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'Vacate Braih Salem, Injaz markets'

Kuwait Municipality gives tenants 7-day eviction notice

By Inaas Awadh

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: The Director General of Kuwait Municipality Eng. Manal Al-Asfour issued two decisions regarding the evacuation of the Braih Salem and Injaz markets.

The first administrative decision, No. 64/2026, stipulated that all occupants of kiosks in the designated areas of the Braih Salem Market must evacuate the premises within a period not exceeding seven days from the date they are notified of the decision.

The evacuation is required due to the termination of the occupants' legal right to use the kiosks following the cancellation of the contract with the company licensed to manage and operate the market. That company had previously entered into tempo-

rary usufruct contracts with the kiosk occupants, while preserving all rights of the municipality.

The decision further prohibited any individual or entity from occupying any kiosks or facilities in the Braih Salem Market after the specified evacuation deadline. Any such occupation will be considered an illegal encroachment on state property, and legal action will be taken against violators.

It stated that the Hawally Municipality branch, in coordination with the supervising authority, will enforce the decision using all available means, including forced eviction with the assistance of the Ministry of Interior, and the issuance of encroachment reports against anyone violating the evacuation order for unlawfully occupying state property.

The decision also noted that the Projects Sector's Construction Department will take over the market site after evacuation in order to take the necessary measures.

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Dust, drizzle, frosty lows to stir Kuwait's weekend

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: (Agencies): The Meteorological Department has forecast that the country will experience dust-raising winds from Friday evening until Saturday morning, with a chance of scattered rain. Weather during the weekend is expected to be moderate during the day and cold to very cold at night, with possible frost in agricultural and desert areas.

The acting Director of the Meteorological Department, Dhirar Al-Ali, told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that weather maps and numerical models indicate the country will be affected by a gradually weakening surface high-pressure

system, allowing a cold-front low-pressure system to advance. This will trigger active southeast winds, shifting to northwest, causing dust from Friday evening to Saturday morning, with chances of scattered rain.

On Friday, daytime weather will be moderate, partly cloudy to cloudy, with light to moderate variable to southeast winds ranging from 6 km/h to 38 km/h. Maximum temperatures are expected between 20°C and 22°C, and the sea will be light to moderate, with waves of one to five feet.

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HH the PM chairs the 42nd ministerial committee meeting at Bayan Palace to follow up on the implementation of major development projects.

Kuwait advances renewable energy, green initiatives

PM oversees progress on strategic nat'l projects

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired on Thursday the 42nd ministerial committee meeting at Bayan Palace to follow up on the implementation of major development projects.

The meeting reviewed the latest reports from relevant government bodies on procedures related to key development projects, including Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, the electricity sector, renewable energy development, low-carbon green waste recycling systems, housing development, environmental

infrastructure for wastewater treatment plants, free zones, economic zones and efforts to combat desertification. He reaffirmed the keenness of Kuwait's leadership on providing continuous guidance toward achieving Kuwait's comprehensive and sustainable development vision, and speeding up all active projects.

For his part, Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs and committee rapporteur Ambassador Sameeh Hayat said the meeting reviewed key achievements related to proposing new major development projects and opening avenues for

strategic cooperation with various countries to deepen economic, trade and investment relations in line with Kuwait's strategic objectives.

Attending the meeting were by Head of the Prime Minister's Diwan Abdulaziz Al-Dakhil, Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Minister of Public Works Dr. Nora Al-Mashaan, Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Abdulfatih Al-Mashari.

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Minister of Information Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, DG of Kuwait Municipality Eng. Manal Al-Asfour, TEC CEO Eng. Anwar Al-Halila, and Abaad Real Estate Vice Chair Khaled Najib Al-Marzouq arrive at the press conference ahead of the Green Island development announcement.

Project emphasizes eco-friendly development

Green Island set for major tourism overhaul

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: The Tourism Enterprises Company (TEC) held a press conference to announce the Green Island development project, in cooperation with Integrated Global Services for

General Trading and Contracting.

The conference was attended by Minister of Information Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, Director General of Kuwait Municipality Engineer Manal Al-Asfour, CEO of TEC Eng. Anwar Al-Halila, and Vice Chair and CEO of Abaad Real Estate Group Khaled Najib Al-Marzouq.

A visual presentation outlining the Green Island development plan was shown during the conference, highlighting its role in supporting and advancing Kuwait's tourism and entertainment sector.

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**2 Unity does not mean uniformity**

Newswatch

BEIRUT: Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam stressed the need to provide the Lebanese Army with logistical and financial support to enhance its capabilities and enable it to swiftly implement the second phase of the arms control plan.

In a statement on Thursday, Salam praised the significant efforts exerted by the Lebanese Army in completing the first phase of its plan to implement the government decision to restrict weapons to the state authority and extend state control across all Lebanese territory. (KUNA)

Salmya fire controlled, no casualties

Fire broke out in the basement of a commercial complex located in Salmya on Thursday morning, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Firefighters from Salmya, Bidaa, and Hilali fire stations rushed to the

location as soon as they received information about the fire, and managed to control it before it spread further. No casualties were reported. Investigations were launched to determine the cause of the fire.



Kuwait Fire Force photo

Kuwait Fire Force responds to a basement fire at a Salmya commercial complex Thursday morning.

Stray dogs terrorize Press Street workers

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: Concern is growing in several areas of Kuwait over the rising number of stray dogs, some of which are suspected to carry rabies. The situation has become a direct threat to the safety of citizens and residents, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Despite repeated media warnings and complaints from the public, a comprehensive solution has yet to be implemented, which raises serious questions about the effectiveness of measures taken by the relevant authorities, particularly the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAFR).

Residents frequently report the widespread presence of stray dogs in streets, public walkways, and open areas. Workers in industrial zones say that periodic campaigns to control stray animals are limited in scope and effectiveness, failing to cover all high-risk areas.

The situation is particularly severe in the Shuwaikh Industrial Area, especially around Press Street, where stray dogs are a daily presence, causing fear and concern among workers.

With the rising number of stray dogs, the area has become a constant source of concern, as employees and passersby face frequent attacks and bites. Witnesses described the incidents as "terrifying" due to both their timing and locations.

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Kuwaiti Minister of Public Works Dr. Nora Al-Mashaan discusses with Saudi Minister of Transport and Logistics Saleh Al-Jasser.

Kuwait, Saudi push ahead on railway, logistics cooperation

RIYADH, Jan 8: (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Public Works Dr. Nora Al-Mashaan discussed on Thursday with Saudi Minister of Transport and Logistics Saleh Al-Jasser ways to enhance cooperation in the field of transport and logistics services.

This came during Al-Jasser's reception of Dr. Al-Mashaan, who is

visiting Riyadh at the invitation of the government to discuss the next steps for the railway link project between the two countries.

During the meeting, several topics of common interest in the fields of transport and logistics were discussed, with the aim of strengthening cooperation and integration between the two brotherly countries.

Other Voices

No guarantees in a world of shifting interests: A necessary Arab wake-up call

A clear warning from Venezuela

By Khalaf Ahmad Al Habtoor

UAE Businessman

What unfolded recently in Venezuela is not an isolated incident, nor should it be treated as such. It is a clear signal, one that deserves careful reading, not emotional reaction, and a defining moment that exposes the fragile reality of the international order we inhabit today.

Earlier this month, the United States carried out a direct military operation on Venezuelan soil, resulting in the arrest of President Nicolás Maduro and his transfer to the United States to face criminal charges. This was not the result of a multilateral decision, nor the conclusion of an international judicial process. It was a unilateral act, executed by force.

The message is unmistakable: there are no absolute guarantees, and state sovereignty is conditional when it clashes with the interests of powerful states.



Al Habtoor

When Law Becomes Selective

If the accusations against President Maduro were legal in nature, a simple question must be asked: Why was the International Criminal Court not used? Why were formal complaints not submitted, evidence examined, and due process followed?

By bypassing international legal institutions, the United States has effectively taken international justice into its own hands. In doing so, it has not only weakened Venezuela's sovereignty, but also undermined the very system it claims to uphold. This sets a dangerous precedent. If one power can ignore international mechanisms without consequence, what prevents others from doing the same?

A Precedent That Extends Beyond Venezuela

The United States is not the only global power. China, Russia, India, Pakistan, and others all possess military strength and nuclear capability. If unilateral action becomes an accepted norm, who will restrain the next intervention carried out under the banner of "security" or "justice"? This is why Venezuela matters. Not because of sympathy for a regime or a leader, but because the rules themselves are being rewritten.

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Kuwait to strengthen bonds with UK



Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habashi presents a memento to the Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Kuwait, Qudsi Rashid.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habashi received the Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Kuwait, Qudsi Rashid, on Thursday.

According to a press release issued by Jahra Governorate, both sides discussed topics of mutual interest during the meeting, and explored ways to enhance cooperation and bilateral relations between the two friendly countries, including collaboration in related fields.

Governor Al-Habashi highlighted the historical ties between Kuwait and the United Kingdom, and emphasized the Kuwaiti leadership's commitment to strengthening cooperation and coordination with friendly nations.

Ambassador Rashid expressed his gratitude for the warm reception, praised Kuwait's regional and international role, and affirmed his country's desire to expand cooperation frameworks in the coming period.

'Make them part of society'

Co-ops support for disabled, elderly prioritized

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: The acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Dr. Sayed Issa, issued a circular to the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies (UCCS), proposing a study on the feasibility of implementing a number of initiatives to promote inclusivity and create an accessible service and social environment within cooperative society facilities.

In a press statement, Dr. Issa emphasized that cooperative societies, being the closest service points to residential areas, can play a vital role in providing a friendly and inclusive environment, promoting the principles of social responsibility, and actively supporting people with disabilities and the elderly.

He stressed that the proposals in-

clude assessing the feasibility of providing specialized exercise equipment for people with disabilities and the elderly, in compliance with health and safety requirements, as well as supplying wheelchairs and assistive devices within the cooperative society's facilities to facilitate beneficiaries' access to services.

Dr. Issa highlighted the importance of providing children's play equipment specifically designed for children with disabilities, taking into account their physical and sensory needs, whether inside cooperative society facilities, in outdoor areas, or in public walkways

and parks within the cooperative society's service area, in coordination with the relevant authorities.

He stressed that this initiative is based on the directives of the Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah and is aimed at promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities and the elderly, improving their quality of life, establishing the concept of inclusivity, and making cooperative societies a model of welcoming and accessible environments for all segments of society.

He called on the boards of directors of cooperative societies to submit their opinions, observations, and suggestions regarding the circular, including the feasibility of implementation, proposed mechanisms, and potential challenges, to enable the ministry to study the recommendations and take the necessary actions.

'Adopt Arab smart learning plan to fight illiteracy'

TUNIS, Jan 8, (KUNA): The Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) on Wednesday called for the adoption of an "Arab Smart Learning Strategy" aimed at raising collective and individual awareness in Arab countries of the dangers of illiteracy, strengthening adult education and lifelong learning, and integrating artificial intelligence to achieve these goals.

In a statement marking Arab Literacy Day, observed annually on January 8, ALECSO said that the risks and challenges of illiteracy remain persistent despite the efforts exerted by governments, institutions, organizations, and individuals, noting that millions of illiterate males and females still exist across Arab countries, accounting for a high percentage of the world's total illiterate population.

ALECSO explained that it chose this year's theme, "From Alphabet to Digital: The Artificial Intelligence Revolution in the Service of Arab Knowledge," in line with its intellectual approach, calling for renewing literacy mechanisms in Arab states by leveraging the outcomes of the technological revolution.

The organization described the occasion as an opportunity

to deepen discussion on practical and radical solutions to the underlying causes hindering the eradication of illiteracy, foremost among them poverty, weak educational infrastructure, limited access to quality education, and geographic distance from educational institutions.

The statement stressed the importance of adopting virtual education and AI-supported digital platforms capable of delivering personalized educational content tailored to learners' abilities, comprehension speed, and needs. It also highlighted the use of local dialects to simplify concepts, alongside intelligent diagnostic tools based on data analysis algorithms to identify groups most vulnerable to school dropout and enable early intervention to prevent illiteracy at its source.

ALECSO added that Arab countries, within the framework of the Second Arab Decade for the Eradication of Illiteracy (2025-2034), are working to reduce the overall illiteracy rate to less than five percent by 2030.

It stressed that achieving this goal now depends on the responsible use of artificial intelligence, which has become a new key driver of learning.

Other Voices

Your eyes look like Baghdad

There is a famous Russian proverb, "Your eyes look like Baghdad, beautiful even in sadness".

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By Ahmad alsarraf

I recently posted this on social media. In an interview on the television program "The Black Box", former Iraqi MP Faiq Al-Sheikh stated that Iraq once ruled large parts of the Arabian Peninsula, its influence extending to Qatar and beyond.

I attached to the post an interview with Egyptian journalist Ibrahim Essa, in which he highlights a fact unknown to many:

"Iraq, with its current cities and borders, did not exist until 1920, when it was created by the British occupiers, who appointed Faisal bin Ali as its king. Faisal had previously been the king of Syria briefly before France, the colonial power in Syria, opposed his rule. He was the brother of Prince Abdullah bin Hussein, the Emir of the Emirate of Transjordan, which later became the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan."

Abdullah and Faisal were both sons of Sharif Hussein bin Ali, the King of Hejaz, whom King Abdulaziz bin Saud defeated. The British arranged for Sharif Hussein's exile to the island of Cyprus.

After Faisal lost the throne of Syria, Britain compensated him with the throne of Iraq, based on the recommendations of the British Governor of Iraq, Sir Percy Cox, and the Englishwoman Gertrude Bell. I have previously discussed Gertrude Bell's fascination with Iraq in two earlier articles, highlighting her puzzling and influential role in selecting Faisal as King of Iraq. Although she held no official political status, she may have acted as an agent of MI6, which was established in 1906.

What applies to the name "Bilad al-Sawad" (Land of the Two Rivers), or Mesopotamia, which became Iraq, also applies to many other countries, near and far, whose names have changed, cities have been redefined, borders have been



alsarraf

redrawn, and new systems of government, whether republics, monarchies, or others, have been adopted.

Therefore, what I have mentioned should not be viewed as an insult to Iraq's history or as a denial of our brotherly neighbor's heritage. It is simply a well-documented historical reality.

Before 1920, and long before the establishment of the Iraqi state and the coronation of Faisal as its king, there was no country called Iraq encompassing Baghdad, Mosul, Basra, Sulaymaniyah, and other cities, with a recognized government and internationally acknowledged borders. The region consisted of separate provinces, cities, and areas inhabited by Kurds, Turks, and others. From 1800 to 1919, the entire area was part of the Ottoman Empire, with partial autonomy granted to the provinces of Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul.

From 1747 to 1831, Circassian Mamluk officers ruled the region, achieving relative independence from the Ottoman Sultan. During this period, they successfully suppressed tribal revolts and restored order and stability.

This rule ended with Ottoman intervention, which reassured direct control over Mesopotamia. During World War I, Britain occupied the Sawad, the fertile lands of Iraq, and the rest of Mesopotamia, bringing Ottoman rule to an end.

By 1918, Britain had established a military administration under the command of Sir Percy Cox, during which time there were some limited uprisings.

Therefore, any claim that a state called Iraq controlled any region, or that any land or country was subordinate to it in modern times, or at least in the past 200 to 300 years, cannot be supported by historical reality.

If subordination or occupation did occur, it was most likely limited to specific provinces, such as Basra, which were subject to or dependent on other colonial powers. This invalidates any claims of subordination.

Consequently, it is impossible to name any king, president, or leader of Iraq before King Faisal I. The reason is straightforward - the state of Iraq as we know it today, with its current cities and borders, did not exist.

□ □ □

e-mail: a.alsarraf@alqabas.com.

Weather

southeasterly wind changing to northwesterly wind, with speeds of 20-60 km/h causing rising dust and a chance for scattered rain.

Station Max Exp Min Rec

Kuwait City 20 11

Kuwait Airport 21 05

Abdaly 21 06
Bubyan 19 03
Jahra 22 12
Failaka Island 17 07
Salmiyah 19 14
Ahmadi 21 08
Jal Aliyah 19 13
Salmy 19 05

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Mild and partly cloudy to cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speeds of 06-38 km/h.

By Night: Rather cold and cloudy to partly cloudy with moderate to fresh strong at times

Other Voices

Unity does not mean uniformity

By Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri

At a moment of heightened regional and global uncertainty, the need to preserve Gulf unity has become more urgent than ever. The challenges facing the region do not distinguish between individual states, nor do they respect rigid interpretations of sovereignty when issues of security, stability, and international standing are involved.

The Gulf Cooperation Council was founded on a clear premise: shared geography, history, and interests make cooperation a necessity rather than a choice. This logic has proven effective in economic and social areas, where integration has advanced steadily. Yet cooperation has remained limited in critical domains such as collective security, defense coordination, and regional political alignment.

This limitation is not the result of insufficient capacity or vision. Instead, it reflects an expanded understanding of sovereignty that has, at times, constrained collective action. Sovereignty is not

weakened by coordination; it is reinforced by it. In an increasingly volatile international environment, both small and large states protect their independence not through isolation, but through resilient partnerships and credible institutional frameworks.

Historically, the Gulf's strength has rested on pragmatic realism. This approach granted the region influence beyond its geographic size and established it as a central actor in global energy markets and international security. Today, the world views the Gulf not only as an energy supplier, but as a pillar of global stability. Any disruption in this region carries consequences far beyond its borders.

For this reason, side disputes, media escalation, and the revival of old sensitivities serve no constructive purpose. More troubling is the tendency of individual voices to align publicly with one Gulf party against another. Within the Gulf home, there should be no opposing camps, only a shared space shaped by common destiny. Unity does not require permanent alignment of positions. It is the discipline of managing differences within a single framework, through calm and credible institutions. Negative posturing may attract brief attention, but quiet cohesion is what sustains states when difficult moments arrive.



Al-Anjeri

'Zour' plant to boost power, water limits

'Expedite work for strategic objectives'

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: The Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, the Minister of Finance, and the acting Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizem, highlighted the strategic importance of the Zour North Power Plant project (phases two and three) in strengthening Kuwait's electricity and water production system and ensuring the country's energy and water security.

He emphasized the need to adhere to the highest technical and environmental standards, accelerate the pace of implementation to meet sustainable development goals, and complete the project according to the approved plan to achieve its strategic objectives.

The minister said this during a meet-



Dr. Al-Mukhaizem

ing that he chaired, in the presence of the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Gulf Energy and Water Alliance Company Jassim Al-Nouri, ACWA Power board representatives, Vice Chairman Samir Sarhan and CEO Odeon Smith; and a representative of the Gulf Investment Corporation Fadai Al-Nisf.

He highlighted the Kuwaiti government's commitment to regularly monitoring strategic projects and strengthening coordination with implementing companies, which supports public-private partnerships and enhances the country's investment climate.

Representatives of the Gulf Energy and Water Alliance Company affirmed their dedication to executing the pro-

ject according to the highest international standards, in a way that meets the aspirations of the State of Kuwait in this vital sector.

The meeting was attended by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy Dr. Adel Al-Zamel, Director General of the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects Asma Al-Mousa, and several other senior officials from both the ministry and the company.

The meeting aimed to review the latest developments related to the Zour North Power and Water Desalination Plant (Phases Two and Three).

During the meeting, the company provided a visual overview of the project, detailing the contractual framework and implementation mechanism under the Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) model.

The presentation highlighted the project's technical specifications, including an electricity production capacity of approximately 2,700 megawatts through combined-cycle power generation units and a water production capacity of 120 million imperial gallons per day using reverse osmosis technology.

It also covered the project's implementation timeline and provided progress updates.

2nd phase of Kuwaitization tests Feb 14

Plan to offer 'non-supervisory' positions

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: Dr. Sayed Issa, the acting Assistant Undersecretary for Financial, Administrative, and Cooperative Affairs at the Ministry of Social Affairs, announced the launch of the second phase of Kuwaitization tests, scheduled to begin on February 14 at Gulf University of Science and Technology (GUST).

This phase follows the completion of the application review process and verification of eligibility requirements.

In a press statement, Dr. Issa explained that 1,072 applicants have qualified to take the written exam. The ministry will soon send SMS messages and emails to the accepted candidates, providing details on the exam date, time, location, and attendance procedures.

As in the first phase, the tests will be tailored to each applicant's specialization for the advertised supervisory positions.

In another development, Dr. Issa revealed that the ministry is preparing to

offer non-supervisory (support) positions as part of the Kuwaitization plan in the cooperative sector.

He stressed that this phase will include several roles, such as marketing manager, branch manager, warehouse keeper, supply branch manager, wholesale branch manager, and family supplies branch manager.

Dr. Issa affirmed that this is in line with the Kuwaitization process and aims to strengthen the participation of national talent in all aspects of cooperative work.

Dr. Issa confirmed that the ministry has coordinated with GUST to implement all necessary monitoring measures in the exam halls, including audio and video surveillance systems and the assignment of proctors to ensure full oversight during the exams.

He highlighted a clear commitment to enforcing test regulations, warning that any violations, such as attempts to cheat, cause disturbances, or engage in behavior that disrupts the exam, will be met with strict consequences. Dr. Issa explained that any applicant found

breaching the rules will be immediately disqualified, their score nullified, and their name barred from future registration in the Public Authority for Manpower's (PAM) system for cooperative sector recruitment processes.

He noted that one of the organizational measures for this phase includes providing test-takers with their results immediately on their devices upon completing the exam.

Dr. Issa highlighted that applicants have the right to submit appeals through a dedicated appeals office located opposite the testing hall, but only while on campus, adding that appeals submitted after leaving the university will not be considered.

He stressed that the grievance mechanism relies on full audio and video documentation in the exam halls, enabling a thorough review of any issues raised, whether related to disturbances, suspected cheating, or other concerns.

Dr. Issa emphasized that all these new regulations and procedures will be clearly detailed in the official announcement to be published later.

Woman gets 5 years in 'royal' insult

Duo denied release in New Year Eve murder

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: In a busy day of court proceedings, the Criminal Court sentenced a fugitive Kuwaiti woman to five

LOCAL

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A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

What happens tomorrow?
Living in an unstable world

"WHEN the so-called "Arab Spring" erupted in 2011, the Houthis, a group in northern Yemen, revolted against the government, claiming their needs had been neglected," columnist Ahmad Al-Dawas wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"They took up arms, overthrew the legitimate government in Sana'a, which then relocated to Aden, and threatened shipping in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. As a result, many ships avoided the Suez Canal, rerouting around the Cape of Good Hope, causing Egypt to lose approximately \$800 million per month. Their actions harmed not only their own country but also Egypt and its people.



Ahmad Al-Dawas

"Russian President Vladimir Putin ignited a war by invading eastern Ukraine. The people there had been living in peace and security, but Putin grew suspicious of NATO, fearing that the alliance's expanding membership threatened Russia's western borders. He launched the war to halt NATO's advances towards Russia, and to turn Ukraine into a buffer zone between Russia and Europe. This approach, however, prompted other European countries to join the alliance, making it more united and stronger than ever. Both Ukrainians and Russians continue to bear the heavy consequences of this war."

"Taiwan, a stable and economically advanced island, faces repeated threats of invasion and annexation from China. In the Middle East, Israel has approved a plan to control and occupy the entire Gaza Strip. In Africa, people suffer from drought, poverty, insecurity, and the presence of Islamist terrorist groups, forcing many to migrate to Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya. From there, they pay smugglers to cross the Mediterranean in search of a better life, often risking capsized boats and fatal journeys at sea."

"No sooner had US President Donald Trump taken office than he appeared to adopt the "mad president" theory, which suggests that a head of state can intimidate opponents and gain concessions by acting unpredictably, essentially using erratic behavior to pressure other countries. The old certainties seem gone, replaced by a world where unpredictability reigns. With the rise of artificial intelligence, many jobs are at risk of being replaced by machines, leading to higher unemployment and increased human hardship, or even the spread of false statements by leaders that could ignite wars between nations."

