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Amir receives Senegal President, accompanying delegation

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Moshel Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, received the President of the Republic of Senegal, Bassirou Diomaye Faye, in the presence of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, on his official visit to the country.

The meeting was attended by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdulla Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

An official reception ceremony was held in honor of President Faye, beginning with the playing of the national anthems of both countries.

Official talks were subsequently held between the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Senegal.

His Highness the Amir headed the Kuwaiti side, while President Faye led the Senegalese side, with the attendance of the Crown Prince, the Prime Minister, and a number of senior officials from both countries.

Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah stated that the talks touched on the bilateral relations between the two friendly countries and peoples, and ways to develop them across all fields.

A luncheon banquet was also held in honor of President Bassirou Diomaye Faye and the accompanying official delegation.

President of the Republic of Senegal Bassirou Diomaye Faye, accompanied by an official delegation, arrived in Kuwait on Monday evening on an official visit.

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Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

Channel sovereign wealth domestically

KUWAIT'S prolonged period of isolation resulted in the loss of huge development opportunities. This isolation, driven by influential figures in the National Assembly who exerted control, prevented the country from benefiting from its strategic location to become a major economic hub and compete regionally.

This led to national stagnation and regression in exchange for minimal gains, a poor trade-off for a nation endowed with vast yet underutilized wealth.

The announcement of a new openness by the Ministry of Interior was therefore met with widespread enthusiasm among Kuwaitis. However, the public still anticipates further comprehensive measures to fully revitalize economic and commercial activity.

The ultimate goal is to strategically position the country for regional competitiveness across all sectors, thereby compensating for the extensive development opportunities lost over the years.

In many countries, tourists and visitors are warmly welcomed because they spend their money there and thus contribute to the economy, and to some extent, as some have noted, they are "spoiled."

In Kuwait, however, the experience is different. While many visitors do come, they encounter a lack of essential elements related to tourism, entertainment, and comfort.

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Cardinal Parolin visits Kuwait, to lead basilica elevation ceremony

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Apostolic Nuncio to Kuwait Monsignor Eugene Martin Nugent announced that His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State to His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, will arrive in Kuwait today for a three-day official visit.

Speaking at a press conference, he explained that Cardinal Parolin, as Secretary of State, is the highest-ranking diplomatic representative of the Holy See.



Ten dead amid Gaza cold snap

GAZA, Jan 13, (KUNA): A severe low-pressure weather system sweeping the Gaza Strip has further aggravated the already deteriorating humanitarian and health conditions caused by Israeli occupation war of extermination on Gaza, resulting in the deaths of ten children and elderly people.

In a press statement, Director of Al-Shifa Medical Complex Dr. Mohammad Abu Salimya said that hospitals across the Strip, foremost among them Al-Shifa Medical Complex, have in recent hours dealt with numerous cases of suffocation,

Continued on Page 5



Amiri Diwan photos

Private schools in residential areas to close by end of 2028

Kuwait adds traffic clause to closure



Motorists carefully make their way along the cold, slick roads leading into Kuwait City on Tuesday, braving the chilly winter temperatures.

KISR records over 1,400 local quakes since 1997

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Director of the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), Dr. Faisal Al-Humaidan, says the Kuwait National Seismic Network has recorded more than 1,400 local earthquakes, ranging from weak to moderate in magnitude, since its establishment in 1997, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an interview with the daily, he indicated that the network also monitors regional and

global earthquakes around the clock.

Dr. Al-Humaidan revealed that the network includes nine field stations in various regions of Kuwait, as well as a central seismic data analysis center at the institute's headquarters in Shuwaikh.

In response to a question about KISR's recent achievements, Dr. Al-Humaidan explained that in 2024 and 2025, KISR successfully solidified its position as a leading national

research institution by implementing a wide range of scientific and applied projects in the fields of environment, energy, water, food security, and innovation.

It achieved a significant milestone by ranking second in the Gulf region and fourth regionally among 322 research centers, according to the SCIMAGO 2024 ranking.

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Kuwait Fire Force photo

Worker plucked to safety

A worker who was trapped in a maintenance crane that had malfunctioned in Mirqab was successfully and safely rescued, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

On Monday, firefighters from Mirqab Search and Rescue Center responded to an emergency at a building where a maintenance crane had malfunctioned, leaving a worker trapped. They acted quickly to bring the worker safely to the ground. No casualties occurred during the incident.

2,000 killed in Tehran unrest

DUBAI, Jan 13, (AP): The death toll from nationwide protests in Iran spiked Tuesday to at least 2,000 people killed, activists said, as Iranians made phone calls abroad for the first time in days after authorities severed communications during a crackdown.

This level of violence around protests hasn't been seen in Iran in decades.

The U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, which has been accurate in previous unrest in recent years, gave the latest toll. It relies on supporters in Iran cross-checking information.

The group said 1,847 of the dead over more than two weeks of protests were protesters and 135 were government-affiliated. Another nine children were killed, and nine civilians it said were not taking part in protests also were killed.

With the internet down in Iran, gauging the demonstrations from abroad has grown more difficult. The Associated Press has been unable to independently assess the toll.

Continued on Page 5

8 ABK Wealth Management launches ABK Wealth Trade



9 'Zain Great Idea' takes 11 regional tech startups to Silicon Valley for unique global acceleration journey

Prayer Timings

Fajr 05:20 Asr 14:51
 Sunrise .. 06:44 Maghrib .. 17:10
 Zohr 11:57 Isha 18:31

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Mild with light to moderate freshening at times northwesterly wind, with speeds of 10-42 km/h.

By Night: Cold with light to moderate northwesterly wind to

Weather

light variable wind, with speeds of 08-35 km/h.	Bubyan	16	12
Jahra	20	12	
Failaka Island	16	12	
Salmiyah	19	16	
Ahmadi	23	09	
Jal Aliyah	19	12	
Nuwaibis	20	11	

Kuwait, UAE judicial teams review measures to facilitate litigation procedures



Kuwaiti and UAE judicial teams visit the headquarters of the Judicial Council at the new Palace of Justice. KUNA photo

'Gov't must up agriculture investment, cut food cost'

Move to hike non-oil revenues: expert

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: While praising the government's focus on increasing non-oil revenues and supporting food security, agricultural and food security expert Mohammad Al-Furaih emphasized that investment projects should also be expanded to the agricultural sector. This can be achieved through collaboration with the private sector for providing various incentives for companies wishing to invest in agriculture, in coordination with local banks.

In a press statement, Al-Furaih indicated that expanding agricultural investment will pave the way for similar initiatives in sectors such as livestock, the feed industry, the grain trade, and increasing storage capacity, adding that neighboring countries, including Saudi Arabia, have



Al-Furaih

long pursued a pioneering approach in expanding their agricultural land area.

Regarding the potential contribution of agricultural investment to the growth of non-oil revenues, Al-Furaih said he believes the agricultural sector can support the national economy while also achieving food security and reducing the import bill.

He stressed that expanding agricultural investments in Kuwait requires first addressing the challenges facing the sector, while focusing on private sector involvement and utilizing modern technologies to enhance production efficiency and improve the quality of local products.

Al-Furaih highlighted the challenges posed by high summer temperatures, noting that expanding greenhouse farming with modern designs and advanced technology is essential.

He expressed hope that new greenhouses would not follow the same models used in Wafra and Abdali, which failed to meet practical specifications,

resulting in higher production costs, lower yields, increased maintenance expenses, and greater water and electricity consumption. In this regard, Al-Furaih urged relevant authorities in Kuwait to draw lessons from Saudi Arabia's experiences.

He indicated that Saudi Arabia has taken confident steps toward building a robust agricultural economy by aiming for self-sufficiency as outlined in its "Vision 2030."

Al-Furaih highlighted the "Developmental Coffee City" project, which is built on over 1.6 million square meters of Saudi land and is managed using state-of-the-art artificial intelligence systems and drip irrigation networks exceeding 450,000 meters in length. He said the project is supported by processing and roasting facilities that are the largest in the region, with a targeted production capacity of 10,000 tons annually.

Al-Furaih emphasized that supporting agriculture in Kuwait requires prioritizing local products and granting agricultural holdings to those already active in the sector who wish to develop them, noting that one of the main benefits of agricultural expansion in Kuwait is reducing the high cost of food in the local market.

Gang of Syrians nabbed in bid to move fake dollars in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The Counterfeiting and Forgery Investigation Department thwarted the circulation of approximately \$130,000 in counterfeit currency and arrested six Syrian expatriates involved in distribution and smuggling activities, reports Al-Anba daily.

This comes weeks after the Criminal Security Sector's Counterfeiting and Forgery Crimes Department apprehended some expatriates for defrauding individuals seeking quick profits by selling counterfeit US dollar bills at half their real value. In the latest incident, authorities arrested six Syrian expatriates in Farwaniya and Jleeb Al-Shuyukh for attempting to circulate counterfeit currency.

The accused sold \$50,000 to a Kuwaiti citizen at approximately 55 percent less than its face value. The case came to light after the citizen reported being defrauded, stating that he purchased the amount for KD 7,000. He discovered the deception when he attempted to exchange the money and learned that the banknotes were invalid and unfit for circulation, despite appearing to be in good condition.

According to security sources, upon receiving the report, a specialized team was immediately formed to investigate and verify the information. The investigation led to

the arrest of the main suspect, a Syrian expatriate, who confessed during questioning to selling the counterfeit money to the citizen and implicated another Syrian national involved in the same activity. Both admitted to being part of a network of four expatriates who brought the money from Jordan over several trips.

Further investigations revealed that the counterfeit US dollars were smuggled from Iraq to Jordan before being brought into the country by truck drivers. These drivers transported the money in exchange for a commission, with their role limited to delivery and handing over to a fellow national upon entering the country. Searches of the suspects' residences in Farwaniya and Jleeb Al-Shuyukh uncovered approximately \$130,000 in counterfeit US currency, along with other items related to the case.

The sources affirmed that the Ministry of Interior is firmly committed to combating counterfeiting and forgery crimes and will not tolerate any attempts to undermine economic security or target citizens and residents. The ministry stressed the importance of reporting any similar suspicions and avoiding dubious offers.

The suspects and the seized items have been referred to the relevant authorities for further legal action.



Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets the Peruvian Ambassador Carlos Jiménez Gil Fortoul in his office. Ahmadi Governorate photo

Ahmadi Gov. receives Peruvian Ambassador

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received the Ambassador of the Republic of Peru to Kuwait, Carlos Jiménez Gil Fortoul, who was accompanied by Consul Pedro Javier and Mohammad Al-Bani, on Monday morning.

According to a press release issued by Ahmadi Governorate, the two sides exchanged introductions and friendly dialogue during the meeting, discussing bilateral relations and ways to enhance cooperation in various fields.

The governor welcomed Ambassador Carlos and wished him success in his duties and in strengthening relations between the two countries.



Finance Ministry photo
 Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, and the acting Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, Dr. Subaih Abdulaziz Al-Mukhaizem, and the UN Secretary-General's Representative and Resident Coordinator in Kuwait, Ghada Hatem Al-Taher hold discussions.

Kuwait, UN mull future SDGs plan

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, and the acting Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, Dr. Subaih Abdulaziz Al-Mukhaizem, received the UN Secretary-General's Representative and Resident Coordinator in Kuwait, Ghada Hatem Al-Taher, on Tuesday.

According to a press release issued by the Ministry of Finance, the two parties discussed several topics of mutual interest between the Ministry of Finance and the United Nations, in line with the priorities of New Kuwait

2035 vision and the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030. They also reviewed the framework for strategic cooperation between Kuwait and the United Nations in the near future and reaffirmed Kuwait's supportive role toward the UN's mission.

The meeting was attended by Assistant Undersecretary for Technical Services Saad Al-Alati, Director of the International Economic Cooperation Department Saad Al-Rashidi, and Diplomatic Attaché at the Department of International Organizations in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ahmad Al-Sayyar.

Other Voices

Should Kuwait follow Saudi lead in liberalization?

By Ahmad alsarraf

Saudi Arabia has announced the opening of its financial markets to all categories of foreign investors, removing many previous restrictions that limited stock exchange participation.

Previously, this right was reserved for Saudi citizens and later extended to qualified foreign investors under specific approvals and structures, such as swaps.

Under the new rules, all non-resident foreign investors can now invest directly in stocks, gaining full capital exposure rather than only economic exposure through derivatives. The changes will take effect at the beginning of next month, with the Capital Market Authority (CMA) serving as the implementing regulator.

This significant move comes after a long-term, gradual liberalization process that began with swap



agreements in 2008 and the Qualified Foreign Investor (QFI) system introduced in 2015. These measures have culminated in full market liberalization, expanding access to large and strategic stocks in a market filled with opportunities.

Saudi regulations will maintain the previous maximum limit for foreign ownership at 49 percent of the total shares in a listed company, with lower limits for individual investors. These thresholds are designed to balance market openness with the protection of national assets and financial wealth, while ensuring overall market stability.

The reforms are part of Vision 2030, which aims to attract long-term global capital, enhance market liquidity, and strengthen Saudi Arabia's position as a leading emerging markets hub. The changes will also facilitate foreign investor participation in upcoming initial public offerings (IPOs) and help diversify the investor base.

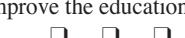
These reforms may also lead to higher valuations for Saudi assets and increased weighting in benchmark indices. Restrictions on foreign exchange have been eased, allowing investors to

transfer profits, sale proceeds, and capital through standard banking channels. Financial transfers are still subject to anti-money laundering checks, identity verification, and any remaining foreign exchange controls. In principle, funds can move freely, but all transfers must comply with both Saudi regulations and the rules of the investor's home country.

In light of this development, it is essential for Kuwait's Capital Markets Authority (CMA) to closely study Saudi Arabia's pioneering move and seek to emulate it by accelerating Kuwait's integration into global markets and opening the door for foreign investors.

Economic challenges are inevitable, and we must prepare by taking bold steps, deepening global economic integration, and modernizing education to keep pace with progress, rather than clinging to outdated practices.

Enough is enough with the unjustified expenditures, delays in diversifying income sources, stagnation in administrative development, and failures to improve the education system.



Teaching robotics.

artificial intelligence and programming, along with Chinese language instruction. The goal is to identify talented students and establish a strong knowledge base that will enable them to advance to higher levels of education. It also aims to attract future scientists and develop a core of national talent capable of driving progress in software and artificial intelligence.

Dr. Al-Enezi emphasized the importance of early exposure to these technologies to prepare future generations and guide them in using technology consciously and productively. He expressed hope for strengthened cooperation with the Ministry of Education to help identify talented students and support the initiative. Furthermore, Muhamna Al-Arabi, Director of Top Academy Education Group, said, "The true investment lies in education and preparing future generations."

Move cars, let traffic flow: GTD

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: In a move that reflects a significant shift in the concept of education and its future role, the Kuwait Association for Educational Development (KAED) launched a free scholarship program in artificial intelligence, programming, and skills development, targeting around 100 students.

The launch was announced during a press conference attended by a select group of educators and media representatives.

The program is part of a strategic educational partnership with Top Academy China and JNA, a company specializing in advanced technologies and robotics. It aims to equip Kuwaiti students to become active contributors to the knowledge economy and technology sector, rather than merely consumers.

Dr. Saleh Al-Enezi, President of the association, emphasized that nations achieve progress through science and education.

He explained that rapid advancements in technology and artificial intelligence require societies to keep pace to avoid falling behind in the global arena. The association has been implementing a comprehensive educational project for over 30 years, serving students, parents, and the community. The program is a direct response to accelerating digital transformation. It targets students aged 9 to 17 and, in its first phase, offers a free foundational scholarship in

the program.

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diwaniya

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Monroe Doctrine ... What does it mean for people?

"US President Trump is invoking the 'Monroe Doctrine', which was originally articulated by US President James Monroe in 1823," columnist Ahmad Al-Dawas wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"This doctrine declared that 'Latin America should be a US sphere of influence, off-limits to foreign powers.'

"In essence, it serves as a warning to Russia and China against interfering in what the United States considers its 'backyard.' Events in the Western Hemisphere are treated as American matters, where Washington may act unilaterally to counter those it perceives as threats."

"US officials maintain that 'the Monroe Doctrine remains firmly in place.' Trump, for his part, claims that the United States has the right to remove Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro from its Caribbean neighborhood because a large portion of the drugs flooding American streets originate from Venezuelan gangs. However, some observers argue that the real motivation behind Trump's actions is oil."

"A US military official provided a detailed account of how Venezuelan President Maduro was captured. An intelligence team had been monitoring Maduro's movements and lifestyle, including his diet and clothing. The training included building a replica of Maduro's house and practicing how to storm it, which ensured a smooth operation."

"Saturday, January 3, was chosen as the optimal time to minimize civilian casualties and maximize the element of surprise. US military aircraft, including bombers, fighters, and surveillance, intelligence, and reconnaissance planes, launched an attack. As they approached Caracas, they were targeted by Venezuelan anti-aircraft fire, but US forces destroyed the missiles. Maduro and his wife surrendered and were flown to New York. Maduro's Vice President, Delcy Rodríguez, assumed the interim presidency."

"Trump stated, 'We will be in Venezuela because of their oil. Their country's wealth will go to its people and to the American people as compensation for damages. We will send our oil experts there.' In response, a British MP called the kidnapping of President Maduro 'cowboy behavior,' while a US senator urged President Trump to 'stop this madness and focus on America's domestic crises.'

"The UN Secretary-General stated that these developments set a dangerous precedent and could encourage countries like China to launch military campaigns against Taiwan, for example. The Cuban president declared, 'For Venezuela, we are ready to give our blood,' and the Russian president angrily asked, 'Was what America did authorized by the Security Council? No?'

"President Trump further escalated tensions with Denmark, stating, 'We need Greenland for national security. There are Russian and Chinese ships everywhere.' This prompted the Danish Prime Minister to condemn his remarks."

"American journalist Ethan Levins commented, 'Now anyone can do as they please. This means that Russia, China, India, Pakistan, or any other country now has the power, because of this American action, to arrest any president they want, regardless of who they are, and install a puppet government.'

"China could arrest the Japanese or Vietnamese prime minister, Russia could arrest the Estonian prime minister, and India could arrest the Bangladeshi prime minister. Each party can do as it pleases, and America can't say a word because the United Nations is effectively defunct."

"Trump also threatened Iran, warning that if Iranian authorities suppressed peaceful protesters and shed blood during the demonstrations, they would be held accountable."

"The arrest of Maduro is considered a shock to Tehran, especially as it comes amidst widespread protests across most Iranian provinces against the country's economic and living conditions. These protests have been met with excessive force by the police, resulting in numerous deaths and injuries."

Also:

"Kuwait rises with achievements under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (May God protect him)," Kuwaiti journalist Hamed Al-Hamdi wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"In an era marked by regional and global challenges, the reign of His Highness the Amir stands out as a model of wise leadership, combining firmness with determination and laying the foundation for a new phase of comprehensive development in Kuwait."

"During the two years after His Highness assumed power in December 2023, the achievements of this era are evident in a remarkable development journey, reflecting a visionary approach aimed at advancing the nation, ensuring prosperity, and fulfilling the aspirations of the noble Kuwaiti people."

"His Highness the Amir is known as the 'Blessing of Firmness and Determination,' a title that reflects his steadfast approach to confronting challenges with strong will and resolve, upholding the law, and safeguarding the nation's resources. This auspicious era has seen



Ahmad Al-Dawas

a significant focus on combating corruption, promoting integrity and transparency, and supporting administrative and financial reforms, thereby restoring Kuwait's prestige and stability."

"He has also placed great emphasis on national security, drawing on his extensive experience in developing security agencies to ensure the safety of the nation and its people. Among the most prominent developmental achievements of his reign is the commissioning of the Al-Zour Refinery, a major advancement in the energy and oil sector that strengthens the national economy and reduces reliance on imports. Equally significant is the opening of Abdullah Al-Salem University, a historic step toward advancing higher education and cultivating generations capable of innovation and knowledge."

"His Highness has not neglected the future, as he launched the Kuwait National Center for Space Research to open new horizons in science and technology."

"In the social sphere, he has been keen to honor outstanding individuals and promote national unity, reflecting his paternal care for the people."

"On the international stage, his reign has strengthened Gulf cooperation as well as Arab and global relations, solidifying Kuwait's position as a nation of peace and prosperity."

"These achievements are not merely projects but they are building blocks in the construction of a new Kuwait that is advancing with determination and resolve toward sustainable development and comprehensive progress."

"In the era of the beacon of determination, Kuwait rises with achievements and flourishes, God willing."

□ □ □

"No Christmas trees in previous years have faced the same level of attack as those in 2025. Even in India, Hindus attacked the Christmas trees, as did groups in Tel Aviv," Kuwaiti writer Zaid Al-Jalawi wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"There is an unprecedented convergence of attacks from some Islamists, Zionists, and Hindus. This striking coincidence calls for understanding its underlying causes, which may reveal a hidden coordination among these three groups."

"Arab and Islamic governments, as well as the international community, are aware of the need to challenge Zionism's influence over Western public opinion. This public sentiment is increasingly resisting the reduction of their countries' interests to those of the occupying entity in Palestine. Zionists, in turn, claim that Arab incitement lies behind this growing Western dissent against their entity."

"The assassination of Charlie Kirk marked the beginning of what has been described as Israel's defensive-offensive, possibly intended to provoke a Christian backlash against Muslims and Islam in Western capitals. The aim appeared to be persuading British and European leaders not to recognize a Palestinian state, using figures like Tommy Robinson, who had been expelled from the UAE, to stir public unrest under the guise of 'freedom of expression, for which Charlie Kirk died.'

In reality, Kirk's assassination served as a pretext to rally Zionist supporters against Muslims.

"The implication was that Israel wields the power to influence Western public opinion against their own governments if they choose to support Muslims and recognize a Palestinian state. This position was opposed by the entity, which, despite its reach, remains relatively limited in scale."

"Meanwhile, in the Arab and Muslim world, Islamists, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood Group, intensified their attacks on New Year's celebrations this year in a reprehensible manner. Some Arab governments were urged to take a firm stance against them, as these governments believe that Israel is behind this coordination, seeking to portray Muslims negatively to the West. This is intended to exploit the growing Western sympathy for our causes and manipulate it through their propaganda."

"Even the attack on Jews in Australia cannot be ruled out as orchestrated by Tel Aviv, were it not for the intervention of the heroic Arab Muslim, Ahmed al-Ahmad. Our governments condemned the operation, while our media celebrated the heroism of the savior, who was personally visited by the Australian Prime Minister, who notably refused to include the occupying entity in the investigation."

"As for the Hindus in India and their attack on the Christmas tree, the 'Netanyahu' collective presented themselves to the West as influential figures with authority over the Hindus, implying that these Hindus were reacting to their provocation."

