



Page 14

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Amir, Crown Prince, PM receive new Municipality chief

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Tuesday at Bayan Palace the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs, Abdulatif Hamed Al-Meshaari, who was accompanied by the newly appointed Director General of Kuwait Municipality, Eng. Manal Al-Asfour.

On the same day, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdulla Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah also received Minister Al-Meshaari, who presented Eng. Al-Asfour on the occasion of her new appointment.

Civil Service perks now 'merit-based'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, and acting Chairman of the Civil Service Council, Shereeda Al-Mousherji, announced that the Civil Service Council approved the proposed amendments to the Civil Service Law and Regulations that aim to ensure the optimal use of human resources, and link job benefits, including allowances, bonuses, and privileges, to actual performance, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Continued on Page 5



Amiri Diwan photo
HH the Amir with the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs and the newly appointed Director General of Kuwait Municipality.



Crown Prince Diwan photo
HH the Crown Prince with the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs and the newly appointed Director General of Kuwait Municipality.

Chalets removal backed by administrative court

Jahra Corniche development gets legal greenlight

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The Administrative Court concluded the cases filed by some owners of West Doha chalets against the Kuwait Municipality, dismissing the lawsuits procedurally and substantively.

The court affirmed the validity of the decision of the Municipal Council to implement the Jahra Corniche waterfront project, including the removal of the

chalets located in the area as they hinder the implementation of the project. Fawaz Al-Kandari, a member of the Legal Department at the Municipality, represented the Municipality in the court. He argued for the legality of the contested administrative decision. He emphasized that it was issued to serve public interest, which supersedes individual interests. He explained that the chalets in dispute are located on State-owned land, thus, authorizing the administrative body to terminate their operating licenses whenever the public interest so requires, based on Law No. 105/1980 concerning the State Property System and the established principles of the Court of Cassation.

Continued on Page 5



Amiri Diwan photos

Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs and Head of the Crown Prince Diwan receive the Ambassador of Brazil (top) and Ambassador of Ukraine.

Capital Governorate rises as cultural, touristic landmark

By Munif Naif
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The Capital Governorate, the beating heart of Kuwait, stands as the nation's premier destination and a cultural and touristic landmark, where a rich historical heritage meets present ambitions and future vision.

The Capital Governorate has prominent landmarks that shape its heritage and historical identity, including the historic Mubarakiya Market, Al-Shaheed Park, the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre, the waterfront, and the Kuwait Towers. This reinforces its role as a commercial and financial hub as well as a destination for tourism and investment.

The governorate is witnessing continuous development under the direct supervision of the Capital Governor Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, who affirmed that the governorate is undergoing a comprehensive renaissance in various sectors. This renaissance aims to elevate public ser-



Capital Governor Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah

vices and improve the quality of life for citizens and residents through strategic plans and major projects.

Governor Sheikh Abdullah also highlighted the Capital Governorate's preparations for the National Day celebrations, which coincide this year with the holy month of Ramadan.

The details of the interview are as follows:

Question: What are the most prominent achievements recently realized in the Capital Governorate?

Continued on Page 5

Four pharmacies lose licenses for violations

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Abdulwahab Al-Awadhi has issued a ministerial decision to revoke the licenses of four pharmacies that violated regulations and conditions governing the practice of pharmacy in the private sector and the circulation of medicines and medical products.

Continued on Page 5



National Bank of
Kuwait accelerates
national talent growth
in 2025

15 Zain Kuwait
sponsors 22nd
Asian Handball
Championship

Newswatch

AMMAN: Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa and US President Donald Trump underlined, in a phone call on Monday, the importance of Syria's independence and territorial integrity.

The two presidents also stressed the importance of supporting all efforts aimed at achieving stability in Syria, the Syria News Agency reported.

Both sides underlined the need to guarantee the rights and protection of the Kurdish people within the framework of the Syrian state. (KUNA)

Cybersecurity seminar marks new chapter in US-Kuwait partnership

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Chargé d'affaires of the American Embassy in Kuwait Steve Butler described the relationship between the United States of America and Kuwait as a deep friendship and long-standing partnership.

In a statement on the sidelines of a seminar organized by the Embassy titled, "Cybersecurity and Innovation," Butler pointed out that the two countries are approaching the 35th anniversary of the liberation of Kuwait.

According to Butler, "artificial intelligence is a new and extremely important field."

Continued on Page 5



Steve Butler, Chargé d'affaires of the American Embassy in Kuwait, addresses the attendees of the seminar titled 'Cybersecurity and Innovation.'

Prayer Timings

Fajr 05:20 Asr 14:56
 Sunrise .. 06:43 Maghrib .. 17:16
 Zohr 11:59 Isha 18:36

Local

Kuwait, Pakistan to boost trade, investment ties



Kuwait's Ministry of Finance Undersecretary Aseel Al-Munaifi, Pakistan Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Zafar Iqbal, Secretary of the Board of Private Investments Jamil Qureshi and other Kuwaiti officials at the meeting.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The Ministry of Finance announced that Undersecretary Aseel Al-Munaifi held a meeting with a technical delegation from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, led by Jamil Qureshi, Secretary of the Board of Private Investments, on Monday.

According to a press release issued by the Ministry of Finance, the meeting was aimed

at reviewing the bilateral cooperation between Kuwait and Pakistan and discussing strategies to enhance and develop economic and investment collaboration in the mutual interests of both friendly countries.

They also discussed mechanisms to elevate the level of joint cooperation in the future with the aim of creating new economic and investment partnership opportunities.

The meeting was held as part of preparations for an upcoming visit by a delegation of senior Kuwaiti officials to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Attendees at the meeting included Saad Al-Rashidi, Director of the International Economic Cooperation Department, and Laila Al-Maghribi, Director of the Tax Compliance Department.

Finance Ministry photo

Event common ground to unite Muslims: Iran envoy

Focus on Quranic values at 'Isra and Mi'raj' evening

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Ibrahim Al-Baghi, Chair of the Sayyida Nafisa Charitable Foundation, says the foundation's sponsorship of the Quranic evening commemorating Isra and Mi'raj (the Prophet's Night Journey and Ascension) stems from its belief in the importance of instilling Quranic values in the hearts of future generations and supporting Quran memorizers as a fundamental pillar in building society and preserving its religious and cultural identity.



Dr. Al-Ajmi

This was stated in a speech delivered on his behalf by the foundation's Vice Chair, Murtada Ali Al-Jedi, during the Quranic evening held recently at the Millennium Hotel and Convention Centre in Salmiya.

The event was held under the patronage of the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social

Affairs, Dr. Khaled Al-Ajmi, and in the presence of the Director of the Department of Charitable Societies and Foundations, Abdulmohsen Al-Makhial, along with a number of official, diplomatic, and cultural figures. A select group of Quran memorizers from the State of Kuwait and the Islamic Republic of Iran also participated in the event.

Al-Jedi explained that the charity is keen to ensure that its Quranic events serve as platforms for intellectual and cultural enrichment. The accompanying Islamic calligraphy exhibition, in which a select group of calligraphers from the Islamic Republic of Iran were featured, embodies the beauty of Arabic script inspired by the spirit of the Holy Quran, and reflects the convergence of art and religious values within a comprehensive cultural framework.

Meanwhile, the Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait, Dr. Mohammad Toutounchi, said Kuwait's hosting of this Quranic evening underscores the deep fraternal and popular ties between the two neighboring countries, noting that the Holy Quran represents the common ground that unites Muslims and calls for harmony and compassion.

Ambassador Toutounchi expressed his hope that cultural and artistic relations between Kuwait and Iran would witness further development in line with the strength of bilateral relations, particularly in the cultural field.

In addition, Head of the Center for Moderation, Dr. Abdulla Al-Shuraika, affirmed that the State of Kuwait represents a well-established model of coexistence and national unity, noting that its laws and regulations are founded on the principles of justice and equality without discrimination.

He stressed that the Ministry of Social Affairs supervises charitable societies and foundations according to unified standards, reflecting authentic Islamic values that have contributed to strengthening social stability and reinforcing national belonging.

It is worth noting that an Islamic calligraphy exhibition featuring three calligraphers from the Islamic Republic of Iran were inaugurated during the event, followed by the honoring of the winners of the Grand Quran Memorization Competition, as well as the recognition of three Quran memorizers from Iran for their distinguished participation.

Meanwhile, Maysa Hadmi, Director of the Health and Humanitarian Aid Department and Head of the Technical Secretariat of the Council of Arab Health Ministers, emphasized that blood transfusion services are a core pillar of the health system due to their vital role in saving lives and supporting medical treatments, particularly during emergencies.

She noted that this responsibility requires collective efforts to improve quality, ensure safety, and maintain sustainability.

Death sentence upheld in girlfriend's murder

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The Court of Appeals, presided over by Judge Abdullah Al-Othman, upheld the death sentence for a man convicted of murdering his girlfriend in Rumaihiya and placing her body in a suitcase to smuggle it out of the country.

In its arguments before the Criminal Court, the Public Prosecution, represented by Prosecutor Fares Al-Dabbous, demanded the

maximum penalty -- death -- for the accused, describing him as "a wolf who devoured the innocence of the victim with his claws, robbing her of her right to life, a right enshrined in all divine religions and forbidden to be violated."

He added, "O judges of justice, we come to you seeking the truth. So deliver justice and retribution for every murderer on earth. Our aim is nothing but fair retribution... From this standpoint, the Public Prosecution demands that the court apply the maximum penalty to the

accused -- a fitting punishment."

The report of the Medical Committee, comprised of psychiatrists, concluded that the defendant did not suffer from mental illness.

While the Criminal Court sentenced the defendant to death and eight years imprisonment for the other charges -- desecrating a corpse, misusing a telephone, drug use and unlawfully detaining the victim, the Court of Appeals amended the charge to premeditated murder of the victim by strangulation.

The Court of Appeals upheld the

death sentence and sentenced the defendant to six years imprisonment for the other charges.

Lawyer for the victim's heirs, Attorney Youssef Al-Attar, stated that after filing the civil suit, they explained the circumstances of the heinous crime. "Following the Criminal Court and the Court of Appeal's death sentences, we will continue to pursue the legal proceedings until the death sentence becomes final and binding, the sentence is carried out and the heirs' rights are restored," he concluded.

Court obligates father to pay kids full tuition fees

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The Court of First Instance obliged a father to pay the full tuition fees of his children enrolled in a private school for the academic year 2024/2025 -- totaling KD15,551, in addition to court costs and KD100 for actual legal fees.

The court pointed out in its reasoning that the children's enrollment in a private school is not a new or unexpected matter, but rather the educational path they had been accustomed to since childhood and continued without interruption. Therefore, changing it without justification is contrary to their educational interests and psychological well-being.

It affirmed that this is within the scope of the legally and religiously mandated expenses, stressing that school fees are an integral part of the legally and religiously mandated maintenance, and this obligation is not waived simply because there is free public education, provided the children's best interests are proven and the father has the financial means to pay.

It rejected the father's argument that free public education exempts him from any financial obligation towards private education, indicating that the assessment of educational expenses is based on the actual circumstances of the children and their educational level, not the availability of a free alternative.

It then obligated the father to pay the full school fees as detailed in the ruling, thereby, upholding the principle of prioritizing the best interests of the children above all other considerations.



Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received Faisal Sayyah Al-Mutairi, Director of Mosques in Farwaniya Governorate, to discuss preparations and arrangements for the holy month of Ramadan.

Gov. oversees readiness of mosques in Ramadan

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received Faisal Sayyah Al-Mutairi, Director of Mosques in Farwaniya Governorate, to discuss preparations and arrangements for the holy month of Ramadan.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, they discussed the readiness of mosques to receive worshippers during Ramadan, methods to prepare them, and ways to enhance coordination to ensure a suitable and comfortable atmosphere for worship throughout the holy month.

Governor Sheikh Athbi affirmed the importance of integrated efforts among relevant authorities to serve worshippers, and praised the role of the Farwaniya Governorate's Mosques Department in the early preparation for Ramadan.

At the end of the meeting, Al-Mutairi expressed his sincere gratitude and appreciation to the governor for the warm reception and excellent cooperation, commanding his continued support and attention to all matters that contribute to serving mosques and worshippers during Ramadan.

Governor Sheikh Athbi affirmed the importance of integrated efforts among relevant authorities to serve worshippers, and praised the role of the Farwaniya Governorate's Mosques Department in the early preparation for Ramadan.

It then obligated the father to pay the full school fees as detailed in the ruling, thereby, upholding the principle of prioritizing the best interests of the children above all other considerations.

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: A significant decrease in temperature and cold to rather cold with light to moderate freshening at times northwesterly wind, with speeds of 12-45 km/h causing rising dust over open areas.

By Night: Very cold with light to

Weather

moderate freshening at times over coastal areas northwesterly wind to wind, with speeds of 10-50 km/h with a chance for frost forming over agricultural and desert areas.

Station Max Exp Min Rec

Kuwait City 19 10

Kuwait Airport	19	06
Abdaly	20	05
Bubyani	19	04
Jahra	20	12
Failaka Island	18	07
Salmiyah	19	12
Ahmadi	21	06
Jal Aliyah	19	06

Lives saved in blood therapy

Minister inaugurates confab

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20:

Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi inaugurated the 15th Arab Conference on Transfusion Medicine on Monday, and highlighted that Kuwait's hosting of the scientific event



Dr. Al-Awadhi

Hadmi revealed that the Arab Authority for Blood Transfusion Services was established in 1979 under the Council of Arab Health Ministers as part of joint Arab initiatives.

She highlighted the Arab League's commitment to supporting the Authority, enhancing coordination, sharing expertise, and unifying standards among member countries.

Furthermore, Dr. Aisha Al-Maliki, President of the Arab Authority for Services, emphasized that blood transfusion is no longer merely a support service, but has become a vital component of the healthcare system, closely linked to patient safety, risk management, and emergency response.

She highlighted that the conference serves as an important platform for building a more efficient and innovative future.

Dr. Al-Maliki noted that the Authority has helped establish an integrated network among member states, facilitating the exchange of information and expertise among specialists, enhancing operational efficiency, and improving the quality of healthcare services.

In addition, Dr. Reem Al-Radwan, Head of the Conference and Director of the Central Department of Blood and Cellular Therapy at the Ministry of Health, explained that the three-day event is hosting more than 50 speakers from Arab and international countries. The program includes 19 specialized workshops, 12 scientific sessions, and 80 research papers showcasing the latest studies and advancements in blood transfusion and cellular therapy.

Dr. Al-Radwan affirmed that the wide participation underscores the conference's importance as a leading scientific platform for sharing expertise, enhancing practical skills, and strengthening regional and international cooperation.

The Minister of Health honored the recipients of the Arab Award for Blood Transfusion Services, presented by the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States:

- Dr. Salama Hamida, Director General of the National Blood Transfusion Center in Tunisia

- Dr. Arwa bint Zakaria, Senior Consultant Hematologist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital in Oman

Other Voices

Imam's affairs and concerns of senior citizens' retirement

By Ahmad alsarrat

No nation or people can avoid turning to the judiciary, which is considered a safe haven. Even in countries where the judiciary is perceived as flawed, the need to maintain its prestige and standing is essential.

The United States Constitution and its judicial system, which have been breached occasionally, are often regarded as a model of relative perfection.

However, they are not entirely immune to political interference, particularly in the appointment of Supreme Court judges by the US President. This selection has often been influenced by the President's whims and partisan leanings, rather than solely on merit.

The American judiciary is distinguished by its constitutional independence from the executive and legislative branches.

Article 3 of the Constitution stipulates that Federal Court judges, including Supreme Court judges, are appointed for life, provided they maintain good conduct. Supreme Court judges can only be removed through the complex impeachment procedures conducted by Congress, not by a decision of the president or the executive authority.

The Supreme Court has the authority to interpret laws and review the constitutionality of actions taken by Congress and the President. The executive authority does not have the right to interfere with or amend judicial rulings, although the president can exert political influence through the selection of nominees for high judicial positions.

During my relatively short time working in construction contracting 50 years ago, the company won a contract to build a mosque on the fairgrounds.

It required me to visit the office of an official from the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs to arrange for electricity to be supplied from a ministry-affiliated facility near the construction site. I happened to be in his office with a number of imams and was disturbed by the poor treatment they received from that senior official when submitting requests for loans, financial settlements, leave of absence, or transfers. They were subjected to harsh treatment, with no regard for their status. How can we expect them to guide others when they are in such a difficult psychological state?

Even those who hold sensitive and critical positions face similar treatment after retirement. The prestige they enjoyed during their service suddenly vanishes. They are forced to submit their retirement paperwork to individuals younger and less senior than themselves, after years of dedicated and arduous service.

Such individuals deserve better treatment, one that preserves their dignity. Modern electronic methods can be used to process their retirement paperwork, eliminating the need to carry their documents from one office to another.

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LOCAL

diwaniya  ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Entertainment & culture major drivers of tourism

"FOR six years, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has gained recognition through the Joy Awards, a prestigious event in the entertainment industry," columnist Sheikh Eng. Fahad Dawoud Al-Sabah wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"Each year, Saudi Arabia has witnessed several positive developments in the entertainment sector, which positioned Saudi Arabia as a prominent destination for tourism both regionally and internationally. These achievements reflect significant efforts and high-level directives for smartly marketing the country.



Al-Sabah

"In the past decade, Saudi Arabia has emerged as a major player in the tourism sector. Besides the Riyadh Season, which hosts a variety of cultural and artistic events, Saudi Arabia has welcomed scientific missions to explore archaeological sites in its various areas. These explorations have yielded substantial discoveries, documenting the rich cultural heritage of the country and establishing Saudi Arabia as a tourism destination with a growing international presence.

"This year, the sixth edition of the Joy Awards has much to highlight. The exceptional selection of award recipients has had a profound impact on people throughout the Arab world, especially since the awards cover many facets of creativity.

"Twenty individuals were awarded for their creative achievements during the year, and a prominent figure was honored for a lifetime of work, inspiring creative individuals, both Saudi and Arab, in the fields of art, cinema, drama, music, and sports.

"There is no doubt that this success comes thanks to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, who is working to develop Saudi Arabia through a strategic vision that harnesses the energies of young people in many fields and utilizes individuals capable of creative organization.

"For example, Turki Al-Sheikh, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the General Entertainment Authority, is a cultured individual with extensive experience in sports administration. He has achieved success on many occasions, proving that well-considered choices consistently lead to outstanding results.

"The entertainment industry in Saudi Arabia is a comprehensive process that covers multiple areas. Every day, the country hosts amazing events and celebrations in terms of their meticulous organization.

"Non-religious tourism accounts for 53 percent of visitors to Saudi Arabia, generating significant revenue for the country.

"Sectors such as entertainment, culture, sports, and other forms of tourism have become major drivers of growth, representing a substantial portion of Saudi Arabia's overall tourism revenue."

Also:

"Despite the transfer of visitation centers to the Judicial Enforcement Department at the Ministry of Justice more than three months ago, no improvements have been observed on the ground," columnist Bassam Fahad Thunayyan Al-Ghamim wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

of non-compliance.

"There is a genuine lack of cooperation from the centers with fathers; on the contrary, fathers are often treated with disrespect. The police are frequently called to remove the father from the visitation center, causing public humiliation in front of his children. In some cases, the police unintentionally assist staff in obstructing the implementation of visitation orders.

"There is a noticeable absence of any serious initiative or practical steps to address these problems.

"The prevailing culture within the visitation centers remains unchanged, contradicting the law and hindering the enforcement of visitation orders.

"It is clear that transferring the visitation centers to the Judicial Enforcement Department has not yet produced any positive results. The failure continues, and fathers are still unable to see their children. Moreover, after the transfer, fathers become powerless to take any legal action against the custodial parent, as the center previously protects the parent through a formal report claiming full compliance, stating that the custodial parent brought the child to the center and then left.

"Using the excuse that a child has reached the age of 15 if they refuse to go with their father enables the custodian to continue obstructing and hindering court orders. This is compounded by the lack of enforcement of punitive measures for non-compliance, such as arrest warrants, travel bans, or forced execution. As a result, the authority of the staff has become greater than that of the court rulings, and justice has lost its effectiveness. Parental disobedience becomes the reality imposed by these centers.

"Closing these visitation centers has become an urgent necessity, especially after the failure of all previous administrative measures to address their shortcomings. The situation requires a radical solution that guarantees the rights of both children and parents, restores the enforcement of court rulings, and upholds the rule of law, free from bias or abuse."

□ □ □

"The situation in Gaza Strip remains as I feared - 47 percent of the area is controlled by the Sinwar faction and 53 percent by the Netanyahu faction, leaving the affected population with no choice but to turn to the UN Security Council. What is done is done, Dr. Fouad." Palestinian journalist Adnan Makkawi wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"The Sinwar faction is now focused solely on staying in power, even if it is a weak and fragile power. Their struggle has become a mere formality for their followers, relying on UNRWA to provide scraps from the world's handouts, allowing them to portray Gaza as stable and improving, as if everything is fine, my friend.

"Even celebrations and festive nights have returned to the old Gaza where they are present, and the Rafah crossing is reopening.

"As for the Netanyahu faction, they are satisfied with the current situation in the Gaza Strip, leaving Hamas to govern 47 percent of its territory. They could not have found worse rulers than Hamas to administer it and discipline its original residents. Everything remains postponed and suspended until the return of the last body of the Zionist captives, while work continues at full pace to build a new Gaza in the east, opposite the old Gaza in the west, separated by the yellow line - the new Berlin Wall - for many years to come, unfortunately.

"Did I not tell you that the Sinwar and Netanyahu factions are brothers? Their points of departure are the same, and the essence of their extremist right-wing religious thinking is identical. Their primary concern is to suppress the real people of Gaza and turn them into beggars, confined in pens like animals, fed one or two meals a day until the time of slaughter arrives.

"The people there have no say. Whoever dies, God has willed it, and whoever dies will go to Paradise, how fortunate. No one can alter the will and decree of God, Dr. Fouad.

"The important thing is to be patient and persevere, people of Gaza, as long as UNRWA continues to operate. Or it will resume operating, and everything will be fine, all is well, and what lies ahead will be better.

"In short, Israel wants Hamas in Gaza, and Hamas wants Israel in Gaza, unfortunately.

"If Israel truly wanted to end Hamas's rule, it could have set a deadline for them to hand over their suspicious weapons and leave Gaza.

"Similarly, Trump's America wants Hamas, but only after it has been disciplined by the sons of Netanyahu, and only in less than half of Gaza.

"If it did not want it, the United States could have taken stronger action against Hamas's leaders, but that has not happened. Hamas is satisfied, Israel is satisfied, America is satisfied, and even most of Gaza's people are satisfied.

"As for a quarter of Gaza's real people, the sea of Gaza is before you, so drink it. And it is a revolution until death! Gaza is lost, its people are lost, and the Palestinian lands are lost... It does not matter.

"What matters is that UNRWA remains, the refugee ration card remains, and the cause remains something to begin with."

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty

Khalaf Al Habtoor ... a fruitful tree

By Abu Meshal

'A fruitful tree is pelted with stones, yet it yields delicious fruit' - this proverb came to mind when I read the comments of some fools who attacked our friend, the Emirati businessman Khalaf Ahmad Al Habtoor.

These people, as I know them, are mostly political opportunists without a steady profession. One of them was once a minor, self-proclaimed journalist who later became an agent for Syrian intelligence.