"As for electric cars, many have caught fire unexpectedly or suffer from defects. Meanwhile, the expansion of factories worldwide has contributed to rising air pollution. Airplanes add to the problem due to the emitting of smoke from their engines. At the same time, cars continue to increase emissions on the ground, driving global temperatures higher. As a result, ice at the North and South Poles is melting, causing sea levels to rise. Experts have long warned that this could submerge parts of certain countries and cities, including Alexandria, the Maldives, and Bangladesh."

"Europe welcomed Syrian refugees in 2015, but they were soon joined by Afghans, Iranians, Iraqis, Africans, and others. Their arrival coincided with extremist attacks targeting European society, including bombings and assaults on groups of Europeans in public spaces. We have written about this before. These events prompted Europe to adopt a more restrictive stance on migration, with many Europeans subsequently electing far-right parties to power."

"In West Africa, extremist Islamist groups took control of parts of Mali after 2011 and gradually expanded their influence throughout the region. Somalia split into three states, including Somaliland, which became pirate-controlled in the south. Israel recognized the State of Somaliland due to its strategic location, approximately 300 to 500 kilometers from Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen, making it a vital platform for intelligence gathering, drone interception, and regional surveillance. China also maintains a significant presence in Africa, operating a military port in neighboring Djibouti. Israel's recognition of Somaliland could therefore provide it, and potentially the US, with a strategic means to monitor Chinese activity in the Horn of Africa and counter China's growing influence."

Also:

"In the hustle and bustle of life, we often exhaust ourselves not because of events themselves, but because of the way we exaggerate and amplify them," Kuwaiti writer Fatima Nasser Al-Muzayel wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"We do not suffer as much from situations as we do from our perceptions of them, and we do not tire of people as much as we strain our hearts trying to interpret their actions. Much of the psychological distress begins when we lose the ability to see things in their proper perspective. Small matters grow large in our minds, while significant issues appear diminished. In this way, we drift aimlessly between ignoring serious problems and exaggerating trivial ones."

"Wisdom lies in the ability to see things in their true perspective. This ability is not gained through education alone, but through experience, self-awareness, and honesty with oneself. A

problem is not always an enemy worth fighting, nor is a hurtful word an earthquake that causes everything to collapse. Sometimes, all we need is to observe from a distance. In doing so, we realize that its impact is temporary, and its effect will fade, just as others have."

"Balance is not indifference; it is a wise perspective that distinguishes between what deserves our effort and what can be overlooked. Exaggeration drains the heart, burdening it with overthinking and unnecessary analysis, turning a person into a prisoner of assumptions that may not even exist in reality. On the other hand, excessive apathy clouds understanding and distorts perception of reality. Wisdom lies in finding a middle ground without exaggerating or blindly following emotions. One should strive to understand the actions of others without exhausting oneself in an attempt to justify them."

"How wonderful it is to remember that hearing a harsh word from someone we love does not diminish our value to them. Feelings may fluctuate, but dignity remains intact when we keep everything in its proper perspective. Not every disappointment means an end, not every criticism is an insult, and not every silence reflects weakness. There are fine lines between what hurts and what teaches, between what destroys and what builds. To see things in their true perspective is to cultivate the flexibility to avoid both excessive fear and excessive joy, to resist being swayed by suspicions, and to prevent doubt from controlling you."

"When you reach this level of awareness, you realize that balance is not coldness but a gentle strength. It shields your heart from being scattered and grants you the insight to see the world as it truly is - simple, ever-changing, yet never worth sacrificing your peace of mind."

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"The deportation of 39,487 expatriates in 2025 may not appear large when compared to Kuwait's total population, but it carries several implications that warrant attention," columnist Eng. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"Undoubtedly, a significant number of those deported were involved in criminal activities, which raises important questions. The purpose of publishing statistics is not merely to announce figures, but to highlight the efforts made in various fields and to provide insight into the nature of services, enforcement measures, and other relevant factors."

"When statistics are presented in detail, citizens are better able to understand the scope and significance of change. In this case, the figure appears vague, as it is essential to clarify the types of violations and crimes that led to the deportation of these residents. Knowing these details could serve as a foundation for a sociological study of the approximately four million expatriates, as the number of deportees represents a substantial proportion when viewed in this context. It is inconceivable that one percent of expatriates are lawbreakers, as this would imply an extremely high crime or violation rate. Typically, crime rates are measured by the number of offenses per thousand people."

"By general definition, any violation of the law, whether major or minor, is considered a crime. Legally, however, crimes are classified into categories, with specific penalties prescribed for each offense. Statistics can highlight the need to amend laws, whether by strengthening or easing penalties, and help policymakers make informed decisions. These statistics also reflect the significant efforts exerted by the Ministry of Interior to rid society of elements that undermine its stability, an effort that deserves recognition and appreciation."

"I am not discussing performance evaluation, but I want to emphasize that security personnel are the vigilant guardians of the nation and its citizens, and everyone takes pride in their work. What matters most are the nature of the violations, the professions of the violators, and how many of them are domestic workers or drivers, as they live in our homes. When citizens are aware of the types of violations committed by these individuals, they can take appropriate measures to protect their families. If the offenders are ordinary workers, understanding the nature of their violations is essential for developing effective solutions."

"This example, and others like it, make it easier to handle matters more safely, especially given that the expatriate population increases each year, bringing both benefits and challenges. To maximize the benefits, we must understand the nature of these violations, as this is a major part of prevention. While the influx of expatriates undoubtedly brings positive effects, such as stimulating the economy, it is crucial to understand the social backgrounds of those who break the law."

"It would be great if the media, when publishing these statistics, also sought academic and scientific analysis, as many questions naturally arise from the data."

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty

Kuwait safety, stability top priority: Governor



Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Sabah receives Director of Farwaniya Security Command Brigadier General Mohammad Eid Al-Ghasab at his office.



Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Sabah receives Head of the Special Security and Correctional Institutions Sector Brigadier General Dakhil Ahmed Al-Dakhil, and the Director General of the Special Forces, Brigadier General Bader Nasser Bu Marzouq.

appreciation for the warm reception, affirming their commitment to continued cooperation and coordination in a manner that serves the public interest and strengthens the country's security and stability.

The Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Sabah also received Director of Farwaniya Security Command Brigadier General Mohammad Eid Al-Ghasab at his office.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, the importance of joint cooperation to support security and stability in all areas of the governorate was emphasized during the meeting.

Governor Sheikh Athbi commended the efforts of the Farwaniya Security Command in fulfilling its duties, praising its role in serving citizens and residents and maintaining public order.

Meanwhile, Brigadier General Al-Ghasab expressed his gratitude to the Governor for his attention and support, affirming his commitment to continue working in service of the people of Farwaniya Governorate.

Afghans, B'deshi in long-term jail for trafficking in narcotics

Filipino caught with hashish gets 15 years behind bars

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: The Criminal Court has issued severe sentences against several defendants in separate drug trafficking and consumption cases.

An Afghan drug dealer has been sentenced to life imprisonment after being caught in a sting operation by the Drug Control General Department (DCGD) while attempting to sell heroin to an undercover agent.

A Bangladeshi drug dealer received a life sentence after being found in possession of narcotics, including heroin and hashish.

In another case, an Afghan drug dealer was sentenced to life imprisonment after being apprehended in Hawally with significant quantities of heroin and other intoxicants.

A Filipino defendant was sentenced to 15 years in prison after being caught in Salmiya with hashish and other intoxicants.

In a separate case, a citizen employed at a government ministry and a doctor were each sentenced to 10 years in prison and fined KD 10,000 after being convicted of trafficking and using hashish, cocaine, and other intoxicants. They were arrested during a well-planned ambush conducted by DCGD officers in Surra and Siddiq.

Uncle wins his rights: The Court of Appeals has

overturned a lower court ruling that dismissed a case concerning the inheritance of a deceased man, ordering the first respondent to pay KD 18,100 to the appellant. The amount represents the uncle's share of his late brother's estate, in addition to court costs and KD 300 in actual attorney's fees.

The appeal was filed by Lawyer Mohammad Ahmad Al-Rifai on behalf of the deceased's brother, who is the uncle of the deceased's daughters. Following the death of the deceased, his inheritance was limited to his daughters and his brother, but the latter had been unable to claim his rightful share.

While he was alive, the deceased had entered into an agreement to manage and operate a specialized dental clinic, which resulted in outstanding financial obligations owed by one of the parties. These obligations were payable to the deceased during his lifetime and subsequently to his heirs after his death.

The Court of First Instance had dismissed the case. However, the Court of Appeal ruled in favor of the appellant, citing omissions in the documentation that proved the legal relationship and the uncle's financial rights, including his established inheritance entitlement.

□ □ □

33 drug cases reviewed: Three circuits of the Criminal Court at the Palace of Justice reviewed 46 criminal cases in three courtrooms on Thursday. The cases covered a range of issues related to community security and the protection of public funds.

Session statistics revealed that 33 cases involved drug-related offenses, including possession for personal use and trafficking. The court

also reviewed five theft cases, four forgery cases, two money laundering cases, one case of embezzlement of public funds, and one case of premeditated murder in Firdous.

The Criminal Court continues to hear such cases as part of its efforts to expedite the resolution of criminal matters, uphold the rule of law, and enhance deterrence.

□ □ □

Sentence withheld: The Court of Cassation refrained from issuing a sentence against the son of a former MP and another citizen, who were accused of joining the ISIS terrorist organization and creating websites to promote extremist ideology.

The court ordered both defendants to post bail of KD 500 each, along with a one-year pledge of good conduct.

Earlier, the Criminal Court had sentenced the defendants to five-year imprisonment, but the Court of Appeals overturned that sentence and ruled to refrain from issuing a sentence, which was upheld by the Court of Cassation in its final ruling.

□ □ □

Wanted Kuwaiti nabbed: A Kuwaiti citizen was recently arrested in an Arab country, as he is wanted in connection with financial cases involving bounced cheques, reports Al-Rai daily.

According to security sources, the citizen had outstanding judgments issued by the Misdemeanor Court. Based on these rulings, international arrest warrants were issued, leading to his detention abroad in accordance with established legal procedures.



Chief of the General Staff of the Kuwait Armed Forces, Lt Gen Khaled Al-Shurai'an visits the Amiri Guard where he was briefed on the training, readiness of personnel.

Chief of Staff visits Amiri Guard, reviews readiness

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8, (KUNA): Chief of the General Staff of the Kuwait Armed Forces, Lieutenant-General Khaled Al-Shurai'an, visited the Amiri Guard on Thursday, where he was received by the Commander of the Amiri Guard, Major-General Bader Al-Sahloul, along with several Amiri Guard officers.

The General Staff said in a press statement that Lt. Gen. Al-Shurai'an received a comprehensive briefing on the duties and responsibilities of the Amiri Guard, as well as training programs and development plans aimed at enhancing the capabilities and professionalism of its personnel.

Lt. Gen. Al-Shurai'an praised the advanced performance and discipline of the personnel, noting that the nature of the Guard's duties requires high levels of efficiency, readiness, continuous training, and both mental and physical preparedness.

Drug tablets found on female from Ethiopia

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: A female passenger who arrived from Addis Ababa was apprehended at Kuwait International Airport Terminal 1 in possession of approximately 3,458 Tapentadol tablets, a controlled psychotropic substance, concealed inside containers of body powder in an attempt to smuggle them without a prescription, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to an official statement issued by the General Administration of Customs (GAC), the passenger's luggage was searched after suspicions were raised during customs inspections.

It was confirmed that the passenger is a domestic worker from Benin. Following standard legal procedures, a seizure report was filed, and the confiscated items were handed over to the Drug Control General Department for necessary legal action.



Largest Spread in Town

Child Buffet	Adult Buffet
KD 4.250	KD 7.450
KD 3.400	KD 5.950
EVERY THURSDAY DINNER ONLY 6 PM TO 11 PM	EVERY FRIDAY LUNCH & DINNER 12:30 PM TO 4:30 PM & 6 PM TO 11 PM
AVAILABLE AT HAWALLY BRANCH BEIRUT ST, LULU AL WATAN COMPLEX, OPPOSITE CBK 22626782 22626783	AVAILABLE AT FAHAHEEL BRANCH 1ST FLOOR, AL HOOR BUILDING BLOCK NO.11, BEHIND TO CENTERPOINT 23911175 23911174

CAPT suspends vehicle tender as Grievance Committee intervenes

MEW advances KD 8 mln power line project

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: The Grievance Committee has requested the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) to provide it with a copy of all the documents and information related to Regulation No. 116/2025, submitted by one of the bidders in a tender for leasing various vehicles with drivers to serve the ministry's sectors.

The committee stated that it is currently reviewing the grievance and will issue a ruling, which requires suspending all procedures related to the contested decision until the matter is resolved and the agency receives the necessary ruling.

In response, CAPT's Board of Directors decided to provide the Grievance Committee with copies of all relevant documents and notify the concerned authority to suspend the related procedures.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Electricity and Water has referred a tender worth KD 8.069 million for the supply and installation of high-voltage and extra-high-voltage overhead power lines in various areas of the country to the State Audit Bu-

reau for pre-audit, review, and audit procedures, as well as for approval of the contract and commencement of work.

The tender aims to develop and modernize the electricity transmission network, which delivers power to substations that then distribute it to homes and properties in all governorates. It will also allow the ministry to provide uninterrupted electricity to new customers around the clock, especially during the summer months when demand peaks.

In a separate report, the ministry stated that 856 Kuwaitis were appointed to various sectors within the ministry between January and November 2025. The total workforce reached 36,245 employees, both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti, with Kuwaitis making up 97.8 percent of the total.

New traffic controls and roadway reorganization proposed

Jahra Council advances public safety measures



Jahra Governorate photo

In addition, the committee discussed mechanisms for dealing with abandoned vehicles within the governorate and ways to develop a clear regulatory framework to address this issue in coordi-

nation with the relevant authorities.

The committee also discussed the security con-

trol mechanisms for camping areas and the enti-

ties responsible for their implementation.



JANUARY



Room Description

Price

One night stay in a Queen Bed Cabana for 2 persons inclusive of Breakfast

BD46.000 /-net

One night stay in a Two Bedroom Chalet for 4 persons inclusive of Breakfast

BD102.148 /-net

Terms & conditions apply



Farwaniya Governorate Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser honored Eng. Fatima Fahad Al-Enezi, in recognition of her outstanding academic achievements.

Farwaniya Governor honors Kuwaiti engineer for academic achievement

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser honored Eng. Fatima Fahad Al-Enezi,

recipient of the 2025 Adventure Day Award in the International Projects category from IE University in Spain, in recognition of her outstanding academic achievements.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, the governor praised Eng. Al-Enezi's accomplishment, highlighting that the successes of young

Other Voices

When a record of association turns from shield to liability

By Shaikha Al Julaibi

Attorney

Many entrepreneurs believe that once a company's record of Association is notarized and registered with the Ministry of Justice, legal risks are largely behind them.

The Kuwaiti market tells a different story.

In reality, many commercial disputes arise not because incorporation documents are missing, but because they are treated as final, while the business evolves in a completely different direction.



Al Julaibi

A Framework, Not an Operating Manual

Under Kuwaiti Companies Law, the record of Association sets the company's legal foundation management structure, authorities, and profit distribution.

But it was never designed to regulate the daily realities of partnership relations or long-term operational shifts.

That role belongs to internal regulation agreements, which translate formal incorporation terms into practical governance.

When Practice Overrides Paper

It is common for companies to operate for years based on informal arrangements that contradict their registered record of Association without amendments, updates, or internal agreements.

This silent gap is where disputes take shape.

A Familiar Market Story

A limited liability company requires joint management and dual signatures under its notarized record.

In practice, one partner manages alone, signs contracts, and runs the business, while the other remains passive.

When conflict emerges:

■ One side points to the written Memorandum.

■ The other points to years of actual practice.

The dispute escalates, despite being entirely preventable through a simple post incorporation internal agreement.

When Protection Becomes a Risk

A record of Association becomes a liability when:

■ It no longer reflects who truly controls the business.

■ Authority exists only on paper.

■ Business activities evolve without legal updates.

■ The document is used defensively after conflict, not proactively before it.

The Courts' Reality Check

Kuwaiti courts do not read incorporation documents in isolation.

They look at behavior, knowledge, consent, and real management practices alongside formal contracts.

A document ignored in practice may offer little protection in court.

Final Thought

A record of Association is not a permanent safety net.

It is the starting point.

True legal protection requires alignment between documents, internal agreements, and the way the business is actually run.

Because in business, disputes rarely begin in courtrooms, they begin in outdated contracts.

PACA names AICIO lead investigator

Kuwait Aviation Authority enforces 'stricter' aircraft incident protocols

By Mohammed Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: The Public Authority for Civil Aviation (PACA) issued a circular to all affiliated sectors and entities operating at Kuwait International Airport, mandating that any accident or incident be reported to the Aircraft Accidents and Incidents Investigation Office (AICIO), which operates under the authority of the Director General of PACA.

According to the circular, AICIO is the official authority responsible for managing and controlling the scene of any accident or incident.

It is prohibited to move, remove, or tamper with any part of an accident or incident site without prior official authorization from the AICIO's designated in-

vestigator. This includes the aircraft, its components, and any related equipment, documents, or evidence.

Once the investigator presents official identification, all relevant documents must be provided promptly to facilitate the AICIO's investigation procedures. This is necessary to preserve the integrity of evidence and streamline the investigation process, allowing the investigator to carry out their duties in accordance with applicable rules and regulations.

The circular clarified that these procedures are based on both the administrative decision establishing the organizational structure of the Office for Investigation of Aircraft Accidents and Incidents and the provisions of Annex 13 of the International Civil Aviation Organization on the investigation of aircraft accidents and incidents.

Nursery oversight goes digital

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: The Director of the Private Nurseries Oversight Department, Nayef Al-Sawagh, stated that six inspection teams from various government agencies conduct surprise inspections throughout the year to monitor nurseries in all governorates for ensuring their compliance with approved standards, regulations, and conditions, reports Al-Anba daily.

In an interview, Al-Sawagh affirmed that the department will be fully digitized by 2026, with all nursery-related procedures, including licensing and renewal

applications, processed through the "Saheb Aamal" application.

He explained that a specialized committee, composed of representatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs, Kuwait Municipality, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health, and Kuwait Fire Force, will review inspection reports, identify violations, and refer cases to the relevant authorities. Another dedicated committee, including members from all relevant agencies, will handle new and renewal license applications.

LOCAL



Participants pose for a group photo during the Manama Archaeology Symposium.

Experts present studies on Ubaid civilization

'Gulf antiquities prove region's ancient roots'

MANAMA, Jan 8, (KUNA): Acting Assistant Secretary General for Antiquities and Museums at Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) Mohammad bin Redha said that Gulf antiquities are a living proof of the region's deep human civilization and a cornerstone of national identity and cultural dialogue with the world.

This came in a statement for KUNA, as head of NCCAL's delegation to a scientific symposium on Gulf Arab antiquities in Manama, organized by Bahrain's Authority for Culture and Antiquities.

Bin Redha said that the symposium's sessions concluded on Wednesday providing a vital platform to exchange expertise and highlighting the development of archaeological work in Gulf Coopera-

tion Council (GCC) countries.

The discussions reflected major progress in discoveries and excavations, regional and international cooperation, and digital transformation, including the use of modern technologies in research, preservation, and documentation, he said.

Bin Redha pointed out that Kuwait's participation reflects its commitment to supporting joint Gulf archaeological work and promoting national expertise at advanced scientific forums.

He noted Kuwait took part with expert researchers, including former Head of NCCAL's Antiquities and Museums Department Dr. Sultan Mutlaq Al-Duwaish, who presented a paper on Ubaid civilization remains at the Subiya site during the Neolithic period, and Kuwait University



Mohammad bin Redha, Acting Assistant Secretary General for Antiquities and Museums at NCCAL, speaking at the Gulf Archaeology Symposium in Manama.

(KU) Anthropology Professor and NCAL Adviser Dr. Hasan Ashkanani, who presented a paper on using radiometric analysis techniques to study pre-Dilmun pottery.

The symposium issued recommendations to strengthen joint archaeological research among Gulf states, expand the use of modern technology and digitization in documentation and study, develop sustainable plans to manage and protect archaeological sites, support public awareness and dedicated research, and build national capacity through ongoing training, he explained.

The symposium was recommended to continue as a regular scientific platform to follow-up on discoveries and recommendations, he added.

Al-Mutairi unveils Appreciation, Creativity Awards 2025 winners

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8, (KUNA): Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi announced the winners of the Kuwait Appreciation Award and the Creativity Award for 2025 in the fields of arts, literature, and social sciences.

In a press statement, Al-Mutairi said the awards reflect Kuwait's commitment to honoring pioneers and creatives for their distinguished contributions and their role as role models for future generations.



Al-Mutairi

The Appreciation Awards were

granted to artist Thuraya Al-Baqsmi (short story and novel), and artists Abdulrahman Al-Aqel and Abdullah Al-Hubail (theatre and other arts).

The Kuwait Creativity Award winners included Maitham Abdal for fine and applied arts (sculpture), Youssef Fathallah for short story, Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Sharqawi for linguistic and literary studies, and Dr. Talal Al-Jassar for translation into Arabic from German.

In the field of social and human sciences, a joint work by Salah Al-Fadhl, Fahad Al-Shualah, Dr. Waleed Al-Munais, Dr. Faisal Al-Wazzan, Fahad Al-Abduljalil, and Ahmad Al-Adwani won the historical and archaeological studies award, while Dr. Bdoor Al-Mutairi received the sociology award.

The results were approved by the Supreme Committee of the awards, an independent body operating under Ministerial Decision No. 37 of 2025.

Arabian Gulf Road closed Jan 8-11

Road, reports Al-Seyassah daily. The closure will take effect at 6:00 pm on Thursday, Jan 8, and will continue until Sunday, Jan 11, to allow for necessary road maintenance work.

Al platform links authorities to fight threats
CITRA hosts 7th Cybercrime Conference

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff



Najat Ibrahim, Acting Director General of the Central Agency for Information Technology, delivers a speech.

scientific forums help facilitate.

Al-Mazeed emphasized CITRA's objective by saying, "We hope that the panel discussions and scientific sessions at this conference will produce practical recommendations that serve as a roadmap for all relevant entities, ensuring they are actionable and not merely words on paper."

A New Platform

In the same context, the conference chairman, Lawyer Mohammed Al-Jassem, stated that this edition of the conference marks a qualitative step in enhancing cooperation among various parties, as it brings together expertise from government, private sector, and academia, enabling the development of more effective solutions to address rapidly evolving cybersecurity challenges.

He said, "Cybercrimes are no longer limited to individual transgressions but they now threaten institutions as well, thus requiring coordinated efforts at both national and international levels.

To address this, a new platform has been designed to expedite responses to reports by integrating artificial intelligence technologies. This system allows for immediate analysis of reports upon submission and provides instant guidance and responses. The platform was developed in collaboration with Interpol and is designed to link local authorities with international entities that manage social media platforms such as Meta, Facebook, Instagram,

WhatsApp, and TikTok. This connectivity will enable real-time monitoring of cyber incidents, reduce the targeting of victims, and address technical vulnerabilities."

Furthermore, Mubarak Abdulhadi, Chair of the Organizing Committee and CEO of Infinity, said, "Cybercrimes pose a real threat that rivals, and in some cases surpasses, the danger of traditional crimes due to their remarkable ability to transcend geographical and temporal boundaries. Given this complex reality, there is an urgent need to unify efforts and integrate capabilities to strengthen the comprehensive cybersecurity system".

In addition, Yousef Kazem, the official spokesperson for the e-government services application "Sahel", explained that the color-coded indicators appearing to some users in the "Data" menu of the Sahel app are notifications meant to alert users about the need to update their information or official documents. These notifications pertain to Ministry of Interior data, including vehicle registration, sponsorships, and driver's licenses, as well as data from the Public Authority for Civil Information, such as civil ID cards for individuals, their children, or dependents.

He stressed the importance of promptly renewing these documents and taking the necessary steps.

In a statement to the daily on the sidelines of the conference, Kazem clarified that the "Tawasul" service enables all citizen users to submit complaints or suggestions directly to government entities through the Sahel application.

