elements are inseparable from human rights, making development incomplete if it is pursued without them.

“Human rights form the foundation for comprehensive development, as real progress cannot be achieved without wide societal participation. This principle is embedded within human rights themselves, which emphasize inclusion, equality, and shared responsibility in economic and social life. When individuals are empowered to participate fully in development processes, societies benefit from stronger institutions, greater trust, and enhanced collective resilience.

“This close relationship between human rights and development is clearly reflected in the United Nations’ 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A careful examination of the SDGs reveals their deep roots in the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948. The SDGs provide a practical development framework that translates human rights ideals into measurable goals and targets. For instance, the right to a decent standard of living is reflected in SDGs focused on ending poverty and hunger, the right to health corresponds to SDG 3, the right to education to SDG 4, and the right to work to SDG 8. Each goal can be directly linked to a core human rights principle.

“This connection is reinforced by the guiding principles of both documents. The Universal Declaration opens with the assertion that all human beings are born free and equal in rights and dignity, while the SDGs are guided by the pledge to “leave no one behind.” Both emphasize inclusivity, equality, and shared progress, underscoring that development must benefit all members of society.

“In practice, human rights are not abstract moral values but essential prerequisites for genuine development. Access to quality education, healthcare, and basic living standards strengthens human capital and enhances productivity. When individuals are healthy, educated, and secure, they are better equipped to contribute to economic activity and innovation. Women’s rights to education, work, and equality further expand the pool of human capital, leading to higher national income, faster economic growth, and more resilient legal and institutional frameworks.

“Good governance, which is rooted in human rights principles such as transparency, accountability, and the rule of law, also plays a critical role in development. Strong governance frameworks improve a country’s creditworthiness, attract investment, and encourage domestic and foreign investors. Conversely, weak respect for human rights undermines trust, discourages investment, and hampers sustainable growth.

“Human rights theory and economic theory converge on a shared objective - the well-being of individuals and society. While human rights frameworks focus on justice, equality, and meeting basic needs, economic theories emphasize production, growth, efficiency, and resource allocation. These perspectives are not contradictory but complementary. Rights such as education, health, housing, fair wages, and decent work are not only moral imperatives but also economic variables directly linked to public spending, fiscal policy, and productivity.

“Modern economic thinking increasingly places human beings at the center of development, recognizing that people are both the means and the end of progress. In this sense, human rights define the goals of development, while economics provides the tools to achieve them. However, economic tools alone are insufficient without adequate resources and political commitment, as there can be no effective education or healthcare systems without proper funding.

“The experiences of countries such as Japan, Singapore, and South Korea provide compelling evidence of the practical link between human rights and development. These nations achieved remarkable economic progress not through abundant natural resources, but through sustained investment in human development, improved quality of life, and the empowerment of individuals. Their development strategies focused on education, skills, governance, and innovation, demonstrating that human potential is the most valuable resource.

“Japan’s post-World War II recovery illustrates how respect for human rights

and human development can drive national reconstruction. Singapore linked human rights to governance, basic needs, and economic growth, creating a stable and prosperous society. South Korea’s transformation accelerated after embracing democracy, strengthening human rights, and implementing effective governance reforms. In all three cases, development and human rights advanced together, reinforcing one another.

“Ultimately, growth, development, and progress themselves can be viewed as human rights. Just as individuals are entitled to dignity and equality, societies are entitled to development that enhances well-being and opportunity for all. The relationship between human rights and development is therefore complementary and inseparable. Development that ignores human rights is fragile and incomplete, while human rights without development lack the material conditions necessary for their full realization. Sustainable progress can only be achieved when human rights are placed at the heart of development strategies.”

Also:

“In the past, there were no refrigerators, so people rushed to bury the dead quickly, expecting the effects of decomposition that could hinder the burial process. With the availability of refrigerators that prevent decomposition, as well as mortuaries and chemicals that limit the spread of unpleasant odors, it has become necessary to reconsider the Islamic burial method in a way that befits the final moments of farewell to loved ones.” Kuwaiti writer **Zaid Al-Jalawi** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

“Carrying our departed loved ones in an unsafe manner on uneven shoulders, with bodies swaying, calls for greater awareness among officials and the general Muslim public. The rush to bury the dead often leads to overcrowding at gravesites and may result in injuries. I propose that the deceased be placed in an open vehicle that moves slowly and calmly, followed by the mourners, until it reaches the grave. There, some relatives or brothers take the body and place the deceased in their final resting place. Everyone then steps back to make way for a vehicle to fill the prepared grave with earth. After that, everyone proceeds to the designated area to offer condolences.

“There is nothing preventing Kuwait Municipality from staggering burial times, rather than leaving it entirely to the bereaved family. The municipality could set specific times, such as after the afternoon prayer, the sunset prayer, the night prayer, in the morning, or in the evening. This would help distribute funerals throughout the day and avoid overcrowding and stampedes. Currently, sometimes five or six funerals take place at the same time, causing congestion and chaos. If Kuwait Municipality were to establish a schedule for each funeral, burials could proceed calmly and comfortably for the mourners, while showing greater respect for the deceased.”

“In this article, I will not express my own opinion, but rather explain the reality regarding the increase in health insurance fees for residents and the reactions to it.” columnist **Eng. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

“When the National Assembly was in session, this issue was raised, and some parties sought to impose fees on expatriates. Another group opposed imposing the fees, arguing that this would affect the standard of living, as the private sector would bear the burden of these fees since it relies on expatriate labor.



Adel Al-Kharafi

“There were fierce debates between the two groups, but the discussions remained unresolved. “Today, there is only one group, or rather one authority, tasked with both legislation and executive responsibilities after the dissenting opinion, represented by the National Assembly and reflecting populist sentiment, was silenced. I reiterate that today we have only one authority - the executive authority, which approved the increase in health insurance fees for residents.

“Now, we do not understand those who used to attack the National Assembly, claiming that it was hindering development and placing obstacles in the way of achievement. If we agree with you that it was hindering progress, then why are you angry now?

“The executive authority has expressed its opinion, and it must be accepted because it holds full power and bears the consequences. I emphasize that I am keeping my personal opinion and will not express it in this article.

“Even if there is only one authority in the state, it is natural that it bears the consequences, based on the well-known principle - whoever works is bound to make mistakes.

“Therefore, everyone should bear the consequences of those mistakes. Given the current reality of having a single executive authority, it is assumed that positive achievements should outweigh the negatives. The National Assembly, despite its flaws, acted as a filter. Despite the pointless and unnecessary conflict, this is part of the cost of democracy.

— Compiled by Simi K.Kutty



Undersecretary of the National Guard, Lieutenant General Hamad Al-Barjas, during his visit to the Al-Tahrir Camp.



KUNA photos

Remain committed, hardworking: Al-Barjas

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30, (KUNA): Undersecretary of the National Guard, Lieutenant General Hamad Al-Barjas, conducted an inspection visit to Al-Tahrir (Liberation) Camp on Monday, during which he reviewed workshops, technical facilities, and the training program for new recruits.

Lieutenant General Al-Barjas was received by the Commander of Support, Brigadier General Engineer Talal Al-Saedi.

In a statement, the National Guard said that Lt. Gen. Al-Barjas conveyed the greetings of the Chief of the National Guard, Sheikh Mubarak Hamoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and the Deputy Chief, Sheikh Faisal Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, to the recruits. He commended their efforts in the workshops and technical facilities, highlighting their important role in meeting the operational needs of National Guard units.

The statement noted that Lt. Gen. Al-Barjas reviewed the progress of the recruits’ training course and confirmed the availability of all required resources to ensure its success. He encouraged the recruits to remain committed and hardworking, and to make full use of the training curriculum so they can effectively perform their duties upon graduation and assignment to their respective units.



Al-Seyassah photo

Some of the vehicles involved in a car parade in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh.

Joy of exams end leads to Asian revelers arrest

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: The Ministry of Interior (MoI) announced on Monday the arrest of several Asian expats involved in reckless driving in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, after a video showing the dangerous behavior went viral on social media, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

In an official statement, the ministry explained that security forces from the Farwaniya Security Directorate’s Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh District Command responded immediately to the scene near a private school, and discovered that the gathering was organized to celebrate the end of the first semester exams.

The authorities recorded the license plate numbers of the vehicles and identified the drivers, discovering that the vehicles were rented. The individuals were referred with the seized vehicles to the concerned authorities where all necessary legal procedures were taken.

The ministry affirmed that such reckless behavior endangers public safety and will not be tolerated.

It stressed that security forces will continue to monitor social media for violations and take strict legal action against perpetrators.

Accident death toll falls after latest Traffic Law

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: Traffic campaigns launched last week by the General Traffic Department resulted in the issuance of 19,362 citations, the impounding of 254 vehicles, and the detention of 19 juveniles for driving without a license.

Weekly statistics from the department reported three fatalities and 1,302 accidents resulting in 242 injuries, reflecting a decrease in fatal accidents following the implementation of the new traffic law.

The statistics also revealed that three individuals were referred to the Drug Control General Department on suspicion of possessing illegal substances for further legal action.

The department affirmed that traffic campaigns will continue in all governorates to apprehend violators and ensure compliance with traffic regulations.

Court acquits actress in fake news spread issue

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: The Criminal Court, presided over by Judge Nayef Al-Dahoum, acquitted actress Ilham Al-Fadhala of charges of spreading false news.

In a previous session, the court had released Al-Fadhala after she denied the allegations.

No terror link traced: The Criminal Court, presided over by Judge Nasser Al-Bader, acquitted an individual of serious charges, including joining and promoting the terrorist group ISIS and possessing and manufacturing explosives.

The court ruled that there was insufficient material and moral evidence to support the allegations.

Lawyer Nawaf Sari argued that the case lacked legally admissible proof linking the defendant to the crimes, emphasizing that the file contained no conclusive evidence for conviction.

The defense highlighted that criminal judges apply strict forensic scrutiny to distinguish valid evidence from insufficient claims.

The court followed this principle, adhering to the established principle that a defendant is innocent until proven guilty, and ensuring the defendant received a fair trial with full legal protections.

Woman admits fraud: General Department of Criminal Investigation’s Cybercrime Unit successfully resolved a social media fraud case involving a woman who ordered printing services from a company but failed to pay the required amount, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

Following investigations, the suspect was identified and confronted with the allegations. She confessed to the crime and admitted to not paying on time. The suspect has been referred to the appropriate authorities for further legal action.

The Ministry of Interior affirmed that security forces are committed to pursuing perpetrators of fraud and taking legal measures to protect public safety and safeguard individual rights.

Heavy ‘penalty’ in wife-bashing

Coach's 7-year jail overturned

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: The Civil Court has ordered a citizen to pay his wife KD 15,000 in compensation for assaulting her and their children. The court also decided to reopen an earlier case against him that had been closed by the Public Prosecution.

The case stems from a complaint the wife filed with the Public Prosecution, which was initially closed after she withdrew it following her husband’s promises of reconciliation. However, he later broke those promises and evicted her from their home.



Al-Habib

During the court session, the woman’s defense counsel Lawyer Hawra Al-Habib argued that the husband had betrayed her trust, and emphasized that someone who lies cannot be trusted. She requested both compensation and the reopening of the complaint, both of which the court approved.

Lawyer Al-Habib highlighted that physical assault is unjustifiable under any religion and constitutes a punishable crime.

She noted that the wife had initially withdrawn her complaint based on her husband’s apology and promises, which he failed to honor, making him legally accountable.

Coach acquitted: The Court of Appeals overturned the seven-year prison sentence issued against a sports coach in a money laundering case, acquitting him once again. The court also revised the other charges, reducing the sentence to four months in prison and ordering the confiscation of seized hormones and medical equipment, replacing the previous KD 40,000 fine.

According to the case file, the coach had been accused of operating an unlicensed drug warehouse by storing medications at his residence for commercial sale and practicing pharmacy without a license from the Ministry of Health.

He was represented in court by Lawyer Bashar Al-Nassar, who argued that the money laundering charge was unfounded and that the lower court’s verdict contained errors in legal interpretation as well as insufficient reasoning.

Investigations had begun following confidential information about individuals selling hormones and steroids in Kuwait without Ministry of Health’s approval or proper registration, which are legally required for such substances.

When questioned, the accused admitted to possessing hormonal products at his residence, selling them without a license, and using the proceeds to purchase more products for resale at higher prices.

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MoC and Kuwait PR Association sign strategic cooperation pact

Enhance staff skills and institutional excellence

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: The Ministry of Communications, represented by the acting Undersec-

retary Meshal Al-Zaid, signed a joint cooperation agreement with the Kuwait Public Relations Association, represented by its president, Jamal Al-Nasrallah.



Ministry of Communications photo
Ministry of Communications's Meshal Al-Zaid and Kuwait PR Association's Jamal Al-Nasrallah shake hands after signing a cooperation agreement to boost staff skills.

The agreement aims to exchange expertise and develop national talent in communication and public relations, keeping pace with the latest professional and scientific methods.

In a press statement issued on the sidelines of the signing ceremony, Al-Zaid highlighted that the agreement strengthens cooperation between the ministry and professional civil society organizations.

He noted that the association's expertise and training capabilities will be utilized to provide development opportunities for employees in the ministry's Public Relations Department.

Al-Zaid emphasized that specialized training in public relations, corporate communication, and customer service will improve the efficiency of national staff, in line with the ministry's strategic goal of investing in human capital and enhancing skills in public and media communication.

Jahra Council approves mosque site allocation

By Inaas Awadh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: The Jahra Committee of the Municipal Council, in its recent meeting chaired by Abdullah Al-Enezi, approved the Ministry of Islamic Affairs' request to allocate a site for a mosque, parking, and a residence for the imam and muezzin. The allocation involves a portion of agricultural holding 1 in block 5 of the Abdali Agricultural area.

The committee also referred back to the executive branch the proposal to expand the Naeem housing project (low-cost housing), requesting an updated

response from the Public Authority for Housing Welfare.

In addition, the committee recommended coordination between the executive branch and the Ministry of Public Works to implement the Municipal Council's decision on the second phase of the project, which includes constructing parking spaces on the northern and southern sides of the mosque in the Naeem area, block 1, to support urban planning and regulate traffic flow.

The committee expressed its disapproval of a request to change the zoning designation of several properties in block 91 of Jahra.



Jahra Municipal Council photo
Abdullah Al-Anzi presided over the Jahra Committee meeting, attended by Eng. Munira Al-Amir, Khaled Al-Mutairi, and Eng. Ismail Behbehani.



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Amiri Diwan photo
His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait arrives in the sisterly Kingdom of Bahrain to head Kuwait's delegation at the Gulf Summit.

Vision 2035 in focus

Kuwait's 2025 year in review

Continuation

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30, (KUNA): Kuwait 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:

Dec 1: Amiri Decrees published extending the term of the Central Agency for remedying the Status of Illegal Residents for two years starting from November 9, 2025, as well as renewing mandate of Agency's chief Saleh Yousef Al-Fadhalah, for two years.

Dec 3: His Highness the Amir departs to Bahrain to lead Kuwait's delegation at the "46th Regular Session of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)."

Dec 3: His Highness the Amir delivers a speech at the 46th GCC Supreme Council meeting hosted by the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Dec 14: Amiri Decree No. (232) of 2025 issued appointing Manal Al-Asfour as Director General of Kuwait Municipality with the rank of Undersecretary.

Dec 14: Amiri Decree No. (233) of 2025 issued appointing Rabab Al-Osaimi as Director General of the Public Authority for Manpower with the rank of Undersecretary, and appointing AbdulLatif Al-Fawzan and Nasser Al-Mutairi as Deputy Directors with the rank of Assistant Undersecretary.

Dec 14: Amiri Decree No. (234) of 2025 issued appointing Dr. Faisal Al-Adwani and Saadoun Boureki as Assistant Undersecretaries in the Ministry of Higher Education.

Dec 14: Amiri Decree No. (231) of 2025 issued promoting Brigadier General Abdulwahab Al-Wuhaib to the rank of Major General and appointing him as Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior.

"Dec 15: His Highness the Amir receives Prince Turki bin Mohammad bin Fahad bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Minister of State and Member of the Council of Ministers of Saudi Arabia, at Bayan Palace during his official visit to Kuwait.

Dec 17: Amiri Decree No. (163) of 2025 issued abolishing the Public Authority for Roads and Land Transport, established in 2014, transferring its departments and authorities to the Ministry of Public Works, except for the Land Transport Department and the Traffic Bank Project, which are transferred to the Ministry of Interior.

Dec 23: His Highness the Amir receives the Director General of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority, Sheikh Dr. Meshaal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and the Deputy Chairperson of the Authority, Wafaa Ahmad Al-Qatami, along with members of the Authority, who presented the 10th Annual Report for the year (2024-25) at Bayan Palace.

Dec 23: Under the patronage of His Highness the Amir and in the presence of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the final match of the Amir football Cup for the 2024-25 season was held between Kuwait SC and Al-Arabi SC at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium.

His Highness the Crown Prince:

Feb 23: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received the Prime Minister

of Egypt, Dr. Mustafa Madbouly, who was paying an official visit to Kuwait.

Feb 23: His Highness the Crown Prince received Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Ruler of Abu Dhabi and UAE National Security Advisor, during his official visit.

March 4: His Highness the Crown Prince headed to Egypt to represent His Highness the Amir to the Extraordinary Arab Summit in Cairo.

March 30: His Highness the Crown Prince performed Eid Al-Fitr prayers at the Grand Mosque.

April 9: On behalf of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown inaugurates the new Maternity Hospital in the Sabah Health Area.

April 28: His Highness the Crown Prince receives at Bayan Palace the Secretary-General of the Arab League, Ahmad Abul Gheit.

May 25: On behalf of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince arrives at Kuala Lumpur to lead Kuwait's delegation at the second ASEAN-GCC-China Summit in the Malaysian capital.

May 26: Representative of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince witnessed the signing of a joint statement in Kuala Lumpur to launch negotiations for a free trade agreement between the GCC and Malaysia.

May 27: On behalf of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince, in his capacity as President of the current session of the GCC Supreme Council, delivered the opening speech at the third GCC-ASEAN-China Summit. He emphasized the importance of tripartite commercial and investment integration, energy and food security, advanced technology cooperation, digital transformation, and activation of cultural, educational, health and tourism programs. He also stressed the need to coordinate positions in international forums on common issues.

May 28: His Highness the Crown Prince arrives at Haneda International Airport in Tokyo on an official visit to Japan.

May 29: His Highness the Crown Prince meets Emperor Naruhito of Japan at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo.

May 30: His Highness the Crown Prince arrives at Kansai International Airport in Osaka as part of his official visit to Japan and visits the Expo 2025.

June 30: His Highness the Crown Prince receives at Bayan Palace Michael Jary, Vice Chairman of the King's Foundation in the United Kingdom, and Dr. Simon Sadinsky, Executive Director of Education, on the occasion of their visit to Kuwait.

July 6: His Highness the Crown Prince received at Seif Palace the UK Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, David Lammy, on the occasion of his official visit.

Aug 12: His Highness the Crown Prince received at Bayan Palace the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Federal Republic of Somalia, Abdulsalam Abdi Ali.

Aug 25: His Highness the Crown Prince received at Bayan Palace the Lebanese Minister of Defense, Lieutenant General Michel Mansi.

Aug 31: His Highness the Crown Prince receives at Bayan Palace the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Al-Hassan.

To be continued

Appointments follow CSC approval

MoE sets Dec 30 deadline for school activity coordinators

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: The Ministry of Education has set December 30 as the deadline for activity coordinators to commence their duties in schools in all grade levels, reports Al-Jarida daily.

According to educational sources, the ministry has finalized the procedures for assigning coordinators, with two designated for each school.

The ministry recently appointed around 600 activity coordinators, following approval from the Civil Service Commission (CSC) to create this new role.

The total number of coordinators is expected to reach approximately 1,800, after the ministry allowed certain job categories to transition into this newly established position.

The sources explained that CSC has set several conditions for appointment as school activity coordinators. Applicants must be registered in CSC's central employment system and possess relevant qualifications, with priority given to those in educational fields such as teaching or technical supervision.

Candidates underwent specialized tests

and interviews designed by the relevant sector to ensure their competence and ability to perform the duties assigned in schools, particularly as the role involves direct interaction with students.

Regarding activity plans, the sources stated that the responsibilities of school activity coordinators include the following:

- Implementing programs and assisting in applying activity plans under the guidance of their direct supervisor and technical advisor
- Analyzing data, preparing studies and research on activities, and collecting relevant information
- Coordinating programs and aligning activities with the curriculum
- Observing and developing students' abilities and training them to enhance their skills
- Organizing student teams for participation in activities and competitions
- Providing necessary resources by identifying material and technical requirements for activities
- Supervising school radio broadcasts, exhibitions, and morning assemblies.