Another claims to be a journalist, but for decades has used his pen or keyboard to blackmail people. Those who pay him are safe, but those who ignore him are accused and insulted by him.

A third is a volatile individual who is full of malice. This political opportunist has a different story. Those who know him say he began in journalism as a trainee editor through the connections of a Lebanese leader. He soon established ties with Syrian intelligence, submitting reports to its officers in Beirut in exchange for payment. Even the person who helped him secure a government job was not spared his betrayal.

As the saying goes, "What is learned in youth is carried into old age." He behaves like someone who spits in the plate he once ate from.

Rose

Within a short time, with the support of Hezbollah (the Satan's Party), he rose to the position of minister. When he later lost the elections, he insulted his own people, calling them donkeys, and arrogantly declared that he did not care about the hundreds of thousands who had supported him.

All this fuss was stirred up by fools because Khalaf Ahmad Al Habtoor ignored them and others who insulted him. As the old saying goes, "The caravan moves on while the dogs bark."

Because he is tolerant and wise, he chose



Khalaf Al Habtoor

not to respond to the fools. As a true Arab nationalist, he directed his calm and measured message instead to the Lebanese President and Prime Minister.

Khalaf Al-Habtoor is concerned that the situation could get out of control and that the attacks might escalate to involve all the Gulf states.

The fools' goal is to sabotage the newly established relationship between Beirut and the Gulf capitals.

In response, Al Habtoor addressed Presidents Aoun and Salam, saying, "I am bringing to your attention what has recently been published on some Lebanese media platforms, including the 'Al-Sharaa' website. I ask you frankly, and from a position of responsibility rather than hostility - Are you satisfied with what is being written? Are you content with these statements published in the name of

Lebanese media? Do you realize their serious repercussions for Lebanon and the Lebanese people before any other party?

I have warned you more than once, in various ways, with clear concern for Lebanon. But unfortunately, we have not yet seen any serious steps or practical measures to put an end to this chaos or stop these transgressions.

Interests

Let me be clear. These statements are not expressions of opinion or objective criticism, but a direct threat to Lebanon's interests, its social security, its Arab relations, and the livelihoods of thousands of Lebanese. No country allows a group or individuals to tamper with its foreign relations under the guise of the media. Nor can a country capable of progress allow irresponsible words to determine the fate of its people and its relations.

I am not calling for the silencing of opinions. Rather, I am asking the state to assume its responsibility by holding individuals accountable and by drawing clear boundaries between freedom and chaos, and between responsible media and harm to national security. Silence at this stage is not neutrality, but it implies consent.

I write this letter not only out of love for Lebanon, but also as a clear warning. Time is not in anyone's interest. Every day of delay increases the damage and deepens the loss. The responsibility today rests on your shoulders, and history will not forgive those who compromise the security, dignity, and interests of the people. With respect, Khalaf Ahmad Al Habtoor."

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that we all love Lebanon and its people. Unfortunately, some Lebanese are harming their own country. These individuals occupy influential positions and thus contribute to shaping public opinion or represent segments of society. At this sensitive juncture, can Lebanon bear the consequences of the actions of these fools? This is a question directed to Lebanese officials.

KNG's Al-Barjas visits 'Al-Sumoud Camp', lauds readiness

KUNA photo
Deputy Undersecretary of the Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Lieutenant General Hamad Al-Barjas during his visit to the Martyrs Field at Al-Sumoud Camp.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20, (KUNA): Deputy Undersecretary of the Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Lieutenant General Hamad Al-Barjas conducted an inspection tour of Martyrs Field at Al-Sumoud Camp, during which he conveyed the greetings and appreciation of the National Guard leadership.

According to a statement issued by the National Guard on Tuesday, Lt. Gen. Al-Barjas underscored the importance of Martyrs Field within the National Guard's firing range system, noting that it serves as a supporting and complementary facility to the firing ranges at Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah Camp.

He stated that the field plays a vital role in honing shooting skills among National Guard personnel, enabling them to perform their national defense duties with the highest level of efficiency and professionalism.

Captain, crew selling subsidized diesel nabbed

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The General Directorate of Coast Guard seized a vessel that was involved in smuggling and illegally selling subsidized diesel fuel within Kuwaiti territorial waters, and arrested 18 individuals, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an official statement, the

Ministry of Interior explained that the vehicle was seized after it was detected by Coast Guard patrol boats. Specialized field teams were immediately dispatched to take necessary action. Investigations revealed that the vessel's captain and crew were selling sub-

sidized diesel to several other vessels within Kuwaiti territorial waters. The operation led to the arrest of 18 individuals involved and the impounding of the vessel.

The captain and crew admitted to selling the subsidized diesel and receiving payments via KNet. They

were referred to the relevant authorities for legal action.

The Ministry of Interior affirmed its commitment to upholding strict maritime security and implementing zero-tolerance policy against violations or misuse of subsidized items.

Farwaniya Governorate photo
Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah receives Chairman of the Kuwait Sports for All Federation Faisal Maqseed, who was accompanied by Vice President Abdullah Al-Adwani and Board Member Hamed Al-Hazim.

Call to promote sports in all segments of society

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received Chairman of the Kuwait Sports for All Federation Faisal Maqseed, who was accompanied by Vice President Abdullah Al-Adwani and Board Member Hamed Al-Hazim.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, the visit aimed to strengthen cooperation and coordination and to support sports and community initiatives.

During the meeting, the parties discussed ways to enhance sports activities targeting various segments of society, as well as the importance of promoting the concept of "Sports for All" due to its role in improving public health and instilling positive values.

Governor Sheikh Athbi praised the Kuwait Sports for All Federation for its role in serving the community and encouraging sports participation.

He affirmed the Farwaniya Governorate's support for all efforts that contribute to the development of sports and community activities and the achievement of national goals.

At the end of the meeting, the guests expressed their sincere gratitude and appreciation to Governor Sheikh Athbi for the warm reception and excellent cooperation. They also commended his continued support for sports and community initiatives, and his dedication to strengthening partnerships with community institutions in the public interest.



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LOCAL

Photo by Mohammad Morsi
Nazaha officials during the awareness workshop.**Building government integrity****Nazaha holds workshops on corruption risk management**

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The awareness workshops on the guide for assessing and managing corruption risks in government entities, organized by the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha), began on Monday, January 19 and will continue until Thursday, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The workshops are part of Nazaha's ongoing efforts to enhance corruption prevention and strengthen the principles of integrity in government work.

In an official statement, Nazaha explained that the guide serves as a reference for public entities, providing a systematic methodology to identify, analyze, and manage corruption risks. It helps monitor and address weak-

nesses early and promotes the adoption of preventive measures as a sustainable institutional practice.

The development of the guide is in line with Nazaha's commitment to implementing the anti-corruption requirements outlined in the United Nations Convention against Corruption and supports the pillars of Kuwait's strategy to promote integrity and combat corruption.

The workshops are attended by specialists from a number of government entities and aim to familiarize participants with the guide's content and implementation mechanisms, while reinforcing governance principles and raising awareness of preventive measures among the participating entities.

**By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff**

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The Board of Directors of the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) has approved the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects' (KAPP) request to launch a public tender for "preparing consultancy studies related to the subscription and transfer of ownership of shares allocated to Kuwaiti citizens in the Umm Al-Hayman Wastewater Treatment Company."

The decision, made during CAPT's meeting on Wednesday, confirms the article on the transfer of ownership of Umm Al-Hayman shares to citizens soon" published by the daily last month.

CAPT's approval allows KAPP

to carry out the procedures through a public tender, in accordance with Article 17 of the Public Tenders Law No. 49/2016, which permits contracting via public tender through competitive negotiation or a request for proposals.

The Board's decision came after reconsidering KAPP's request and reviewing its letter containing the required amendments, with the acting Director General Asma A1 - Mousa representing KAPP.

Previously, the Board had postponed the decision on December 22, awaiting a follow-up letter from KAPP outlining the discussed amendments within five working days.

This project marks Kuwait's second major experience in strengthening public-private partnerships,

following the first phase of the Zour North Power Plant. The plant is the largest in the southern region and one of the largest regionally, as well as the first in Kuwait to operate using integrated renewable energy.

Biogas generated by the plant provides 50 percent of the electricity required for its operations. The facility treats 500,000 cubic meters of wastewater daily, with plans for future expansion to a total capacity of 700,000 cubic meters per day. This makes it the largest wastewater treatment plant in Kuwait and the region to operate on a biogas system, fully utilizing the sludge produced during the treatment process and delivering it to beneficiaries.

The capital of Umm Al-Hayman Wastewater Treatment Company is approximately KD 49 million, divided into 490 million shares.

Ownership is allocated as follows: 10 percent to the Kuwait Investment Authority, 40 percent to a strategic investor, and 50 per-

cent subscribed by the government through the Public-Private Partnership Projects Authority. Citizens will subscribe to around 245 million shares, and the company is set to be listed on the Kuwait Stock Exchange shortly after the subscription period begins.

This pioneering project highlights exceptional public-private collaboration, including partnerships with WTE Wassertechnik GmbH and International Financial Advisors Holding Company (IFA), along with government shareholders.

The project has generated substantial investment opportunities, with financing provided by several local, German, and South Korean banks holding varying stakes. The Ministry of Public Works has also contributed as an important partner by funding a portion of the project.

This unique financing model is the first of its kind in the region and is expected to encourage local banks to actively participate in future government-led investment opportunities.



Al-Mousa

Islamic Affairs issues over 84,000 fatwas in 2025

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Dr. Saad Rashid Al-Shanfa, Director of the Fatwa Department at the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, announced that the department issued over 84,000 fatwas in 2025, reports Al-Anba daily.

In the first press statement he issued after assuming his position, Dr. Al-Shanfa highlighted the ministry's ongoing efforts to issue fatwas through specialized committees within the Fatwa Department, particularly the telephone fatwa service, which issued more than 84,000 fatwas with support from the General Secretariat of Aqwaf.

He affirmed that the telephone fatwa service is available during official working days through the hotline No. 149 from 8:00am to 1:30pm and from 4:00pm to 8:00pm, adding that working hours during the holy month of Ramadan will be from 9:00am to 1:30pm, and then from 3:00pm to 5:00pm.

Dr. Al-Shanfa confirmed that the various committees in the Fatwa Department issued numerous fatwas, with the Personal Status Committee issuing 262 fatwas over 44 sessions, and the Economic Committee issuing 14 fatwas. The

department also facilitated 254 declarations of conversion to Islam in 2025.

Regarding publications, Dr. Al-Shanfa explained that the Sharia Research Department continues to publish important works for researchers, citizens, and residents. The latest publication "Majalis al-Ifta" (Fatwa Councils), compiles fatwas from the Sharia Fatwa Authority and its specialized committees, covering issues related to creed, worship, transactions, personal status, contemporary matters, and new developments, all in accordance with Sharia rulings and opinions of scholars.



Namaa charitable society photo

Blankets and essentials distributed**Namaa society brings winter relief to 125 Yemeni families**

ADEN, Jan 20, (KUNA): Kuwait's Namaa charitable society has distributed winter aid to about 125 displaced and vulnerable families, as part of "Kuwait By Your Side" campaign which continues for the 11th year in a row.

In a statement issued on Monday, head of Namaa communication sector Abdulaziz Al-Ibrahim said this assistance seeks to mitigate the suffering of Yemeni families facing tough conditions, amid continued displacement, poverty and the absence of simple life needs.

He expressed appreciation to Kuwait and Kuwaitis for this support.

Meanwhile, executive director of Yemen's development society, Rofqa Majid bin Harhara said the aid included blankets, keffiyehs, socks and jackets to provide the minimum level of warmth, main winter needs and more.

In a statement, bin Harhara lauded humanitarian aid provided by Kuwait to Yemen that shows the fraternal bonds and solidarity with Yemeni brothers, and Namaa's key role in helping Yemenis in various parts.

Unapproved asphalt modifications flagged**Ministry of Education strengthens oversight on school maintenance**

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Minister of Education Engineer Jalal Al-Tabtabaei has directed educational zone leaders to immediately remove all violations reported by the Ministry of Public Works in several schools that carried out unauthorized modifications to newly laid asphalt layers, reports Al-Rai daily.

According to informed sources, the Ministry of Education is enforcing strict measures to ensure that all maintenance and development work in schools complies with approved technical specifications.

This aims to uphold accountability, maintain the sustainability of school infrastructure, and safeguard public spending, while raising safety and quality standards in educational facilities.

The ministry confirmed that all schools found in violation will be referred for investigation, with responsible parties held accountable under existing legal frame-

The Ministry of Public Works had notified the Ministry of Education that recent technical violations in several schools pose a direct threat to safety and quality standards, negatively impact the warranty coverage for asphalt work, and could result in unnecessary public spending due to repairs outside the warranty period. It stressed the urgent need to remove and correct these violations immediately, before the problem worsens or spreads to additional areas within school parking lots and facilities.

The sources highlighted the importance of coordinating with the Ministry of Public Works before carrying out any future maintenance or construction work, to ensure safety and protect public funds.

They affirmed that the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Public Works are committed to strengthening their cooperation on the maintenance of educational facilities, adding that this cooperation is aimed at safeguarding school infrastructure, preventing improper practices that could cause damage, and ensuring the highest standards of quality and sustainability in public service projects.

MPW wraps up road safety projects

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The Ministry of Public Works has completed a series of road network development projects, including painting sidewalks, marking speed bumps, and installing traffic signs, under its new contracts, which aim to enhance traffic safety and improve infrastructure quality, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to informed sources, sidewalks and road markings on the main roads in Abu Futaira have been completed. Speed bumps are currently being marked to ensure smooth traf-

fic flow and the safety of vehicles and pedestrians. The projects also include street markings and traffic signs in other areas, which reflect ongoing efforts for a nationwide infrastructure improvement.

Meanwhile, extensive work on Arabian Gulf Street has been completed under new contracts to improve daily commute experience for citizens. Street markings and traffic signs have also been implemented on the Fourth Ring Road and Al-Salmi Road to reduce potential road hazards.

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LOCAL

Municipal panel approves sites for expatriate workers housing

North Kabad wastewater plant expansion cleared

By Inaas Awadh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The Technical Committee at the Municipal Council, chaired by Eng. Munira Al-Amir, on Sunday held its extraordinary meeting, during which it approved the request of the Ministry of Public Works to expand the North Kabad wastewater treatment plant in Sulalibiya Agricultural Area to around 2.88 million square meters.

This expansion is part of a Kuwaiti-Chinese memorandum of understanding (MoU) for wastewater treatment, subject to the approval of the concerned authorities.

ties. Conditions include submitting an environmental and social impact assessment study and fulfilling the requirements of service providers.

The committee emphasized that the project is part of efforts to support vital infrastructure projects and improve the efficiency of water treatment and the areas served by the plant in the interest of the public.

The committee also approved the following:

- Request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to reorganize two plots in the Diplomatic Quarter to align with future planning needs,
- Amendment a previous decision on the al-

location of sites in Shaddadiyah for housing expatriate workers and handing them over to the Ministry of Finance for utilization in accordance with applicable laws.

It approved other requests and referred some matters to the executive body for technical study, stressing that its decisions are made within the framework of achieving sustainable urban development in coordination with the relevant government agencies.

Meanwhile, Al-Amir affirmed that the decisions of the committee aim to balance the requirements of sustainable urban development and infrastructure needs, while taking into account the environmental and regulatory aspects. She stressed the importance of continuous coordination with the concerned government agencies to ensure that the projects needed by the State are implemented according to the approved plans and the highest technical standards.

Al-Amir

PAAET reinforces workplace Code of Conduct

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) affirmed its full commitment to the Code of Conduct and its dedication to instilling discipline, integrity, and professionalism in the workplace, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an official statement, PAAET revealed that it issued a number of disciplinary decisions against individuals found in violation of regulations and bylaws, as part of its ongoing efforts to strengthen institutional commitment, promote a culture of responsibility and transparency, and

uphold the integrity of the educational and training process in its colleges and institutes.

Director General Dr. Hassan Al-Fajjam explained that PAAET is steadily implementing the Administrative Accountability Regulations within a comprehensive corporate governance framework based on justice and transparency, ensuring rights are upheld and reinforcing the values of professional integrity and ethical commitment in line with the approved Code of Conduct.

Continued from Page 1

Professionals deserve

Globally, countries—including those in the Gulf—prioritize attracting skilled workers and capital. They offer permanent residency or citizenship to encourage integration into the local economy and society. Many even use citizenship as an incentive, sometimes tied to real estate investment, even for buying a single apartment.

Kuwait has numerous opportunities to attract foreign capital and investors seeking stability and productive projects.

The main question is: Why the government has yet to amend the restrictive laws affecting the mobility of investors and specialized skills—a path already adopted by other Gulf states and most countries throughout the world?

A strategy to boost the national product and generate significant public revenue involves the vast, undeveloped tracts of land, including long-unused areas in and around the capital. These pieces of land could be allocated to the investment funds, such as the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS), Zakat House and Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA). These funds could then undertake the development of buildings and projects for sale to foreign investors at preferential or market rates.

Utilization of all human capabilities is essential for national growth. Such utilization adds value by stimulating job creation, facilitating knowledge transfer, increasing foreign direct investment, improving infrastructure, diversifying income streams and expanding trade.

Nevertheless, this vital economic contribution is contingent upon the establishment of a sophisticated and flexible legal framework.

Despite the global crises, security challenges and wars, the world continues to progress. Only astute and skillful leaders will seize these opportunities.

Chalets removal

The defense also clarified that the chalet license contracts contained explicit clauses empowering the administrative body to terminate the license without compensation when public interest demands it. They stressed that a contract is binding on the contracting parties, there is no room for interpretation when the text is clear, and that individual interests can only be realized within the framework of the interest of society as a whole.

In its reasoning, the court confirmed that the executive authority, represented by the Council of Ministers, is the governing body responsible for managing State interests, properties and public facilities. It also stated that the Committee for Removing Encroachments on State Property and Protecting It was transferred from the Ministry of Finance to the Municipality through a Council of Ministers decision. The court stated that annual licenses for family rest houses (chalets) are automatically renewable, subject to administrative decisions made in the interest of the public, and do not entitle the licensees to claim the value of the facilities or compensation upon expiration or cancellation of the license.

The court concluded that the contested decision was based on sound reasoning, consistent with the provisions of the law and the contract terms, particularly clause 15 and served the public interest, thus, confirming its validity and legality, while affirming the Municipality's right to proceed with the Jahra Corniche project.

Four pharmacies

The decision, which was based on Ministerial Decree No. 237/2025 concerning the regulations and procedures for licensing private-sector pharmacies, is part of the Ministry of Health's responsibility to protect public health and ensure the safe circulation of medicines. It reflects the ministry's commitment to enforcing approved regulatory frameworks and strengthening professional discipline in this vital sector.

This step is part of the ongoing inspection campaigns of pharmacies in all areas to ensure safe handling of medications, protecting public health, and guaranteeing compliance with health standards.

In an official statement, the ministry explained that one of the pharmacies affected by the decision has multiple branches in various areas of the country. This affirms that laws and regulations are applied without exception and in a manner that upholds the principles of justice and accountability, regardless of the establishment's size or scope of operations.

It reiterated that oversight of private pharmacies is an ongoing process aimed at ensuring full compliance with professional and regulatory requirements and maintaining the quality of pharmaceutical services, thereby enhancing public confidence in the healthcare system.

Amiri Diwan

The meeting addressed the distinguished relations linking the two countries and peoples, as well as ways to support and develop cooperation across various sectors.

They also discussed the latest regional and international developments and reviewed a number of topics of common interest.

Capital Governorate

Answer: The Capital Governorate has implemented several development and service projects in coordination

with relevant government agencies. These include infrastructure improvements, developing public squares and waterfronts, and addressing field observations related to municipal and traffic services.

Damascus Street, a major road, was opened to improve traffic flow, in addition to waterfront development and maintenance work on several streets.

Q: This year, the National Day celebrations coincide with the holy month of Ramadan. How has the government prepared for them?

A: The Capital Governorate has prepared a comprehensive organizational plan that takes into consideration the special nature of Ramadan along with the atmosphere of the National Day celebrations. The plan includes organizing national and cultural events, enhancing public services, and managing visitor traffic in important areas.

The date for raising the flag will be determined by the Amiri Diwan, with celebrations and events scheduled at Mubarakiya Market, Gulf Road, and public parks.

Q: What is the nature of the coordination with the Ministry of Interior and the relevant authorities?

A: There is ongoing and direct coordination with the Ministry of Interior and relevant authorities, particularly regarding security and traffic management, through pre-established plans and organized security deployments.

The Governorate Council includes representatives from various government ministries and plays an active role in addressing any concerns and expediting work across different sectors.

Q: What are the most prominent problems that have been addressed on the ground?

A: A number of challenges have been addressed on the ground, most notably traffic congestion in commercial areas, issues related to cleanliness and services, and the regulation of vendors and public facilities in cooperation with the relevant authorities.

Q: To what extent have regular meetings with citizens contributed to accelerating progress?

A: Periodic meetings have significantly contributed to bridging viewpoints and directly understanding citizens' needs. This has helped expedite the resolution of many problems and achieve tangible results in coordination with relevant authorities.

Q: Is there a direct mechanism for receiving residents' complaints and feedback?

A: Yes, the governorate has a clear mechanism for receiving citizens' complaints and feedback, whether through direct visits or approved communication channels. Complaints are taken seriously and followed up until appropriate solutions are implemented.

Residents of the Capital Governorate can submit complaints or suggestions via a user-friendly application, by visiting the governorate headquarters in person, or through the governorate's official platforms.

Q: How are you monitoring the development of Mubarakiya Market and ensuring the preservation of its heritage identity?

A: Mubarakiya Market, which is one of the country's most prominent heritage landmarks, is being carefully developed while preserving its historical identity. Efforts focus on improving services and infrastructure and regulating traffic flow within the market.

The section damaged by the fire will soon reopen following reconstruction and development funded by Kuwait Finance House, in coordination with relevant authorities and Kuwait Municipality.

Q: What are the upcoming development projects in Mubarakiya Market?

A: Studies and development proposals are ongoing to enhance the visitor experience, covering organizational and service improvements. Any new projects will be announced in due course after full coordination with the relevant authorities.

Q: How is the Governorate working to address congestion and parking in Al-Mubarakiya?

A: Work is underway to study traffic and organizational solutions, including promoting the use of nearby parking and regulating entry and exit, in cooperation with relevant authorities, especially given the growing importance of Mubarakiya Market as a major tourist destination.

Q: What about the fish market within Al-Mubarakiya?

A: Kuwait Municipality has decided to relocate the fish market to Sharq with the aim of eliminating odors and improving the overall organization in Mubarakiya Market.

Q: What is the current status of Al-Shaheed Park?

A: Al-Shaheed Park is one of the country's prominent national projects. Its main phases have been completed, and it now serves its cultural and recreational role, with development work continuing according to the approved plans.