"In short, a Christian, Jesuit, faith-based movement is emerging from the West and for the West, one that is not aligned with Israel. Tel Aviv does not necessarily see this as serving its interests. The very Netanyahu who intervened by meeting with influential Western media figures and paying them large sums to write in his favor is now facing a growing backlash."

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty

30 days construction scrutiny bid launched



Municipality inspectors visiting various under construction sites in all governorates of Kuwait.

KUNA photos

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Kuwait Municipality launched a month-long field inspection campaign on Monday to monitor construction work in all six governorates for ensuring compliance with regulations and standards in all residential areas, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Director of the Engineering Audit and Follow-up Department at Jahra Municipality, Yousef Al-Badhal, explained in a press release

that the inspections are being carried out under the supervision of national engineers from Kuwait Municipality. During the visits, two building code violations were issued at private residences in Al-Mutlaa, and all necessary regulatory measures were taken against the violators.

Al-Badhal went on to explain that Kuwait Municipality teams conduct preliminary in-

spections of residential properties, issue citations for violations, and ensure their removal after giving contractors an opportunity to correct the issues. The inspection teams will continue their campaigns with several field visits covering all governorates, following a schedule set by the Public Relations Department in coordination with relevant departments over the coming weeks.

Customs DG on visit to port container section

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Director General of the General Administration of Customs (GAC) Yousef Al-Nuwaif, accompanied by Deputy Director General for Ports, Research, and Customs Investigation Affairs Saleh Al-Omar, conducted an inspection tour of the Container Inspection Center at Shuaiba Port and its Control Room, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The tour was aimed to review workflow and customs procedures, as well as assess the level of technical and operational readiness. It included an overview of modern technological systems supporting real-time monitoring and control operations, and enhancing performance efficiency at customs ports, as well as a review of the Control Room's functions due to its pivotal role in coordinating field efforts, monitoring workflow, and providing immediate responses.

Al-Nuwaif emphasized the importance of continuously developing the technological infrastructure, supporting the workforce, and strengthening integration between field and technical operations to achieve the highest levels of readiness, protect the country, and facilitate trade within the legal framework.



Yousef Al-Nuwaif

Murder ruling set for 'Feb 2'

Court overrules PADA order

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The Court of Appeals has adjourned to February 2 its verdict in the murder case of traveler Hani Al-Mousawi, widely referred to in the media as "The Jabriya Murder Case."

Previously, the Court of First Instance had convicted the defendant and sentenced him to death.

During the proceedings, the victim's lawyer, Hassan Al-Mousawi, stressed that the defendant did not merely fire two shots at the victim outside his home but also pursued him inside and fired the final shot to his head while he was in his mother's arms, in a scene that embodies extreme violence and premeditation.

The defense called for the imposition of the maximum penalty.

Decision overruled: The Court of Appeals accepted the appeal filed by Lawyer Nasser Al-Farhood against the decision issued by the technical committee of the Public Authority for Disabilities Affairs (PADA) to refuse recognizing his client as visually impaired. The court overturned the ruling issued by the lower court and canceled the decision issued by PADA's technical committee.

The court stated that the Forensic Medicine Department's report confirmed the appellant was completely blind in his left eye, resulting in a 50 percent visual impairment.

This qualifies as a visual disability under Article 1 of Law No. 8/2010.

The court ruled that PADA's refusal to include the appellant among those with disabilities was unlawful and required annulment.

It ordered PADA to include the appellant under the law's coverage and to issue a certificate confirming his permanent moderate visual disability.

15 years in libel suit: The Criminal Court, presided over by Judge Abdulwahab Al-Mualwi and with judges Abdulrahman Al-Rifai and Waqyan Al-Waqyan as members, sentenced Salman Al-Khalidi to 15 years in prison for insulting the Amir, the rulers of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, and the head of the Central Agency for the Remedy of Situation of Illegal Residents (CARSIR).

The court also ordered the closure of an Instagram account he operated and fined him KD 1,000 for violating licensing regulations.

The court emphasized that His Highness the Amir embodies the core of the state's security, sovereignty, and unity.

It clarified that any insult to His Highness the Amir is not considered an expression of opinion or freedom of expression, but a direct attack on the prestige and integrity of the state.

The court underscored that there is no freedom that undermines the state's structure or allows insults to its symbols.

It also affirmed that insulting the rulers of the GCC states constitutes a serious act of hostility, warranting strict punishment to protect Kuwait's foreign relations, security, and stability.

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Al-Dabbous sentenced to 1-yr jail; bail is 6,000

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The Criminal Court has sentenced Fadhel Al-Dabbous to a suspended one-year prison term, with bail set at KD 6,000, in connection with two cases of insulting officials from the Central Agency for the Remedy of the Status of Illegal Residents (CARSIR).

Al-Dabbous was acquitted of charges related to spreading false news.

The court ruled six months' imprisonment for each of the two insult cases, both suspended pending final judgment, with bail of KD 3,000 set for each case.

In addition, the court ordered the suspension of Al-Dabbous' Snapchat account for one year, as the social media platform was used to commit the offenses, in line with legal provisions.

Kuwait leads Arab SDG efforts through media and education

Official outlines multi-sector strategy to advance 2030 goals

CAIRO, Jan 13, (KUNA): A Kuwaiti official emphasized on Tuesday the importance of utilizing media, education, and international partnerships to support and implement the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals in the Arab region.

This was stated to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) by Faisal Al-Mana, the Arab League's observer in the External Media Sector at the Ministry of Information, during his participation in a meeting of the team responsible for following up on the Arab Sustainable Development Plan 2030 at the Arab League headquarters.

Al-Mana said that Kuwait will host the 104th meeting of the Arab Committee for Sustainable Development in



KUNA photo
Faisal Al-Mana, Arab League observer in the external media sector at the Ministry of Information early February, noting that the meeting will give greater

impetus to sustainable development initiatives. He added that Kuwait presented a number of media initiatives during the meeting, including television and radio programs focusing on sustainable development issues.

He explained that Kuwait is working to integrate sustainable development concepts into the Ministry of Education's curricula, in addition to preparing training courses specifically for media professionals to enhance awareness of sustainability issues, as part of a national plan proceeding according to clear objectives.

Al-Mana also noted that Kuwait's experience is pioneering in the field of sustainable development, pointing to Kuwait's participation in Expo Dubai and Expo Japan, where environmental and water sustainability were prominently featured in Kuwait's pavilions. He affirmed Kuwait's continued commitment to achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which will promote comprehensive and sustainable growth in the region.

Jahra Governor hosts Czech Embassy delegation

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habashi held a meeting with an official delegation from the Embassy of the Czech Republic, including Deputy Ambassador and Chargé d'Affaires Anna Otepko and Agricultural Attaché Lukas Zamzle. The meeting was also attended by representatives from the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) and the Kuwaiti Farmers Union.

According to a press release issued by Jahra Governorate, a range of proposals and ideas were discussed during the meeting to support the development of the agricultural sector and the growth of fisheries. Potential opportunities for bilateral cooperation were also explored, aimed at facilitating the exchange of expertise, sharing successful practices, and utilizing modern technologies.



Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habashi poses with a delegation from the Czech Republic.

They also discussed ways to support joint initiatives to enhance food security, promote sustainable development, and improve the efficiency of agricultural production, as well as develop freshwater fisheries in line

with national priorities for the benefit of farmers and those working in this vital sector.

Governor Al-Habashi emphasized the importance of ongoing coordination and cooperation with relevant

authorities, and called for intensified joint efforts to develop agricultural programs and projects, thereby reinforcing Jahra Governorate's role in supporting the agricultural and fisheries sectors.

Strategic market expansion

AAAID sets sights on Kuwait to enhance regional food security

DUBAI, Jan 13, (KUNA): The Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development (AAAID) is pushing forward with plans to explore the "promising" opportunities the Kuwaiti market has to offer, the Dubai-based pan-Arab food security body said on Monday.

Such a measure is part of "strategic expansion" plans AAAID has set for 2026, it said in a statement to mark the 50th anniversary of its inception while citing the notable contributions the body has made towards food security in the wider Arab region.

The statement underlined these plans as part of a broader "invest-

ment platform" that aims to forge partnerships with international funding institutions, in addition to promoting practices that ensure "financial sustainability," it added.

It went on to cite AAAID's chief Dr. Obaid Al-Zaabi as saying that the pan-Arab body's entry into new and diverse markets encapsulates its "historic commitment" to provide practical solutions to food security in some 21 Arab states, according to the statement.

Through funding agricultural projects in Arab states, the AAAID has worked since its inception in 1976 to bolster food security in the wider region.

Raising awareness on scholarships

'Guide Me' campaign supports students on academic choices

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal emphasized that the guidance program and field visits conducted as part of the annual national scholarship campaign "Guide Me" play a huge role in raising students' awareness of their academic paths and informing them about available scholarship opportunities and their requirements, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

He explained that the "Guide Me" campaign teams are carrying out their field visits to private sector schools, following the completion of visits to public schools, in



Dr. Al-Jalal

cooperation with the Ministry of Education. The visits aim to provide direct academic guidance to students, helping them explore available specializations and align their choices with their interests, abilities, and labor market demands.

Dr. Al-Jalal also announced a special meeting for parents at the end of this month as part of the campaign's activities, highlighting the importance of parental involvement in supporting students and enabling them to make informed academic decisions.

He revealed that the meeting will include a number of officials and specialists from the Ministry of Higher Education to directly answer parents' questions, explain the scholarship process, outline the approved conditions and criteria, and clarify procedures related to admission and studying abroad.

Grievance Committee halts solar tender

SAB clears Al-Mutlaa water project

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy has received conditional approval from the State Audit Bureau to proceed with the Al-Mutlaa water pumping station contract, which is worth a total of KD 29.857 million. This is in confirmation of an article published by the daily in the first week of December 5.

The approval follows a saving of KD 42,317 achieved by the State Audit Bureau through the removal of certain mechanical work items.

The ministry had requested to award the tender for the construction, completion, and maintenance of the water pumping station and its associated facilities at Site No. 1 in Al-Mutlaa City to the lowest bidder, a request recently approved by the Board of Directors of the Central Agency for Public Tenders.

The project is part of the ministry's ongoing efforts to develop essential infrastructure, including water, electricity, and roads, for new residential areas such as Al-Mutlaa City, which the state considers a vital component of its strategy to provide suitable housing for citizens.

Meanwhile, the Grievance Committee has requested the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) to provide a copy of the documents and data related to the grievance filed by bidders in Tender No. 62/2021/2022 for the supply, installation, and operation of a photovoltaic system on the carports and buildings of the northern power stations to be implemented by the Renewable Energy sector of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy.

According to informed sources, this step requires halting the procedures related to the contested decision until a final ruling is issued and CAPT is provided with the necessary documents.

CAPT's Board of Directors, during its meeting on Wednesday, decided to provide the Grievance Committee with a copy of the documents and to notify the relevant authority, the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, to suspend the procedures.

It is worth noting that the tender is part of the ministry's renewable energy projects aimed at relying on renewable sources as an alternative to traditional energy generated from fossil fuels at its external sites, thereby reducing costs and lowering emissions from oil combustion.

PIFSS denies fake investment claims

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) has denied reports circulating on social media claiming the launch of a new investment program for retirees and employees, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Highlighting that it is monitoring the spread of misinformation, the in-

stitution emphasized the importance of not sharing any personal or private data with any individual or entity to protect individual rights and uphold data security.

It also urged the public to rely solely on its official social media accounts of the institution for accurate information and updates.

Expert panel to review 675 projects

MoE closes submissions period for 'Ibdaat' innovation platform

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The Ministry of Education announced the conclusion of the submission period for development projects submitted by its employees through the "Ibdaat" (Innovations) digital platform, which is dedicated to encouraging creative and developmental ideas and projects, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The ministry explained that the platform was launched under the directives of Minister of Education Engineer Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabai, with the goal of promoting a culture of initiative and innovation in the ministry. A total of 675 diverse projects were submitted through the Ibdaat platform, which reflects strong engagement from various sectors, departments, and educational zones, as well as the keen interest of educational and administrative staff in actively participating.

Educational projects made up the largest share of submissions, totaling 287 projects, followed by technical pro-

jects with 85, administrative projects with 82, student projects with 73, professional development projects with 45, and infrastructure projects with 34. The submissions also included 16 media-related projects and 53 projects classified as "other."

All projects will be reviewed and evaluated by a team of experts with diverse backgrounds and specializations, in accordance with established criteria.

These criteria include clarity of concept, expected impact, feasibility, implementation mechanism, creativity, sustainability, and alignment with the ministry's objectives and development plans. Project proponents will be notified of the evaluation results through the "Ibdaat" online platform. If a project is initially accepted, the proponent will be required to submit a detailed feasibility study within a specified timeframe to complete the final evaluation and determine the appropriate implementation strategy.

JANUARY

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Oil ministry launches 'Masar' to modernize energy sector

Six integrated systems aim to boost efficiency, governance and institutional performance

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Minister of Oil Tareq Al-Roumi affirmed that the ministry's vision for digital transformation stems from the firm belief that technology is not an end in itself, but a tool to enhance work efficiency, improve service quality, strengthen integration among state sectors, and build a more flexible and responsive institutional system, reports Al-Seyasah daily.

He said this in a speech he gave at a ceremony organized by the Ministry of Oil to launch six digital transformation projects under the name "Masar" at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center.

The ceremony was attended by Minister of State for Communications Omar Al-Omar and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Oil Sheikh Dr. Nimer Fahad Al-Malek Al-Sabah.

Minister Al-Roumi explained that the event is part of a comprehensive vision adopted by the Ministry of Oil to keep pace with rapid changes in the institutional work environment and enhance the oil sector's readiness for future requirements by establishing governance principles, improving performance efficiency, and accelerating the pace of digital transformation.

He affirmed that the ministry is moving forward with its digital transformation plan and developing national capabilities to support this strategy.

Al-Roumi praised the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) for its role in advancing the national digital infrastructure.

He also commended the efforts of the ministry's leadership and staff, as well as contributions from various government entities, technology companies, the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), and its subsidiaries.

Al-Roumi stated that the "Masar" initiative marks a significant step in institutional development and serves as a model reflecting the ministry's commitment to implementing the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Moshel Al-Ahmad, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, and the support of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah.

Meanwhile, Minister of State for Communications Omar Al-Omar highlighted that the success of the digital transformation journey relies on close institutional cooperation, emphasizing the ministry's dedication to adopting and reinforcing this approach through collaboration among state institutions.

Al-Omar explained that the cooperation with the



Kuwaiti Minister of Oil Tareq Al-Roumi addresses his statement.



Minister of State for Communications Omar Al-Omar addresses his statement.



Undersecretary of the Ministry of Oil Sheikh Dr. Nimer Al-Sabah addresses his statement.



Ministry of Oil photos

Ministry of Oil is aimed to achieve integration and strengthen the strategic partnership to provide a secure and advanced digital infrastructure based on unified technology for ensuring the success of the initiative. Efforts are underway to expand collaboration to include capacity building, with ongoing cooperation between the Oil Training Center and the National E-Training Platform to develop personnel in all state institutions.

Furthermore, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Oil, Sheikh Dr. Nimer Fahad Al-Malek Al-Sabah, stated that the launch of the digital transformation projects

marks a pivotal milestone in the ministry's institutional journey, as it moves from the preparation and planning phase to the actual implementation of the digital transformation system within an integrated institutional framework.

He emphasized that these projects highlight the ministry's commitment to translating its strategic vision into a measurable and evolving operational reality.

Sheikh Nimer explained that "Masar" is a comprehensive program designed to achieve this transformation, aiming to strengthen governance, enhance performance efficiency, and link planning with imple-

mentation through an integrated digital system.

It is an integrated institutional program that addresses the work system at its core, focusing on building a modern operational environment that is more responsive to the next phase of the oil sector, using a methodology centered on organization and sustainability.

The program has already resulted in the completion of six integrated digital projects that form the foundation of the Ministry of Oil's digital system.

The first project, the Strategic Performance Management System, has transformed the monitoring of plans and programs from traditional models to interactive digital dashboards, enabling performance measurement, progress tracking, and timely decision-making.

The second project is the Ministerial Accounting System for the Economic Affairs Sector, designed to create a unified digital financial system linking the Ministry of Oil with oil companies and providing accurate, transparent data. This aims to reduce human error and improve the efficiency of financial and oversight procedures.

The third project is the Oil Training Center (OTC) system, developed as an integrated framework for managing training and development, connecting training needs to career paths, and building qualified national capabilities.

The fourth project is the Ministry of Oil's Digital Portal, which is a unified platform for digital services and systems, aimed at enhancing user experience and expediting procedures.

The fifth project is the Well Lifecycle Management System for the Technical Affairs Sector, which enables monitoring of technical and oversight operations, enforces regulations for petroleum resource preservation, and strengthens technical supervision.

The sixth project is the Digital Transformation System for Legal Affairs, which converts complex paper-based legal procedures into clear electronic workflows, supporting contract management, legal advisory services, and the protection of employee rights.

Sheikh Nimer highlighted the pivotal role of Oil Minister Tariq Al-Roumi in empowering work teams, accelerating decision-making, and establishing a robust institutional work approach.

It is worth noting that several partners from supporting entities and institutions involved in the digital transformation journey were honored during the ceremony. Also, an exhibition showcasing the six digital systems and their operational mechanisms was held on the sidelines of the ceremony.

Continued from Page 1

Channel sovereign

Private schools

This is largely due to infrastructure that still requires significant development and a major overhaul, including the removal of dilapidated structures and the construction of modern facilities. Achieving this also requires amending laws related to investment, tourism, and other sectors to enable Kuwait to become a major player in the regional economic arena. Therefore, we reiterate that there are enormous sovereign wealth funds, perhaps exceeding the capacity of the local economy to absorb.

However, investing a significant portion of these funds domestically has become essential for implementing industrial, agricultural, service, and infrastructure projects. It is also crucial to develop trust funds that hold surpluses which are not being utilized effectively, so they can fulfill their intended developmental role.

Many funds continue to operate under outdated investment strategies, such as investing in high-risk foreign stocks or real estate in countries experiencing economic recession. Redirecting these funds toward domestic investment could significantly enhance returns.

For example, both the Public Institution of Social Security and the Zakat House are legally permitted and have the capacity to invest in profitable domestic projects, but they require encouragement from the government and access to incentives comparable to those available internationally.

The Social Security institution currently supports approximately 200,000 retirees, a number that increases annually and is expected to reach around half a million beneficiaries within a few years.

Given the ongoing global inflation, maximizing financial returns has become essential. Therefore, the institution must urgently begin developing profitable investment programs to secure the future of its growing number of beneficiaries.

Kuwaiti funds possess substantial potential for local investment along with their existing foreign ventures. Important local opportunities include participation in major projects such as Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port and the new airport, the development of much-needed entertainment facilities, and investment in the northern economic zone.

To maximize the country's GDP, a clear strategic vision is required, including the establishment of a southern economic zone for these funds.

In addition, investments should be directed toward infrastructure, the digital sector, and strategic industries in politically and economically stable Arab countries that maintain strong ties with Kuwait.

Capitalizing on this potential requires a proactive and sophisticated marketing strategy that mirrors the global efforts of other successful nations. Opportunities are time-sensitive, making decisive action essential to secure long-term economic benefits.

The marketing approach must be flexible, incentive-based, and attractive, with streamlined procedures. It is also essential to avoid excessive rigidity and scrutiny that could hinder economic activity and negatively affect people's livelihoods.

seeks to serve Catholics throughout the Gulf and to stand as a symbol of dialogue and coexistence."

Regarding the visit's connection to interfaith dialogue, Msgr. Nugent said, "This visit highlights Kuwait's long history of peaceful coexistence among different religions."

The Holy See places great importance on dialogue with the Islamic world, including ongoing and effective communication with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The construction of a church in the heart of the Arabian Peninsula is seen as a testament to mutual respect and shared values."

When asked about the message the Vatican hopes to convey through the visit, Msgr. Nugent said, "This visit carries a message of friendship, gratitude, and hope. It underscores the Holy See's appreciation for Kuwait's openness, its commitment to coexistence, and its care for the diverse communities within its borders. It also reassures Catholics in the Gulf that they are an integral part of the universal Church and are highly valued."

Msgr. Nugent confirmed that the official announcement of the conversion of the small cathedral into a basilica will take place on Friday, January 16 at Our Lady of Arabia Church in Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah and Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for Africa Affairs Ambassador Naif Mohammad Al-Mudhaf.

The Senegalese president's accompanying delegation comprises Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Chief of His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Advisor to His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan and Chief of the accompanying mission of honor Sheikh Dr. Basel Humoud Al-Malek Al-Sabah and Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for Africa Affairs Ambassador Naif Mohammad Al-Mudhaf.

It is worth highlighting that the Vatican has announced last August the elevation of Our Lady of Arabia Church in Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah to the status of a "minor basilica," making it the first church in the Arabian Gulf region to receive this title. The designation was issued by the Vatican's Dicastery for Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments on June 28, 2025.

Amir receives

The President of the Republic of Senegal was welcomed at the airport by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdulla Al-Ahmad Al-Abdullah.

He was also welcomed by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Chief of His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Advisor to His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan and Chief of the accompanying mission of honor Sheikh Dr. Basel Humoud Al-Malek Al-Sabah and Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for Africa Affairs Ambassador Naif Mohammad Al-Mudhaf.

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Cardinal Parolin

Regarding the reason for choosing Our Lady of Arabia Church for this honor, Msgr. Nugent said, "Our Lady of Arabia Church is considered the mother church in Kuwait. It was originally built in 1958, and the current building, constructed in 1975, was a gift from the Kuwait Oil Company. The church has always been a spiritual haven for Catholics of various nationalities and holds immense historical and pastoral significance in the Gulf region."

Regarding Kuwait's role in the Holy See's relations with the Gulf states, Msgr. Nugent said, "Kuwait occupies a unique position in the Holy See's relations with the region. It was the first Gulf state to establish diplomatic relations with the Vatican in 1968 and to host a papal embassy. Kuwait has consistently shown openness, hospitality, and respect for religious coexistence, which the Holy See greatly values."

Furthermore, Msgr. Nugent said, "During his visit, Cardinal Parolin is expected to hold bilateral meetings with Kuwaiti officials. These meetings aim to reaffirm and strengthen the friendly relations and cooperation between the Holy See and the State of Kuwait."

Although the visit focuses on Kuwait, it carries wider regional significance. The Holy See places great importance on its long-standing relations with all Gulf states and views this visit as a testament to its commitment to the entire region. The small cathedral

breathing difficulties and hypothermia.

He confirmed the deaths of more than five children due to complications from extreme cold, in addition to the deaths of several elderly people suffering from chronic diseases that worsened amid the sharp drop in temperatures.