Cabinet backs rehab center, accessibility code

Ministers approve Hague Convention protocol, review nationality cases

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30, (KUNA): The Council of Ministers held its weekly meeting on Tuesday at Bayan Palace, chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Following the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereeda Al-Mousherji stated the following:

The Cabinet, at the outset of its session, reviewed messages received from the Amiri Diwan addressed to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

He explained that the messages were sent by leaders of several countries and addressed ways to enhance bilateral relations and activate avenues of joint cooperation between Kuwait and those countries across various political, economic, and developmental fields.

On another matter, the Cabinet reviewed a visual presentation submitted by Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi regarding the Addiction Rehabilitation Center project in the Al-Sulaibiya area, implemented pursuant to Law No. 59 of 2025 concerning combating narcotics and psychotropic substances and regulating their use and trafficking.

The Minister explained that the project constitutes an integrated addiction treatment center providing comprehensive medical and rehabilitation services in accordance with the highest professional standards, targeting individuals subject to judicial rulings and addiction complaints to enable completion of treatment without compromising planned duration.

He affirmed that the project represents a pioneering national model reflecting integration between government action and community support, embodying the pivotal role of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Interior, in cooperation with Zakat House, in treating and rehabilitating addiction patients.

In another development, the Cabinet listened to an explanation by Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs and Chairperson of the Public Authority for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities Dr. Amthlal Al-Huwaila concerning Ministerial Decision No. 696 of 2024.

She explained that the decision amended provisions of Ministerial Decision No. 206 of 2009 regulating construction works and its attached schedules, relating to the issuance of the Kuwait Accessibility Code for Persons with Disabilities based on universal design principles adopted by the authority.

She clarified that the code applies to all buildings and facilities according to each building's designated use and functional nature, and includes fundamental updates to construction, design, and implementation requirements to meet public safety, sustainability, and comprehensive accessibility standards.

She stressed that the decision enhances social inclusion for people with disabilities and aligns with relevant international conventions, foremost among them the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as the State's orientation toward sustainable urban development and inclusive quality of life.

The Cabinet decided to task all ministries, government agencies, public authorities, and institutions with full compliance in applying the Building Code and the Kuwait Accessibility Code for Persons with Disabilities as mandatory references for all current and future state projects.

The Cabinet also obligated all entities to circulate the aforementioned ministerial decision and all related codes, requirements, and attached schedules, and to upload them on their official electronic websites to ensure full implementation without exception.

On another front, the Cabinet reviewed the minutes of the Ministerial Committee for Legal Affairs, which included several items, most notably a draft decree-law approving accession to the Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention on protecting cultural property during armed conflict.

The draft decree-law comes in implementation of Kuwait's policy to strengthen international humanitarian law enforcement, align national legislation with international requirements, integrate protection rules domestically, and enhance institutional frameworks supporting prevention and legal accountability.

Accession to the protocol gains particular importance as it provides an advanced legal framework to protect cultural property during armed conflicts, establishes enhanced protection for designated cultural assets, restricts targeting of cultural and religious sites, and affirms heritage as humanity's shared legacy.

The Council of Ministers approved the draft decree-law on accession to the Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and decided to submit it to His Highness the Amir.

The Cabinet also approved the minutes of the Supreme Committee for the Investigation of Kuwaiti Nationality, which included cases of loss and withdrawal of Kuwaiti nationality from certain individuals, in accordance with Decree-Law No. 15 of 1959 and its amendments.

Kuwait's FM Al-Yahya holds phone talk with Tunisian Foreign Minister

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30, (KUNA): Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya held a phone call on Monday with Tunisian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tu-

nisiens Abroad Mohamed Ali Nafti.

During the call, the two ministers reviewed bilateral relations and discussed regional and international developments, as well as issues of mutual interest.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs photo

Kuwait Deputy FM discusses bilateral ties with Egyptian Ambassador.

Kuwait Deputy FM, Egyptian envoy discuss strengthening bilateral ties

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Tuesday received the Egyptian Ambassador to

Kuwait Mohammad Jaber Abulwafa, discussing bilateral ties between both countries, issues of mutual interest and latest international and regional developments.

Minister probes co-op violations; union demands fair auction prices

Sheikh Fahad inspects Ardiya Farmers Market

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: In continuation of his tireless efforts and reform initiatives in the agricultural sector, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef inspected operations at the Kuwait Farmers Union's market in Ardiya, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Sheikh Fahad was accompanied by the Chairman of the Kuwait Farmers Union, Ahmed Al-Adwani, Secretary General Ahmed Nasser Al-Shabak, and Treasurer Obaid Nasser Al-Nafishan.

Following the tour, Secretary General Al-Shabak said that Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef's visit to the farmers' market was a source of joy for every productive farmer.

He praised Sheikh Fahad's responsiveness to farmers' demands and his commitment to supporting them. Al-Shabak revealed that Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef received a briefing on the auction process, which is overseen by both the Kuwait Farmers Union and the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR).

He said, "We informed the First Deputy Prime Minister that several consumer cooperative societies are not adhering to the requirement to purchase from the Ardiya market."

Al-Shabak affirmed that Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef acknowledged the unfair treatment towards local produce, which is sold at prices that barely cover the production costs, while it is sold at much higher prices in local markets.

He revealed that the union requested a minimum price be set for each agricultural product before auctions begin.

Al-Shabak clarified that Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef recognized the importance of the issue and took steps to address it, aiming to ensure that Kuwaiti farmers can sell their produce at profitable prices while consumers can buy it at reasonable rates.



Ministry of Interior photo

First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef inspects operations at the Ardiya Farmers Union market, reviewing auction procedures and discussing fair pricing measures with officials and union representatives.

Meanwhile, Dr. Ahmed Zaid Al-Azmi, former head of the Al-Wafra Agricultural Association, expressed his pleasure at meeting Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef during his inspection of the Ardiya market.

He noted that he briefed Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef on the importance of setting a minimum price for each local product auctioned at the Ardiya and Sulaibiya markets.

Dr. Al-Azmi said it is unfair for farmers to be forced to sell a box of tomatoes at the peak of the harvest for 70 fils, while consumers pay 500 fils or more in other markets. He asked, "Where does this difference go?" and answered, "The difference between the two prices goes into the middlemen's pockets."

Continued from Page 1

Dear government,

Everyone recalls the late Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, who famously said, "Corruption has become too heavy for camels to carry."

Although he was referring to a specific institution at the time, this statement applies to nearly all ministries and public bodies, with very few exceptions.

The decline in performance and productivity, coupled with the practice of one institution issuing decisions only to have them overturned by another, highlights the absence of a clear administrative vision.

This is why His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad, has consistently stressed the importance of sound financial planning, avoiding waste, and allocating budgets to top-priority projects. Achieving this goal requires a comprehensive reform vision to modernize and develop the performance of government and public institutions, thereby increasing efficiency, combating corruption, and ensuring transparency.

Undoubtedly, this goal cannot be achieved without a comprehensive review of the roles of public institutions and resolving any overlaps in their jurisdictions. Through such fundamental reform, institutions can be established that do not waste public funds for the personal gain of a few influential figures. This radical reform will strengthen the state's ability to maintain its path of progress.

Cheaters risk

Violations that apply to both the first and second academic terms include:

Cheating or assisting another student in cheating by any of the following actions:

- Bringing any means of cheating into the examination room
- Giving their answer sheet or any cheating material to another student
- Throwing or receiving an answer sheet, cheat sheet, or any exam-related material from another student inside the examination room
- Attempting to cheat or assisting another in cheating, whether written or practical, in any illegal manner
- Writing a name other than their own on the answer sheet
- Leaving the examination room with the answer sheet or part of it
- Writing their name incorrectly, crossing out their name, writing another student's name, or failing to write their name and leaving the room
- Possessing scraps of paper, writing on their hand, or any tools related to the exam subject
- Tearing up the answer sheet during the exam
- Attempting to assault a staff member

or forcibly take their belongings inside the examination room or its surrounding areas

■ Throwing the answer sheet with the intention of removing it from the examination room

■ Possessing any communication device, including mobile phones, listening devices, or other modern devices, even if switched off

■ Using an answer sheet from previous exams for the current exam

■ Refusing to submit the answer sheet when caught cheating

■ Having any cheat sheets, answer sheets, or communication devices while going to or returning from the toilet after inspection.

■ Writing to another student inside the examination room.

3. If the violation occurs during the first or second semester exams, the student will receive a zero for both the practical and written exams, but they will retain their coursework grade for the subject during the period in which the violation occurred.

Violations include attempting to cheat by looking around or communicating with neighboring students during the exam, deliberately sitting in an unassigned seat without permission, violating exam rules, engaging in inappropriate writing or drawing during the exam that is discovered during marking, smoking inside the examination room, and being present in the examination room in military uniform.

4. If the violation occurs during the first or second semester exams, the student will receive a zero for both the practical and written exams as well as for coursework grades in all subjects during the period in which the violation occurred.

Also, students who violate the rules will be referred to the school disciplinary council for appropriate action in accordance with established regulations and procedures. Violations include disrupting the order and workflow of the examination committee, assaulting, threatening, or verbally abusing staff members in the examination room or surrounding areas, and damaging staff property.

5. If a violation warranting expulsion occurs during the first or second semester examinations, a reasoned decision will be issued to expel the offending student.

A detailed report of the incident, along with all related documents, will be submitted to the relevant authorities, including the directors of educational affairs in the educational zones, the Director General of Private Education, the Director of Religious Education, and the Director of Special Education.

For 12th-grade students, the expulsion decision will be issued by the relevant assistant undersecretary and the central examination control office.

For other students, the decision will be issued by the head of examinations or their designee.

If the impersonator is illiterate, the head of the examination committee will submit a report to the relevant authorities to refer the matter to the penal authorities. Violations that warrant expulsion include a student impersonating another student, a non-student impersonating the original student, and committing offenses against God, the prophets, the companions of the Prophet, or the Amir during the examination, or if such behavior is discovered later during the marking of exam papers. The ministry emphasized that these measures aim to maintain the integrity of the examination process and ensure all students' right to a fair and organized learning environment.

Kuwait boosts

citizens and residents as well as strengthen overall national security.

In a televised interview, Colonel Al-Lamee' stressed that the plan involves detailed preparations and continuous coordination among all sectors of the ministry, in collaboration with relevant government agencies, to enable rapid and effective management of security and humanitarian incidents.

He emphasized the ministry's dedication to handling all reports received through the Emergency Hotline No. 112 with utmost seriousness, noting that the service operates 24/7.

Colonel Al-Lamee' explained that security and traffic patrols have been strategically deployed according to a detailed organizational plan to manage the expected gatherings. This ensures rapid response capabilities, maintains smooth traffic flow, and prevents any behavior that could compromise public safety.

The Reports Department, which is part of the Central Operations Sector, operates continuously without holidays. Statistics show the department handles around 360,000 security and humanitarian reports annually. These reports cover a wide range of incidents, including security breaches, humanitarian needs, requests for assistance, and medical emergencies.

Colonel Al-Lamee' noted that the 112 Emergency Hotline received approximately 3.2 million calls in 2024.

He urged all citizens and residents to cooperate with security agencies, follow the instructions of security and traffic personnel, and not hesitate to use the Hotline No. 112 in case of any emergency.

Colonel Al-Lamee' concluded with a prayer for the country, asking for the continuation of security and safety and wishing peace, prosperity, and happiness for everyone in the new year, 2026.

Interior personnel

testing included members of the Police Sports Federation, headed by the federation's chairman Brigadier General Sheikh Mubarak Ali Yousef Al-Sabah, accompanied by his deputy, board members, and all federation personnel.

The ministry added that the procedure is in implementation of Law No.159 of 2025 on combating drugs and psychotropic substances, within an approved timetable covering all Interior Ministry sectors.

It also said the plan includes periodic and random testing linked to promotion, supervisory appointments, hiring, and investigations, affirming firm implementation to enhance readiness, discipline, and maintain a safe, violation-free work environment.

KOC implements

the goal of saving approximately KD one billion over the next five years.

These efforts have already led to improved operational efficiency, increased competitiveness, reduced project execution times, and enhanced service quality.

Savings of nearly KD 430 million are anticipated by reviewing and improving well designs, including drilling pipes and other components, for all deep well drilling projects.

An additional KD 365 million in savings is projected over the next five years after revising drilling cost estimates for new wells based on historical data and the best average drilling durations.

Furthermore, savings of approximately KD 180 million is estimated by reducing maintenance budget projections, comparing them to actual costs, and optimizing the number of scheduled drilling days. This would bring total projected savings to around KD 975 million, in addition to the KD 208 million already saved by KOC last year.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) announced in the official gazette "Kuwait Al-Youm" that it had awarded the tender for Redwood interface evaluation and conversion services on the Oracle Cloud platform to Arab Computer Services Company (AIMS), which had submitted the lowest bid and met all technical specifications and requirements, at a price of KD 51,800.

KPC also announced the list of companies invited to participate in a limited tender for Kuwait Petroleum International (Q8) for the provision

of catering and canteen services. The tender will be issued to the 15 invited companies 30 days after the advertisement's publication in the official gazette "Kuwait Al-Youm".

Any party whose name does not appear on the list of companies invited to participate in the tender has the right to appeal their exclusion or submit a request to participate, accompanied by supporting documents. Appeals must be submitted to the Chairman of the Higher Procurement Committee for KPC and its subsidiaries within 30 days of the announcement's publication.

The Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) announced the postponement of the deadline for submitting bids for a KOC's tender related to repair and renovation services for production facilities in the West Kuwait area. The new deadline is January 25, instead of January 4.

Temperatures

Meanwhile, the Al-Ojairi Scientific Center announced that the Al-Murabba'aniyah season is nearing its end with the appearance of its third star, known as "Al-Shula," beginning on January 2, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press release, the center explained that the Al-Shula star period lasts for 13 days and is the third and final star of the Al-Murabba'aniyah season. During this period, sunrise occurs later than at any other time of the year.

On the first day of Al-Shula, sunrise is at 6:43 am and sunset at 5:01 pm. Nights continue to lengthen, averaging approximately 13 hours and 42 minutes. Temperatures drop at night, especially in open areas, with a noticeable increase in cold.

Regarding Al-Shula's characteristics, the center explained that it consists of two bright stars close together at the tip of Scorpio's tail (the "needle"), almost touching. The upper star is of the second magnitude, while the lower is of the third magnitude.

One feature of this cold spell is the continued drop in temperatures, which can reach frost levels in open areas. Fog may appear, and remaining leaves fall, as typically occurs in winter.

Kuwait eyes

medical standards and significantly enhance specialized healthcare in Kuwait.

They also reviewed detailed plans and preparations for the logistical, technical, and operational aspects of the move to ensure a smooth transition without disrupting ongoing patient treatment services.

Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi emphasized the ministry's commitment to enhancing cancer care for citizens and residents.

He described the partnership with Gustave Roussy Hospital as a "strategic addition" that will strengthen KCCC's capabilities in training, treatment, and scientific research.

Dr. Al-Awadhi praised the efforts of the KCCC board and staff, affirming the ministry's full support for initiatives aimed at refining treatment protocols, strengthening early diagnosis programs, and improving psychological and social support for patients and their families.

He stressed that these initiatives align with New Kuwait 2035 vision for the health sector.

It is worth highlighting that the MoU signed with Gustave Roussy Hospital, a global leader in cancer research and treatment, is designed to boost cooperation in training, knowledge transfer, and the development of treatment and research programs, all for advancing Kuwait's goal of becoming a regional hub for cancer care.

Judicial institute,

For his part, in a similar statement to KUNA, the Chairman of KRCS Khaled Al-Mughamis, said that the MoU aims to achieve common goals in spreading legal and humanitarian awareness, enhancing training and scientific research, and exchanging experiences and expertise, thus contributing to supporting distinguished relations and strengthening institutional ties.

The signing of the MoU stems from KRCS's commitment to building effective partnerships with specialized national institutions, noting that combining the humanitarian dimension with legal knowledge is a fundamental pillar for developing institutional work and raising the efficiency of personnel working in the humanitarian field.

Al-Mughamis emphasized that this cooperation comes within the framework of KRCS's efforts to expand its strategic partnerships and strengthen its humanitarian and institutional role in line with modern developments and in service of its national and humanitarian mission.



A street actor performs with fire during snowfall in St. Petersburg, Russia, Monday, Dec. 29, 2025. (AP)

1 seat shifts power

Iowa election could restore Republican ‘supermajority’

DES MOINES, Dec 30, (AP): Some Iowans are ringing in 2026 with a special election on the final Tuesday of the year, casting ballots for a state senator in a race that offers Republicans an opportunity to reclaim two-thirds control of the chamber.

Democrat Renee Hardman faces Republican **Lucas Loftin** in the special election for the state Senate seat representing parts of Des Moines’ suburbs. The seat is vacant after the Oct. 6 death of state Sen. Claire Celsi, a Democrat.

Flipping the seat would give Republicans supermajority status once again, just months after a Democrat flipped a Republican seat in an August special election, giving Democrats 17 seats to Republicans’ 33. Celsi’s death left the Democratic caucus at 16.

Senate Republicans left Des Moines last spring with a supermajority, which allows the party to easily confirm Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds’ appointments to state agencies and commissions. A Hardman win in Tuesday’s election would



Loftin

limit Republicans’ power in the Senate as lawmakers prepare to return to Des Moines for the 2026 legislative session. Without a supermajority, Republicans would have to rely on support from at least one Democrat to approve Reynolds’ nominees.

Democrats outnumber Republicans in the district by about 3,300 voters, 37% to 30%, but a holiday week special election may prove more volatile.

About a third of registered voters in the district are affiliated with another party or register without a political party.

Celsi won her 2024 reelection bid against a Libertarian competitor with 69% of the district electorate. But she earned a smaller majority of voters in 2022 - 58% - against a Republican, who earned 42% of the vote. That was similar to the share Republican President Donald Trump received in the district last year.

Hardman, who would be the first Black woman elected to the Iowa state Senate, is the CEO of non-profit Lutheran Services of Iowa and a member of the West Des Moines City Council. Loftin, who started as a tree trimmer for Wright Service Corp. in 2007, has since transitioned to software and data project management for the environmental services company.

Winter storm packing snow, strong winds to descend on Great Lakes and Northeast

NEW YORK, Dec 30, (AP): A wild winter storm was expected to bring strong winds, heavy snow and frigid temperatures to the Great Lakes and Northeast on Tuesday, a day after a bomb cyclone barreled across the northern U.S. and left tens thousands of customers without power.

The storm that hit parts of the Plains and Great Lakes on Monday brought sharply colder air, strong winds and a mix of snow, ice and rain that led to treacherous travel. Forecasters said it intensified quickly enough to meet the criteria of a bomb cyclone, a system that strengthens rapidly as pressure drops.

Nationwide, more than 153,000 customers were without power early Tuesday, more than a third of them in Michigan, according to Poweroutage.us.

As Monday’s storm moved into Canada, the National Weather Service predicted more inclement weather conditions for the Eastern U.S., including quick bursts of heavy snow and gusty winds known as snow squalls.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul warned that whitout conditions were expected Tuesday in parts of the state, including the Syracuse-metro area.

“If you’re in an impacted area, please avoid all unnecessary travel,” she said in a post on the social media platform X,



A person walks across the street after a winter storm system hit South East Michigan, Monday, Dec. 29, 2025, in Detroit. (AP)

Snow piled up quickly in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula on Monday, where as much as 2 feet (60 centimeters) fell in some areas, according to the National Weather Service. Meteorologist Ryan Metzger said additional snow was expected in the coming days, although totals would be far lighter.

Waves on Lake Superior that were expected to reach 20 feet (6 meters) Monday sent all but one cargo ship into harbors for shelter, according to MarineTraffic.com. Weather forecasting on the lakes

has improved greatly since the Edmund Fitzgerald sank in 1975 after waves were predicted at up to 16 feet (4.8 meters).

The fierce winds on Lake Erie sent water surging toward the basin’s eastern end near Buffalo, New York, while lowering water on the western side in Michigan to expose normally submerged lakebed - even the wreck of a car and a snowmobile.

Kevin Aldrich, 33, a maintenance worker from Monroe, Michigan, said he has never seen the lake recede so much and was surprised on Monday

to spot the remnants of old piers dating back to the 1830s. He posted photos on social media of wooden pilings sticking up several feet from the muck.

“Where those are at would typically be probably 12 feet deep,” he said. “We can usually drive our boat over them.”