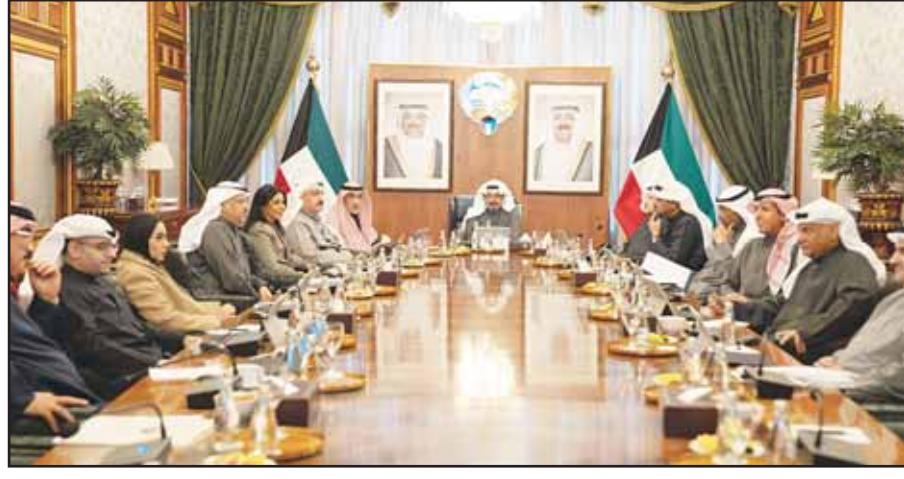
Q: How many waterfront development projects has the Capital Governorate overseen?

A: The Capital Governorate, in coordination with relevant authorities, has overseen several waterfront development projects aimed at improving public facilities.

Shwaikh Beach was opened three months ago in coordination with the private sector, along with the development of various other waterfronts, reflecting the country's modern image, enhancing quality of life, and providing a safe and attractive environment for visitors.

Q: What message do you have for the residents of the Capital Governorate and its visitors?

A: I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to the residents of the Capital Governorate and all visitors on the occasion of the upcoming National Day celebrations, and I wish everyone a blessed Ramadan. I encourage everyone to cooperate and preserve public property. The



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

Kuwaiti citizens prioritized; 15% profit cap enforced

MoSA mandates co-op reps for farm auctions

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The Ministry of Social Affairs has mandated cooperative societies to appoint one or more representatives to attend daily auctions at approved marketing outlets.

These representatives will be responsible for purchasing local agricultural products directly from the producers. Priority in appointment will be given to Kuwaiti citizens to support national talent in line with the general policies of the State.

Reliable sources said the ministry issued a circular to cooperative societies stipulating that representatives will commence their duties only after its approval of the marketing outlets, indicating the transactions prior to this approval are invalid.

Regarding the announcement of agricultural

product prices, sources stated that a clear notice board must be displayed in the central markets of the cooperative societies. They added this notice must include an updated statement of prices for local and imported agricultural products, allowing consumers to compare prices and promoting transparency.

On the commitment to the profit margin, sources stressed the commitment to applying a profit margin not exceeding 15 percent on all purchases by cooperative societies of local agricultural products, in accordance with aforementioned ministerial decision, and in order to achieve its purpose of supporting local products and easing the burdens of consumers, as per Ministerial Decision No. 347/2025 on the support and promotion of local agricultural products in cooperative societies, and in a manner that ensures proper implementation, follow-up and accountability.

KRCS denies fake online job claims

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) has confirmed that reports circulating on social media about available job opportunities are completely false, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

KRCS urged the public to verify information and rely only on official sources, emphasizing that any legitimate job postings will be published exclusively through KRCS' official and approved platforms.

MoE disqualifies 1,681 from supervisory roles

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The concerned authorities at the Ministry of Education disqualified 1,681 educators from a total of 8,162 applicants for educational supervisory positions, including school principal, assistant school principal, technical advisor, technical supervisor and department head, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources from the educational sector.

Sources told the daily that the disqualification is due to the applicants' failure to meet a number of conditions stipulated in the ministerial decree governing the abovementioned positions. Sources confirmed that the selection process was conducted in accordance with strict standards to ensure competence and integrity in the appointment to supervisory roles.

Sources said the reasons for disqualification include disciplinary action recorded against some applicants, which prevented their nomination for supervisory positions. Sources added that a number of applicants did not submit the certificate of good conduct, which is a basic and mandatory requirement for applying for these posts.

Sources disclosed that the electronic tests for educational supervisory positions for those who have been approved will be held in February, as per the timetable and organizational plan being implemented by the educational affairs sector.

Sources explained this approach is intended to ensure that the process proceeds smoothly and in a transparent manner, indicating that the electronic tests aim to assess the professional, leadership and educational competencies of applicants to select the most qualified individuals who are capable of assuming supervisory responsibilities.

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Appropriations are not a game, they are a law: Google

Judge refuses to block new DHS policy limiting Congress members' access to ICE facilities

WASHINGTON, Jan 20, (AP): A federal judge refused Monday to temporarily block the Trump administration from enforcing a new policy requiring a week's notice before members of Congress can visit immigration detention facilities.

US District Judge Jia Cobb in Washington, DC, concluded that the Department of Homeland Security didn't violate an earlier court order when it reimposed a seven-day notice requirement for congressional oversight visits to Immigration and Customs Enforcement facilities.

Cobb stressed that she wasn't ruling on whether the new policy passes legal muster. Rather, she said, plaintiffs' attorneys representing several Democratic members of Congress used the wrong "procedural vehicle" to challenge it. The judge also concluded that the Jan. 8 policy is a new agency action that isn't subject to her prior order in the plaintiffs' favor.

Plaintiffs' lawyers asked Cobb to intervene after three Democratic members of Congress from Minnesota were blocked from visiting an ICE facility near Minneapolis earlier this month - three days after an ICE officer shot and killed US citizen Renee Good in Minneapolis.

Last month, Cobb temporarily blocked an administration oversight visit policy. She ruled Dec 17 that it is likely illegal for ICE to demand a week's notice from members of Congress seeking to visit and observe conditions in ICE facilities.

A day after Good's death, US Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem secretly signed a new memorandum reinstating another seven-day notice requirement. Plaintiffs' lawyers from the Democracy Forward legal advocacy group said DHS didn't disclose the latest policy until after US Reps Ilhan Omar, Kelly Morrison and Angie Craig initially were turned away from an ICE facility in the Minneapolis federal building.

On Monday, Cobb ruled that the new policy is similar but different than the one announced in June 2025.

"The Court emphasizes that it denies Plaintiffs' motion only because it is not the proper avenue to challenge Defendants' January 8, 2026 memorandum and the policy stated therein, rather than based on any kind of finding that the policy is lawful," she wrote.

Democracy Forward spokeswoman Melissa Schwartz said they were review-



US Rep Kelly Morrison D-Minn, (center), Rep. Ilhan Omar, D-Minn, (second from the right), and Rep Angie Craig, D-Minn., (far right), at the Bishop Whipple Federal Building, on Jan 10, in Minneapolis. (AP)

ing the judge's latest order.

"We will continue to use every legal tool available to stop the administration's efforts to hide from congressional oversight," she said in a statement.

Twelve other Democratic members of Congress sued in Washington to challenge ICE's amended visitor policies after they were denied entry to detention facilities. Their lawsuit accused Republican President Donald Trump's administration of obstructing congressional oversight of the centers during its nationwide surge in immigration enforcement operations.

A law bars DHS from using appropriated general funds to prevent members

of Congress from entering DHS facilities for oversight purposes. Plaintiffs' attorneys from the Democracy Forward Foundation said the administration hasn't shown that none of those funds are being used to implement the latest notice policy.

"Appropriations are not a game. They are a law," plaintiffs' attorney Christine Google said during a hearing Wednesday.

Justice Department attorney Amber Richer said the Jan. 8 policy signed by Noem is distinct from the policies that Cobb suspended last month.

"This is really a challenge to a new policy," Richer said.

Plaintiffs' attorneys said the matter is urgent because members of Congress are negotiating funding for DHS and ICE for the next fiscal year with DHS's annual appropriations due to expire Jan. 30.

"This is a critical moment for oversight, and members of Congress must be able to conduct oversight at ICE detention facilities, without notice, to obtain urgent and essential information for ongoing funding negotiations," the lawyers wrote.

Government attorneys have said it's merely speculative for the legislators to be concerned that conditions in ICE facilities change over the course of a week. But the judge rejected those arguments last month.

"The changing conditions within ICE facilities means that it is likely impossible for a Member of Congress to reconstruct the conditions at a facility on the day that they initially sought to enter," wrote Cobb, who was nominated to the bench by Democratic President Joe Biden.

Meanwhile, an immigrant from Nicaragua was found dead at a Texas immigration detention facility last week, federal officials said.

Victor Manuel Diaz appears to have killed himself Wednesday at the sprawling tent complex at the US Army's Fort Bill base in El Paso, Immigration and Customs Enforcement said in a statement. The federal investigation into his death continues.

It's the same facility where ICE said another detainee died earlier this month as staff members tried to keep him from killing himself. But a fellow detainee said at least five officers were restraining the handcuffed inmate and at least one had an arm around his neck.

America

Sherrill to be sworn in as NJ's 57th gov: Mikie Sherrill, the four-term congresswoman and former Navy helicopter pilot who cast her November election in New Jersey as a victory over President Donald Trump's vision for the country, is set to be inaugurated as the state's 57th governor on Tuesday.

Sherrill, 54, will be just the second woman to lead the state of nearly 9.5 million people and is the first person from a major political party to be elected to a third straight term in more than six decades, succeeding two-term Democrat Phil Murphy.

She swept to victory over her Trump-endorsed GOP rival in part by pinning blame for high costs on the president's tariffs and promising that her first action once in office would be to order a freeze on skyrocketing utility rates.

She will be sworn in Newark, the state's largest city whose voters made up a key component of her winning coalition. It is a departure from previous inaugurations, which have included military artillery salutes along the Delaware River outside the statehouse in Trenton. She is being sworn in as her former congressional colleague Abigail Spanberger comes into office in a Virginia's governor after a similar double-digit victory over her Republican opponent and as the midterm elections start to come into sharper focus. Democrats are hopeful the president will be a drag on GOP candidates in key races across the country.

Murphy said Friday in his final news conference that he has been in regular touch with Sherrill about the transition. He summed up his two terms as governor as having lived up to promises he made on the campaign trail. (AP)



Sherrill

Manhunt for suspect in shooting of judge: An Indiana state court judge and his wife were in stable condition

Monday as authorities continued to search for suspects who shot the couple the day before at their Lafayette home.

Steven Meyer, a Tippecanoe Superior Court judge, suffered an injury to his arm and his wife, Kimberly Meyer, had a hip injury from the attack, authorities said.

Officers responded Sunday afternoon to a report of a shooting in the residential area about 60 miles (96 kilometers) northwest of Indianapolis to find the couple injured. They were treated for their wounds, and officers recovered shell casings from the scene.

Lafayette Police said the investigation remains active and involves local, state and federal agencies. They have not released a motive or suspect description.

Mayor Tony Roswarski assured the community that every available resource was being used to apprehend the person or people responsible for what he called "this senseless unacceptable act of violence."

Kimberly Meyer said in a statement Monday that she has "great confidence" in investigators and is grateful to the officers and medical professionals who helped her and her husband. The shooting had other Indiana judges worried for their safety, with state Supreme Court Chief Justice Loretta H. Rush urging them to "please remain vigilant in your own security." (AP)

□ □ □

FAA urges pilots to exercise caution: The Federal Aviation Administration on Friday urged US aircraft operators to "exercise caution" when flying over the eastern Pacific Ocean near Mexico, Central America and parts of South America, citing "military activities" and possible satellite navigation interference.

The warning was issued in a series of Notices to Airmen (NOTAMs) issued by the FAA. They say, "Potential risks exist for aircraft at all altitudes, including during overflight and the arrival and departure phases of flight." The alerts are in effect for 60 days. Such notices are issued routinely in any region where there are hostilities nearby.

The notices come after nearly four months of US military strikes against boats in the Caribbean Sea and the eastern Pacific that the U.S. alleged were trafficking drugs. That campaign included 35 known strikes that killed at least 115 people, according to the Trump administration. (AP)

□ □ □



This image taken from video provided by WZZM shows part of a severe multi-car pileup leading Michigan State Police to shut down an interstate south of Grand Rapids on Jan 19, in Ottawa County, Mich. (AP)

100 vehicles pile up in Michigan crash as snowstorm moves across US

More than 100 vehicles smashed into each other or slid off an interstate in Michigan on Monday as snow fueled by the Great Lakes blanketed the state.

The massive pileup prompted the Michigan State Police to close both directions of Interstate 196 Monday morning just southwest of Grand Rapids while officials worked to remove all the vehicles, including more than 30 semitrailer trucks. The State Police said there were numerous injuries, but no deaths had been reported.

Pedro Mata Jr. said he could barely see the cars in front of him as the snow blew across the road while driving 20-25 mph (32-40 kph) before the crash. He was able to stop his pickup safely, but then decided to pull his truck off the road into the median to avoid being hit from behind. "It was a little scary just listening to everything, the bangs and booms behind you. I saw what was in front of me. I couldn't see what was behind me exactly," Mata said. (AP)

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People march during a pro-Greenlanders demonstration, in Copenhagen, Denmark on Jan 17. (AP)



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portional."

Trump has insisted the US needs the territory for security reasons against possible threats from China and Russia. Earlier Tuesday, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said America's relations with Europe remain strong and urged trading partners to "take a deep breath" and let tensions driven by the new tariff threats over Greenland "play out."

"I think our relations have never been closer," he said.

The American leader's threats have

sparked outrage and a flurry of diplomatic activity across Europe, as leaders consider possible countermeasures, including retaliatory tariffs and the first-ever use of the European Union's anti-coercion instrument.

Also:

COPENHAGEN, Denmark: Red baseball caps spoofing Donald Trump's iconic MAGA hats have become a symbol of Danish and Greenlandic defiance against the US president's threat to seize the frozen territory.

The caps reading "Make America Go Away" - parodying Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan - have gained popularity along with several variants on social media and at public protests, including a weekend demonstration held in freezing weather in the Danish capital.

European governments are rallying behind Denmark, citing the need to defend Arctic regions and warning that threats against Greenland undermine Western security. Protesters, however, are less diplomatic.

"I want to show my support to Greenland and also show that I don't like the president of the United States," said 76-year-old Copenhagen resident Lars Hermansen, who wore one of the red caps at a protest Saturday.

The mock hats were created by Copenhagen vintage clothing store owner Jesper Rabe Tonnesen. Early batches

flipped last year - until the Trump administration recently escalated its rhetoric over Greenland. Now they are popping up everywhere.

Demand suddenly surged from a

trickle to selling out in the space of one weekend. Tonnesen said he has now ordered "several thousand."

The original version designed by Tonnesen featured a play on words:

"Nu det NUUK!" - a twist on the Danish phrase "Nu det nok," meaning

"Now it's enough," substituting Nuuk,

Greenland's tiny capital.

Europe

Le Pen faces crucial Paris appeals trial: French far-right leader Marine Le Pen's political future hangs in the balance at an appeals trial in Paris, which may damage her party's ambitions of radically changing France's direction through anti-immigration and nationalist policies.

Le Pen will answer the judges' questions for two days starting Tuesday as she seeks to overturn a March ruling that found her guilty of misusing European Parliament funds in the wake of a massive corruption scandal.

She was given a five-year ban from holding elected office, two years of house arrest with an electronic bracelet and a further two-year suspension.

Here's why the appeals trial could significantly impact France's landscape:

If she's able to run, Le Pen, 57, is expected to be among top contenders in the 2027 presidential election, possibly the front-runner, according to opinion polls.

She finished runner-up to Emmanuel Macron in 2017 and 2022, making her one of the most experienced senior politicians in the country. (AP)



Le Pen

at half staff on Tuesday as the nation began three days of mourning for the victims of the deadly train accident in the country's south, while emergency crews continued to pull bodies from the wreckage.

The official death toll of Sunday's accident rose to 41 by Tuesday morning, after Spanish Transport Minister Óscar Puente Santiago said that another corpse had been discovered when a crane lifted a damaged carriage.

Officials have repeatedly warned that that death count may rise, with emergency workers still probing for bodies among what Andalusian regional president Juanma Moreno called "a twisted mass of metal."

Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska told Spanish national television RTVE late Monday that searchers believe they have found three more bodies still trapped in the wreckage. It is not clear if those bodies are included in the official count. (AP)

□ □ □

Russia batters Ukraine's power grid again: Russia bombarded Ukraine with more than 300 drones and ballistic and cruise missiles in its latest nighttime attack on the Ukrainian power grid. President Volodymyr Zelensky said Tuesday, as Moscow gives no public sign that it's willing to end the invasion of its neighbor anytime soon.

The attack knocked out heating to more than 5,600 apartment buildings in the capital, Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said. Nearly 80% of the affected buildings had recently had their heating supply restored after a major Russian barrage on Jan. 9 that plunged thousands of people into a dayslong

blackout, he said. (AP)

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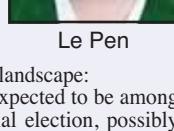
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Le Pen

Trump slams UK deal to hand over Chagos Islands

LONDON, Jan 20, (AP): A startled British government on Tuesday defended its decision to hand sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius, after US President Donald Trump attacked the plan, which his administration had previously supported.

Trump said that relinquishing the remote Indian Ocean archipelago, home to a strategically important American naval and bomber base, was an act of stupidity that shows why he needs to take over Greenland.

"Shockingly, our 'brilliant' NATO Ally, the United Kingdom, is currently planning to give away the Island of Diego Garcia, the site of a vital US Military Base, to Mauritius, and to do so FOR NO REASON WHATSOEVER," he said in a post on his social media platform Truth Social. "There is no doubt that China and Russia have noticed this act of total weakness."

The blast from Trump was a rebuff to efforts by Prime Minister Keir Starmer to calm tensions over Greenland and patch up a frayed trans-Atlantic relationship. Starmer on Monday called Trump's statements about taking over Greenland "completely wrong," but called for the rift to be "resolved through calm discussion."

The United Kingdom and Mauritius signed a deal in May to give Mauritius sovereignty over the Chagos Islands after two centuries under British control, though the UK will lease back Diego Garcia where the US base is located, for at least 99 years.

Bulgaria's left-leaning president Rumen Radev stepping down

SOFIA, Bulgaria, Jan 20, (AP): Bulgaria's left-leaning president Rumen Radev announced on Monday that he is stepping down from the mostly ceremonial post.

INTERNATIONAL

Asia

ASEAN won't endorse election in Myanmar – Malaysia: The Association of Southeast Asian Nations will not endorse elections in military-ruled Myanmar, Malaysia's foreign minister said Tuesday, citing concerns over the lack of inclusive and free participation.

Myanmar's military-backed political party appeared headed for a parliamentary majority after the second round of voting earlier this month in the country's first general election since the army ousted a civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021. The takeover triggered widespread opposition that has grown into a civil war.

Human rights and opposition groups say the polls were neither free nor fair and are an effort by the military to legitimize its rule.

Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan told Parliament that ASEAN leaders decided at their summit in October not to send observers to Myanmar because conditions for a credible election were not met, though some member countries chose to do so individually. Myanmar's Information Ministry said last month that ASEAN members Cambodia and Vietnam were among several nations that sent observers.

Mohamad Hasan said ASEAN has made clear that the election must be conducted with comprehensive and free participation, rather than being held in phases or under restrictive conditions that bar certain candidates. (AP)

N.Korea's Kim fires vice PM over factory failures: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has dismissed a vice premier over troubles in a factory modernization project, an apparent move to tighten discipline among officials and push them to deliver greater results ahead of a major political conference.

The upcoming ruling Workers' Party congress, the first of its kind in five years, is one of North Korea's biggest propaganda spectacles and is intended to review past projects, establish new political and economic priorities and reshuffle officials.

The Korean Central News Agency reported Tuesday that Kim blamed Yang Sung Ho, a vice premier in charge of the machine-building industry, for causing "unnecessary man-made confusion" in works to modernize the Ryongsong Machine Complex in the northeast.



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, center, visits the Ryongsong Machine Complex in North Korea on Jan 19. (AP)

In a Monday speech marking the completion of the complex's first-stage modernization plan, Kim said the project suffered "not a small amount of economic loss" because of irresponsible and incompetent officials. Kim said he had already criticized Yang over related issues during a party meeting in December and watched him closely, but found that he felt no sense of responsibility at all, KCNA said.

"To speak figuratively in simpler words, he was like a goat yoked to pull an ox cart. We should see this as an incidental mistake in our practice of personnel appointment," Kim said. "Could we expect a goat to pull a cart for an ox?" (AP)

S.Korea designates Lee's stabbing incident as terrorist act: South Korea officially designated President Lee Jae Myung's stabbing incident in January 2024 as a terrorist act, multiple media outlets said Tuesday.

Prime Minister Kim Min-seok presided over the national counter-terrorism committee meeting, formally recognizing the 2024 incident as a terrorist act. It marked the first official designation since the anti-terrorism act was established in 2016.

Lee, then opposition leader of the Democratic Party, was stabbed on the left side of his neck with a modified knife by a man in his 60s who disguised himself as a supporter and approached Lee, who was visiting the construction site of the new Gadeokdo airport near the southeastern port city of Busan in January 2024.

Lee suffered laceration and damage to his internal jugular vein, and the top court finalized a 15-year prison sentence for the assailant in February 2025. (Xinhua)

Helicopter carrying 3 missing near Mt. Aso in Japan: A sightseeing helicopter carrying three people went missing near the summit of Mount Aso in Kumamoto Prefecture in southwestern Japan on Tuesday, local media reported.

The helicopter took off at 10:52 a.m. local time from the Aso Cuddy Dominion zoo in Aso City, with three people believed to be on board, including the pilot, according to public broadcaster NHK.

Around 11 a.m., an emergency call was made reporting that a smartphone's collision detection function had been activated, the report said.

Police and fire departments are searching the area near the Nakadake crater of Mt. Aso.

The helicopter was on its third sightseeing flight of the day when it went missing, and no abnormalities had been reported during the first two flights, according to the operator.

The zoo offers panoramic helicopter rides over the area, which is famed for its volcanic landscapes. (Xinhua)

5.1-magnitude quake hits Mindanao, Philippines: An earthquake with a magnitude of 5.1 jolted Mindanao, Philippines, at 1853 GMT on Monday, the GFZ German Research Centre for Geosciences said.

The epicenter, with a depth of 10.0 km, was initially determined to be at 6.43 degrees north latitude and 123.78 degrees east longitude. (Xinhua)

2 killed in collision between car, train west of Melbourne

Australia's Parliament passes anti-hate speech, gun laws after Sydney attack last month

MELBOURNE, Australia, Jan 20, (Agencies): Australia's Parliament on Tuesday passed anti-hate speech and gun laws proposed after two shooters killed 15 people at a festival in Sydney last month in an attack that authorities say was inspired by the Islamic State group.

The gun laws create new restrictions on gun ownership and create a government-funded buyback program to compensate people forced to hand in their firearms.

Anti-hate speech laws enable groups that don't fit Australia's definition of a terrorist organization, such as the Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir, to be outlawed. Hizb ut-Tahrir is already outlawed by some countries.

The government had initially planned a single bill, but separated the issues into two bills introduced to the House of Representatives on Tuesday.

Both bills initially passed the House, where the center-left Labor Party government holds a majority of seats. The firearms bill was the first to be passed by the Senate, where no party holds a majority, with a 38-to-26 vote. The anti-hate speech bill followed with a 38-to-

22 vote in the 76-seat upper chamber.

Earlier Tuesday, Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke told Parliament that alleged gunmen Sajid Akram, 50, and his 24-year-old son Naveed Akram wouldn't have been allowed to possess guns under the proposed laws.

The father, who was shot dead by police during the attack on worshippers during celebrations at Bondi Beach on Dec 14, legally owned the guns used.