Abu Salimya noted that the low-pressure system was not merely a passing weather condition, but has become a direct threat to the lives of thousands of Palestinian civilians, given the health system's inability to provide heating supplies, the severe shortage of fuel needed to operate medical equipment and intensive care units, as well as the lack of medicines and essential medical supplies.

He noted that emergency departments are operating beyond their capacity, with a rise in respiratory illnesses, particularly among children and displaced persons living in tents that lack even the most basic protection from cold and rain.

He warned that the continuation of the low-pressure system could lead to a further increase in fatalities in the coming days.

Meanwhile, the Civil Defense said its crews transported four fatalities resulting from the collapse of a building and a wall west of Gaza City due to strong winds and heavy rain.

The victims included two women and a child, in an incident reflecting the fragility of structures previously damaged by the Israeli war on the

Gaza Strip and their inability to withstand current weather conditions.

The low-pressure system comes at a time when Gaza is enduring exceptional circumstances, with climatic factors posing a compounded threat to residents amid widespread destruction of infrastructure and acute shortages of resources, making every cold wave or weather depression a direct threat to life.

KISR records

This ranking, which was based on research output, innovation, and community service indicators, reflects the development of KISR's research performance.

Regarding environmental and marine projects, Dr. Al-Humaidan explained that KISR completed several high-quality initiatives, including a project to adapt to and build resilience against cross-border sandstorms between Kuwait and Iraq, the development of advanced air quality management systems to support decision-makers, and the establishment of a remote sensing unit to monitor environmental changes.

KISR carried out environmental compensation projects, such as restoring vegetation cover, monitoring the Sabah Al-Ahmad Reserve, and preparing a long-term plan for the marine reserve in Sulaibikhat Bay.

In the marine sector, KISR began implementing five research projects aboard the research vessel "Al-Mustakif" (The Explorer), funded by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), to support marine food security and study the Kuwaiti marine environment.

In energy and renewable energy, Dr. Al-Humaidan highlighted KISR's contribution to developing the Energy Efficiency Code in cooperation with the Ministry of Electricity and Water.

As a consultant, KISR inaugurated two solar power plants at the factories of the Kuwait Oil Tanker Company (KOTC) in Shuaiba and Umm Al-Aish, and developed a smart home energy management system using artificial intelligence, achieving up to 26 percent energy savings.

The institute also completed a study on offshore wind energy in Kuwait Bay, showing production potential ranging from 350 to 550 megawatts.

Dr. Al-Humaidan emphasized KISR's focus on the water sector, including solar-powered desalination projects, studies on desalinating highly turbid water using wastewater, and research on reusing treated wastewater and extracting minerals.

He stated that these efforts aim to enhance water security through sustainable solutions that account for climate change, population growth, and rising water demand.

Regarding KISR's methodology for setting priorities, Dr. Al-Humaidan explained that KISR prioritizes its research projects as per an institutional framework in line with national plans and the New Kuwait 2035 vision. This process includes consultations with government agencies and the private sector, as well as analysis of future risks and challenges. KISR follows its Tenth Strategic Plan, which focuses on maximizing the economic, environmental, and social impact of research and development.

Dr. Al-Humaidan concluded by underlining that scientific research is a national imperative, noting that developed countries allocate up to three to four percent of their GDP to research and development.

2,000 killed

Iran's government hasn't offered overall casualty figures.

Iranians' calls gave a glimpse of life after being cut off from the outside world Thursday night.

Witnesses described a heavy security presence in central Tehran, burned-out government buildings, smashed ATMs and few passersby. Meanwhile, people remain concerned about what comes next, including the possibility of strikes after U.S. President Donald Trump said he could possibly use the military to defend protesters. Trump also has said Iran wants to negotiate with Washington.

"My customers talk about Trump's reaction while wondering if he plans a military strike against the Islamic Republic," said shopkeeper Mahmoud, who gave only his first name out of concern for his safety. "I don't expect Trump or any other foreign country cares about the interests of Iranians."

Reza, a taxi driver who also gave just his first name, said protests remain on many people's minds. "People - particularly young ones - are hopeless but they talk about continuing the protests," he said.

Several people in Tehran were able to call The Associated Press on Tuesday morning and speak to a journalist there. The AP bureau in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, was unable to call those numbers back. The witnesses said text messaging still was down and that internet users in Iran could connect to government-approved websites locally but nothing abroad.

Anti-riot police officers, wearing helmets and body armor, carried batons, shields, shotguns and tear gas launchers, according to the witnesses. Police stood watch at major intersections. Nearby, the witnesses saw members of the Revolutionary Guard's all-volunteer Basij force, who similarly carried firearms and batons. Security officials in plainclothes were visible in public spaces as well.

Several banks and government offices were burned during the unrest, they said. Banks struggled to complete transactions without the internet, the witnesses added.

However, shops were open, though there was little foot traffic in the capital. Tehran's Grand Bazaar, where the demonstrations began Dec. 28, was open Tuesday. However, a witness described speaking to multiple shopkeepers who said the security forces ordered them to reopen no matter what. Iranian state media had not acknowledged that order.

The witnesses spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal.

It also appeared that security service personnel were searching for Starlink terminals as people in northern Tehran reported authorities raiding apartment buildings with satellite dishes. While satellite television dishes are illegal, many in the capital have them in their homes and officials broadly had given up on enforcing the law in recent years.

On the streets, people also could be seen challenging plainclothes security officials, who were stopping passersby at random.

State television also read a statement about mortuary and morgue services being free - a signal some likely charged high fees for the release of bodies amid the crackdown.



Mayor of London Sadiq Khan speaks during an interview in London, Monday, Jan. 12, 2026. (AP)

Khan refutes Trump's claims

London sees historic decline in homicides

LONDON, Jan 13, (AP): London's murder rate fell in 2025 to its lowest level in decades, officials said Monday. Mayor Sadiq Khan said the figures disprove claims spread by U.S. President Donald Trump and others on the political right that crime is out of control in Britain's capital. Police recorded 97 homicides in London in 2025, down from 109 in 2024 and the fewest since 2014. The Metropolitan Police force said the rate by population is the lowest since comparable records began in 1997, at 1.1 homicides for every 100,000 people.

That compares to 1.6 per 100,000 in Paris, 2.8 in New York and 3.2 in Berlin, the force said.

"There are some politicians and commentators who've been spamming our social media with an endless stream of distortions and untruths, painting an image of a dystopian London," Khan told The Associated Press. "And nothing could be further from the truth."

Trump, who has been directing insults at Khan for a decade, said in September that crime in the city is "through the roof." He has called Khan a "stone-cold loser," a "nasty person" and - in front of the U.N. General Assembly in September - a "terrible, terrible mayor." Trump has also claimed without foundation that Khan wants to bring Sharia, or Islamic law, to London.

City officials say a combina-

tion of targeted policing aimed at organized crime and a violence reduction unit that aims to stop young people from getting involved with gangs have helped reduce violent crime.

Declining rates for murder and other violent crime are only part of London's crime story. Many Londoners have firsthand experience of phone-snatching or have witnessed the surge in shoplifting documented by the Office for National Statistics.

"It feels like the minor crimes have gone up," said Vijay Pankhania, walking his dog outside London's city hall beside the River Thames. "Things like stealing mobile phones from people - I've seen that loads of times around here."

The Crime Survey for England and Wales, which asks people about their experience of crime rather than relying on police figures, found overall crime rose by 7% in the year to March 2025 from the previous 12 months, though it remains significantly lower than in 2017.

Arguments that London is a crime-plagued dystopia under Labour Party mayor Khan have mushroomed on social media sites, including the Elon Musk-owned X, formerly Twitter, and are echoed by opposition politicians, often tied to anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim views.



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Service, emergency services personnel work to extinguish a fire following a Russian attack in Kharkiv, Ukraine, Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2026. (AP)

US accuses Russia of 'dangerous and inexplicable escalation' of war

Ukraine hit by renewed Russian barrage, killing 4

KYIV, Jan 13, (AP): Russia launched a second major drone and missile bombardment of Ukraine in four days, officials said Tuesday, aiming again at the power grid and apparently snubbing U.S.-led peace efforts as the war approaches the four-year mark.

Russia fired almost 300 drones, 18 ballistic missiles and seven cruise missiles at eight regions overnight, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on social media.

One strike in the northeastern Kharkiv region killed four people at a mail depot, and several hundred thousand households were without power in the Kyiv region, Zelenskyy said. The daytime temperature in the capital was -12 C (around 10 F). The streets were covered with ice, and the city rumbled with the noise from generators.

Four days earlier, Russia also sent hundreds of drones and dozens of missiles in a large-scale overnight attack and, for only the second time in the war, it used a powerful new hypersonic missile that struck western Ukraine in what appeared to be a clear warning to Kyiv's NATO allies that it won't back down.

In Ukraine's Kharkiv region, the Russian attack also wounded 10 people, local authorities said.

In the southern city of Odesa, six people were wounded in the attack, said Oleh Kiper, the head of the regional military administration. The strikes damaged energy infrastructure, a hospital, a kindergarten, an educational facility and a number of residential buildings, he said.

Zelenskyy said that Ukraine is counting on quicker deliveries of agreed-upon air defense systems from the U.S. and Europe, as well as new pledges of aid, to counter Russia's latest onslaught.

Meanwhile, Russian air defenses shot down 11 Ukrainian drones overnight, Russia's Ministry of Defense said Tuesday. Seven were reportedly destroyed over Russia's Rostov region, where Gov. Yuri Slyusar confirmed an attack on the coastal city of Taganrog, about 40 kilometers (about 24 miles) east of the Ukrainian border, in Kyiv's latest long-range attack on Russian war-related facilities.

Ukraine's military said domestically-produced drones hit a drone manufacturing facility in Taganrog. The Atlant Aero plant carries out design, manufacturing and testing of Molniya drones and components for Orion unmanned aerial vehicles, according to the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Explosions and a fire were reported at the site, with damage to production buildings confirmed, the General Staff said.

It wasn't possible to independently verify the reports.

On Monday, the United States accused Russia of a "dangerous and inexplicable escalation" of its nearly four-year war in Ukraine at a time when the Trump administration is trying to advance negotiations toward peace.

U.S. deputy ambassador to the United Nations Tammy Bruce singled out Russia's launch of a nuclear-capable Oreshnik ballistic missile last week close to Ukraine's border with Poland, a NATO ally.

She told an emergency meeting of the Security Council that the United States deplores "the staggering number of casualties" in the conflict and condemns Russia's intensifying attacks on energy and other infrastructure. Ukraine called for the meeting after last Thursday's overnight Russian bombardment with hundreds of drones and dozens of missiles, including the powerful, new hypersonic Oreshnik missile, which Moscow used for only the second time in what was a clear warning to Kyiv's NATO allies.



Left: Federal immigration officers are seen outside Bishop Whipple Federal Building after tear gas was deployed Monday, Jan. 12, 2026, in Minneapolis. Right: Federal immigration officers detain a demonstrator outside Bishop Whipple Federal Building after tear gas was deployed Monday, Jan. 12, 2026, in Minneapolis. (AP)



New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani, right, and his wife Rama Duwaji wave to members of media after a news conference at Gracie Mansion, Monday, Jan. 12, 2026, in New York. (AP)

State, local leaders sue to fight enforcement surge

Minnesota boils as protesters and ICE repeatedly clash

MINNEAPOLIS, Jan 13, (AP): Days of demonstrations against immigration agents left Minnesota tense on Tuesday, a day after federal authorities used tear gas to break up crowds of whistle-blowing activists and state and local leaders sued to fight the enforcement surge that led to the fatal shooting of a Minneapolis woman.

Confrontations between federal agents and protesters stretched throughout the day and across multiple cities on Monday. Agents fired tear gas in Minneapolis as a crowd gathered around immigration officers questioning a man, while to the northwest in St. Cloud hundreds of people protested a strip of Somali-run businesses after ICE officers arrived.

Later that night confrontations erupted between

protesters and officers guarding the federal building being used as a base for the Twin Cities crackdown.

With the Department of Homeland Security pledging to send more than 2,000 immigration officers into Minnesota in what Immigration and Customs Enforcement has called its largest enforcement operation ever, the state, joined by Minneapolis and St. Paul, sued the Trump administration Monday to try to halt or limit the surge.

The suit filed says the Department of Homeland Security is violating the First Amendment and other constitutional protections. It accuses the Republican Trump administration of violating free speech rights by focusing on a progressive state that favors Democrats and welcomes immigrants.

"This is, in essence, a federal invasion of the Twin

Cities in Minnesota, and it must stop," state Attorney General Keith Ellison said at a news conference.

Homeland Security says it has made more than 2,000 arrests in the state since December.

The days after Renee Good was shot in the head by an ICE officer while behind the wheel of her SUV have seen dozens of protests or vigils across the U.S. to honor the 37-year-old mother of three and to passionately criticize the Trump administration's tactics.

In response to Monday's lawsuit, Homeland Security spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin accused Minnesota officials of ignoring public safety.

"President Trump's job is to protect the American people and enforce the law - no matter who your mayor, governor, or state attorney general is," McLaughlin said.

The Prosecutor's Office of Georgia said that Garibashvili pleaded guilty to the charges and agreed to the terms of a plea deal, which were subsequently upheld by the court. Funds obtained through criminal activity and seized during a search of his residence will be transferred to the state treasury.

Garibashvili, 43, served as Georgia's prime minister from 2013 to 2015 and again from 2021 to 2024. (Xinhua)

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Spain nets massive cocaine haul: Spanish police reported on Monday that they had seized massive amounts of cocaine from a cargo vessel intercepted on the high seas, marking the largest maritime drug haul ever made by Spain.

Police officers discovered nearly 10 tonnes of cocaine concealed beneath a shipment of salt aboard a foreign-flagged ship around 530 kilometers west of the Canary Islands, said Spain's National Police report. A firearm was also found on board. Thirteen crew members were arrested during the operation. (Xinhua)



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer, right, and the President of Poland, Karol Nawrocki, left, attend a meeting at 10 Downing Street in London, Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2026. (AP)

Europe

Le Pen returns to court: France's far-right leader Marine Le Pen returns to court Tuesday to appeal an embezzlement conviction, with her 2027 presidential ambitions hanging on the outcome of the case.

Le Pen, 57, is seeking to overturn a March ruling that found her guilty of misusing European Parliament funds. She was slapped with a five-year ban from holding elected office, two years of house arrest with an electronic bracelet, a further two-year suspended sentence and a 100,000-euro (\$116,800) fine.

"I hope I'll be able to convince the judges of my innocence," Le Pen told reporters Monday. "It's a new court with new judges. The case will be reset, so to speak."

She was seen as the potential front-runner to succeed President Emmanuel Macron in the 2027 election until last year's ruling, which sent shock waves through French politics. Le Pen denounced it as "a democratic scandal."

Her National Rally party has been coming out on top in opinion polls, and Le Pen alleged that the judicial system brought out "the nuclear bomb" to prevent her from becoming France's president. (AP)

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Cyprus president's top aide quits: A top aide to Cyprus' president resigned on Monday after an online video was posted recently, strongly suggesting that he and others used their close ties to the leader to earn favors for would-be investors in exchange for cash.

President Nikos Christodoulides said in a written statement that he has accepted the resignation of Charalambos Charalambous - the director of his presidential office and brother-in-law - in what he called an act of "self-confidence and trust" that the allegations are untrue. "The departure of Mr. Charalambous, who is distinguished by his work ethic, character and integrity, constitutes a loss of a valuable aide during our great effort to upgrade our country," Christodoulides said.

The video posted on social media last week features Charalambous, a former energy minister and the chief executive of a major construction company boasting about their close relationship to the president and securing foreign investments as to suggest influence peddling. (AP)

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Former Georgia PM gets 5 years: Georgia's former Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili has been sentenced to five years in prison and fined 1 million Georgian lari (about 370,000 U.S. dollars) over money laundering charges, local media reported on Monday.

Mamdani move into mayoral home

New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani and his wife Rama Duwaji began moving into the official mayoral residence on Monday, leaving behind their leaky, one-bedroom apartment in Queens for a fully staffed mansion in Manhattan.

As workers unloaded cardboard boxes stuffed with houseplants and rolled up carpets, Mamdani marked the latest inaugural rite of passage with a press conference on his new riverfront lawn.

"Today, Rama and I feel lucky to participate in a ritual that so many New Yorkers have experienced at various meaningful moments in their lives: Beginning a new chapter, by moving to a different part of the city that we call home," Mamdani said.

Nearly all of the city's mayors have slept - at least sometimes - in the stately, custard-colored 18th century home, known as Gracie Mansion, since its 1942 designation as the official mayoral residence.

For Mamdani, the historic house stands in particularly sharp contrast to his previous living quarters: a \$2,300 per month one-bedroom apartment that lacked a washer and dryer, and was prone to flooding from a busted pipe. (AP)

Sen. Kelly sues Pentagon

WASHINGTON, Jan 13, (AP): Democratic Sen. Mark Kelly sued the Pentagon on Monday over attempts to punish him for his warnings about illegal orders, claiming the Trump administration trampled on his constitutional rights to free speech.

Kelly, a former U.S. Navy pilot who represents Arizona, is seeking to block his censure last week from Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, who said he censured Kelly over his participation in a video that called on troops to resist unlawful orders.

Hegseth said the Jan. 5 censure - by itself - simply a formal letter with little practical consequence - was "a necessary process step" to proceedings that could result in a demotion from Kelly's retired rank of captain and subsequent reduction in retirement pay. Kelly asked the federal court in Washington, D.C., to rule that the censure letter, the proceedings about his rank and any other punishments against him are "unlawful and unconstitutional."

"The First Amendment forbids the government and its officials from punishing disfavored expression or retaliating against protected speech," his lawsuit says. "That prohibition applies with particular force to legislators speaking on matters of public policy."

The case was assigned to U.S. District Judge Leon, who was nominated to the bench by Republican President George W. Bush.

The legal action of a sitting U.S. senator suing the defense secretary is rare, if not jarring, and the latest effort from members of Congress to push back against what they see as an out-of-control executive branch.

The censure stemmed from Kelly's participation in a video in November with five other Democratic lawmakers - all veterans of the armed services and intelligence community - in which they called on troops to uphold the Constitution and not to follow the Trump administration's military directives if they were unlawful.

The 90-second video was first posted on a social media account belonging to Sen. Elissa Slotkin. Reps. Jason Crow, Chris Deluzio, Maggie Goodlander and Chrissy Houlahan also appeared in the video.

Republican President Donald Trump accused the lawmakers of sedition "punishable by DEATH" in a social media post days later.



Kelly

“The First Amendment forbids



Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, right, shakes hands with South Korea's President Lee Jae Myung at the start of their summit meeting in Nara, western Japan Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2026. (AP)

China, Sri Lanka cement strategic partnership

COLOMBO, Jan 13, (Xinhua): Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Monday made a stopover in Sri Lanka on his way back from a trip to Africa and held a friendly meeting with Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, said China has extended a helping hand to Sri Lanka at the earliest opportunity to cope with the devastating cyclone, and believes the Sri Lankan people will overcome the disaster and rebuild their homes at an early date.

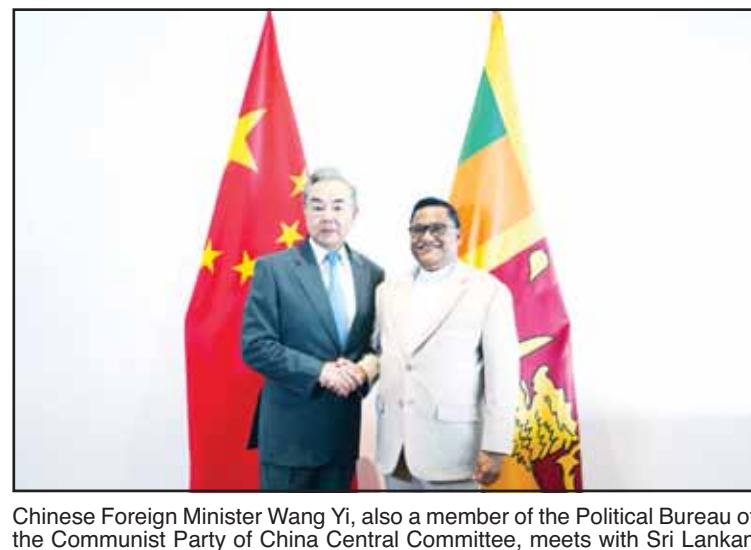
Wang said China is willing to enhance exchanges of governance experience with Sri Lanka, expand practical cooperation in various fields, facilitate people-to-people exchanges, further deepen the strategic cooperative partnership based on sincere mutual assistance and everlasting friendship between the two countries, and jointly build a China-Sri Lanka community with a shared future.

Wang said that in the face of an increasingly complex and volatile international situation, China will firmly safeguard the legitimate rights

and interests of developing countries, especially small and medium-sized countries, uphold the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and international law, and work with like-minded countries to oppose the resurgence of the "law of the jungle," resist all forms of power politics and bullying, and defend multilateralism and international fairness and justice.

Wang noted that China appreciates Sri Lanka's long-standing adherence to the one-China principle and is willing to continue supporting Sri Lanka in pursuing a development path suited to its national conditions. He added that the two sides can strengthen regional cooperation oriented toward South Asia and jointly promote a more just and equitable global governance system.

Herath thanked China for its valuable assistance following the cyclone disaster. He said Sri Lanka regards China as one of its most reliable strategic partners, and is willing to maintain close high-level exchanges with China, deepen cooperation in infrastructure, maritime affairs, tourism, and cultural exchanges, and continuously enhance the Sri Lanka-China strategic cooperative partnership.



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, meets with Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath in Sri Lanka, Jan. 12, 2026. (Xinhua)

Africa

RSF strike kills 32 in Sudan: At least 32 people were killed and 86 others injured in drone strikes in central and southern Sudan on Monday by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), according to local sources.

At least 27 people were killed and 73 others wounded in a drone strike by the RSF on a military base in the city of Sina in Sudan's central Sinnar State, a government source in Sinnar State told Xinhua, adding that the death toll may rise due to the severity of injuries.

An eyewitness said the attack targeted the Sudanese army's 17th Infantry Division headquarters and nearby electricity and water facilities.

"There were simultaneous and powerful explosions in the city, along with the sound of Sudanese army anti-aircraft fire," the witness said, adding that casualties were taken to multiple hospitals in the state.

Informed sources confirmed the targeted location, saying the attack took place during a high-level security meeting attended by the governors of Sinnar, White Nile, and Blue Nile states, as well as military and security officials. The strike directly hit the meeting hall. The Sinnar State government also issued a statement, saying Sina was targeted on Monday afternoon by an RSF strategic drone, and that the Sudanese army's anti-aircraft defenses engaged the drone. (Xinhua)

across the continent.