He urged citizens and residents to pay attention to notifications and updates while cautioning against spreading inaccurate or misleading information about the Sahel app on social media platforms.

Kazem clarified that the application uses clear notifications and color-coded indicators to highlight the approaching expiration or renewal of official documents, including civil ID cards for individuals, children, and dependents, as well as driver's licenses and vehicle data, thus helping citizens and residents accurately track their information.

Al-Mishari launches PAHW housing expo

Minister highlights sustainable solutions

By Mohammed Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Abdul Latif Al-Mishari inaugurated the "Home of a Lifetime 2026" exhibition in the presence of senior officials from the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW).

In a press statement, PAHW explained that the minister's participation in the opening highlights his strong interest in supporting events specialized in housing, as well as those working in construction and urban development fields. Such events serve as important platforms for exploring the latest solutions and technologies that enhance housing quality and develop housing projects to meet citizens' aspirations.

The exhibition showcased a number of advanced solutions in sustainable energy, water conservation, and recycling, both through its ongoing projects and the offerings of participating companies. This aligns with the state's focus on environmental sustainability and efficient resource



Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs, Engineer Abdul Latif Al-Mashari, inaugurated the (House of Life 2026) exhibition.

reflects its commitment to boosting direct communication and keeping the public informed about the progress of various housing projects.

Its participation also stems from its dedication to strengthening cooperation with relevant authorities, construction, and development companies, as well as learning from best practices to enhance the housing care system and improve the efficiency of housing projects.

Continued from Page 1

No guarantees

The Silence of the International Community

The United Nations met. Statements were delivered. Concerns were voiced. But beyond words, there was little action. This familiar pattern sends a clear message to the world: power overrides principle, and accountability is selective. When international institutions fail to act decisively, they do not preserve stability; they erode it.

Even warnings from UN bodies that such actions make the world less safe were met with indifference. This silence is not neutral; it is consequential.

From Venezuela to Greenland: Who Is Truly Safe?

President Donald Trump has repeatedly stated that Greenland is vital to US national security. If security interests justify unilateral action, it is reasonable to ask: Should the world expect similar logic to be applied elsewhere?

This is not alarmism. It is the logical outcome of a world in which power replaces law. The uncomfortable question we must ask honestly and without illusion is this: Who is safe today?

Strength Is Not Declared, It Is Built

Despite this reality, we must be clear about one thing: we are not powerless.

The Arab world possesses immense human capital; scientists, innovators, thinkers, and leaders, many of whom have contributed significantly to global progress when given the opportunity. Our challenge has never been a lack of talent. There has been a lack of consistent structures that protect, empower, and retain that talent.

Our most successful Arab economies were not built through dependence. They were built on our land, by our people, through vision, discipline, and long-term planning. This is not theory; it is lived experience. True independence does not come from slogans. It comes from

knowledge, institutions, and the ability to make sovereign decisions without fear.

What Must Be Done

1: Strengthen the Arab League in Practice, Not Form

The Arab League must move beyond symbolism. It must evolve into a credible political, economic, and security framework capable of protecting its members and deterring external pressure. A bloc that cannot protect its own sovereignty will not be respected by others.

2: Keep Arab Capital and Strategic Assets Within the Region

Recent global events have once again proven a simple truth: assets held abroad are vulnerable. The freezing and seizure of Russian private assets in Europe stand as a clear reminder that political decisions can freeze, seize, or restrict access to foreign-held wealth overnight, regardless of legal ownership or prior assurances.

Economic sovereignty begins at home – through regional investment in food security, energy, industry, and technology. This is not isolationism; it is prudence.

3: Unity, Vigilance, and Trusted Leadership Circles

Unity is not an emotional concept; it is a strategic necessity. Arab states must coordinate policies, close ranks, and reinforce internal cohesion. At the same time, it is imperative to examine carefully those closest to decision-makers, retaining only those whose loyalty to national interests is unquestionable.

History teaches us that internal weaknesses are often more destructive than external threats.

A Final Reflection

Venezuela is not an exception. It is a warning. We are entering an era where international guarantees are fragile, institutions are weakened, and power speaks louder than principle. Awareness today is not a luxury; it is a requirement for survival. Those who understand the direction of the world and prepare wisely will endure. Those who rely on assumptions

that no longer hold may not be given another opportunity.

The lesson is clear. The time to act is now.

'Vacate Braih'

The second decision, No. 57/2026, mandates the evacuation of all tenants of shops and leased spaces in the Injaz Market within a period not exceeding seven days from the date of notification. This follows the expiration of their lease contracts with the investing company, which has resulted in the termination of their legal right to occupy the premises, while preserving all rights of the municipality.

The decision prohibits any individual or entity from occupying any shops or spaces in the Injaz Market after the specified evacuation date. Any such occupation will be considered an unlawful encroachment on state property, and legal action will be taken against violators.

The Capital Municipality branch, in coordination with the supervising authority, will be responsible for implementing the decision by all available means, including forced eviction with the assistance of the Ministry of Interior.

Encroachment reports will be filed against those who violate the evacuation order. Following the evacuation, the Projects Sector's Construction Department will assume control of the market site to take the necessary measures, while preserving all the municipality's rights.

Dust, drizzle,

Friday night will be cool, partly cloudy, with southeast winds turning northwest, moderate to occasionally strong, ranging from 20 km/h to 60 km/h, raising dust, with a chance of scattered rain in northern areas. Minimum temperatures are expected

between 8°C and 10°C, and the sea will be moderate to rough, with waves of four to seven feet.

On Saturday, weather during the day will be moderate, partly cloudy, with light to moderate northwest winds, occasionally active, ranging from 15 km/h to 45 km/h, with chances of dust in open areas and scattered light rain in northern areas. Maximum temperatures are expected between 18°C and 20°C, and the sea will be moderate to rough, with waves of three to six feet.

Saturday night will be cold, partly to mostly cloudy, with northwest to variable winds, light to moderate, ranging from 8 km/h to 32 km/h. Minimum temperatures are expected between 5°C and 7°C, and the sea will be light to moderate, with waves of two to four feet.

In other news, the Meteorological Department of the Public Authority for Civil Aviation (PACA) announced the gradual shutdown of automated weather monitoring stations on its website and mobile applications, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an official statement, PACA explained that the shutdown is part of a scheduled plan to develop and upgrade weather monitoring systems. The plan is aimed to ensure the continuity of essential services during the upgrade process and to provide a smooth transition to the upgraded systems.

PM oversees

Also present were Director General of the Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) Sheikh Dr. Meesa Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Head of the Fatwa and Legislation Department Counselor Salah Al-Majed, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Adel Al-Zamel, and Ambassador Samech Hayat.

Stray dogs

The latest incident, captured on CCTV on Al-Sahafa Street, showed a passerby suddenly attacked by three dogs. A bystander intervened at the last moment, but the victim still sustained multiple injuries throughout his body.

Amid these recurring incidents, the pressing question remains – how long will this danger persist without a comprehensive and decisive plan? Will the relevant authorities wait for an even more tragic event before taking serious action and shifting from partial measures to a fundamental approach that ensures public safety?

Green Island

Minister of Information Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi underscored the importance of the project, describing it as one of the country's promising national tourism projects that reflects an ambitious vision to modernize recreational facilities and enhance Kuwait's appeal as a comprehensive tourist and cultural destination.

In his speech during the conference, he explained that the project aligns with the state's priorities to ensure optimal investment in vital sites with environmental and heritage value, transforming them into assets that contribute to society and the national economy. The project's objective is not limited to developing a recreational site, as it aims to provide a comprehensive visitor experience based on clear operational standards that emphasize quality, safety, and accessibility.

Environmental sustainability is central to the project's design and operation, through practical solutions for resource conservation, waste management, and the preservation of the site's natural elements, ensuring its long-term impact for future generations.

Such projects receive the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Moshal Al-Ahmad. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah. This support represents a fundamental pillar for accelerating tourism development and strengthening its role in diversifying the national economy and improving quality of life.

Minister Al-Mutairi stressed that the Ministry of Information works based on an executive vision built on partnership and integration with government entities, the private sector, and civil society.

He affirmed that the success of major projects can only be achieved through unified efforts, coordinated messaging, and accomplishments.

Minister Al-Mutairi highlighted that the ministry is giving special attention to developing the tourism promotion system and strengthening Kuwait's regional and international presence through modern digital initiatives, most notably the "Visit Kuwait" platform, which serves as a comprehensive window showcasing the country's tourism, cultural, and heritage assets.

Meanwhile, CEO of TEC Eng. Anwar Al-Halila expressed his delight to welcome attendees to Green Island, describing it as one of the company's most important facilities and a prominent landmark that carries deep historical value and reflects a continued commitment to preserving national heritage and reinforcing its role in sustainable development.

Al-Halila explained that Green Island, the first artificial island in the region since its opening in 1988, has for decades played a major role as a recreational and cultural destination for families and visitors, and is an integral part of Kuwait's national tourism memory.

Trump signs order pulling US from 66 global bodies

WASHINGTON, Jan 8, (AP): The Trump administration will withdraw from dozens of international organizations, including the U.N.'s population agency and the U.N. treaty that establishes international climate negotiations, as the U.S. further retreats from global cooperation.

President Donald Trump on Wednesday signed an executive order suspending U.S. support for 66 organizations, agencies, and commissions, following his administration's review of participation in and funding for all international organizations, including those affiliated with the United Nations, according to a White House release.

Many of the targets are U.N.-related agencies, commissions and advisory panels that focus on climate, labor, migration and other issues the Trump administration has categorized as catering to diversity and "woke" initiatives. Other non-U.N. organizations on the list include the Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, and the Global Counterterrorism Forum.

"The Trump Administration has found these institutions to be redundant in their scope, mismanaged, unnecessary, wasteful, poorly run, captured by the interests of actors advancing their own agendas contrary to our own, or a threat to our nation's sovereignty, freedoms, and general prosperity," Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a statement.

Trump's decision to withdraw from organizations that foster cooperation among nations to address global challenges comes as his administration has launched military efforts or issued threats that have rattled allies and adversaries alike, including capturing autocratic Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro and indicating an intention to take over Greenland.

The administration previously suspended support for agencies like the World Health Organization, the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees known as UNRWA, the U.N. Human Rights Council and the U.N. cultural agency UNESCO. It has taken a larger, à la carte approach to paying dues to the world body, picking which operations and agencies it believes align with Trump's agenda and those that no longer serve U.S. interests.

"I think what we're seeing is the crystallization of the U.S. approach to multilateralism, which is 'my way or the highway,'" said Daniel Forti, head of U.N. affairs at the International Crisis Group. "It's a very clear vision of wanting international cooperation on Washington's own



US President Donald Trump points to the crowd as he walks off stage after speaking to House Republican lawmakers during their annual policy retreat, Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2026, in Washington. (AP)

terms."

It has marked a major shift from how previous administrations - both Republican and Democratic - have dealt with the U.N., and it has forced the world body, already undergoing its own internal reckoning, to respond with a series of staffing and program cuts.

Many independent nongovernmental agencies - some that work with the United Nations - have cited many project closures because of the U.S. administration's decision last year to slash foreign assistance through the U.S. Agency for International Development, or USAID.

Despite the massive shift, Trump administration officials say they see the potential of the U.N. and want to in-

stead focus taxpayer money on expanding American influence in many of the standard-setting U.N. initiatives where there is competition with China, like the International Telecommunications Union, the International Maritime Organization and the International Labor Organization.

The withdrawal from the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, or UNFCCC, is the latest effort by Trump and his allies to distance the U.S. from international organizations focused on climate and addressing climate change.

UNFCCC, the 1992 agreement between 198 countries to financially support climate change activities in developing countries, is the underlying treaty for the land-

mark Paris climate agreement. Trump - who calls climate change a hoax - withdrew from that agreement soon after reclaiming the White House.

Gina McCarthy, former White House National Climate Adviser, said being the only country in the world not part of the treaty is "shortsighted, embarrassing, and a foolish decision."

"This Administration is forfeiting our country's ability to influence trillions of dollars in investments, policies, and decisions that would have advanced our economy and protected us from costly disasters wreaking havoc on our country," McCarthy, who co-chairs America Is All In, a coalition of climate-concerned U.S. states and cities, said in a statement.

Mainstream scientists say climate change is behind increasing instances of deadly and costly extreme weather, including flooding, droughts, wildfires, intense rainfall events and dangerous heat.

The U.S. withdrawal could hinder global efforts to curb greenhouse gases because it "gives other nations the excuse to delay their own actions and commitments," said Stanford University climate scientist Rob Jackson, who chairs the Global Carbon Project, a group of scientists that tracks countries' carbon dioxide emissions.

It will also be difficult to achieve meaningful progress on climate change without cooperation from the U.S., one of the world's largest emitters and economies, experts said.

The U.N. Population Fund, the agency providing sexual and reproductive health worldwide, has long been a lightning rod for Republican opposition, and Trump cut funding for it during his first term. He and other GOP officials have accused the agency of participating in "coercive abortion practices" in countries like China.

When President Joe Biden took office in January 2021, he restored funding for the agency. A State Department review conducted the following year found no evidence to support GOP claims.

Other organizations and agencies that the U.S. will quit include the Carbon Free Energy Compact, the United Nations University, the International Cotton Advisory Committee, the International Tropical Timber Organization, the Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation, the Pan-American Institute for Geography and History, the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies, and the International Lead and Zinc Study Group.



Russian President Vladimir Putin accompanied by military personnel and their families, lights a candle while attending an Orthodox Christmas service at a church in Moscow Region, Russia, on Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2026. (AP)

Tough new sanctions on Russia get Trump's nod

WASHINGTON, Jan 8, (Agencies): US President Donald Trump is now on board with a hard-hitting sanctions package meant to economically cripple Moscow as his administration continues to negotiate a deal to end the war that began with Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said he met with Trump at the White House earlier Wednesday, during which the president "greenlit" the Russia sanctions bill that has been in the works for months.

Graham had signaled previously that Trump has blessed the bill, only for it to encounter additional obstacles. But a White House official confirmed to The Associated Press Wednesday that the president supports the sanctions legislation.

"This will be well-timed, as Ukraine is making concessions for peace and Putin is all talk, continuing to kill the innocent," Graham said in a statement, referring to the Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The bill, chiefly written by Graham and Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., allows the administration to impose tariffs and secondary sanctions on countries that purchase Russia's oil, gas, uranium and other exports. Doing so is meant to cut off the source of financing for much of Russia's military actions.

The White House has previously insisted on some revisions and flexibility for Trump in the sanctions package, but the White House official on Wednesday did not elaborate on whether any changes were secured.

The legislation has dozens of co-sponsors in the Senate, as well as a companion bill in the House, drafted by Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa.

Graham said there could be a vote as early as next week, although it's

unclear how likely that will be. The Senate is poised to take up a scaled-back government funding package next week that the House is currently considering, if the House passes it. The following week is a Senate recess timed to Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

The Trump administration is currently trying to finalize a peace deal to end the war in Ukraine, now nearly four years old, with special envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, as the U.S. president's chief negotiators.

Also:

MOSCOW: The seizure of a Russian-flagged oil tanker by the United States violates international maritime law and UN conventions, a senior Russian lawmaker said on Wednesday.

"The seizure of the Mariner, a Russian-flagged vessel sailing in international territorial waters, is undoubtedly a violation of maritime law and UN conventions. This is piracy of the 21st century by the Anglo-Saxons," Leonid Slutsky, chairman of the International Affairs Committee of the Russian State Duma, was quoted as saying by the TASS news agency.

Slutsky added that sanctions cannot be used as a justification for seizing a vessel. "The United States is increasingly acting according to the 'law of force,' while ignoring the 'force of law.'

U.S. European Command said it seized an empty oil tanker linked with Venezuela and registered as a Russian vessel in the North Atlantic in an operation on Wednesday.

Russia has condemned the U.S. action and demanded that the United States not impede the speedy return of Russians on board the vessel to their homeland.

Europe

Trio ink Declaration of Intent: Ukraine, France and the United Kingdom on Tuesday signed a Declaration of Intent on the deployment of multinational forces to support Ukraine's defense, reconstruction, and strategic resilience after a peace agreement is achieved, the Ukrinform news agency reported.

The document was signed in Paris by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, French President Emmanuel Macron, and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

The signing followed a meeting of the Coalition of the Willing, which brought together leaders of several European countries, as well as White House special envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, U.S. President Donald Trump's son-in-law. (Xinhua)

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Berlin power fully restored: Electricity has been fully restored in southwestern Berlin following a five-day blackout that left thousands of households without power, authorities confirmed late Wednesday in a statement declaring the situation resolved and issuing an all-clear.

Earlier in the day, Berlin's senator for economic affairs Franziska Giffey announced that power had been reconnected to all affected households as of 2:10 p.m. local time. However, some residents continued to report outages into the evening before the final confirmation was sent out.

About 45,000 households and more than 2,200 businesses lost power early Saturday after cables leading to a power station were set ablaze, triggering Berlin's longest post-war outage. (Xinhua)

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Norway house fire kills 2: Two firefighters were found dead after going missing during an overnight house fire rescue in Verdal municipality in central Norway's Trondelag county, according to local authorities on Wednesday.

The two, employed by the inter-municipal fire service Brannvesenet IKS-Midt, were on duty when the blaze broke out at around 2 a.m. local time on Wednesday. Police said the house was destroyed, the resident had evacuated independently, and occupants of a neighboring home were also evacuated.

Norwegian media reported that contact was later lost with the two smoke divers inside the building, and the intensity of the blaze made further rescue attempts impossible. (Xinhua)

UK braced for heavy snow as cold snap in Europe persists

LONDON, Jan 8, (AP): Britain, already in the midst of one of its coldest and longest cold snaps in years, is set to endure heavy snowfall and strong winds later Thursday that weather authorities have warned could bring a risk to life.

The brunt of the storm coming in from the Atlantic is set to be felt in central England, with as much as 30 centimeters (12 inches) of snow falling in just a few hours, which inevitably will have potential implications for schools, travel and commerce, particularly in more rural areas.

Storm Goretta, which has been named by the French weather service France Meteo, is expected to leave Britain's shores by late Friday before further impacting other parts of northwest Europe, which have already endured snow, ice and freezing temperatures in recent days.

Neil Armstrong, chief forecaster at the Met Office, Britain's national meteorological service, described Goretta as a "multi-hazard event" with heavy rain, strong winds and snow.

The Met Office has issued amber warnings for many parts of the U.K. These have an "increased likelihood of impacts from severe weather" compared to the lower yellow warnings, meaning there is the possibility of travel delays, road and rail closures, flight cancellations, power cuts and

potential risk to life and property.

The snowfall will mean trains and planes could be delayed or cancelled, rural communities may be cut off, and power cuts and disruption to mobile signal are likely.

Amber cold weather health alerts have also been extended by the U.K. Health Security Agency for all regions of England until Jan. 12, which means severe impacts across health and social care services are expected. Officials expect a rise in deaths, particularly among those aged 65 and over or with health conditions, with impacts also possible on younger age groups.

Many parts of Wales, northern England and Scotland have been blanketed with snow over the past few days that has led to numerous school closures and travel disruption.

In the Netherlands, the bad weather eased on Thursday, helping Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport, which saw hundreds of flights canceled on each of the first three days of the working week, trying to return to normal. However, it was briefly hit by a power outage in the morning.

Dutch national carrier KLM said there were still long lines of passengers at the airport but added that it was "doing everything possible to ensure departing passengers leave on time."



Snow clearing vehicles remove snow at the Hamburg Airport in Hamburg, Germany, Thursday, Jan. 8, 2026. (AP)

Subcontinent

Sri Lanka issues storm warning: Sri Lanka's Meteorological Department on Thursday urged fishermen at sea to return immediately or seek safe harbor, as a deep depression over the Bay of Bengal is expected to affect the country on Friday.

The department also advised fishermen not to venture out to sea until further notice.

Several districts already hit by last year's Cyclone Ditwah could receive more than 100 mm of rain, the department said, urging relevant authorities to be prepared.

DMC Director **Pradeep Kodipalli** on Wednesday said several areas that were severely affected by Cyclone Ditwah are expected to experience heavy rainfall in the coming days. (Xinhua)

26 Naxals surrender in central India: Twenty-six Naxals, including seven women cadres, surrendered to government forces on Wednesday in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh, police said.

The Naxals laid down arms in Sukma district, about 410 km south of Raipur, the capital city of Chhattisgarh.

Currently, Naxals are active across the central and eastern parts of India.

India's federal government has resolved to eradicate Naxalism before the end of March this year. (Xinhua)

Afghanistan traffic accidents kill 5: At least five people were killed and 16 others injured in a series of traffic accidents in western Afghanistan's Herat province on Wednesday, local sources said on Thursday.

Meanwhile, officials confirmed that an additional traffic accident in another part of the province also resulted in injuries to 16 people. In total, the incidents claimed five lives and left 16 others injured. (Xinhua)

Afghan clashes leave 4 dead: Clashes between residents and operators of a gold mining company in northern Afghanistan left four people dead and five others injured, officials said Wednesday.

Three residents and one company employee were killed in the violence that occurred Tuesday in the Chah Ab district of Takhar province, Interior Ministry spokesman Abdul Mateen Qane said. He did not specify what triggered the clashes or who owns the company. (AP)



Actresses from the cultural center of Gansu's Jiuquan City perform Dunhuang dance during the first show of a mass cultural performance and broadcasting event held at the Lanzhou Concert Hall in Lanzhou, northwest China's Gansu Province, on Jan. 7, 2026. The mass cultural performance and broadcasting event, which plans to organize 240 mass cultural shows throughout the year, aims to build cultural and artistic stages for the general public at their doorsteps. (Xinhua)

US suspends assistance to Somalia's federal govt, alleging it seized food aid



Workers distribute food aid from the World Food Program at a refugee camp in Dolo, Somalia on July 18, 2012. (AP)

WASHINGTON, Jan 8, (AP): The State Department said Wednesday that it has suspended all U.S. assistance to Somalia's federal government over allegations that Somali officials destroyed an American-funded warehouse belonging to the World Food Program and seized 76 metric tons of food aid intended for impoverished civilians.

"The Trump Administration has a zero-tolerance policy for waste, theft, and diversion of life-saving assistance," the department said in a statement.

"The State Department has paused all ongoing U.S. assistance programs which benefit the Somali Federal Government," it said. "Any resumption of assistance will be dependent upon the Somali Federal Government, taking accountability for its unacceptable actions and taking appropriate remedial steps."

The suspension comes as the Trump administration has ratcheted up criticism of Somali refugees and migrants in the United States, including over well-publicized fraud al-

legations involving child care centers in Minnesota. It has slapped significant restrictions on Somalis wanting to come to the U.S. and made it difficult for those already in the United States to stay.

It was not immediately clear how much assistance would be affected by the suspension because the Trump administration has slashed foreign aid expenditures, dismantled the U.S. Agency for International Development and not released new country-by-country data. The U.S. had provided \$770 million in assistance for projects in Somalia during the last year of Democratic President Joe Biden's administration, but only a fraction of that went directly to the government.

A senior State Department official said Wednesday the department is "undertaking a thoughtful and individualized review to determine which ongoing assistance programs directly or indirectly benefit the Somali Federal Government and to take appropriate actions to pause, redirect or terminate such programs."

President Petro's clash with Trump over Venezuela backs Colombia into a corner

BOGOTÁ, Jan 8, (AP): An "abhorrent" violation of Latin American sovereignty. An attack committed by "enslavers." A "spectacle of death" comparable to Nazi Germany's 1937 carpet bombing of Guernica, Spain.

There is perhaps no world leader criticizing the Trump administration's attack on Venezuela as strongly as left-wing President Gustavo Petro of Colombia, historically Washington's most important ally in the region.

For the past 30 years, the U.S. has worked closely with Colombia, the world's largest producer of cocaine, to arrest drug traffickers, fend off rebel groups and boost economic development in rural areas.

But while other officials tread carefully, Colombia's outspoken president has seized on the U.S. capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro to escalate his spiraling war of words with President Donald Trump, who said a U.S. military operation in Colombia "sounds good to me."