His son, who was wounded, has been charged with dozens of offenses, including 15 counts of murder and one of committing a terrorist act over the attack.

Burke said that the Indian-born father would have been barred from gun ownership under the proposed laws because he wasn't an Australian citizen. The Australian-born son would also be banned, because he had come under surveillance from the Australian Security Intelligence Organization, or ASIO, spy agency in 2019 over his association with suspected extremists.

"In responding to the antisemitic terror attack, we need to deal with the motivation and we need to deal with the method," Burke told Parliament. "We are dealing with two people there who had horrific antisemitic bigotry in their minds and in their hearts. And they had weapons they should not have had."



Workers gather floral tributes, messages of support and items left as a memorial is dismantled in Sydney on Dec 22, a week after an attack on a festival that left 15 dead. (AP)

ASIO also has a role under the new anti-hate speech laws in deciding which hate groups should be outlawed. Neo-Nazi group National Socialist Network has

announced plans to disband rather than have its members targeted under the laws.

The opposition Nationals party had opposed the anti-hate speech legislation, arguing it could impinge on free speech.

"The legislation needs amendments to guarantee greater protections against unintended consequences that limit the rights and freedom of speech of everyday Australians and the community," Nationals leader David Littleproud said in a statement late Tuesday.

Parliament had been scheduled to resume for the year in February, but was brought back early to respond to Australia's worst mass shooting since 1996.

A lone shooter killed 35 people in Tasmania state that year, in a massacre that galvanized the nation into introducing tough gun laws that drastically reduced the number of rapid-fire weapons in public ownership. The government then bought back almost 700,000 guns.

But the states of Tasmania and Queensland and the Northern Territory are resisting the federal push for a new gun buyback, for which the states and territories would be expected to pay half the cost.

Burke said his government would continue to negotiate with the states and territories on the buyback.

Also:

MELBOURNE: Two people have been killed in a collision between a car and a train west of Melbourne in the Australian state of Victoria on Tuesday morning.

Emergency services were called to reports of a freight train hitting a car on a railway crossing near the small town of Cressy, 120 km west of Melbourne, on Tuesday morning.

Two occupants of the car, who have not yet been formally identified, died at the scene.

Local media reported that the freight train was carrying at least 60 carriages and the only occupants were a driver and two staff members.

Helicopter footage from the scene broadcast by Seven Network television showed the wreckage of a white vehicle rolled on its side next to the train tracks.

A police statement said that the circumstances surrounding the collision are yet to be established and are subject to an ongoing investigation.

Subcontinent

IS group claims attack on Kabul blast: The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for an explosion at a Chinese restaurant in Afghanistan's capital that killed at least seven people, including a Chinese national. The cause of the blast was still under investigation, authorities said Tuesday.

The militant group said in a statement posted on its Aamaan news agency late Monday that a suicide bomber entered a restaurant frequented by Chinese nationals in the city and detonated an explosive vest during a gathering. It said that 25 people were killed or wounded in the attack, including Taliban guards. The details couldn't be independently verified.

Afghan authorities haven't officially confirmed the cause of the explosion on Monday, and Interior Ministry spokesperson Mufti Abdul Mateen Qani said Tuesday that it was still being investigated.

The IS claim corresponded in style to previous ones issued by the group, and supporters of the militants widely shared it early Tuesday. The claim included a further threat against Chinese nationals in Afghanistan, linking the attack to China's treatment of Uyghur Muslims.

While nearly all nations pulled out of Afghanistan following the Taliban offensive of 2021 that led to them seizing Kabul, China has maintained a major economic presence in the country. Beijing has yet to diplomatically recognize Afghanistan's Taliban-run government.

On Tuesday, China advised its citizens not to travel to Afghanistan in the near term after the bombing, and asked Chinese people and companies already in the country to strengthen security measures and evacuate from high-risk areas. (AP)

Moderate earthquake kills 1 in Pakistan: A magnitude 5.8 earthquake struck northern Pakistan on Monday, killing at least one person and damaging dozens of mud-brick houses, authorities said.

In a statement, the regional Gilgit-Baltistan government said the tremors mainly caused damage across the Hunza Valley. The tremors, which were also felt in several districts in the northwest, triggered landslides in Hunza and nearby towns, blocking several roads, it said.

According to the statement, rescue teams were still collecting information on casualties and damages. The quake's epicenter was in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department.

Pakistan lies along an active seismic zone and is frequently hit by earthquakes.

A magnitude 7.6 quake in 2005 killed thousands of people in Pakistan and Kashmir, which is divided between Pakistan and India and claimed by both. (AP)

Trump threats and Bukele model on crime back Latin-American progressives into corner

MEXICO CITY, Jan 20, (AP): Latin American progressive leaders are increasingly being backed into a corner on organized crime by pressure from the Trump administration and from their own voters, who point to the results from El Salvador president's war on gangs.

The hunger for a more heavy-handed response to endemic problems has been mounting for years in Latin America. El Salvador President Nayib Bukele's punitive tactics launched against his country's gangs in 2022, resulted in a sharp decline in homicides and soaring approval by Salvadoreans.

Bukele not only touts the success at home, but has also looked to export his approach, winning fans among voters and conservative populists across the hemisphere, including US President Donald Trump.

Over the past year, Trump has taken a more confrontational approach toward Latin America than any U.S. president in recent history. He's declared a slew of Latin American criminal groups foreign terrorist organizations, deposed former Venezuela President Nicolás Maduro for trial on drug-trafficking charges, threatened military action on an array of countries and pointed to Bukele as an example of what he wants to see for the rest of the region.

That ratcheted up pressure on more progressive administrations in Mexico, Colombia and Guatemala that had pitched more holistic solutions to en-



El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele speaks at the National Palace as he hosts a meeting with US congresspeople in San Salvador, El Salvador on Jan 19. (AP)

demic problems, like rooting out corruption and offering youth economic opportunities.

Guatemala President Bernardo Arévalo was the latest to feel that pressure when suspected gang members killed 10 police officers in apparent retaliation for the government denying privileges to imprisoned gang leaders.

On Sunday evening, he declared a state of emergency curtailing some constitutional rights.

"The mix of growing U.S. pressure and the rightward reference of Bukele that gives an answer to security issues

stay in place for 30 days to combat the gangs, which he described as "violent criminals who commit acts of terrorism." The declaration can limit some constitutional rights like the freedoms of movement, gathering and protest, and was approved by Guatemala's congress Monday night.

"We will spare no resources to punish, to pursue, to find those responsible for these crimes," Arévalo said in a speech Monday at the funeral of the officers.

Arévalo's move echoed actions taken by his neighbor Bukele in 2022. El Salvador's state of emergency remains in place nearly four years later and more than 90,000 Salvadorans have been arrested under it, fueling accusations of human rights abuses. But the country recorded just 82 homicides in 2025, compared to 6,656 in 2015.

Arévalo is just the latest leader in Latin America to take a page out of Bukele's book, following in the footsteps of Ecuador, Honduras and Costa Rica, which just last week broke ground on a prison modeled after El Salvador's infamous prison for alleged gang members.

But efforts to piggyback on Bukele's political success have largely fallen flat even as the region experiences a rightward political shift. That is in part because many leaders are hesitant to go as far as Bukele, who has detained more than 1% of his country's population and is regularly criticized for what civil society groups describe as authoritarian tendencies.

Sheinbaum reassures Mexico after US army movements spark concern

MEXICO CITY, Jan 20, (AP): Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum quelled concerns on Monday about two recent movements of the US military in the vicinity of Mexico that have the country on edge since the attack on Venezuela.

On Friday, the US Federal Aviation Administration urged US aircraft operators to "exercise caution" when flying over the eastern Pacific Ocean near Mexico, Central America and parts of South America, citing "military activities."

The president said her administration waited a couple hours until the US government provided "written" assurance that there would not be any US military flights over Mexican territory. She said the US government had not given Mexico a heads up about any military operations.

The US government provided precise coordinates for where it was operating and Mexican authorities issued a statement saying the FAA advisory had no implications for Mexico.

Then, images of a US military transport airplane on the tarmac at Toluca's airport about 39 miles (63 kilometers) west of Mexico City began circulating on social media.

Sen. Clemente Castañeda, of the opposition Citizen Movement party, posted on social platform X asking for an explanation from the government, because Mexico's senate is supposed to approve sending Mexican troops abroad or allowing foreign troops into Mexico.

Sheinbaum described it as a "logistical" operation that did not require senate approval.

"The United States plane landed, public servants got on that plane and they went (to the US) for training," Sheinbaum said. "Who authorized this? The Secretary of Defense."

Her security cabinet had posted on X Sunday night that such training operations "occur in conformity with established protocols and in adherence to the bilateral collaboration agreements."

Both events highlighted the sensitivity created by not only the Trump administration's unilateral action to capture Venezuela's then-President Nicolás Maduro earlier this month, but the subsequent renewal of offers and threats to take direct military action against the drug cartels in Mexico.

Sheinbaum and Trump spoke again last week on the subject. Both governments continue to say they will collaborate on security issues, with Mexico emphasizing that it will not accept violations of its sovereignty.

Africa

CAR confirms Touadéra's election win: The Central African Republic's Constitutional Council on Monday confirmed President Faustin-Archange Touadéra's victory in last month's election, granting him a third term and rejecting an appeal by the opposition alleging widespread fraud and other irregularities.

The body announced that President Touadéra secured 77.9% of the vote, a modest increase from the 76.15% reported in the provisional results earlier this month. His main challenger and runner-up, Anicet Georges Dologué, received 13.1%, down slightly from the 14.66% previously announced.

The council also dismissed an appeal to annul the election filed by Dologué earlier this month.

The main opposition candidate had contested the results on Jan. 6, citing instances of alleged malpractice by the National Elections Authority and widespread fraud.

Dologué earlier this month proclaimed himself the winner of the election. (AP)

Ugandan opp'n figure Besigye's health failing: The health of jailed Ugandan opposition figure Kizza Besigye is failing, his party said on Tuesday, after he was driven overnight to a medical facility in the capital of Kampala.

Besigye's health "has reached a critical and deteriorating state," the People's Front for Freedom said in a statement that also demanded unrestricted access to Besigye by his personal doctors and family.

Besigye, a veteran politician who was Uganda's most prominent opposition figure before the rise of Bobi Wine, is being detained in a maximum-security jail in Kampala. He is set to

Kuwait oil price down to \$60.73 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti crude oil went down by 36 cents to USD 60.73 per barrel (pb) on Monday, compared to USD 61.09 pb the previous day, said Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Tuesday.

In global markets, Brent crude futures rose by one cent to USD 64.14 pb, and US West Texas Intermediate crude futures settled at USD 59.44 pb.

Record recruitment figures, rising Kuwaitization rates, and increased Kuwaiti talent development programs

National Bank of Kuwait accelerates national talent growth in 2025

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: In a year marked by accelerating digital transformation and intensifying competition for specialized skills, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) distinguished itself as a leading force in attracting, empowering, and developing national talent. Throughout 2025, the bank significantly strengthened its workforce through new hires, achieved tangible progress in its Kuwaitization rates, and expanded its investments in developing the next generation of local competencies, particularly in digital and technical fields.

This strategic momentum reflects NBK's deep commitment to supporting Kuwait's national agenda, strengthening the participation of national talent in the private sector, and building a future-ready workforce capable of leading the banking sector through innovation.

An Exceptional Year in Talent Attraction

The Group Human Resources - Talent Acquisition Department delivered one of its strongest performances to date, further affirming NBK's position as the employer of choice for ambitious national talent. During the year, the Bank participated in six major job fairs across Kuwait, enabling meaningful engagement with thousands of job seekers, showcasing its diverse career pathways, and highlighting its expanding opportunities in cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and data analysis, reflecting its strong focus on innovation and digital transformation.

These events played a key role in attracting the top national competencies and talents to NBK, building a strong pipeline of qualified candidates to support its digital transformation strategy, and reinforcing its presence among graduates and young professionals seeking meaningful career opportunities within the financial sector.

Moreover, NBK's participation in these events generated strong interest, with the Bank receiving more than 8,000 CVs in 2025, underscoring the high level of trust and confidence the Kuwaiti community places in NBK as a leading employer and talent destination.

A Bigger and More Diverse Workforce

From this extensive pool of applicants, NBK recruited 249 new employees during the year, marking a notable increase and reaffirming its commitment to strengthening its capabilities in line with evolving market demands.

Most notably, Kuwaiti nationals accounted for 90% of these new hires, reflecting NBK's leadership in supporting national employment and providing sustainable career opportunities for Kuwaitis.

More specifically, the Bank's recruitment strategy focused on attracting talent in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), with 68 new hires in these vital disciplines. These additions strengthen the Bank's capabilities in cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, data science and analytics, software engineering, and digital product development. They also play a pivotal role in advancing NBK's digital transformation journey, enabling continued innovation and



Gadeer Al Kooheji

Al Kooheji:

- National competencies and talents accounted for 90% of new recruits.
- Localization rates rose to 76.8%, ranking among the highest in the banking sector.
- NBK received more than 8,000 CVs, resulting in 249 new hires.
- A total of 68 new recruits joined in the fields of science and technology (STEM).
- In 2025, the Bank further strengthened its workforce by attracting top national talent.
- We will continue to support Kuwait's strategic agenda and expand national employment in the private sector.



A group photo of the new employees in 2025 with the bank's executive management.

the delivery of enhanced banking experiences.

Higher Kuwaitization Rates

One of NBK's most notable achievements in 2025 was raising its Kuwaitization rate to 76.8% of its total workforce, placing it among the highest in the banking sector.

This achievement reflects the Bank's commitment to supporting Kuwait's vision of increasing national participations in the private sector and underscores its conviction that national talent is the cornerstone of its long-term success and sustainability.

By prioritizing local recruitment, NBK contributes to strengthening Kuwait's economic development and building a workforce that embodies the values and aspirations of the local community.

On this occasion, Gadeer Al Kooheji, VP-Head of Talent Acquisition, commented on the Bank's achievements in attracting and developing talent during 2025, stating:

"At NBK, we are deeply proud of the tangible progress we have achieved this year in attracting national talent and enhancing our Kuwaitization rates, reflecting our firm commitment to supporting Kuwait's vision and empowering the country's youth. We have witnessed a strong interest from outstanding candidates, and through our participation in major job fairs, we have been able to attract a select group of high-caliber talents who represent a valuable addition to the Bank".

"The achievement of a Kuwaitization rate of 76.8%, alongside the recruitment of 249 new employees, 90% of whom are Kuwaiti nationals, underscores the success of our strategy in building a national workforce capable of shaping the future of the banking sector. Moreover, the recruitment of 68 professionals in STEM disciplines strengthens our readiness for digital transformation and reinforces our competitive edge across technical and digital domains," Al Kooheji added:

"We continue to invest in human capital through advanced training programs, leadership development pathways, and specialized academies, firmly believing that national talent is the cornerstone of realizing our future vision and reinforcing

the Bank's leadership position, both locally and regionally," Al Kooheji concluded.

Developing the Next Generation of Leaders

It is worth noting that NBK's employment strategy goes beyond recruitment to encompass sustained investment in the development of its employees through comprehensive training programs, structured leadership pathways, and specialized academies, designed to equip Kuwaiti talents with world-class skills.

The Bank's development ecosystem includes foundational programs for new graduates, leadership tracks for high-potential employees, specialized academies in cybersecurity, data and digital transformation, as well as training initiatives delivered in collaboration with leading global institutions.

A National Workforce Spearheading the Digital Transformation Journey

As the pace of digital transformation accelerates, NBK recognizes that its long-term success is fundamentally anchored in the strength of its human capital. This is why attracting STEM talent represents a strategic priority in building an integrated ecosystem capable of driving digital innovation and strengthening cybersecurity.

By embedding these advanced disciplines across all its operations, NBK continues to consolidate its position as one of the region's leading banks in delivering best-in-class cutting-edge financial solutions.

A Solid Foundation for the Future

NBK's recruitment achievements in 2025 reflect more than strong numbers; they represent a long-term vision centered on national development, innovation, and sustainable growth. The Bank's success in attracting and nurturing Kuwaiti talent underscores its capacity to shape the future of the financial sector and support Kuwait's broader economic objectives.

With the continued expansion of its national workforce, rising Kuwaitization rates, and the growth of its development programs, NBK remains firmly on its path to building a solid foundation for the future, anchored in empowering national youth, creating meaningful career opportunities, and cultivating the next generation of banking leaders.

Main market leads gains

Boursa Kuwait closes higher on Tuesday

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait ended Tuesday's session with its general index advancing 25.45 points, or 0.29 percent, to close at 8,847.48 points. Trading activity reached a total of 345.6 million shares through 19,897 cash transactions, valued at KD 92.3 million (approximately USD 281.5 million).

The Main Market Index recorded a strong performance, climbing 85.17 points, or 1.04 percent, to settle at 8,237.85 points. This came on the back of 156.13 million shares traded through 9,652 transactions, with a turnover of KD 26.2 million (around USD 79.9 million).

Calls grow for tighter oversight of listed companies

Experts urge swift action to protect small shareholders

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: A number of financial, accounting, and legal experts called for the quick implementation of all necessary measures by regulatory bodies in cases of suspected irregularities involving companies listed on the Boursa Kuwait, before their delisting, to protect small shareholders from losing their investments.

Dr. Sadiq Al-Bassam, Head of the Accounting Department at Kuwait University and an economic expert, emphasized the importance of protecting small shareholders, who are the most affected by the delisting of companies due to administrative violations.

He explained that many small shareholders borrowed from banks to purchase shares or invested all their savings, which could ultimately result in severe consequences for some such as imprisonment. On the other hand, large investors have mechanisms to manage their losses and absorb risks. Such situations discourage small shareholders from participating in trading altogether.

Dr. Al-Bassam stressed the importance of following the practices of the Ministry of Social Affairs, which replaces the boards of directors in consumer cooperative societies when manipulation or fraud is proven, referring the convicted parties to the Public

Prosecution, and allowing the cooperative societies to continue operating until a new board is elected.

He advised small shareholders to review a company's record and history before purchasing shares, emphasizing the importance of avoiding the temptation to buy shares priced at 40, 50, or 100 fils simply because of their low value, and recommended investing in companies with a solid market reputation.

Meanwhile, Lawyer Ali Al-Attar, who specializes in financial and money laundering cases, stated that many small shareholders have suffered losses due to placing excessive trust in some company boards of directors without proper scrutiny.

He stressed that small shareholders often lack the experience and awareness to detect fraudulent practices employed by certain boards, and called for stronger oversight of listed companies through strict enforcement of relevant laws.

Lawyer Al-Attar emphasized the importance of continuous monitoring to ensure companies comply with their articles of incorporation.

He highlighted the need to audit company capital to verify it is used for the purposes stipulated in the articles, noting that some companies have deviated from their stated objectives by investing in unauthorized entities or registering company assets in the names of foreign parties.

Lawyer Al-Attar also stressed the importance of

taking legal action against companies suspected of wrongdoing before their boards resolve violations illegally through reshuffling or appointing other executives, thereby avoiding accountability for those involved in the violations.

In addition, financial analyst and gold expert Salah Al-Jumaz emphasized the need to amend stock market regulations to prevent small shareholders from bearing losses caused by the delisting of companies that violate the law.

He highlighted the importance of implementing smart regulations to monitor illegal practices, which not only harm company assets and lead to delisting but also result in losses for small shareholders.

Al-Jumaz explained that some companies are managed arbitrarily, without adherence to regulations. When an executive commits violations that could result in delisting of the company,

some shareholders or partners offer friendly advice instead of holding the executive accountable. This approach is wrong, as laws must be enforced immediately in cases of suspicion to protect both assets and small shareholders.

The most effective way to safeguard assets and shareholders' rights is to establish a precise internal control system within the company to detect manipulation or financial and administrative violations by senior executives at an early stage.



Ali-Attar



Al-Jumaz

Kuwait hosts IMF-API event on boosting competitiveness

DUBAI, Jan 20: The International Monetary Fund-Middle East Center for Economics and Finance and The Arab Planning Institute in Kuwait co-organized a high-level event on boosting competitiveness in the Arab World.

The IMF-Middle East Center for Economics and Finance (IMF-CEF), in partnership with the Arab Planning Institute Kuwait (API), co-organized a high-level event titled "Boosting Competitiveness in the Arab Region: Industrial Policy vs. Structural Reforms." This hybrid event convened experts from the IMF, academia, and policymakers from the region, and hybrid audience comprising representatives from the public and private sectors, civil

society, international organizations, the press, and the diplomatic community. Dr. Belkacem Laabas, Senior Advisor at API, moderated the event.

Following a welcome speech by Dr. Walid Abdumoula, the Deputy Director of the API, Dr. Sami Ben Naceur, Director of the IMF-CEF, opened the event by underscoring its aim: to advance an open and policy-relevant discussion on how Arab countries can strengthen competitiveness amid persistent productivity challenges, limited economic diversification, and a rapidly shifting global environment. The session featured brief presentations examining the effectiveness of industrial policies rela-

tive to broader structural reforms, drawing on long-run development perspectives (Dr. Giovanni Federico, New York University Abu Dhabi), regional policy and development-finance experience (Dr. Mahmoud-Sami Nabi, Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development), and frontier research on innovation and industrial policy (Dr. Sandra Baquie, IMF). A panel discussion followed, featuring insights from the presenters and addressing audience questions.

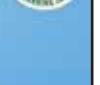
Dr. Belkacem Laabas thanked IMF-CEF and API for co-organizing this timely event. He also thanked the panelists and audience members for their insightful and lively discussions.

Boosting Competitiveness in the Arab Region: Industrial Policy vs. Structural Reforms

Monday, January 16, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. (Kuwait Time)
In English with Arabic Interpretation



CEF



Arab Planning Institute



Sami Ben Naceur
Director, IMF-CEF



Belkacem Laabas
Senior Advisor, Arab Planning Institute



Giovanni Federico
Professor, NYU Abu Dhabi



Mahmoud-Sami Nabi
Head of Studies & Research, Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development



Sandra Baquie
Economist, IMF-RES

As part of its efforts to promote sustainability standards and deliver an enhanced customer experience

Gulf Bank reopens Al-Sabahiya branch following comprehensive renovation

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: As part of its ongoing efforts to promote sustainability standards and deliver an enhanced customer experience, Gulf Bank has reopened its Al-Sabahiya branch following a comprehensive renovation.

The Al-Sabahiya branch is the first Gulf Bank branch to be renovated in the southern regions as part of the second phase of the bank's branch development plan. The plan includes the renovation of several branches, namely Al-Ghazali, Al-Zahraa, Abdullah Al-Salem Suburb, Al-Shaab, Al-Jabriya, Al-Nuzha, Hawalli, Al-Adailiya and Al-Fanar, in addition to the opening of a new branch in the Sabah Al-Ahmad Residential Area. This initiative aligns with the bank's five-year strategy and Kuwait Vision 2035, which aims to transition toward a sustainable economy and reduce carbon emissions.

On this occasion, Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking Services at Gulf Bank, **Mr. Basel Al-Assad**, stated that the renovated branches feature modern designs and fast, advanced banking services. He noted that the bank has been keen to implement the latest technologies to serve customers in line with the significant global developments in banking services.