While acknowledging the "sovereign right of the US to review its international commitments in line with its national priorities," Youssouf stressed that Washington "has long been a key partner for Africa and a central pillar of the multilateral system." (KUNA)

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Nigerian troops rescue 18: At least 18 passengers on a trip to Cameroon were rescued by Nigerian troops after a group of suspected sea pirates attacked and hijacked their boat on Monday, the army said.

Semi Sokoya, assistant director of public relations at the Headquarters 13 Brigade Nigerian Army, told local media in Calabar, the capital of Nigeria's Cross River State, that the incident occurred along the Calabar-Cameroon waterways, prompting the military to respond to a distress call. The suspected pirates, operating in two speed boats and a wooden boat, intercepted the commercial boat and kidnapped the passengers around Kombo, a fishing port within the Cameroonian waters, Sokoya said. (Xinhua)



US withdrawal worries AU: The African Union (AU) expressed its "concern over the US withdrawal from 66 international organizations, agreements and treaties," many of which are involved in engagement in Africa, warning that such a move could have serious repercussions.

In a statement Tuesday, Chairperson of the African Union Commission Mahmoud Ali Youssouf cautioned that "the US withdrawal step may have implications for development achievements, peacebuilding efforts and community resilience, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected contexts across Africa."

He noted that several of the institutions from which the US has withdrawn have contributed to strengthening national and regional capacities, promoting inclusive economic growth, advancing gender equality, supporting post-conflict recovery, and protecting vulnerable populations

Summit in historic Nara signals renewed partnership

Japan, South Korea relations enter new phase

NARA, Japan, Jan 13, (AP): South Korean President Lee Jae Myung and Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi agreed to step up cooperation between the neighbors, whose relations are occasionally strained, as they both face growing uncertainty and regional challenges.

"I believe cooperation between Korea and Japan is now more important than ever and anything else, as we have to continue moving forward to a new, better future amid this complex, unstable international order," Lee said at the outset of the summit Tuesday. Takaichi said she renewed her determination to further improve Japan's relations with South Korea "as I believe the two countries should cooperate and contribute for the stability in the region."

"This year I will elevate Japan-South Korea relations even higher," said Takaichi, who aims to secure stable ties with Seoul while Tokyo struggles with a worsening dispute with China.

The meeting could deliver a political win as Takaichi seeks to shore up her power. A few months after taking office, she enjoys strong approval ratings but her party has a majority in only one of two houses of Parliament. There is growing speculation she may be planning a snap election in hopes of gaining more seats.

Takaichi is hosting Lee in her hometown, Nara, an ancient capital known for its treasured deer and centuries-old Buddhist temples, following a request by Lee during the



Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, right, and South Korea's President Lee Jae Myung, left, hold their meeting in Nara, western Japan Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2026. (AP)

October APEC meeting in Gyeongju, South Korea.

Nara, the center of cultural exchanges between the Korean Peninsula and Japan in ancient times, "carries a special meaning at a time Korea-Japan exchanges are more important than ever," Lee said.

Takaichi will take Lee on a tour Wednesday of Horyu Temple, which includes buildings from the late 7th or early 8th century. They are among the world's oldest surviving wooden architecture and illustrate Japan's adoption of Buddhism via the Korean Peninsula. Lee also will meet with South Korean residents in Japan before returning home in the afternoon.

Japan's cultural, religious and political ties to the Korean Peninsula are ancient, but in modern times their relationship has been repeatedly disrupted by disputes stemming from Japan's brutal colonial rule of Korea from 1910-1945.

Takaichi was in Nara on Monday to prepare and posted on X: "I hope to further push forward Japan's relations with South Korea in the forward-looking way as we meet in the ancient capital of Nara with more than 1,300 years of history and long-standing cultural exchanges between Japan and the Korean Peninsula."

The Japanese prime minister faces intensifying trade and political tension

with China over a remark about Taiwan that angered Beijing days after she took office. Takaichi said that potential Chinese military action against Taiwan, the island democracy Beijing claims as its own, could justify Japanese intervention. Tuesday's meeting was intended to focus on trade and the challenges of China and North Korea, as well as efforts to deepen trust between the two countries.

Japan and South Korea, both key U.S. allies, must also figure out how to deal with President Donald Trump's unpredictable diplomacy, and both countries are under U.S. pressure to increase defense spending.

Lee was in Beijing last week for talks with Chinese leader Xi Jinping as China steps up economic and political pressure against Japan and seeks to cozy up to Seoul. During the visit, the South Korean leader told reporters that relations with Japan are as important as those with China but that South Korea's ability to broker reconciliation between its neighbors is limited.

Lee, in an interview Monday with Japan's NHK television, noted his interest in gaining Japanese backing for South Korea's participation in the 12-member Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. He said that would involve South Korea lifting a ban on imports from Fukushima and nearby Japanese prefectures affected by the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster and may take time because of health concerns among South Koreans.

Cuba's president says no current talks with US following Trump's threats

Machado seeks Pope Leo's support for Venezuela's transition

ROME, Jan 13, (AP): Pope Leo XIV met with Venezuelan opposition leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner María Corina Machado in a private audience at the Vatican on Monday, during which the Venezuelan leader asked him to intercede for the release of hundreds of political prisoners held in the Latin American country.

The meeting, which hadn't been previously included in the list of Leo's planned appointments, was later listed by the Vatican in its daily bulletin, without adding details.

Machado is touring Europe and the United States after she reemerged in December after 11 months in hiding to accept her Nobel Peace Prize in Norway.

"Today I had the blessing and honor of being able to share with His Holiness and express our gratitude for his continued support of what is happening in our country," Machado said in a statement following the meeting.

"I also conveyed to him the strength of the Venezuelan people who remain steadfast and in prayer for the freedom of Venezuela, and I asked him to intercede for all Venezuelans who remain kidnapped and disappeared," she added. Machado also held talks with Vatican Secretary of State Pietro Parolin, who was Nuncio in Venezuela from 2009 to 2013.

Pope Leo has called for Venezuela to remain an independent country after U.S. forces captured former President Nicolás Maduro in his compound in Caracas and took him to New York to face federal charges of drug-trafficking.

Leo had said he was following the developments in Venezuela with "deep concern," and urged the protection of human and civil rights in the Latin American country.

Venezuela's opposition, backed by consecutive Republican and Democratic administrations in the U.S., had vowed for years to immediately replace Maduro with one of their own and restore democracy to the oil-rich country. But U.S. President Donald Trump delivered them a heavy blow by allowing Maduro's vice president, by allowing Maduro's vice president,



This image released by Vatican Media shows Pope Leo XIV meeting with Nobel Peace Prize laureate María Corina Machado of Venezuela, right, inside his private library at the Vatican, Monday, Jan. 12, 2026. (AP)

Dely Rodríguez, to assume control.

Meanwhile, most opposition leaders, including Machado, are in exile or prison.

After winning the 2025 Nobel Prize for Peace, Machado said she'd like to give it to or share with Trump.

Machado dedicated the prize to Trump, along with the people of Venezuela, shortly after it was announced. Trump has coveted and openly campaigned for winning the Nobel Prize himself since his return to office in January 2025.

The organization that oversees the Nobel Peace Prize - the Norwegian Nobel Institute - said, however, that once it's announced, the prize can't be revoked, transferred or shared with others.

"The decision is final and stands for all time," it said in a short statement

last week.

In other news, Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel said Monday that his administration is not in talks with the U.S. government, a day after President Donald Trump threatened the Caribbean island in the wake of the U.S. attack on Venezuela.

Diaz-Canel posted a flurry of brief statements on X after Trump suggested that Cuba "make a deal, BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE." He did not say what kind of deal.

Diaz-Canel wrote that for "relations between the U.S. and Cuba to progress, they must be based on international law rather than hostility, threats, and economic coercion."

He added: "We have always been willing to hold a serious and responsible dialogue with the various US governments, including the current one, on the basis of sovereign equality, mutual respect, principles of International Law, and mutual benefit without interference in internal affairs and with full respect for our independence."

His statements were reprinted by Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez on X.

On Sunday, Trump wrote that Cuba would no longer live off oil and money from Venezuela, which the U.S. attacked on Jan. 3 in a stunning operation that killed 32 Cuban officers and led to the arrest of President Nicolás Maduro.

Cuba was receiving an estimated 35,000 barrels a day from Venezuela before the U.S. attacked, along with some 5,500 barrels daily from Mexico and roughly 7,500 from Russia, according to Jorge Piñón of the Energy Institute at the University of Texas at Austin, who tracks the shipments.

Case could shape future genocide rulings

Myanmar at UN court over Rohingya

THE HAGUE, Jan 13, (AP): Myanmar heard accusations that it is responsible for genocide against the Rohingya ethnic minority at the top court of the United Nations, as long-awaited hearings began on Monday.

The West African country of Gambia first filed the case at the International Court of Justice in 2019, arguing a so-called "clearance operation" by Myanmar's military in 2017 violated the 1948 Genocide Convention.

The Southeast Asian country, which has since been taken over by the military, has denied the allegations.

In his opening statements, Gambian Justice Minister Dawda Jallow said his country brought the case out of "a sense of responsibility" after its own experience with a military government. "We must use our moral voice in condemnation of oppression, of crimes against individuals, and of groups, wherever and whenever they occur," he said, addressing a full courtroom in The Hague.

Jallow then asked about a dozen members of the Rohingya who had made the long journey to the Great Hall of Justice to stand to be seen by the judges. They rose silently.

Myanmar launched the campaign in Rakhine state in 2017 after an attack by a Rohingya insurgent group. Security forces were accused of mass rapes, killings and torching thousands of homes as more than 700,000 Rohingya fled into neighboring Bangladesh.

Now, some 1.2 million members of this persecuted minority are languishing



In this Sept. 7, 2017, file photo, smoke rises from a burned house in Gawdu Zara village, northern Rakhine state, Myanmar, where the vast majority of the country's 1.1 million Rohingya lived. (AP)

in chaotic, overcrowded camps, where armed groups recruit children and girls as young as 12 are forced into prostitution. The sudden and severe foreign aid cuts imposed last year by U.S. President Donald Trump shuttered thousands of the camps' schools and have caused children to starve to death. "We don't have anything that human beings should have," Yousef Ali, who traveled from a refugee camp in Bangladesh to the Netherlands for the proceedings, told The Associated Press ahead of the hearings.

Myanmar contested the court's jurisdiction, saying Gambia was not directly involved in the conflict and therefore could not initiate a case. Both countries are signatories to the genocide convention, signed in the wake of World War II, and in 2022, judges rejected the argument, allowing the case to move forward. The decision opened the door for South Africa to bring a case accusing Israel of genocide. Israel strongly denies the allegation and accuses Pretoria of providing political cover for Palestinian militant group Hamas.

Whatever the court ultimately decides in the Myanmar case will impact the South African case, Juliette McIntyre, an expert on international law at the University of South Australia, told The Associated Press. "The legal test for genocide is very strict but it is possible the judges broaden the definition," she said.

Kuwait oil price surges to \$60.17 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti crude oil rose up 62 cents to USD 60.17 per barrel (pb) compared to USD 59.55 pb on Friday, said Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Tuesday.

In global markets, Brent crude futures climbed 53 cents to USD 63.87 pb, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude futures rose 38 cents to USD 59.50 pb.

Multi-market trading platform offering access across the GCC, Egypt, & US

ABK Wealth Management launches ABK Wealth Trade

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: ABK Wealth Management announced the launch of ABK Wealth Trade, its new multi-market trading platform that significantly expands clients' access to regional and international markets. The platform enables investors to trade seamlessly across all GCC markets, as well as Egypt and the United States, through a single, fully integrated interface.

ABK Wealth Trade is available on abkwealth.com as well as iOS and Android mobile applications, ensuring convenient access for investors anytime and anywhere.

The launch reflects ABK Wealth Management's commitment to being investors' local partner for global reach, empowering clients with global market access while maintaining the strength, insight, and support of a trusted local institution.

In addition to multi-market trading, the platform allows clients to transfer funds between accounts in different currencies and easily fund their trading accounts using a variety of convenient methods, including bank transfers and, for ABK clients, seamless transfers directly from the ABK app. These features enhance flexibility and efficiency for investors managing diversified portfolios across multiple jurisdictions.

This initiative is part of ABK Wealth Management's broader ethos of continuous innovation, aimed at delivering a fully integrated and seamless wealth management experience. By combining trading, funding, and account management capabilities in one platform, the company continues to enhance its offering to meet the evolving needs of today's investors.

On this occasion, Sherif ElRafie, Chief Executive Officer at ABK Wealth Management, said, "This launch underscores our promise to be a local partner with a truly global reach. Innovation is central to our strategy,



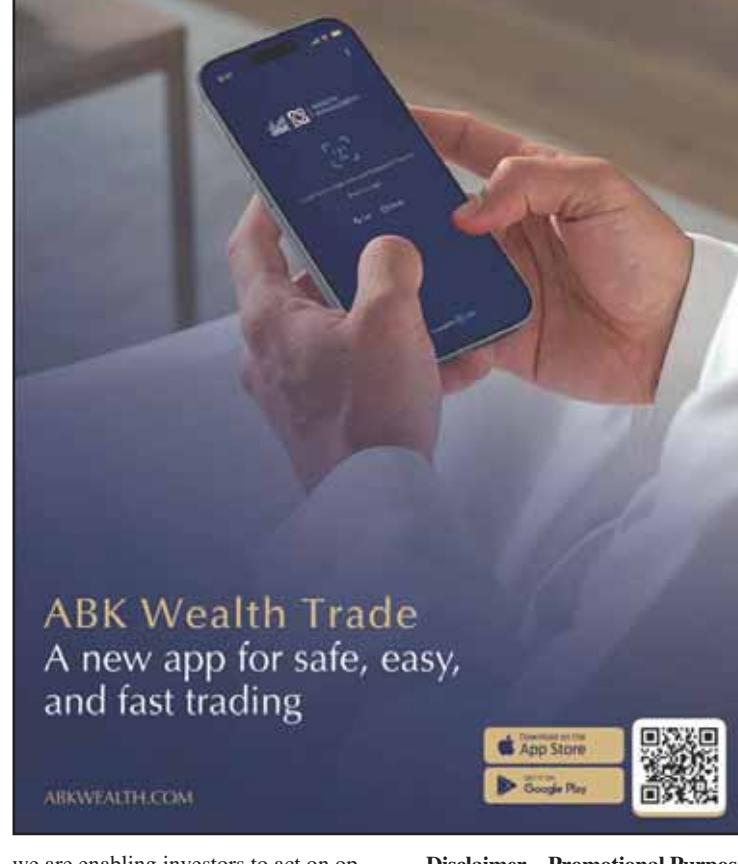
Sherif ElRafie



Ali Atesh

and ABK Wealth Trade represents a major step toward offering our clients a comprehensive, integrated, and future-ready wealth management ecosystem."

Ali Atesh, Head of Brokerage at ABK Wealth Management, added, "ABK Wealth Trade is a direct result of our focus on innovation and our commitment to simplifying our clients' investment journey. By providing access to key regional and global markets, along with flexible funding and multi-currency transfer options,



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we are enabling investors to act on opportunities efficiently and with confidence, all through a single platform."

ABK Wealth Management will continue to pursue innovation across its products and services to further strengthen its platform and deliver best-in-class solutions tailored to the needs of its clients and investors.

For more information about ABK Wealth Trade, please call ABK Wealth Management on 18291829 or email trade@abkwealth.com or visit [www.abkwealth.com](http://abkwealth.com).

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the program is the result of years of sustained efforts, close coordination and continuous follow-up across oil sector companies.

She noted that reaching this stage required overcoming traditional barriers to establish a new work culture based on data, innovation and artificial intelligence, emphasizing the program supports KPC's strategic objectives for 2024 and contributes to achieving Kuwait Vision 2035 by developing the oil sector's capabilities and creating added value for the national economy.

She expressed gratitude to KPC and its subsidiaries for entrusting KNPC with leading this phase under the supervision of KPC's Higher Digital Transformation Steering Committee, commanding BCG for its professional commitment.

The meeting also featured technical presentations by BCG, along with KNPC's Projects II and Information Technology departments, outlining the transition from strategic vision to execution and presenting the future implementation roadmap.

In line with its commitment to providing integrated financing products for customers

KNPC leads new digital drive across oil industry

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13, (KUNA): Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) on Tuesday launched the executive program for the digital transformation strategy of the Kuwaiti oil sector, comprising 24 digital initiatives, with the possibility of expansion in the future.

The program aims to enhance the sector's role and standing, improve operational performance, and boost profitability and competitiveness.

The launch took place during a meeting at KNPC's headquarters in Al-Ahmadi, attended by KNPC Chief Executive Officer Wadha Al-Khateeb, representatives of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and its subsidiaries, and officials from Boston Consulting Group (BCG), which is overseeing implementation of the program.

KNPC Deputy Chief Executive Officer for Support Services and Chair of the company's Digital Transformation Steering Committee, Kholoud Al-Mutairi, said

she expressed gratitude to KPC and its subsidiaries for entrusting KNPC with leading this phase under the supervision of KPC's Higher Digital Transformation Steering Committee, commanding BCG for its professional commitment.

The meeting also featured technical presentations by BCG, along with KNPC's Projects II and Information Technology departments, outlining the transition from strategic vision to execution and presenting the future implementation roadmap.

In line with its commitment to providing integrated financing products for customers

KFH brings innovative home finance to Mishref expo

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in the Home of a Lifetime exhibition, the largest specialized event for construction, finishing, and home furnishings. Held from January 8 to 13 at the Kuwait International Fair in Mishref, the exhibition was under the patronage and attendance of the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs, Abdullatif Hamed Al-Mesha.

KFH booth at the expo featured a specialized team offering expert consultations and support. The team showcased a full suite of financing solutions tailored to every stage of home construction and furnishing.

Through its booth at the exhibition, KFH showcased a premier range of financing services, including construction and building material solutions with flexible payment plans. In response to the country's growing real estate and construction sector, KFH offers exclusive deals in partnership with a select group of local suppliers.

Moreover, KFH offers a range of distinguished financing products, including housing finance for the purchase, construction, or renovation of real estate. Customers can access financing of up to KWD 70,000 with a repayment period of up to 15 years. Additional benefits include a grace period of up to 12 months before the first installment is due.

KFH provides diverse financing options, such as Financing against Cash Collateral, a commercial financing product for retail customers. This option is backed by a lien on the customer's deposit, which remains intact, enabling the customer to keep earning profits from it. Customers can apply for this financing via KFHonline.



Minister Abdullatif Al-Mesha at the KFH pavilion at the 'Home of a Lifetime' exhibition.

KFH also introduces Kuwait's pioneering "Financing Against Gold Account Collateral" product, enabling customers to secure financing using their gold bullion as collateral. This innovative solution allows customers to leverage the value of their gold without selling it, offering a unique financing option that enhances customer experience and meets their financial needs.

Additionally, KFH provides a deferral option, enabling customers to skip one installment annually. This service allows them to choose a different month to defer each year during the financing term, depending on their individual requirements.

KFH's participation in the "Home of a Lifetime"

exhibition reflects its leading economic role in financing construction and home furnishings. By supporting the industrial and construction sectors, KFH contributes to stimulating economic activity and providing customers with tailored financing solutions through the most efficient channels.

With more than 140 government and private sector participants under one roof, this exhibition was the ultimate destination for new homeowners. Attendees discovered advanced products that meet their construction needs from start to finish. Key sectors include elevators, aluminum, lighting, air conditioning, kitchens, marble, and more.

Providing innovative services tailored for its customers' needs

NBK strengthens home financing with Al Manzel

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: NBK Al Manzel Program is the largest specialized home improvement program, that includes financing solutions for residential developments and comes as part of the bank's dedication to providing banking services that meet the changing needs and aspirations of its customers in different stages of their life.

This initiative also comes as part of the bank's commitment to supporting its customers in their home renovations and constructions by offering them flexible and comprehensive financing solutions.

Through Al Manzel Program, NBK aims to confirm its position as the financing partner of choice in the local market by providing an integrated experience that starts from planning to execution, and includes financing options specifically designed to suit the individual needs of customers, whether they are seeking to renovate, furnish, restore, or even start building their homes from scratch.

Personal loans up to KWD 95,000 designed to meet the client's construction and furnishing needs.

Flexible repayment terms tailored to the client's income and financial circumstances.

A grace period of up to 12 months.

Fast processing and application procedures.

NBK strongly believes that owning a dream home is not merely a financial goal but a milestone in everyone's life that reflects their aspirations and



نقدم لك برنامج المنزل
من الوطني
كل اللي تحتاجه لبيت العمر

NBK's Al Manzel program

lifestyle. With this in mind, NBK designed Al Manzel Program to be a comprehensive experience that starts from the idea to the realization of the dream, supported by flexible financing solutions and strategic partnerships with leading local brands.

Moreover, NBK is keen to be part of its customers' journey towards achieving their housing dreams, whether through housing loans or NBK Al Manzel Program, confirming the bank's deep commitment to innovating and providing the best.

In this light, NBK does not simply provide financing, but also presents for its customers an integrated system of services to make their journey towards owning their dream house more seamless and convenient. This reflects NBK's deep commitment to enhancing the customers' quality of life and confirms its leadership in providing innovative banking solutions based on trust and added value.

NBK Al Manzel Program stems from NBK's strategy to strengthen its position as a leading financial institution that prioritizes the needs of its customers and constantly seeks to provide innovative solutions that enhance their banking experience and keep pace with their aspirations for a more stable and prosperous life.

NBK continues to invest in developing its personal and digital banking services to meet the needs of its customers and enhance their banking experience.

Property deals rise 13% in value

Real estate market starts 2026 with strong growth

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Ali-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The Kuwaiti real estate market started the new year with notable growth, recording a five percent increase in transaction volume and a 13 percent rise in value during the first week of January, fueled by strong demand for high-end commercial properties.

Four major transactions totaling KWD 20.9 million were registered, compared to three transactions worth KWD 5.2 million in the same period in 2025, marking a 302 percent increase in value. This highlights the ongoing demand for premium commercial and retail spaces.

According to the weekly real estate report issued by the Real Estate Registration and Documentation Departments at the Ministry of Justice, a total of 79 real estate transactions were recorded between January 4 and 8, with a combined value of KWD 61.1 million.

This marks an increase of four transactions valued at KWD 7.1 million compared to 75 transactions worth KWD 54 million during the same period last year. The growth reflects the sector's continued appeal for investment and capital inflows, supporting the diversification of the country's income sources.

In the residential real estate sec-

tor, 56 transactions worth KWD 19.6 million were recorded in the first week of January, compared to 51 transactions valued at KWD 19.4 million during the same period last year. This represents an increase of five transactions (9.8 percent) and KWD 200,000 (1 percent), indicating a steady preference for small-sized to medium-sized properties.