Answering a protest call issued by Petro, thousands of Colombians gathered in public squares across the country Wednesday "to defend national sovereignty" against Trump's military threats, chanting "Long live free and sovereign Colombia!" and waiting anxiously to hear what they expected would be Petro's latest scathing salvo in his clash with Trump.

Instead, to everyone's surprise, the Colombian president offered an olive branch to the man who has repeatedly called him a drug kingpin, despite a lack of evidence.

"I had one speech prepared for today, but I have to give another one," Petro told the crowd in Colombia's capital of Bogotá. "The first speech was quite harsh. I had to change it."



Colombian President Gustavo Petro addresses supporters in a rally he called to protest comments by U.S. President Donald Trump, in Bogotá, Colombia, Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2026. (AP)

Just minutes earlier, Petro said, he had held a friendly call with Trump, and explained that his only connection to drug trafficking was his fierce commitment to fighting against it.

"I asked (Trump) to re-establish direct communication between our governments," Petro said. "If there is no dialogue, there will be war."

Trump released a statement on social media, calling it a "Great Honor" to speak with Petro. He even invited his fiercest critic to the White House, revealing what he's shown in the past to be a dramatic capacity to swiftly change tack.

"I appreciated his call and tone, and look forward to meeting him in the near future," Trump wrote of Petro.

The sudden détente between the irascible foes revealed that, for all their differences, Petro and Trump share a

willingness to side with an ideological rival if deemed to be in their best interest.

For Colombia, the U.S. remains key to the military's fight against leftist guerrillas and drug traffickers. Washington has provided Bogotá with roughly \$14 billion in the last two decades.

For the U.S., Colombia remains the cornerstone of its counternarcotics strategy abroad, providing crucial intelligence used to interdict drugs in the Caribbean.

The Colombians are extremely effective in taking advantage of their contacts in Washington, on the Hill and elsewhere, and the private sector is mobilized," said Michael Shifter, a Latin America expert at the Inter-American Dialogue think tank in Washington.

Philippines evacuates 3,000 people as authorities raise 5-step alert

Mayon awakens, pyroclastic flows threaten villages

MANILA, Jan 8, (AP): A series of mild eruptions at the most active volcano in the Philippines has prompted the evacuation of nearly 3,000 villagers from a danger zone on its foothills, officials said Wednesday.

Authorities raised the 5-step alert around Mayon Volcano in the northeastern province of Albay to level 3 on Tuesday after detecting intermittent rockfalls, some as big as cars, from its peak crater in recent days along with deadly pyroclastic flows - fast-moving avalanche of super-hot rock fragments, ash and gas.

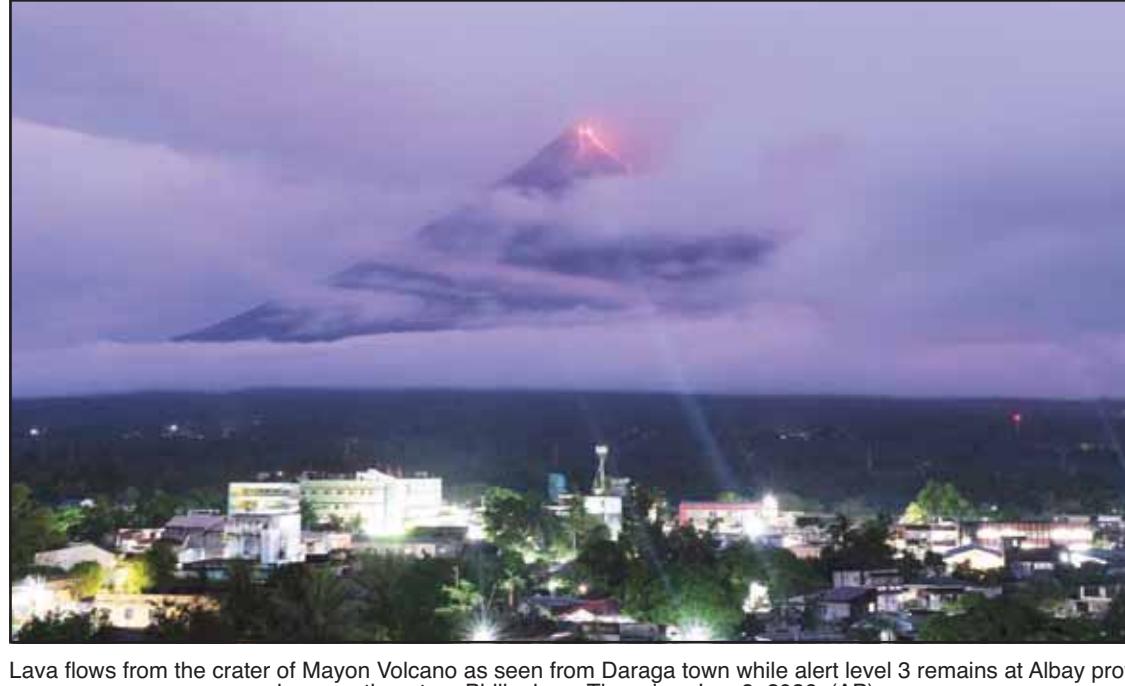
Alert level 5 would indicate that a major explosive eruption, often with violent ejections of ash and debris and widespread ashfall, is underway.

"This is already an eruption, a quiet one, with lava accumulating up the peak and swelling the dome, which cracked in some parts and resulted in rockfalls, some as big as cars," Teresito Bacolol, the country's chief volcanologist, told The Associated Press.

He said it is too early to tell if Mayon's restiveness would worsen and lead to a major and violent eruption given the absence of other key signs of unrest, like a spike in volcanic earthquakes and high levels of sulfur dioxide emissions.

Troops, police and disaster-mitigation personnel helped evacuate more than 2,800 villagers from 729 households inside a 6-kilometer (3.7-mile) radius from the volcano's crater that officials have long designated a permanent danger zone, demarcated by concrete warning signs, Albay provincial officials said.

Another 600 villagers living outside the permanent danger zone have evacuated voluntarily to government



Lava flows from the crater of Mayon Volcano as seen from Daraga town while alert level 3 remains at Albay province, northeastern Philippines, Thursday, Jan. 8, 2026. (AP)

run emergency shelters to be safely away from the volcano, Claudio Yucot, regional director of the Office of Civil Defense, said.

Entry to the permanent danger zone in the volcano's foothills is prohibited, but thousands of villagers have flouted the restrictions and made it their home or maintained farms on and off for generations. Lucrative businesses, such as sand and gravel quarrying and sightseeing tours, have also thrived openly despite the ban and the mountain's frequent eruptions - now 54 times since

records began in 1616.

The 2,462-meter (8,007-foot) volcano is one of the Philippines' top tourism draws because of its near-perfect cone shape. But it's also the most active of the country's 24 restive volcanoes.

A terrifying symbol of Mayon's deadly fury is the belfry of a 16th-century Franciscan stone church which protrudes from the ground in Albay. It's all that's left of a baroque church that was buried by volcanic mudflow along with the town of Cagsawa in

an 1814 eruption which killed about 1,200 people, including many who sought refuge in the church, about 13 kilometers (8 miles) from the volcano.

The thousands of people who live within Mayon's danger zone reflect the plight of many impoverished Filipinos who are forced to live in dangerous places across the archipelago - near active volcanoes like Mayon, on landslide-prone mountainsides, along vulnerable coastlines, atop earthquake fault lines, and in low-lying villages often engulfed by flash floods.

Cambodia extradites alleged cyberfraud kingpin to China

BANGKOK, Jan 8, (AP): Cambodia's government said Wednesday it had arrested and extradited to China a tycoon who has been accused of running a huge online scam operation.

Cambodia's Interior Ministry said Prince Holding Group chairman Chen Zhi and two other Chinese citizens were arrested and extradited Tuesday at the request of Chinese authorities. Chen formerly had dual nationality but his Cambodian citizenship was revoked in December, it said.

U.S. prosecutors charged Chen in October with conspiracy charges alleging he masterminded a multinational cyberfraud network, used his other businesses to launder its profits and sanctioned violence against workers.

Prince had boasted of getting \$30 million a day from the scams, according to the indictment.

The U.S. Treasury Department and the U.K. Foreign Office imposed sanctions, while authorities also seized Chen Zhi's assets, which included properties worth at least \$100 million and \$14 billion worth in cryptocurrencies.

Scam centers have proliferated across Southeast Asia, swindling money from victims by persuading them to join bogus investment schemes.

According to estimates from the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime, scam victims worldwide lost between \$18 billion and \$37 billion in 2023.

The U.S. and U.K. imposed sanctions against Chen, 38, and

his companies' legitimate involvements or legally registered entities, which were primarily involved in real estate development and financial services.

U.S. authorities also seized what they said was an estimated \$14 billion in bitcoin linked to Chen or his operations, and charged him with wire fraud and money laundering conspiracies.

He was accused of sanctioning violence against workers, authorizing bribes to foreign officials and using his other businesses, such as online gambling and cryptocurrency mining, to launder illicit profits.

Prosecutors in the U.S. charged that his organization scammed 250 Americans out of millions of dollars, with one losing \$400,000 in cryptocurrency.

In 2024, Americans lost at least \$10 billion to Southeast Asia-based scams, according to the U.S. Treasury Department.

British authorities froze Chen's British businesses and assets, including a 12-million-euro mansion and a 100-million-euro office building in London.

Then other authorities followed. Singapore launched an investigation on Oct. 30 after announcing the seizure of financial assets belonging to Chen worth more than \$150 million Singaporean dollars (\$114 million) and a yacht. In Taiwan, police seized 26 luxury cars including a Ferrari, Bugatti, and a Porsche, while Hong Kong police seized financial assets. All three authorities launched investigations into Chen.

Kuwait oil price down to \$57.05 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by USD 1.09 to reach USD 57.05 per barrel on Wednesday, compared to USD 58.14 on Tuesday, reported the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC).

In global markets, the price of Brent crude went down by 74 cents to reach USD 59.96 per barrel, while the West Texas Intermediate went down by USD 1.14 to reach USD 55.99.

Participants praise the practical skills gained for career growth

Business

KIBS honors graduates of the 5th cohort of Cybersecurity Leaders Program and the 6th cohort of Certified Sharia Auditor Program



KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: Under the patronage of the Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and Chairman of Kuwait Institute of Banking Studies (KIBS), Mr. Basel A. Al-Haroon, the Kuwait Institute of Banking Studies honored on Tuesday, 06 January 2026, the graduates of the 5th cohort of the Cybersecurity Leaders Program and the 6th cohort of the Certified Sharia Auditor Program.

Both programs fall under Kafa'a Initiative, launched by CBK in collaboration with Kuwaiti banks and managed by KIBS, and dedicated to strengthening Kuwait's banking and financial sector by developing a sustainable pipeline of qualified national talent for future leadership roles.

Held from 14 September to 18 December 2025, the Cybersecurity Leaders Program was delivered in strategic partnership with SANS Institute, one of the world's leading providers of advanced cybersecurity training and internationally recognized certifications. The program also featured a specialized workshop under the supervision of the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), the most established global organization dedicated to strengthening financial sector resilience worldwide. The program targets Kuwaitis interested in the field of cybersecurity and offers them the opportunity to refine their skills and enhance their capabilities, with the aim of developing a generation of professional and specialized leaders capable of confronting cyber threats and risks by creating strategic programs to protect infrastructure and information systems in the banking and financial sectors and other sectors operating in Ku-

wait in accordance with the relevant international best practices.

A total of 30 participants successfully completed the program including fresh graduates and employees from various entities within and beyond the banking sector. The program supports the Central Bank of Kuwait's strategy to develop national talents specialized in cybersecurity, a strategy that aims to strengthen the banking sector and improve the com-

petencies of institutions and sectors across the State of Kuwait.

On the other hand, and aiming to enhance the efficiency of Sharia auditing in Sharia-compliant financial institutions, recognizing auditing as a core pillar of Sharia supervisory governance amid ongoing developments in the Islamic banking sector, the Certified Sharia Auditor Program was held from 09 April to 18 June 2025, and attended by an elite group of Kuwaitis who work in or are interested in Sharia auditing.

The growing demand of the banking and financial sectors for more specialized Sharia audit professionals along with the need to enhance the qualifications of existing talents was the motivation behind launching the program and the success it has achieved. Previous programs witnessed strong demand, contributing to the provision of Islamic banking institutions with distinguished national talents who successfully met all the requirements for obtaining this certification.

This program, which graduated 30 participants this year, is accredited by CBK, the Capital Markets Authority and Walbrook Institute London, UK.

Ms. Rana A. Al-Nibari, the KIBS Director General, congratulated the graduates and encouraged them to continue their self-development and keep pace with the rapid developments taking place around the world. She extended her gratitude to CBK and local banks for supporting KIBS' efforts in delivering specialized education, advanced training and professional development as a driver of economic growth, institutional excellence and the national economy with distinguished talents and competencies through the Institute's programs or Kafa'a.

Several graduates shared their reflections on the programs, expressing appreciation to CBK and KIBS for the opportunity to acquire practical knowledge and skills that will contribute to their professional advancement in the financial sector and other vital sectors of the State of Kuwait.

Boursa Kuwait closes lower

Premier and main market decline

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait closed trading on Thursday with its general index declining by 21.76 points, or 0.25 percent, to reach 8,838.08 points, with 285.4 million shares traded through 19,763 cash deals, valued at KD 76.8 million (about USD 234.2 million).

The Main Market Index declined by 34.84 points, or 0.43 percent, to reach 8,157.33 points, through trading of 132.6 million shares across 10,925 cash deals, valued at

KD 23.7 million (about USD 72.2 million).

The Premier Market Index also fell by 19.66 points, or 0.21 percent, to reach 9,443.72 points, through trading of 152.7 million shares across 8,838 deals, valued at KD 53 million (about USD 161.6 million).

Meanwhile, the Main 50 Index rose by 2.53 points, or 0.03 percent, to reach 8,641.58 points, through trading of 88.5 million shares across 6,002 cash deals, valued at KD 17 million (about USD 51.8 million). Alfa Energy, Ooredoo, Gulf Bank, and Manazil recorded the highest gains, while Dalqan A. Ik-tetab, Al-Taqqadum, and Imitiazat posted the biggest declines.

A historic experience for travellers

Kuwait Airways to launch flights to Sphinx, Egypt on 15 Jan 2026



Captain Abdulwahab Al-Shatti

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: Kuwait Airways continued its preparations to launch operations to its new destination of Sphinx in the Arab Republic of Egypt, commencing 15 January 2026, with three weekly flights operating on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. This new destination offers travellers a unique tourism experience, combining Egypt's ancient heritage with the distinguished travel experience on board the national carrier.

Kuwait Airways Acting Chief Executive Officer, Captain Abdulwahab Ibrahim Al-Shatti stated, "Kuwait Airways is pleased to announce the launch of its newest destination, Sphinx city, which represents an important addition to KAC's route network. This destination offers an exceptional opportunity for travellers wishing to explore its civilization, given the airport's proximity to the Pyramids and the Grand Egyptian Museum."

Al-Shatti added that the launch of operations to the destination of Sphinx, at the beginning of 2026 highlights Kuwait Airways' commit-

ment to meeting the expectations of its customers by providing a comfortable and flexible travel experience, whether for tourism, business, or education.

He emphasized the company's focus on delivering quality services and ensuring all means of comfort for passengers. He pointed out that this step reflects the national car-

rier's dedication to expanding its international flight network and providing diverse travel options that support the aspirations of travellers and provides them with varied options on their preferred carrier, Kuwait Airways.

Al-Shatti emphasized that the new destination represents the beginning of a series of expansions aimed at enhancing Kuwait Airways' services and meeting the needs of its valued passengers, through the highest standards of onboard entertainment, diverse in-flight programs, varied menu options, and the professionalism of the company's crew in providing exceptional services to passengers.

Al-Shatti concluded by emphasizing Kuwait Airways' commitment to providing its valued passengers with comprehensive services and eliminating all obstacles throughout their travel journey, from booking tickets and entering Terminal 4, through the completion of travel procedures, to boarding the aircraft to enjoy a comfortable and safe flight.

Mubadala leads Gulf funds

Gulf sovereign funds double US AI investments to over \$70 bln

By Inaas Awadhi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: The economic website Semaphore reported that investments by Gulf sovereign wealth funds in the United States doubled last year, surpassing USD 70 billion in the artificial intelligence sector.

The report noted that Gulf funds increased their investments in AI, which reflects their support for President Donald Trump's ambitions to reshape the world's largest economy.

According to data from consulting firm Global SWF, Gulf sovereign wealth funds invested more in the United States in 2025 than in any previous year, both in absolute terms and as a share of their total investments.

The figures highlight the growing influence of these funds in global capital flows and major dealmaking. The seven largest Gulf sovereign wealth funds invested a combined USD 119 billion in 2025, marking an increase of more than 40 percent compared to 2024, despite lower oil prices that reduced the region's cash surplus.

Furthermore, future projections by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) indicate that AI could contribute between 20 percent and 34 percent annual growth to Gulf economies until 2030, reflecting a notable rise in investments and the technology's economic applications.

PwC also projected that AI will contribute approximately USD 320 billion to the economies of the Middle East and the Gulf by 2030,

signaling a strong and sustainable growth trend in investments and smart applications across multiple sectors, particularly in Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

In this regard, Diego Lopez, Managing Director of GlobalSWF, noted that it is unclear whether this surge in US investment is directly linked to President Donald Trump's policies or simply reflects the availability of investment opportunities in assets aligned with major trends such as AI and climate investment.

The United States accounted for 59 percent of all deals made last year by the seven most active Gulf sovereign wealth funds. They are:

- Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA)
- Abu Dhabi Developmental Holding Company (ADQ)
- Dubai Investment Corporation (DIC)
- Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA),
- Mubadala,
- the Public Investment Fund (PIF)
- Qatar Investment Authority (QIA)

This reflects a wide global trend of state-owned funds increasingly focusing their investments on the US.

Saudi Arabia's PIF was the largest sovereign funds investor in the US last year, led by its USD 29 billion acquisition of video game developer Electronic Arts, followed by Mubadala with a USD 24 billion investment. Mubadala has been among the world's most active sovereign wealth funds for several years and aims to double its

size over the next five to ten years.

Gulf funds continue to support major global deals and expand their US investments. Emad Investments, the PIF, and the QIA, all based in Abu Dhabi, are backing Paramount SkyDance's USD 108 billion bid to acquire Warner Bros. Discovery.

Rank of AI Funds' US Investments

1. Mubadala, UAE - With investments ranging from USD 4.5 billion to USD 5 billion, Mubadala is the largest Gulf investor in artificial intelligence, focusing heavily on the US market, particularly AI companies, data centers, and digital infrastructure.

2. Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) - Investing approximately USD 3 billion through global technology portfolios, KIA maintains a significant presence in AI companies as part of its long-term investment strategy.

3. Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) - With investments around USD 3 billion, QIA's contributions include direct and indirect stakes in US AI companies, emphasizing advanced technologies and innovation.

4. Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) - By investing between USD 1 billion and USD 1.5 billion, ADIA has smaller but stable investments within US technology portfolios.

5. Public Investment Fund, Saudi Arabia (PIF) - With investments under USD 1 billion in AI, PIF's direct US AI holdings are limited and are part of broader technology investments despite the fund's large global size.

Over 400 Kuwaiti companies now operating in Türkiye

Türkiye-Kuwait trade surges 52% to \$1.08 billion in 2025

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: As of 2025, the total trade volume between Türkiye and Kuwait increased by 52% compared to the previous year, reaching approximately 1.08 billion US dollars. We take great pride in surpassing the one-billion-dollar threshold for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic.

H.E. Tuba Nur Sönmez, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to the State of Kuwait, highlighted the remarkable growth in trade relations between the two countries, noting that this achievement reflects the strengthening partnership and mutual confidence between Türkiye and Kuwait. She emphasized that the steady rise in bilateral trade marks an important milestone in economic cooperation and opens new avenues for future collaboration.

Furthermore, Türkiye's exports to Kuwait rose by 58% in 2025, amounting to 887 million dollars, while Kuwait's exports to Türkiye grew by 29%, reaching 195 million dollars. The Ambassador expressed confidence

that these figures can be multiplied in a short period, noting that Türkiye's construction, defense, and tourism sectors offer highly attractive opportunities for Kuwaiti investors. The Embassy stands ready to provide all necessary support, guidance, and facilitation to Kuwaiti business leaders and investors.

The recent momentum in bilateral trade and investment relations has been strongly driven by the increase in high-level visits between Türkiye and Kuwait. During President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to Kuwait last October, both leaderships reached a clear consensus to further expand the trade volume. Initial results of these efforts are now beginning to materialize.

Currently, more than 400 Kuwaiti companies operate in Türkiye, while approximately 50 Turkish firms – particularly in the construction sector – are active in Kuwait, where they play a significant role in infrastructure projects.

On the investment front, notable progress has also been achieved. A del-

egation from the Investment and Finance Office of the Presidency of Türkiye conducted a visit to Kuwait on 29-30 September 2025. Following meetings with various institutions, the Embassy hosted an Investment Reception bringing together Kuwaiti investors and business leaders with Turkish officials. Such events will continue to be organized in the future.

Additionally, the 11th round of the Joint Economic Commission meeting will be held in Türkiye this year to comprehensively address bilateral trade issues. At the end of this month, a Türkiye-Kuwait Business Forum and B2B meetings are also scheduled to take place in cooperation with MÜSİAD and the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, with pre-registration already open.

To conclude, Ambassador Sönmez reaffirmed her belief that these growing partnerships will continue to expand, serving as a model for other countries and reinforcing the strong economic ties between Türkiye and Kuwait.

As the strategic partner of the 49th Engineering Design Exhibition

KFH promotes engineering creativity among students and graduates



His Excellency the Minister at the Kuwait Finance House pavilion.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in the 49th Engineering Design Exhibition at Kuwait University. Organized by the College of Engineering and Petroleum, the two-day event was held under the patronage of Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and Acting Minister of Finance, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investments, Dr. Sabeeh Abdulaziz Al-Mukhaizeem.

Kuwait University honored KFH in recognition of its leading role in supporting students and developing their skills and sponsoring their graduation projects. Receiving this honor on behalf of the Bank, Executive Manager Corporate Relations and CSR at KFH, Faisal Alsurayye, said that the Bank's participation as a

strategic partner in the Engineering Design Exhibition for many years, is part of its keenness to support students, education and youth, promote engineering creativity among students and graduates, and encourage scientific initiatives that contribute to achieving development across various fields.

He noted that KFH is the main and largest supporter of graduation projects at the College of Engineering and Petroleum, providing support to approximately 300 students each year.

Alsurayye added that KFH has dedicated the annual Sustainability Award, which is granted to the winning projects of the first and second places focusing on environment and sustainability.



Faisal Alsurayye receiving the honorary shield from His Excellency Minister Dr. Sabeeh Al-Mukhaizeem.

He affirmed that through its strategic partnership with the College of Engineering and Petroleum, KFH contributes to creating a thriving academic environment for nurturing young minds, empowering them to grow, and enabling them to contribute to Kuwait's development through their projects.

Vice President for Academic Support Services at Kuwait University, Dr. Abdulla Al-Mutawa, praised KFH's keenness to support the college's various activities and outstanding students. Meanwhile, students behind the graduation projects commended KFH for its sponsorship of their projects, expressing their appreciation for the Bank's prominent role in social responsibility.

Tehran faces growing pressure

Protests in Iran sparked by economic woes spread nationwide, activists say

DUBAI, Jan 8, (AP): Protests in Iran sparked by economic woes have spread nationwide across the Islamic Republic, activists said Thursday, signaling both their staying power and intensity as they challenge the country's theocracy.

Wednesday saw the most-intense day of demonstrations, reaching rural towns and major cities in every province though still localized enough for daily life to continue in Tehran, Iran's capital, and elsewhere. So far, violence around the demonstrations has killed at least 38 people while more than 2,200 others have been detained, said the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency.

The growth of the protests increases the pressure on Iran's civilian government and its Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. So far, authorities haven't shut down the internet or fully flooded the streets with security forces like they did to put down the 2022 Mahsa Amini demonstrations. But any intensification may seem them act.