He added: "The new branches are designed to



Basel Al-Assad

Al-Assad

■ Renovated Branches Feature Modern Design and Advanced, Fast Banking Services



Gulf Bank provides a distinctive customer experience in its branches.

provide greater comfort, convenience and speed for customers, while also being sustainable and environmentally friendly, in line with green building standards. These standards aim to reduce electricity consumption through the use of

solar panels, increased reliance on natural lighting, and smart sensors to optimize energy usage. Selected branches also offer electric vehicle charging stations, in addition to expanded green spaces both inside and outside the branches."

Mr. Al-Assad further explained that Gulf Bank operates under a clear strategy focused on continuously enhancing the customer experience, whether through the bank's mobile application – considered among the easiest, fastest and best in the banking sector – or through branch visits, ATM services, as well as the modernization of the customer service center and the interactive voice response (IVR) system.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading bank in Kuwait by fostering an inclusive and diverse workplace that empowers its employees to deliver exceptional customer service, while remaining committed to serving the community in a sustainable manner. Through its extensive branch network and innovative digital services, the bank offers customers the flexibility to choose how and where they conduct their banking transactions, ensuring a smooth and efficient banking experience.

In support of Kuwait Vision 2035, "New Kuwait," and in cooperation with various stakeholders to achieve its objectives, Gulf Bank remains committed to driving impactful developments in sustainability across environmental, social and governance (ESG) dimensions through a range of strategically selected initiatives, both within and beyond the bank.

Populist talk, elite backdrop

Trump takes affordability pitch to billionaire Davos

WASHINGTON, Jan 20, (AP): President Donald Trump plans to use a key address Wednesday to try to convince Americans he can make housing more affordable, but he's picked a strange backdrop for the speech: a Swiss mountain town where ski chalets for vacations cost a cool \$4.4 million.

On the anniversary of his inauguration, Trump is flying to the World Economic Forum in Davos – an annual gathering of the global elite – where he may see many of the billionaires he has surrounded himself with during his first year back in the White House.

Trump had campaigned on lowering the cost of living, painting himself as a populist while serving fries at a McDonald's drive-thru. But in office, his public schedules suggest he's traded the Golden Arches for a gilded age, devoting more time to court-vetting the wealthy than talking directly to his working-class base.

"At the end of the day, it's the investors and billionaires at Davos who have his attention, not the families struggling to afford their bills," said Alex Jacquez, chief of policy and advocacy at Groundwork Collaborative, a liberal think tank.

Trump's attention in his first year back has been less on pocketbook issues and more fixed on foreign policy with conflicts in Gaza, Ukraine and Venezuela. He is now bent on acquiring Greenland to the chagrin of European allies – a headline likely to dominate his time in Davos, overshadowing his housing ideas.

Trump noted the Europeans' resistance, telling reporters Monday night, "Let's put it this way: It's going to be a very interesting Davos."

The White House has tried to shift Trump's focus to affordability issues, a response to warning signs in the polls in a year where control of Congress is at stake in midterm elections.

About six in 10 U.S. adults now say that Trump has hurt the cost of living, according to the latest survey by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. It's an issue even among Republicans, who have said Trump's work on the economy hasn't lived up to their expectations. Only 16% say Trump has helped "a lot" on making things more affordable, down from 49% in April 2024, when an AP-NORC poll asked Americans the same question about his first term.

The president is banking on investment commitments from billionaires and foreign nations to create a jobs boom, even as his broad tariffs have crimped the labor market and spurred inflation. Trump supporters who attend his rallies – which the president resumed last month – are left to trust that Trump's business ties can eventually help them.

This strategy carries political risks. Voters are more interested in the economy they're experiencing in their own lives than in Trump's relationships with billionaires, said Frank Luntz, the Republican-affiliated pollster and strategist.

"If you're asking me, 'Are billionaires popular?' The answer is no – and they've haven't been for some time," said Luntz, who last year identified "affordability" as a defining issue for voters.

Since Trump's first term in 2017, the wealthiest 0.1% of Americans have seen their wealth increase by \$11.98 trillion to \$23.46 trillion, according to the Federal Reserve.

The magnitude of those gains dwarfs what the bottom 50% of households – the majority of the country – received during the same period. Their net worth rose by \$2.94 trillion, roughly one-fourth what the top 0.1% got.

One of the biggest concerns for voters is the cost of housing. In recent weeks, Trump has floated proposals like reducing interest rates on home loans by buying \$200 billion in mortgage debt and banning large financial companies from buying homes. Yet those efforts would do lit-

tle to address the core problem in the housing market: a multi-year shortfall in home construction and home prices that have generally risen faster than wages.

Trump regularly points to the investments made by the wealthy and powerful as signs of economic growth to come. To encourage billionaires to deliver, Trump in his first year pursued policies on artificial intelligence and financial regulation that can benefit the wealthy, along with tax cuts, reduced IRS enforcement and fewer regulatory burdens for large-scale investments.

"Most billionaires don't share the interests of the working class," said Darrell West, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution who has written about the "wealthification" of U.S. politics. "The ultrawealthy love tax cuts and deregulation, and those preferences make it difficult for government to provide the help that working class people want."

Trump has been trying to sell tax breaks on tips and overtime pay from what is known as the "One Big Beautiful Bill" as benefiting workers. But a Congressional Budget Office analysis indicated that middle-class families may only see savings of \$800 to \$1,200 a year, on average, while the top 10% of earners would receive \$13,600. A separate analysis by the Tax Policy Center, a think tank, said those earning above \$1 million would save on average \$66,510 this year.

Trump regularly holds public events with the wealthy and powerful at the White House and beyond. He jetted to the Middle East and Asia with billionaires in tow as he had foreign countries announce investment commitments, promising that the money would flow down into factory jobs for the middle class.

At a September dinner with tech billionaires, Trump said it was an honor to be surrounded by the likes of Bill Gates, Tim Cook, Sergey Brin and Mark Zuckerberg.

"There's never been anything like it," Trump said. "The most brilliant people are gathered around this table. This is definitely a high-IQ group and I'm very proud of them."

The White House said the previous Biden administration had alienated the business community to the detriment of the economy. "President Trump's pro-growth policies and friendly relationships with industry titans, on the other hand, are securing trillions in investments that are creating jobs and opportunities for everyday Americans," White House spokesman Kush Desai said.

Last month, Trump celebrated a charitable contribution of \$6.25 billion to the "Trump" investment accounts for children by Michael Dell. It was a chance to talk about economic inequality – but also another opportunity for Trump to showcase his relationship with billionaires.

Trump takes phone calls from billionaires and CEOs to chat about business, politics and interests such as his planned White House ballroom. He regularly peppers his speeches with shoutouts to Nvidia founder Jensen Huang, whose net worth was estimated by Forbes at roughly \$162 billion as of Sunday.

He's installed billionaires in his inner circle such as Commerce Secretary Hodan Lutnick (net worth: \$3.3 billion) and Special Envoy Steve Witoff (net worth: \$2 billion). He put Elon Musk (net worth: \$780 billion) in charge of slashing government payrolls before a dramatic falling-out and, later, a public reconciliation.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt at a briefing last month portrayed Trump's own status as a billionaire as a positive for him with voters.

"I think it's one of the many reasons they reelected him back to this office, because he's a businessman who understands the economy and knows how to fix it," she said.

Kuwait reforms aim to attract sustained foreign investment to capital market: Minister Al-Ajeel

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Davos – Kuwait's Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalifa Abdullah Al-Ajeel said on Tuesday that regulatory and legislative reforms have strengthened the competitiveness of the Kuwaiti economy and improved the appeal of its capital market to foreign investors.

Speaking on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Al-Ajeel said foreign investors were not new to Kuwait, noting that a series of government-led reforms had directly supported the development of the Kuwait Stock Exchange and reinforced investor confidence.

Foreign trading activity in the market has grown at an average annual rate of around 9%, while the value of foreign ownership has increased by approximately 18% over the past



Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalifa Al-Ajeel.

two years, reflecting sustained confidence in the Kuwaiti economy, the minister said.

He added that Kuwait's capital

market development is being pursued through a comprehensive approach, starting with infrastructure upgrades and regulatory reforms, alongside

the introduction of new market tools and financial instruments, as well as enhanced technological capabilities.

Al-Ajeel said Kuwait continues to advance legislative reforms aimed at removing obstacles for investors, including unified licensing procedures and updated regulations for digital trade, aligned with international best practices.

He also called for closer coordination among Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, including the adoption of unified risk-hedging policies to address global political and economic uncertainty. The minister said the reforms form part of a broader strategy to support long-term investment flows, strengthen market resilience and position Kuwait's financial markets as a key driver of sustainable economic growth.

Saudi Arabia leads GCC IPOs despite decline

GCC IPO market contracts sharply in 2025

By KAMCO Invest

After witnessing healthy primary market activity in 2024, the GCC equity markets witnessed a sharp contraction in IPOs during 2025 mainly led by a slowdown in big-ticket offerings as well as a slide in TASI, especially during Q4-2025. GCC exchanges witnessed a total of 42 IPOs during 2025 which was the lowest in four years. At the country level, Saudi Arabia once again accounted for the biggest pie of offerings during the year followed by the UAE, although both these regions witnessed a y-o-y decline in the number of offerings. The decline also came after the GCC region lagged behind other global financial markets by registering one of the lowest comparable index gains during the year. The underperformance of the MSCI GCC index with a marginal gain of 1.6% in 2025 and TASI down by 12.8% during the year, reflected several factors including continued geopolitical issues in the region that added an additional risk premium for international investors, a sharp decline in oil prices that affected projects market awards during the year as well as shift in capital to other global markets that showed significantly higher gains led by a rally in AI-related stocks.

In terms of proceeds, GCC issuers raised USD 5.8 Bn during the year, the lowest in five years and a 54.8% decline as compared to proceeds of USD 14.9 Bn in 2024, based on data from Bloomberg and stock exchanges. The decline in proceeds reflected a fall in overall issuance numbers as well as a fall in USD 1 Bn plus IPOs during the year. Based on listing market cap, the total number of IPOs with a market cap of over USD 1 Bn fell from 14 IPOs in 2024 to merely 7 IPOs in 2025.

In terms of stock performance after the listing, bulk of the companies reported declines by the end of the year as against post listing gains for most IPOs in 2024. As per data as of end of year, 13 companies showed gain in share price since listing while 28 companies posted declines. The remaining one company got listed at the start of 2026. The performance of companies post listing was affected by the prevailing issues in the region in addition to concerns regarding steep valuations expected by the promoters prior to the listing. Gainers, on the other hand, reflected niche offerings in the region including in sectors like Energy, Software and Services, and Education with solid business fundamentals and future growth. Moreover, there were very few offerings during the year that were a part of the respective government's privatization efforts as compared to the previous year.

Meanwhile, the number of IPOs globally continued to see steady growth during 2025. As per data from LSEG, total IPOs reached 1,257 globally during 2025 as compared to 1,225 IPOs in 2024, registering a y-o-y volume growth of 2.6%. This was the second-lowest yearly IPO volume globally during 2025. However, total proceeds from these IPOs was a three-year high level and reached USD 146.1 Bn in 2025 as compared to USD 113.6 Bn in 2024, registering a growth of 28.6%. At the country level, US and China dominated in terms of share of total proceeds from IPOs in 2025. IPOs on US exchanges was a three-year high level and increased by 44% during 2025 to reach USD 45.7 Bn accounting for almost a third of total global IPO proceeds. On the other hand, China-domiciled IPOs witnessed an even stronger growth with an increase of 77% during the year to reach USD 25.8 Bn and accounted for 17.7% of the total proceeds. The share of GCC IPOs in total global IPO proceeds stood at 3.9% in 2025 vs. 11.4% in 2024.

Saudi Exchange dominates both IPO proceeds and deals in 2025

Saudi Arabia continued its leadership position in terms of volume of GCC IPO in 2025, as 37 out of the 42 GCC IPOs debuted on either the Nomu or the Main Market. However, IPOs in Saudi Arabia

declined y-o-y from 42 deals in 2024. Within Saudi Arabia, the Nomu – Parallel market dominated the number of issuances with 24 deals (vs. 28 deals in 2024), as compared to 13 deals for the Main Market (vs. 14 Main Market IPOs in 2024). However, both the market segments registered a y-o-y decline in volumes during 2025 as compared to 2024. In terms of IPO proceeds, Saudi Arabia overtook UAE in 2025 with total IPO proceeds of USD 4.2 Bn during the year a marginal increase from USD 4.1 Bn in 2024 and the increase came despite a decline in total number of IPOs in the Kingdom. The UAE was next with total IPO proceeds of USD 1.1 Bn in 2025 vs. USD 4.1 Bn in 2024. The volume of IPOs in the UAE also declined from 7 IPOs in 2024 to merely 3 IPOs in 2025.

Meanwhile, Oman's efforts on privatization moderated during 2025 with only one IPO during the year as compared to the IPO of two state-owned firms in 2024 on the Muscat Exchange. The listing of Oman's state-owned logistics firm Asyad Shipping resulted in aggregate proceeds of USD 332.8 Mn.

Size of IPOs in the GCC in 2025

In terms of size of the IPOs, the average proceeds per IPO in the GCC in the main market (excluding Nomu Parallel Market) stood at USD 306 Mn in 2025 as compared to an average of USD 505 Mn in 2024. In addition, there was only one IPO in the GCC during the year that raised over USD 1 Bn that included the IPO of Flynas that raised USD 1.1 Bn as compared to three IPOs in 2024 with over USD 1 Bn in proceeds.

The average listing size (market-cap) of the IPOs during 2025 in the main market remained almost in line with 2024 levels at USD 2.1 Bn. The average listing market-cap for the three IPOs on the UAE exchanges (Alpha data, Dubai Residential REIT and Alec Holdings) stood at USD 2.3 Bn, a sharp decline from USD 3.8 Bn in 2024. On the other hand, the average market-cap for Main Market IPOs in Saudi Arabia stood a sharp increase from USD 1.2 Bn in 2024 to USD 2.2 Bn in 2025.

Companies in Saudi Arabia's Nomu parallel market raised USD 341 Mn during the year with an average IPO proceeds of USD 14.0 Mn and average listing size of USD 158 Mn. This was significantly higher than total proceeds of USD 292 Mn in 2024 with an average IPO proceeds of USD 10 Mn and an average listing market cap of USD 70.8 Mn.

In terms of demand for the IPO, the large local investor base has resulted in strong demand for the regional IPOs. Saudi Arabia dominated with eight out of the top ten IPOs orders were for IPOs in the Kingdom. The IPO of Saudi Arabia's Umm Al Qura for Development & Construction Co. (Masar) garnered the biggest orders during the year. Shares of the company was oversubscribed by 241x with orders worth USD 126 Bn. Flynas and Derayah Financial were next with IPO orders of USD 109 Bn and USD 58.4 Bn with oversubscriptions of 100x and 146x, respectively. The two IPOs in Dubai (Dubai Residential REIT and Alec Holdings) received total IPO orders of USD 15.0 Bn and 8.1 Bn with oversubscriptions of 25.6x and 21x, respectively.

In terms of sectoral split, the Real Estate sector was leading with a total of 8 IPOs during the year with companies like Umm Al Qura for Development & Construction, Dar Al Majed Real Estate Company and Al Ramz Real Estate. The Transportation and Consumer Services sectors were next with 5 IPOs each. Consumer Discretionary Distribution and Software & Services sectors with 4 and 3 IPOs, respectively. The overall sectoral participation from the region remained diverse with corporations with unique niche operating models coming to the primary market.

Asia Pacific was leading in terms of IPO proceeds in 2025

Data from EY's annual IPO report for 2025 showed that the IPO activity during the year was led by a

growth in the Asia Pacific region that captured the largest share of global proceeds increasing by 106% supported by strong activity in Hong Kong and an improving pipeline in the Chinese mainland, despite the overall deal count staying flat. India maintained its global lead in listing volumes throughout 2025, reaching a historic peak of 367 IPOs that raised USD 22.9 Bn driven largely by a surge in SME activity and robust liquidity from domestic investors. In Europe, deal count declined by 20% to 105 IPOs compared to 131 IPOs in 2024 while proceeds declined 10% from 2024 to USD 17.3 Bn.

In terms of sectoral trend in IPOs during 2025, the Industrials sector remained the world's top-performing sector in terms of volume. However, the market's demand for AI and Tech showed no signs of cooling, with both sectors attracting top-tier interest with the TMT sector in the US contributing nearly 40% of its proceeds, while Industrials, Financial Services and Real Estate dominated in Europe.

Strong pipeline of IPOs in the GCC for 2026
The GCC region is once again poised to see an active IPO market in 2026 with a number of companies already in the pipeline. The list also includes companies that postponed their IPO plans due to lack of appropriate valuations in the GCC, especially after the region underperformed a globally market rally in 2025. Based on the status of IPO offering, there are around 73 IPOs already in the pipeline in the GCC, with a majority of the IPOs in the announced stage while a few remain in the rumoured stage. Saudi Arabia is expected to lead once again in terms of volume of IPOs in 2026 with the CEO of Saudi Exchange asserting that there are 40 companies that have already applied for IPO and the tally climbs to 100 if companies seeking financial advisors for IPO are also included.

What's On

SPOTLIGHT

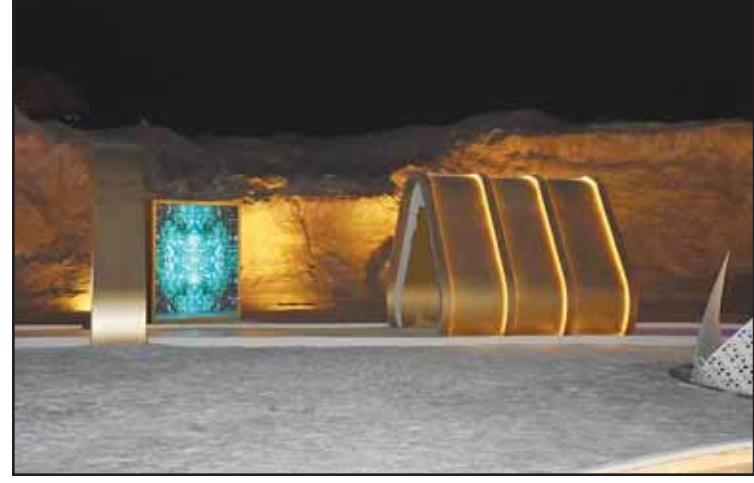
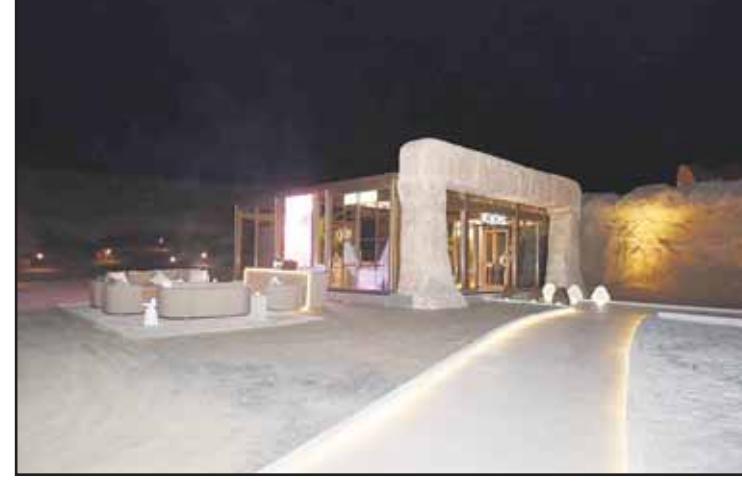


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Over 70,000 smokers in Kuwait switch to smoke-free alternatives

Philip Morris reaffirms commitment to smoke-free future in Kuwait



Philip Morris strengthens smoke-free initiatives with IQOS ILUMA i launch and local artist collaboration.

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh

Arab Times/Al-Seyassah Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Philip Morris is reaffirming its commitment to Kuwait as a central market in its smoke-free strategy, highlighting growing local interest in reduced-risk alternatives.

The company has maintained a long-standing presence in the country, which is home to approximately one million adult smokers, of whom around 70,000 have already switched to smoke-free options such as IQOS.

The initiative focuses on education and empowerment, providing adult smokers with accurate information to help them make informed decisions for their long-term health.

IQOS has a dedicated presence in Kuwait, staffed by trained experts who engage only with adult smokers who would otherwise continue smoking.

In 2025, Philip Morris introduced "IQOS ILUMA i" in Kuwait, which is its most advanced device to date. The product features a bladeless SMARTCORE Induction System™, Touch Screen, Pause Mode, and FlexPuff, offering a cleaner, more personalized experience.

IQOS devices generate, on average, 95 percent lower levels of harmful chemicals compared with conventional cigarettes. While not risk-free, they offer a significant reduction in exposure for adult smokers who do not quit.

The device features state-of-the-art technology designed to provide a cleaner, more personalized experience for adult smokers seeking alternatives to conventional cigarettes.

PMI's presence at LEVELS, a dedicated space for IQOS users, focuses on education and empowerment, offering adults the information they need to make informed choices about their long-term health. The initiative reflects the company's commitment to promoting smoke-free options and supporting public health in Kuwait.

Philip Morris International (PMI) continues to position itself as a global leader in smoke-free innovation, advancing its mission to create a smoke-free future while expanding its portfolio to include products beyond tobacco and nicotine.

Smoke-free products are now available in 100 markets worldwide. As of October 21, 2025, over 41 million adult consumers legally use PMI's smoke-free products, many of whom have either quit cigarettes or significantly reduced their consumption. In the first nine months of 2025, smoke-free products accounted for 41 percent of PMI's total net revenues.

Since 2008, PMI has invested more than \$14 billion to develop, scientifically

validate, and commercialize innovative smoke-free products for adults who would otherwise continue to smoke, aiming to phase out the sale of cigarettes ultimately.

It is worth highlighting that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has authorized the marketing of Swedish Match's General snus and ZYN nicotine pouches, along with versions of PMI's IQOS devices and consumables, which are the first authorizations of their kind in their respective categories. Some of these products have also received Modified Risk Tobacco Product (M RTP) status.

Beyond tobacco, PMI's long-term ambition includes expanding into wellness and healthcare, with the goal of enhancing life through seamless health experiences. The company is committed to scientific transparency and collaboration, sharing its research with the global scientific community, governments, and regulators to gather feedback, meet regulatory standards, and provide clear visibility into its scientific findings and results.

Since 2008, PMI has published more than 541 peer-reviewed papers and book chapters, with its scientists regularly presenting their findings at international scientific forums and to regulatory authorities.

PMI reaffirmed its commitment to responsible communication and science, emphasizing that all its campaigns and activations are directed strictly at adults aged 21 and over, without targeting youth.

The company has developed world-class scientific assessment capabilities, including pre-clinical systems toxicology, clinical and behavioral research, and post-market studies. PMI's long-term goal is the complete elimination of cigarette sales by offering scientifically validated alternatives for adults who would otherwise continue to smoke.

As part of its local engagement, PMI partnered with Kuwaiti designer Abrar Zenkawi to create limited-edition IQOS sleeves and accessories inspired by traditional heritage motifs, including Sadi weaving and desert-inspired color palettes. The collaboration reflects IQOS's 'Curious Minds' philosophy, merging art, technology, and culture to create products that feel authentically Kuwaiti.

Globally, PMI's smoke-free vision now reaches over 41 million adult users and demonstrates the company's significant investment in innovation, design, and science-driven solutions to reduce the harm of smoking.