On the other hand, the investment real estate sector showed modest activity this week, recording 18 transactions, which is the same as last year, but with a nine percent decline in total value, dropping by KWD 2 million.

The sector's total value reached KWD 19.8 million, compared to KWD 21.8 million last year, indicating that investors are waiting for market stability following the implementation of new real estate legislation.

The industrial sector also saw a decline in both volume and value, with only one transaction valued at KWD 0.8 million, compared to two transactions worth KWD 2.6 million last year. This reflects a 33.3 percent decrease in the number of transactions and a 69.2 percent drop in transaction value.

Meanwhile, the banking, warehouse, showroom, retail, and coastal strip sectors remained inactive, with no transactions recorded during the week.

KIB joins Motawer program to boost fintech innovation

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: As part of its commitment to advancing financial innovation, empowering emerging talent, and supporting the advancement of the national economy, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced its participation in the Motawer Program, the first national initiative dedicated to supporting innovation in financial technology (fintech) across Kuwait. The program is presented by the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) under the guidance and support of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK).

As part of the program's activities, Khalid Al-Sumait, Executive Manager – Core Digital Factory at KIB, recently took part as a speaker in the training sessions and workshops, where he presented several key pillars related to building effective partnerships between banks and fintech startups.

The session focused on partnerships between banks and fintech companies, emphasizing the importance of clearly defining the problem and the genuine need addressed by technological solutions.

It also highlighted effective mechanisms for managing partnerships and navigating the various stages of collaboration. In addition, the session explored different partnership models used in the financial sector and the partnership lifecycle from ideation and planning to execution and scaling, underscoring the importance of testing technological solutions through pilot exercises and systematically evaluating outcomes before moving to broader implementation to ensure sustainable value creation for both parties.

Commenting on his participation, Al-Sumait said: "Being involved with Motawer was a truly enriching experience. It provided an open, interactive platform for exchanging insights and ideas, and for exploring opportunities for constructive collaboration between banks and fintech companies, from developing a clear understanding of challenges and solutions to the practical testing and development of scalable, implementable solutions.

He highlighted that: "What makes Motawer unique is its ability to translate innovation into action. It doesn't stop at ideas, but equips participants with the mindset, tools, and mentorship needed to turn ambition into tangible outcomes. This is essential for accelerating the maturity of the fintech ecosystem in Kuwait."

Al-Sumait further emphasized the importance of institutional collaboration, emphasizing that: "The strong support of the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Banking Association reflects a clear national direction toward innovation and digital progress. Such collaboration is essential for advancing the financial sector and the fintech ecosystem in Kuwait."

Through a network of branches spread across the State of Kuwait, KIB offers a broad range of banking products and services, as well as innovative digital banking solutions in line with international best standards. As part of its duty towards the community, the Bank also encompasses a leading social responsibility program that aims at positively impacting all members of the community through a wide range of impactful initiatives and activities.

Today, KIB has taken concrete steps in implementing its new strategic objectives. The Bank has cemented its role as a key player in the local banking industry and has continued to maintain its strong financial performance; enabling it to be globally recognized for its strong credit rating and financial position.



KIB's Khalid Al-Sumait

rewards totaling KWD 60,000, the program delivers long-term value by equipping participants with the skills and confidence needed to transform ideas into viable market solutions.

The initiative has witnessed strong engagement, highlighting the creativity and ambition of Kuwaiti youth and reinforcing optimism about the future of fintech leadership in the country. The program includes two tracks: one dedicated to individuals and startups with early-stage ideas, and another designed for advanced projects seeking further development and scalability.

Through participating in initiatives such as Motawer, KIB continues to advance the Central Bank of Kuwait's vision of fostering innovation, supporting digital transformation, and promoting economic diversification. The Bank remains committed to supporting initiatives that drive innovation, empower talent, startups and entrepreneurs, and contribute to shaping a sustainable and competitive financial future for Kuwait.

About KIB

Kuwait International Bank (KIB) is a bank that operates according to the Islamic Shari'ah, based in the State of Kuwait. Incorporated in 1973, and originally known as Kuwait Real Estate Bank, KIB made the transition to its current Islamic operating model in 2007. In 2018, KIB embarked on a new phase of its journey full of innovation and development. As part of its new strategic direction, the Bank focuses on offering a next-level customer experience under the slogan: "Bank for Life".

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Business

'Zain Great Idea' takes 11 regional tech startups to Silicon Valley for unique global acceleration journey

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative ICT and digital lifestyle communications operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, successfully completed its two-week Silicon Valley Global Acceleration program, the most dynamic stage of its award-winning startup accelerator, Zain Great Idea (ZGI).

The program's latest edition marked a major milestone as ZGI recently evolved from a Kuwait-centric initiative into a regional platform that brought together founders from across six Zain markets. The visit to Silicon Valley culminated with an immersive experience at the world's leading hub for entrepreneurship and technology whereby founders gained valuable insights from global giants such as Apple, Google, Tesla, NVIDIA, Amazon, Stanford, and more.

This regional expansion is powered by Zain Ventures, the Group's investment arm for emerging technologies, and ZainTECH, its regional digital solutions enterprise arm, reinforcing Zain's '4WARD – Progress with Purpose' strategy through meaningful innovation, inclusive growth, and AI-powered digital transformation with real societal impact.

The Global Acceleration phase brought together founders of 11 tech startups selected from Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, who took part in a highly curated program in Silicon Valley, California, designed to sharpen their business fundamentals, elevate their investment readiness, and expand their networks globally.

This dynamic phase of the program builds on ZGI's proven track record of enabling founders to access mentorship, capital, and international exposure. It also reflects Zain's long-term role as an ecosystem builder, creating pathways for entrepreneurs to scale sustainable business models and pursue new partnerships across the region and beyond.

Four interconnected tracks

Over two intensive weeks, the cohort followed a tightly curated program designed to combine learning, exposure, and real-world engagement. The journey unfolded across four interconnected tracks: structured masterclasses and bootcamps to accelerate core startup capabilities, field visits to leading tech companies and innovation hubs to translate theory into practice, curated panels/networking opportunities and ecosystem learning moments focused on emerging trends, and a Demo Day pitching session that helped founders test their story, expand their connections, and build momentum within the Valley.

Masterclasses and bootcamps

Delivered in collaboration with Vibrani VC, a leading Silicon Valley-based venture capital fund specializing in startup investments, the program opened with a clear roadmap and expectations for the cohort, setting a high-performance tone from day one.

The founders then progressed through a packed sequence of masterclasses and bootcamps that tackled what it takes to compete in Silicon Valley and beyond, starting with a deep dive into how the ecosystem really works, and how founders can become confident relationship builders through networking-focused practices.

Throughout the two weeks, founders accelerated core pillars of venture building through hands-on workshops and coaching. Sessions covered the venture mindset, value proposition and persona development, business model architecture, and go-to-market execution, alongside practical guidance on building products with modern approaches, including no-code and AI, and grounding product decisions in UI/UX fundamentals and customer-centric development.

To ensure founders could engage the investment landscape with confidence, the program placed strong emphasis on fundraising readiness and deal fluency, spanning fundraising, common legal pitfalls and how to avoid them, investor rights and priced rounds, financial modeling, and pitch deck mastery. The learning journey rounded out with strategic perspectives on scale, long-term value creation, and exit pathways through merger or acquisition, helping participants connect day-to-day execution with founder-level decision making that shapes outcomes over the long run.

Visits to tech giants & innovation hubs

To translate the classroom intensity into real-world insight, the cohort followed a curated itinerary across major technology landmarks and ecosystem institutions. At the NVIDIA Showroom and NVIDIA Inception Program for Startups, the founders strengthened their understanding of the infrastructure powering modern AI and how specialized startup programs can support credibility, technical enablement, and partnership pathways.

A visit to Stanford University's Jen-Hsun Huang Engineering Center offered a window into advanced computing and AI innovation in a research environment, helping founders connect frontier work to real product possibilities and long-term

- **Founders from six Zain markets exposed to global innovation leaders visiting Apple, Google, Tesla, NVIDIA, Amazon, Stanford, and more**
- **High-impact program combined intensive learning, networking, and pitching to 80 global tech experts**
- **Founders sharpened fundraising readiness, product strategy, and go-to-market execution, with a strong lens on AI-era venture building**

differentiation. This was complemented by a Stanford Walkabout Tour, which highlighted how universities can function as startup engines through talent pipelines, research commercialization, and dense founder networks.

At Google HQ in Mountain View, founders observed how platform companies sustain innovation through experimentation, ecosystem thinking, and product iteration at pace. The stop at Apple Park reinforced the importance of product craft and user experience as a competitive advantage, with takeaways on focus, simplicity, and trust built through design.

The visit to Tesla, including a Cybertruck overview and test drive, offered a close-up view of how bold product vision can be paired with relentless execution, how engineering, storytelling, and user excitement can amplify each other.

The cohort then experienced how global technology leaders build and operate at extraordinary scale. A visit to the Amazon Fulfillment Center showcased operational excellence in action, translating into lessons on process discipline, systems design, and customer experience built through execution.

The program also included a visit to In Orbit Robot Space, a robotics innovation environment focused on operating robots at scale, where founders explored what real-world deployment demands, from orchestration and monitoring to reliability and workflow integration.

At Carta, a private markets platform that supports equity and ownership management, founders gained practical perspective on how venture-backed companies structure cap tables and why ownership data becomes a strategic asset as startups raise, hire, and scale.

Alongside these flagship destinations, the program deepened founders' understanding of the broader startup ecosystem and what it takes to grow investment-ready businesses. At Atlassian, a global software company whose products help teams collaborate and manage work, founders learned how the company's Atlassian for Startups program helps founders build credibility and distribution through ecosystem-led growth, partnerships, and integrations with enterprise-grade platforms.

A visit to the Computer History Museum connected today's AI wave to the arc of previous technology shifts, reinforcing lessons on adoption cycles, timing, and category-defining product thinking. At Five Star Bank, founders gained exposure to the financial backbone behind high-growth ventures, including the value of op-



ZGI founders in California.



The founders at Apple HQ.

erational readiness and investor-grade discipline.

Networking and ecosystem engagement

Beyond the formal curriculum and site visits, the program created multiple touchpoints for founders to step into the Silicon Valley ecosystem through curated networking and learning moments. Across a range of discussions and ecosystem sessions, the cohort explored how emerging shifts, from agentic data infrastructure to AI-driven workflow transformation, are reshaping what investors and enterprise buyers prioritize.

These experiences helped founders build sharper market awareness, stress-test their assumptions in live conversations, and expand their networks with peers and ecosystem stakeholders in an environment built on high-velocity collaboration.

Pitching readiness & Demo Day

In parallel, the Global Acceleration experience sharpened founders' pitching readiness through structured rehearsals, deck refinement, and multiple rounds of reworking their presentations to strengthen clarity, flow, and investor appeal. The journey culminated in Demo Day at Pillsbury Law in Palo Alto, where all founders delivered their pitches to a crowd of 80+ attendees, bringing together venture capitalists, angel investors, ecosystem leaders, and fellow founders. The format gave startups a high-signal environment to validate their story, demonstrate progress, and accelerate momentum toward partnerships and potential fundraising conversations.

Meet the founders

The Silicon Valley cohort brought together a standout group of founders representing Zain's footprint, each tackling real market challenges with scalable, tech-enabled solutions. Representing Zain Kuwait, Nour Al-Fadhl leads VEHAB, a VR platform reshaping rehabilitation through immersive 360° simulations that support physical and cognitive recovery in realistic environments.

Also representing Zain Kuwait, Ahmad Al-Ebrahim co-founded the QA, Kuwait's first research platform connecting brands with verified local participants for fast, high-quality insights, while Eid Al-Mujahibel founded Tenmeya, an Arabic-first platform enabling creators to monetize digital content and products simply in one place.

Hanan Al-Kulaib and Basma Al-Humaidhi, co-founders of Playbook Kuwait, are making it easier for parents to discover and book kids' parties while helping vendors grow, and Rashed and Yousef Al-Otaibi co-founded Outing, a trusted Kuwaiti booking platform for verified chalets, villas, and holiday homes with secure payments and reliable listings. Completing Zain Kuwait's representation, Abdulwahab Al-Tabatabaei co-founded Farah, a one-stop digital destination for planning weddings and streamlining the journey for couples.

Across the wider regional cohort, founders showcased how innovation is being built across different markets and sectors. Representing Zain KSA, Maha and Leen Al-Rossais co-founded WePay, an escrow-based fintech platform designed to elevate transaction security and trust between buyers and sellers, whether individuals or businesses.

Representing Zain Bahrain, Ghassan Esfahani co-founded Wajba, a platform that helps F&B businesses sell surplus food at discounted prices, cutting waste, recovering revenue, and making meals more affordable. From Zain Iraq, Khalid Al-Saady founded Jaamilia.com, an online platform connecting buyers and sellers while enabling digital trade, inventory management, and more streamlined supply chain workflows.

From Zain Jordan, Ahmad Al-Saif founded Alefredo EdTech, a holistic education platform already serving 12,000+ students across 16 countries, focused on expanding quality learning access at scale. The cohort also included representation from ZainTECH in the UAE, where Kausar Tahir founded MeNOW Health, a femtech solution supporting marginalized women by bridging science, empathy, and innovation to create more informed and empowering women's health experiences.

ZGI ... A Corporate Rising Star

Recently, Zain Great Idea was recognized as one of the "Corporate Rising Stars" for 2025 at the Corporate Startup Stars Awards in Paris, a global acknowledgment presented at a gala hosted at the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) headquarters and co-organized with Mind the Bridge.

Now in its tenth edition, the Corporate Startup Stars Awards spotlighted corporations that embed open innovation into their strategy and build structured pipelines for startup collaboration, with the Corporate Rising Star category celebrating five high-potential organizations demonstrating outstanding commitment to working with startups and strengthening emerging innovation ecosystems.



From the visit to the Amazon fulfillment center.



Group pic at NVIDIA HQ.

The founders at Apple HQ.

From the visit to the Amazon fulfillment center.



Group pic at Stanford University.



The founders at Google Mountain View HQ.



The Global Acceleration program featured intensive masterclasses and bootcamps.



Founders from six regional markets took part in Zain's global experience.



Founders pitched their startups to innovation experts and investors.

What's On

SPOTLIGHT



Got a birthday or event?

Share your story and snapshots with Arab Times!
Email your write-up and photos to
arabtimes@arabtimesonline.com
We'll feature it on our What's On page!

'Blossoms of Life' showcases art, music, and shared heritage of Palestine and Japan

IWG hosts joint Palestinian–Japanese cultural event celebrating resilience and hope

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: For the first time, the International Women's Group (IWG) proudly hosted a joint cultural event titled "Blossoms of Life, Resilience & Hope," in collaboration with the Embassies of the State of Palestine and Japan, on 11 January at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Many distinguished and honored guests, including Sheikha Alaa Salem Al Ali Al Sabah and several women Ambassadors to the State of Kuwait were welcomed at the event.

As customary, the event commenced with an introduction by the IWG Public Relations Coordinator, Mrs. Layla Boulos.

In her opening remarks, IWG President Mrs. Marika Kochlamazashvili, spouse of the Ambassador of the Republic of Georgia, expressed her belief that the Palestinian people deserve happiness and well-being, and that their aspirations are deeply linked to the pursuit of peace worldwide. She extended her sincere thanks to H.E. Rami Tahboub, Ambassador of the State of Palestine, and H.E. Kenichiro Mukai, Ambassador of Japan, as well as to both IWG Vice Presidents – Mrs. Rima Khalidi, wife of the Palestinian Ambassador, and Mrs. Midori Mukai, wife of the Japanese Ambassador – for their efforts in organizing the event.

Following the President's remarks, H.E. Rami Tahboub delivered a speech highlighting the distinguished relationship between Palestine and Japan. He emphasized Japan's longstanding support for the Palestinian people at multiple levels, particularly in economic development and infrastructure, which contribute to Palestine's growth and prosperity. He also underscored Japan's significant role as one of the largest donors to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

In his address, H.E. Kenichiro Mukai spoke of the enduring friendship between Japan and Palestine, nurtured over many years. He noted Japan's continued support for the Palestinian people in their efforts to build an independent, peaceful, and prosperous state through initiatives such as the "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity."

Serving as master of ceremonies, Mrs. Rima Khalidi emphasized the importance of art and music as universal languages that unite humanity. She noted that cultural diversity



Photos during the event.

reflects the beauty of the world and that the blending of cultures fosters deeper understanding of shared human values.

A recorded message from renowned Palestinian-Japanese soprano Mariam Tamari was screened from Paris. In her address, she reflected on the similarities between Palestinian and Japanese cultures and the resilience of both peoples.

She expressed her hope that as ties between Palestine and Japan continue to strengthen, so too will the global commitment to building a

just, equitable, and compassionate world. She also called for remembrance of the people of Gaza, whose steadfastness, she said, exemplifies the true meaning of justice and dignity.

The program opened with a video showcasing the natural beauty and cultural diversity of Japan, followed by a film from Jerusalem highlighting the city's historical, Islamic, and Christian significance.

A special segment featured poetry readings by Mrs. Diala S. Al Alami and Ms. Anna Mukai, inspired by the

theme of the event. Their poems drew parallels between the January blossoming of almond trees in Palestine and plum blossoms in Japan, symbolizing renewal, resilience, and the enduring spirit of both peoples.

Throughout the program, paintings by renowned Palestinian artist Vladimir Tamari – father of Mariam Tamari – were displayed before each segment. Known for his abstract watercolors depicting "powerful landscapes of living light," his work reflects memories of his youth in Palestine, experiences of exile, and

nearly five decades of life in Japan.

Members and guests also viewed a short film on the Palestinian Embroidery Obi Project, a social enterprise founded by Japanese entrepreneur Maki Yamamoto, which blends traditional Japanese kimonos with Palestinian embroidery.

The audience was further captivated by a fashion show featuring a fusion of Kuwaiti, Japanese, and Palestinian attire. Kuwaiti designer Mrs. Sharifa Al Ghani presented four magnificent kimono-inspired designs incorporating Kuwaiti ele-

FAIPS DPS wins top honors at IYS 'Know Your India' quiz

IYS Kuwait hosts 'Know Your India' quiz with Indian Embassy

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The Indian Youth Society (IYS), Kuwait, in partnership with the Embassy of India, Kuwait, successfully organized the "Know Your India" Quiz on January 9, 2026. This educational initiative is a platform for children to learn about India's vast history, culture, heritage, achievements, and contributions across various fields, including sports, science & technology, business, literature, entertainment, and art.

The event was conducted as part of the celebrations marking Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (observed annually on January 9), National Youth Day (Rashtriya Yuva Divas, celebrated annually on January 12), and the national vision of "Viksit Bharat" (Developed India). The program also commemorated the Statehood Days of Uttar Pradesh, Meghalaya, Tripura, Manipur, and Himachal Pradesh, celebrating India's rich cultural diversity and federal heritage. The actual statehood dates for these regions are January 21 for Meghalaya, Tripura, and Manipur, January 24 for Uttar Pradesh, and January 25 for Himachal Pradesh.

The program was graced by the esteemed presence of Her Excellency Mrs. Paramita Tripathi, Ambassador of India to Kuwait. The event was organized under the leadership of Dr. Shabbir Qamar, along with Shri Harit Ketan Shelat, Second Secretary (Community Affairs & Associations), Embassy of India, Kuwait.

The quiz was conducted by renowned Quiz Master Mr. Vinay Mudaliar, who holds a world record for being the first quizmaster to conduct a quiz aboard a naval aircraft carrier warship, India's majestic INS Vikramaditya.

A special highlight was a thought-provoking speech delivered by Ms. Aahana, a student of 9th standard in FAIPS DPS School, focusing on the themes of the event. Her Excellency Mrs. Paramita Tripathi also presented a special token of appreciation to Ms. Nita Bhatkar, the emcee, in recognition of her continued volunteer support to the Indian Youth Society.

The quiz witnessed enthusiastic participation from 18 schools competing in the junior and senior categories, reflecting strong student engagement and academic enthusiasm.

Winners of the Quiz Competition

Junior Category

- First Prize: FAIPS DPS
- Second Prize: Indian Community School, Amman Branch
- Third Prize: Indian Community School, Khaitan

Senior Category

- First Prize: FAIPS DPS
- Second Prize: Indian Educational School
- Third Prize: India International School

The organizers expressed their sincere gratitude to the event's partners and supporters:

Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Mughal Mahal



Photos during the event.

Restaurants, Stack Group, Kuwait Swedish cleaning company, and Lulu Exchange, Travel Partner: Jazeera Airways, Hospitality Partner: Montrose Hotel.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Dr. Shabbir Qamar, who ex-

pressed appreciation to all contributors for making the event a grand success. The Indian Youth Society, Kuwait, reaffirmed its commitment to promoting knowledge, patriotism, and youth engagement through such meaningful educational initiatives.

Diplomatic families unite in Indo-Japanese wedding

NEW DELHI, Jan 13: HE Mr Sibi George, Former Indian Ambassador to Kuwait and current Secretary West at the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, and his wife Joice Sibi, a gifted artist in her own right celebrated the marriage of their daughter Elitha Thampuran to Ryota Odachi from Japan on January 2 at the Sacred Heart Cathedral in New Delhi. It was a special marriage as it saw the coming together of India and Japan, two countries and cultures

St. Peter's CSI Church gears up for annual Harvest Festival

Rev. C.M. Eappen, Vicar of the St. Peter's CSI Church, will preside over the general meeting, which will be attended by various spiritual and social leaders of Kuwait.

General Conveners, Mr. Vinod Kurien, Mr. Johnson Varghese, Mr. Philji Jacob, Mr. Thomas John and other committees are being led by various members. The Harvest Festival features 30 different food stalls, various arts and cultural programs, and Choral singing from various Christian churches, all organized to coincide with the Harvest Festival.

Rev. Sajan P. Mathew, a well-known Christian musician and composer and former director of Department of Sacred Music and Communications (DSMC), will inaugurate the Harvest Festival. Indian Embassy representative Shri Harit Ketan Shelat, will also be present.

Features

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Jordan, Erivo, Doeckii, Lamar, Taylor vie for top honor

'Sinners' leads movie nominations for NAACP Image Awards

LOS ANGELES, Jan 13, (AP): Ryan Coogler's pulsating supernatural thriller "Sinners" leads the movie categories in nominations for the NAACP Image Awards, announced Monday.

"Sinners," in which Michael B. Jordan pulls double duty as twins, received 18 nominations, followed by Spike Lee's "Highest 2 Lowest," which got nine. In television, "Bel-Air" leads with seven nods.