Dangerous wind chills plunged as low as minus 30 F (minus 34 C) across parts of North Dakota and Minnesota on Monday. And in northeast West Virginia, rare, nearly hurricane-force winds were recorded on a mountain near Dolly Sods, according to the National Weather Service.

In Iowa, after blizzard conditions eased by Monday morning, high winds continued blowing fallen snow across roadways, keeping more than 200 miles (320 kilometers) of Interstate 35 closed. State troopers reported dozens of crashes during the storm, including one that killed a person.

On the West Coast, the National Weather Service warned that moderate to strong Santa Ana winds were expected in parts of Southern California through Tuesday, raising concerns about downed trees in areas where soils have been saturated by recent storms. Two more storms were forecast later this week, with rain on New Year’s Day potentially soaking the Rose Parade in Pasadena for the first time in about two decades.



In this photo provided by Ukraine’s 65th Mechanized Brigade press service, recruits attend drills at a training ground in the Zaporizhzhia region, Ukraine, Monday, Dec. 29, 2025.

European leaders to discuss US-led peace initiative as Russia-Ukraine tensions spike

KYIV, Dec 30, (AP): European leaders were due to hold talks Tuesday on U.S.-led peace efforts to end the nearly four-year war between Russia and Ukraine, amid a flare-up in tensions between Moscow and Kyiv over Russian claims, denied by Ukraine, of a mass drone attack on a lakeside residence used by President Vladimir Putin.

The virtual European meeting was expected to gather leaders who attended talks in Berlin earlier this month, according to Polish government spokesman Adam Szlapka, although it was not clear who would be taking part.

It was the first meeting of European leaders since

U.S. President Donald Trump hosted Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at his Florida resort on Sunday. Trump insisted that Ukraine and Russia are “closer than ever before” to a peace settlement, although he acknowledged that outstanding obstacles could still prevent a deal.

At the same time, Russian and Ukrainian officials have exchanged bitter accusations over Moscow’s allegations that Ukraine attempted to attack the Russian leader’s residence in northwestern Russia with 91 long-range drones almost immediately after Trump’s Sunday talks with Zelenskyy.

The claims and counterclaims threatened to derail peace efforts. “I don’t like it. It’s not good,” Trump said Monday after Putin told him by phone about the alleged attack.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiba noted Tuesday that Russia “still hasn’t provided any plausible evidence” to support its allegations.

Moscow won’t do so because “no such attack happened,” he wrote on X.

“Russia has a long record of false claims,” he added, referencing the Kremlin’s denials it intended to attack Ukraine ahead of its Feb. 24, 2022, all-out invasion of its neighbor.

Heightened security on attack anniversary

National Guard to patrol New Orleans

NEW ORLEANS, La., Dec 30, (AP): A National Guard deployment in New Orleans authorized by President Donald Trump will begin Tuesday as part of a heavy security presence for New Year’s celebrations a year after an attack on revelers on Bourbon Street killed 14 people, officials said Monday.

The deployment in New Orleans follows high-profile National Guard missions the Trump administration launched in other cities this year, including in Washington and Memphis, Tennessee. But the sight of National Guard troops is not unusual in New Orleans, where troops earlier this year also helped bolster security for the Super Bowl and Mardi Gras.

“It’s no different than what we’ve seen in the past,” New Orleans police spokesperson Reese Harper said.

The Guard is not the only federal law enforcement agency in the city. Since the start of the month, federal agents have been carrying out an immigration crackdown that has led to the arrest of at least several hundred people.

Harper stressed that the National Guard will not be engaging in immigration enforcement.

“This is for visibility and just really to keep our citizens safe,” Harper said. “It’s just another tool in the toolbox and another layer of security.”

The Guard is expected to be confined to the French Quarter area popular with tourists and won’t be engaging in assisting in immigration enforcement, Harper said. Guardsmen will operate similar to earlier this year when they patrolled the area around Bourbon Street following the vehicle-ramming attack on Jan. 1.

The 350 Guard members will stay through Carnival season, when residents and tourists descend on the Big Easy to partake in costumed celebrations and massive parades before ending with Mardi Gras in mid-February.

Louisiana National Guard spokesperson Lt. Col. Noel Collins said in a written statement that the Guard will support local, state, and federal law enforcement “to enhance capabilities, stabilize the environment, assist in reducing crime, and restoring public trust.”

In total, more than 800 local, state and federal law enforcement officials will be deployed in New Orleans to close off Bourbon Street to vehicular traffic, patrol the area, conduct bag searches and redirect traffic, city officials said during a news conference Monday.

The extra aid for New Orleans has received the support of some Democrats, with Mayor LaToya Cantrell saying she is “welcoming of those added resources.”

The increased law enforcement presence comes a year after Shamsud-Din Jabbar drove around a police blockade in the early hours of Jan. 1 and raced down Bourbon Street, plowing into people celebrating New Year’s Day. The attacker, a U.S. citizen and Army veteran who had proclaimed his support for the Islamic State militant group on social media, was fatally shot by police after crashing. After an expansive search, law enforcement located multiple bombs in coolers placed around the French Quarter. None of the explosive devices detonated.



Spec. Nelson Harrison, of the Louisiana National Guard, stands guard on Bourbon Street in the French Quarter, Jan. 2, 2025, in New Orleans. (AP)

Obituary

Former Bangladeshi prime minister Khaleda Zia dies at 80

DHAKA, Dec 30, (AP): Former Bangladeshi Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, whose archrivalry with another former premier defined the country’s politics for a generation, has died, her Bangladesh Nationalist Party said in a statement Tuesday. She was 80.

Zia was the first woman elected prime minister of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh’s interim government announced a three-day mourning period. A general holiday also was announced for Wednesday when Zia’s funeral prayers are scheduled to be held in front of the country’s national Parliament building in Dhaka.

Bangladesh’s interim leader Muhammad Yunus issued a statement Tuesday citing Zia’s contributions to the country.

“Her role in the struggle to establish democracy, a multi-party political culture, and the rights of the people in Bangladesh will be remembered forever,” Yunus said.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi offered condolences in a statement Tuesday, noting that “as the first woman Prime Minister of Bangladesh, her important contributions toward the development of Bangladesh, as well as India-Bangladesh relations, will always be remembered.”

Sajeb Wazed, son of former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, said in a statement Tuesday that Zia’s demise “will leave a deep impact on the country’s (democratic) transition.”

“She will be remembered for her contributions in nation building but her death is a blow to stabilize Bangladesh,” said Wazed, whose mother was



Left: Bangladesh’s main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party chief and former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia looks upwards as she attends a rally of her supporters outside their party headquarters in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Monday, March 12, 2012. Right: A woman reacts while waiting behind barricades outside the hospital where former Bangladeshi Prime Minister Khaleda Zia died, in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Monday, Dec. 30, 2025. (AP)



speeches. India alleged insurgents were allowed to use Bangladesh’s soil to destabilize India’s northeastern states under Zia, especially during her term from 2001-2006.

During that term, Zia also was tainted by allegations that her elder son, Tarique Rahman, was running a parallel government and was involved in widespread corruption.

In 2004, Hasina blamed Zia’s government and Rahman for grenade attacks in Dhaka that killed 24 members of her Awami League party and wounded hundreds of people. Hasina narrowly escaped the attack, which she characterized as an assassination attempt, and subsequently won the 2008 general election.

Zia’s party and its partners boycotted the 2014 election in a dispute over a caretaker government, giving a one-sided victory to the increasingly authoritarian regime of Hasina. Her party joined the national elections in 2018 but boycotted again in 2024, allowing Hasina to return to power for a fourth consecutive time through controversial elections.

Zia was sentenced to 17 years in jail in two separate corruption cases for misuse of power in embezzling funds meant for a charity named after her late husband. Her party said the charges were politically motivated to weaken the opposition, but the Hasina government said it did not interfere and the case was a matter for the courts.

Hasina was bitterly criticized by both her opponents and independent critics for sending Zia to jail.

Zia’s greatest political rival.

Hasina issued a statement from exile in India saying Zia’s death was “an irreparable loss” for politics in Bangladesh and recalled her contributions in establishing the nation’s democracy.

Zia had faced corruption cases she said were politically motivated, but in January 2025 the Supreme Court acquitted Zia in the last corruption case against her, which would have let her run in February’s general election.

The BNP said that after she was released from prison due to illness in 2020, her family sought permission for treatment abroad at least 18 times from Hasina’s administration, but the

requests were rejected.

Following Hasina’s ouster in 2024, the Yunus-led interim government finally allowed her to go. She went to London in January and returned to Bangladesh in May.

Bangladesh’s early years of independence, gained in a bloody 1971 war against Pakistan, were marked by assassinations, coups and counter coups as military figures and secular and Islamic leaders jockeyed for power.

Zia’s husband, President Ziaur Rahman, had grabbed power as a military chief in 1977 and a year later formed the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. He was credited with opening democracy in the country but was killed in a 1981

military coup. Zia’s uncompromising stance against the military dictatorship helped build a mass movement against it, culminating with the ousting of dictator and former army chief H.M. Ershad in 1990.

Zia’s opponent when she won her first term in 1991 and in several elections after that was Hasina, the daughter of independence leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who was assassinated in a 1975 coup.

Zia was criticized over an early 1996 election in which her party won 278 of the 300 parliamentary seats during a wide boycott by other leading parties including Hasina’s Awami League, which demanded an election-

time caretaker government. Zia’s government lasted only 12 days before a nonpartisan caretaker government was installed and the new election was held that June.

Zia returned to power in 2001 in a government shared with the country’s main Islamist party, Jamaat-e-Islami, which had a dark past involving Bangladesh’s independence war.

Zia’s Bangladesh Nationalist Party was previously closely allied with the party and her government maintained the confidence of the business community by following pro-investment, open market policies. Zia was known to have a soft spot for Pakistan and used to deliver anti-Indian political

Danger zones snarl skies

Beijing defends Taiwan drills after US remarks

BEIJING, Dec 30, (Agencies): The ongoing military drills by the Eastern Theater Command of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army around Taiwan Island is a punitive and deterrent action against separatist forces who seek “Taiwan independence” through military buildup, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said on Tuesday.

Spokesperson Lin Jian made the remarks at a daily press briefing in response to a related query about recent comments by a U.S. leader regarding the drills, code-named “Justice Mission 2025” starting from Monday.

Taiwan is an inalienable part of China’s territory, and the relevant military drills are a “necessary move to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity,” Lin added.

China’s People’s Liberation Army staged a second day of large-scale military drills around Taiwan on Tuesday, unleashing a live-fire show of force as part of what it called “Justice Mission 2025” to demonstrate its ability to deter any external armed support for the self-ruled island that it has long insisted is part of its sovereign territory.

The PLA’s Eastern Theater Command sent destroyers, frigates, fighters and bombers to the waters to the north and south of the island to test its ability in sea-air coordination and blockading. Its ground forces carried out long-range, live-fire drills in the waters to the island’s north and also organized live-fire training, alongside simulated long-range, joint strike with air, navy and missile units, in the waters to Taiwan’s south, achieving what command spokesperson Li Xi called “desired effects.”

The maneuvers increased tension around the Taiwan Strait as 2025 drew to a close, but the impact extended beyond military pressure into everyday life. Taiwan’s Civil Aviation Administration was notified that seven temporary “dangerous zones” had been set

up around the strait. The schedules of Taiwan’s four international airports on Tuesday afternoon showed over 100 international and domestic flights had revised times, delays or cancellations, according to their websites.

Xinhua, China’s official news agency, posted a commentary late Monday saying the drills sent an unequivocal message: That Beijing is always ready to prevent anything that tries to split Taiwan from China. Each escalation, it said, would be met with stronger countermeasures.

“By currying favor with the United States through obsequious loyalty gestures and promoting arms purchases, the DPP is binding the entire island of Taiwan to its catastrophic secessionist chariot, disregarding public opinion,” it wrote, referring to Taiwan’s ruling Democratic Progressive Party.

Taiwan President Lai Ching-te said Tuesday his territory would act responsibly by neither escalating conflict nor provoking disputes.

“China has recently escalated military pressure in a frequent manner, this is not conduct expected of a responsible major nation,” he wrote on Facebook.

Taiwan’s Defense Ministry said it had detected 130 aircraft, including fighters and bombers, 14 military ships and eight other official ships around the island between 6 a.m. Monday and 6 a.m. Tuesday. Its forces kept monitoring the development and deployed aircraft, navy ships and coastal missile systems in response. Ninety of the Chinese aircraft crossed the median line of the strait. A Chinese military balloon was also spotted, it said.

It said the PLA long-range artillery unit in Fujian, a southeastern Chinese province, fired live rounds toward a target zone north of the island, with impact zones scattered around the line 44 kilometers (24 nautical miles) off its coast.



Chinese President Xi Jinping and his wife Peng Liyuan pose for a group photo with the heads of foreign delegations and their spouses attending the Global Leaders’ Meeting on Women in Beijing, China, Oct. 13, 2025. (Xinhua)

Diplomatic engagements reflect China’s firm and steady strides on global stage

Xi’s diplomacy in 2025: Shedding light on a world at crossroads

BEIJING, Dec 30, (Xinhua): As 2025 draws to a close, a review of Chinese President Xi Jinping’s diplomatic engagements throughout the year reflects China’s firm and steady strides on the global stage.

This year has been one of turbulence and transformation, marked by rising conflicts and escalating frictions. At a time when humanity once again stands at a crossroads, China’s diplomacy under Xi’s leadership offers a clear answer to the choices between unity and division, dialogue and confrontation, win-win cooperation and zero-sum rivalry.

FORGING GLOBAL GOVERNANCE SYNERGY

2025 has emerged as a pivotal year for global governance, with Xi proposing the Global Governance Initiative (GGI) at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Tianjin -- the largest gathering in the 24-year history of the organization, which brought together leaders from more than 20 countries and heads of 10 international organizations.

Xi highlighted five principles of the GGI: adhering to sovereign equality, abiding by international rule of law, practicing multilateralism, advocating the people-centered approach, and focusing on taking real actions.

The GGI, the fourth landmark global initiative raised by Xi after the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative, is considered another important public good that China contributes to the world.

This year also marks the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People’s War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, the World Anti-Fascist War and the founding of the United Nations.

On Sept. 3, two days after the conclusion of the SCO Tianjin Summit, a massive military parade was held in central Beijing to commemorate the victory. While addressing a reception commemorating the Victory Day, Xi called for firmly upholding international fairness and justice, staying committed to the path of peaceful development, and making unremitting efforts to improving people’s well-being at all times.

Today, the question of how to reform the global governance system and advance global peace and development has been asked among nations around the globe.

In September, while delivering video remarks at the UN Climate Summit, Xi announced China’s new Nationally Determined Contributions, including a 7 to 10 percent reduction in economy-wide net greenhouse gas emissions from peak levels and increasing the share of non-fossil fuels in total energy consumption to over 30 percent by 2035.

In October, during the Global Leaders’ Meeting on Women in Beijing, he outlined China’s proposals to support women in “enabling them to play a substantive role in global governance and share in its benefits.”

A month later, at the APEC Economic Leaders’ Meeting held in the Republic of Korea (ROK), Xi urged economies to “bear in mind the well-being of the entire humanity, and promote the sound and orderly development of AI while ensuring that it is beneficial, safe and fair.” As the world grapples with a deficit in rules-based governance and a widening gap in global cooperation, the initiatives underscore China’s commitment to advancing global governance by

working together “to fully mobilize resources from all quarters and tackle more effectively the common challenges for humanity.”

UPHOLDING WIN-WIN PARTNERSHIP

Within this year, Xi and Russian President Vladimir Putin had active engagements.

“Persistently promoting the high-level development of China-Russia relations is in the fundamental interests of the two peoples and is also the source of stability for world peace,” Xi once said.

Throughout the course of this year, Xi held multiple phone conversations with U.S. President Donald Trump. In October, the two leaders met after a six-year interval, holding a 100-minute meeting in ROK’s Busan.

“China and the United States should be partners and friends. That is what history has taught us and what reality needs,” Xi said. Trump said China is a great country and Xi is a well respected great leader. With joint efforts, the two countries can get many great things done for the world, Trump added.

In December, Xi met with visiting French President Emmanuel Macron. He also engaged in in-depth exchanges with leaders of Germany, Spain, Portugal and other European countries throughout the year. He called for strengthening communication, enhancing trust and deepening cooperation between China and Europe in a more challenging and complex international situation. Xi’s overseas engagements in 2025 have also been focused on China’s neighborhood. Following the central conference on work related to neighboring countries held in April, Xi paid a state visit to three southeastern Asian countries, promoting ties with Vietnam, Malaysia and Cambodia.



Passengers wait at the Taipei Songshan Airport where flights were affected by China’s military drills around Taiwan in Taipei, Tuesday, Dec. 30, 2025. (AP)

Lat/Am

Dock area hit: US President Donald Trump said that the US has hit a facility in Venezuela, which allegedly was used to traffic narcotics into the US and the region.

This is the first operation carried out by the US against Venezuelan soil since Trump announced his campaign against the government of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro. This development was announced in a Friday interview with WABC Radio when Trump revealed that the US has hit a “big facility” in Venezuela, adding, “They have a big plant or a big facility where they send the, you know, where the ships come from. Two nights ago we knocked that out, so we hit them very hard.”

President Trump did not provide specific details on the strike or whether it was carried out by the US military or the CIA. In a brief statement to CNN, Trump was pressed about who carried out the attack, to which he replied, “I don’t want to say that... I know exactly who it was, but I don’t want to say who it was. But you

know, it was along the shore.”

“There was a major explosion in the dock area where they load the boats up with drugs,” said Trump, adding and the “implementation area” was “no longer around.” (KUNA)

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Shamans predict ‘fall’: A group of shamans gathered Monday by the sea in the Miraflores district of Peru’s capital, Lima, to carry out an annual ritual in which they make predictions for the upcoming year.

Dressed in traditional Andean pon-

chos and headdresses, the group performed a ceremony, and made predictions about the course of international relations, ongoing conflicts and the fate of world leaders.

In this year’s event, the shamans said that Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro will be removed from office, and added that global conflicts, like the war in Ukraine will continue.

“We have asked for Maduro to leave, to retire, for President Donald Trump of the United States to be able to remove him, and we have visualized that next year this will happen,” said shaman Ana Maria Simeón.

The group has a mixed record with its annual predictions.

Last year, they warned a “nuclear war” would break out between Israel and Gaza, where a ceasefire is currently in place.

But in December 2023, the group correctly predicted that former Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori, who had been imprisoned for human rights abuses, would perish within twelve months. Fujimori died from cancer in September 2024 at the age of 86. (AP)

Kuwait oil price down to \$60.41 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by 99 cents to USD 60.41 per barrel on Monday, compared to USD 61.40 pb last Friday, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Tuesday.

At the global level, the price of Brent crude increased by USD 1.30 to USD 61.94 per barrel, while the same occurred with the West Texas Intermediate, which went up by USD 1.34 to USD 58.08 pb.

Business

Refinery invests \$151 mln to cut emissions

Duqm Refinery boosts capacity, strengthens Oman's global energy position

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: The Kuwaiti-Omani Duqm Refinery has been selected to appear on the new Omani banknote due to its pivotal role and outstanding performance in oil refining.

According to Omani sources, this selection places the refinery among the Sultanate's most prominent mega-projects.

The Duqm Refinery holds major strategic importance for Oman, as it represents the largest joint investment between two Gulf states. Through this partnership, Oman seeks to position the refinery among the world's leading refining facilities.

The refinery produces a wide range of high-quality petroleum products, including naphtha, A1 jet fuel, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), diesel, petroleum coke, and sulfur. Diesel is the main product of the refinery, with output exceeding 130,000 barrels per day, followed by naphtha at about 61,000 barrels per day and LPG at more than 15,000 barrels daily.

A related report revealed that the Duqm Refinery's annual refining capacity reached 11.5 million metric tons last year, with a daily refining rate of about 230,000 barrels per day.

According to the report, a ten percent increase in capacity since the beginning of 2025 has raised production to 255,000 barrels per day, bringing projected annual output to approximately 13 million metric tons.

The refinery's main markets are in the Middle East, Asia, North and South Africa, Europe, and North and South America. It processes a crude mix of 65 percent Kuwaiti oil and 35 percent Omani oil.

The refinery has invested about USD 151 million in technologies aimed at reducing its environmental impact both inside and outside the facility. These investments include advanced emissions control systems, energy recovery technologies, water conservation initiatives, and comprehensive waste management solutions.

These measures have contributed to lowering greenhouse gas emissions, improving energy efficiency, and conserving water resources.

The report stated that the refinery's board of directors is currently focused on

ensuring production is in line with global environmental standards by delivering high-quality products and services. This is achieved through continuous monitoring and ongoing improvements to work processes to enhance customer confidence.