Below are details of the interview held with the General Manager of PMI in Kuwait, Ross Donovan:

Question: Are nicotine pouch products coming to Kuwait?**

Answer: At present, Kuwait does not have specific regulations for nicotine pouches. However, other GCC countries are moving ahead, and we hope Kuwait

will soon follow the lead of its neighbors and introduce a clear regulatory framework, so adult consumers can access these products safely and legally.

Q: What are the regulations like in other GCC countries?

A: The UAE introduced technical regulations for nicotine pouches effective July 2025. Bahrain has approved national technical standards, and Saudi Arabia allows product classification and evaluation by the authorities.

Q: Is IQOS risk-free?

A: No, IQOS is not risk-free. It contains nicotine, which is addictive. However, scientific studies show that IQOS emits, on average, 95 percent lower levels of harmful chemicals compared to cigarettes. The best choice is always to quit tobacco and nicotine entirely, but for adults who would otherwise continue smoking, switching completely to a scientifically substantiated smoke-free alternative can be a better option.

Q: What is PMI's position on youth access and marketing?

A: Our products and communications are strictly for adults 21 and over. We have robust measures in place to prevent youth access, including age verification at points of sale and clear marketing guidelines. We do not target or appeal to youth in any of our activities.

Q: What about the price and affordability of IQOS in Kuwait?

A: We do not comment on specific pricing, but our goal is to make smoke-free alternatives accessible to adult smokers who would otherwise continue to smoke. Pricing is set in accordance with local regulations and market conditions.

Q: How does PMI ensure product safety and quality?

A: PMI has invested over \$14 billion in research and development since 2008, building world-class scientific and quality assessment capabilities. All our products undergo rigorous testing for safety, quality, and performance before reaching consumers.

Q: What is PMI's long-term vision for Kuwait?

A: We want Kuwait to be part of our global smoke-free transformation. Our ambition is to replace cigarettes with better alternatives for adults who would otherwise continue to smoke, and to support Kuwait's public health goals through science-based innovation and responsible communication.

Q: Are there plans for more local collaborations or community initiatives?

A: We are always looking for ways to engage with and celebrate Kuwaiti culture. Our recent collaboration with Abrar Zenkawi is just one example. We look forward to exploring more partnerships that resonate with local communities and support our smoke-free vision.



SGIOME Platinum Jubilee 2026 – logo inauguration.

St. Gregorios Church marks 75 years of faith & heritage

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Marking the beginning of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations of St. Gregorios Indian Orthodox Church, Kuwait, the official Platinum Jubilee logo was released by the Vicar, Rev. Fr. Dr. Biju George Parakal.

Around 40 faithful of the Malankara (Indian) Orthodox Syrian Church, with the desire to preserve and practice their own liturgical traditions and faith heritage, began Orthodox evening prayers every Tuesday at the National Evangelical Church in 1957, with the blessings of the then Supreme Head of the Malankara Church, His Holiness Baselios Geevarghese II Catholicos.

This marked the first time the Malankara (Indian) Orthodox Church, as an independent Indian Church, was able to officially begin its own worship services in Kuwait - a milestone of great pride for the Church.

The Indian Orthodox congregation, which began on January 15, 1957, witnessed the offering of the first Holy Qurbana in Kuwait in March of the same year by Rev. Fr. E.P. Jacob, who visited Kuwait privately.

Later in 1962, with the visit of Rev. Fr. George Kurien, then Vicar of the Bahrain Parish, and the regular celebration of the Holy Qurbana, parish activities expanded beyond evening prayers. About six months later, Rev. Fr. C.V. John was officially appointed as the first Vicar of the parish, following which the parish began functioning in full capacity with around 120 members.

During 1994-95, based on a decision taken at the parish general body meeting held under the presidency of the Diocesan Metropolitan, the parish was renamed after Saint Parumala Thirumuni. Subsequently, on November 2, 2007, His Holiness Moran Mar Baselios MarthomaDidymos I Catholicos proclaimed the parish as a "MahaEdavaka".

The event was attended by Assistant Vicar Rev. Fr. Mathew Thomas, Trustee Deepak Alex Panicker, Secretary Jacob Roy, Platinum Jubilee General Convenor Mathews Varghese, Joint General Convenor John P. Joseph, and Finance Convenor Naveen Kurian Thomas. The selected Platinum Jubilee logo was designed by parish member Saji Daniel.

A heartfelt tribute video honored

the well-wishers and dedicated members who contributed to 19 years of unwavering service, followed by a Committee Introduction Audio-Visual presentation showcasing the new office bearers.

Executive Committee (2025-2027):

President: Mr. S. Ramadoss | Vice President: Mr. S. Chelladurai

General Secretary: Mr. Rajnarayanan Desigan | Joint Secretary: Mrs. Rajalakshmi Kartik

Treasurer: Mr. Prasanna Krishnan | Joint Treasurer: Mrs. Pradhama Maniyarasu

Committee Members:

Mrs. Sudha Jayamani, Mrs. Revathi Sivakumar, Mrs. Rajalakshmi Balaji, Mrs. Sumitha Sathish, Mrs.

Lakshmi Ashok, Mr. Pattabhiraman, Mr. Sivaraman, Mr. Gokulakrishnan, Mr. R. V. Murthy, Mr. Arivanandam

The program was anchored with elegance by popular Tamil actress Mrs. Anitha Sampath, whose presence added charm and energy to the proceedings.

The cultural segment featured mesmerizing songs by Mrs. Shamala Devi, a much-applauded mimicry performance by KPY fame Mr. Satish, and a lively live stage act by renowned actor Mr. TSK, entertaining and engaging the audience throughout the morning.

In a special segment, KTS honored academic excellence with the Academic Distinction Awards (2024-2025) for students of Class X and XII, pre-

sented to the children of members who achieved over 90% in their examinations, celebrating scholastic achievement within the community.

The program concluded with a Vote of Thanks by Treasurer Mr. Prasanna Krishnan, expressing heartfelt gratitude to the Chief Guest, performers, committee members, sponsors, and all participants who contributed to the success of the 20th-year celebration.

The morning ended with a sumptuous traditional banana leaf lunch, featuring both vegetarian and non-vegetarian delicacies, catered by Grand Udhayam Restaurant, leaving participants with fond memories of a truly landmark celebration that beautifully blended tradition, culture, and community spirit.



Photo during the event.

Pakistani community in Kuwait shows solidarity through blood donation

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Pak Donors (Pakistani Blood Donors Association)

successfully conducted its 31st Blood Donation Drive at the Kuwait Central Blood Bank in Jabiya on January 16, from 2:00 pm to 7:00 pm, receiving an overwhelming response from the Pakistani community and well-wishers. The initiative recorded strong participation, with more than 160 individuals registering to donate blood, reflecting the community's sustained commitment to humanitarian service and life-saving efforts.

The blood donation camp was attended by several distinguished guests, including Mr. Hamza Touqir, Community Welfare Attaché at the Embassy of Pakistan in Kuwait, who praised Pak Donors for its continued humanitarian service under the principle of "Humanity Beyond Nationality." A special guest from the Kingdom of Bahrain, Mr. Muhammed Adnan, Director of Adminis-

tration at Noor Hospital-Bahrain, attended alongside Mr. Nouman Aslam Ghuman, Advisor to Pak Donors, who announced the establishment of a Pak Donors branch in Bahrain and plans to organize its

first blood donation camp soon. Mr. Muhammed Adnan was appointed In-Charge Coordinator of the Pak Donors Bahrain Chapter.

The event was further honored by the presence of Mr. Muhammed Shafiq, Secretary General of the Asian Handball Federation. Guests were received by Mr. Abdul Waheed Jaber Ali, In-Charge Coordinator of Pak Donors Kuwait Chapter, along with senior community members. A

notable highlight was the strong participation of the Pak Donors Female Wing, contributing to an encouraging turnout of women donors. Pak Donors expressed appreciation to supporting organizations, donors,

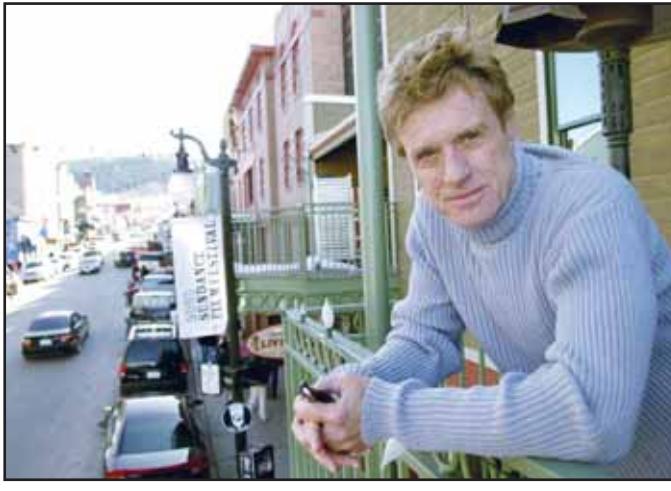
media representatives, volunteers, and community members, reaffirming its commitment to voluntary blood donation guided by the principles of "Humanity First" and "Humanity Beyond Nationality."



Photos during the event.



Features



Robert Redford poses on a balcony along Main Street decorated with his Sundance Film Festival banners on Jan. 17, 2003, in Park City, Utah. (AP)

Festival legacy to continue

Sundance to bid farewell to Park City and Redford

PARK CITY, Utah, Jan 20, (AP): The Sundance Film Festival may be a little bittersweet this year. It will be familiar in some ways as it kicks off on Thursday in Park City, Utah. There will be stars, from Natalie Portman to Charlize Theron, and breakout discoveries, tearjerkers, comedies, thrillers, oddities that defy categorization and maybe even a few future Oscar nominees. The pop-ups and sponsors will be out in full force on Main Street. The lines to get into the 90 movies premiering across 10 days will be long and the volunteers will be endlessly helpful and cheery in subfreezing temperatures.

But the country's premier showcase for independent film is also in a time of profound transition after decades of relative stability. The festival is bidding farewell to its longtime home and forging forward without its founder, Robert Redford, who died in September. Next year, it must find its footing in another mountain town, Boulder, Colorado.

It's no surprise that legacy will be a through-line at this year's final edition in Park City. There will be screenings of restored Sundance gems like "Little Miss Sunshine," "Mysterious Skin," "House Party" and "Humpday" as well as Redford's first truly independent film, the 1969 sports drama "Downhill Racer." Many will also pay tribute to Redford at the institute's fundraising event, where honorees include Chloé Zhao, Ed Harris and Nia DaCosta.

"Sundance has always been about showcasing and fostering independent movies in America. Without that, so many filmmakers wouldn't have had the careers they have," said "Mysterious Skin" filmmaker Gregg Araki. He first attended the festival in 1992 and has been back many times, including at the labs where Zhao was one of his students.

Quite a few festival veterans are planning to make the trip, including "Navalny" filmmaker Daniel Rohr. His first Sundance in 2022 might have been a bit unconventional (made fully remote at the last minute due to the pandemic) but ended on a high note with an Oscar. This year he's back with two films, his narrative debut "Tuner," and the world premiere of "The AI Doc: Or How I Became an Apocaloptivist," which he co-directed with Charlie Tyrell.

Transition

"We're going through a weird moment in the world ... There's something that strikes me about an institution that has been evergreen, that seems so entrenched going through its own transition and rebirth," Rohr told The Associated Press. "I'm choosing to frame this year as a celebration of Sundance and the institute and a future that will ensure the festival goes on forever and ever and stays the vital conduit for so many filmmakers that it has been."

Over the past four decades, countless careers have been shaped and boosted by the festival and the institute. Three of this year's presumed Oscar nominees - Paul Thomas Anderson, Ryan Coogler and Zhao - are among those the institute supported early in their careers.

Jay Duplass, who first came to Sundance in 2003 with his brother, Mark, with what he calls a "\$3 film" said it was the place where his career was made.

"I'd probably be a psychologist right now if it wasn't for Sundance," Duplass said.

While he's been to "probably 15 Sundances" since, it hasn't lost its luster. In fact, when a programmer called him to tell him that his new film "See You When I See You" was selected, he cried. The film is based on a memoir in which a young comedy writer (Cooper Raiff) attempts to process the death of his sister (Kaitlyn Dever). It's one of many films that finds humor amid grim subjects.

As always, the lineup is full of starry films as well, including Cathy Yan's art world satire, "The Gallerist," starring Portman, Jenna Ortega, Sterling K. Brown, Zach Galifianakis and Da'Vine Joy Randolph. The romantic drama "Carousel," from Rachel Lambert, features Chris Pine and Jenny Slate as high school exes who rekindle their romance later in life. Araki is also bringing a new film, "I Want Your Sex," in which Olivia Wilde plays a provocative artist (Araki described as a cross between Madonna and Robert Mapplethorpe) who takes on Cooper Hoffman as her younger muse.

"It's kind of a sex-positive love letter to Gen Z," Araki said. "It's a comedy. It has elements of mystery, thriller, murder - a little bit of 'Sunset Boulevard' ... it's fun, it's colorful, it's sexy. It's a ride."

Wilde also steps behind the camera for "The Invite," in which she stars alongside Seth Rogen as a couple whose marriage disintegrates over the course of an evening. Olivia Colman is a fisherwoman looking to make the perfect husband in "Wicker," co-starring Alexander Skarsgård. Zoë Deutch plays a Midwestern bride-to-be seeking out her celebrity "free pass" (Jon Hamm) in the screwball comedy "Gail Daughtry and the Celebrity Sex Pass." And Ethan Hawke and Russell Crowe lead the Depression-era crime drama "The Weight."

Pop star and noted cinephile Charlize Theron will also be out and about, starring in the self-referential mockumentary "The Moment," and appearing in "The Gallerist" and "I Want Your Sex" as well.

The 2026 festival features a robust lineup of documentaries too, which have a good track record of snagging eventual Oscar nominations and wins. There are a handful of films about famous faces, including basketball star Britney Griner, Courtney Love, Salman Rushdie, Billie Jean King, Nelson Mandela and comedian Maria Bamford.

Resistance

Others delve into newsy subjects past and present, like "When A Witness Recants," in which author Ta-Nehisi Coates revisits the case of the 1983 murder of a boy in his Baltimore middle school and learns the truth. "American Doctor" follows three professionals trying to help in Gaza. "Who Killed Alex Odeh" examines the 1985 assassination of a Palestinian American activist in Southern California. "Everybody To Kenmore Street" is about civil resistance to deportations in Glasgow in 2021. And "Silenced" tracks international human rights lawyer Jennifer Robinson in her fight against the weaponization of defamation laws against victims of gender violence.

And some don't fit into any easy category, like "The History of Concrete" in which filmmaker John Wilson takes what he learned at a "how to sell a Hallmark movie" seminar and tries to apply it to a documentary on concrete.

There might be a bit of wistfulness in the air too, as everyone takes stock of the last Sundance in Park City and tries to imagine what Boulder might hold.

"It feels very special to be part of the last one in Park City," Duplass said. "It's just a super special place where, you know there are going to be movies there with giant stars and there's also going to be some kids there who made movies for a few thousand dollars. And they're all going to mix."

Araki, like Redford, knew long ago that the festival had outgrown Park City. It will be strange to no longer have its iconic locations like Egyptian Theatre and Eccles and The Ray anymore, but it's also just a place.

"The legacy and the tradition of Sundance will continue no matter where it is," Araki said.

'Wild at Heart' leaves audiences inspired

IMAX movie tells Ohio's environmental comeback story

COLUMBUS, Ohio, Jan 20, (AP): When you think IMAX, chances are your mind goes to those immersive documentaries that take you inside volcanoes, deep under oceans, atop mountains or to distant planets. Or to those wide-screen films that bathe you in backstage experiences with iconic rockstars or Hollywood special effects.

But, this year, the state of Ohio is using the technology to tell an environmental comeback story closer to home.

"Ohio: Wild at Heart" features the state's top-ranked park system to highlight wildlife conservation efforts and the restorative power of outdoor recreation. Filmed over more than a year, the \$2.5 million project - paid for with information and education funds - is drawing large crowds at science museums around the state and heads next year into classrooms.

Ohio Department of Natural Resources Director Mary Mertz calls it "a love letter to the mission of protecting our natural resources and expanding opportunities to explore."

Ricky Jackson, a conservationist and taxidermist from Gallipolis, Ohio, in the state's Appalachian region, said he wasn't expecting to leave the theater feeling as if he'd seen a documentary filmed all across North America.

"It was just really, really unexpected



Audience members watch 'Ohio: Wild at Heart' that features the state's top-rated park system to highlight wildlife conservation efforts and the restorative power of outdoor recreation at the Robert D. Lindner Family OMNIMAX Theater at the Cincinnati Union Terminal, Tuesday, Dec. 30, 2025, in Cincinnati. (AP)

ed to see so much diversity all filmed in Ohio," Jackson said.

After viewing the film at its premier at COSI, Columbus' science center, last fall, Jackson said he thought the film was "very cool, very well done," and he learned a lot.

"It was very motivating," he said. "It made you want to see parts of the state you've never seen, or experience

nature in Ohio in a way that you just didn't know was available."

Narrated by Ohio State football great Archie Griffin, the documentary depicts the state's landscapes at a sweeping scale - from the lighthouse-dotted shores of Lake Erie in the north to the towering limestone formations of the Hocking Hills in the hilly south.

The efforts take on outsized

Obituary

His gowns made royals and movie stars feel beautiful

Valentino, designer to the jet set, dies at 93

MILAN, Jan 20, (AP): Valentino Garavani, the jet-set Italian designer whose high-glamour gowns - often in his trademark shade of "Valentino red" - were fashion show staples for nearly half a century, died Monday. He was 93.

"Valentino Garavani was not only a constant guide and inspiration for all of us, but a true source of light, creativity and vision," the foundation founded by Valentino and his partner Giancarlo Giammetti said in a statement posted on social media. The foundation said he died at his Rome residence but did not mention the cause.

Universally known by his first name, Valentino was adored by generations of royals, first ladies and movie stars, from Jackie Kennedy Onassis to Julie Roberts and Queen Rania of Jordan, who swore the designer always made them look and feel their best.

"I know what women want," he once remarked. "They want to be beautiful."

Though Italian-born and despite maintaining his atelier in Rome, he mostly unveiled his collections in Paris, and spoke French with his Italian partner Giammetti, an entrepreneur.

Alessandro Michele, the current creative director of the Valentino fashion house, wrote in Instagram that he continues to feel Valentino's "gaze" as he works on the next collection, which will be presented March 12 in Rome, departing from the usual venue of Paris. Michele remembered Valentino as "a man who expanded the limits of the possible" and possessing "a rare delicacy, with a silent rigor and a limitless love for beauty."

Condolences

Another of Valentino's successors, Pierpaolo Piccoli, placed a broken heart emoji under the announcement of his death. Former supermodel Cindy Crawford wrote that she was "heartbroken," and called Valentino "a true master of his craft."

Condolences also came in from the family of the late designer Giorgio Armani, who died in September at the age of 91, and Donatella Versace, who posted two photos of Valentino, saying "he will forever be remembered for his art."

Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni remembered Valentino as "an indisputable maestro of eternal style and elegance of Italian high fashion."

Never one for edginess or statement dressing, Valentino made precious few fashion faux pas throughout his nearly half-century career, which stretched from his early days in Rome in the 1960s through to his retirement in 2008.

His fail-safe designs made Valentino the king of the red carpet, the go-to man for A-listers' awards ceremony needs. His sumptuous gowns have graced countless Academy Awards, notably in 2001, when Roberts wore a vintage black and white column to accept her best actress statue. Cate Blanchett also wore Valentino - a one-shouldered number in butter-yellow silk - when she won the Oscar for best supporting actress in 2005.

Valentino was also behind the long-sleeved lace dress Jacqueline Kennedy wore for her wedding to Greek shipping magnate Aristotle Onassis in 1968. Kennedy and Valentino were close friends for decades, and for a spell the one-time U.S. first lady wore almost exclusively Valentino.

He was also close to Diana, Princess of Wales, who often donned his sumptuous gowns.

Beyond his signature orange-tinged shade of red, other Valentino trademarks included bows, ruffles, lace and embroidery; in short, feminine, flirty embellishments that added to the dresses' beauty and hence to that of the



Italian fashion designer Valentino Garavani waves after the presentation of his pret-a-porter 1995 spring-summer collection on October 16, 1994 in Paris, France. (AP)

wearers.

Perpetually tanned and always impeccably dressed, Valentino shared the lifestyle of his jet-set patrons. In addition to his 152-foot (46-meter) yacht and an art collection including works by Picasso and Miro, the couturier owned a 17th-century chateau near Paris with a garden said to boast more than a million roses.

Valentino and his longtime partner Giammetti flitted among their homes - which also included places in New York, London, Rome, Capri and Gstaad, Switzerland - traveling with their pack of pugs. The pair regularly received A-list friends and patrons, including Madonna and Gwyneth Paltrow.

"When I see somebody and unfortunately she's relaxed and running around in jogging trousers and without any makeup ... I feel very sorry," the designer told RTL television in a 2007 interview. "For me, woman is like a beautiful, beautiful flower bouquet. She has always to be sensational, always to please, always to be perfect, always to please the husband, the lover, everybody. Because we are born to show ourselves always at our best."

Valentino was born into a well-off family in the northern Italian town of Voghera on May 11, 1932. He said it was his childhood love of cinema that set him down the fashion path.

"I was crazy for silver screen, I was crazy for beauty, to see all those movie stars being sensation, well dressed,

being always perfect," he explained in the 2007 television interview.

After studying fashion in Milan and Paris, he spent much of the 1950s working for established Paris-based designer Jean Desses and later Guy Laroche before striking out on his own. He founded the house of Valentino on Rome's Via Condotti in 1959.

From the beginning, Giammetti was by his side, handling the business aspect while Valentino used his natural charm to build a client base among the world's rich and fabulous.

Setbacks

After some early financial setbacks - Valentino's tastes were always lavish, and the company spent with abandon - the brand took off.

Early fans included Italian screen sirens Gina Lollobrigida and Sophia Loren, as well as Hollywood stars Elizabeth Taylor and Audrey Hepburn. Legendary American Vogue editor-in-chief Diana Vreeland also took the young designer under her wing.

Over the years, Valentino's empire expanded as the designer added ready-to-wear, menswear and accessories lines to his stable. Valentino and Giammetti sold the label to an Italian holding company for an estimated \$300 million in 1998. Valentino would remain in a design role for another decade.

"I was crazy for silver screen, I was crazy for beauty, to see all those movie stars being sensation, well dressed,

ball in the Villa Borghese gallery.

Valentino retired in 2008 and was briefly replaced by fellow Italian Alessandra Facchetti, who had stepped into Tom Ford's shoes at Gucci before being sacked after two seasons.

Facchetti's tenure at Valentino proved equally short. As early as her first show for the label, rumors swirled that she was already on her way out, and just about one year after she was hired, Facchetti was indeed replaced by two longtime accessories designers at the brand, Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pierpaolo Piccioli.

Chiuri left to helm Dior in 2016, and Piccioli continued to lead the house through a golden period that drew on the launch of the Rockstud pump with Chiuri and his own signature color, a shade of fuchsia called Pink PP. He left the house in 2024, later joining Balenciaga, and has been replaced by Michele, who revived Gucci's stars with romantic, genderless styles.

Valentino is owned by Qatar's Mayhoola, which controls a 70% stake, and the French luxury conglomerate Kering, which owns 30% with an option to take full control in 2028 or 2029. Richard Bellini was named CEO last September.