Jordan is also one of the five luminaries vying for the NAACP's Entertainer of the Year award. He joins Cynthia Erivo, Doeckii, Kendrick Lamar and Teyana Taylor. Last year's winner was Keke Palmer.

As for Taylor, who stars in "One Battle After Another," she received the most individual nods with

six across multiple categories, including movies, music and TV. In music, Lamar led the group with six nods.

"The NAACP Image Awards is our declaration to our community that 'We See You,' affirming Black creativity, excellence, and humanity across every space where our stories are told," said Derrick Johnson, president and CEO of the NAACP, in a statement.

"From film, television, and music to literature and beyond, the voices of all of our nominees tell stories that honor our past, celebrate our identity, and remind us that storytelling has the power to move culture forward."

For this year's awards, the NAACP introduced

two new categories: outstanding literary work - journalism and outstanding editing in a motion picture or television series, movie, or special. The journalism category honors excellence in nationally distributed journalism impacting the Black community, while the editing category recognizes post-production editing that enhances various aspects of a project's storytelling.

The 57th NAACP Image Awards will be handed out Feb. 28 at the Pasadena Civic Auditorium and televised on BET.

The public can vote in select categories at <https://naacpimageawards.net/>. Voting in those categories closes on Feb. 7.



This image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows Michael B. Jordan, (foreground from left), Michael B. Jordan and Omar Benson Miller in a scene from 'Sinners.' (AP)

Over 180 speakers withdraw

Literary fest canceled over Palestinian writer exclusion

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, Jan 13, (AP): Organizers of Australia's largest free literary festival canceled the event Tuesday after more than 180 writers and speakers withdrew over the scrapping of an appearance by an Australian-Palestinian writer and academic.

The uproar began when the board of the Adelaide Festival, which runs Adelaide Writers Week, announced on Jan. 8 that they had disinvited Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah from the event "given her previous statements" and citing cultural sensitivities "at this unprecedented time so soon after" an antisemitic mass shooting at Sydney's Bondi Beach.

There was no suggestion that Abdel-Fattah or her writings "have any connection with the tragedy," the board members added.

They didn't cite any specific statements by the lawyer, academic and writer of fiction and nonfiction that prompted their decision. Abdel-Fattah decried the move as "censorship" and said the announcement suggested that her "mere presence" was culturally insensitive.

By Tuesday, when the event was canceled, most of the programmed speakers had withdrawn. The episode unfolded amid a fraught national debate in Australia about limits on speech following the Bondi shooting.

Ideology

A father and son who were apparently inspired by Islamic State group ideology are accused of the massacre during a Hanukkah event in December, in which 15 people were shot dead. The surviving suspect, Naveed Akram, has not entered a plea to the dozens of murder, terrorism and other charges he faces.

In the aftermath, the Jewish Community Council for South Australia - the state where Adelaide is located - wrote to the festival to lobby for Abdel-Fattah's exclusion, the group's spokesperson Norman Schueler told The Adelaide Advertiser. The Premier of South Australia state Peter Malinauskas also supported the writer's removal.

The Adelaide Writers Week was scheduled to run for six days beginning in late February, as part of a wider annual culture festival. The 2025 literary event was the festival's 40th and attracted 160,000 attendees.

Born in Australia to Palestinian and Egyptian parents, Abdel-Fattah often writes about Islamophobia and had been invited to speak about her novel *Discipline*, which follows two Muslims, a journalist and a university student, navigating issues of censorship in Sydney. She has been a critic of the Israeli government and an advocate for Palestinians throughout the two-year war in Gaza.

After the board's statement canceling Abdel-Fattah's appearance, other speakers on the program - including British novelist Zadie Smith and former New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern - withdrew from their events too. The Festival's director quit Tuesday, citing her objections to the board's decision to disinvite Abdel-Fattah.

Louise Adler, a Jewish Australian, wrote in the *Guardian* that she could not "be party to silencing writers." She said 70% of the event's speakers had withdrawn.

Hours later, a statement on the Festival's Facebook page said that the event would not proceed and that all remaining board members would resign. The statement, which was not attributed to a named individual, offered an apology to Abdel-Fattah for "how the decision was represented."

Board members wanted to "reiterate this is not about identity or dissent but rather a continuing rapid shift in the national discourse around the breadth of freedom of expression in our nation following Australia's worst terror attack in history," the statement said.

Apology

Abdel-Fattah rejected the apology in a post on X Tuesday, lambasting the decision to cancel her appearance as "a blatant act of anti-Palestinian racism." She said the board had apologized for how her removal was presented but not for the decision itself.

The removal of Abdel-Fattah prompted some sponsors of the event to withdraw, too. The fate of the wider Adelaide Festival was unclear Tuesday, although a new board was due to be appointed Wednesday.

The event is a major draw for the state and generated millions of dollars in revenue and hundreds of jobs in 2025, a report by the festival organization said.

Abdel-Fattah's exclusion came amid proposed or enacted law changes covering hate speech, protest and guns after the Bondi massacre.

New South Wales state, where the shooting happened, swiftly passed a law in December banning protest gatherings during periods following terrorism declarations.

The state is also mulling changes that would criminalize certain chants, including some used at pro-Palestinian rallies.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced Tuesday that he would recall the federal parliament in January to vote on his proposed measures to tighten Australia's gun controls and lower criminal thresholds for prosecuting hate speech. He has also announced a major national inquiry, called a royal commission, into antisemitism in Australia and the Bondi attack specifically.

Albanese said a national day of mourning for those killed will be held on Jan. 22.



New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern gestures as she gives her victory speech to Labour Party members at an event in Auckland, New Zealand, Oct. 17, 2020. (AP)

Awards



Julia Roberts arrives at the 83rd Golden Globes on Sunday, Jan. 11, at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, Calif. (AP)



Emma Stone arrives at the 83rd Golden Globes. (AP)



Nikki Glaser arrives at the 83rd Golden Globes on Sunday, Jan. 11. (AP)

The reunions and moments

Untold stories from the Golden Globes

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif., Jan 13, (AP): Emma Stone just seems more comfortable out of her seat than in it at awards shows.

At the Golden Globes Sunday, the "Bugonia" star held court with a rotating cast of companions, from Kirsten Dunst to Jennifer Lawrence -- not in the main ballroom, but in a much smaller side room with a bar, a tea and coffee station and an ever-replenishing supply of decadent deserts, Nobu sushi, caviar cups and, perhaps most importantly, no television cameras.

Here's some more of what you didn't see on the Golden Globes broadcast.

Before the show even started Jennifer Garner and Mark Ruffalo found one another near the bar and chatted for a while, not about plans for an impromptu "Thriller" dance, but about how Jay Penske, whose media empire includes Hollywood trade publications like "The Hollywood Reporter," "Variety" and "Deadline," also co-owns the Golden Globes. "Isn't that crazy," she said. Conversation then shifted to how she nearly missed his own category last year due to the security backup at the drop off area. He made it in, eventually, but just by a hair and had to take a seat in the aisle.

As the clock ticked down, Glen Powell escorted his mother into the ballroom, taking her arm to navigate the steps. Alicia Silverstone just had to sidestep down. They spotted their table off to the side and Powell took a beat: "Want to hit the bar then?"

Silverstone was having her own issues though, and another mom soon came to the rescue: Mila Kunis was on a mission to deliver some Band-Aids to Silverstone, who thanked her profusely.

Elsewhere, Colman Domingo danced his way to his table. Teyana Taylor, flanked by security trying to rush her to her seat, snapped a selfie with a guest. Rose Byrne paused to hug Elle Fanning, while Universal chair Donna Langley spoke to Benicio Del Toro. And Kylie Jenner made her way

in at the last minute, without Timothée Chalamet and with only minutes to showtime.

Stone beelined to the side room after the first award, leading her "Bugonia" director Yorgos Lanthimos and costar Alicia Silverstone along with her. Stone and Lanthimos were deep in conversation, with brief interruptions requesting selfies.

Over at the coffee and tea station, Kirsten Dunst was halfway through pouring herself a cup of coffee when she paused and told husband Jesse Plemons "I don't want this, do you?" Her order instead was cranberry and some sparkling, which Plemons dutifully delivered to her throughout the night. Both were also excited to greet Wagner Moura.

Glamorous

After Stellan Skarsgård's win, Sean Penn made his way to the "Sentimental Value" table to give Renate Reinsve a big hug, while Megan Everett-Skarsgård, who had just gotten a very public boost from her husband, celebrated with Elle Fanning.

Seth Rogen, meanwhile, followed his first win of the evening with what looked like a very, very dirty martini.

Ariana Grande led a glamorous train to the ladies' room, telling Jessie Buckley and Reinsve to "hold on to me!" The three made a brief stop to say hi to Tessa Thompson, and pose for a photo, before reaching their destination. In the line for the toilets, Grande sighed "phew we made it," holding up her voluminous gown as best she could. Still someone soon stepped on a part of it, apologizing profusely. Grande put her at ease immediately, though, insisting, "No, I'm the problem!"

Later in the show, Jennifer Lawrence made her way to the bar area where she hugged Jeremy Allen White before finding Stone, who put down her drink and took her friend's face in her hands. They fluffed their hair when a photographer asked for a photo before they decided to take their own selfie

as well.

Dunst spotted Lawrence nearby too, telling "The Testament of Ann Lee" filmmaker Mona Fastvold and Zoë Kravitz that she just wanted to say hi. Plemons soon arrived with three drinks to dole out. One was not for Lawrence, who joined the line to order her own drink.

In another part of the room, Gayle King, who snacked on a small bite of dessert, appeared to have procured a to-go box for the sushi and soon was next to the "KPop Demon Hunter" women picking some choice pieces.

Patrick Schwarzenegger took a good long look at the dessert table, before moving on, empty-handed to the sushi. No protein shakes here for the "White Lotus" star.

Back inside the ballroom, the commercial breaks are a race to socialize. Everywhere you looked, there were interesting chats happening: Dwayne Johnson and Steven Spielberg, Macaulay Culkin and Parker Posey, Maya Rudolph and Selena Gomez, Johnson and Timothée Chalamet and Oscar Isaac and Ethan Hawke, to name a few.

Others stayed put in their seats as the night went on. Julia Roberts, George Clooney and Adam Sandler seemed content to hang at their very starry table. (Why get up when people can come to you instead?) Jessie Buckley let her "Hamlet" son, a tired-looking, Jacobi Jupe sit on her lap for a bit. And Eva Longoria took a moment to reapply their lipstick before their category was up.

Were Marty Supreme (Chalamet) and The Smashing Machine (Johnson) talking about greatness? Was Sean Penn smoking inside the ballroom? What did Britt Lower whisper to Grande? And what did Grande then write on a napkin and pass to Lower? Why was Ethan Hawke's wife Ryan Hawke carrying a tote bag that said "Snoop's Survival Kit" and what was in it? And what did Stone say to the three Beverly Hills Police officers that made them laugh so much?

Toymaker aims to make fashion dolls more inclusive

Mattel adds autistic Barbie to doll line promoting diversity

NEW YORK, Jan 13, (AP): Mattel Inc. is introducing an autistic Barbie on Monday as the newest member of its line intended to celebrate diversity, joining a collection that already includes Barbies with Down syndrome, a blind Barbie, a Barbie and a Ken with vitiligo, and other models the toymaker added to make its fashion dolls more inclusive.

Mattel said it developed the autistic doll over more than 18 months in partnership with the Autistic Self Advocacy Network, a nonprofit organization that advocates for the rights and better media representation of people with autism. The goal: to create a Barbie that reflected some of the ways autistic people may experience and process the world around them, according to a Mattel news release.

That was a challenge because autism encompasses a broad range of behaviors and difficulties that vary widely in degree, and many of the traits associated with the disorder are not immediately visible, according to Noor



This photo provided by Mattel Inc. shows the new autistic Barbie doll. (AP)

Pervez, who is the Autistic Self Advocacy Network's community engagement manager and worked closely with Mattel on the Barbie

prototype.

Like many disabilities, "autism doesn't look any one way," Pervez said. "But we can try and show some of the ways that autism expresses itself."

For example, the eyes of the new Barbie shift slightly to the side to represent how some people with autism sometimes avoid direct eye contact, he said. The doll also was given articulated elbows and wrists to acknowledge stimming, hand flapping and other gestures that some autistic people use to process sensory information or to express excitement, according to Mattel.

The development team debated whether to dress the doll in a tight or a loose-fitting outfit, Pervez said. Some autistic people wear loose clothes because they are sensitive to the feel of fabric seams, while others wear figure-hugging garments to give them a sense of where their bodies are, he said.

The team ended up choosing an A-line dress with short sleeves and a flowy skirt that pro-

vides less fabric-to-skin contact. The doll also wears flat shoes to promote stability and ease of movement, according to Mattel.

Each doll comes with a pink finger clip fidget spinner, noise-cancelling headphones and a pink tablet modeled after the devices some autistic people who struggle to speak use to communicate.

The addition of the autistic doll to the Barbie Fashionistas line also became an occasion for Mattel to create a doll with facial features inspired by the company's employees in India and mood boards reflecting a range of women with Indian backgrounds. Pervez said it was important to have the doll represent a segment of the autistic community that is generally underrepresented.

Mattel introduced its first doll with Down syndrome in 2023 and brought out a Barbie representing a person with Type 1 diabetes last summer. The Fashionistas also include a Barbie and a Ken with a prosthetic leg, and a Barbie with hearing aids, but the line also encompasses

tall, petite and curvy body types and numerous hair types and skin colors.

"Barbie has always strived to reflect the world kids see and the possibilities they imagine, and we're proud to introduce our first autistic Barbie as part of that ongoing work," Jamie Cygelmman, Mattel's global head of dolls, said in a statement.

The doll was expected to be available at Mattel's online shop and at Target stores starting Monday for a suggested retail price of \$11.87. Walmart stores are expected to start carrying the new Barbie in March, Mattel said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported last year that the estimated prevalence of autism among 8-year-old children in the US was 1 in 31. The estimate from the CDC's Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network said Black, Hispanic, Asian and Pacific Islander children in the US were more likely than white children to have a diagnosis, and the prevalence more than three times higher among boys than girls.

Technology

Firm plays catch up in AI race

Apple taps Google to help enhance Siri, AI on iPhone

NEW YORK, Jan 13, (AP): Apple will rely on Google to help finish its efforts to smarten up its virtual assistant Siri and bring other artificial intelligence features to the iPhone as the trendsetting company plays catch up in technology's latest craze.

The deal allowing Apple to tap into Google's AI technology was disclosed Monday in a joint statement from the Silicon Valley powerhouses. The partnership will draw upon Google's Gemini technology to customize a suite of AI features dubbed "Apple Intelligence" on the iPhone and other products.

After Google and others took the early lead in the AI race, Apple promised to plant its first big stake in the field with an array of new features that were supposed to be coming to the iPhone in 2024 as part of a ballyhooed software upgrade.

But many of Apple's AI features remain in the development phase, while Google and Samsung have been rolling out more of the technology on their own devices. One of the most glaring AI omissions on the iPhone has been a promised overhaul of Siri that was supposed to transform the often-confused assistant into a more conversational and versatile multitasker.

Google even subtly mocked the iPhone's AI shortcomings in ads promoting the release of its latest Pixel phone last summer.

Apple's AI missteps prompted the Cupertino, California, company to acknowledge last year that its Siri upgrade wouldn't happen until some point during 2026.

Getting Apple to endorse its AI implicitly represents a coup for Google, which has been steadily releasing more features built on its Gemini technology in its search engine and Gmail. The progress has intensified Google's competition with OpenAI and its ChatGPT chatbot, which already has a deal with Apple that makes it an option on the iPhone.

Wedbush Securities analyst Dan Ives hailed the Apple deal as a "major validation moment for Google," in a Monday research note.

Google's AI inroads have helped its corporate parent, Alphabet Inc., become slightly more valuable than Apple in the assessment of investors. Alphabet marked a milestone Monday when it surpassed a market value of \$4 trillion for the first time.

Even so, Alphabet's market value remained about \$150 billion above Apple, which for years ranked as the world's most valuable company before the rise of AI changed the stakes.

Three other companies have joined the \$4 trillion club in the past year, with AI chipmaker Nvidia becoming the first last July. Apple and Microsoft also broke the barrier last year, although the market values of those two longtime rivals are now below \$4 trillion.

Nvidia's market value briefly topped \$5 trillion in late October, before backtracking amid recurring worries that the hundreds of billions of dollars pouring into AI technology may be creating an investment bubble that will eventually burst. With its chipsets designed for AI still in high demand, Nvidia remains atop the heap with a \$4.5 trillion market value.

Alphabet's stock price has been on a tear since early September when Google dodged the U.S. government's attempt to break up its internet empire following a ruling last year that branded its ubiquitous search engine an illegal monopoly.



The cast and crew of the opera Turandot acknowledges the audience after the performance at the Chongqing Grand Theatre in southwest China's Chongqing, Jan. 10. (Xinhua)

Opera Turandot deepens cultural exchange between China and Italy

On Saturday evening, the main auditorium of the Chongqing Grand Theatre in southwest China was at maximum capacity. As a familiar melody rose, a tenor delivered one of Giacomo Puccini's most celebrated arias, *Nessun dorma*, drawing sustained applause from the audience after the final note.

From Jan. 10 to 11, the classic Italian opera

Turandot, produced by the Puccini Festival, was staged for two performances at the Chongqing Grand Theatre. Since the start of the new year, the Italy-born opera, set against a Chinese backdrop, has toured several Chinese cities, including Xiamen, Wuhan and Chongqing, continuing a long-standing tradition of cultural exchange between China and Italy.

Premiered in 1926, Turandot has remained a cornerstone of the global operatic repertoire. By blending the grand traditions of Western opera with his own interpretation of the East, Puccini crafted a work that continues to inspire fresh interpretations across diverse cultural contexts, securing its enduring presence on stages worldwide. (Xinhua)

An 'ultimate' tribute

Muhammad Ali to be honored with new stamp

NEW YORK, Jan 13, (AP): Muhammad Ali once joked that he should be a postage stamp because "that's the only way I'll ever get licked."

Now, the three-time heavyweight champion's quip is becoming reality.

Widely regarded as the most famous and influential boxer of all time, and a cultural force who fused athletic brilliance with political conviction and showmanship, Ali is being honored for the first time with a commemorative US postage stamp.

"As sort of the guardian of his legacy, I'm thrilled, I'm excited," Lonnie Ali, the champ's wife of nearly 30 years, told The Associated Press. "Because people, every time they look at that stamp, they will remember him. And he will be in the forefront of their consciousness. And, for me, that's a thrill."

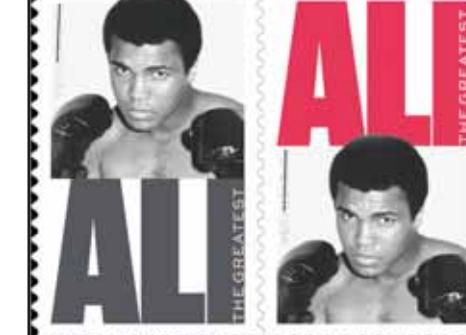
Muhammad Ali died in 2016 at the age of 74 after living with Parkinson's disease for more than three decades. During his lifetime and posthumously, the man known as The Greatest has received numerous awards, including an Olympic gold medal in 1960, the United Nations Messenger of Peace award in 1998 and the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2005.

Having his face on a stamp, Lonnie Ali said, has a particular significance because it's a chance to highlight his mission of spreading compassion and his ability to connect with people.

"He did it one person at a time," she said. "And that's such a lovely way to connect with people, to send them a letter and to use this stamp to reinforce the messaging in that life of connection."

A first-day-of-issue ceremony for the Muhammad Ali Forever Stamp is planned for Thursday in Louisville, Kentucky, the birthplace of the famed boxer and home to the Muhammad Ali Center, which showcases his life and legacy. That's when people can buy Muhammad Ali Forever Stamps featuring a black-and-white Associated Press photo to 1974 of Ali in his famous boxing pose.

Each sheet of 20 stamps also features a photo of Ali posing in a pinstripe suit, a recognition of his work as an activist and humanitarian. Twenty-two million stamps have been printed. Once they sell out, they won't be reprinted, US Postal Service officials said. The stamps are expected to generate a lot of interest from collectors and noncollectors.



This image released by the United States Postal Service shows a commemorative Muhammad Ali stamp featuring a 1974 Associated Press photo of Ali. (AP)

Because they're Forever Stamps, the First-Class Mail postage will always remain valid, which Lonnie Ali calls an "ultimate" tribute.

"This is going to be a Forever Stamp from the post office," she said. "It's just one of those things that will be part of his legacy, and it will be one of the shining stars of his legacy, getting this stamp."

Lisa Bobb-Semple, the USPS director of stamp services, said the idea for a Muhammad Ali stamp first came about shortly after his death almost a decade ago. But the process of developing a stamp is a long one. The USPS requires people who appear on stamps to be dead for at least three years, with the exception of presidents.

As the USPS was working behind the scenes on a stamp, a friend of Ali helped to launch the #GetTheChampAStamp campaign, which sparked public interest in the idea.

"We are really excited that the stars were able to align that allowed us to bring the stamp to fruition," said Bobb-Semple, who initially had to keep the planned Ali stamp secret until it was official. "It's one that we've always wanted to bring to the market."

Members of the Citizen Stamps Advisory Committee, appointed by the postmaster general, are responsible for selecting who and what appears on

stamps. Each quarter, they meet with Bobb-Semple and her team to review suggestions submitted by the public. There are usually about 20 to 25 commemorative stamp issues each year.

Once a stamp idea is selected, Bobb-Semple and her team work with one of several art directors to design the postage. It then goes through a lengthy final approval process, including a rigorous review by the USPS legal staff, before it can be issued to the public.

Antonio Alcalá, art director and designer of the Muhammad Ali stamp, said hundreds of images were reviewed before the final choices were narrowed to a few. Finally, the AP image, taken by an unnamed photographer, was chosen. It shows Ali in his prime, posing with boxing gloves and looking straight into the camera.

Alcalá said there's a story behind every USPS stamp.

"Postage stamps are miniature works of art designed to reflect the American experience, highlight heroes, history, milestones, achievements and natural wonders of America," he said. "The Muhammad Ali stamp is a great example of that."

Beyond the boxing ring, Ali was outspoken about his beliefs when many Black Americans were still fighting to be heard. Born Cassius Clay Jr., Ali changed his name after converting to Islam in the 1960s and spoke openly about race, religion and war. In 1967, he refused to be inducted into the US Army, citing his religious beliefs and opposition to the Vietnam War.

That stance cost Ali his heavyweight championship title and barred him from boxing for more than three years. Convicted of draft evasion, he was sentenced to five years in prison but remained free while appealing the case. The conviction was overturned by the US Supreme Court in 1971, further cementing his prominence as a worldwide figure.