To this end, the refinery continues to invest in advanced technologies to enhance product quality and sustainability, while closely monitoring and evaluating greenhouse gas emissions.

This improves its environmental performance, as accurate tracking, measurement, and assessment of emissions help ensure operational stability and provide a clear benchmark for comparing emission levels.

The report stated that the Duqm Refinery follows a highly professional health and safety strategy focused on full compliance with applicable legal requirements related to health, safety, security, and environmental protection.

The refinery also adopts an accident-free workplace environment to safeguard employees and minimize the impact of its activities on people and the environment.

In addition, it places strong emphasis on asset protection and operational safety by proactively identifying risks and addressing them before they materialize.

Through website, e-branches, call center & social media

Kuwait Finance House offers round-the-clock e-services during holidays

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announced it will continue providing its banking services to customers around the clock during the holiday period. Most services can be accessed through the bank's digital platforms, including its mobile applications and e-branches in key areas. Additionally, KFH's social media accounts and other e-service channels will remain active, utilizing the latest in financial technology and digital platforms.

KFHOnline app features a sleek, modern design with smart banking services. KFH has carried out a comprehensive update to its app, reaffirming its dedication to digital transformation and excellence in providing advanced financial solutions. These solutions meet customer needs and deliver seamless banking experience. This move also underscores the Bank's outstanding execution of its digital transformation strategy.

The KFHOnline app offers more than 200 banking services. New services allow customers to instantly request virtual prepaid cards through KFHOnline. Customers can also control the usage limits of their bank cards, additional credit cards, and both local and international money transfers.

KFH's hybrid branches offer a variety of services, giving customers the opportunity to access unlimited e-services through a range of digital channels. Customers can either interact directly with employees or use self-service devices and other modern technology.

KFH also launched "Fahad", Kuwait's first AI-powered virtual employee. This groundbreaking innovation was first introduced at the KFH branch in The Avenues (Phase 4). "Fahad" is designed to answer customer inquiries and provide comprehensive, real-time guidance on a wide range of banking services and products. The launch of "Fahad" underscores KFH's dedication to digital transformation and its commitment to offering advanced banking experiences to its customers.

KFH's e-branches are a smart banking channel that transforms typical customer transactions into an innovative, automated experience. These branches provide highly efficient banking services, offering over 80% of what is available at traditional locations.

KFH e-branches include the XTM device, which allows direct video calls with service personnel, as well as ATMs and cash deposit machines. The cash deposit machines accept up to 300 notes per transaction.

Moreover, customers can conduct a variety of interactive banking transactions through e-branches located in various places in Kuwait, including Kuwait International Airport. These services include: establishing Murabaha transactions, requesting credit and prepaid cards, updating data and phone numbers, activating bank cards, opening deposits and accounts, instant cheque and card printing, receiving gold biscuits (10 grams), opening (gold, savings, Al-Rabeh, electron) accounts, online gold purchase and sell, cardless withdrawals using QR code through



Kuwait Finance House holiday services.

mobile, or by using Civil ID or phone number, in addition to many other financing and banking services conducted quickly, easily and safely.

The e-banking services encompass a wide array of digital functionalities, including opening additional bank account without a branch visit, instant virtual prepaid card issuance, viewing PINs and other credit and ATM card details, activating and temporarily suspending bank cards, opening deposits, adding beneficiaries, balance inquiries, cheque book requests, opening and trading gold accounts, gifting gold, requesting and checking financing obligations and installments, perusing investment plans, receiving account balances and deposit summaries, and managing children's accounts through the Baiti Online service, and more.

Call Center

The Call Center continues to provide services around the clock, receiving customer calls, addressing their inquiries, and responding to them through a qualified and technically advanced staff. KFH also provides the automated telephone service, 1803333, which operates with the same efficiency and speed to facilitate transfers between accounts, answer inquiries about financial transactions, among other services.

Customers outside Kuwait can contact KFH's call center from seven countries (USA, Canada, UK, France, Germany, Turkey and Spain) without additional fees.

To use this service customers can call from the following toll-free numbers: USA and Canada (18008188608), UK (08000148898), France (0805086620), Germany (08001817080), Spain (900905440), and Turkey (908507712154). Local tariff charges may be applied in Turkey by local Turkish telecoms companies when calling this number.

This service is free exclusively for mobiles and landlines users in the mentioned countries only and doesn't include the (Roaming Service).

Social media channels

KFH's social media team remains dedicated to addressing customer inquiries and assisting them at all hours through the official social media accounts (@KFHGroup).

Money transfer and account opening KFH successfully launched WAMD

digital service, allowing customers to send and receive money instantly and for free using their mobile numbers, 24/7. Additionally, customers can request money through WAMD service by sharing or scanning a QR code from the KFHOnline app. This app also allows customers to transfer funds from their local Knet bank accounts directly to their credit and prepaid cards.

KFH also successfully launched the D-POS device for account opening, the first-of-its-kind in the market, allowing customers to open accounts at KFH immediately and anywhere.

Customers can now open accounts in major currencies through KFHOnline; previously, account opening was only available at branches. Additionally, KFH has integrated Western Union (WU) services into its app, enabling customers to make international transfers directly through the application. The Bank also offers instant transfers within the GCC countries through the AFAQ network on the mobile app.

Corporate services

KFH launched the first mobile application for corporate banking encompassing major services for business development, in addition to launching facial recognition technology based on biometric identity and other distinguished electronic services available through the corporate banking webpage.

KFH successfully introduced corporate cards, offering three different products that cater to the various local and global corporate needs. Key features include cash and cheque deposits, as well as cash withdrawals. The cards also provide access to Point of Sale (POS) terminals and online payment gateways, both in Kuwait and internationally.

In addition, KFH has introduced corporate credit cards, which are among the bank's distinguished offerings for business owners. These cards are linked directly to the company's account, allowing business owners to issue cards to employees for seamless expense management. They can be used to cover day-to-day business expenses, one-time travel costs, and more. The corporate credit card helps businesses better manage their cash flow while offering enhanced control over employee expenditures.

Boursa dips 1.27% to close at 8,850 points

Premier & main markets both retreat

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait ended Tuesday's trading session with its general index falling by 113.82 points, or 1.27%, to close at 8,850.04 points.

Trading activity saw 296.2 million shares exchanged through 21,443 transactions, with a total

market value of KD 88.18 million (about USD 268.9 million).

The Main Market Index declined 96.18 points (or 1.16%) to 8,221.66 points, recording 130.3 million shares traded through 10,158 transactions worth KD 24.2 million (approximately USD 73.8 million).

Similarly, the Premier Market Index dropped 123.78 points, or 1.29%, to settle at 9,443.53 points.

The segment witnessed 165.8 million shares traded in 11,285 transactions valued at KD 63.9 million (around USD 194.8 million).

Meanwhile, the Main 50 Index recorded the steepest decline, closing 120.47 points, or 1.38%, lower at 8,595.51 points. A total of 84.7 million shares changed hands across 6,453 transactions with a traded value of KD 17.7 million (roughly USD 53.9 million).

Propane set at \$525, butane at \$520 per ton

Kuwait Petroleum Corporation sets Jan 2026 LPG prices for propane and butane

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30, (KUNA): Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) announced on Tuesday new prices for liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) propane and butane for January 2026.

In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), KPC said one metric ton of propane will be sold at USD 525 in January, while one metric ton of butane will be sold at

USD 520.

Propane and butane are used in the petrochemicals industry and for other purposes, including cooking and heating.

LPG prices generally move with global oil prices and are also influenced by supply and demand as well as other market factors.

Digital services available 24/7

ABK announces official closure days on the occasion of the New Year '26

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) extends its greetings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, as well as the government, people, and residents of Kuwait on the occasion of the New Year 2026.

ABK discloses that its branches will be closed Thursday, 1 January 2026, to resume operations on Sunday, 4 January 2026. During this time, ABK's branch in Al Khiran Mall will be open to serve customers from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

The Bank has also confirmed its full operational readiness to serve customers 24/7 via its various digital platforms throughout the holiday. This includes Online Banking



ABK New Year 2026 e-greeting

via eahli.com, Mobile Banking through the ABK app, as well as

the Bank's call center Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 and its ATM network.

As part of its support for the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign and its strategy to promote a safe banking environment for customers

KIB upholds its efforts to raise public awareness about the dangers of digital fraud

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: Driven by its commitment to fostering a secure banking environment and ensuring the safety of its customers' financial transactions, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) extended its efforts to raise awareness about cybersecurity risks and evolving digital fraud methods. This comes as part of KIB's support for the national "Let's Be Aware" (Diraya) campaign, launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) in collaboration with local banks. The Bank's continued support for the nationwide campaign aligns with its dedication to empowering customers to protect their data and funds, especially in light of the rapid digital transformation.

To this end, Mustafa Murad, Assistant Manager – Information Security, Privacy and Anti-Fraud Department at KIB, shared valuable information on Kuwait TV Channel 2 (KTV2) regarding the most widely spread fraud attempts and the precautions customers ought to take to protect their personal information and financial transactions. The interview also addressed the importance of achieving seamless integration between customer awareness and the advanced security systems employed by banks, given the complementary nature and reliance of both efforts on one another within the security framework. Nonetheless, he emphasized that customer awareness remains the "first line of defense" against fraud attempts despite banks' ongoing investment in developing and safeguarding anti-fraud systems and updating security policies and procedures.

He pointed out that KIB's awareness programs are not limited to a specific age group or category, but extend to schools, universities, shopping malls, and social media platforms, given their increasing influence and reach across various segments of society.

As for the importance of targeting younger age groups, he explained that children and teenagers are now heavily reliant on smart devices and resort to online shopping at a young age, which urgently call for reinforcing their financial literacy and awareness of secure banking practices and building



Mustafa Murad

sound digital habits that will protect them in the future.

Among the most common fraud scenarios highlighted by Murad was online shopping fraud, whereby scammers pose as official stores and send users fake links via email or text messages requesting their banking and card details. The inability to recognize such attempts as fraudulent greatly endangers customers' hard-earned funds and exposes their money to theft.

Following up on the most prevalent cybersecurity threats, Murad presented a set of practical guidelines that customers should adopt to safeguard their personal and banking information as well as their funds. The safe banking guidelines included enabling SMS and mobile app notifications to monitor any debit transactions in real time, in addition to attentively reading one-time password (OTP) messages and verifying the merchant's name and the transaction value before entering the shared code on any portal, while avoiding the use of the auto-fill feature upon checkout. He also stressed the importance of



being wary of tempting offers that pressure customers into making haste decisions, urging them to stop immediately and contact the Bank using the number printed on their card in case of any suspicions. He further advised customers to review their account statements regularly to detect any unauthorized transactions early on.

If a customer falls victim to fraud despite taking the necessary precautions, Murad emphasized the need for swift action by immediately blocking the card via the KIB Mobile app and contacting the Bank directly to provide all available details about the incident. He explained that the Bank will investigate and attempt to recover the funds whenever possible, noting that the liability falls on the customer if they voluntarily disclose the OTP.

Murad also highlighted the Central Room, established in December 2023 under the guidance and supervision of CBK, in cooperation with banks, the Ministry of Interior, and the Public Prosecution. He explained that this room operates around the clock to receive fraud reports from banks and coordinate immediately to mitigate damage, particularly concerning bank transfers made through applications or links, with the aim of keeping funds within the country before transferring them abroad.

In conclusion of the interview, Murad emphasized the importance of caution and avoiding haste, noting that urgency and impatience are among the most prominent indicators of fraud, and stressing the need to immediately terminate any suspicious communication.

It is worth noting that this media presence comes as part of KIB's participation in the "Let's Be Aware" campaign, underscoring the importance of collective efforts to enhance cybersecurity awareness. Customers are urged to immediately report any suspected fraud by contacting KIB's Call Center at 1866866, via WhatsApp on 1866866, for international inquiries at (+965) 2295 7300, by email at KIB-Callcenter@kib.com.kw, or through the Live Chat feature on the KIB Mobile App.

Continuing its journey of giving throughout 2025 through innovative initiatives aligned with Kuwait Vision 2035

NBK deepened its longstanding community ties & further cemented its leadership in social responsibility

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) concluded an exceptional year marked by a wide range of developmental and community initiatives that reinforced its position as one of the leading partners in Kuwait’s national development journey. Through key projects and innovative campaigns, the Bank embodied its steadfast commitment to its pioneering role in serving the nation and society, reaffirming its standing as the largest contributor to social responsibility in Kuwait.

Throughout the year, NBK’s initiatives spanned environmental, health, social, educational, and sports domains, reflecting a comprehensive approach to social responsibility aimed at enhancing quality of life, supporting sustainable development, and empowering youth. This approach underscores the Bank’s enduring commitment to remain at the forefront of institutions that translate national belonging into tangible action in service of the community and future generations.

Development Projects

In 2025, a series of key development projects and initiatives were launched and implemented. Among the most prominent was the inauguration of the Shuwaikh Beach Development and Beautification Project, funded by NBK at a cost of KD 3 million. The project transformed the 1.7kilometer Shuwaikh waterfront into a fully integrated urban destination featuring modern facilities, green spaces, and dedicated areas for sports and recreation. It stands as a leading model of effective public-private partnership, supporting sustainable development and enhancing Kuwait’s position as a distinctive tourism and leisure destination in the region.

In addition, the Bank laid the foundation stone for the expansion of the NBK Children’s Hospital for Hematology, Oncology, & Stem Cell Transplant through the construction of the new Building (C). The project aims to strengthen the hospital’s capacity to treat pediatric blood disorders, cancer, and stem cell transplantation, while ensuring the highest standards of specialized medical care for children.

This project ranks among the Bank’s most significant achievements in 2025, following the Council of Ministers’ approval to accept NBK’s donation to fully fund the expansion, at a cost of approximately KD 19 million. Spanning more than 22,000 square meters of specialized medical infrastructure, the project reaffirms NBK’s pioneering role as a national financial institution that places community development at the core of its priorities.

The NBK Specialized Children’s Hospital holds critical importance within Kuwait’s healthcare system, providing free-of-charge treatment to children under the age of sixteen diagnosed with cancer. The hospital adopts an integrated care philosophy that extends beyond medical treatment to encompass psychological and social support for both the child and the family.

As part of its efforts to advance sustainable development, NBK contributed to Sharq area development project, which includes the establishment of a public park and a multi-storey car park comprising 1,175 parking spaces, at a total cost of approximately KD 7 million. The project supports efforts to ease congestion and enhance quality of life in the heart of the capital, while reflecting the Bank’s commitment to delivering innovative infrastructure solutions aligned with Kuwait Vision 2035.

NBK Run

As part of its strategy to promote healthy lifestyles and strengthen community cohesion, NBK organized the 31st edition of the NBK Run, the largest sporting event in Kuwait. The race attracted more than 7,000 participants from across all age groups and, for the first time, introduced a 21 km distance, alongside the 10 km and 5 km races. The event also two new groups for the 2.5 km race for people with disabilities, increasing the total number of groups in this category to five, up from three in the previous year, for both men and women.

For the first time in the race’s history, the NBK Run 2025 honored the top three winners across six age categories, for both men and women, with cash prizes, in recognition of their achievements and to encourage the continued adoption of a healthy and active lifestyle.

This year’s race also enjoyed significant media attention and public engagement, reaffirming its status as Kuwait’s premier family-oriented recreational sporting event and offering a benchmark example of how sport can be leveraged as a powerful catalyst for positive social impact.

Enhancing Financial Awareness

As part of its efforts to promote financial literacy, Ban-kee, the first program of its kind in Kuwait, continued its distinctive role in embedding financial awareness among young learners through an innovative and interactive ap-



Manal Al-Mattar

Al-Mattar:

- We translated social responsibility into tangible action through projects that serve Kuwait and future generations
- Our relationship with the community has been deeply rooted for more than seven decades, built on trust and shared responsibility
- Every initiative we undertake represents an investment in Kuwait’s future and a reflection of our commitment to being an active partner in development
- We aim to leave a positive and lasting impact through innovative projects and high-impact initiatives across all fields
- NBK is not merely a financial institution, but a genuine partner in building a thriving community and a sustainable future
- Our social responsibility extends beyond the achievements of a single year; it is an ongoing journey dedicated to supporting all segments of society

proach. The program introduces students at an early age to core economic concepts and practices, such as earning, spending, saving, and financial obligations, while also instilling fundamental values including integrity, honesty, personal development, responsibility, cooperation, and teamwork.

Since its launch, Bankee has recorded sustained year-on-year growth, expanding to reach more than 100 public and private schools across Kuwait’s governorates. The program now engages over 10,000 teachers, who utilize its tools and interactive activities to integrate financial literacy into the learning process. It has also generated a tangible impact on more than 50,000 students, strengthening saving habits and fostering financial responsibility from an early age.

The Bank also organized a series of awareness campaigns focused on the various forms of cyber fraud and methods of prevention, reflecting its commitment to its educational role in safeguarding the community against cyber threats. These campaigns went beyond theoretical awareness, adopting interactive approaches that simulated real-life cyber fraud scenarios through workshops and educational lectures held at schools and universities. The aim

was to equip students with a clear understanding of digital risks and to develop practical skills that enable them to respond to such threats with awareness and confidence.

Community Initiatives

As part of its community-focused initiatives, NBK continued its annual campaign, “Do Good Deeds in Ramadan,” throughout 2025. Launched more than 30 years ago, the campaign was renewed this year with innovative activities aimed at strengthening social solidarity and reinforcing the values of giving during the holy month.

The campaign included the “Reduce Food Waste” initiative, which seeks to promote a culture of responsible consumption by providing refrigerators to store surplus food at the entrances of 12 NBK branches. This initiative enables community members to donate excess food to those in need, contributing to heightened environmental and social awareness.

NBK also launched the “Your Iftar with NBK” initiative, distributing KD 50 shopping vouchers to support families as they prepare for the holy month. The initiative to distribute light Iftar meals also continued, aimed at promoting road safety and reducing traffic accidents.

In addition, NBK organized its annual children’s care

carnival at Bayt Abdullah, held on 20 November to coincide with World Children’s Day, lending the event special significance and a profound humanitarian dimension.

NBK also continued the “I Dream to Be” initiative into its thirteenth year, bringing joy to children battling cancer by helping fulfill their dreams of meeting inspiring figures and taking part in unique experiences that instill strength and hope in their journey to overcome illness. During 2025, the Bank also rolled out a series of high-impact initiatives that underscored NBK’s steadfast commitment to providing psychological and moral support to children.

Furthermore, NBK intensified its pivotal role in developing young talent and equipping youth with the skills needed to meet future challenges through a suite of high-impact programs spanning education, sports, and environmental sustainability. The Bank continued to deliver the national Aspire Summer Internship Program, which attracted 133 students across four training cycles at its head office. It also renewed its partnership with the Rafa Nadal Academy, providing support to the academy’s junior team across several international tournaments. In parallel, NBK supported programs by LOYAC, including “Kilma Program” for public speaking and communication skills, “KON” for social entrepreneurship in collaboration with Babson College, the Youth Leadership Program (YLP) in the United Kingdom, and the “Green Adventure” program in Portugal aimed at advancing environmental sustainability. The Bank also sponsored the “EcoQuest” program, which focused on delivering innovative solutions to environmental challenges with the participation of seven schools. Collectively, these initiatives benefited hundreds of students.

Deeply Rooted Community Relationships

On this occasion, Manal Al-Mattar, Executive Vice President – Head of Group Corporate Communications at NBK, said: “The relationship between NBK and the community is not a recent development; it is an extension of a journey that began more than seventy years ago with the Bank’s establishment. These deeply rooted ties are built on trust and shared responsibility and have been embodied through high-impact initiatives across healthcare, education, the environment, and sports, affirming that NBK is not merely a financial institution, but a genuine partner in building a thriving community and a sustainable future.”

“2025 was an exceptional year of giving, during which we successfully delivered a range of impactful projects and initiatives touching multiple aspects of life, from health and education to the environment and sports, reflecting our vision of creating meaningful community impact in line with the State’s aspirations and Kuwait Vision 2035,” Al-Mattar added.

“Through our community initiatives, we invest in Kuwait’s future. Every project and initiative we deliver forms part of our commitment to being an active partner in development and to leaving a positive, lasting impact that serves both current and future generations,” she emphasized.

Al-Mattar further noted that investing in human capital is an investment in the future, underscoring that NBK places youth empowerment at the heart of its priorities through training programs and educational and sports initiatives designed to meet young people’s needs and equip them to become a dynamic and effective workforce in the years ahead.