A public viewing will be held at the Valentino Garavani and Giancarlo Giammetti Foundation on Wednesday and Thursday, and a funeral will be held Friday in the Basilica di Santa Maria degli Angeli e dei Martiri in central Rome.

Books

From spice routes to shared roots, book captures timeless bond

Roy chronicles soul of Kuwait-India kinship in Sadaaqa

By Claudia Farkas Al Rashoud
Special to the Arab Times

On the surface, few nations seem more distinct than Kuwait and India – one an affluent desert nation with a small population, the other a teeming sub-continent of staggering diversity. One would expect their worlds to intersect but not necessarily to intimately intertwine. Yet, as the compelling conversations in *Sadaaqa*, Partnership & Cultural Kinship reveal, outside the Arabian Gulf region, Kuwait shares its deepest historical, economic, and human bonds with India. Author Chaitali Banerjee Roy chronicles this fascinating paradox through personal interviews with pioneering Indians and Kuwaitis, highlighting the multifaceted threads of a remarkable relationship.

Tradition

In her foreword to the book, Sheikha Altaf Salem Al Ali Al Sabah notes that the ancient tradition of trade between the two countries became the vehicle for commercial exchange as well as the diffusion of knowledge. "With goods traded along the Arabian Gulf and the subcontinent, so too were traits, customs, and ideas. The most important of these were language, cuisine, social customs, and artistic styles."

Fast forward to present day Kuwait, with nearly a million Indians living here and forming the country's largest expatriate community. Obviously, Indian expatriates are an integral part of Kuwait's social, cultural, and economic fabric. Yet surprisingly, there is very little documentation of this far-reaching relationship. As a cultural journalist, author, podcaster, and broadcaster with over three decades of experience in radio, print, and digital media spanning both Kuwait and India, it's not surprising that Chaitali Banerjee Roy recognized the merit of researching this captivating and consequential subject.

Roy arrived in Kuwait in 2001 and soon began contributing articles to the *Arab Times* newspaper and presenting and editing interviews for Kuwait Radio. In the preface of *Sadaaqa* she discloses that already within her first few weeks in Kuwait she began noticing



many shared traits between the Kuwaiti and Indian cultures, especially the strong emphasis on family ties and hospitality. Describing her deepening sense of kinship she writes, "I realised I was not immersed in an entirely foreign culture; instead, Kuwait felt like an extension of India in many ways. The civilisational ties were hard to miss."

However, it wasn't until the publication of her first book, *Women of Kuwait: Turning Tides*, in 2016, that she began to contemplate documenting the affinity of



The book cover of 'Sadaaqa' by Chaitali Banerjee Roy.

Photos by Claudia Farkas Al Rashoud
Cultural journalist, author, podcaster and broadcaster Chaitali Banerjee Roy.

the two cultures as embodied by both Kuwaiti and Indian families and individuals. In January 2022, along with her technical director, Anees Backer, she began her radio series titled *Sadaaqa*, which translates as friendship in Arabic, and forms the backbone of the book.

According to Roy, what ensued were tales of "the inspiring journeys of pioneering Indian families, including the Jashanmals, Oberois, Kohlis, Bhasins, Mathews, and oth-

ers, who built their businesses from the ground up through sheer hard work and determination. In doing so, they not only created livelihoods but also became significant contributors to Kuwait's economic growth, standing shoulder to shoulder with the locals."

These are accounts of grit and resilience, forged during a time when life in this desert nation was far from easy. This book is also about second and third-generation Indians who spend their entire lifetimes in Kuwait..."

Roy's thoughtful interviews are well-researched. They provide the back-stories to familiar names of Indian families in Kuwait of which we may only have superficial knowledge.

Jashanmal's, for example, is a well-known department store in Kuwait, and the first such commercial outlet of its kind in the country. A branch opened in Kuwait in 1934, following its founding in Basra, Iraq in 1919 by Rao Sahib Jashanmal. It is Rao Sahib's grandson, Tony Jashanmal, who successfully rebuilt and expanded the business after the Iraqi occupation. Today Jashanmal's remains a prominent retailer and distributor of international brands of luxury goods in Kuwait. Born in the old American Mission Hospital in Kuwait, Tony Jashanmal is an example of a prominent third-generation Kuwait-based Indian entrepreneur.

Businesses

Like the Jashanmals, many other Indian merchants suffered devastating losses during the Iraqi occupation and had to painstakingly rebuild their businesses from the ground up. Roy tells stories of Indian businessmen imbued with the trust and support of their Kuwaiti partners, adapting to change and capably facing the challenges of restarting businesses in post-liberation Kuwait. Strong work ethics passed down from father to son to grandson have resulted in successful businesses run by Indians and Kuwaitis spanning several generations, which are still ongoing.

While entrepreneurship forged these relationships, in most cases the bonds became cultural and social as well as economic. Several Indian businessmen in Roy's book described the ties of personal kin-

ship between themselves and their Kuwaiti sponsor as like that of father and son. Tolerance was a key factor in these strong bonds. Both Indians and Kuwaitis featured in the book recall the joy of participating in each other's religious holidays and festivals.

In addition to Indians who migrated to Kuwait, Roy recognizes distinguished Kuwaitis with deep ties to India. From Kuwait's love affair with Bollywood to marathon Indian shopping trips; from food, art, history, yoga, and tourism to the intimate fabric of families united through marriage, these personal stories form a rich tapestry. They show that long-time Kuwait-India relations are marked by trust, familiarity, and mutual respect.

Integration

Ahmed Al Sarraf, an outspoken newspaper columnist and successful businessman, has strong relations with India and with Indians in Kuwait. Speaking about cross-cultural relationships in an interview with Roy, he states that, "the strength of any society lies in its ability to bring people of different cultures together. The beauty of India, for instance, rests in its diversity..." He concluded that, "the spirit of achievement and integration flourishes best in environments where people are encouraged to feel part of the larger society."

Besides Roy's in-depth knowledge of her subject, her interviewing style and warm personality have no doubt contributed to the success of *Sadaaqa*. With an obviously genuine interest in her subjects she has a gentle way of putting them at ease, so no matter how long you've known her, the interview feels like having a chat with an old friend.

With the use of first-hand sources, Roy's book goes beyond surface-level observations to illustrate deeply-woven real experiences. While the economic and political landscapes of both nations have inevitably evolved, Roy's work ensures that the profound human legacy -- forged by good, hardworking, and tolerant individuals -- is neither forgotten nor diminished, but celebrated as the enduring foundation upon which future relations can be built.

Landmark privacy case

Tabloid scoops left Harry 'paranoid beyond belief'

LONDON, Jan 20, (AP): The third and final round in Prince Harry's battle with the British tabloids began Monday with his lawyer alleging that the Daily Mail and its sister Sunday newspaper engaged in a "clear, systematic and sustained use of unlawful information gathering" for two decades.

Attorney David Sherborne said a longstanding culture of hiring private investigators who practiced "dark arts" to spy on celebrities for scoops had left Harry distressed and isolated.



Harry

"It was 'disturbing to feel that my every move, thought or feeling was being tracked and monitored just for the Mail to make money out of it,'" Harry said, according to his lawyer's written opening statement.

The intrusions were "terrifying" for his loved ones, created a "massive strain" on his personal relationships, and the distrust and suspicion they caused left Harry "paranoid beyond belief," Sherborne said.

Tens of millions of dollars are on the line in the privacy invasion case in which the Duke of Sussex is joined by Elton John, actors Elizabeth Hurley and Sadie Frost, and others who claim the publisher of the Mail hired private investigators to bug their cars, obtain their personal records and eavesdrop on phone calls.

Associated Newspapers Ltd. has denied the allegations, called them preposterous and said the articles in question were reported with legitimate sources that included "leaky" associates willing to dish dirt on their famous friends.

The trial in London's High Court is expected to last nine weeks and will see the return of Harry to the witness box Thursday for the second time since he made history in 2023 by becoming the first senior

member of the royal family to testify in more than a century.

Harry, wearing a dark blue suit, cheerfully waved at reporters as he entered the court building via a side entrance. He took a seat in the back row of the courtroom near Hurley and Frost as John watched the proceedings online.

The case in the High Court follows two cases Harry brought against the other major tabloids that grew out of the widespread phone hacking scandal in which some journalists intercepted voicemail messages around the turn of this century.

Harry won a court judgment in 2023 that condemned the publishers of the Daily Mirror for "widespread and habitual" interception of phone messages. Last year, Rupert Murdoch's flagship U.K. tabloid made an unprecedented apology for intruding on Harry's life for years, and agreed to pay substantial damages to settle his privacy invasion lawsuit.

The litigation is part of Harry's self-proclaimed mission to reform the media that he blames for the death of his mother, Princess Diana, who was killed in a car crash in 1997 while being pursued by paparazzi in Paris. He also said persistent press attacks on his wife, Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, led them to leave royal life and move to the United States in 2020.

Defense lawyer Antony White said the lawsuits were based on weak inferences by trying to connect articles to payments made to investigators.

But he said witnesses, from editors to reporters who have worked for the newspapers for decades, were "lining up" to dispute the allegations and explain their sources, which he said were often very close the subjects of the articles.

"This is in reality little more than guesswork - it involves jumping to conclusions based on insufficient evidence, or worse, artificially selecting and presenting evidence to fit the preconceived agenda," White wrote in his opening statement. "It also ignores the fact that references in articles to a 'friend', or similar, as a source can be accurate."

Fashion



Models wear creations as part of the Giorgio Armani and Prada Fall/Winter 2026-2027 Men's collections presented in Milan, Italy on Jan 18-19. (AP)

Sport, sustainability, and style on the winter runway

Milan Fashion Week channels the Games, glamour

MILAN, Jan 20, (AP): The Olympic spirit permeated Milan Fashion Week, closing Monday, from Canadian designers Dsquared2's cheeky tribute to the Games, Emporio Armani's in-store parade of Team Italia's uniforms and Ralph Lauren's celebrity-packed runway show, strong on ski resort wear as it prepares to outfit Team USA.

Fashion always reflects what is going on in the world at large, and the front-row chatter went beyond silhouettes, notably streamlined at Prada, and striking, inventive accessories, like Dsquared2's hybrid winter footwear, to questions of diversity and sustainability.

Some highlights from four days of mostly menswear previews for Fall-Winter 2026-27:

The Italian fashion house Dsquared2, founded by Canadian twins Dean and Dan Caten, made a strong, if ironic, case for why they would have been a fun choice as Team Canada's official Olympic outfitter for the Feb. 6-22 Games. Fellow Canadian Hudson Williams, the actor starring in the buzzy series "Heated Rivalry" about a hockey love story, opened the show, strutting down a fake-snow-covered staircase wearing a ripped double denim jacket and sparkly racing number.

Dsquared2 was a gold-medal contender for best footwear of the season. For women, the twins created a hybrid floating high heel that snaps into a sturdy ski boot at the ankle. The brand created a similar

mashup for men. The designers played with Olympic imagery with their usual irreverence, including an in-store Gold medal on a ski sweater, yet mindful of the International Olympic Committee's strictly enforced copyrights.

Ralph Lauren presented a much more patrician approach to mountaineering in its stately Milan palazzo, with a mélange of colorful patterned knits and cozy fleece jackets layered with puffers and flannel that evoked the brand's wholesome American heritage. Shown to an intimate celebrity crowd that included Nick Jonas, Tom Hiddleston and Noah Schnapp, the collection offered a cozy entrée to the Olympic season, even as news from home was anything but reassuring.

"As a designer you feel the vibrations in the world. Living in New York City and traveling around the world, you feel the vibrations, and if you are sensitive to that, you develop an ear or a feel for the clothes that you think you're going to do the next season," founder Ralph Lauren said in a social media campaign before the show.

Prada's co-creative directors Miuccia Prada and Raf Simons explored the range of men's headwear, from berets to fedoras, made foldable as if origami, that when flattened could be snapped onto the back of outerwear.

Runway highlights included a modular men's cape that fit over coats and jackets, giving a layer of protection and utility. Men's dress shirts had T-shirt

necklines and buttoned down the back; exaggeratedly long and purposely worn cuffs protruded from jacket sleeves.

The ultra-slim silhouette of base layer car coats had fashionistas talking, but Miuccia Prada was unapologetic: "That's fashion."

Zegna creative director Alessandro Sartori's latest collection is about wardrobe building over seasons with pieces that can endure generations, like the fashion house itself that recently named co-CEOs from its fourth generation.

Sartori said he aims to produce more than fashion, but pieces that offer both quality and aesthetics. The jacket of the season was longer and more voluminous with square shoulders that can be worn single-breasted, double-breasted or more casually in a unique formation of three horizontal buttons. The styling versatility is achieved with a clever button-reversing mechanism.

Underlining that brand identity, Zegna displayed behind glass a nearly century-old jacket made with the company's own fabrics. Today, the family-run business controls about 60% of its supply chain, which gives it a unique footprint as other Italian brands are enveloped in a supply chain scandal.

Simon Cracker, a 15-year-old brand featuring upcycled fashion, is among a small cadre of fashion houses on the Milan runway that can talk up sustainability with any credibility.

CAN concludes annual thyroid cancer awareness campaign

Thyroid cancer campaign promotes timely diagnosis and treatment

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The Cancer Aware Nation (CAN) Campaign recently concluded its annual thyroid cancer awareness initiative titled, "Be Aware and Care."

The week-long campaign was aimed to raise awareness about cancers, such as thyroid cancer, where early detection can significantly improve recovery rates.

In a press release, Dr. Khaled Al-Saleh, Chairman of CAN's Board of Directors, explained that thyroid cancer involves the abnormal growth of cells in the thyroid gland, located in the neck, often appearing as a painless lump or nodule. Symptoms can include hoarseness, difficulty breathing or swallowing, and swollen lymph nodes.

Although the exact causes are not fully understood, thyroid cancer is believed to develop due to genetic changes (mutations) in thyroid cells, leading to uncontrolled growth and tumor formation. Hereditary factors and exposure to radiation are also considered potential causes, and in some cases, the cancer may spread to other parts of the body.

Dr. Al-Saleh emphasized that thyroid cancer is curable and that timely medical consultation is essential for proper diagnosis and treatment.

He indicated that while there are several types of thyroid cancer, most grow slowly and can be successfully treated, although some forms may be more aggressive.

Dr. Al-Saleh highlighted radiation exposure, particularly during childhood, as a major risk factor.

He stressed the vital role of doctors in early detection, which can increase the cure rate to around 90 percent.

Dr. Al-Saleh also commended the Kuwait Cancer Society (KCS) for its awareness efforts and encouraged the public to maintain healthy, balanced lifestyles, including proper nutrition and regular physical activity.

Meanwhile, Dr. Iman Al-Shammari, the campaign coordinator, said the primary goal was to improve cure rates for thyroid cancer, which is the third most common cancer in Kuwait, by emphasizing the importance of early detection.

She explained that the campaign included health exhibitions that were held at several hospitals and health centers of the Ministry of Health. These exhibitions included awareness activities that offered psychological support for patients recovering from the disease, and distributed educational materials.

It aimed to raise health literacy about the early signs of thyroid cancer and encourage timely detection to maximize the chances of successful treatment and recovery.



KUNA photo
Thyroid cancer awareness campaign coordinator Dr. Iman Al-Shammari with participants during the 'Be Aware and Care' campaign.

'Too much protein could up diabetes risk'

New diet guidelines say to double up on protein, but experts are wary

NEW YORK, Jan 20, (AP): Protein just got a big boost from US health officials.

The latest federal dietary guidelines tell Americans to "prioritize protein foods at every meal" and advise increasing daily intake - up to double the amount of previous recommendations.

"We are ending the war on protein," Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said in a White House post on social media.

The guidance - including a new food pyramid - emphasizes red meat, whole milk and other animal sources of protein, while downplaying plant-based offerings.

But top nutrition experts question the protein push, saying Americans already consume more protein than they need, and there's no new evidence that people need to drastically ramp up consumption. For many people, eating much more protein could lead to more fat and more cases of diabetes, they say.

"If you're actively building muscle with strength or resistance training, more protein can help," said Dr. Dariush Mozaffarian, a Tufts University nutrition expert. "Otherwise, you're getting enough."

Others worry that the dietary advice will accelerate the trend of companies encouraging Americans to embrace extra protein in foods including bars, cereals and snacks - even water.

Sales of protein-enriched packaged food will increase at a time "when one of the main messages is 'eat real food, eat whole foods,'" said Christopher Gardner, a nutrition expert at Stanford University. "I think they're going to confuse the public in a big way."

Here's what you need to know about the new protein recommendations:

Protein is a macronutrient that is in every cell in the human body. It's vital for growth and repair of muscle, bone, skin, hair and other organs and tissues. It's made of building blocks called amino acids, including some that the body doesn't make and must come from food.

For decades, the U.S. dietary guidelines and other sources have recom-



New York strip steaks are on display at a Sam's Club, Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025, in Bentonville, Ark. (AP)

mended that people consume 0.8 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight each day, or about 54 grams daily for a 150-pound person.

The new recommendation advises people to consume 1.2 grams to 1.6 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight - up to double the previous advice.

The guidance says adults should consume at least 100 grams of protein per day with half or more coming from animal sources.

The average adult man already consumes about 100 grams of protein a day, or twice the old recommendation.

The previous protein recommendations were calculated to prevent a nutrition deficiency, according to a scientific review published with the new dietary guidelines.

"It represents the lowest intake that maintains equilibrium in most healthy adults but does not reflect the intake required to maintain optimal muscle mass or metabolic function under all conditions," the review said.

The new document relied on evidence from 30 studies that looked at the effects of higher protein diets on weight

management and nutrient adequacy.

It concluded that protein intakes well above the previous guidance "are safe and compatible with good health."

Nutrition experts noted that trials focusing on weight reduction aren't typically used to make dietary recommendations for the general population.

And, in a new article published in Journal of the American Medical Association, Mozaffarian said there is little evidence, outside of use for strength or resistance training, that "higher protein builds muscle or provides other health benefits."

"In fact, excess dietary protein can be converted to fat by the liver," Mozaffarian wrote. That can increase the risk of the development of dangerous fat in the abdomen that surrounds vital organs and boost the risk of diabetes, he added.

Other nutrition experts said the recommendation to eat more protein could be useful if it helps achieve another key goal of the new guidelines: encouraging people to eat more whole foods and fewer highly processed foods such as packaged snacks and cookies.

4.2M in Sudan at malnutrition risk

KHARTOUM, Jan 20, (Xinhua): The Global Nutrition Cluster warned on Monday that around 4.2 million children and pregnant or breastfeeding women in Sudan are projected to suffer from acute malnutrition in 2026 amid ongoing conflict and the deterioration of basic services.

The report, issued by the UN-led coordination group, estimates that about 8.4 million people will need nutritional assistance in 2026, including 5 million children under the age of 5 and 3.4 million pregnant and breastfeeding women.

Meanwhile, about 824,000 children under five are projected to suffer from severe acute malnutrition, the most life-threatening form, which dramatically increases mortality risk without urgent interventions.

The Cluster is a coordination mechanism led by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to organize the response to food crises.

It added that among its recent surveys, 31 out of 61 reported a prevalence of global acute malnutrition at 15 percent or higher, exceeding the World Health Organization's emergency threshold. The global acute malnutrition is a measurement of the nutritional status of a population that is often used in protracted refugee situations.

The report said that the situation is expected to deteriorate further in 2026 due to the expanding conflict, declining food security, and damaged health and water services.

In 2026, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) plans to mobilize nearly 1 billion U.S. dollars to help 13.8 million people in Sudan, including 7.9 million children.

The agency warned that 3.4 million children face life-threatening diseases, as about 70 percent of health facilities in conflict-affected states remain non-functional.

On Jan. 15, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) cautioned that without immediate funding, its food stocks in Sudan will be depleted by the end of March, leaving millions without aid.

A late 2025 UN report confirmed famine in the cities of El Fasher in North Darfur and Kadugli in South Kordofan.

Generics transform care

Advantages, challenges of Indian generic drugs

NEW DELHI, Jan 20, (Xinhua):

In the global pursuit of greater pharmaceutical accessibility, Indian generic drugs have gained popularity for their affordability and broad reach, while also facing persistent challenges related to quality oversight and intellectual property disputes. Both their achievements and limitations warrant close examination.

Indian generic drugs have become a key option for patients worldwide by combining low prices with generally reliable quality.

Unlike originator pharmaceutical companies, which often spend billions of US dollars and over a decade on drug development, Indian firms focus on process optimization and supply-chain efficiency, frequently reducing production costs to as little as 5 percent of those of patented medicines.

A notable example is Cipla, which reduced the daily cost of an anti-AIDS cocktail therapy from 30-40 dollars to less than 1 dollar, dramatically expanding access to treatment in developing countries.

This cost advantage is supported by India's flexible patent regime. The Patent Act of 1970 initially protected only manufacturing processes of new drugs, enabling the rapid growth of the generic drug industry. Even after India amended the law in 2005 to comply with WTO rules, it retained mechanisms such as compulsory licensing and patent challenges.

In 2013, the Indian Supreme Court rejected Novartis' patent application for an updated version of its leukemia drug Gleevec, ruling that the change lacked sufficient innovation and allowing India's generic companies to continue producing and selling cheaper versions.

Industrial clustering has further strengthened India's competitiveness. Hyderabad, the country's pharmaceutical hub, hosts nearly 200 companies covering the full industry chain within a 50-km radius. According to Mordor Intelligence, India produces around 60,000 branded generics across more than 60 therapeutic categories and supplies about 20 percent of the global generic drug market, with the United States as a major market.

Despite the strong points, India's generic drug industry faces mounting challenges. Regulatory capacity remains limited: Reuters reports that the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization has only about 2,000 staff overseeing more than 10,000 factories and 1 million pharmacies.

Since 2022, deaths linked to Indian-made medicines have prompted tighter regulation and mandatory upgrades to meet WHO standards.

Compliance pressures are also threatening industry stability. According to India's Economic Times, of roughly 12,000 pharmaceutical companies, about 8,500 are small and medium-sized enterprises, and over 60 percent risk closure if they fail to meet Good Manufacturing Practices requirements on time. Experts warn this could lead to shortages of commonly used drugs such as antibiotics, antihypertensives and painkillers.

International pressure is intensifying as well. The Office of the United States Trade Representative has repeatedly listed India as a "priority watch country" for intellectual property concerns, while the US and EU markets continue to tighten quality standards for imported drugs.

International pressure is intensifying as well. The Office of the United States Trade Representative has repeatedly listed India as a "priority watch country" for intellectual property concerns, while the US and EU markets continue to tighten quality standards for imported drugs.

'Smart living glue' offers hope for IBD therapy

Groundbreaking study shows human heart regrows cells after heart attack

SYDNEY, Jan. 20, (Xinhua): In a world-first discovery, scientists in Australia have found that the human heart can regrow muscle cells after a heart attack, raising hopes for future regenerative treatments for heart failure.

The study, published in Circulation Research, revealed that while parts of the heart remain scarred after a heart attack, new muscle cells are also produced, a phenomenon previously seen only in mice and now demonstrated in humans for the first time, said a statement of Australia's University of Sydney on Tuesday.

"Until now we've thought that, because heart cells die after a heart attack, those areas of the heart were irreparably damaged, leaving the heart less able to pump blood to the body's organs," said Robert Hume, research fellow at the University of Sydney and first author of the study.