Meanwhile, the protests themselves have remained broadly leaderless, though a call for protests by Iran's exiled crown prince will test whether or not demonstrators are being swayed by messages from abroad.

"The lack of a viable alternative has undermined past protests in Iran," wrote Nate Swanson of the Washington-based Atlantic Council, who studies Iran.

"There may be a thousand Iranian dissident activists who, given a chance, could emerge as respected statesmen, as labor leader Lech Wałęsa did in Poland at the end of the Cold War. But so far, the Iranian security apparatus has arrested, persecuted and exiled all of the country's potential transformational leaders."

On Wednesday, at least 37 protests took place across the country, activists said. They included Shiraz, where online videos purported to show an anti-riot truck using a water cannon to target demonstrators. The state-run IRNA news agency, which has largely been silent about the demonstrations, reported on a mass demonstration in Bojnourd, as well as demonstrations in Kerman and Kermanshah.

Iranian officials have offered no acknowledgment of the scale of the protests. However, there has been reporting regarding security officials being hurt or killed. The judiciary's Mizan news agency report a police colonel suffered fatal stab wounds in a town outside of Tehran, while the semi-official Fars news agency said gunmen killed two security force members and wounded 30 others in a shooting in the city of Lordegan in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province.

Demonsations continued Thursday, with merchants closing their shops in Iran's Kurdish province and soon after in other cities.

It remains unclear why Iranian officials have yet to crack down harder on the demonstrators. U.S. President Donald Trump's warned last week that if Tehran "violently kills peaceful protesters," America "will come to their rescue."

Trump's comments drew a new rebuke from Iran's Foreign Ministry.

"Recalling the long history of criminal interventions by successive U.S. administrations in Iran's internal affairs, the Foreign Ministry considers claims of

concern for the great Iranian nation to be hypocritical, aimed at deceiving public opinion and covering up the numerous crimes committed against Iranians," it said.

But those comments haven't stopped the U.S. State Department on the social platform X from highlighting online footage purporting to show demonstrators putting up stickers naming roads after Trump or throwing away government-subsidized rice.

"When prices are set so high that neither consumers can afford to buy nor farmers can afford to sell, everyone loses," the State Department said in one message. "It makes no difference if this rice is thrown away."

The demonstrations so far broadly appear to be leaderless, like other rounds of protests in Iran in recent years. However, Iran's exiled Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi, the son of the late shah, has urged the public in Iran to shout from their windows and roofs on Thursday and Friday nights at 8 p.m. (1630 GMT).

"Wherever you are, whether in the streets or even from your own homes, I call on you to begin chanting exactly at this time," Pahlavi said in an online video that's also been promoted by Iranian satellite news channels abroad. "Based on your response, I will announce the next calls to action."

Whether people take part will be a sign of possible support for Pahlavi, whose support of and from Israel has drawn criticism in the past - particularly after the 12-day war Israel waged on Iran in June. Demonstrators have shouted in support of the shah in some demonstrations, but it isn't clear whether that's support for Pahlavi or a desire to return to a time before the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Iranian officials appeared to be taking the planned protests seriously. The hard-line Kayhan newspaper published a video online claiming security forces would use drones to identify those taking part.

Meanwhile, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi remains imprisoned by authorities after her arrest in December.

"Since Dec. 28, 2025, the people of Iran have taken to the streets, just as they did in 2009, 2019," her son Ali Rahmani said. "Each time, the same demands came up: an end to the Islamic Republic, an end to this patriarchal, dictatorial and religious regime, the end of the clerics, the end of the mullahs' regime."

Iran has faced rounds of nationwide protests in recent years. As sanctions tightened and Iran struggled after a 12-day war with Israel in June, its rial currency collapsed in December, reaching 1.4 million to \$1. Protests began soon after, with demonstrators chanting against Iran's theocracy.

Prior to Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution, the rial was broadly stable, trading at around 70 to \$1. At the time of Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, \$1 traded for 32,000 rials. Shops in markets across the country have shut down as part of the protests.

This round of protests has yet to reach the level of the months of protests surrounding the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in police custody in 2022. Amini was detained over not wearing her hijab, or headscarf, to the liking of authorities. Her death became a rallying cry for women who continue to refuse to wear the hijab.

Wholesale price index rises 1.1% in Sept

Agriculture and manufacturing sectors lead price growth

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: Statistics from the Central Statistical Bureau showed that the wholesale price index in Kuwait increased by 1.1 percent year-on-year at the end of September, driven by a 0.9 percent rise in the imported goods index and a 1.5 percent increase in the locally produced goods index, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to the statistics, the overall wholesale price index month-on-month rose 0.2 percent in September compared to August, reflecting a 0.1 percent increase in

the imported goods price index and a 0.4 percent rise in the locally produced goods index.

The main "Agriculture and Fishing" group index increased by 3.6 percent year-on-year, led by a 3.4 percent rise in crop and livestock production activities, a 1.1 percent increase in imported goods prices, and a 9 percent increase in locally produced goods prices.

In contrast, the "Mining and Quarrying" group index fell by 0.6 percent, following a 0.8 percent drop in sand and gravel prices and a 1.4 percent decrease in locally produced goods prices.

Meanwhile, prices of imported goods rose by 0.1 percent year-on-year.

The manufacturing sector index in Kuwait

rose by 1 percent in September compared to the same month in 2024, driven by increases in food prices (0.6 percent), beverage prices (1.7 percent), textile prices (5.2 percent), chemical prices (0.2 percent), and electronic and computer products (0.6 percent).

By production stage, prices of finished goods and intermediate goods increased by 1 percent and 1.6 percent, respectively, while raw material prices remained stable year-on-year.

Prices of consumer goods, capital goods, and production goods for final use rose by 1.4 percent, 0.7 percent, and 0.9 percent, respectively.

The wholesale price index serves as a major economic indicator for monitoring developments in Kuwait's economy.

As part of its support to the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign

National Bank of Kuwait warns against fake investment promo on social media channels

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: National Bank of Kuwait continues promoting the "Let's Be Aware" campaign introduced by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in cooperation with local banks and Kuwait Banking Association (KBA).

In this light, the bank intensifies publishing awareness content by sharing educational material including video clips, text messages, and tips across its social media platforms and other digital channels, as well as reposting CBK's communications. This aims to raise awareness among all people and familiarize them with different fraud schemes and the required precautions to avoid banking scams.

In this context, NBK highlights scams using Deepfake, an advanced AI technology used to create videos in which a person's face and voice are digitally altered so that they appear to be those of a famous and trusted person. This scam targets convincing people to invest in certain companies, trade on certain platforms, or pro-

mote investments. Deepfake is also used to create convincing fake videos or audio recordings that can deceive individuals into giving away sensitive information or making unauthorized transactions.

NBK advises customers to beware of ads about lucrative investments, especially those appearing on social media, tempting people with cash prizes, or ads impersonating well-known companies aiming to trick them into investing in attractive stocks and bonds with high returns, provide false information about a real investment, or entering trading websites and registering personal information to obtain profits, as all these are scams for identity theft, and obtaining personal and banking information.

NBK also urges customers to avoid communicating with unknown parties impersonating official institutions by using the same logo or the same IVR message to trick victims into believing they are employees of that institution, which may expose the victim to fraud from unknown parties. Therefore, NBK calls to ignore such calls and not disclose any banking information to any party, in addition to following the bank's tips and instructions to avoid any scams.

Additionally, it affirms that it will never ask customers for personal information via e-mail, SMS or phone calls, warning them to respond to such scam messages trying to obtain their banking information to steal their money.

NBK's role is not limited to warning but also extends to providing various safe investment and savings alternatives that suit all customer segments.

With the ever-evolving fraud threats using various techniques, NBK is keen to protect customers and increase their awareness of how to steer clear of fraud by following the tips provided on all its digital channels.

CMA scraps swap agreements, expands investor base

Saudi to fully open capital market to foreign investors

RIYADH, Jan 8, (Xinhua): Saudi Arabia's Capital Market Authority (CMA) announced Tuesday it will open its capital market to all categories of foreign investors starting Feb. 1.

The amendments eliminate the concept of the Qualified Foreign Investor (QFI), thereby allowing all categories of foreign investors to access the market without the need to meet qualification requirements.

It also eliminates the regulatory frame-

work governing swap agreements through which non-resident foreign investors could obtain economic benefits only from listed securities.

The CMA stated that the decision aims to expand and diversify the investor base, support greater investment inflows, and enhance overall market liquidity.

International investors held over 590 billion Saudi riyals (about 157.3 billion U.S.

dollars) in the Saudi capital market by the end of the third quarter of 2025, with about 519 billion riyals invested in the Main Market, marking an increase from the end of 2024, when foreign ownership stood at 498 billion riyals, the statement showed.

The CMA expects the amended regulations to help draw additional international investment and further strengthen the Saudi capital market.

Jordan extends temporary residency for foreigners to boost tourism, investment

AMMAN, Jan 8, (Xinhua): Jordan on Thursday extended temporary residency permits for foreigners to three months, up from one month, in a move aimed at promoting tourism and attracting investment.

Interior Minister Mazen Faraya said the new rules apply to all foreigners entering through Jordan's border crossings, except those on work visas. Under the updated policy, visitors will receive a three-month residency stamp directly on their passports upon arrival.

The change removes the previous requirement for visitors

to extend their initial one-month permits at local security centers.

Faraya said the measures are part of a broader strategy to stimulate the national economy. Longer stays are expected to encourage growth in the medical tourism sector and give foreign investors more flexibility to explore business opportunities in Jordan.

Jordan welcomed around 6.1 million foreign tourists in 2024 and is expected to report stronger arrivals for 2025, according to data released by the kingdom's tourist ministry.

US jobless claims hit 208k but remain historically low

Fed cuts rates

WASHINGTON, Jan 8, (AP): U.S. filings for jobless benefits rose in the last week of 2025 but remain historically low, despite signs that the labor market is weakening.

The number of Americans filing for jobless claims for the week ending Jan. 3 rose by 8,000 to 208,000, up from 200,000 the previous week, the Labor Department reported Thursday. The figure was right in line with what analysts surveyed by the data firm FactSet were expecting.

Applications for unemployment aid are viewed as a proxy for layoffs and are close to a real-time indicator of the health of the job market.

Last month, the government reported that the U.S. gained a decent 64,000 jobs in November but lost 105,000 in October as federal workers departed after cutbacks by the Trump administration. That helped to push the unemployment rate up to 4.6%, the highest since 2021.

The government's December jobs report will be released Friday, with analysts expecting that the U.S. added 55,000 non-farm jobs.

On Wednesday, the Labor Department reported that businesses posted far fewer jobs in November than the previous month, a sign that employers aren't yet ramping up hiring even as growth has picked up.

Businesses and government agencies posted 7.1 million open jobs at the end of November, down from

7.4 million in October. Layoffs also dropped as companies seem to be retaining workers even as they are reluctant to add staff, a trend economists refer to as "low hire, low fire."

Recent government data has revealed a labor market in which hiring has clearly lost momentum, hobbled by uncertainty raised by President Donald Trump's tariffs and the lingering effects of the high interest rates the Fed engineered in 2022 and 2023 to rein in a spike of pandemic-induced inflation. Since March, job creation has fallen to an average 35,000 a month, compared to 71,000 in the 12 months ended in March.

In an attempt to stabilize a softening labor market, the Federal Reserve last month trimmed its benchmark lending rate by a quarter-point, its third straight cut.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell said members of the committee are increasingly concerned that the job market is even weaker than it appears. Powell suggested that recent job figures could be revised lower by as much as 60,000, which would mean employers have actually been shedding an average of about 25,000 jobs a month since the spring, when the Trump administration rolled out its sweeping import taxes.

Companies that have recently announced job cuts include UPS, General Motors, Amazon and Verizon.

The Labor Department reported Thursday that the four-week average of claims, which softens some of the week-to-week volatility, fell by 7,250 to 211,750.

The total number of Americans filing for jobless benefits for the previous week ending Dec. 27 jumped by 56,000 to 1.91 million, the government said.

Institutional investors own just 1% of US homes

Trump targets institutional investors in housing market

WASHINGTON, Jan 8, (AP): President Donald Trump said Wednesday that he wants to block large institutional investors from buying homes, saying that a ban would make it easier for younger families to buy their first homes.

Trump - who has been under pressure to address voters' concerns about affordability ahead of November midterm elections - is tapping into long-standing fears that corporate ownership of homes has pushed out traditional buyers, forcing more people to rent. But his plan does little to address the overarching challenges for the housing market: a national shortage of home construction and prices that have climbed faster than incomes.

"People live in homes, not corporations," Trump said in a social media post as he called on Congress to codify his ban.

Last month, Trump pledged in a prime-time address that he would roll out "some of the most aggressive housing reform plans in American history" this year. The president said he would discuss housing and affordability in more detail in two weeks at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, an event known for attracting CEOs, wealthy financiers and academics with a global focus who often run contrary to Trump's populist rhetoric.

The president has in the past floated extending the 30-year mortgage to 50 years in order to lower monthly payments, an idea that has been criticized because it would reduce people's ability to create housing equity and increase their own wealth.

With Trump's proposed ban, the challenge is that institutional investors are only a tiny sliver of homebuyers, accounting for just 1% of total single-family housing stock, according to an August analysis by researchers at the American Enterprise Institute, a center-right think tank based in Washington. The analysis defined these investors as owning 100 or more properties.

The analysis notes that institutional ownership varies nationwide, reaching 4.2% in Atlanta, 2.6% in Dallas and 2.2% in Houston. But these investors tend not to dominate neighborhoods, even if they're generally more concentrated in lower- and middle-income communities.

Some Democrats have called for crackdowns on corporate ownership of homes, but Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., told reporters Wednesday that the Trump administration could cause housing prices to rise by allowing the real estate companies Compass and Anywhere to merge.

"But he's feeling the heat because the American people want to see us lower the cost of housing and it is

Democrats who are committed to getting that done," Warren said.

The Senate in October passed a bipartisan bill sponsored by Warren that would create incentives for local governments to streamline zoning regulations, among other policies, to increase the supply of housing, but the measure has been held up in the Republican-majority House.

The larger challenge has been a shortage of new construction, such that Goldman Sachs in October estimated in October that 3 million to 4 million additional homes beyond the normal construction levels would need to be built to relieve cost pressures. Mortgage rates also climbed in the inflation that followed the coronavirus pandemic, causing monthly payments on home loans to increase dramatically faster than incomes.

Still, Trump said last month that an increase in new construction would create a dilemma as it could cause existing home values to drop and that would come at the expense of many existing homeowners' net worth.

"I don't want to knock those numbers down because I want them to continue to have a big value for their house," Trump said. "At the same time, I want to make it possible for young people out there and other people to buy housing. In a way, they're at conflict."

Beijing to investigate Meta's Manus AI deal

HONG KONG, Jan 8, (AP): China said on Thursday it would assess and investigate Meta's acquisition of artificial intelligence startup Manus, in a move highlighting its technology rivalry with the U.S..

Meta announced last week it was buying Manus, which is Singapore-based with Chinese roots, as the California tech giant behind Facebook and Instagram expands its AI offerings across its platforms.

It is a rare acquisition by a U.S. tech group of an AI company with Chinese roots, at a time of heightened frictions between Washington and Beijing.

On Thursday, China's Commerce Ministry spokesperson He Yadong told reporters that it would work with relevant departments to assess and investigate whether Meta's acquisition of Manus is consistent with Chinese laws and regulations.

Any enterprises engaging in outward investment, technology export, data transfer and cross-border mergers and acquisitions must comply with Chinese laws, he said.

Meta and Manus did not immediately reply to requests for comment.

"Security has become the top concern for Chinese policymakers," said Gary Ng, a senior economist for Asia Pacific at investment bank Natixis. "Any tech transfer that could give the U.S. an edge in competitiveness will be heavily scrutinized."

While the company behind Manus is Singapore-based Butterfly Effect Pte, its roots can be traced back to Beijing-registered entities which were founded in China a few years ago. Meta said last week there would be "no continuing Chinese ownership interests in Manus AI" following the acquisition, and that Manus would discontinue its services and operations in China. Meta's platforms including Facebook and Instagram are still banned in China under the country's "Great Firewall".

Manus said it would continue to operate in Singapore, where most of its employees are now based.

Cui Fan, a professor at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, raised questions in a public post on the Chinese social media site WeChat over the acquisition's compliance with Chinese laws and technology export controls.

"A key question is whether any technologies prohibited or restricted from export under Chinese laws and regulations are exported without a license," he wrote.

The "general-purpose" AI agent released by Manus last year can automatically perform multi-step complex work such as breaking down tasks into smaller steps. It can be used for free but also offers paid subscription packages. Last month, Manus said its annual recurring revenue had reached more than \$100 million.

OpenAI's \$500 bln shift faces Musk trial scrutiny

Musk-OpenAI fraud case heads to trial

WASHINGTON, Jan 8, (AP): A federal judge on Wednesday indicated a jury will be allowed to decide whether artificial intelligence trailblazer OpenAI hoodwinked its billionaire co-founder Elon Musk during its evolution from a nonprofit research lab into a capitalistic enterprise now valued at \$500 billion.

Without issuing an official ruling, U.S. District Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers made it clear that she intended to reject OpenAI's motion to dismiss a 17-month-old case that Musk filed against a San Francisco startup that he helped create in 2015.

"This case is going to trial," Gonzalez Rogers said emphatically during an occasionally 90-minute hearing held in Oakland, California.

The judge said she still needed to figure out some of the logistics of how the trial will be set up, as well as whether to dismiss unjust enrichment allegations that Musk has made against Microsoft, which has accumulated a \$135 billion stake in OpenAI since investing \$1 billion in a for-profit subsidiary that the startup created in 2019.

But the judge told lawyers that there is sufficient evidence for a jury to consider in a legal showdown pitting Musk - the world's richest man with an estimated fortune of \$713 billion - against OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, whose fortune is currently pegged at \$2 billion. Both

billionaires would likely be summoned to court to testify under oath if the trial proceeds.

"Part of this is about whether a jury believes the people who will testify and whether they are credible," Gonzalez Rogers said.

It's unclear when the judge will schedule the trial.

The case revolves around OpenAI's origins as a nonprofit research lab that Musk and Altman launched to develop artificial intelligence designed primarily for the good of humanity. That mission, the two founders believed, could serve as a foil to AI being developed by Google and other profit-driven companies that, they claimed, could deploy the technology recklessly as they strived to make more money.

Musk contributed \$40 million, mostly funneled through donor-advised funds that he had set up, in addition to four Tesla vehicles. Then he and Altman had a falling out over OpenAI's future, according to evidence that has surfaced so far.

At that point, Musk began to suspect that Altman and another OpenAI executive, Greg Brockman, might be plotting to transform the research lab into a profit-seeking company, according to evidence submitted to the judge.

Although Altman sought to reassure Musk he remained committed to OpenAI's non-

profit mission, Musk decided to cut ties with the startup and eventually launched a rival, xAI, that was valued at \$230 billion in a just-completed fundraising.

A 2017 diary entry by OpenAI's Brockman was among the information that Gonzalez Rogers cited to support her rationale for allowing Musk's lawsuit to go to trial.

In the diary, Brockman mused about his desire to become a billionaire and wrote, "We've been thinking that maybe we should just flip to a for profit. Making the money for us sounds great and all," according to court filings.

At one point, OpenAI's own board of directors had serious enough misgivings about Altman's motives to trigger his firing in 2023 before quickly bringing him back as CEO in a comeback that Microsoft helped orchestrate.

One of the key issues that must be decided before Musk can pursue his fraud claims against OpenAI at trial is pinpointing when the alleged deceit occurred. That's because there's a three-year statute of limitations on his fraud claims.

Gonzalez Rogers indicated she will probably let a jury first decide when the alleged fraud against Musk occurred. The trial then would be allowed to proceed to the fraud phase if it's determined that the suspected deceit began less than three years before Musk's August 2024 filing of his lawsuit.

France vows to fight EU-Mercosur free trade pact

EU pushes forward long-discussed free trade deal with South America

BRUSSELS, Jan 8, (AP): The European Union is renewing internal negotiations over a free trade agreement with five South American nations neighboring Venezuela a week after the United States' audacious raid there to detain President Nicolás Maduro.

Ministers of Agriculture from across the 27 European Union nations met in Brussels on Wednesday to discuss protecting farmers while also reaping the economic and geopolitical benefits of a free trade deal with the Mercosur nations of Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay. The EU's trade negotiator Maroš Šefčovič said after the meeting that while the deal would increase EU agrifood exports by up to 50%.

"It's a landmark one. This is the biggest free trade agreement we ever negotiated," Šefčovič said. He said that EU trading partners "value the EU for particular one thing in this turbulent world, one thing above all, this is credibility. So therefore, we must, safeguard this priceless currency by remaining a trusted and reliable trading partner."

He said that EU negotiations over Mercosur will continue on Friday amid speculation that a deal could be signed in Paraguay on Jan. 12.

Fierce opposition from France in December, fired up by enraged farmers, derailed the deal and forced European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to scrap a trip to Brazil where top EU officials had hoped to sign the EU-Mercosur deal after 26 years of negotiations.

Italy is seen as the linchpin of the deal. If Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni joins the deal's supporters led by Germany, then it will pass over the objections of France and Poland. She posted on X on Tuesday that she welcomed von der Leyen's proposal to fast-track funds to farmers but Meloni did not promise crucial backing to the deal.

The Mercosur trade deal covers a market of 780 million people and a quarter of the globe's gross domestic product, and would progressively remove duties on almost all goods traded between the two blocs. Such a massive free trade deal would provide a stark counterpoint in South America of economic diplomacy compared to the Trump administration's incursion into Venezuela and threats across the region.

The EU is seeking to forge new trade ties amid commercial tensions with the U.S. and China, and the December delay of Mercosur was seen to diminish the EU's negotiating credibility.

French President Emmanuel Macron led opposition to the deal, which he sees as fueling a surging far right that rallies support by criticizing the deal. His centrist government has demanded safeguards to monitor and stop large economic disruption in the EU, increased regulations in the Mercosur nations like pesticide restrictions, and more inspections of imports at EU ports.

French Agriculture Minister Annie Genevard reaffirmed Wednesday France's opposition to the Mercosur deal, because she said it threatens sectors including beef, chicken, sugar, ethanol and honey.

"As long as the combat is not over, nothing is lost," she told French news broadcaster France Info, referring to the ongoing negotiations over the deal.

If the EU Commission signs the deal on Jan. 12, it will be debated at the European Parliament, she said. "There's no guarantee the deal will be



Women atop a tractor support farmers as they protest at the Arc de Triomphe against the European Union's negotiations over the Mercosur trade deal with five South American nations, Thursday, Jan. 8, 2026 in Paris. (AP)

approved by the European Parliament," she said.

She also acknowledged Italy "will likely" approve the deal.

Supporters say the EU-Mercosur deal would offer a clear alternative to Beijing's export controls and Washington's tariff blitzkrieg, while detractors say it will undermine both environmental regulations and the EU's iconic agricultural sector.

Šefčovič said recent negotiations within the EU over the deal had led to new safeguards like "semiautomatic triggering thresholds" that would snap into place if Mercosur imports are found to be deeply undercutting

EU products.

The political tensions that have marked Mercosur in recent years - especially between Argentina's far-right President Javier Milei and Brazil's center-left Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the bloc's two main partners - have not deterred South American leaders from pursuing an alliance with Europe that will benefit their agricultural sectors.

Venezuela was in Mercosur until 2016, when the trade bloc suspended its membership, a move criticized by Venezuela's new prime minister Delcy Rodríguez, then the foreign minister.

Is it even possible to up the ante?

'The Pitt' is back for another harrowing 15-hour shift

LOS ANGELES, Jan 8. (AP): When we first glimpse Noah Wyle's Michael Robinavitch - aka Dr. Robby, of course - in Season 2 of "The Pitt," he's looking darned good, truth be told. The beloved ER doc is riding his motorcycle to work, wearing nice shades, hair rustling in the early-morning Pittsburgh breeze.

Wait - hair rustling? It's only then we notice what's missing. Can it be that Robby - dedicated, wise, overworked, charming and brilliant - isn't wearing a helmet?