Al-Mattar emphasized that NBK’s social responsibility does not end with the achievements of a single year, but rather represents an ongoing journey aimed at supporting all segments of society, particularly youth-focused programs, driven by the Bank’s firm belief in the tangible impact of these initiatives on building a thriving community and a better future.

She noted that NBK continues to move steadily toward amplifying positive impact through its community investments, with a clear focus on delivering measurable social outcomes, in line with its effective communication strategy, ensuring that the Bank remains at the forefront of institutions that combine banking leadership with social responsibility.

As a new year approaches, NBK reaffirms its steadfast commitment to continuing this long-standing journey of giving by launching innovative projects and high-impact programs that align with community aspirations and Kuwait Vision 2035, with a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability, youth empowerment, and quality of life enhancement. For NBK, social responsibility is not merely a slogan, but a sustained strategic approach aimed at building a brighter future for generations to come.



NBK continues to support 'Kon' social entrepreneurship program in its 10th edition.



Strategic partnership with LOYAC to support sustainability for a better future.



Part of the honoring ceremony for schools participating in the Bankee program.



A group photo at the conclusion of the Aspire Program.



A scene from the annual children's care carnival at Bayt Abdullah.



'I Dream to Be' initiative continued to fulfill the dreams of children with cancer.



NBK's executive management with the NBK Run 2025 team.

Reaffirming the Bank’s commitment to ensuring the safety of its most valuable asset, employees, by means of raising awareness

Burgan Bank conducts an emergency evacuation drill for staff at its head office in line with its CSR & ESG programs

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: In line with its commitment to implementing corporate social responsibility (CSR) and environmental, social, and governance(ESG) initiatives, Burgan Bank recently conducted an emergency evacuation drill for its employees at its head office. The drill came as part of the Bank’s ongoing efforts to foster a safe work environment and reinforce employees’ preparedness to handle emergencies. This further confirms Burgan Bank’s regard for its employees as its top priority and among its most valuable assets, thereby investing in their health and wellness as a necessary prerequisite for productivity, achieving top performance, and guaranteeing swift and effective response in cases of emergency.

The evacuation, which was supervised by a team from the Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD), helped evaluate employees’ response time as well as understand potential gaps and areas for improvement. The staff underwent comprehensive training on how to manage natural disasters or accidents. Part of the exercise also involved a fire simulation and a situation wherein few individuals were trapped and injured on one of the floors.

Following the drill, **Engineer Saud Al-Hadbah**, General Manager – General Services Administration at Burgan Bank, said: “At Burgan Bank, we are committed to the safety of our employees; something



Al-Hadbah



Burgan Bank team participating in the evacuation operation with personnel from the General Department of Civil Defense, the Medical Emergency Department, and Kuwait Fire Force.



A snapshot from the emergency evacuation drill conducted with the participation of Kuwait Fire Force.

we consider to be an absolute priority. Therefore, we conduct regular and periodic training on emergency situations to ensure their safety and protect customers’ private and confidential data.”

He added: “These drills contribute to consolidating our customers’ confidence in our business continuity and ability to serve them at all times. In addition to the drills, we always ensure we implement the highest international standards and recommended practices that ensure maximum safety of our people.”

Burgan Bank’s staff responded successfully to the mock drill and evacuated the head office building of all personnel in a record time. The drill was carried out under the supervision of the General Department of Civil Defense, the Medical Emergency Department, and Ku-

wait Fire Force, with the participation of Lieutenant Colonel Mohammed Al-Hajri, Captain Othman Al-Sanad, and First Warrant Officer Rashid Al-Rashid. Two teams were formed, one for rescue operations and the other for firefighting, while the training was coordinated by the Public Services Department at the Bank.

Burgan Bank extends its sincere appreciation and gratitude to all relevant entities for their valuable contributions and support during these procedures. It is worth noting that the Bank upholds its commitment to promoting employee wellness and security through state-of-the-art occupational training and learning programs. Furthermore, the Bank affirms its continued dedication to strengthening partnerships with various entities in the public and

private sectors to implement initiatives that have a positive impact on society, in line with the Kuwait Vision 2035 goal towards a safer and more sustainable society.

About Burgan Bank

Established in 1977, Burgan Bank is currently the third largest bank by assets in Kuwait. From its earliest days, the Bank has significantly focused on the corporate and financial institution sectors, in addition to diversifying its offering to cater to its growing retail and private banking customer base.

Burgan Bank has majority-owned subsidiaries, collectively known as the “Burgan Bank Group”, in the MENAT region. This Group is supported by one of the largest branch networks across the region and includes: Gulf Bank Algeria – AGB

(Algeria), Bank of Baghdad – BOB (Iraq & Lebanon), Tunis International Bank – TIB (Tunisia), and the fully owned Burgan Bank Turkey. Furthermore, Burgan Bank has a presence in the UAE through its corporate office, Burgan Financial Services Limited.

The Bank has continuously improved its performance over the years, through an expanded revenue structure, diversified funding sources, and a strong capital base. The adoption of state-of-the-art services and technology has positioned it as a trendsetter in the domestic market and within the MENA region. Moreover, Burgan Bank’s brand has been built on a foundation of real values – trust, commitment, excellence and progression – which serve as a reminder of the high standards to which the Bank always aspires.

In fact, the Bank’s core philosophy of ‘Driven by You’ is the foundation on which its products and services are continuously developed.

The Bank obtained the ISO/IEC 27001: 2013 Information Security Management Systems certificate (ISMS) and was re-certified with the prestigious ISO 9001:2015, making it the one of the few banks in the GCC and Kuwait to receive such a certification for five consecutive times. The Bank also has the distinction of being the only Bank in Kuwait to have won the JP Morgan Chase Quality Recognition Award for twenty consecutive years.

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

China’s economy shows strength on paper, struggles on the ground

AI and exports bolster growth, but uneven recovery persists

HONG KONG, Dec 30, (AP): By some measures, China’s economy is looking resilient, with strong exports and breakthroughs in artificial intelligence and other advanced technologies.

But that’s not how it feels for many ordinary Chinese, who have been enduring the strain from weak property prices and uncertainty over their jobs and incomes.

While some industries are thriving thanks to government support for technologies such as AI and electric vehicles, owners of small businesses report tough times as their customers cut back on spending.

Some economists believe that the world’s second largest economy is growing more slowly than official figures suggest, even though China may hit its official 2025 annual growth target of about 5%. Beijing has averted a damaging full blown trade war with Washington after President Donald Trump struck a truce with Chinese leader Xi Jinping, but many longer-term challenges remain.

Business is “very tough” right now as people don’t have much disposable income, said billiards hall owner Xiao Feng, who lives in Beijing.

“It seems the wealthy don’t have the time, and the ordinary folks don’t have money to spend,” said Xiao. “After deducting all costs, including rent, labor, utilities, I’m just breaking even.”

Xiao and his wife, a nurse, have a 10-year-old son. With her stable income, she is now the household’s breadwinner.

“Before, I used to contribute about 100,000 yuan (about \$14,250) annually to the household,” said Xiao, who has cut his staff from eight to five as competition has intensified. “But I’ve had no income for about six consecutive months now.”

Beijing-based commercial property agent Zhang Xiaozhe said he used to make up to 3 million yuan (nearly \$428,000) a year during the peak years of the mid-2010s. Now he brings in about 100,000 yuan annually, and the business environment is “extremely challenging,” he said.

“Demand is weak because many companies are relocating out of Beijing,” Zhang said, who is married with one child. “The fundamental issue is that people don’t have money.”

“There are times when I must dip into my savings to support the family,” he said.

China’s ruling Communist Party is promoting leader Xi’s push for “high-quality growth” and domestic innovation as it shifts investment and policies toward a consumption-driven growth model and high-tech industries.

During its rapid ascent as an export manufacturing superpower, China invested heavily in infrastructure such as railways, highways and ports, industrial zones and other property development. While boosting consumer spending and business investment are key priorities, exports remain a vital driver of employment and economic growth.

In the first 11 months of this year Chinese exports amounted to a record \$3.4 trillion -- with growing shipments to Southeast Asia and Europe helping to offset a sharp drop to the U.S. -- versus imports of \$2.3 trillion.

“China’s economy is amidst what I call a ‘Great Transition,’ as it moves away from the growth engines that drove growth the past three decades,” said Lynn Song, chief economist for Greater China at ING.

As is true in the U.S., in China the AI boom has helped drive gains in share prices. But the resources that have poured into the technology sector have not



Workers hold up balloons showing 2025 as they shoot a video to welcome 2026 at a shopping district in Beijing, China, Thursday, Dec. 18, 2025. (AP)

translated into a direct wealth effect for most people, said Song. “It is no surprise that many feel the situation on the ground is not reflecting the relatively more optimistic growth picture,” he said.

The divergence between the official economic growth figures and what many Chinese people are feeling suggests China’s actual growth “may be well below” what official data suggest, said Zichun Huang, China economist at Capital Economics.

Recent economic data indicate growth is slowing. Retail sales increased by just 1.3% in November from a year earlier, slower than October’s 2.9% growth. Fixed-asset investment, meanwhile, dropped 2.6% in the first 11 months of 2025.

Disposable household income growth has been running below pre-pandemic pace in recent years, economists at HSBC said in a recent report, and “income gains from property have virtually vanished.”

The International Monetary Fund recently raised China’s growth forecast from 4.8% to 5%, near the official target, and banks including Goldman Sachs raised their forecast for China’s economic growth in recent months.

Other estimates vary. Capital Economics forecasts growth at a 3% to 3.5% annual pace this year. The Rhodium Group, a think tank, puts it at 2.5% to 3%.

Much of China’s consumer and investor confidence hinges on property, the main repository for most household wealth. Housing prices have fallen 20% or more since they peaked in 2021. The massive downturn followed a crackdown on excessive borrowing in the real estate industry that triggered a debt crisis.

In the first 11 months of this year, new home sales fell 11.2% by value from a year earlier, according to China’s National Bureau of Statistics. Property investments fell nearly 16% year-on-year.

Xiao, the Beijing billiards hall owner, bought an apartment in the city’s Tongzhou district in 2019 for more than 3 million yuan. (\$428,000). It’s now worth about (\$342,000).

“I drive a ten-year-old car and have no plans to replace it given the economic climate,” Xiao said. “If my apartment hadn’t depreciated so significantly, I might have already bought a new one.”

Xiao said he used to spend a “considerable amount” on his son’s tutoring fees. “But now we’ve cut that entirely and teach him ourselves instead,”

he added. “I feel quite uncertain about the economic outlook.”

A Tianjin-based tutor, who only gave his surname as Zhou as he’s not authorized by his company to speak to the media, said his income dipped by more than a third as more parents stopped sending their children for tutoring.

“Because of the economic situation, parents are unwilling to spend money on tutoring,” said Zhou. “They prefer large group classes instead of one-on-one tutoring.” “Business is much worse than before -- about 50 percent worse than during the COVID period,” he added. “The future looks bleak.”

Most forecasts are for the economy to grow more slowly in 2026 and beyond, as China’s leaders tinker with incremental policies while putting off fundamental reforms that might help boost consumer confidence. Challenges ahead center on consumption and investment, but with the housing market remaining weak, growth momentum may be slow, economists said.

Excess supply in many industries, including autos, steel and consumer goods is a chronic problem, depressing prices and profits. Chinese export prices have fallen by over 20% overall since early 2022, according to HSBC. Government efforts to tame price wars have so far had “minimal impact,” it said. The country’s growing trade surplus, at more than \$1 trillion in 2025, is also adding to trade friction, potentially triggering protectionist moves that may crimp exports.

Economists such as Michael Pettis of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace argue that a fundamental shift enabling workers to hold much more of the nation’s wealth is needed. But that so far appears to be politically untenable.

With people cutting back on everything including business trips, a budget hotel owner in the northern city of Shijiazhuang was glum about the outlook.

“I don’t see an immediate rebound in the economy,” said the man, who gave only his surname, Zhai, fearing that making critical comments about the economy could get him in trouble. “(I) don’t have a high level of education, so switching industries is almost impossible. Other industries are also struggling.”

“My lease expires next May or June,” he added. “If the situation hasn’t improved by then, I will shut down the hotel.”

Abel takes over Berkshire, upholding Buffett’s legacy

OMAHA, Dec 30, (AP): Greg Abel faces the challenge of taking over Berkshire Hathaway from the legendary Warren Buffett this week.

Many regard Buffett as the world’s greatest investor after he grew Berkshire from a struggling New England textile mill that he started buying up for \$7.60 a share in 1962, to the massive conglomerate it is today with shares that go for more than \$750,000 a pop. Buffett’s personal fortune of Berkshire stock is worth roughly \$150 billion even after giving more than \$60 billion away over the past 20 years.

Berkshire for decades has routinely outpaced the S&P 500 as Buffett bought up insurance companies like Geico and National Indemnity, manufacturers like Iscar Metalworking, retail brands like Dairy Queen, major utilities and even one of the nation’s biggest railroads, BNSF. Along the way, Buffett bought and sold hundreds of billions of dollars of stocks and profited handsomely from his famously long-term bets on companies like American Express, Coca-Cola and Apple.

Berkshire has struggled to keep that pace in recent years because it has grown so huge and also struggled to find new and significant acquisitions. Even this fall’s \$9.7 billion acquisition of OxyChem probably isn’t big enough to make a difference in Berkshire’s profits.

Investors will be watching closely to see what changes Abel might make in Berkshire’s trajectory, but don’t expect any seismic shifts.

Buffett isn’t going anywhere and Abel has already been managing all of Berkshire’s noninsurance businesses since 2018. Buffett will remain chairman and plans to continue coming into the office each day to help spot new investments and offer Abel any advice he asks for.

CFRA Research analyst Cathy Seifert said it is natural for Abel to make some changes in the way Berkshire is run. Taking a more traditional approach to leadership with nearly 400,000 employees spread across dozens of subsidiaries makes a lot of sense, she said.

But Berkshire operates under an extremely decentralized structure that trusts its executives with significant decisions. Everyone associated with the company has said there are no plans to change that.

The world learned that Abel was to become the designated successor at Berkshire in 2021 when Buffett’s longtime business partner, the late Charlie Munger, assured shareholders at an annual meeting that Abel would maintain the company’s culture.

Part of Buffett’s sales pitch to company founders and CEOs thinking of selling their companies has always been that Berkshire would largely allow them to continue running their companies the same way as long as they delivered results.

“I think the investment commu-

nity would likely applaud Greg’s management style to the degree that it sort of buttons things up,” Seifert said. “And if it helps performance, that can’t really be faulted.”

Abel has already shown himself to be a more hands-on manager than Buffett, but he still follows the Berkshire model of autonomy for acquired companies. Abel asks tough questions of company leaders and holds them accountable for their performance.

Abel did announce some leadership changes earlier this month after investment manager and Geico CEO Todd Combs departed, and Chief Financial Officer Marc Hamburg announced his retirement. Abel also said he’s appointing NetJets CEO Adam Johnson as manager of all of Berkshire’s consumer, service and retail businesses. That essentially creates a third division of the company and takes some work off of Abel’s plate. He will continue to manage the manufacturing, utility and railroad businesses.

Abel will eventually face more pressure to start paying a dividend. From the beginning, Berkshire has held the position that it is better to reinvest profits rather than making quarterly or annual payouts to shareholders.

But if Abel can’t find a productive use of the \$382 billion cash that Berkshire is sitting on, there may be a push from investors to start paying dividends or to adopt a traditional stock buyback program that would boost the value of shares they hold. Currently, Berkshire only repurchases shares when Buffett thinks they are a bargain, and he hasn’t done that since early 2024.

Still, Abel will be insulated from such pressure for some time since Buffett controls nearly 30% of the voting power in the stock. That will diminish gradually after his death as his children distribute his shares to charity as agreed.

Many of Berkshire’s subsidiaries tend to follow the economy and profit handsomely whenever the country is prosperous. Berkshire’s utilities typically generate a reliable profit, and its insurance companies like Geico and General Reinsurance supply more than \$175 billion worth of premiums that can be invested until claims come due.

Investor Chris Ballard, who is managing director at Check Capital, said most of Berkshire’s businesses “can almost take care of themselves.” He sees a bright future for Berkshire under Abel.

One of the biggest questions right now may be how much additional change there will be in company leadership after Combs’ departure, if any at all. The head of the insurance unit, Vice Chairman Ajit Jain, who Buffett has long lavished with praise, is now 74 and many of the CEOs of the various companies have continued working long after retirement age because they like working for Buffett.

102-year-old judo instructor and D-Day veteran among 2026 recipients

Hollywood stars Elba, Erivo recognized in New Year's honor's list

LONDON, Dec 30, (AP): Britons ranging from Hollywood stars Idris Elba and Cynthia Erivo to a 102-year-old judo instructor have been named in King Charles III's New Year's honors list, an annual tradition that recognizes people for their contributions to U.K. public life.

Elba, who starred as a drug dealer in "The Wire" and the president of the United States in "A House of Dynamite," was knighted for his services to young people after he and his wife, Sabrina, founded the Elba Hope Foundation to target issues such as knife crime, education and poverty.

The actor accepted the honor on behalf of the young people served by the charity.

"I hope we can do more to draw attention to the importance of sustained, practical support for young people and to the responsibility we all share to help them find an alternative to violence," Elba said.

Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean, the ice dancing duo who won a gold medal at the 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo, were also awarded top honors, with Torvill receiving a damehood and Dean a knight-

hood.

Erivo, one of the stars of "Wicked," was named a Member of the British Empire, or MBE, for services to music and drama. And John Hearn, who goes by the name Judo Jack, received a British Empire Medal, after the Guinness World Records recognized him as the world's oldest judo instructor.

Other honorees include author and comedian Richard Osman, who writes the "Thursday Murder Club" book series and was declared an Officer of the British Empire; retired marathon runner Paula Radcliffe, Officer of the British Empire; and 101-year-old D-Day veteran Mervyn Kersh, who was awarded a British Empire Medal for school talks on Holocaust remembrance and his wartime service.

The history of Britain's honors system stretches back to the Middle Ages, when monarchs gave gifts of land, money and titles to those who served the crown. In modern times, that has evolved into a hierarchy of honorary distinctions awarded by the king on the recommendation of the government.

Modern honors are awarded for contributions in areas such as government, academia, the arts and sports. While many of the awards go to politicians, pop stars and Olympic medalists, honorees often include librarians, charity workers and civil servants who serve their communities with little fanfare.

In all, 1,150 people received New Year's honors this year.

The most prestigious honors are knight-hoods and damehoods. Men who receive the awards are entitled to use the honorific "sir" before their names, while women use the title "dame."

Below that are the three levels of the Order of the British Empire. These are known, in order of precedence, as Commander, or CBE; Officer, or OBE; and Member, or MBE. Recipients are entitled to use the initials related to their award after their names.

Honors are generally announced twice a year on New Year's and the king's birthday. They are presented by the king or another member of the royal family at ceremonies throughout the year.



In this file photo, Idris Elba poses for photographers at the red carpet for the film 'A House of Dynamite' during the 82nd edition of the Venice Film Festival in Venice, Italy. (AP)

Warts and all

Chase embraces honesty in new docu

NEW YORK, Dec 30, (AP): Insulting the director who is making a documentary about you might not be the most diplomatic of choices. Then again, Chevy Chase has never been very diplomatic.

The comedian gets snarly at the top of filmmaker Marina Zenovich's "I'm Chevy Chase and You're Not," which airs Thursday on CNN. During their very first meeting, he warns her it isn't going to be easy to figure him out. She asks him why.

"You're not bright enough, how's that?" he replies.

That the exchange made the film says a lot about Zenovich and also about Chase, a gifted physical comedian who starred in classic 1970s and '80s comedies like "Fletch," "Three Amigos," "Caddyshack" and the National Lampoon's "Vacation" franchise.

"He's one of those people everybody thinks they know," says Zenovich. "He has a reputation that precedes him and there's something underneath that you want to get to. So it was a great challenge to try to get there."

"I'm Chevy Chase and You're Not" follows Chase's life and career, from his dark childhood to the dawn of "Saturday Night Live" and then Hollywood, ending with his messy time on the TV series "Community." There are perspectives offered from Dan Aykroyd, Beverly D'Angelo, Goldie Hawn, Lorne Michaels, Ryan Reynolds, Martin Short, his wife Jayni Chase and three daughters, and brother Ned.

A portrait emerges of a sharp and often cutting comedian who has a deep fan base but can rub some people the wrong way with a blunt inelegance. "I'm complex and I'm deep and I can be hurt easily," he tells the filmmaker.

The documentary shows footage of his film and TV work alongside home movies, cuddling a cat, playing a piano, playing chess, reading fan mail - including a birthday card from Bill Clinton - and visiting a flower shop.