Later in life, Ali emerged as a global humanitarian and used his fame to promote peace, religious understanding and charitable causes, even as Parkinson's disease limited his speech and movement.

The commemorative postage stamp comes at a time of political division in the US and the world. Lonnie Ali said if her husband were alive today, he'd probably "block a lot of this out" and continue to be a compassionate person who connects with people every day.

BBC seeks to dismiss Trump's \$10B defamation lawsuit

LONDON, Jan 13, (AP): The BBC will ask a court to throw out US President Donald Trump's \$10 billion lawsuit against the British broadcaster, court papers show.

Trump filed a lawsuit in December over the way the BBC edited a speech he gave on Jan. 6, 2021. The claim, filed in a Florida court, seeks \$5 billion in damages for defamation and \$5 billion for unfair trade practices.

The speech took place before some of Trump's supporters stormed the US Capitol as Congress was poised to certify President-elect Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 election that Trump falsely alleged was stolen from him.

The BBC had broadcast the documentary - titled "Trump: A Second Chance?" - days before the 2024 US presidential election. It spliced together three quotes from two sections of the

2021 speech, delivered almost an hour apart, into what appeared to be one quote in which Trump urged supporters to march with him and "fight like hell." Among the parts cut out was a section where Trump said he wanted supporters to demonstrate peacefully.

The broadcaster has apologized to Trump over the edit of the Jan. 6 speech. But the publicly funded BBC rejected claims it had defamed him. The furor triggered the resignations of the BBC's top executive and its head of news.

Papers filed Monday with Florida's Southern District court say the BBC will file a motion to dismiss the case on the basis that the court lacks jurisdiction, the court venue is "improper" and Trump has "failed to state a claim."

The broadcaster's lawyers will argue that the BBC did not create, produce or broadcast the doc-

umentary in Florida and that Trump's claim the documentary was available in the U.S. on streaming service BritBox is not true.

It will also argue that Trump has failed to "plausibly allege" the BBC acted with malice in airing the documentary.

The BBC is asking the court to "stay all other discovery" - the pretrial process in which parties gather information - pending a decision on the motion to dismiss. The discovery process could require the BBC to hand over reams of emails and other documents related to its coverage of Trump.

If the case continues, a 2027 trial date has been proposed.

"As we have made clear previously, we will be defending this case," the BBC said Tuesday in a statement. "We are not going to make further comment on ongoing legal proceedings."

RECALL INFORMATION



URBAN CRUISER (MY-2025)

VIN: MBJYMLA24ST122430 to MBJYMLA25ST129600

Due to some manufacturing issues with combination meter, there is a possibility that the fuel level indicator on the combination meter indicates more fuel than remaining fuel, and the low fuel warning light does not turn on even as the fuel decreases, so the customer may not notice and run out of fuel, resulting in the engine stalling and the engine not starting.

RECALL REASON

Owners of affected vehicles will be contacted by Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons Est. Co. W.L.L. and are asked to make an appointment once the remedy is available, without any charge to the customer.

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This Recall is run pursuant to articles (42,43,44,45,46,47 and 48) of no.(27/2015) issuing the executive by laws no.(39/2014) on Consumer Protection

Doctors trained on diabetic foot care

DDI organizes workshop on prevention and management of diabetic foot complications

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI), established by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), concluded its three-day workshop titled "The Prevention and Management of Diabetic Foot Complications" held January 11–13, 2026 at DDI's premises. The program was organized in collaboration with the Central Administration for Primary Health Care at the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization (WHO).

This workshop brought together many physicians from primary and secondary care. Over three intensive days, participants practiced evidence-based evaluation and treatment techniques for diabetic foot, including risk assessment, screening and classification, ulcer prevention, debridement principles, infection recognition, off-load-

ing strategies, referral pathways, and patient self-care education.

The Institute emphasized that preventing foot ulcers and avoiding amputations require timely screening, standardized protocols, and a multidisciplinary approach. By building practical skills among frontline clinicians, DDI aims to reduce complications and amputations and improve quality of life for people living with diabetes.

Despite the high prevalence of diabetes in the Middle East and North Africa, many health systems underutilize foot screening and patient education. DDI continues to address this gap by offering hands-on training, clinical guidelines, and public awareness initiatives that help embed best practices across Kuwait's healthcare network.

US approves first new tests as infections rise

At-home STD tests offer new options for private screening and treatment



This photo provided by Visby Medical in January 2026 shows its three-in-one gonorrhea, chlamydia and trichomoniasis test for women. (AP)

Schoolnik, who is also a professor emeritus at Stanford Medical School.

The FDA approved Visby's test based on study results showing that it correctly detected the three infections with accuracy rates around 98% or higher. That's similar to tests performed at hospitals and health clinics.

Some home-based tests still require outside input to get the results.

For example, in May the FDA approved Teal Health's testing kit for HPV, the virus that causes cervical cancer. The company's Teal Wand allows women to collect their own vaginal sample, which is then placed in a tube and shipped to a laboratory for processing.

Updated federal guidelines for HPV screening released earlier this month endorsed self collection for the first time.

The bacteria that causes gonorrhea has constantly evolved, developing resistance to nearly every antibiotic used to treat it.

Both of the two new drugs can be taken by mouth, a major advantage over the current standard of care: an injection of the antibiotic ceftriaxone.

Nuzolvenc, developed through a public-private partnership, comes in granules that dissolve in water. Bluejapa, from GlaxoSmithKline, is a tablet that is also approved to treat urinary tract infections.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention previously recommended another drug, oral azithromycin, alongside injectable ceftriaxone, but dropped the pill from its guidance after signs that gonorrhea was growing resistant to it.

"We were down to one class of

antibiotics recommended to treat gonorrhea and we had no other good options," said Park. "So to have two new options in the same year is very exciting."

The CDC's provisional data for 2024 showed a third consecutive year of fewer gonorrhea cases, and the second year in a row of fewer adult cases of chlamydia and the most infectious forms of syphilis.

Experts point to several factors behind the trend, including less sexual activity among young people, increased use of an antibiotic as a morning-after pill to prevent infections and more at-home screening.

The new tests could drive further reductions, although some experts urge caution.

As more people test at home it could become harder to track national infection rates, which previously have been reported by a handful of large testing laboratories.

Additionally, the new tests and drugs come with higher price tags that may limit access. For example, Visby's \$150 test is not covered by insurance.

Add to that recent Trump administration funding cuts to the CDC and other public health agencies and there could be more challenges on the horizon.

"I'm feeling very optimistic about the fact that people have more testing options and also that we now have access to new drugs," Park said. "What I fear is these cuts to public health are going to decrease access to sexual health care for populations who can least afford to take advantage of these new options."

'Liver enzyme crucial'

Common fatty liver therapies may raise cancer risk: experts

CANBERRA, Jan 13, (Xinhua): Blocking a key cellular enzyme, an approach thought to protect against fatty liver disease, may instead increase the risk of chronic liver damage and cancer as people age, Australian researchers warned on Tuesday.

Published in Science Advances, the study found that loss of the enzyme Caspase-2 drives abnormal growth in liver cells, triggering inflammation, fibrosis, and a significantly higher risk of liver cancer, according to a news release from Australia's Adelaide University.

The findings challenge growing interest in Caspase-2 inhibitors as a potential therapeutic strategy to treat and prevent fatty liver disease and highlight the need for caution when targeting this pathway, the release said.

Caspase-2 plays a critical role in maintaining the genetic stability of liver cells while also having an independent role in controlling fat levels in

the liver, said lead researcher Loretta Dorstyn from the Center for Cancer Biology.

"Liver cells normally have extra copies of genetic material, known as polyploidy, and while this feature can help the liver cope with stress, our study shows that without the enzyme Caspase-2, abnormally high levels of polyploidy in the liver can be damaging," Dorstyn said.

In mice lacking the enzyme, or had a version of it that no longer worked, liver cells were abnormally large with an excessive amount of genetic and cellular damage, said the researchers.

"Over time, these mice developed chronic liver inflammation and characteristics of hepatitis-like liver disease, including scarring, oxidative damage and a type of cell death linked to inflammation," Dorstyn said, adding the aging animals were much more likely to develop liver cancer.

Zinc, selenium supplements unsafe for kids, warns SAHPRA

CAPE TOWN, Jan 13, (Xinhua): South Africa's health products regulator on Monday issued a warning over health supplements for children that contain zinc picolinate and selenium, citing safety concerns and anouncing tighter regulatory controls.

In a statement, the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) said it "has been made aware of products in the market containing zinc picolinate (as a source

material for zinc) and/or selenium intended for use in children."

SAHPRA noted that both ingredients are "not permitted in health supplements for children" under existing guidance. It warned that zinc picolinate can cause side effects which include indigestion, diarrhea, headache, nausea, and vomiting, adding that variable bio-availability makes its effects unpredictable and unsuitable for children.



Participants at the Dasman Diabetes Institute workshop on diabetic foot care.

Study backs dietary guidelines

Eating less ultraprocessed food helps healthier aging, new research shows

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

□ □ □

By Mouf Dey

South Dakota State University

Older adults can dramatically reduce the amount of ultraprocessed foods they eat while keeping a familiar, balanced diet - and this shift leads to improvements across several key markers related to how the body regulates appetite and metabolism. That's the main finding of a new study my colleagues and I published in the journal Clinical Nutrition.

Ultraprocessed foods are made using industrial techniques and ingredients that aren't typically used in home cooking. They often contain additives such as emulsifiers, flavorings, colors and preservatives. Common examples include packaged snacks, ready-to-eat meals and some processed meats. Studies have linked diets high in ultraprocessed foods to poorer health outcomes.

Experts point to several factors behind the trend, including less sexual activity among young people, increased use of an antibiotic as a morning-after pill to prevent infections and more at-home screening.

The new tests could drive further reductions, although some experts urge caution.

As more people test at home it could become harder to track national infection rates, which previously have been reported by a handful of large testing laboratories.

Additionally, the new tests and drugs come with higher price tags that may limit access. For example, Visby's \$150 test is not covered by insurance.

Add to that recent Trump administration funding cuts to the CDC and other public health agencies and there could be more challenges on the horizon.

"I'm feeling very optimistic about the fact that people have more testing options and also that we now have access to new drugs," Park said. "What I fear is these cuts to public health are going to decrease access to sexual health care for populations who can least afford to take advantage of these new options."

ultraprocessed foods. The diets were designed to be realistic for everyday eating, and participants were not instructed to restrict calories, lose weight or change their physical activity.

We prepared, portioned and provided all meals and snacks for the study. Both diets emphasized minimally processed ingredients and aligned with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, the US government's nutrient-based recommendations for healthy eating, while providing similar calories and amounts of key nutrients.

The 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, released on Jan. 7, 2026, explicitly recommend eating less ultraprocessed food, but the previous versions of the guidelines did not specifically address food processing. Our feeding study design allowed us, for the first time, to examine the health effects of reducing ultraprocessed foods while keeping nutrient levels consistent with recommended targets.

We compared how participants fared while eating their habitual diets with how they responded to the two diets that were low in ultraprocessed foods. During the periods when participants ate fewer ultraprocessed foods, they naturally consumed fewer calories and lost weight, including total and abdominal body fat. Beyond weight loss, they also showed meaningful improvements in insulin sensitivity, healthier cholesterol levels, fewer signs of inflammation and favorable changes in hormones that help regulate appetite and metabolism.

These improvements were similar whether participants followed the meat-based or the vegetarian diet.

Ultraprocessed foods make up more than half the calories consumed by most US adults. Although these foods are convenient and widely available, studies that track people's diets over

time increasingly link them with obesity and age-related chronic diseases such as Type 2 diabetes and heart disease. With older adults making up a growing share of the global population, strategies that preserve metabolic health could support healthy aging.

Most previous feeding studies testing how ultraprocessed foods affect people's health haven't reflected real-world eating, especially among Americans. For example, some studies have compared diets made up almost entirely of ultraprocessed foods with diets that contain little to none at all.

Our study aimed to more closely approximate people's experience while still closely tracking the foods they consumed. It is the first to show that for older adults a realistic reduction in ultraprocessed foods, outside the lab, has measurable health benefits beyond just losing weight. For older adults especially, maintaining metabolic health helps preserve mobility, independence and quality of life.

Our study was small, reflecting the complexity of studies in which researchers tightly control what participants eat. It was not designed to show whether the metabolic improvements we observed can prevent or delay diseases such as diabetes or heart disease over time. Larger, longer studies will be needed to answer that.

On the practical side, it's still unclear whether people can cut back on ultraprocessed foods in their daily lives without structured support, and what strategies would make it easier to do so. It's also not fully understood which aspects of processing - for example, additives, emulsifiers or extrusion - matter more for health.

Answering these questions could help manufacturers produce foods that are healthier but still convenient - and make it easier for people to choose healthier food options. (AP)

Plan to mix hydrogen with gas draws criticism

US project to cut climate pollution sparks safety, health risk concerns

NEW YORK, Jan 13, (AP): Alma Figueroa began to worry when she learned that her gas provider wanted to test a controversial solution to curb global warming: blend hydrogen with natural gas to power her stove and other appliances. Figueroa, who has asthma and recently learned her lung cancer is back, worries about health risks.

"I don't want to be anyone's experiment," said Figueroa, 60, a resident of Orange Cove in California's Central Valley.

The Southern California Gas Co. wants to blend and inject hydrogen into the town's gas infrastructure, after the state agency that regulates utilities directed them and other companies to launch pilot projects. Proponents see it as key to helping California reduce planet-warming pollution by curbing reliance on gas while integrating cleaner energy into existing infrastructure. It's part of a statewide effort to create safety rules for hydrogen blending. But opponents say it poses unnecessary risks, and Orange Cove's mostly Latino and low-income residents say processes are happening without transparency or their input. Projects in states such as Colorado and Oregon have also raised concerns.

Interest in deploying hydrogen boomed during the Biden administration but has been hard hit with the Trump administration's cancellation of billions of dollars for hydrogen technology and other clean energy projects, including \$1.2 billion for a hydrogen hub in California.

The Orange Cove project is one of five proposed in California to test how gas pipelines and the appliances they fuel hold up with different amounts of hydrogen. Hawaii has been blending



Hydrogen storage tanks are visible at the Iberdrola green hydrogen plant in Puertollano, central Spain, March 28, 2023. (AP)

for decades.

Natural gas is mostly methane, a potent planet-warming gas that's super-charging extreme weather worldwide, which often impacts low-income and communities of color the most.

Supporters see green hydrogen as one way to cut emissions. It's made with renewable energy sources such as solar or wind to power an electrolyzer, which splits water into oxygen and hydrogen, a carbon-free gas that can be used to generate electricity and complement intermittent renewable energy. California Gov. Gavin Newsom has touted it "an essential aspect of how we'll power our future and cut pollution."

Some see the 18-month proposed project in Orange Cove as one step in that direction. A solar farm would power the technology and direct the mixture, up to 5% hydrogen, to businesses and the town's roughly 10,000

residents. The estimated \$64.3 million project would be paid for with ratepayer money.

A Minneapolis utility company estimated a blend of up to 5% green hydrogen would reduce carbon pollution by about 1,200 tons annually, the equivalent of removing 254 gas-powered cars.

Janice Lin of the Green Hydrogen Coalition said it's important to test blending. The U.S. has a vast network of gas pipelines - about 3 million miles, according to the Department of Energy - which can be used to move clean hydrogen while reducing reliance on gas, she said. If scaled, it could be cost-competitive and help industries that can't fully electrify pollution less.

"The way to move us away and really clean our air and minimize our reliance on fossil fuels is by having a viable alternative," she said.

Synchronous glacier retreats challenge ice age theories

SYDNEY, Jan 13, (Xinhua): An international research team involving Australian scientists has uncovered evidence that glaciers in the Southern and Northern hemispheres were synchronous during the last ice age.

Published in Nature Geoscience, the finding challenges prevailing theories and provides critical information to help model how today's ice sheets will respond to a changing climate, said a news release from Australia's University of Queensland (UQ) on Tuesday.

Researchers constructed the first complete record of glacial fluctuations in the Southern Alps of New Zealand by

analyzing a marine sediment core, the release said.

When the evolution of the New Zealand glaciers was compared to their European and North American counterparts, they were found to retreat simultaneously, said UQ Professor Helen Bostock, who conducted the research with partners in New Zealand, France, and Germany.

"Our work shows a period of global warming, likely caused by an increase in the global energy imbalance, preceded by glacial retreats in both hemispheres at the same time," Bostock said, adding the finding challenges previous theories of an inter-hemispheric "bipolar seesaw."

'Mixed emotions'

Australia capt Healy plans to retire after India series

MELBOURNE, Jan 13, (AP): Australia captain Alyssa Healy, who is regarded among the best players ever in women's cricket, will end her 15-year international career in March after a series against India.

The 35-year-old Healy has scored more than 7,000 runs across all three international formats and completed 275 dismissals since making her debut for Australia in 2010.

The wicketkeeper-batter has won eight World Cup titles - six in the T20 format and two in the ODI format. She became Australia captain after Meg Lanning retired in late 2023.

Healy's records include the highest individual score in an ODI World Cup final (170 against England in 2022), most runs in a T20 international (148 not out against Sri Lanka in 2019) and most dismissals in T20 internationals by a woman or man (126).

"It's with mixed emotions that the upcoming India series will be my last for Australia," she said in a statement announcing her retirement Tuesday. "I'm still passionate about playing for Australia but I've somewhat lost that competitive edge that's kept me driven since the start, so the time feels right to call it a day."

"Knowing I won't be going to the T20 World Cup this year and the limited preparation time the team has, I won't be part of the T20s against India, but I'm excited to have the opportunity to finish my career and captain the ODI and test side at home against India - one of the biggest series on the calendar for us."

Healy said she's been ready to retire for about three months.

"Every contest I wanted to be a part of and wanted to compete, and it's probably drained me a bit more over the years," Healy was quoted as saying by Australian Associated Press. "The opportunity to finish at home is something I really wanted to do."

The series with India features three T20s from Feb. 15-21, followed by three one-day internationals from Feb. 24-March 1 and finishing with a test in Perth from March 6-9.

If she plays five of the matches she will reach 300 internationals.

Healy has also become a popular commentator on TV broadcasts over the past several years, including during the recent men's Ashes series. She is married to Australia fast bowler Mitchell Starc and is the niece of former Australia wicketkeeper Ian Healy.

Cricket Australia chief executive Todd Greenberg said Alyssa Healy "is one of the all-time greats of the game and has made an immeasurable contribution both on and off the field . . . We look forward to celebrating her achievements throughout the series against India."

In interviews Tuesday, Healy was non-committal about her immediate plans in retirement from international cricket.

"I've been fortunate enough to have had a lot of opportunities outside of the game in the last 12 to 18 months," she said. "But I still feel like I can contribute to the game ... it's given me so much and I still owe a lot to cricket."

Harden passes O'Neal for ninth place on NBA all-time scoring list



Los Angeles Clippers guard James Harden (1) shoots over Charlotte Hornets guard Sion James (4) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Inglewood, Calif. (AP)

Utah bounces back after 55-point loss

CLEVELAND, Jan 13, (AP): Keyonte George scored 32 points, Lauri Markkanen added 28 and the Utah Jazz bounced back after a 55-point loss and defeated the Cleveland Cavaliers 123-112.

George had 16 points during the third quarter, when Utah rallied from a 10-point deficit and regained control and began its five-game road trip with a victory. George also was 12 of 12 at the free throw line and had nine assists.

The win was the Jazz's second in their past eight games and came two nights after a 150-95 loss to the Charlotte Hornets, the second-largest by scoring margin in franchise history and the biggest since they moved from New Orleans in 1979.

Markkanen, 10th in the league in scoring at 27.8 points per game, also had 12 rebounds. Jusuf Nurkic, who missed the last two games due to a toe injury, had 11 points and 17 rebounds.

Darius Garland led Cleveland with 23 points and Donovan Mitchell scored 21. The Cavaliers have dropped two of three.

Clippers 117, Hornets 109

In Inglewood, Kawhi Leonard scored 35 points and James Harden had 32 to move past Shaquille O'Neal into ninth place on the NBA's career scoring list, and the Los Angeles Clippers beat Charlotte for their fourth win in five games.

Jordan Miller added 14 points and Ivica Zubac had nine points and 11 rebounds for the Clippers.

LaMelo Ball had 25 points and nine rebounds to lead the Hornets in their third loss in four games. Kon Knueppel scored 18 points, Moussa Diabaté had 13 points and 15 rebounds, Brandon Miller also scored 13 and Miles Bridges 11.

Kings 124, Lakers 112

In Sacramento, Malik Monk made seven 3-pointers and scored 26 points to help Sacramento Kings to a win over Los Angeles.

DeMar DeRozan had 32 points and six assists for the Kings (10-30), who won their second straight after a seven-game skid. Russell Westbrook, who played 78 games for the Lakers in 2023, added 22 points and seven assists.

It was the Kings' first home win against the Lakers since March 13, 2024.

Luka Doncic paced the Lakers with 42 points, seven rebounds and eight assists. It was the seventh 40-point game of the season for the NBA's leading scorer.

LeBron James had 22 points on 8-for-17 shooting that included missing all five attempts from 3-point distance.

DeAndre Ayton scored 13 points to reach 7,000 for his career. Jaxson Hayes added 12 points for the Lakers (23-11), who have lost two straight since winning three in a row.

Pacers 98, Celtics 96

In Indianapolis, Pascal Siakam scored 21 points, including the decisive 7-foot bank shot with 6.1 seconds remaining, and Indiana won three straight games for the first time this season, beating Boston.

Boston's Derrick White missed a go-ahead 3-point attempt in the final seconds. He had tied the game at 96-all on a driving layup with 28.6 seconds remaining.



Sacramento Kings guard Malik Monk (0) dribbles against Los Angeles Lakers guard Gabe Vincent (7) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Sacramento, Calif. (AP)

Siakam pump-faked and stepped inside the foul line for the high-arching leaner that banked through in the final seconds. He also had eight rebounds and six assists.

The Pacers began the night with the NBA's worst record but improved to 9-31, one-half game better than the New Orleans Pelicans. They were without forward Bennet Mathurin (17.8 points per game), sidelined by a thumb injury for a fifth consecutive game.

Jay Huff had 20 points, including four 3-pointers, for the Pacers.

Payton Pritchard led the Celtics with 23 points and eight assists.

White had 18 points and Anfernee Simons 16.

76ers 115, Raptors 102

In Toronto, Tyrese Maxey scored 33 points, Joel Embiid had 27 and Philadelphia used an 80-point first half to beat Toronto.