It's such a jarring sight that, launching a Zoom interview with Wyle, it's one of the first things we must inquire about. Did we remember that right? Were we supposed to notice?

Yes and yes. "You're supposed to notice that he doesn't wear it," Wyle confirms. "But then, he tells people that he does. Which means, you know he's lying. We don't know what else he's lying about."

More broadly, it's all part of the goal this new season, after an impactful, Emmy-winning debut that culminated with a mass shooting. There were worries that they wouldn't be able to up the ante. Well, the idea is not to up the ante, Wyle says, but to more deeply explore characters and their issues.

"Our job isn't to come up with another stunt that creates drama to be the catalyst for excitement on the show," Wyle says. "Our job is to be faithful to the characters that we've initiated. To plot them in space and time in a real three-dimensional way, and allow their lives and what they're going through to generate the

drama and the tension."

Hence the no-helmet scene - a last-minute decision the night before. They'd planned for Robby to wear a helmet. But Wyle says he suggested to executive producer John Wells that if he didn't, "We won't know what to trust and what not to trust from that moment forward, and the audience will be privy to a secret that the characters around him aren't."

"He dug it, so we went with that."

The timing - July 4 - was hardly chosen haphazardly. Think holiday gatherings, fireworks, injuries we can imagine and worse ones we can't. But also, timing is important for the characters - it's been 10 months since last season's events.

Dr. Frank Langdon has spent those months in rehab. The hard-driving senior resident with the much-noticed dimpled chin ran into serious trouble in the first season when he was caught stealing prescription meds to feed his addiction.

Well, Frank's been given reprieve, and he's on his first day back. Robby, for one, is not thrilled.

But Patrick Ball, who plays Frank, is very relieved at his own reprieve. He'd been biting his nails as he awaited his character's fate.

"Pretty much the entirety of my time on 'The Pitt' has been praying for a job and hoping I don't get fired," Ball quips. "I was sweating pretty hard." He got the good news that he'd be back in a call from Wells, while walking on a rainy New York street.

Katherine LaNasa, who plays all-knowing



This image released by HBO Max shows Noah Wyle, left, in a scene from 'The Pitt.' (AP)

charge nurse Dana, had a similar sense of uncertainty. She was a breakout star of the first season, winning one of the show's five Emmys. But her character also seemed headed out the door, disillusioned by a brutal punch from an unruly patient.

"I'm like, really, please don't get rid of me

now!" LaNasa says she thought. Happily, Dana is back, taking charge as her title implies, with that sassy but maternal demeanor.

"I think of her as like a basketball coach," says LaNasa of Dana. "She's looking at what's going on, and what do people need to do their best? ... I have children that are 24 years apart

in age and so, I feel like I've just been mothering my whole life."

A key arrival in the expanded cast is Dr. Baran Al-Hashimi, who's planning to take over from Robby as chief attending doctor while he goes on sabbatical (on his motorcycle).

Played by Sepideh Moafi, Al-Hashimi is a big proponent of AI and new technology - something Robby's deeply skeptical of. On top of that, they're not used to sharing leadership roles, even for one day (or season). "It's a bit of a learning curve," Moafi notes.

Talk about a learning curve: The actors, along with their characters, have absorbed a lot more new medicine.

"There's a LOT more procedures," pronounces Taylor Dearden, who plays Melissa "Mel" King, now a third-year resident. One of the first ones we witness is a doozy - a "clamshell," in which surgeons cut across the chest to expose the heart and lungs. Cue Al-Hashimi's line: "Convert to clamshell!"

As for Mel, who is neurodivergent, she's dealing with a lot. "All the confidence Mel's gained over the past 10 months is completely eroded ... because she's named in a malpractice suit," Dearden explains. "It's a really tough day for Mel, trying to bolster her own self-esteem when the odds are very much against it."

Wyle - who produces and writes as well as stars - says it happens all the time: People in the health care industry, who have roundly embraced the show, weigh in with stories. So do patients.

'Client not guilty of murder'

High-profile attorney quits Nick Reiner case

LOS ANGELES, Jan 8. (AP): The high-profile private attorney for Nick Reiner resigned from his case Wednesday for reasons he said he could not reveal, and he later told reporters that under California law his client is definitely not guilty of murder in the killing of his parents, Rob Reiner and Michele Singer Reiner.

"Circumstances beyond our control and more importantly circumstances beyond Nick's control have dictated that, sadly, it's made it impossible to continue our representation," lawyer Alan Jackson said as he stood with his team outside a Los Angeles courthouse.

But, Jackson added, after weeks of investigation, "what we've learned, and you can take this to the bank, is that pursuant to the laws of this state, pursuant to the law of California, Nick Reiner is not guilty of murder. Print that."

Jackson would not specify what he meant and took no questions at the brief news conference, but it was the first direct statement from a Nick Reiner representative about his guilt or innocence in the 3 1/2 weeks since the killings.

He spoke after a hearing where Reiner was supposed to be arraigned and enter a plea to two charges of first-degree murder. Instead, after meeting with the Judge Theresa McGonigle in chambers, Jackson, at his own request, was replaced by a public defender and the plea hearing was postponed to Feb. 23.

Reveal

Jackson said that for legal and ethical reasons, he could not reveal why he had to resign. He first appeared in court representing Nick Reiner at a hearing a few days after the beloved actor-director and his wife of 36 years were found dead with stab wounds in their home in the upscale Brentwood section of Los Angeles. Jackson did not say how he was hired - or who hired him. Generally, defendants use public defenders when they can't pay for a private attorney.

Jackson has become one of the most prominent defense attorneys in the nation in recent years after his defense of clients including Harvey Weinstein, Kevin Spacey and Karen Read at her intensely followed trials in Massachusetts.

Deputy Public Defender Kimberly Greene took over as Reiner's attorney during the hearing.

"The Public Defender's Office recognizes what an unimaginable tragedy this is for the Reiner family and the Los Angeles community," LA County Public Defender Ricardo D. Garcia said in a rare public statement on a case from the office. "Our hearts go out to the Reiner family as they navigate this difficult time. We ask for your patience and compassion as the case moves through the legal process."

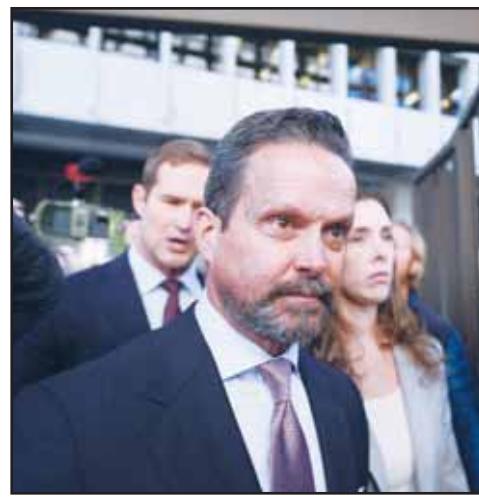
A Reiner family spokesperson said in a statement after Wednesday's hearing that "They have the utmost trust in the legal process and will not comment further on matters related to the legal proceedings."

During Wednesday's hearing, Reiner stood behind glass in a custody area of the courtroom wearing brown jail garb and with his hair shaved. Two deputies stood behind him. Jackson and his team stood in front of him on the other side of the glass. At one point, Reiner stood on his tiptoes to peer over the lawyers' heads to look at the audience. He spoke only to agree to the delayed arraignment.

McGonigle approved the use of cameras inside the courtroom but said photos and video could not be taken of the defendant. Reiner did not wear the suicide prevention smock he had on at his initial court appearance on Dec. 17.

Reiner, 32, the third of Rob Reiner's four children, has been held without bail since his arrest hours after his parents were found dead on Dec. 14.

Jackson, a former LA County prosecutor, had given no indication of the plans for his defense.



Alan Jackson, the attorney for Nick Reiner, leaves court after Reiner's arraignment on murder charges for the deaths of Rob and Michele Reiner in Los Angeles. (AP)

Film



This image released by Row K shows Dacre Montgomery, foreground, and Bill Skarsgård in a scene from 'Dead Man's Wire.' (AP)

After a long hiatus, Gus Van Sant returns

'Dead Man's Wire' delivers tense '70s true crime

LOS ANGELES, Jan 8. (AP): It plays a little loose with facts but the righteous rage of "Dog Day Afternoon" is present enough in Gus Van Sant's "Dead Man's Wire," a based-on-a-true-tale hostage thriller that's as deeply 1970s as it is contemporary.

In February 1977, Tony Kiritsis walked into the Meridian Mortgage Company in downtown Indianapolis and took one of its executives, Dick Hall, hostage. Kiritsis held a sawed-off shotgun to the back of Hall's head and draped a wire around his neck that connected to the gun. If he moved too much, he would die.

The subsequent standoff moved to Kiritsis' apartment and eventually concluded in a live televised news conference. The whole ordeal received some renewed attention in a 2022 podcast dramatization starring Jon Hamm.

But in "Dead Man's Wire," starring Bill Skarsgård as Kiritsis, these events are vividly brought to life by Van Sant. It's been seven years since Van Sant directed, following 2018's "Don't Worry, He Won't Get Far on Foot," and one of the prevailing takeaways of his new film is that that's too long of a break for a filmmaker of Van Sant's caliber.

Working from a script by Austin Kolodney, the filmmaker of "My Own Private Idaho" and "Good Will Hunting" turns "Dead Man's Wire" into not a period-piece time capsule but a bracingly relevant drama of outrage and inequality. Tony feels aggrieved by his mortgage company over a land deal the bank, he claims, blocked. We're never given many specifics, but at the same time, there's little doubt in "Dead Man's Wire"

that Tony's cause is just. His means might be desperate and abhorrent, but the movie is very definitely on his side.

That's owed significantly to Skarsgård, who gives one of his finest and least adorned performances. While best known for films like "It," "The Crow" and "Nosferatu," here Skarsgård has little more than some green polyester and a very '70s mustache to alter his looks. The straightforward, jittery intensity of his performance propels "Dead Man's Wire."

Aspires

Yet Van Sant's film aspires to be a larger ensemble drama, which it only partially succeeds at. Tony's plight is far from a solitary one, as numerous threads suggest in Kolodney's fast-paced script. First and foremost is Colman Domingo as a local DJ named Fred Temple. (If ever there were an actor suited, with a smooth baritone, to play a '70s radio DJ, it's Domingo.) Tony, a fan, calls Fred to air his demands. But it's not just a media outlet for him. Fred touts himself as "the voice of the people."

Something similar could be said of Tony, who rapidly emerges as a kind of folk hero. As much as he tortures his hostage (a very good Dacre Montgomery), he's kind to the police officers surrounding him. And as he and Dick spend more time together, Dick emerges as a kind of victim, himself. It's his father's bank, and when Tony gets M.L. Hall (Al Pacino) on the phone, he sounds painfully insensitive, sooner ready to sacrifice his son than acknowledge

any wrongdoing.

Pacino's presence in "Dead Man's Wire" is a nod to "Dog Day Afternoon," a movie that may be far better - but, then again, that's true of most films in comparison to Sidney Lumet's unsurpassed 1975 classic. Still, Van Sant's film bears some of the same rage and disillusionment with the meatgrinder of capitalism as "Dog Day."

There's also a telling, if not entirely successful subplot of a local TV news reporter (Myha'la) struggling against stereotypes. Even when she gets the goods on the unspooling news story, the way her producer says to "chop it up" and put it on air makes it clear: Whatever Tony is rebelling against, it's him, not his plight, that will be served up on a prime-time plate.

It doesn't take recent similar cases of national fascination, such as Luigi Mangione, charged with killing a healthcare executive, to see contemporary echoes of Kiritsis' tale. The real story is more complicated and less metaphor-ready, of course, than the movie, which detracts some from the film's gritty sense of verisimilitude. Staying closer to the truth might have produced a more dynamic movie.

But "Dead Man's Wire" still works. In the film, Tony's demands are \$5 million and an apology. It's clear the latter means more to him than the money. The tragedy in "Dead Man's Wire" is just how elusive "I'm sorry" can be.

"Dead Man's Wire," a Row K Entertainment release, is rated R for language throughout. Running time: 105 minutes. Three stars out of four.

Disney's live-action 'Tangled' to star Croft and Manheim

LOS ANGELES, Jan 8. (AP): Disney will let down Rapunzel's lengthy hair once again.

Walt Disney Pictures said Wednesday its live-action adaptation of "Tangled" will star Teagan Croft and Milo Manheim in the lead roles of Rapunzel and Flynn Rider.

The 2010 animated hit followed Rapunzel, the magically long-haired princess locked away in a tower, whose carefully ordered life is upended when she teams up with Flynn Rider, a charming outlaw on the run. The original film featured the voices of Mandy Moore and Zachary Levi, grossed more than \$590 million worldwide, and

spawned both the short film "Tangled Ever After" and the Disney Channel series "Rapunzel's Tangled Adventure."

The new "Tangled" will be directed by Michael Graczyk, best known for "The Greatest Showman," with a screenplay by Jennifer Kaytin Robinson.

No release date has been announced.

Croft, an Australian actor, is best known for starring as Rachel Roth, aka Raven, on the DC series "Titans," and her role on Netflix's "True Spirit."

Manheim is already a familiar face to Disney audiences after leading the "Zombies" franchise. The actor and

singer, who is also the son of Emmy and Golden Globe winner Camryn Manheim, finished as runner-up on season 27 of "Dancing with the Stars."

"Tangled" was first reported to be in early development in December 2024. It's the latest animated Disney title to receive the live-action treatment. The studio's growing slate includes "The Lion King," "Beauty and the Beast," "Aladdin," "The Little Mermaid," "Snow White" and "Lilo & Stitch," the first \$1 billion release of 2025.

A live-action version of "Moana" is scheduled to hit theaters this summer.

'I just want to do perfect joke'

Glaser struggles with Roberts and Venezuela while building monologue

LOS ANGELES, Jan 8, (AP): The Golden Globes are fast approaching, and Nikki Glaser is struggling to find a Julia Roberts joke.

"She's been the toughest nut to crack," Glaser, who's hosting Sunday's Globes, said with a determined laugh. "But I'm going to crack it."

The comedian got the hosting gig last year after showing her skill at ruthlessly roasting celebrities. She got raves for her monologue. She brought out the knives, but they weren't overly sharp. She was promptly asked back.

Sunday's monologue will be a shape-shifting monster until the moment the CBS telecast starts and she takes the stage at the Beverly Hilton, ideally with a bit ready for Roberts, who's nominated for best actress in a drama for "After the Hunt." She'll be sitting in front of Glaser with her star-powered charm.

"I just want to do the perfect joke but it's like people do not have a sense of humor about Julia Roberts," Glaser said in an interview with The Associated Press. "She'll be fine - other people are not fine on her behalf. Like the most innocent joke about her that I made a couple times trying it out, they booed, they were like jeering."

For others, Glaser is confident in her material, and their ability to take it, including the men in the absurdly star-studded best actor categories:

■ She'll get another shot at Timothée Chalamet, nominated last year for playing Bob Dylan and this year for "Marty Supreme": "Timothée, he's great. He knows how to handle it," she said. Last year, she told a mustachioed Chalamet: "You have the most gorgeous eyelashes - on your upper lip."

■ She'll get her first chance to poke at George Clooney, nominated for "Jay Kelly": "George Clooney's going to be exciting to just have any kind of interaction with. I think he's

such a good sport," she said. "He's down for it."

■ She's says she's excited about her stuff on "Sinners" nominee Michael B. Jordan.

■ And what about Leonardo DiCaprio, representing awards season powerhouse "One Battle After Another"? "Leo? Leo, yeah, Leo. We're going to hit Leo," she said. "The icebergs are coming. Watch out."

Glaser spoke to the AP while wearing a gown and fur coat on a mock New York street at a CBS studio lot where she's prepping.

But the real preparation has been happening at Southern California's comedy clubs.

"I've been running the jokes constantly," she said. "I live and die by those crowds. They really tell me what to keep and what not to. Things that I think will kill will just be nothing and things that I think are just a throwaway are like the best joke."

She shares one that she dumped.

"I was going to make a joke about 'Pluribus' where I said like, 'Have you seen it? Pluribus not?'" she said. "But we could not find a place for 'pluribus not' and so that one is in the graveyard. Probably rightfully so."

Because the monologue is directed, roast-style, at the people in the Globes crowd, the comedy club audience has to play celebrity roles.

She'll ask them, "Will you play Julia Roberts for me?" You know, like it is, it's strange, but I kind of just set it up. Like I'm hosting the Golden Globes. They're usually very excited about that."

Like every awards show host, she's wary that some major current event will upset everything. During the past weekend, she thought she certainly would have to talk about Venezuela onstage. Now she thinks maybe not.



Nikki Glaser arrives at the 82nd Golden Globes at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, Calif. (AP)

Awards



SAG-AFTRA president Sean Astin speaks during the nominees presentation for the 32nd Annual Actor Awards in Los Angeles. (AP)

Anderson's epic breaks SAG Awards record with 7 nominations

'One Battle After Another' dominates awards

LOS ANGELES, Jan 8, (AP): "One Battle After Another" dominated nominations to the Actor Awards on Wednesday, with Paul Thomas Anderson's ragtag revolutionary saga landing a record seven nods in the annual SAG-AFTRA honors.

In the 31 years of the Actor Awards, formerly known as the Screen Actors Guild Awards, no movie has received more than five nominations. Along with a nod for the guild's top award, best ensemble, the cast of "One Battle After Another" was showered with nominations for Leonardo DiCaprio, Chase Infini, Teyana Taylor, Sean Penn, Benicio Del Toro and its stunt performers.

The four other nominees for best ensemble are: "Sinners," "Hamnet," "Marty Supreme" and "Frankenstein." Usually, to win best picture at the Oscars, a movie needs a SAG ensemble nomination. Only four films in the last three decades have managed the feat without that. Among the films that missed the cut this year were "Sentimental Value," "Wicked: For Good" and "Train Dreams."

"Sinners" had an especially good result. Along with a best male actor nod for Michael B. Jordan, supporting actors Miles Caton and Wunmi Mosaku were both nominated. It collected five nominations in total.

In television, Apple's "The Studio," HBO's "White Lotus" and Netflix's "Adolescence" lead the nominees.

Historically, the Actor Awards have been one of the strongest Oscar indicators. Actors make up the largest branch of the film academy, and, in the past, individual SAG nomi-

nees have overlapped with the Oscar field at a rate of roughly four out of five. The Actor Awards are presented by the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists.

That means the nominees Wednesday may closely resemble those headed to the Oscars. They are:

Best male actor: DiCaprio, Timothée Chalamet ("Marty Supreme"), Michael B. Jordan ("Sinners"), Éthan Hawke ("Blue Moon") and Jesse Plemons ("Bugonia"). The only surprise of that group was Plemons. The favorite remains the 30-year-old Chalamet who won the same award last year for "A Complete Unknown" and vowed to pursue "greatness" in his acceptance speech.

Best female actor: Infiniti, Jessie Buckley ("Hamnet"), Rose Byrne ("If I Had Legs I'd Kick You"), Kate Hudson ("Song Sung Blue") and Emma Stone ("Bugonia").

In the supporting male actor category, the nominees are: Del Toro, Penn, Caton, Jacob Elordi ("Frankenstein") and Paul Mescal ("Hamnet").

The nominees for best supporting female actor are: Taylor, Mosaku, Ariana Grande ("Wicked: For Good"), Amy Madigan ("Weapons") and Odessa A'zion ("Marty Supreme"). The biggest surprise in that category was the 25-year-old A'zion.

Snubbed altogether was Joachim Trier's acclaimed Norwegian drama "Sentimental Value." Both Renate Reinsve, in lead female actor, and Stellan Skarsgård, for supporting male actor, have been viewed as shoo-ins.

Many analysts have even considered Skarsgård the favorite to win. With more than 122,000 voting members, the actors guild has tended to skew more populist and the guild often shies away from non-English language nominees.

Membership in the academy, meanwhile, has grown increasingly international. Along with "Sentimental Value," movies like the Iranian revenge drama "It Was Just an Accident" and the Brazilian political thriller "The Secret Agent" should have greater success come Oscar nominations on Jan. 22.

There have been some prominent differences between SAG and the Oscars. Last year, Chalamet won best male actor but lost to Adrien Brody ("The Brutalist") at the Oscars. The palatial drama "Conclave" took best ensemble, but Sean Baker's "Anora" won best picture at the Academy Awards.

On the television side, the leader in comedy was "The Studio," which scored nods for its ensemble, Seth Rogen, Kathryn Hahn, Catherine O'Hara and Ike Barinholtz. The top drama was "The White Lotus," which collected four nominations including best ensemble and nods for Parker Posey, Walton Goggins and Aimee Lee Wood. The limited series "Adolescence" also landed four nominations, for Owen Cooper, Stephen Graham, Erin Doherty and Christine Tremarco.

The Actor Awards will take place Sunday, March 1, at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. Netflix will stream the ceremony live. Harrison Ford will be presented with the guild's life achievement award.

Google and chatbot maker Character to settle lawsuit

TALLAHASSEE, Fla., Jan 8, (AP): Google and artificial intelligence chatbot maker Character Technologies have agreed to settle a lawsuit from a Florida mother who alleged a chatbot pushed her teenage son to kill himself.

Attorneys for the two tech companies have also agreed to settle several other lawsuits filed in Colorado, New York and Texas from families who alleged Character AI chatbots harmed their children, according to court documents filed this week in federal courts in those states.

None of the documents disclose the specific terms of the settlement agreements, which must still be approved by judges.

The suits against Character Technologies, the company behind Character AI, also named Google as a defendant because of its ties to the startup after hiring its co-founders in 2024. Character declined to comment Wednesday and Google didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

In the Florida lawsuit, Megan Garcia alleged that her 14-year-old son Sewell Setzer III fell victim to a Character AI chatbot that pulled him into what she described as an emotionally and sexually abusive relationship that led to his suicide in February, 2024.

The lawsuit alleged that in the final months

of his life, Setzer became increasingly isolated from reality as he engaged in sexualized conversations with the chatbot, which was patterned after a fictional character from the television show "Game of Thrones." In his final moments, the chatbot told Setzer it loved him and urged the teen to "come home to me as soon as possible," according to screenshots of the exchanges.

Garcia's lawsuit was the first of similar lawsuits around the U.S. that have also been filed against ChatGPT maker OpenAI. A federal judge had earlier rejected Character's attempt to dismiss the Florida case on First Amendment grounds.

Winter tourism delivers strong returns

Global tourists discover 'Cool China' at world's largest ice-and-snow park

HARBIN, Jan 8, (Xinhua): CNN correspondent Mike Valerio rang in the New Year among throngs of visitors at Harbin Ice-Snow World, braving sub-zero temperatures to showcase what he described as the "largest winter festival in the world" to audiences worldwide, underlining that this city has become yet another glitzy attraction boosting travel to China from locations around the world.

For many in the West, the name Harbin may not immediately ring a bell. The capital city of northeast China's Heilongjiang Province is often associated with China's old industrial base, where smokestacks and factory rooftops dominated city views.

Through Valerio's lens, however, that image was thoroughly erased and replaced by a dazzling skyline of towering ice sculptures and glowing lanterns.

As the world's largest ice-and-snow theme park, Harbin Ice-Snow World stands as a prism reflecting the city's ongoing transformation. Once challenged by industrial restructuring, the region's steel and minds now underpin the wonders of its iconic winter attractions, channeling renewed momentum fueled by a surge of global visitors.

Inspired by the CNN broadcast, Brazilian tourist Samy Klajman flew thousands of kilometers to experience China's winter, turning his summer in the Southern Hemisphere into a surreal northern adventure.

Gazing up at six-story ice sculptures, Klajman described the trip as "the craziest -- but definitely worthwhile." He said Harbin's blend of vivid aesthetics and modern technology was among the biggest surprises encountered on his visit.

Performances

"It feels like a city from the future," he said, while filming dancing humanoid robots and drone performances against an illuminated replica of the ancient Yellow Crane Tower. "I never thought winter could become such an unprecedented carnival." Few visitors realize how quickly this spectacle takes shape. From Nov. 25 to Dec. 17 last year, about 10,000 workers, aided by automated ice-cutting machines and heavy industrial equipment, shaped 400,000 cubic meters of ice and snow into a 1.2-million-square-meter winter wonderland.