The movie has the endorsement of a tough critic: Chase, himself. "It's just like a massage. I think of it that way: I love the massage. Sometimes it hurts, but the massage is so lovely," the comedian tells The Associated Press.

Subjects

Chase is just the latest profile by two-time Emmy-winner Zenovich, whose previous documentary subjects have included Roman Polanski, Richard Pryor, Robin Williams and Lance Armstrong.

"I make films about these complicated men," she says. "I'm just fascinated by humans and their behavior and Chevy just seems to fit in my oeuvre."

Zenovich points to Chase's early years to help explain how he became who he became. Chase, as a boy, was locked in the basement for days, hit across the face and shut in a closet as punishment at the hands of his stepfather and mother.

"I think the whole key to Chevy is his childhood. I hate to use the word trauma, but I think he's traumatized," she says. "Humor is his way of dealing with it."

Chase famously feuded with many comedians, including "Community" co-star Joel McHale, "SNL" castmate John Belushi and Bill Murray, who had replaced him at "SNL." He left "Community" following reports he'd used a racist slur and directed insults at co-star Donald Glover. He had also quarreled with the show's creator Dan Harmon, who was pushed out for a time.

"The old Chevy could make you laugh putting you down and there was a little bit of a wink there, so you were in on the joke," writer and actor Alan Zweibel says in the film. "Now it just comes off as mean."

The film argues that Chase's darkness was amplified by his drug use. "In his mind he doesn't think he's mean," says Zenovich, who interviewed Chase twice and then followed him around for a few days.

"What was really interesting about Chevy is that he really wants to try to figure himself out. He wanted to go there, but then something stops him," she says. "He goes to a certain point, and then something stops him."

Chase, now 82, says he's aware that there's a long list of people who consider him contemptible, but insists he doesn't care. "It's just Hollywood stuff," he says. "It never really bothered me."

The movie digs into his short-lived TV talk show and his eye-opening first and only season at "Saturday Night Live."

He concedes leaving "SNL" was a mistake and shows how hurt he was not to be invited onstage when the show celebrated its 50th anniversary earlier this year.

The documentary also shows him basking in the applause of fans as he attends a recent screening of "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation" and it also reveals that his three daughters are insightful, funny and sweet.



In this file photo, actor Chevy Chase, center, sits on the front row during the second half of an NBA basketball game between the Atlanta Hawks and Dallas Mavericks in Dallas. (AP)

Film



This image released by Vertical shows Daisy Ridley in a scene from 'We Bury the Dead.' (AP)

Emotional zombie thriller with shocking twists in 'We Bury the Dead'

Ridley elevates horror with heart

NEW YORK, Dec 30, (AP): Movies that begin with a wedding often don't bode well for the couple. Starting with the so-called happy ending can only really guarantee a reversal of fortune. In the case of "We Bury the Dead," in theaters Friday, something cosmically catastrophic is coming: the accidental detonation of an experimental weapon that instantly wipes out some 500,000 people in Tasmania, including Ava's (Daisy Ridley) husband Mitch (Matt Whelan). Perhaps they should have toasted to something other than Kid Cudi's "Pursuit of Happiness (Nightmare)."

Grief manifests for everyone in its own way and the only thing Ava can think to do is board a plane and search for Mitch. It's almost certain he's dead. In fact, the resort where he was staying on a work trip is south of an area that is still burning - the humanitarian cleanup mission she joins isn't allowed to go there. There's a little extra complication too: Some of the dead have been "coming back." The helpers are told not to worry, but also not to engage. Simply light a flare and someone in the military will be there quickly to kill them. Again.

If the promise of zombies might send some hightailing back across the ocean, Ava is only emboldened by hope. What if Mitch is one of the reanimated? What could it mean? Why do some come back and not others? What if

he can be saved? If it seems like a somewhat delusional dream, especially once she starts getting glimpses of some of the zombie specimens with their bloodcurdling teeth grinding and generally unpleasant demeanor, just wait: There's at least one person she'll meet who has an even crazier plan.

Ava works dutifully for a bit, removing bodies from wherever they've fallen. It's disgusting, thankless work full of smells, bodily fluids and the occasional jump scare. Her partner, Clay (Brenton Thwaites), seems mostly unbothered by it all. With his long hair and '70s dropout mustache, he's a product of a different era despite his young age, more interested in the leftover cocaine and aspirational cars and motorcycles they encounter along the way than any bigger purpose. Eventually, Ava decides to just ask him to help her, and off they go into the forbidden zone.

The film was written and directed by Zak Hilditch, an Australian filmmaker perhaps best known for "These Final Hours," also an apocalyptic thriller with extinction and procreation on its mind.

"We Bury the Dead" is ultimately a movie about grief that seems to be unsure of how much it wants to go full zombie. We feel for Ava on her hopeless quest, although it's a bit of a meditative slow burn as the story reveals

little morsels about how her marriage had already curdled. Perhaps some real-time reflection might have been helpful for those watching her on this quest, but the screenplay relegates her story to flashbacks. Present-day Ava has to keep it all in the eyes.

Zombies have long served as cinematic metaphors, and this film at least gestures toward something novel. But it also doesn't totally commit to its own idea that some of the zombies might have souls worth saving and instead delves into more familiar tropes. Also, despite the consistent teeth grinding, it remains a bit unclear what happens if and when one gets bit/scratched/whatever by the undead.

Nonetheless, the very threat of zombies keeps things kind of interesting, perhaps because of all that's come before, but this film seems to be suffering the same plight as its protagonist. Both are searching for closure, a bigger point, something that might give the whole thing meaning. What they both arrive at is the kind of wild, bizarre ending that turns what once seemed like a decent original standalone into something much more terrifying: A setup.

"We Bury the Dead," a Vertical release in theaters Friday, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for "strong violent content, brief drug use, language, gore." Running time: 95 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

'The Plague' dives into a sink-or-swim water polo camp

NEW YORK, Dec 30, (AP): The undercurrents of adolescent cruelty churn queasily in Charlie Polinger's stylish first feature, "The Plague."

The title of Polinger's film might bring to mind Stephen King or recent global history, but "The Plague" is set entirely around the clear, chlorinated pools and shadowy hallways of a water polo camp, circa 2003. There, 12-year-old Ben (Everett Blunck), a scrawny and sensitive kid, arrives for the second session. That's a key detail: Is there any greater horror than joining a summer camp where the friend groups are already established?

But there is really only one group: a lewd and boisterous lot led by a smirking, cocksure kid named Jake (Kayo Martin). And there is one outcast: Eli (Kenny Rasmussen), the kind of 12-year-old who's obviously smart but whose awkward, introverted manner and fondness for things such as magic tricks and "Les Misérables" inevitably make him an outsider. He also is covered in acne and has rashes across his back. Jake and the rest all say he has the plague. "No cure for him," Jake tells Ben.

These are the troubled coming-of-age



This image released by IFC shows Kenny Rasmussen in a scene from 'The Plague.' (AP)

waters that "The Plague" swims in. From the start, it's clear that Polinger, who also wrote the film, has a keen eye for both darkly gleaming surfaces and for the roiling torments that lurk below. "The Plague" is by no means charting new ground when it comes to adolescent torments; this is a movie working with very recognizable preteen types. But Polinger's talent for crafting ominous, murky atmospheres and perceptive adolescent dynamics make "The Plague" an

auspicious debut feature.

While coming-of-age tales have played out before on baseball diamonds and football gridirons, the deep pools of water polo are a more novel setting. From the start, Polinger's camera, working with cinematographer Steven Breckon in 35 mm, drifts eerily toward the quiet frenzy underwater: the kicking legs and agitated bubbles. Their entry to adulthood is a sink-or-swim, with nothing to stand on.

When their coach (Joel Edgerton, also a producer) asks what water polo is, he calls on Ben, who offers: "Working together as one big family, or whatever." But far from collective, the world of "The Plague" is primal and survivalist. The coach is kind but ineffectual. Parents are distant and out of reach. This is "Lord of the Flies" in the pool.

That connection is most clear one night when the boys sneak out to some abandoned building, make a bonfire, smash a bunch of stuff and watch as Eli - who usually isn't even allowed in their presence - dances by spinning wildly around. Ben is more sensitive than Jake and his pals, and he looks concerned for Eli as soon as he arrives. But he's also more anxious about his own, tenuous-at-best place in the group, and he uses this moment to crash into Eli, knock him down and then make a show of cleaning off any "plague" residue on his arm.

In "The Plague," ostracism is as permanent and irremediable as any pandemic infection. As big-screen bullies go, Jake is a classic one, terrifically played with smarmy malice by Martin. Jake isn't taller or stronger than the rest, but he has a maturely manipulative feel for weak points.

Culture

Jordan imported over 55,600 tons of coffee, valued at 151.2 million Jordanian dinars in 2024

From social occasions to daily habits, coffee craze reveals changing Jordanian lifestyle

AMMAN, Dec 30, (Xinhua): Whether at the break of dawn or after a long day’s work, more and more Jordanians are making a rich, specialty coffee at local cafes an integral part of their daily routine.

As urbanization progresses in Jordan, the lifestyle of its people is shifting, with the rise of coffee culture serving as a clear marker of this change.

According to Amin Alasoufi, head of the Economic Studies and Research Department at the Amman Chamber of Industry, coffee in Jordan has transitioned from a beverage traditionally associated with social occasions to a daily consumer product.

As noted by Alasoufi, Jordan’s coffee industry has seen significant growth, especially in the capital, Amman, where population density and changing lifestyles have driven increased demand.

In 2024, Jordan imported over 55,600 tons of coffee, valued at 151.2 million Jordanian dinars (approximately 213 million U.S. dollars), according to Alasoufi. Chamber data also revealed that the average annual per capita consumption stands at about 5 kg, highlighting robust and sustained demand.

According to the chamber, the number of cafes operating nationwide has exceeded 1,664, reflecting a 9.6-percent increase from 2023.

“Cafes now serve multiple purposes, from social gatherings to business meetings and study spaces,” Alasoufi said.



A man pours Arabic coffee at a cafe in Amman, Jordan. (Xinhua)

For cafe owners, the surge in coffee consumption has translated into business opportunities. “Coffee has become a reliable business because people drink it regardless of economic conditions,” said Mohammad Odeh, who opened a specialty coffee shop in west Amman three years ago. “Customers may cut back on other expenses, but coffee remains a constant in their daily routine.” Sociologist Fadia Ibrahim attributes the shift in coffee consumption

patterns to changes in social behavior. “While traditional Arabic coffee symbolizes hospitality, respect, and social cohesion, especially during important events like weddings, funerals, and reconciliation gatherings, modern cafes cater to younger generations who seek flexible social spaces and a variety of tastes,” said Ibrahim. In downtown Amman, traditional Turkish coffee shops continue to operate along-



A man drinks coffee at a cafe in Amman, Jordan. (Xinhua)

side modern establishments, reflecting a balance between Jordanian tradition and modern lifestyles. Saif Abdulmunem, owner of Central Cafe, one of the city’s oldest cafes established in the 1930s, acknowledged that modern cafe concepts have impacted traditional businesses. However, he emphasized that long-established cafes continue to draw customers seeking authenticity and a familiar social atmosphere.

For ordinary Jordanians, the line between tradition and modernity doesn’t seem to matter as much. What’s really important to them is the social connection and meaning behind the coffee. Ahmad Khalil, a 42-year-old employee from Amman, said, “Coffee is always the first thing we offer to guest, no matter the occasion. It’s not just about having coffee; it’s about showing respect and hospitality.”

‘The demand for this experience is growing every year’

Egypt’s Valley of Whales becomes new hotspot for growing astrotourism

FAYOUM, Egypt, Dec 30, (Xinhua): In the desert stillness of Egypt’s Wadi El-Hitan, a group of stargazers kneeled on the cooling Fayoum sands as Mohammed Hassan’s green laser sliced through the ink-black sky to illuminate the glowing disk of Jupiter.

Wadi El-Hitan, or the Valley of the Whales, located in Fayoum governorate southwest of Cairo, is famous for being an open-air museum of 40-million-year-old whale fossils. As the sun goes down, the focus shifts from the fossil-strewn ground to the vast expanse of the heavens.

Hassan, the camp organizer and an astronomy expert, spends his nights giving brief lectures about the planets and stars, using his laser pointer to guide the eyes of amazed tourists toward the wonders of the universe.

“The demand for this experience is growing every year,” Hassan told Xinhua as he prepared a powerful telescope for the group. “Egyptians and non-Egyptians are coming here, especially in the summer, to reconnect with the cosmos. Astrotourism is a new growing trend.” Hassan revealed that thousands of tourists visit this UNESCO World Heritage Site every year because the sky here is among the clearest in the world, adding that the numbers are notably growing every week.

This surge in interest is a direct result of a government-backed push for ecotourism, he said, adding that the state provides the necessary permits for these tent camps and maintains a security presence to ensure the site remains protected, he said.

In 2020, Egypt launched the Eco Egypt campaign as the first initiative of its kind designed to reposition the country on the global tourism map as a leading destination for sustainable travel.

This strategic move not only protects the nation’s natural wonders but also bolsters a sector that remains a critical source of foreign currency for the Egyptian economy, ensuring that the preservation of the environment goes hand-in-hand with national financial stability.

Among the crowd were Mostafa Abdel-Fattah and Mona Mohammed, a newly married couple who chose this wilderness for their first trip together. Mohammed said that after a day spent walking on an ancient sea floor among 40-million-year-old skeletons, looking up at starlight that has traveled for millions of years makes her feel as if the history of the

Earth and the universe are finally meeting.

“It is a strange and beautiful feeling,” Mohammed told Xinhua as she looked up from the lens of a telescope, watching the sharp craters of the moon and the distinct rings of Saturn.

Mohammed’s husband, a mechanical engineer, said he first discovered the magic of Wadi El-Hitan through a viral post on social media.

“My professional background gives me a unique appreciation for the celestial mechanics at play above the dunes,” he told Xinhua. “I have always been fascinated by the sheer precision of the universe, and I have spent years wishing to truly understand the deeper mystery of astronomy.” The experience has left such a lasting impression on Abdel-Fattah who is already planning to revisit the site. For him, the combination of technical wonder and natural beauty is irresistible.

“There is something about this place that makes you feel both small and significant at the same time,” he said. “You can read about the stars in books or see them on a screen, but feeling the desert wind while you witness the cosmos in person is something entirely different. It is a passion I want to keep exploring,” he added.

Not far from the couple, Mostafa Diab, a young doctor who is visiting the site for the third time, brought a group of his friends after finally convincing them to enjoy the experience.

He watched with a smile as his friends, who are usually glued to their screens, realized that their phones have no signal.

“I told them that once you get deep into the desert of Fayoum, your phone becomes a toy,” he told Xinhua. “There is no signal here, and that is the best part.” He said that he had to show his friends that they do not need a five-star hotel to feel like a millionaire, adding that all they need is “a clear sky and good company.” At the camp, the lifestyle remains simple and authentic. There are no luxury buildings, only two toilets and a small cafe. As the desert air turns cold, the tourists sit around a crackling wood fire, making tea over the flames.

The smell of woodsmoke and the sound of local Bedouin music shows fill the air, as musicians from nearby communities share their traditional songs under the Milky Way.

“There is nothing that can be better than this night...the sand is my mattress and the sky is my cover,” Diab said.



Members of the Vienna Philharmonic are seen at the rehearsal of the 2026 Vienna Philharmonic New Year’s Concert in Vienna, Austria. (Xinhua)

France grants citizenship to George & Amal Clooney and their twins Ella and Alexander



In this file photo, George Clooney and his wife Amal Clooney pose for photographers upon arrival at the screening of the film ‘The Boys In The Boat,’ Dec. 3, 2023, in London. (AP)

PARIS, Dec 30, (AP): Call them Monsieur and Madame Clooney.

France’s government says that George Clooney, his wife Amal and their twins Ella and Alexander have been awarded French citizenship.

The naturalizations of the Kentucky-born star of the “Oceans” series of heist movies and his family were announced last weekend in the Journal Officiel, where French government decrees are published.

The government notice indicated that human rights lawyer Amal Clooney was naturalized under her maiden name, Amal Alamuddin. It also noted that George Clooney’s middle name is Timothy.

The couple purchased an estate in France in 2021. In an interview with Esquire in October, Clooney described their “farm in France” as their primary residence - a decision the 64-year-old actor and his 47-year-old wife made with their children in mind.

“I was worried about raising our kids in L.A., in the culture of Hollywood,” he told the magazine. “I don’t want them to be walking around worried about paparazzi. I don’t want them being compared to somebody else’s famous kids.”

Growing up away from the spotlight in France, “they’re not on their iPads, you know?” he said. “They have dinner with grown-ups and have to take their dishes in. They have a much better life.”

Variety

NEW YORK: For the first time in 20 years, rain could be an intruder at the Rose Parade in Southern California, a venerable New Year’s Day event that attracts thousands of spectators and is watched by millions more on TV.

Storms caused Christmas week flooding, mudslides and other miseries across the region. Now comes a 90% chance of rain Thursday in Pasadena, according to the National Weather Service.

“We try not to say that word around here,” joked Candy Carlson, a spokesperson for the Pasadena Tournament of Roses, the organization behind the 137th Rose Parade, which precedes the Rose Bowl College Football Playoff game.

On New Year’s Eve in New York City, forecasters are predicting temperatures in the low 30s, which is not unusual, when the ball drops in Times Square. Light rain is possible in Las Vegas, where several casinos will be shooting fireworks from rooftops.

During Nashville’s Big Bash, a New Year’s Eve event at a park, temperatures will be in

the low 30s when an illuminated music note drops at midnight in the Tennessee city. New Orleans will be in the 40s for a free concert and fireworks along the Mississippi River. (AP)

ANKARA: A Turkish court ordered the release of veteran journalist Fatih Altayli from prison pending the outcome of his appeal against a conviction for allegedly threatening President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Altayli, 63, a longtime columnist whose YouTube programs drew hundreds of thousands of viewers daily, was sentenced last

month to four years and two months in prison. He had been arrested in June on charges of threatening the president during one of his broadcasts - a case critics described as an attempt to silence a prominent government opponent.

The regional appeals court ruled for his release from prison, citing the absence of any flight risk, the fact that evidence had already been collected, and the time he had already spent in detention, according to state-run Anadolu Agency.

Altayli’s arrest stemmed from remarks on his program “Fatih Altayli Comments,” in

which he discussed a survey showing more than 70% of the public opposed a lifetime presidency for Erdogan, who has ruled for over two decades. Altayli said he was not surprised by the result, noting that Turkish society favored checks on authority.

“Look at the history of this nation,” he said. “This is a nation which strangled its sultan when they didn’t like him or want him. There are quite a few Ottoman sultans who were assassinated, strangled, or whose deaths were made to look like suicide.”

Altayli has strongly denied that his comments amounted to a threat against Erdogan. (AP)

Rural county brings lifesaving drugs to doorsteps

China’s healthcare reform ends long struggle for essential medicines

YINCHUAN, Dec 30, (Xinhua): After Yang Meilan, 70, finally reached a point in her life where she no longer had to worry about food, clothing, her children’s tuition, or the roof over her head, she still faced one lingering hassle: getting the medicine she needed for her chronic condition -- medicine that wasn’t available in her town.

Yang hails from Hexi Township, Tongxin County in northwest China’s Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. This area is part of the Xihaigu region, which used to be called the least suitable place for human settlement by UN experts because of its harsh droughts and delicate ecosystem.

Thanks to continuous poverty-reduction efforts over the years, all 1,100 impoverished villages in Xihaigu had been lifted out of poverty by 2020, with 803,000 people shaking off poverty over the decade since 2011. Yang is one of them.

Today, Yang’s family farms land, grazes five cattle and 30 sheep, and lives on an annual per capita income of approximately 26,000 yuan (about 3,695 U.S. dollars).

But there’s still one frustration hanging over her. Ever since Yang was diagnosed with a chronic kidney condition at 53, she’s poured considerable time and money into trips just to get the medication she needs -- Roxadustat. Sometimes she would travel to Yinchuan, the capital city of Ningxia, and sometimes to Xi’an or Lanzhou, nearby provincial capitals.

The travel fare and accommodation could easily add up to nearly a thousand yuan just for one trip, Yang recalled, saying, “You have no idea how hard it used to be to get medicine.” Aside from the travel expenses, medicines prescribed in another provincial region used to mean a lower coverage of reimbursement.

Yang’s struggle with access to special medication tests the local government’s commitment to addressing even the minute but pressing concerns of residents, particularly rural residents who have just shaken off poverty.

Such efforts by local governments have been underway in recent years, with many focusing on addressing a specific concern that affects people in need.