VJ Edgecombe and Paul George each scored 15 points as the 76ers bounced back from Sunday's overtime loss to Toronto to win for the sixth time in eight games.

Embiid (left knee and left groin) and George (left knee) were back in the lineup after sitting out Sunday.

Fans chanted "We want Lowry!" in the fourth quarter, then rose for a standing ovation when former Raptors player Kyle Lowry checked in for Maxey with 1:57 left to play.

Lowry starred for the Toronto team that won the 2019 NBA championship. He airballed a 3-pointer on his first attempt and missed all three shots he took.

Immanuel Quickley scored 18 points and Brandon Ingram had 17 points and 10 rebounds. Scott Barnes scored 15 points for Toronto.

Mavericks 113, Nets 105

In Dallas, Cooper Flagg scored 27 points and matched a season high with three steals, and Naji Marshall had three straight baskets down the stretch and finished with 22 points as Dallas beat Brooklyn.

The Mavericks (15-25) snapped a two-game skid. Klay Thompson scored 18 off the bench and matched a season high with six 3-pointers.

Michael Porter Jr. scored 28 points and Day'Ron Sharpe had 14 points and 12 rebounds off the bench for the Nets (11-26), who have lost four consecutive games. They were swept in a road back-to-back, losing 103-98 at Memphis on Sunday.

Initial stages of free agency halted

WNBA and players' union agree to moratorium

In this file photo, New York Liberty guard Sabrina Ionescu controls the ball against the Phoenix Mercury during the second half of Game 1 during the first round of the WNBA basketball playoffs in Phoenix. (AP)

month would guarantee a maximum base salary of \$1 million in 2026 that could reach \$1.3 million through revenue sharing.

That's up from the current \$249,000 and could grow to nearly \$2 million over the life of the agreement, a person familiar with the negotiations told the AP earlier this month. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the negotiations.

Under the league's proposal, players would receive in excess of 70% of net revenue - though that would be their take of the profits after expenses are paid. Those expenses would include upgraded facilities, charter flights, five-star hotels, medical services, security and arenas.

The average salary in 2026 would be more than \$530,000, up from its current \$120,000, and grow to more than

\$770,000 over the life of the agreement. The minimum salary would grow from its current \$67,000 to approximately \$250,000 in the first year, the person told the AP.

The proposal would also financially pay star young players like Caitlin Clark, Angel Reese and Paige Bueckers, who are all still on their rookie contracts, nearly double the league minimum.

Revenue sharing is one of the major sticking points in the negotiations.

The union's counter proposal to the league would give players around 30% of the gross revenue. The player's percentage would be from money generated before expenses for the first year and teams would have a \$10.5 million salary cap to sign players. Under the union's proposal, the revenue sharing percent would go up slightly each year.

Bangladesh stays firm in stand not to play matches in India

The BCB said its position remains unchanged despite the ICC highlighting the tournament itinerary has already been announced and requested the board to reconsider its stance.

"Both parties agreed that discussions will continue to explore possible solutions. The BCB remains committed to safeguarding the well-being of its players, officials and staff while engaging constructively with the ICC to address the matter."

The T20 World Cup is being co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka from Feb. 7-Mar. 8. Bangla-

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'Yarqa' wins Sheikh Ahmad Cup

Sahab wins Al-Nawader Stud Cup

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: "Sahab" of Al-Haila claimed the Al-Nawader Stud Cup for mixed Egyptian-bred horses, completing the 2,000-meter race in 2:32.65 during the seventh race of the 11th meeting at the Hunting and Equestrian Club.

The winners were presented with the trophy by Salem Essam Al-Roumi, owner of Al-Nawader Stud, and Alaa Hamad Al-Roumi, owner of Al-Raya Stud. The event was attended by Sheikh Dhari Al-Fahad, Chairman of the Club, and Sheikh Mohammed Dhari Al-Fahad.

Other top performers included "Al-Moor," "Yarqa," and "Al-Ghalia Muniya," who won the trophies for Martyr Sheikh Fahad Al-Ahmad, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad, and Sheikh Dhari Al-Fahad respectively, as part of the Triple Crown of Champs series.

In the fifth race, the horse "Yarqa," owned by Al-Faraj, trained by Faraj Amer, and ridden by jockey Abdullah Al-Faraj, won the Sheikh



Sheikh Dhari Al-Fahad receives memorial shield.

Ahmad Al-Fahad Cup for mixed horses over 1,000 meters, finishing in 59.50 seconds.

The sixth race, reserved for mixed C3 mares, saw "Al-Ghalia Muniya"

of Al-Ansari, trained by Sultan Al-Athab and ridden by Salem Al-Ajmi, take the Sheikh Dhari Al-Fahad Cup, covering 1,400 meters in 1:27.77.

The event concluded with Sheikh

Sabah Fahad Al-Nasser, Hamdan Al-Odhaleh, and Hassan Al-Badeen presenting a commemorative shield to the heirs of the late Martyr Sheikh Fahad Al-Ahmad.

Juventus moves into third



Juventus' Edon Zhegrov, left, fights for the ball with Cremonese's Giuseppe Pezzella during the Serie A soccer match between Juventus and Cremonese, in Turin, Italy. (AP)

Genoa snaps winless streak with Cagliari win

TURIN, Italy, Jan 13, (AP): Juventus notched its highest score of the season in a 5-0 demolition of Cremonese that lifted it into third place in Serie A on Monday.

Juventus' fifth win in six league games took the Turin giants to equal on points with Napoli and Roma but above both on goal difference.

Inter Milan led AC Milan by three points. The top two and defending champion Napoli have a game in hand.

Juventus took the lead after 12 minutes with the aid of a lucky strike. Gleison Bremer's long-range shot took a deflection that left goalkeeper Emil Audero rooted to the spot.

Two minutes later Jonathan David made it

two when he finished off Khéphren Thuram's incisive counterattack.

Cremonese coach Davide Nicola was sent off for protesting a VAR decision not to award his side a penalty and his night got worse just moments later.

Juventus was awarded a penalty at the other end and though Audero tipped Kenan Yıldız's spot kick on to the post, the Turkish international followed up to slot home the rebound and make it 3-0 before halftime.

Weston McKennie poked a fourth into the net two minutes into the second half although Filippo Terracciano was unfortunate to see his efforts on the goal-line marked down as an own goal.

McKennie made sure of his place on the scoresheet with a close-range header.

Cremonese, which has gone six games with-

out a win, remained in 13th place.

Earlier, Genoa won for the first time in more than a month with a double from its Scandinavian pair cementing a 3-0 win over Cagliari.

Lorenzo Colombo scored the opener with seven minutes gone, sliding home a low shot after a nice through ball from Ruslan Malinovskyi.

Dane Morten Frendrup doubled the lead after 75 minutes and Norwegian center half Leo Skiri Østigård made it 3-0 just seconds later with a neat header.

It was Genoa's first victory after a troubling run of three losses and two draws and lifted it into 15th place, above Cagliari on goal difference.

Both sides are five points clear of the relegation zone.

Monfils loses Auckland opener

Venus beaten by Maria in Hobart first round

HOBART, Australia, Jan 13, (AP): Venus Williams lost 6-4, 6-3 to Tatjana Maria in the first round at the Hobart International on Tuesday, less than a week before her appearance at the Australian Open.

The 45-year-old Williams received a wild-card entry for the first Grand Slam event of the year. She also had a wild card to play in Hobart, where she lost to sixth-seeded Maria in a match lasting almost 1 1/2 hours.

Williams also lost her first-round match at Auckland, New Zealand last week.

The seven-time Grand Slam singles champion, who is 576th in the world rankings, broke 38-year-old Maria's serve in the opening set. But Williams dropped serve twice, handing the set to Maria, who is 42nd on the WTA rankings.

Tournament officials said the match featured the highest combined age - 83 years - of a singles match in the history of the WTA.

"The crowd was amazing. Usually I play a really big game and it's fun to watch," Williams said. "I felt I couldn't play that with the wind. I felt bad I wasn't able to give that performance I usually give. I was in control until I wasn't ... I just need to keep going and doing that and earn my stripes. I've been away a while."



Guo Hanyu of China hits a return during the women's singles qualifying 1st round match against Dominika Salkova of the Czech Republic at Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne, Australia. (Xinhua)

Maria, who has two children and has won three of her four titles since becoming a mother, hoped the pair could send a message to younger players.

"For all the little girls out there ... that they have time and can improve and play (for) longer," she said. "I'm a professional tennis player but I'm also a mom and we have a normal life."

Williams has made the Australian Open singles final twice - in 2003 and 2017 - losing to her sister Serena both times.

The Australian Open begins Sunday. Williams has not played

at Melbourne Park for five years and will break the age record held by Kimiko Date, the Japanese player who was 44 when she contested the 2015 Australian Open.

In another first-round result in Hobart, two-time major winner Barbora Krejčíková lost to Peyton Stearns. Krejčíková, ranked 55th and unseeded in Hobart, lost to Stearns 6-4, 1-6, 7-6 (4).

Meanwhile, defending champion Gael Monfils lost his opening match at the ATP Tour stop in Auckland, New Zealand on Tuesday, three days after his wife Elina

Svitolina won her 19th WTA Tour title on the same court.

The 39-year-old Frenchman lost 5-7, 6-3, 6-4 to 26-year-old Hungarian Fabian Marozsan at the ASB Classic in what may be the first match of his farewell season.

Monfils won the Auckland title in 2025 and told his wife Elina before her final on Sunday "if you don't win this year I don't know what to tell you anymore." Svitolina and Monfils are one of only a few husband and wife teams to have held ATP and WTA singles titles in the same tournament at the same time.

Monfils started strongly in his first tournament since September, winning the first set with a break in the 11th game. He sent down 10 aces in the match. Monfils lost his first service game in the second set as Marozsan pulled off two superb winners at the net and went on to lose the set 6-3.

Monfils put up a great fight in the third set. After dropping his serve in the fifth game, he broke back immediately and tested Marozsan with his power variation. But Marozsan achieved the crucial break at 5-4 and held to take the match in exactly two hours.

"It's always special to play against Gael. He's a legend and a great player," Marozsan said.

Al-Qadsia crushes Kazma

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Al-Qadsia continued its strong league form with a 94-64 win over Kazma at the Union Hall, Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex, during the 10th round of the basketball league. Meanwhile, Kuwait Club delivered a commanding 138-78 victory over Al-Nasr.

The 11th round kicks off today with Al-Qadsia facing Al-Arabi at 5:00 PM, followed by Al-Qurain taking on Al-Nasr at 7:30 PM.

After the latest results, Kuwait Club remains at the top of the standings with 20 points from 10 wins and no losses. Al-Qadsia holds second place with 18 points, followed by Kazma (17), Al-Qurain (16), Al-Sulaibikhat (15), Al-Nasr (13), Al-Sahel (11), and Al-Arabi (10).

The league features three divisions, with the top four teams advancing to the semifinals, played in a best-of-three playoff format. The



Al-Nasr player heads for the basket as Kuwait Club defender readies.

race for the remaining semifinal spots is heating up, with Al-Qadsia well-positioned in second place behind already-qualified Kuwait Club, while Al-Qurain, Al-Sulaibikhat, and Kazma battle for the last two positions in a tight contest.

Real promotes Arbeloa to first team

Madrid parts ways with Alonso

MADRID, Jan 13, (AP): Real Madrid pulled the trigger and replaced Xabi Alonso with B team manager Álvaro Arbeloa on Monday.

Madrid said Alonso left by mutual agreement but it followed a tumultuous stint that lasted less than eight months and came a day after Madrid lost to Barcelona 3-2 in the final of the Spanish Super Cup in Saudi Arabia.

Alonso was immediately replaced by Arbeloa - they were teammates for Madrid, Liverpool and Spain and won the World Cup together in 2010.

"Real Madrid wishes to announce that, by mutual agreement between the club and Xabi Alonso, it has been decided to bring his time as first team coach to an end," a statement said. "Xabi Alonso will always carry the affection and admiration of all Madridistas because he is a Real Madrid legend and has always represented the values of our club. Real Madrid will always be his home."

The club also thanked Alonso's coaching staff.

Alonso arrived last May under high expectations as Carlo Ancelotti's replacement and pressure built as the team struggled to play well under his command. He had spats with players such as Vinícius Júnior and widespread media reports said he lost control of the locker room.

Vinícius, and others, complained more than once of being substituted by the coach during matches. Some players publicly supported the coach late last year but the situation didn't appear to improve much.

After Sunday's loss in Jeddah, Alonso appeared to want his team to do a guard of honor for Barcelona during the awards ceremony but Kylian Mbappé and other players called him back and walked away.

Mbappé was the first player to bid farewell to Alonso on Monday. Mbappé praised and thanked Alonso in an Instagram story that accompanied a photo of him and the coach saluting each other.

"It's been short but it was a pleasure to play for you & learn from you," the France star wrote. "Thank you for giving me the confidence since Day 1. I will remember you as a manager who had clear ideas and knows many things about football. Best of luck for you(r) next chapter."



Real Madrid's head coach Xabi Alonso gestures during the Spanish Super Cup match against FC Barcelona at King Abdullah Sports City Stadium in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. (AP)

Other Madrid players also posted messages thanking Alonso and wishing him luck. Vinícius was not among those publicly bidding farewell to the coach.

Alonso did not immediately make any public comments.

He was at Madrid's helm in 34 matches across all competitions, winning 24, losing six and drawing four.

Madrid won the season's first clásico in October by 2-1 but still trails Barcelona by four points at the halfway point of La Liga. The team's next match is on Wednesday at Albacete in the Copa del Rey round of 16.

As a player, Arbeloa helped Madrid win eight titles from 2009-16, including two European Cups and one Spanish league. Arbeloa also helped Spain win the 2010 World Cup and the 2008 and 2012 European Championships.

The 44-year-old Alonso was in the same Spain team, as well as the Madrid team that won the 2014 Champions League. He won six titles with Madrid from 2009-14.

The 42-year-old Arbeloa had been coaching the B team since June. He also coached youth teams at the club.

Alonso signed in May to June 2028. He'd led Bayer Leverkusen to an unprecedented German league and cup double in his first full season after taking over the team when it was in the Bundesliga relegation zone the season before.

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Sports

'Kuwait ready to host Asian Handball Championship'

Blues hope to secure World Championship spot

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Qaed Al-Adwani, Secretary-General of the Kuwait Handball Federation and Director of the 22nd Asian Men's Handball Championship – which also serves as the 2027 IHF World Championship qualifiers in Germany – expressed his deep appreciation to Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, Chairman of the Supreme Organizing Committee, for his continuous support of Kuwaiti sports and handball in particular.

Al-Adwani highlighted the Minister's efforts in overcoming all ob-



Left: Qaed Al-Adwani, Secretary-General Kuwait Handball Federation and Director of the 22nd Asian Men's Handball Championship. Right: Aron Kristjansson talks to a player during training session.

stacles and providing all necessary resources to ensure the success of the championship, which will be held at Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex from January 15 to 29.

He also praised Undersecretary

Turki Al-Aradi for his work in broadcasting the tournament professionally; allowing fans to follow the action live and stay connected to the event.

Welcoming the participating teams to the "land of friendship and



peace," Al-Adwani emphasized that Kuwait is a hub for sports, with the facilities and national expertise to host major tournaments. He affirmed that the Kuwait Handball Federation, through all its working committees, is fully prepared for Asia's premier

handball championship, with the ultimate goal of raising Kuwait's flag and name at the continental level.

Icelandic coach Aron Kristjansson noted that the 22nd Asian Championship will be highly competitive, given the participation of Asia's

strongest teams. He said:

"We are very excited for the championship. The team has trained hard over the past months, and we have great confidence in the players, their ambition, and determination to achieve our main goal: securing one of the four qualifying spots for the 2027 World Championship in Germany."

Kristjansson outlined the team's preparation, which began in mid-October with a long-term training plan. The team held three overseas training camps in Tunisia, Egypt, Croatia, and Slovenia, playing several strong friendly matches. They also participated in the Islamic Solidarity Games, boosting both their physical conditioning and technical skills, and leaving the players ready to defend Kuwait's chance for World Championship qualification.

"Despite some injuries, the Blue team is ready. We will approach the championship step by step and prepare injured players for later stages. We have full confidence in our squad and hope to secure a spot in the World Championship."

'Doha is a global beacon for sports'

Qatar 'welcomes' 196 shooters for Asian Shotgun Championship

DOHA, Jan 13, (KUNA): The Asian Shotgun Championship 2026 kicked off on Monday in the Qatari capital, Doha, and will run until January 21, with the participation of 196 male and female shooters from 17 countries, including Kuwait.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, President of the Asian Shooting Confederation Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah praised the unwavering support provided by Qatar's wise leadership to the sports sector, describing Qatar as a global beacon for sports.

He expressed his appreciation to Amir of the State of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, as well as President of the Qatar Olympic Committee Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad Al Thani, for their continued support in hosting the 2026 Asian Shotgun Championship, in addition to the 14th Asian Youth Training and Development Camp.

Sheikh Salman affirmed the Confederation's full confidence in the Qatari organizing committee's ability to deliver an outstanding and memorable edition of the championship.

He noted that Doha's hosting of the World Shooting Championships next November, during which 36 qualification spots for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games will be awarded, reflects Qatar's remarkable progress and leadership in the sports arena.

Sheikh Salman also expressed pride in the achievements and strong performances of the Qatar Shooting Federation, headed by Dr. Mishael Ibrahim Al-Nasr, as well as its athletes and technical and administrative staff across regional and international competitions.

For his part, President of the Qatar Shooting and Archery Federation Dr. Mishael Ibrahim Al-Nasr said he was



President of the Asian Shooting Confederation Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah

delighted with the record-breaking participation in the Asian Shotgun Championship – Doha 2026, which features a distinguished lineup of world and Olympic champions competing at the Lusail International Shooting Range.

Dr. Al-Nasr extended his sincere gratitude to the wise leadership for its continued support of sports federations, particularly the Shooting Federation, which has witnessed significant development at all levels.

He welcomed Asia's elite shooters to Lusail in an atmosphere that reflects the values of fair competition and excellence, wishing all participants success and an exciting championship experience.

Competition began on Monday with official practice sessions for the skeet event (75 targets). The junior and youth skeet competitions will be held

on Tuesday, followed by the men's and women's skeet events (50 targets).

Qualifying rounds for the skeet event will take place on Wednesday, followed by the junior and youth finals. The men's, women's, and mixed team (junior and youth) skeet finals will be held on Thursday, with the mixed team skeet final (men and women) scheduled for Friday.

Following the conclusion of the skeet competitions, official practice for the trap event will begin on January 17. The trap qualifying rounds will be held on January 18 and 19, with the junior men's and women's trap finals taking place on January 19.

The men's, women's, and mixed team trap finals will be held on January 20, with the championship concluding on January 21 with the mixed team trap final.

Szoboszlai the hero and villain

Liverpool breaks down spirited Barnsley in FA Cup

LIVERPOOL, England, Jan 13, (AP): Dominik Szoboszlai was hero and villain for Liverpool as the home side broke down a spirited Barnsley fourth round tie against Premier League rival Brighton.

The Hungarian midfielder gave Liverpool the lead after eight minutes when he silenced the travelling fans with a stunning 30-meter strike.

Jeremie Frimpong made it 2-0 when he cut in from the right and fired home a fierce left-foot shot.

But Szoboszlai offered Barnsley a way back into the game five minutes before halftime with a calamitous mistake that will feature in bloopers reels for years to come.

His attempted backheel six meters in front of his own goal was poorly planned and shockingly executed and the chasing Adam Phillips only had to tap the ball into the empty net to make it 2-1.

"Sorry to the team," Szoboszlai told broadcaster TNT Sports. "I made it hard for us with an easy mistake. Football happens and we move on."

The midfielder was also lucky not to give away a penalty early in the second half as Barnsley made a mockery of its



Liverpool's Andrew Robertson sends a cross by Barnsley's Corey O'Keeffe during the FA Cup third round soccer match between Liverpool and Barnsley in Liverpool, England. (AP)

League 1 status.

The Yorkshire club took the game to its more storied rival and with the match still in the balance Liverpool coach Arne Slot was forced to call on his big guns, bringing on Florian

Wirtz, Hugo Ekitiké and Ibrahima Konate after an hour.

However, much of the action continued to revolve around Szoboszlai.

He cleared a Phillips shot off the line at one end and then set up Wirtz.

moments later only to see him blaze the ball over the bar.

Wirtz made amends six minutes from time when, with the visitor's energy levels dropping, he took an Ekitiké pass and curled a lovely shot into the far corner.

Ekitiké made it 4-1 in stoppage time when he tapped home a Wirtz cross.

It was an unfortunate end for a visiting team that acquitted itself admirably against a team 57 places above it in the league pyramid.

"I thought we were outstanding," Barnsley manager Conor Hourihane said. "We got a bit tired at the end but we started so well. They brought on top player after top player."

"I wanted the lads to put in a performance that they could come away from and be immensely proud of and they can certainly do that."

Although the scoreline flattered the home side the result was Liverpool's 11th straight game without defeat and a sign of its ability to grind out results. Liverpool has not lost since November to Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League.

Brighton will come to Anfield on the weekend of Feb. 14.

Brighton will come to Anfield on the weekend of Feb. 14.

Kuwait Club looks to extend league lead against Al-Jahra

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Kuwait Club looks to extend its lead in the Zain Premier League when it faces Al-Jahra today at 4:10 PM at Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium. Later, Al-Salmiya will take on Al-Nasr at 6:45 PM at Thamer Stadium, as part of the 11th round of the competition.

The round continues tomorrow with Al-Qadisiya vs Al-Shabab at Mohammed Al-Hamad Stadium and Al-Arabi vs Al-Faheeh Al-Sabah Al-Salem Stadium. The 11th round concludes the following day with Al-Tadhamon vs Kazma at Al-Oula Stadium.

League leader Kuwait Club (26 points) is looking to secure another win, maintain its undefeated streak, and move closer to its 21st league title. The "White" team comes off a strong run, having qualified for the Crown Prince Cup semifinals, and will look to repeat their 4-1 first-round victory over Al-Nasr.

Al-Jahra (8th, 7 points), meanwhile, hopes to pull off an upset against the league leader and gain a crucial result to boost its fight against relegation.



A file photo of players challenging for the ball.

Al-Salmiya (6th, 13 points) is eager to bounce back from a poor run, having gone winless in the last six rounds with two draws and four losses. The "Sky Blues" also aim to replicate their first-round 2-0 victory over Al-Nasr.

Al-Nasr, currently at the bottom with 4 points, enters the match with high morale after qualifying for the Crown Prince Cup semifinals, where it will face Kuwait Club. The "Maroon" team is also seeking revenge against Al-Salmiya, buoyed by their 0-0 draw with Al-Qadisiya in the 10th round.