The massive operation is repeated annually, drawing millions of domestic and overseas visitors.

Among them was Papawarin, a tourist from Thailand, who shared her excitement with family moments after racing down the park's iconic 521-meter Super Ice Slide.

This was the first time she had ever seen so much ice and snow, not to mention molding it into shining hills and slide lanes. Papawarin revealed. "I'm going to tell all my friends how cool China is in winter." Beyond the spectacular scenery, new attractions powered by emerging technologies are enriching the visitor experience in Harbin.

Guo Hongwei, chairman of Harbin Ice and Snow World Co., Ltd., said the park has introduced augmented-reality performances, immersive indoor shows supported by 4D and virtual reality technologies, as well as AI-assisted guidance. A 5,000-square-meter air-supported dome has also been added to enhance visitor comfort.

"We aim to offer a grand ice-and-snow carnival through ever-improving services," Guo noted.

The popularity of Harbin's winter attractions is translating into strong economic returns. During the three-day New Year holiday this month, inbound tourist visits to the city surged 77.9 percent year on year, while inbound tourist spending increased by 88.1 percent. Total tourist consumption reached 5.56 billion yuan (roughly 79.2 million U.S. dollars).

This momentum extends far beyond tourism. Amid the winter travel boom, Harbin recently hosted its inaugural Harbin International Ice and Snow Expo and a Global Mayors Dialogue, which brought together diplomats, city representatives, business leaders and experts from over 20 countries and regions, keen to explore opportunities in what some describe as "Cool China."

Distinctive

"Harbin's distinctive cultural heritage and ice-and-snow appeal continue to draw global attention," said Emmanuel Loriot, consul general of the French Consulate General in Shenyang, capital of Liaoning Province, which is also in northeast China. Loriot added that he plans to lead a delegation of more than 60 French companies to Harbin later this year to explore cooperation in cultural tourism, high-end manufacturing and other sectors.

Heikki Kontiosalo, deputy speaker of the city council of Rovaniemi in Finland, said he was impressed by China's evolving winter equipment, ranging from industrial-grade unmanned snow-removal machines to carbon-fiber skis.

"These products show how ice and snow have evolved from a natural resource into a powerful driver of innovation and business," he explained.

With China continuing to optimize its visa-free policies and boost the supply of high-quality goods and services, the country's ice-and-snow economy is benefiting, exceeding 1 trillion yuan in scale in 2025, China Tourism Academy said in a report.

Transforming from seasonal festivals to a fully-fledged economic engine, China's ice-and-snow resources are reshaping consumption, energizing industries and redefining urban governance, while showcasing a dynamic, enterprising and hospitable China to both its citizens and the world, said Han Yuanjun, a researcher at the academy.

"The popularity of Harbin has largely overturned the stereotype of northeast China, with a region once seen as dusty and declining now presenting itself to the world as dynamic, progressive and welcoming," said Zhang Guihai, head of Heilongjiang's ice-and-snow industry research institute.



A contestant works on a snow sculpture at the Sun Island International Snow Sculpture Art Expo in Harbin, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province. (Xinhua)



Professor Nathan Palpant, Professor Mark Smythe and Professor Glenn King. (UQ photo)

Preclinical results show promise

Spider venom drug enters human trials for heart attacks and strokes

SYDNEY, Jan 8, (Xinhua): A potentially life-saving treatment for heart attacks and strokes, derived from the venom of one of the world's deadliest spiders, has entered human trials, researchers in Australia said Thursday.

The current phase 1 clinical study will assess the safety, tolerability and dosage of IB409, a novel drug developed from a molecule found in Australian funnel-web spider venom by biotechnology company Infensa Bioscience, said a statement of Australia's University of Queensland (UQ).

Professor Glenn King from UQ's Institute for Molecular Bioscience said his team had published "exceptionally promising" preclinical results with Hi1a, a protein derived from the venom of a funnel-web spider on the state of Queensland's Fraser Island.

"We believe that Hi1a could reduce damage to the heart and brain during heart attacks and strokes by preventing cell death caused by lack of oxygen," King said, adding that his team had established that Hi1a effectively protects the heart, with a subsequent study subjecting it to



A potential breakthrough treatment derived from the venom of one of the world's deadliest spiders has taken a major step toward human trials. (ILKHA)

preclinical tests mimicking real-life treatment scenarios.

The Infensa team has transformed Hi1a into IB409, a miniaturized peptide suitable for drug development, according to the UQ statement.

"If the Phase 1 and subsequent clinical trials of IB409 show that it can safely and effectively treat heart attacks, we could improve the lives of millions of people living with heart disease around the world," said Infensa CEO and UQ researcher Professor Mark Smythe.

Smythe noted that no existing drugs prevent the damage caused by heart attack and stroke.

WASHINGTON, Jan 8, (AP): Americans should eat more whole foods and protein, fewer highly processed foods and less added sugar, according to the latest edition of federal nutrition advice released Wednesday by the Trump administration.

Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins issued the 2025-2030 U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which offer updated recommendations for a healthy diet and provide the foundation for federal nutrition programs and policies. They come as Kennedy has for months stressed overhauling the U.S. food supply as part of his Make America Healthy Again agenda.

"My message is clear: Eat real food," Kennedy said at a White House briefing.

The guidelines emphasize consumption of fresh vegetables, whole grains and dairy products, long advised as part of a healthy eating plan. Officials released a new graphic depicting an inverted version of the long-abandoned food pyramid, with protein, dairy, healthy fats and fruits and vegetables at the top and whole grains at the bottom.

But they also take a new stance on "highly processed" foods, and refined carbohydrates, urging consumers to avoid "packaged, prepared, ready-to-eat or other foods that are salty or sweet, such as chips, cookies and candy." That's a different term for ultraprocessed foods, the tasty, energy-dense products that make up more than half the calories in the U.S. diet and have been linked to chronic diseases such as diabetes and obesity.

The new guidance backs away from revoking long-standing advice to limit saturated fats, despite signals from Kennedy and Food and Drug Commissioner Marty Makary that the administration would push for more consumption of animal fats to end the "war" on saturated fats.

Instead, the document suggests that Americans should choose whole-food sources of saturated fat - such as meat, whole-fat dairy or avocados - while continuing to limit saturated fat consumption to no more than 10% of daily calories. The guidance says "other



Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins stands by an image of a food pyramid during a briefing at the White House, Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2026, in Washington. (AP)

options can include butter or beef tallow," despite previous recommendations to avoid those fats.

The dietary guidelines, required by law to be updated every five years, provide a template for a healthy diet. But in a country where more than half of adults have a diet-related chronic disease, few Americans actually follow the guidance, research shows.

The new recommendations draw praise from some prominent nutrition and medical experts.

"There should be broad agreement that eating more whole foods and reducing highly processed carbohydrates is a major advance in how we approach diet and health," said Dr. David Kessler, a former FDA commissioner who has written books about diet and nutrition and has sent a petition to the FDA to remove key ingredients in ultraprocessed foods.

"The guidelines affirm that food is medicine and offer clear direction patients and physicians can use to improve health," said Dr. Bobby Mukamala, president of the American Medical Association.

Other experts were relieved that the guidelines didn't go against decades of nutrition evidence linking saturated fat to heart disease, but they were critical of the guidelines' focus on meat and

The new guidelines largely rejected the advice of a 20-member panel of nutrition experts convened by the Biden administration, who met for nearly two years to review the latest scientific evidence on diet and health. Kennedy had criticized the expertise of the panel members and suggested that they had ties to the food industry that influenced their advice.

Instead, the new guidance relied on a new set of experts revealed Wednesday in supporting documents. Of the 10 experts who led the new scientific review under Kennedy, five reported financial ties to beef, pork or dairy industries or to makers of infant formula or supplements.

The new group rejected more than half the recommendations of the previous panel, the documents showed.

That previous panel didn't make recommendations about ultraprocessed food. Although a host of studies have shown links between ultraprocessed foods and poor health outcomes, the nutrition experts had concerns with the quality of the research and the certainty that those foods, and not other factors, were causing the problems.

The recommendations on highly processed foods drew cautiously positive reactions. The FDA and the Agriculture Department are already working on a definition of ultraprocessed foods, but it's expected to take time.

Not all highly processed foods are unhealthy, said Dr. David Ludwig, an endocrinologist and researcher at Boston Children's Hospital.

"I think the focus should be on highly processed carbohydrates," he said, noting that processing of protein or fats can be benign or even helpful.

The guidelines made a few other notable changes, including a call to potentially double protein consumption.

The previous recommended dietary allowance called for 0.8 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight - about 54 grams daily for a 150-pound person. The new recommendation is 1.2 to 1.6 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight. An average American man consumes about 100 grams of protein per day, or about twice the previously recommended limit.

The Conversation

Old viruses evolve as new threats emerge

Viral outbreaks are always on the horizon

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



By Patrick Jackson
University of Virginia

A new year might mean new viral threats.

Old viruses are constantly evolving. A warming and increasingly populated planet puts humans in contact with more and different viruses. And increased mobility means that viruses can rapidly travel across the globe along with their human hosts.

As an infectious diseases physician and researcher, I'll be keeping an eye on a few viruses in 2026 that could be poised to cause infections in unexpected places or in unexpected numbers.

Influenza A is a perennial threat. The virus infects a wide range of animals and has the ability to mutate rapidly. The most recent influenza pandemic - caused by the H1N1 subtype of influenza in 2009 - killed over 280,000 people worldwide in its first year, and the virus continues to circulate today. This virus was often called swine flu because it originated in pigs in Mexico before circulating around the world.

Most recently, scientists have been monitoring the highly-pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 subtype, or bird flu. This virus was first found in humans in southern China in 1997; wild birds helped spread the virus around the world. In 2024, the virus was found for the first time in dairy cattle in the U.S. and subsequently became established in herds in several states.

The crossover of the virus from birds to mammals created major concern that it could become adapted to humans. Studies suggest there have already been many cow-to-human transmissions.

In 2026, scientists will continue to look for any evidence that H5N1 has changed enough to be transmitted from human to human - a necessary step for the start of a new influenza pandemic. The influenza vaccines currently on the market probably don't offer protection from H5N1, but scientists are working to



Avian flu has spread across dairy herds in the U.S. (AP)



Despite the availability of effective treatments, diseases like HIV and measles are seeing resurgences. (AP)

create vaccines that would be effective against the virus.

Mpox virus, formerly called monkeypox virus, was first discovered in the 1950s. For many decades, it was seen rarely, primarily in sub-Saharan Africa. Contrary to its original name, the virus mostly infects rodents and occasionally crossed over into humans.

Mpox is closely related to smallpox, and infection results in a fever and painful rash that can last for weeks. There are several varieties of mpox, including a generally more severe clade I and a milder clade II. A vaccine for mpox is available, but there are no effective treatments.

In 2022, a global outbreak of clade II mpox spread to more than 100 countries that had never seen the virus before. This outbreak was driven by human-to-human transmission of the virus through close contact, often via sex.

While the number of mpox cases has significantly declined since the 2022 outbreak, clade II mpox has become established around the world. Several countries in central Africa have also reported an increase in clade I mpox cases since 2024. Since August 2025, four clade I mpox cases have occurred in the U.S., including in people who did not travel to Africa.

It is unclear how mpox outbreaks

in the U.S. and abroad will continue to evolve in 2026.

Oropouche virus was first identified in the 1950s on the island of Trinidad off the coast of South America. The virus is carried by mosquitoes and small biting midges, also known as no-see-ums.

Most people with the virus experience fever, headache and muscle aches. The illness usually lasts just a few days, but some patients have weakness that can persist for weeks. The illness can also recur after someone has initially recovered.

There are many unanswered questions about the Oropouche virus and the disease it causes, and there are no specific treatments or vaccines. For decades, infections in people were thought to occur only in the Amazon region. However, beginning in the early 2000s, cases began to show up in a larger area of South America, Central America and the Caribbean. Cases in the United States are usually among travelers returning from abroad.

In 2026, Oropouche outbreaks will likely continue to affect travelers in the Americas. The biting midge that carries Oropouche virus is found throughout North and South America, including the southeastern United States. The range of the virus could continue to expand.

A number of other viruses pose a risk in 2026.

Continuing global outbreaks of chikungunya virus may affect travelers, some of whom may want to consider getting vaccinated for this disease.

Measles cases continue to rise in the U.S. and globally against the backdrop of decreasing vaccination rates.

HIV is poised for a resurgence, despite the availability of effective treatments, due to disruptions in international aid.

And as-yet undiscovered viruses can always emerge in the future as humans disrupt ecosystems and travel around the world.

Around the world, people, animals and the wider environment are dependent on each other. Vigilance for known and emerging viral threats and the development of new vaccines and treatments can help keep everyone safe. (AP)

Mongolia battles growing measles outbreak

ULAN BATOR, Jan 8, (Xinhua): Mongolia's measles tally surged to 13,861 after 8 new local infections were reported in the past 24 hours, the country's National Center for Communicable Diseases (NCCD) said on Thursday.

More than half of new measles infections were among school-age children who have had only one shot of the measles vaccine, the NCCD said in a statement.

In this regard, the NCCD suggested that parents protect their children from potentially severe disease by getting them two doses of the measles vaccine.

Measles is a highly contagious viral disease transmitted by respiratory droplets and direct contact. Common complications include fever, dry cough, runny nose, sore throat, and inflamed eyes. The disease can be prevented by immunization.

'Eat real food'

New dietary guidelines urge Americans to avoid processed foods, added sugar

The new guidelines largely rejected the advice of a 20-member panel of nutrition experts convened by the Biden administration, who met for nearly two years to review the latest scientific evidence on diet and health. Kennedy had criticized the expertise of the panel members and suggested that they had ties to the food industry that influenced their advice.

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A Peri device is seen on display during the CES tech show Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2026, in Las Vegas. (AP)

Experts raise red flags

CES unveils AI-powered health gadgets amid privacy concerns

LAS VEGAS, Jan 8, (AP): Health tech gadgets displayed at the annual CES trade show make a lot of promises. A smart scale promoted a healthier lifestyle by scanning your feet to track your heart health, and an egg-shaped hormone tracker uses AI to help you figure out the best time to conceive.

Tech and health experts, however, question the accuracy of products like these and warn of data privacy issues - especially as the federal government eases up on regulation.

The Food and Drug Administration announced during the show in Las Vegas that it will relax regulations on "low-risk" general wellness products such as heart monitors and wheelchairs. It's the latest step President Donald Trump's administration has taken to remove barriers for AI innovation and use. The White House repealed former President Joe Biden's executive order establishing guardrails around AI, and last month, the Department of Health and Human Services outlined its strategy to expand its use of AI.

Booths at the conference showcased new tech designed to help people living in rural areas with their health care needs amid doctor shortages, boost research into women's health and make life easier for people with disabilities.

AI technologies have benefits in the over \$4.3 trillion health care industry, according to Marshall Runge, professor of medical science at the University of Michigan. They're good at analyzing medical imaging and can help streamline doctors' busy schedules, but they can also promote biases and "hallucinate," providing incorrect information stated as fact.

"I would urge people not to think that the technology is the same as a well-resourced, thoughtful, research-driven medical professional," said Cindy Cohn, executive director of the digital rights group Electronic Frontier Foundation.

Privacy protections like the Health Insurance Portability and Account-

ability Act do not cover information collected by consumer devices, and the companies could be using the data to train their AI models, or selling it to other businesses, Cohn said.

With a lot of the gadgets at CES, it's difficult to find out where your information is going, Cohn said.

"You have to dig down through the fine print to try to figure that out, and I just don't think that's fair or right for the people who might rely on it," she said.

But the creators of the products say their innovations fill in health care gaps, and they maintain they protect their customers' privacy.

Sylvia Kang, founder and CEO of Mira, said she created the egg-shaped hormone tracker because many of her friends were trying to conceive and realized they had no knowledge of their hormonal health. To use the "world's mini hormone lab," you dip a wand in urine, insert the wand into the monitor and look at the results on the app.

Kang said her company uses AI to analyze female hormone data and has one of the world's biggest hormonal health banks. The data is stored on the cloud and is not shared with anyone, Kang said.

"There was no such thing before," Kang said of her \$250 product.

Many gadgets at CES focused on women's health, which has been historically under-researched and underfunded. Before 1993, women were excluded from clinical trials, and there still is little research on areas like menopause. While not every woman will have a baby, all women go through menopause, and "yet we

Blazers survive late scare to beat Rockets

Oklahoma City outlasts Jazz

PORTRALD, Ore., Jan 8, (AP): Deni Avdija had a season-high 41 points and the Portland Trail Blazers won their fourth straight with a wild victory over the Houston Rockets.

It appeared Tari Eason scored on a tip-in for Houston at the buzzer and the Rockets emptied the bench in celebration, but upon review the basket did not beat the clock.

The teams will meet again at the Moda Center on Friday night.

The Blazers held off the Rockets through most of the second half, but Houston tied it at 84 on a Amen Thompson's free throw with 8:56 left. Shaedon Sharpe's 3-pointer put Portland back in front.

Thunder 129, Jazz 125

In Oklahoma, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 46 points and the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Utah Jazz in overtime to snap a two-game losing skid.

Gilgeous-Alexander calmly made a shot from near the free-throw line at the regulation buzzer to force overtime, then scored nine points in the extra period. The reigning MVP increased his streak of games with at least 20 points to 109, the second-longest run in NBA history.

Warriors 120, Bucks 113

In San Francisco, Stephen Curry had 31 points, highlighted by a step-back 3-pointer with 26 seconds left, and added seven assists and seven rebounds to help the Golden State Warriors beat the Milwaukee Bucks.

De'Anthony Melton added 22 points off the bench, Jimmy Butler finished with 21 points and five rebounds, and Al Horford had eight points, 10 rebounds and six assists in one of his best all-around games since joining the Warriors. Antetokounmpo had 34 points, 10 rebounds and five assists while Kevin Porter Jr. contributed 15 points, nine assists and four rebounds for the Bucks, who couldn't withstand Golden State's 18 made 3s and a 53-42 rebounding disadvantage.

Spurs 107, Lakers 91

In San Antonio, Keldon Johnson had 27 points, Victor Wembanyama added 16 points and 14 rebounds, and the San Antonio Spurs overcame 38 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists from Luka Doncic to beat the Los Angeles Lakers.

San Antonio moved into second place in the Western Conference despite shooting 4 for 25 on 3-pointers.

LeBron James didn't play due to arthritis and sciatica as Los Angeles' three-game winning streak came to an end.

Knicks 123, Clippers 111

In New York, Karl-Anthony Towns had 20 points, 11 rebounds and a season-high seven assists, Jalen Brunson scored 26 points and the New York Knicks snapped their four-game losing streak with a victory over the Los Angeles Clippers.

Towns bounced back from a quiet game Monday in Detroit, when he took just four shots and had only six points and six turnovers in the Knicks' 121-90 loss that gave them their longest losing streak of the season.

76ers 131, Wizards 110

In Philadelphia, Joel Embiid scored 28 points, Paul George added 23 and all of Philadelphia's starters scored in double-figures as the 76ers beat the Washington Wizards. Tyrese Maxey contributed 22 points and eight assists for the 76ers, who have won four of five. Not long after the game finished, reports surfaced that Washington and Atlanta made a trade.

Magic 104, Nets 103 OT

In New York, Paolo Banchero banked in a 3-pointer from the top of the key at the overtime buzzer to give the Orlando Magic a victory over the Brooklyn Nets.

Two nights after falling at lowly Washington, the Magic beat the Nets for the eighth straight time to improve to 21-17.

Raptors 97, Hornets 96

In Charlotte, Immanuel Quickley hit a 3-pointer from the top of the key at the



Utah Jazz forward Cody Williams (5) drives against Oklahoma City Thunder guard Cason Wallace (22) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Oklahoma City. (AP)

buzzer and the Toronto Raptors rallied from a 10-point deficit in the fourth quarter to beat the Charlotte Hornets.

RJ Barrett finished with 28 points and seven rebounds, while Quickley added 21 points. Scottie Barnes chipped in with 17 points as the Raptors won for the fifth time in six games. Collin Sexton led the Hornets with 22 points.

Nuggets 114-110, Celtics 110

In Boston, Jamal Murray had 22 points and 17 assists and Peyton Watson scored 30 for the Denver Nuggets, who went on a 14-0 run to rally from a fourth-quarter deficit and pull away to beat the Boston Celtics.

In a game missing its two biggest stars - Denver's three-time NBA MVP Nikola Jokic and Boston All-Star Jayson Tatum - the teams played through 26 lead changes and another nine ties before Denver turn a three-point deficit midway through the fourth into a 101-90 lead.

Boston trailed 107-95 and cut it to three points in the final seconds, but it was too late.

Suns 117, Grizzlies 98

In Memphis, Dillon Brooks scored 21 points, fellow former Memphis player Grayson Allen added 19 and the Phoenix Suns routed the Grizzlies.

Brooks, who played his first six seasons with the Grizzlies, scored 18 of his points in the first half as the Suns built an early advantage. Allen, who also played two seasons with Memphis, was 7 of 13 from the field, including 5 of 10 3-pointers. Devin Booker finished with 13 points, but was 6 of 15 from the field.

Phoenix, which was coming off a 100-97 loss to Houston on Monday night, has won seven of its last nine.

Pistons 108, Bulls 93

In Detroit, Isaiah Stewart scored a career-high 31 points to help the short-handed Detroit Pistons beat the Chicago Bulls.

Stewart, who had his previous best of 26 points against Memphis on Nov. 3, scored 11 points in the first quarter. Two-way player Daniss Jenkins added six rebounds and a career-high 15 assists.

Jackson eyes 500m repeat gold

Stolz leads the charge in Oly speedskating



Jordan Stolz competes in the men's 500 meters at the U.S. Olympic trials for long track speed skating at the Pettit National Ice Center in Milwaukee. (AP)

WASHINGTON, Jan 8, (AP): Long

track speedskating - sometimes referred to simply as "long track" or just "speedskating" - was a part of the original Winter Olympics back in 1924, when only men participated, and is quite different from short track. Here's what to know about the competition at the Milan Cortina Winter Olympics:

In most long track events, two skaters compete against each other on a 400-meter oval, racing counterclockwise in an attempt to record the fastest time. There are two lanes, and the athletes alternate which portion of the course they are in during each lap.

The biggest name in speedskating right now is Jordan Stolz, a 21-year-old from Wisconsin who could line up in five events in Milan and will be favored to win multiple gold medals. He is the best in the world over 500, 1,000 and 1,500 meters at the moment, dominating the World Cup season.

The Dutch have a strong tradition in this sport, and Jenning de Boo should be Stolz's biggest challenger in the sprints. Erin Jackson will seek to defend her gold medal at 500 meters from the 2022 Beijing Games, where the American became the first Black woman to win an individual title at a Winter Olympics.

She'll need to fend off Femke Kok of the Netherlands. The U.S. men hold the world record, and swept the World

Cup races in the team pursuit. Speedskating will be held Feb. 7-21 at the Milano Speed Skating Stadium, part of the Milano Ice Park in Rho, just outside the city. The competition begins with the women's 3,000 meters on Feb. 7 and ends with the women's and men's mass start on Feb. 21.

Eric Heiden of the U.S. went 5-for-5 at the 1980 Lake Placid Olympics, winning gold medals in every individual race: 500, 1,000, 1,500, 5,000 and 10,000 meters. Another American, Bonnie Blair, was the first woman to repeat as Winter Games champion in the 500 meters, and she wound up taking home the gold three times in a row - in 1988, 1992 and 1994 - part of a career haul of six Olympic medals, five golds. Dan Jansen's gold and world record in the 1,000 meters at the 1994 Lillehammer Games stands out as one of the most memorable moments in any sport or at any Olympics. Six years earlier, in Calgary, Jansen fell hard in races held shortly after his sister died of leukemia.