The recommendations for formulating China’s 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030) for national economic and social development identify the goal of “strengthening inclusive, fundamental, and essential livelihood initiatives to address the pressing concerns and difficulties of the people.”

Tongxin County is taking this to heart. The county has a permanent population of over 300,000, but only a few hundred individuals need special medications. “There aren’t many people in our village with my condition. I used to think that no one would care about such a minor issue. It surprised me that it would one day get addressed,” Yang said.

In 2025, the county implemented a unified



This undated photo shows Ma Junling (left), a doctor from the health center of Hexi Township, measuring blood pressure for Yang Meilan, in Tongxin County, northwest China’s Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. (Xinhua)

procurement system. The special medication needs of residents were gathered at the village level through door-to-door visits and

then reported to the county pharmacy for centralized purchasing and distribution.

“Your medicine has arrived. Please come

and pick it up,” Yang is informed by her village doctor over the phone each month -- the call that she is always happy to receive.

“Our county has largely resolved the issue of medical access for the public. At present, 214 individuals benefit from the ‘door-to-door medicine delivery’ service, which would save a total of nearly 560,000 yuan annually in extra costs previously incurred from purchasing medications outside the county,” noted Jin Zicai, director of the Tongxin County health bureau.

The county has set up a “green channel” to speed things up. For life-saving drugs like Clonazepam, when the county’s central pharmacy receives urgent requests from township clinics, it immediately activates the “green channel” to complete procurement, approval, and delivery as quickly as possible.

“For any family, life truly feels hopeful when the sick member does not have to worry,” said Ma Chengxiao, Yang’s husband. He noted that the Roxadustat his wife is currently taking costs only 232 yuan per month after reimbursement, saving them over 2,000 yuan compared to the previous combined costs of medication and travel.

He added that this convenience not only eased the family’s financial burden but also allowed them to focus more on working toward prosperity. “The money saved over the year could be spent on buying some nice food and drinks, and the rest is still enough to raise a few more calves,” Ma said.

China elevates elderly care

More than caregivers, senior care specialists redefine aging support

BEIJING, Dec. 30, (Xinhua): Despite the winter chill outside, the atmosphere inside the memory care unit at Taikang Community Yan Garden, a senior residential community in Beijing’s northern suburbs, remains lively as the year draws to a close.

Veteran senior care specialist Li Qinggang could recently be found humming a classic tune alongside an elderly female resident who has a cognitive impairment. As he hummed, she tapped her hand to the rhythm and her face lit up with a smile.

For Li, these moments of connection are precious, but his role has evolved significantly over the past few months. He has transitioned from a frontline supervisor managing a unit of some 20 residents to a training manager overseeing the professional development of more than 200 staff members in the community.

This shift in his career trajectory mirrors the broader professionalization of China’s elderly care sector.

Li is among China’s emerging generation of senior care specialists -- a new profession that was recognized officially by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security in July this year. Unlike traditional caregivers, these specialists are interdisciplinary professionals who master a comprehensive range of skills, including health assessment, medical support, rehabilitation, psychology, nutrition, service quality management, and care plan formulation and implementation.

“I used to care for the seniors myself. Now, I’m training more professionals to do so,” Li said. “The responsibility is heavier, but the significance is greater.”

His transition from practitioner to mentor is built on nearly eight years of frontline experience, particularly in the challenging field of dementia care.

He remembers a case involving an elderly woman who had been driven by a compulsion to use the toilet nearly 100 times a day. After ruling out physiological causes, Li analyzed her needs and designed a personalized, non-drug intervention. Tapping into her passion for knitting, he provided an elderly-friendly knitting board to divert her attention and modified her bathroom environment to reduce visual stimu-



A doctor conducts health check for a patient at a community elderly care center in Shitun Town of Zhenghe County, Nanping City, east China’s Fujian Province, Sept. 24, 2025. (Xinhua)

lation. The strategy proved effective, gradually reducing frequency to a normal range.

For Li, such behaviors often mask unmet needs that can be addressed through environmental optimization, care method adjustments and improved communication.

He has applied this philosophy to many cases involving residents with dementia, organizing art therapy classes for painting enthusiasts, designing hands-on tasks for former engineers and cultivating a small vegetable garden for those with a keen appreciation for nature.

“Our job is to find the key to reopening the door of communication, and to rebuild emotional connection,” Li said.

Today, he is teaching these new kinds of solutions to others, moving beyond simple feeding and cleaning to provide dignified, personalized care. He has also contributed to a training manual that is now used as a

key reference by more than 20 other senior residential communities across China.

Li’s professional growth has come at a time when China is grappling with a rapidly aging society. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics shows that by the end of 2024, China’s population aged 60 or above had reached 310.31 million. And experts predict that figure will exceed 400 million by about 2035.

“Faced with such a massive and diverse elderly population, traditional care models are challenged,” said Wu Leilei, a human resources executive at Taikang Community. She noted that the rise of senior care specialists is critical to ensuring the well-being of the elderly.

Wang Yongchun, an expert member of the national working commission on aging, noted that a core issue in the sector is the mismatch between professional supply and diverse de-

mand, which calls for continued efforts to strengthen the elderly care talent pool -- senior care specialists, in particular.

In response to such challenges, Chinese authorities have continued to accelerate policy support. Earlier this year, the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security issued a guideline to expedite the recognition of vocational skill levels among elderly care professionals, aiming to smooth the career development path for practitioners like Li.

As 2026 approaches, Li has set new goals: to promote mature, tested care models to benefit more seniors with cognitive impairments, and to bring more young talent into the field.

“For me, the core of an ideal aging society is happiness,” Li said. “Allowing every elder to live in comfort and dignity is my original aspiration and mission.”



Children create paper-cutting works under the guidance of an artist at a kindergarten in Yinchuan, Northwest China’s Ningxia Hui autonomous region, Dec 27, 2025. (Xinhua)

Schools, families urged to cooperate

China plans to boost health of children, youth through 2030

BEIJING, Dec 30, (Xinhua): China on Tuesday unveiled a plan to promote the health of children and adolescents from 2026 to 2030, targeting key issues such as obesity, myopia, mental and behavioral disorders, spinal deformities, and dental health.

The initiative aims to improve young people’s physical and mental well-being by emphasizing prevention

and the coordinated management of multiple health issues.

The plan called for efforts to strengthen cooperation between healthcare services and schools, integrate medical care and physical education, foster family-school collaboration, and encourage broader societal participation in promoting youth health.



Russian scientists creating nanostructures using DNA-based building blocks. KUNA photo

Russian scientists develop DNA-based nanostructures

MOSCOW, Dec 30, (KUNA): Russian Academy of Sciences Member Andrei Naumov said Monday that Russian scientists have, for the first time, created nanostructures using DNA-based building blocks, a breakthrough that could expand possibilities in advanced technology and modern medicine.

Quoted by TASS Russian News Agency, Naumov said the new nanostructures could significantly shrink electronic devices, improving efficiency and supporting the global shift

toward precise, high-end technologies.

The innovation could also have vital medical uses, such as nanosensors for early diagnosis or smart nanocarriers that deliver drugs directly to targeted cells, which could increase treatment effectiveness and reduce side effects, he added.

Research is at an advanced stage as the team is working to turn it into practical products for industrial and medical use in the coming years, he explained.

The Conversation

What loving-kindness meditation is and how to practice it in the new year

The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts. The Conversation is wholly responsible for the content.

By Jeremy David Engels
Penn State

A popular New Year’s resolution is to take up meditation - specifically mindfulness meditation. This is a healthy choice.

Regular mindfulness practice has been linked to many positive health

benefits, including reduced stress and anxiety, better sleep and quick-healing after injury and illness. Mindfulness can help us to be present in a distracted world and to feel more at home in our bodies, and in our lives.

There are many different types of meditation. Some mindfulness practices ask meditators simply to sit with whatever thoughts, sensations or emotions arise without immediately reacting to them.

Such meditations cultivate focus, while granting more freedom in how we respond to whatever events life throws at us.

Other meditations ask practitioners to deliberately focus on one emotion - for example, gratitude or love - to deepen the experience of that emotion. The purpose behind this type of meditation is to bring more gratitude, or more love, into one’s life. The more people meditate on love, the easier it is to experience this emotion even when not meditating.

One such meditation is known as “metta,” or loving-kindness. As a scholar of communication and mindfulness, as well as a longtime meditation teacher, I have both studied and practiced metta. Here is what loving-kindness means and how to try it out

for yourself.

Loving-kindness, or metta, is the type of love which is practiced by Buddhists around the world. Like many forms of meditation today, there are both secular and religious forms of the practice. One does not need to be a Buddhist to practice loving-kindness. It is for anyone and everyone who wants to live more lovingly.

Loving-kindness, the feeling cultivated in metta meditation, is very different from romantic love. In the ancient Pali language, the word “metta” has two root meanings: The first is “gentle,” in the sense of a gentle spring

rain that falls on young plants, nourishing them without discrimination. The second is “friend.”

Metta is limitless and unbounded love; it is gentle presence and universal friendliness. Metta practice is meant to grow people’s ability to be present for themselves and others without fail.

Metta is not reciprocal or conditional. It does not discriminate between us and them, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, popular or unpopular, worthy and unworthy. To practice metta is to give what I describe in my research as “the rarest and most precious gift” - a gift of love offered

without any expectation of it being returned.

In the fifth century, a Sri Lankan monk, Buddhaghosa, composed an influential meditation text called the “Visuddhimagga,” or “The Path of Purification.” In this text, Buddhaghosa provides instructions for how to practice loving-kindness meditation. Contemporary teachers tend to adapt and modify his instructions.

The practice of loving-kindness often involves quietly reciting to oneself several traditional phrases designed to evoke metta, and visualizing the beings who will receive that loving-kindness. (AP)

Miami routs Nuggets as Jokic walks off injured

SGA scores 39, OKC beats Hawks

MIAMI, Dec 30, (AP): Norman Powell scored 25 points and the Miami Heat pulled away in the second half to beat Denver 147-123 in a game where the Nuggets saw superstar Nikola Jokic limp off the court with a knee injury.

The teams were tied at 63 at half-time, with Jokic getting hurt with about three seconds left before the intermission. Miami then scored 47 third-quarter points to take full control.

Nikola Jokic scored 22 points, Jaime Jaquez Jr. added 20 and Bam Adebayo returned from a two-game absence to grab 10 rebounds for the Heat, who had gone 1-15 in their last 16 games against Denver - the one win coming in five-game defeat to the Nuggets in the 2023 NBA Finals.

Denver had also won the last 11 regular-season matchups between the clubs and hadn't lost a game in Miami since 2018.

But everything changed after half-time, with Jokic remaining in the locker room areas for evaluation.

Jokic still led the Nuggets in scoring with 21 points, along with eight assists and five rebounds. Jamal Murray scored 20 for Denver and Spencer Jones - who stepped on Jokic's left foot on the play where the three-time MVP was injured - scored 16 for the Nuggets, as did Tim Hardaway Jr.

Thunder 140, Hawks 129

In Oklahoma City, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 39 points and the Oklahoma City Thunder used a big third quarter to beat the skidding Atlanta Hawks.

Chet Holmgren had 24 points, nine rebounds and three blocks, and Jalen Williams added 20 points, nine rebounds and seven assists for the NBA-leading Thunder (28-5).

Gilgeous-Alexander scored the Thunder's first eight points. He made 15 of 24 field goals and all seven of his foul shots. He scored at least 20 points for the 104th consecutive game.

Nickeil Alexander-Walker scored 30 points and Onyeka Okongwu had 26 points and 14 rebounds for Atlanta (15-19), which has lost seven straight. The short-handed Hawks played without starters Trae Young (quad), Jalen Johnson (illness) and Kristaps Porzingis (illness).

Cavaliers 113, Spurs 101

In San Antonio, Jarrett Allen had 27 points and 10 rebounds and the Cleveland Cavaliers held on to beat



Oklahoma City Thunder guard Aaron Wiggins (21) handles the ball against Philadelphia 76ers forward Justin Edwards (11) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Oklahoma City. (AP)

Victor Wembanyama and the San Antonio.

Cleveland had seven players score in double figures. Evan Mobley scored 16 points and Darius Garland added 15 points and 11 assists.

Wembanyama had 26 points and 14 rebounds for his 10th double-double of the season for the Spurs, who have lost two straight after winning eight consecutive games.

Stephon Castle scored 15 points for the Spurs and De'Aaron Fox 14 added points after a one-game absence due to tightness in his left adductor.

Knicks 130, Pelicans 125

In New Orleans, Jalen Brunson capped a 28-point, 10-assist performance with a driving floater and a layup in the final 1:06, and the New York Knicks surged in front late to beat the New Orleans Pelicans.

OG Anunoby had 23 points and 11 rebounds, Mohamed Diawara scored a career-high 18 points, and Karl-

Anthony Towns had 12 points and 12 rebounds for the Knicks, who've won three straight.

Zion Williamson scored a season-high 32 points for the Pelicans, who lost their fourth straight. Saddiq Bey and Jordan Poole each scored 26 for New Orleans and Trey Murphy III added 21 points.

Neither team led by more than 10 in a game characterized by a lot of scoring in the first half before defensive play intensified in the second.

Suns 115, Wizards 101

In Washington, Dillon Brooks scored 26 points and Collin Gillespie added 25 to help the Phoenix Suns win their fourth game in a row with victory over the Washington Wizards.

Devin Booker added 22 points for the Suns, who have won five of their last six and the first three on a four-game road trip.

Phoenix sank 17 of 40 3-pointers (42.5%) and led Washington 20-9 in

offensive rebounds while moving six games above .500 (19-13) for the first time this season.

This victory came without center Mark Williams, who served a one-game suspension for his role in an on-court altercation in Saturday's 129-114 win at New Orleans.

Rookie Tre Johnson scored a career-high 24 points for Washington, which failed in its bid to win three straight for the first time since Feb 1-5.

CJ McCollum added 17 points for the rebuilding Wizards, who entered Monday with the NBA's second-worst record, but are 4-4 in their last eight.

Timberwolves 136, Bulls 101

In Chicago, Naz Reid scored a season-high 33 points off the bench, Anthony Edwards added 23, and the Minnesota Timberwolves routed the Bulls after Chicago lost top scorers Coby White and Josh Giddey to injuries.

Julius Randle had 17 points as Minnesota pulled away in the third quarter in the opener of a four-game trip. Donte DiVincenzo and Bones Hyland scored 12 each as Minnesota shot 53.7% after a cold start.

Nikola Vucevic led Chicago with 23 points, but the depleted Bulls couldn't keep pace and lost a second straight following a five-game winning streak that had lifted them back to .500. Chicago shot just 40.9%, and committed 16 turnovers compared to three by Minnesota.

Rockets 126, Pacers 119

In Houston, Kevin Durant scored 30 points to lead the Houston Rockets to win over the Indiana Pacers .

It's the second straight 30-point game for Durant and his 10th this season, his first in Houston since a blockbuster summer trade from Phoenix.

Jabari Smith Jr. had 21 points with 10 rebounds and Amen Thompson added 20 points, eight rebounds and

seven assists for the Rockets, who have won three in a row after dropping four of their previous five games during a tough road trip.

It's the ninth consecutive loss for the Pacers, who have the NBA's worst record at 6-27 with Tyrese Haliburton out all season with an Achilles injury.

Warriors 120, Nets 107

In New York, Stephen Curry scored 27 points and Jimmy Butler finished with 21 as the Golden State Warriors beat the Brooklyn Nets .

Curry shot 8 for 15 from the field while Butler went 11 for 12 from the free throw line for the Warriors, who bounced back from an overtime loss in Toronto in Sunday to win for the fourth time in five games.

Trayce Jackson-Davis added 11 points and Gary Payton II, De'Anthony Melton and Will Richardson each chipped in 10.

Michael Porter Jr. had 27 points and rookie Egor Demin added 23 for the Nets, who had their three-game winning streak stopped.

Raptors 107, Magic 106

In Toronto, Jamal Shaeed scored 19 points, Brandon Ingram added 17 and the Toronto Raptors overcame a 21-point, second-quarter deficit to beat the Orlando Magic.

Grady Dick scored 15 points and Scottie Barnes had 13 points and 11 rebounds as the Raptors rallied for the second straight day. Toronto beat Golden State in overtime on Sunday.

Orlando's Anthony Black scored 16 of his 27 points in the third quarter. Paolo Banchero had 23 points, 15 rebounds and 10 assists for his fourth career triple-double but the Magic couldn't win back-to-back games for the first time in almost a month.

Bucks123, Hornets 113

In Charlotte, Bobby Portis shot 8 of 12 from the field and scored 25 points off the bench, Giannis Antetokounmpo added 24 points and seven assists and the Milwaukee Bucks defeated the Charlotte Hornets to earn back-to-back wins for the first time since late October.

Myles Turner added 23 points and Kevin Porter Jr. finished with 15 points and 11 assists for the Bucks, who last won consecutive games Oct. 28-30, against New York and Golden State.

Brandon Miller had 31 points and eight rebounds and LaMelo Ball added 26 points for the injury-riddled Hornets, who fell short in a bid for their first three-game win streak of the season.

Milwaukee won despite being outrebounded 47-31 by the smaller Hornets.



England's Jofra Archer bowls during play on day four of the third Ashes cricket test between England and Australia in Adelaide, Australia. (AP)

Injured Archer makes WC squad, Jamie misses out

LONDON, Dec 30, (AP): Batter Jamie Smith was left out of England's provisional squad for the Twenty20 World Cup on Tuesday, but pacer Jofra Archer was included despite nursing a side strain.

Smith has been short of his form in test cricket for England in the Ashes Series, which Australia leads 3-1. The big-hitting wicketkeeper-batter entered the series with a strong reputation, but so far has a best of 60 from the bat with only one other score over 30 in eight innings.

Archer misses England's fifth and final test in Sydney later this week after sitting out England's recent win in Melbourne.

He sustained the injury after taking six wickets during the third test in Adelaide, a loss which condemned England to a 3-0 deficit and saw Australia retain the Ashes.

Archer had nine wickets overall in the Ashes and scored 51 in Adelaide for his first test 50, suggesting he

could be a valuable pinch-hitter lower down the order at the T20 World Cup, which begins in February.

The England and Wales Cricket Board said Archer was named only in the squad for the T20 World Cup - which is co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka.

England begins its campaign in Group C against Nepal on Feb. 8 in Mumbai, India.

Archer was not included in the T20 or One Day International squads for matches against Sri Lanka leading up to the T20 World Cup. Smith was also left out of those, despite having opened the batting for England in recent ODIs.

England batting great Joe Root was included in the ODI squad for the three games against Sri Lanka, but as expected, not for the T20 internationals or the World Cup.

England opens against Sri Lanka on Jan. 22, with all three games in Colombo and then plays the first of three T20s against Sri Lanka in Kandy on Jan. 30.

Accident claims two lives

Joshua stable following fatal road crash in Nigeria

LAGOS, Nigeria, Dec 30, (AP): Anthony Joshua, the two-time former world heavyweight champion from Britain, was in a stable condition in the hospital Monday after being involved in a car crash in Nigeria that killed two people who were close friends and team members, his promoter said.

Eddie Hearn's Matchroom Boxing said on X that Joshua "sustained injuries in the accident and was taken to hospital for checks and treatment" and he will "remain there for observation." It named Sina Ghami and Latif Ayodele as the two passengers who had "tragically passed away."

Photos on social media showed Joshua being extricated from a wrecked vehicle while he was wincing in pain.

"Following thorough clinical evaluations, medical professionals have confirmed that both patients (hospitalized after the accident) are stable and do not require any emergency medical intervention at this time," a joint statement by Lagos and Ogun state governments said.

The Lagos state commissioner for information, Gbenga Omotoso, confirmed the accident in a post on X, adding that the government had sent ambulances to the crash site.

The crash occurred on a major thoroughfare - the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway which links Ogun state to Lagos, the country's economic capital - at about 11 a.m. local time. Nigeria is the homeland of Joshua's parents.

Ogun State Police earlier said in a statement: "The vehicle conveying Mr. Joshua, a Lexus SUV, was involved in the accident under circumstances that are currently being investigated. Joshua, seated in the rear of the vehicle, sustained minor injuries and is receiving medical attention with another injured person."

According to Olusegun Ogungbe-



In this photo provided by the Federal Road Safety Corps, people gather at the accident scene of British boxer Anthony Joshua in Lagos, Nigeria. (AP)

mide, spokesperson for the Federal Road Safety Corps, preliminary investigations indicated the vehicle was "traveling beyond the legally prescribed speed limit on the corridor, lost control during an overtaking maneuver and crashed into a stationary truck," which was by the side of the road.

The Ogun state government said that "preliminary reports indicate that two male foreign nationals died on the spot."