Speedskating is one of just a half-dozen sports that have been a part of every Winter Olympics - although women were not included in its races until the 1960 Squaw Valley Games. The Netherlands has been by far the most successful nation, collecting 48 golds and 133 total medals. The U.S. has 30 golds, 71 medals.

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NHL stars back on Olympic ice after 12 years

MONTREAL, Jan 8, (AP): One of the showcase events at the Winter Olympics will be hockey, where NHL players are back for the first time since 2014 and the world's best women's players are competing in the Games for an eighth consecutive time.

What's known: The main arena will have ice that's smaller than what the speedy, hard-hitting NHL players are used to. What's not known: Whether the rink will be fully built with a safe ice surface - seating should be fine - by the time play begins.

Assuming that all gets settled, the competition should be remarkable, with star players like Sidney Crosby and Hilary Knight going for Olympic gold.

Each of the 12 teams on the men's side and 10 for the women have rosters of 22 skaters and three goaltenders, dressing 20 and two and playing 5 on 5 in regulation and 3 on 3 in overtime. The games will be familiar to NHL and PWHL fans: 60 minutes of regulation, divided into three periods, with no ties. If there is not a goal in overtime, shootouts - skater vs. goaltender for five rounds - are used to determine the result until the gold medal game, when play continues with sudden-death 20-minute periods until one team scores. Group play sets the matchups for elimination games.

The North American teams are considered the ones to beat for both men and women.

It is expected to be Knight's fifth



In this file photo, Colorado Avalanche center Nathan MacKinnon (29) and Utah Mammoth defenseman Nate Schmidt (88) in the third period of an NHL hockey game Tuesday, Dec. 23, 2025, in Denver. (AP)

and final Games as she and Kendall Coyne Schofield give way to the next generation of American talent led by Laila Edwards. Canada captain Marie-Philip Poulin is set to play in her sixth Olympics and is looking for a fourth gold medal. The Canadians gave up 10 goals - for the first time in national team history - to the U.S. in an exhibition game in December.

Finland is the defending champion on the men's side after winning its first Olympic title in 2022 when pandemic-related scheduling issues caused

the NHL to pull out. Canada won in 2014 and 2010, the last two times the world's best men's players participated, with Crosby this time joining forces with Connor McDavid and Nathan MacKinnon.

As with all team sports, Russia is barred from hockey at the Olympics because of the war in Ukraine. That sidelines many of the best players in the world, including NHL career goals record holder Alex Ovechkin and two-time Stanley Cup champions Andrei Vasilevskiy and Nikita

Kucherov.

The men's tournament is scheduled to run from Feb. 11-22. The women start Feb. 5, the day before the opening ceremony, with the final on Feb. 19. Games are set to be held in Milan at the Santagiulio Ice Hockey Arena, a new, 16,000-seat venue, and a smaller rink in Rho.

Crosby's "golden goal" to give Canada an overtime victory in the final in 2010 in Vancouver is etched in hockey lore. So is T.J. Oshie's shootout success for the U.S. against host Russia in Sochi in '14.

Poulin had her own OT heroics that year, as Canada tied it late after the U.S. hit the post of an empty net, which would have sealed gold. Jocelyne Lamoureux-Davidson and the Americans returned the favor in 2018, beating their archrivals in a shootout in the final.

Men's hockey has been a fixture since the first Winter Games in 1924 and actually debuted at the 1920 Summer Games in Antwerp. Canada has won gold nine times (including Antwerp), the most by far (the Soviet Union won seven times), with Sweden and the U.S. each winning twice.

The American men haven't won since the 1980 "Miracle on Ice" in Lake Placid. The women's competition was added at Nagano in 1998; either the U.S. or Canada has won every Olympic title since and the fierce rivals have met in the final six out of seven times.

Hawks trade star guard Young to Wizards

ATLANTA, Jan 8, (AP): Trae Young's tenure in Atlanta is over, with the Hawks agreeing to trade the high-scoring and frequently criticized guard to the Washington Wizards for a package including veteran Laquan McCollum, a person with knowledge of the move said.

Corey Kispert is also headed from Washington to Atlanta, said the person, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the trade had not received the required league approval. Typically, teams cannot discuss pending trades until they are approved by the league.

"I know you all have questions for me that right now I'm not at liberty to talk about or answer," Hawks coach Quin Snyder said, unprompted, at the start of his postgame news conference Wednesday night following Atlanta's win over visiting New Orleans.

NBA reporter Marc Stein was first to disclose that the sides were closing in on a deal, and ESPN first

reported that the agreement was in place.

The Wizards held McCollum and Kispert out of their loss at Philadelphia on Wednesday night, and Young was on the bench in street clothes for Atlanta. He left the bench area in the fourth quarter, then returned and left again for the final time with about 30 seconds left - slapping hands with a few fans as he headed toward the locker room.

He leaves Atlanta as the Hawks' career leader in assists (passing Doc Rivers) and 3-pointers (passing Mookie Blaylock). He's fourth on Atlanta's free throws list and sixth in points.

Hawks power forward Mouhamed Gueye said he didn't know during Wednesday's game that the trade news had gone public. He had nothing but high praise afterward for his time with Young.

"That's T.Y. That's Trae Young," Gueye said. "When I first got here, he was one of the first guys that texted me, welcoming me to the city, gave me a lot of advice. Obviously, playing with Trae, as a big,

is like a dream come true. I love him as a guy, I love him as a teammate. ... An Atlanta legend."

Young is 10th in points, 12th in points per game, first in assists and first in assists per game since entering the NBA as the No. 5 pick in the 2018 draft.

He is one of five players to rank in the top 10 in both points and assists since he entered the league; the others are Denver's Nikola Jokic, the Los Angeles Lakers' Luka Doncic, the Los Angeles Clippers' James Harden and Phoenix's Devin Booker.

Jokic has won a championship and is a three-time MVP. Doncic is considered an MVP candidate. Harden is a member of the 75th anniversary team, and Booker is a two-time Olympic gold medalist.

Young doesn't get the level of respect those players have earned. He's a four-time All-Star - two of those nods coming through voting, two of them coming when Commissioner Adam Silver added him to the roster as an injury replacement.

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PGA CEO Sprague steps down for family in New York

WASHINGTON, Jan 8, (AP): Derek Sprague is leaving after one year as CEO at the PGA of America, wishing to return to upstate New York to help support his mother and mother-in-law, who are requiring more care.

Sprague took over in January 2025, the first club professional in 20 years to be CEO and the first former PGA president appointed to the role. The PGA of America has some 30,000 professionals, and it runs the Ryder Cup in America and the PGA Championship for men, women and seniors.

He said he would stay on in an advisory role

to ensure a smooth transition when the PGA of America finds his successor. Sprague had informed the PGA board in early December

Rybakina extends streak to 13 with Badosa win

Sabalenka cruises into Brisbane quarters

SYDNEY, Jan. 8. (Agencies): World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka and fifth-ranked Elena Rybakina reached the quarterfinals at the Brisbane International by winning in straight sets at the Australian Open warm-up event.

Sabalenka, the defending champion in Brisbane, triumphed 6-3, 6-3 in one hour and 19 minutes against Sorana Cirstea in their round of 16 match.

After breaking Cirstea's serve three times in the opening set, Sabalenka required six break points across two games in the second set before converting to take a decisive lead.

Speaking on court after the match, Sabalenka said that Cirstea had pushed her hard.

"Especially in the second set, it was a really great level from her. I'm super happy I was able to close this match in straight sets," she said.

Sabalenka has now won 35 matches and lost two in Australia

since the start of 2023, a run that has included two Australian Open titles, with the only defeats coming in finals at the Brisbane International in 2024 and Australian Open in 2025.

Rybakina, who ended 2025 by defeating Sabalenka to win the title at the WTA Finals, beat world No. 25 Paula Badosa 6-3, 6-2 in one hour and 25 minutes on Thursday to extend her winning streak to 13 matches.

The Kazakh fell behind 0-2 in the first set, but won 12 of the next 15 games, hitting 24 winners for the match.

"It was not easy, I started a little bit slow and was struggling on my serve too, but I'm happy that I managed to win," she said.

Sabalenka will play either Diana Shnaider or reigning Australian Open champion Madison Keys in the quarterfinals, while Rybakina will face Ekaterina Alexandrova or Karolina Muchova.

Meanwhile, top-seeded Elina



Jakub Mensik of Czechia hits a forehand to Zizou Bergs of Belgium during their men's singles quarterfinal match at the United Cup tennis tournament in Sydney. (AP)

Svitolina again relied on her "fighting spirit" beating wild-card entry quarterfinals of the WTA tournament in Auckland, New Zealand.

Katie Boulter 7-5, 6-4 to reach the

Both players struggled on serve

in windy conditions on center court. There were nine service breaks in the match, which the No. 13-ranked Svitolina clinched on her third match point.

"Katie is a great fighter so I was expecting a tough match," Svitolina said. "She can strike the ball very well, as she did today, and it was not an easy match for us with the wind swirling around."

Svitolina dropped her serve in the third game, immediately broke back but was broken again in the ninth. She won some exceptional clutch points to break Boulter again and take the first set.

Svitolina broke Boulter in the fourth game on the second set but immediately dropped serve. Both players had to work hard to hold in the sixth and seventh games before a series of three consecutive breaks which ended with Svitolina's second singles win in 2026.

"It definitely was very important to me to fight for every point and try to find my way through," Svi-

tolina said. "I was just pleased with the way I could handle the tough games."

Svitolina ended her 2025 season in September when she took a break from the tour for mental health reasons.

The Ukrainian star won her opening match in Auckland 6-3, 6-1 over Varvara Gracheva.

"My fighting spirit, I would say it's back," Svitolina said after that match. "And I would say it's nice to be refreshed and hungry again, to work hard, to face these tough moments."

"So the period of time at the end of the season that I took off, it really helped me to find again this spirit and fighting experience that I've been having for many years."

The tournament in Auckland is an important tuneup event for the Australian Open, the season-opening major that starts in Melbourne on Jan. 18.

City and Villa stumble

United held at Burnley in Fletcher's debut



Newcastle United's Harvey Barnes, left, and Leeds United's Gabriel Gudmundsson in action during the English Premier League soccer match between Newcastle United and Leeds United in Newcastle, England. (AP)

MANCHESTER, England, Jan. 8. (AP): Manchester City's Premier League title hopes took another blow after a 1-1 draw with Brighton on Wednesday.

Not even Erling Haaland's 150th goal for the club was enough to stop City from dropping points at home for the second time in as many games and recording a third-straight draw.

Kaoru Mitoma's equalizer stopped Pep Guardiola's team from closing the gap to first-place Arsenal to three points.

The City manager blamed missed chances for the latest setback.

Aston Villa also missed out on the chance to move within three points of first-place Arsenal after a goalless draw at Crystal Palace.

Manchester United's first game since firing Ruben Amorim on Monday ended in a 2-2 draw at relegation-fighting Burnley and new Chelsea coach Liam Rosenior watched on from the stands as his team was beaten 2-1 by Fulham.

Newcastle scored in the 12th minute of added time to beat Leeds 4-3. According to the Premier League, it was latest winner on record in the

competition. And Antoine Semenyo also struck in added time as Burnemouth beat Tottenham 3-2 in what could be his last game before a widely anticipated move to City.

For the second time is as many games City blew a lead at home to ease the pressure on Arsenal at the top of the standings.

After the 1-1 draw against Chelsea on Sunday Pep Guardiola's team was held again, this time by Brighton.

Haaland's 41st-minute penalty put City ahead at halftime. But after Mitoma's equalizer on the hour, Haaland was guilty of wasting a golden chance to score the winner when he shot straight at Brighton goalkeeper Ben Verbruggen late on.

A run of three draws also included a 0-0 with Sunderland on New Year's Day.

Villa is third and level on points with City after a 0-0 draw at Palace - the second time in three games that Unai Emery's team has dropped points.

Darren Fletcher couldn't lead United to victory in his first game as interim coach, with Jaidon Anthony scoring a long-range equalizer for second-bottom Burnley.

Two goals from Benjamin Sesko saw United bounce back from Ayden Heaven's early own goal. But Burn-

ley salvaged a draw with the stunning strike from Anthony.

United has won one of its last six games and only three from 12.

Fletcher said afterward that he would remain in charge for the FA Cup tie against Brighton on Sunday. Ole Gunnar Solskjær and Michael Carrick among the candidates to become interim coach until the end of the season.

Rosenior has a job on his hands at Chelsea.

The Club World Cup winner is eighth in the standings after extending its winless run to five games.

Harry Wilson's 82-minute goal secured victory for Fulham against a Chelsea team that had Marc Cucurella sent off early in the match and was led by interim Calum McFarlane, despite the appointment of Rosenior on Tuesday.

Rosenior's first game will be the FA Cup tie against Charlton Athletic on Saturday.

In what might go down as one of the best Premier League games of the season, Harvey Barnes scored in the 102nd minute as Newcastle beat Leeds 4-3.

Leeds led three time at St James' Park and was 3-2 ahead as the clock ticked past 90 minutes.

But there was still plenty of drama

to come.

Bruno Guimaraes made it 3-3 from the penalty spot in the 91st and Barnes spun to squeeze home his second of the match and the winner.

Brentford is up to fifth after a 3-0 win over Sunderland, with Igor Thiago continuing his outstanding scoring run.

The Brazilian struck two more for Keith Andrews' team to take his personal tally to 17 goals for the season. With 16 in the Premier League, only Haaland on 20 has more.

His double also followed the hat trick he scored against Everton on Sunday.

According to stats firm Opta, Thiago has now has the record for the most Premier League goals by a Brazilian in a single season.

Nine-man Everton drew 1-1 with last-place Wolverhampton Wanderers.

After 12 straight losses, Wolves are now three games unbeaten, but still 14 points adrift of safety.

He is widely expected to complete a move to City and if this was his last game for Bournemouth, Semenyo went out with a bang.

With a goal in the fifth minute of added time, the forward sealed a dramatic late victory over Spurs and ended Bournemouth's 11-game winless run.

Best of the Rest

Neymar extends Santos contract: Brazil forward Neymar has extended his contract with Santos until the end of 2026.

The 33-year-old striker, who is hoping to play at next summer's World Cup, rejoined Santos one year ago and despite some injury struggles helped his boyhood club avoid relegation from Brazil's top-flight division.

His contract was set to expire in July. The club confirmed the extension late Tuesday.

The former Barcelona star described 2025 as "a special and challenging year for me."

(AP)

Montgomery named Beijing Guoan coach: Britain's Nick Montgomery has been appointed as head coach of Beijing Guoan, the Chinese Super League (CSL) club announced on Thursday.

Montgomery, 44, spent most of his playing career at Sheffield United before joining Australia's Central Coast Mariners in 2012.

After retiring in 2017, Montgomery became youth team coach and then head coach of Central Coast Mariners. More recently, he served as assistant coach at Premier League sides Tottenham Hotspur and Nottingham Forest. (Xinhua)

Inter maintains lead with Parma win

Napoli held by struggling Verona



Napoli's Rasmus Hojlund drives the ball during the Serie A soccer match between Napoli and Verona in Naples, Italy. (AP)

back into the match early in the second half and the hosts had two goals disallowed before Giovanni Di Lorienzo finally equalized in the 82nd minute.

Verona inched to within two points of safety.

Inter survived a scare on a foggy night in Parma as its opponent hit the woodwork before the visitors took the lead, with a goal that was initially disallowed.

Federico Dimarco was flagged off-side after firing in from a tight angle shortly before halftime, but the goal was awarded on video review.

Marcus Thuram sealed the result deep in stoppage time.

Elsewhere, Atalanta won 2-0 at Bologna to leapfrog its opponent into seventh place.

Fiorentina drew 2-2 at Lazio and Udinese won 2-1 at Torino.

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Manchester United's Leny Yoro, left, and Burnley's Bashir Humphreys go for the ball during the Premier League soccer match between Burnley and Manchester United in Burnley, England. (AP) – See Page 15

Sports

Kuwait Club takes on Burgan

Quarterfinal lineup set for Crown Prince Cup

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 8: Two quarterfinal matches of the His Highness the Crown Prince Cup are scheduled for tomorrow, Saturday. In the first match, Kuwait Club will take on Burgan, while Al-Nasr will face Al-Tadamon in the second.

Kuwait Club looks to continue its title defense, buoyed by strong morale as the team leads the Zain Premier League undefeated, three points ahead of closest rival Al-Arabi.

The defending champion reached the quarterfinals after a 3-0 win over Khaitan in the preliminary round and will aim to halt Burgan's ambitious run. Burgan qualified by defeating Al-Jahra 2-0 but faces a tough challenge due to the experience and performance gap, especially since the team has struggled in the First Division League and is out of promotion contention after ten rounds.

Al-Nasr and Al-Tadamon meet in the "Farwaniya Derby," with both clubs aiming to advance further in the tournament.

Both teams have experienced inconsistent results in the Premier League, fighting to avoid relegation. Al-Nasr sits last with 4 points, just one behind 9th-placed Al-Tadamon. Al-Nasr earned its quarterfinal spot with a 1-0 victory over Al-Sahef, while Al-Tadamon upset Al-Salmiya 2-1.

Al-Qadsia is the final team to reach the quarterfinals, after defeating Al-Shabab 2-0 in the preliminary round at Sabah Al-Salem Stadium, setting up a matchup with Al-Arabi on Sunday. The game marked the debut of Al-Qadsia's Nigerian signing Iblai, who scored the opening goal. Even after playing the second half with ten men due to goalkeeper Ali Jrag's red card for handling the ball outside the box in stoppage time of the first half, Al-Qadsia held on for a 2-0 win, bouncing back from a series of disappointing league results.

Algerian player Adam Rajem is close to joining Al-Qadsia for the remainder of the season, with negotiations in advanced stages. Meanwhile, Coach Nabil Maaloul confirmed that Egyptian player Mahmoud Kahraba has requested to terminate his contract with the club.



Al-Qadsia players celebrate after beating Al-Shabab to qualify.

Australia completes 4-1 series win over England



Australian team celebrate with the Ashes trophy following the final Ashes cricket test between England and Australia in Sydney, Australia. (AP)

Guthrie wins second Dakar Rally stage after Roma penalty and Sanders regains bike lead

HAIL, Saudi Arabia, Jan 8, (AP): Mitch Guthrie became the first driver to win a second stage in the Dakar Rally after Nani Roma was penalized for speeding in the Saudi desert.

Guthrie won his first major stage on Tuesday and the American prevailed again on the 371-kilometer second half of the marathon stage from AlUla east to Hail.

Roma thought he'd won his 14th career car stage - one more than he achieved on a motorbike - after four hours by four seconds but a 70-second penalty meant he lost the stage by 66 seconds. Martin Prokop's third place gave Ford the podium sweep.

Henk Lategan, nearly 13 minutes behind the winner, held on to the overall lead in his Toyota but Nasser Al-Attiyah's second-placed Dacia and Mattias Ekström's third-placed Ford closed to less than six minutes behind.

But for a brief time near the end, Lategan opened the way for almost the entire day.

"It was really, really, really diffi-

cult, one of the most difficult stages I've had to open," he said. "There were no bike tracks and a lot of the tracks were really, really small tracks. The rain washed a lot of them away. The last two days you didn't really want to open but Brett did a great job to get us here. For the car to make it through two days of marathon is actually an amazing job by the team seeing that this car was tested for the first time three months ago."

Roma improved from seventh to fourth and Guthrie from 13th to sixth. They were separated by Ford teammate Carlos Sainz, the four-time champion less than nine minutes off the pace with eight stages to go, including another two-day marathon next week outside Bisha.

Argentine rider Luciano Benavides won the 356-kilometer motorbike stage, emulating his brother Kevin, who won the stage into Ha'il in 2024.

Teammate Adrien van Beveren, third the last two years, was running second in the stage when a wire became stuck in his wheel. He lost 30 minutes and recovered to ninth but was 53 minutes behind overall.

ment, holding roles at Newcastle United, Fulham, Manchester City and the England national team. (Xinhua)

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Downs joins Hamburg on loan: United States striker Damion Downs joined Bundesliga club Hamburger SV on loan for the rest of the season from English second-division team Southampton.

The German-born Downs had signed with Southampton on a four-year deal last summer after he scored 10 league goals to help Cologne earn Bundesliga promotion.

The 21-year-old Downs hadn't scored for Southampton this season, however. He made 14 appearances in all competitions.

"Damion is a direct center forward and has a great mix of size, pace and ability to get in behind," Hamburg director of football Claus Costa said in the team's announcement. "With his strengths in transition and his presence in the box, he fits very well with the profile of player that we and the coaching staff were looking for." Hamburg is 13th in the Bundesliga.

Downs, who played at the CONCACAF Gold Cup, has made six appearances for the United States. (AP)

Benavides was chasing KTM teammate Edgar Canet, the prologue and stage one winner, until Canet stopped at about 240 kilometers after the foam melted on his rear wheel. Canet lost an hour. He started the day fourth overall but has plunged out of title contention. Ross Branch also lost over an hour and fell from sixth overall.

Benavides recovered from knee, shoulder and back injuries in October at the Moroccan Rally to line up in his ninth Dakar. He's up to third in the general standings, six minutes behind teammate Sanders, who regained the lead from Honda's Toshio Schareina and Ricky Brabec.

Brabec was still second, two minutes back but Schareina was penalized 10 minutes for forgetting to leave the bivouac between the flags. He's still fourth overall and only 12 minutes back.

Teammate Adrien van Beveren, third the last two years, was running second in the stage when a wire became stuck in his wheel. He lost 30 minutes and recovered to ninth but was 53 minutes behind overall.

Bilbao suffers heavy defeat

Barcelona strolls into Spanish Super Cup final



Barcelona's Ferran Torres, right, heads the ball during the Spanish Super Cup semifinal soccer match against Athletic Club Bilbao at King Abdullah Sports City Stadium in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. (AP)

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia, Jan 8, (AP): Raphinha scored twice as Barcelona routed Athletic Bilbao 5-0 in the semifinals of the Spanish Super Cup played in Saudi Arabia.

Hansi Flick's team overpowered their Basque rivals by scoring four times in the first half while Barcelona star Lamine Yamal watched from the bench.

Ferran Torres swatted in a missed shot by Fermín López to start the demolition in the 23rd minute at Alin Stadium in Jeddah.

Fermín curled in a pass by Raphinha in the 30th and Rooney Bardhaji squirmed a strike under

Athletic goalkeeper Unai Simón four minutes later.

Raphinha poured it on with a blistering strike to beat Simón in the 38th before the Brazil forward rounded off the big win in the 52nd.

"We made the game look easy. When we are playing well the game becomes easier to play," Raphinha said. "We are focused on ourselves and ready to play whoever wins the other semifinal."

Raphinha missed six weeks due to injury earlier this season but has been playing in the same fine form as last season since his return in early December. His goals and leadership were crucial to Barce-

lona winning La Liga, the Copa del Rey as well as the Spanish Super Cup last campaign.

Yamal went on against Athletic as a late substitute.

Spain forward Nico Williams remained on Athletic's bench for the entire match. Williams has been nagged by a groin strain this season.

"This is a tough loss," Simón said. "When you concede five goals you can't point to any single player. It means the entire team didn't play well."

Barcelona is currently leading La Liga. Athletic is eighth and vying for a European berth.

Best of the Rest

Keegan diagnosed with cancer: Former England striker and manager Kevin Keegan has been diagnosed with cancer, his family announced.

In a statement released by his family, details of his condition were confirmed following recent medical investigations.

"Kevin was recently admitted to hospital for further evaluation of ongoing abdominal symptoms," the statement said.

"These investigations have revealed a diagnosis of cancer, for which Kevin will undergo treatment. Kevin is grateful to the medical team for their intervention and ongoing care." "During this difficult time, the family are requesting privacy, and will be making no further comment," the statement added.

The 74-year-old enjoyed an illustrious playing career, featuring spells at Liverpool, Hamburg, Southampton and Newcastle United, and was twice named European Footballer of the Year.

After retiring as a player, Keegan moved into manage-

Editor-in-Chief
AHMED AL JARALLAH

ment, holding roles at Newcastle United, Fulham, Manchester City and the England national team. (Xinhua)

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