Joshua beat YouTuber-turned-boxer Jake Paul on Dec. 19 in a bout in Miami, which he was using to regain sharpness in the ring. He lost the world heavyweight title in 2021 to Oleksandr Usyk.

"Life is much more important than

boxing. I am praying for the lost lives, AJ and anyone impacted by today's unfortunate accident," Paul said Monday.

Nigeria's president, Bola Tinubu, called Joshua in hospital.

"I spoke with AJ on the phone to personally convey my condolences over the death of his two associates," the president said on X. "I wished him a full and speedy recovery, and prayed with him. AJ assured me he is receiving the best possible care. I also spoke with his mother and prayed for her. She was deeply appreciative of the call."

No further details on Joshua's condition were given.

"Anthony Joshua is in an undisclosed hospital being treated for his

injuries," Lanre Ogunlowo, the commissioner of police for Ogun state, told the AP. He said he has no further information on the injuries.

Hearn had earlier told Daily Mail Sport that he was "away on a family holiday and awoke to the news of this incident."

"We are trying to contact Anthony and in the meantime we don't want to speculate on how he is but thankfully he appears OK from what I have seen in the images."

Joshua briefly went to boarding school in Nigeria at the age of 11. He returned there for the first time in 17 years in 2019, ahead of a fight against Andy Ruiz Jr.

Joshua has been in talks to fight fellow Briton Tyson Fury in 2026.

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LIV Golf faces ranking blow as 54-hole points drop

WASHINGTON, Dec 30, (AP): LIV Golf will end the year with no decision whether the Official World Golf Ranking will approve the 54-man league to receive ranking points like golf's other tours around the world.

The OWGR also said tournaments that are played over 54 holes or even 36 holes will have a reduction in points compared with standard 72-hole events.

OWGR chairman Trevor Immelman had

said two weeks ago one hurdle was the vast majority of LIV players were invited to join instead of earning their way, as is the case with the other 24 tours that are part of the OWGR system.

An update sent Wednesday said only that the board continues to evaluate LIV's application the Saudi-funded league submitted in late June.

"We remain committed to the OWGR's mission, which requires honoring the meri-

tracy woven into the professional game," Immelman said in a statement. "As such, discussions have been regular and remain ongoing. To be clear, progress has been made, but there is no decision to share at this time."

"We will continue to work closely with LIV Golf as it continues to evolve to ensure its application is handled with fairness, integrity and consistency, as stated previously."

Immelman also had previously said the

54 holes that LIV played for its first four years were never that big of an issue. LIV is moving to 72 holes for the 2026 season.

LIV begins its season Feb. 4 in Saudi Arabia. It has been hopeful of being part of the OWGR system because the four majors used it as part of its qualifying criteria.

Several tours that are part of the OWGR are scheduled for 54 holes, such as the Big Easy developmental tour in South Africa and the MENA Tour based in Dubai.

Commitment to sports and community growth remains a top priority

ABK sponsors Arab Elite Tennis Championship in Bahrain



Behbehani, Albenali, and Arab Tennis Federation President with tournament participants.



First-place winner honored.



Runner-up receives prize.



Sager Albenali

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) proudly announced its sponsorship of the Arab Elite Tennis Championship, which will take place in Bahrain. This initiative is part of ABK’s ongoing partnership with the Arab Tennis Federation and reflects the Bank’s commitment to social responsibility and its significant interest in promoting sports activities, encouraging participation across all segments of society in Kuwait.

ABK, participated in the press conference to announce the tournament awards ceremony, which featured intense competition among 22 players from several Arab countries. The event attracted a large number of fans and tennis enthusiasts from the region. On this occasion, Mohammed Talib Behbehani, Assistant General Manager at ABK Wealth Manage-

ment stated, “We take pride in our partnership and continuous support for the activities of the Arab Tennis Federation. We are committed to sponsoring the Arab Elite Tennis Championship annually as part of our comprehensive and diverse social responsibility, with sports being one of its key focuses, given the importance it holds for all segments of society in Kuwait.”

He emphasized that ABK is continuously working on developing its social responsibility, which contributes to enhancing its competitive position and increasing its presence in the local market. The Bank is keen to sponsor numerous health, educational, sports, and scientific research initiatives in collaboration with various institutions across different sectors.

Praising the efforts of the Arab Tennis

Federation, chaired by Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Behbehani commended the successful organization of this year’s Arab Elite Tennis Championship. He emphasized their commitment to continuing to participate in the championship annually, given its widespread popularity among tennis players in Kuwait and other countries in the region.

On his part, Sager Albenali, Chief Communications Officer at ABK said that ABK will continue to develop its social responsibility program and will support all segments of society in Kuwait as part of its role as a leading responsible banking institution in the market. This role goes beyond merely providing banking and financial services to encompass meeting the diverse needs of the local community.



Mohammed Talib Behbehani

Shaheen Al-Mughaira wins Al-Safinat Stud Cup

Hamoud Al-Khair claims Tracks Cup

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: The horse “Shaheen Al-Mughaira,” owned by Jaza’a Al-Azmi, trained by Iyad Al-Farmawi and ridden by Faisal Al-Farmawi, won the Al-Safinat Stud Cup, sponsored by breeder Khaled Fahad bin Shukr, after a strong performance in the fifth race for Egyptian novice horses (C4) over 1,600 meters during the ninth race meeting at the Hunting and Equestrian Club.

The trophy was presented by Bin Shukr alongside the Secretary General of the Hunting and Equestrian Club and Chairman of the Higher Authority for Horse Racing, Sheikh Sabah Fahad Al-Nasser. Bin Shukr also received a commemorative shield in the presence of Alaa Al-Roumi, owner of Al-Raya Stud.

In the sixth race, “Hamoud Al-Khair,” owned by Khaled Al-Otaibi, trained by Abdulrahman Shalih and ridden by Alberto, captured the National Company for Tracks Cup for handicap horses over 1,600 meters, while “Al-Fahd 2” won the Hunting and Equestrian Club Cup over 1,800 meters.

The horses “Thaer Al-Khafaq,” “Ithar,” “Nia-



Bin Shukr is honored with a commemorative shield by Sheikh Al-Nasser in the presence of Al-Roumi.

gara Al-Mori,” and “Sutoo’ Al-Shams” secured victories in the Hunting and Equestrian Trophy races.

Bin Shukr reaffirmed his commitment to supporting purebred Arabian horses of Egyptian bloodlines, noting that horse-riding enthusiasts have united to back this discipline. He explained that the initiative included the organization of 25 cups at Hunting and Equestrian races, with total prize money exceeding KD 55,000, providing strong encouragement for participants to continue their impressive journey in the sport.

He concluded by thanking all those who have contributed to the development of equestrian sports, and expressed appreciation to the Hunting and Equestrian Club and the Higher Authority for Horse Racing for their continued support.

Kazma climbs to second

Kuwait Club dominates Al-Arabi, stays perfect in basketball league

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: Kuwait Club strengthened its grip on the top of the basketball league standings after cruising to a dominant 122–84 victory over Al-Arabi in the ninth round, which also featured Kazma’s 94–67, win over Al-Sulaibikhat. The results saw Kuwait Club move clear at the top with 18 points, maintaining a perfect record of nine wins from nine matches. Kazma climbed to second place with 16 points, level with third-placed Al-Qadsia, while Al-Qurain sits fourth on 14 points. Al-Sulaibikhat follows with 13 points, ahead of Al-Nasr (12), Al-Sahel (10), and Al-Arabi at the bottom with 8 points.

In the opening game, Kuwait Club’s Serbian coach Dusan rotated his squad and gave valuable minutes to younger players. The “White” side asserted control early, finishing the first quarter 24–13 ahead, before extending the margin in the second quarter behind an outstanding display from playmaker Turki Al-Shammari, the game’s leading scorer with 26 points, to reach halftime with a 54–29 advantage.

Kuwait Club continued to dominate in the third quarter, stretching the lead to 83–63, and then capped off an emphatic performance with a commanding final-quarter surge to seal a 38-point win. In the second match, Ka-



Kazma player commands the court with skillful play.

zma imposed their authority from the tip-off, edging the first quarter 23–19. The “Orange” side built on that lead in the second quarter, driven by Serbian standout Mihovitch, who led his team with 25 points, as Kazma went into the break ahead 40–28.

Although Al-Sulaibikhat showed greater resistance in the third quarter, Kazma maintained control to finish it 62–51, before pulling away decisively in the final period to secure a comfortable victory.

Elche’s Barcelona loanee Fort sidelined

First-half blitz sends Roma into top 4

ROME, Dec 30, (Agencies): Roma scored three times in a one-sided first half to beat Genoa 3-1 and move into fourth place in Serie A.

Matias Soule’s neatly taken goal after 13 minutes was followed quickly by an opportunistic strike by Manu Koné as the home side overran its lowly opponent.

On-loan Irish striker Evan Ferguson pounced on a parried shot to poke the ball home and make it 3-0 just past the half-hour mark.

Jeff Ekhator got a late consolation goal for Genoa with a deflected shot.

Roma had been at risk of falling out of touch with the leading pack after only one win in its last four games.

The result lifts Gian Piero Gasperini’s side to 33 points, one point behind Napoli, two behind AC Milan and three behind leader Inter, although all



Roma’s Matias Soule (center) scores during a Serie A football match between Roma and Genoa in Rome, Italy. (Xinhua)

three have a game in hand.

Genoa, meanwhile, remains 17th in the 20-team league and just two points above the relegation zone after its third loss in a row.

Elche defender Hector Fort has undergone an operation on a dislocated left shoulder, the club has confirmed.

The 19-year-old, who is on loan from FC Barcelona with the recently promoted club, suffered the injury as he scored

the opening goal in Elche’s 4-0 win at home to Rayo Vallecano on December 21.

“Hector Fort has been operated on by the FC Barcelona medical services after the injury suffered against Rayo Vallecano,” explained Elche in a statement.

But it does not disclose how long Fort will be out of action, saying only that his “recovery time will be determined by how the injury progresses.”

Fort joined Elche from Barcelona over the summer and has played an increasingly important role at the club, with coach Eder Sarabia using him as a wing-back or even as a wide midfielder ahead of three central defenders.

He has scored one goal in La Liga and another in the Copa del Rey as Elche ends 2025 in a creditable ninth place in the La Liga standings.

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NEWS



Egypt fans cheer on during the Africa Cup of Nations Group B soccer match between Angola and Egypt in Agadir, Morocco. (AP)

Sports

Tight mid-table battle adds spice

Title hopefuls seek momentum in Zain Premier League

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: The 10th round of the Zain Premier League gets underway today with two matches on the schedule. Kazma faces Al-Salmiya at Friendship and Peace Stadium at 4:10 pm, followed by Al-Qadsia taking on Al-Nasr at Thamer Stadium at 6:40 pm.

The round continues tomorrow with a single fixture, as Al-Fahaheel meet Al-Jahra at Naif Al-Dabbous Stadium at 5:30 pm. The round will conclude on Friday with two encounters, featuring Kuwait Club against Al-Tadhamon, and Al-Shabab versus Al-Arabi.

At the top of the table, Kuwait Club leads with 23 points, closely followed by Al-Arabi on 20 points. The battle remains intense in the mid-table positions, with Kazma sitting third on 14 points, level with Al-Qadsia, while Al-Shabab and Al-Fahaheel have 13 points each. Al-Salmiya holds 12 points, Al-Jahra have 7 points, Al-Tadhamon 5 points, and Al-Nasr remains bottom with 3 points.

In the opening match, Kazma and Al-Salmiya are set for a closely fought contest given their similar form and points tally. Kazma comes into the game after a hard-earned 1-0 victory over Al-Nasr in the previous round and is aiming to repeat its opening-round success against Al-Salmiya. Maintaining pressure on the leading duo remains a key objective for the "Orange" side.

Al-Salmiya, meanwhile, is eager to respond after missing out on a win against leader Kuwait Club, where it conceded a late equaliser in a 1-1 draw.



Players fighting for the ball.

The "Red" side is determined to make amends and strengthen their position in the standings.

In the other fixture, Al-Qadsia looks to bounce back from last round's 2-1 loss to rival Al-Arabi, a defeat that saw it slip down the table. The "Yellow" team is keen to rediscover winning form and keep alive its long-standing title ambitions, while also seeking to confirm its superiority over Al-

Nasr, having opened the season with a convincing 4-0 win over them.

For Al-Nasr, the league's bottom side, today's match presents an opportunity to capitalize on its opponent's recent setback and secure only their second victory of the campaign, following its surprise 2-1 win over Al-Arabi in the seventh round.

Media registration opens for French Super Cup in Kuwait

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: The Kuwait Football Association (KFA) has officially opened registration for media accreditation for the French Super Cup, which will feature Paris Saint-Germain and Marseille on January 8 at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium.

In partnership with the Public Authority for Sport, the KFA has set up a dedicated center to process applications at the Authority's headquarters in Al-Riggaa (ground floor).

Distribution of accreditation cards will begin on Sunday, January 4, 2026, at the Permit Issuance Center, with two sessions available: 10:00 am to 1:00 pm and 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm.

The organizing committee has outlined strict requirements for obtaining accreditation. January 4 is the final date for submissions, and late applications will not be accepted. Each media outlet may register one journalist and one photographer only.

All required documents and attachments listed in the online registration link must be completed. Applications are accepted exclusively online, and submission does not guarantee approval. Incomplete or non-compliant applications will be automatically rejected.

Applications can be submitted



Accreditation center set up for the Trophée des Champions 2025 in Kuwait City.

through: pas.gov.kw/registration.

The KFA, together with the Higher Organizing Committee, is working intensively to ensure the Super Cup is held smoothly and professionally.

As part of these preparations, the KFA is collaborating with Rove, a specialized television transport company, which will provide vehicles and professional drivers to safely deliver the Super Cup trophy to press conference venues ahead of the match.

Morocco and South Africa seal knockout spots

Salah gets rest as Egypt draws

RABAT, Morocco, Dec 30, (AP): Host nation Morocco and South Africa advanced to the Africa Cup of Nations' knockout stage, when Egypt star Mohamed Salah got a rest with his team already through.

Morocco made sure of its place in the last 16 with a 3-0 rout of Zambia. The hosts topped Group A to stay on course for having all their knockout games in Rabat's near 70,000-capacity Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium, which will also stage the final on Jan. 18.

Results in Group A, where Comoros finished third with two points, and Group B, where Angola did likewise, set off celebrations elsewhere. That's because teams with more than two points and already assured of at least third place in their groups have reached the last 16.

The four best third-place teams from the six groups progress, along with the top two in each. Head-to-head results are the first determining factor if two teams finish with the same amount of points in a group.

It means 2021 winner Senegal, Congo and Benin (because of its win over Botswana, its first ever in the tournament) are through before their final games in Group D, and defending champion Ivory Coast, five-time winner Cameroon, and Mozambique (because of its win against Gabon) are through from Group F.

Burkina Faso and Sudan are through with already-qualified Algeria from Group E because they both defeated Equatorial Guinea.

Motorists honked their horns, some with flag-waving passengers on the roofs of their vehicles, and supporters blew vuvuzelas on the streets of Rabat after Morocco's win.

This time there were only cheers, after Morocco fans had whistled the team during its previous game, prompting a rebuke from team captain Achraf Hakimi on Sunday.

Ayoub El Kaabi made sure of the win in the 50th with a spectacular bicycle kick - his second of the tournament. An offside flag added to the drama as the goal was ruled out and then allowed after a VAR check confirmed El Kaabi was onside, setting off more joyous celebrations in the stadium.

They had further reason to cheer when Hakimi went on as a substitute in the 64th for his first appearance since recovering from an ankle injury.

The African Footballer of the Year will likely start Sunday, when Morocco will play one of the third-place finishers from Groups C, D or E, the first of what the home fans hope will be four wins to lift the title.

"Now a new competition begins, where there is no room for error," El Kaabi said.

Mali's 0-0 draw with Comoros was enough to finish second in Group A with three draws. Mali midfielder Amadou Haidara was sent off late.

"If we keep playing like this, we won't stay long in the tournament," Mali coach Tom Sainfiet said.

The Eagles will play the second-place finisher in Group D in Casablanca on



Zambia's Joseph Liteta, left and Morocco's Azz-Eddine Ounahi compete for the ball during the Africa Cup of Nations Group A soccer match between Zambia and Morocco in Rabat, Morocco. (AP)

Saturday, possibly Congo.

Oswin Appollis fired South Africa into the last 16 with a 3-2 win over Zimbabwe.

The Bafana Bafana progressed in second place in Group B, behind Egypt, which drew 0-0 with Angola in Agadir. Both final group games were played at the same time.

With his team already through, Egypt coach Hossam Hassan rested his regulars including Salah, Omar Marmoush, and Trézéguet. They're set to return for the Pharaohs' first knockout game, also in Agadir, against a third-place

finisher from Groups A, C or D on Jan. 5.

South Africa needed a win in Marrakech to be sure of progress without relying on a favor from Egypt. But Zimbabwe twice came from behind and pushed for a late equalizer.

"We repeated the same mistakes as in previous games - poor passing and bad positioning," said South Africa coach Hugo Broos, who has complained about the lack of an "AFCON vibe" at the tournament.

South Africa awaits results in Group F as it will play the second-place finisher from that group - Ivory Coast, Cameroon or Mozambique - on Sunday.

Al-Qadsia evaluates multiple foreign players

Abu Al-Dhahab close to joining Al-Arabi

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 30: Jordanian international Hussam Abu Al-Dhahab is reportedly close to joining Al-Arabi, with negotiations between the player and the club reaching advanced stages.

Al-Arabi coach Nasser Al-Shatti is looking to strengthen the squad, particularly as he is not fully satisfied with the performance of some foreign players. Al-Shatti took over the team in November, replacing Portuguese coach Marco Figueira.

If the deal goes through, Abu Al-Dhahab is expected to replace Moroccan Nabil Marmouq or one of the duo Hasimi Fadiga or Christopher John.

The 25-year-old defender has represented Jordan's national team and Al-Faisaly Club. He previously signed with Al-Salmi-



Hussam Abu Al-Dhahab drives the play forward with focus and precision on the field.

ya in July and joined training, but the transfer could not be completed due to the club's player registration ban imposed by FIFA.

Al-Qadsia's technical staff is reviewing applications from several foreign players to select the best candidates to reinforce the squad for the remainder of the season.

The club has confirmed the departure of Libyan Mohamed Soula, who joined Al-Ahly Tripoli, while Egyptian Mahmoud Kahraba is also expected to leave. Congolese Niskens Kibano and Algerian Victor Lekhal are also likely to depart.

In other transfer news, Al-Tadhamon has signed Ivorian Pierre Zibla for the rest of the season. The 28-year-old previously played for Zira FK in Azerbaijan and joins as a replacement for Syrian Ahmad Al-Dali, who is out for the season due to a cruciate ligament injury.

2026 WC ticket request breaks records

GENEVA, Dec 30, (Xinhua): FIFA said it has received more than 150 million ticket requests for the 2026 World Cup, setting a new World Cup ticketing record with the Random Selection Draw phase only at its halfway point.

Fans from over 200 countries and regions flooded the platform at FIFA.com-tickets after the Random Selection Draw ticketing phase opened on December 11. The phase will end on January 13, 2026.

FIFA said the 2026 World Cup is oversubscribed more than 30-fold based on verified individual credit card numbers submitted with each ticket application, and that demand is 3.4 times higher than the overall number of spectators who have attended the 964 matches that make up all 22 editions of the competition combined since 1930.

"The FIFA World Cup 2026 is set to be the greatest and most inclusive show on the planet," said FIFA president Gianni Infantino. "This overwhelming response from passionate fans is a true representation of how our game is loved globally - we are going to make history in North America when we bring the world together like never before in a celebration of unity and the best of football."

The 2026 World Cup will kick off on June 11, with the final scheduled for July 19 across 16 cities in Canada, Mexico and the United States. A total of 104 matches will be played between a record 48 teams.

Best of the Rest

Rondon to leave struggling Oviedo: La Liga struggler Real Oviedo announced that it was cutting short the loan deal for Venezuelan striker Salomon Rondon.

The 36-year-old was due to spend the entire season on loan at Oviedo from the Mexican side Pachuca (which shares the same ownership as the Spanish club), but will now return to Mexico at the midpoint of the campaign.

Rondon played 16 times for Oviedo, scoring two goals, from the club's disappointing total of just seven all campaign.

The arrival of coach Guillermo Almada from Valladolid just before the Christmas break is clearly a key factor in the decision to return Rondon to Pachuca. Almada prefers pressuring high up the field and Rondon doesn't have the speed to do the job. (Xinhua)