"In time, we hope to develop therapies that can amplify the heart's natural ability to produce new cells and regenerate the heart after an attack," said Hume, also lead of translational research at Australia's Baird Institute for Applied Heart and Lung Research.

The team made the breakthrough using living heart tissue samples collected from patients undergoing bypass surgery at Australia's Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.

The team made the breakthrough using living heart tissue samples collected from patients undergoing bypass surgery at Australia's Royal Prince

Alfred Hospital.

"Ultimately, the goal is to use this discovery to make new heart cells that can reverse heart failure," said Professor Sean Lal, the study's senior author and heart failure cardiologist at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.

Cardiovascular disease remains the world's leading cause of death, and heart attacks can eliminate a third of the cells in the human heart, researchers said, adding that the discovery offers promising groundwork for novel regenerative medicine.

In another related development, Chinese researchers have engineered "smart living glue," which is composed of programmed bacteria that can navigate the gut, automatically find internal wounds and patch them up. This strategy offers a novel targeted treatment approach for inflammatory bowel disease (IBD).

The research, published on Monday in the journal Nature Biotechnology, details how a team from the Shenzhen Institutes of Advanced Technology and Shenzhen University, both located in south China's Guangdong Province, managed to modify a harmless strain of E. coli, which is a common gut bacterium.

The team engineered the E. coli with a gene circuit that is activated specifically by blood, a key indicator of severe IBD flare-ups involving mucosal

injury and bleeding.

Once activated, the bacteria secrete a sticky protein similar to that derived from barnacles -- small sea creatures renowned for their powerful, tenacious adhesion to surfaces like rocks and ship hulls. The secreted protein forms a durable "seal" precisely at the bleeding site, while simultaneously releasing a healing factor to repair the gut lining, according to the study.

"The engineered microbes are cultured in liquid and orally administered. Once activated in the gut, they form a film-like morphology that adheres to specific bleeding sites, where they help stop bleeding and repair damage," said Zhong Chao, the study's corresponding author.

A single rectal or oral administration allowed the bacteria to adhere to inflamed tissues for up to 10 days or 7 days, respectively, while in two mouse models, the therapy also demonstrated improved weight recovery, reversed colonic shortening and reduced intestinal bleeding.

This approach addresses a major challenge, namely the ability to make therapeutics stick and act locally in the wet, dynamic environment of the gut, the researchers revealed.

The team is planning to advance the "living glue" towards clinical studies, potentially providing a new targeted therapy for bowel disease patients.



Adelie penguins stand on a block of floating ice at Yalour Islands in Antarctica, Nov. 24, 2025. (AP)

Climate change threatens penguin survival

Antarctic penguin breeding is heating up sooner, and that's a problem: study

WASHINGTON, Jan 20, (AP): Warming temperatures are forcing Antarctic penguins to breed earlier and that's a big problem for two of the cute tufted species that face extinction by the end of the century, a study said.

With temperatures in the breeding ground increasing 5.4 degrees Fahrenheit (3 degrees Celsius) from 2012 to 2022, three different penguin species are beginning their reproductive process about two weeks earlier than the decade before, according to a study in Tuesday's Journal of Animal Ecology. And that sets up potential food problems for young chicks.

"Penguins are changing the time at which they're breeding at a record speed, faster than any other vertebrate," said lead author Ignacio Juarez Martinez, a biologist at Oxford University in the United Kingdom. "And this is important because the time at which you breed needs to coincide with the time with most resources in the environment and this is mostly food for your chicks so they have enough to grow."

For some perspective, scientists have studied changes in the life cycle of great tits, a European bird. They found a similar two-week change, but that took 75 years as opposed to just 10 years for these three penguin species, said study co-author Fiona Suttle, another Oxford biologist.

Researchers used remote control

cameras to photograph penguins breeding in dozens of colonies from 2011 to 2021. They say it was the fastest shift in timing of life cycles for any backboned animals that they have seen. The three species are all brush-tailed, so named because their tails drag on the ice: the cartoon-eye Adelie, the black-striped chinstrap and the fast-swimming gentoo.

Suttle said climate change is creating winners and losers among these three penguin species and it happens at a time in the penguin life cycle where food and the competition for it are critical in survival.

The Adelie and chinstrap penguins are specialists, eating mainly krill. The gentoo have a more varied diet. They used to breed at different times, so there were no overlaps and no competition. But the gentoo's breeding has moved earlier faster than the other two species and now there's overlap. That's a problem because gentoos, which don't migrate as far as the other two species, are more aggressive in finding food and establishing nesting areas, Martinez and Suttle said.

Suttle said she has gone back in October and November to the same colony areas where she used to see Adelies in previous years only to find their nests replaced by gentoos. And the data backs up the changes her eyes saw, she said.

"Chinstraps are declining globally,"

Martinez said. "Models show that they might get extinct before the end of the century at this rate. Adelies are doing very poorly in the Antarctic Peninsula and it's very likely that they go extinct from the Antarctic Peninsula before the end of the century."

Martinez theorized that the warming western Antarctic - the second-fastest heating place on Earth behind only the Arctic North Atlantic - means less sea ice. Less sea ice means more spores coming out earlier in the Antarctic spring and then "you have this incredible bloom of phytoplankton," which is the basis of the food chain that eventually leads to penguins, he said. And it's happening earlier each year.

'We are hopefully we will have a good World Cup'

Zadran and Darwish lead Afghanistan to 38-run win over West Indies

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates, Jan 20, (AP): A record-breaking third-wicket stand between Ibrahim Zadran and Darwish Rasooli led Afghanistan to a commanding 38-run win over West Indies in the first Twenty20 of their three-match series.

Zadran made a career-best unbeaten 87 off 56 balls and Rasooli scored 84 off 59 balls as they combined in a 162-run stand in a strong total of 181-3.

The West Indies top-order struggled against the experienced spin duo of Rashid Khan (2-19) and Mujeeb Ur Rahman (2-29) before cameos from debutant Quentin Sampson (30) and Gudakesh Motie (28) carried them to 143-9.

The series is part of the teams' build-up for next month's T20 World Cup with West Indies yet to finalize its squad for the mega event to be jointly hosted by India

and Sri Lanka.

"As long as we are bringing our best skills to the game, it doesn't matter whether we bat first or second," Afghanistan captain Rashid said. "As a team, we are fit and hopefully we will have a good World Cup."

West Indies made a promising start when Rahmantullah Gurbaz was run out on the first ball and captain Brandon King took a spectacular one-handed catch of Sediqullah Atal in the slips as Afghanistan slipped to 2-19 in the third over.

But Zadran and Rasooli then raised Afghanistan's highest-ever third-wicket partnership in T20s off 113 balls against some wayward West Indies bowling. Motie stemmed the flow of runs briefly in the middle overs with his economical four-over spell of 0-18, but both Afghan batters showed plenty of aggression against pace in the

second half of the innings.

West Indies was also scrappy in the outfield and dropped at least three catches in the death overs as Zadran and Rasooli upped the ante and scored 70 runs in the last six overs. Fast bowlers Matthew Forde and Shamar Joseph gave away 91 runs in their eight overs while left-arm spinner Khary Pierre (0-42) was also expensive.

Forde had a consolation wicket on the final ball when Rasooli holed out in the outfield after striking eight boundaries and two sixes.

West Indies stumbled to 3-42 inside the power play when Mujeeb clean bowled King in the first over; Rasooli held on to Evin Lewis' top-edge in the outfield and Johnson Charles was out lbw while attempting a switch hit against Mujeeb's quicker delivery.

Rashid then made an immediate impact by grabbing

two wickets in his successive overs that included the key wicket of Shimron Hetmyer, who scored only three off seven balls, as West Indies further slipped to 5-50 in the ninth over.

Sampson and Forde (25) combined in the best West Indies partnership of 45 before fast bowler Ziaur Rahman, who conceded 16 runs off his first four balls, claimed two wickets in his return spell and finished with 3-36.

"We are disappointed to lose the game," King said. "We showed glimpses of good cricket but it wasn't good enough. Afghanistan are a team that have quite a few good spinners, we will talk about it on the day off and review the game."

The next two games will be played on Wednesday on Thursday.

'It's amazing'

O'Brien's rapid rise complete: Track star is now US Olympic bobsledder

WASHINGTON, Jan 20, (AP): Jadin O'Brien was running track for Notre Dame a year ago. She's now an Olympic bobsledder.

O'Brien, who got in a sled for the first time only about three months ago, was one of the six women's bobsledders selected Monday to be part of the U.S. Olympic team that will compete at next month's Milan Cortina Games.

O'Brien will push the sled driven by five-time Olympic medalist Elana Meyers Taylor, who made the U.S. team for the fifth time - and has medaled in all four of her previous Olympic appearances.

Kaillie Humphries Armbruster, a three-time gold medalist, will also race in the Olympics for a fifth time between her tenures with Canada and now the U.S. She'll be in a sled with Jazmine Jones as her push athlete.

"These athletes have earned their place through their incredible effort, talent, and perseverance," USA Bobsled and Skeleton CEO Aron McGuire said.

The men's team saw the U.S. qualify two pilots, and the Americans are sending six brakemen as well.

Frank Del Duca, racing in his family's homeland at these Olympics, will drive USA-1 and have Josh Williamson, Boone Niederhofer and Bryan Sosoo in his sled.

Kris Horn was the other men's pilot to make the team, with Carsten Vissering, Hunter Powell and Caleb Furnell in his sled.



Elana Meyers Taylor/Jadin O'Brien of the USA in action during the Women's 2-Bob World Cup, in St. Moritz, Switzerland. (AP)

Best of the Rest

Cheptegei to run Dubai half marathon: Uganda's Joshua Kiprui Cheptegei will open his 2026 season at the Burj2Burj Half Marathon in Dubai on February 8, organizers said.

Cheptegei, who won the Tata Steel Kolkata Road Race in India last month, said he is aiming for a strong start to the year.

"I am preparing well because I am confident of having a better performance in the new season than last year. It is always an athlete's wish to perform better than the previous season," Cheptegei told Xinhua on Tuesday.

The two-time Olympic gold medalist said he plans to use half marathons to sharpen his speed as he continues his transition to longer distances.

"These half marathons will help me improve a lot in the speed ahead of the marathons in 2026. I am slowly adapting to the marathon races since I stopped running track races," added Cheptegei, the 5,000m and 10,000m world record holder. (Xinhua)

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Chongqing Marathon participant dies: A male runner in Sunday's Chongqing Marathon has died after a sudden illness, local authorities told Xinhua on Tuesday.

The organizing committee said it took emergency measures after the incident and that follow-up work is underway to handle the aftermath. (Xinhua)

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Chinese FA data shows rapid growth: China's football development at both youth and grassroots levels recorded strong growth in 2025, with registered players, coaches and competitions all posting sharp increases, according to data released at the Chinese Football Association (CFA) Congress.

CFA president Song Kai said the number of registered youth players across China rose to 109,200, up 24.88 percent over the past two years. China has 126,000 registered coaches, including futsal coaches, with 16,000 newly certified coaches added last year.

According to CFA statistics, the number of amateur players reached 980,000 in 2025, a 95 percent year-on-year increase. Nationwide, 4,324 amateur tournaments and 144,000 matches were staged, up 88 percent and 140 percent, respectively, involving 39,300 teams, an increase of 27 percent.

Song said city leagues such as the Su Super League, a grassroots football competition in east China's Jiangsu Province, have become platforms for local football development, with growing government support and integration into urban development agendas. (Xinhua)

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Butler goes down with right knee injury as Warriors dominate Heat



Golden State Warriors' Will Richard, center, tries to steal the ball from Miami Heat's Jaime Jaquez Jr., left, during the first half of an NBA basketball game in San Francisco. (AP)

Wembanyama scores 33 points after being named All-Star starter

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan 20, (AP): Warriors star Jimmy Butler injured his right knee midway through the third quarter of a 135-112 win against his former Miami Heat team after he scored 17 points, a big blow for Golden State.

Temper flared with some shoving between the reserves in the closing seconds.

Butler was hurt moments after catching a pass in the paint when he went down hard and awkwardly following a collision with the Heat's Davion Mitchell - who was called for a foul at the 7:41 mark of the third. The team said he would have an MRI exam and no further updates on his status were expected until Tuesday.

The knee buckled upon his landing and Butler screamed, grimaced and grabbed at his knee while down for a couple of minutes. He needed teammates Gary Payton II and Buddy Hield to escort him off the court and to the locker room after the fall on the Warriors' offensive end. When he finally got up with assistance, he was unable to put any pressure on his knee.

Andrew Wiggins had 18 points and five rebounds for Miami in his return to Chase Center, where he helped the Warriors win the 2022 NBA championship. Norman Powell had 21 points as the Heat kicked off a five-game West Coast trip and lost their fourth in a row away from home to drop to 7-14 overall outside South Florida.

Butler shot 6 for 11 after he sat out Saturday's 136-116 win against Charlotte for personal reasons. Stephen Curry had 19 points and 11 assists, Brandin Podziemski scored a season-best 24 points to go with six rebounds and Hield added 16 points on a night Golden State was without Draymond Green.

Spurs 123, Jazz 110

In San Antonio, Victor Wembanyama had a season-high seven 3-pointers and finished with 33 points and 10

rebounds hours after being named an All-Star starter for the first time as the San Antonio Spurs beat the Utah Jazz.

Wembanyama, named to his second All-Star team and the eighth San Antonio player to start, shot 7 for 12 from 3-point distance and finished one shy of his career best, set Nov. 13, 2024, against Washington.

The Spurs had seven players score in double figures in winning their third straight and for the fifth time in seven games.

The backcourt trio of Stephen Castle (18 points), Dylan Harper (15) and De'Aaron Fox (14) combined for 47 points for San Antonio.

Kyontae George had 30 points and Jusuf Nurkic added 20 for Utah.

The Jazz snapped the Spurs' eight-game winning streak in the teams' previous meeting on Dec. 27. San Antonio and Wembanyama made sure there was not a repeat finish.

Wembanyama was 3 for 4 on 3-pointers in scoring 13 points in the opening quarter and had 21 points at the half.

The Spurs outscored Utah 35-23 in the third quarter and turned a four-point halftime lead into their 17th victory by double figures.

Detroit started the fourth quarter ahead 84-82 after 11 ties and five lead

changes and the final 12 minutes were also closely contested.

Suns 126 , Nets 117

In New York, Dillon Brooks scored 27 points, Devin Booker had 23 and the Phoenix Suns beat the Brooklyn Nets.

Collin Gillespie finished with 22 points and Grayson Allen added 14 off the bench for the Suns, who have won five of their last seven games. Mark Williams had 16 points and eight rebounds.

Phoenix shot 57% (44 for 77) from the field, including 51% (20 for 39) from long distance.

The Suns led by as many as 20 points in the first half and had a 17-point lead with 9:08 in the fourth quarter before the Nets charged back.

Brooklyn's Noah Clowney capped a 19-6 run with a three-point play that cut the deficit to 118-114 with 4:01 left in regulation. Brooks then responded with a 3-pointer, but was called for a technical foul after he made contact with Michael Porter Jr.

Clowney converted the technical foul shot before Allen found Royce O'Neal wide open on the wing for a 3-pointer that made it 124-115, putting the game out of reach.

76ers 113, Pacers 104

In Philadelphia, Tyrese Maxey had 29 points and eight steals hours after being named an All-Star starter for the first time and Joel Embiid had 30 points and nine rebounds to lead the Philadelphia 76ers to win over the Indiana Pacers.

Kelly Oubre Jr. scored 18 points, and all five starters hit double figures.

Andrew Nembhard led the Pacers with 25 points and Pascal Siakam had 24 points on a night in which Indiana sports fans were more likely tuned to the college football national championship game.

Pacers coach Rick Carlisle lamented before the game he would miss the showdown between the Hoosiers and Miami. He called it a "bummer."

Carlisle likely felt much the same way after the Pacers followed a modest three-game win streak with their third loss in four games.

Under-pressure Frank 'feeling the trust' in toughest spell as Spurs manager

LONDON, Jan 20, (AP): Under-pressure Tottenham manager Thomas Frank believes he retains the faith of the club's board after speculation about his future following a string of bad results in a troubled season.

Frank was taunted in chants by Tottenham's own fans during Saturday's 2-1 home loss to West Ham that left his team in 14th place in the Premier League and with just one win in its last eight games in all competitions.

A day before facing Borussia Dortmund

in the Champions League, the Danish coach said in a news conference Monday that he'd had lunch with leading figures at the club, including CEO Vinai Venkatesham.

"I have just been feeling the trust along the way," said Frank, adding that the current scrutiny was simply "part of the media circus."

Frank said he had "no doubt" he could win back the support of disgruntled fans who called for his departure during the West Ham game and asked for "resilience" in tough times.

"As I have said many times, as long as we win football matches and make sure we win enough of them, then everyone will support us," Frank said on the BBC. "It is not about me. It is about supporting each other, supporting the team, the players."

Frank was hired during the offseason, leaving Brentford after nearly a year as the replacement for Ange Postecoglou at Spurs. They won the Europa League under Postecoglou to end a 17-year trophy drought but finished in 17th place in the Premier League last season.

Frank was supposed to bring more solidity and tactical discipline to the team. Yet, for many fans, the chaos of Postecoglou's reign has been replaced by lethargy and a lack of creativity under Frank.

While Tottenham is decently placed in 11th in the 36-club Champions League standings, the team is out of both domestic cups and has won only seven of its 22 Premier League games. Its home form is particularly poor, with six defeats in 11 league matches at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium already.

Phoenix Suns' Devin Booker, right, fights for control of the ball with Brooklyn Nets' Michael Porter Jr. during the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Phoenix Suns in New York. (AP)

National team secures third straight win and tops its group in style

Zain Kuwait sponsors 22nd Asian Handball Championship



Hamad Al-Musaibeh presents the Match MVP award to Al-Azraq star Haider Dashti.



Zain calls on fans to back the National Team following its well-deserved qualification to the next stages.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Zain Kuwait's main sponsorship of the 22nd Asian Men's Handball Championship (Road to Germany), that Kuwait is hosting until 29 January at Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Halls Complex, sees the participation of 15 teams as part of the qualifiers for the 2027 IHF Men's World Championship in Germany.

The step reflects Zain's continued approach to supporting major regional tournaments hosted in Kuwait, showcasing the country's organizational excellence and strong sporting presence at both the local and continental levels.

Within an ongoing strategic partnership with the Kuwait Handball Association, Zain previously sponsored the 10th Arab Handball Cup, hosted in Kuwait last year, in an edition that saw strong public engagement and distinguished organization.

During the Kuwait Handball National Team's preliminary round match against Hong Kong, Corporate Relations & Communications Director, Hamad Al-Musaibeh, honored star player Haider Dashti with the Match MVP award, in a gesture that reflects Zain's appreciation of standout performances and its ongoing support for the game's



Zain proud to support this continental sporting event hosted on Kuwaiti soil.

champions, as part of its commitment to celebrating the achievements of the national team's players.

Zain's support for the championship aligns with its vision to empower young athletes, spotlight national talent, and reinforce a culture of fair competition within a healthy sporting environment that positively impacts the community. It also contributes to strengthening Kuwait's position as a dynamic regional sports hub through hosting tournaments at a continental level.

The national team has made a strong start by winning its first

three preliminary round matches, advancing to the main stages with a perfect record. This reflects the strong fan base behind Kuwaiti handball and its promising talent, as Zain calls on fans to continue supporting Al-Azraq throughout the upcoming stages of the tournament.

Zain's partnership with the Kuwait Handball Association to be a part of this continental sporting event hosted on Kuwaiti soil contributes to highlighting the country's organizational and sporting capabilities, offering fans a rich competitive experience both on and off the field.

Nahid stars as IIIY win Victory Day Cup

Bangladesh Youth Festival Victory Day Cup concludes in Kuwait



Top and above: Photos from the event

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The Bangladesh Youth Festival and Victory Day Cup 2025, featuring expatriate Bangladeshi cricket teams in Kuwait, concluded successfully on January 18 at the Kuwait Cricket Ground in Sulaibiya. The tournament was organized by the Bangladesh Cricket Association, Kuwait, under the patronage of the Bangladesh Embassy, with the Bangladesh Press Club, Kuwait serving as the media partner.

A total of 10 expatriate Bangladeshi teams competed in the tournament. In the thrilling final, IIIY Sporting Club faced Jilib Expatriate Club. After winning the toss, IIIY Sporting Club elected to bat first. In an exciting contest, IIIY Sport-

ing Club defeated Jilib Expatriate Club by 32 runs, claiming the championship.

Nahid of IIIY Sporting Club impressed with the ball, taking 3 crucial wickets, and was awarded 'Man of the Match' for his outstanding performance.

The prize distribution ceremony was conducted under the supervision of Tournament Convener Mir Mosharrif Hossain Mostafa and Acting President of Bangladesh Cricket Association, Kuwait, Sarwadi Sarwar. The event's Chief Guest was Major General Syed Tarek Hossain, OSP, AUC, PSC, Honorable Ambassador of Bangladesh to Kuwait, while Defence Attaché Brigadier General Rakibul Karim Chowdhury attended as a special guest.

Other dignitaries present included Counselor Mohammad Moniruzzaman, Counselor (Labor) SM Saifur Rahman, First Secretary (Passport & Visa) Mohammad Atiqul Mamun, President of Bangladesh Business Council Kuwait Lutfur Rahman Mukha Ali, along with Mohammad Main Uddin, Aziz Rahman Aziz, Mohammad Akhtaruzzaman Shams, Shafiqul Islam Shafiq, Golden Selim Khan, and other professionals.

The tournament drew journalists, community leaders, sports enthusiasts, and a large number of expatriate Bangladeshis, creating a vibrant and celebratory atmosphere throughout the event.

Kuwait wins gold in men's trap shooting



Kuwait's men's trap team celebrates winning gold at the Asian Shooting Championship in Doha.

DOHA, Jan 20, (KUNA): Kuwait's men's trap team claimed gold at the Asian Championship in Qatar on Tuesday. The trio of Abdurrahman Al-Faihan, Khaled Al-Mudhaf, and

Nasser Al-Miqlid topped the finals, with host nation Qatar taking silver and the UAE securing bronze.

Individually, Al-Faihan also earned a bronze medal, while the



Kuwait women's team celebrates bronze in Doha.

women's team Shahad Al-Hawal, Sarah Al-Hawal, and Reem Al-Zaman added another bronze to Kuwait's tally.

The Doha-hosted Asian Shotgun

Championships 2026, held at the Luail Shooting Complex, features 196 shooters from 17 nations competing for top honors. The event began last week and runs through January 21.

'Siyah' wins late Sheikh Khalid Duaij Al-Sabah Cup

'Shahin Al-Mughira' clinches Al-Danat Cup



Mohammed Suleiman Al-Omar, Alaa Hamad Al-Roumi, and Sheikha Fahad Al-Nasser presented the trophy to the winners.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The remarkable "Shahin Al-Mughira," owned by Rashid Al-Azmi, trained by Iyad Al-Farmawi, and ridden by Faisal Al-Farmawi, continued its winning streak in Arabian horse racing (Egyptian-blooded) by capturing the Al-Danat Stud Cup, owned by Mohammed Suleiman Al-Omar. The victory came in the seventh race for mixed Egyptian-blooded horses over 1,600 meters, finishing in 2:04.34 minutes, at the 12th meeting of the Kuwait Hunting and Equestrian Club.

The trophy was presented by Mohammed Suleiman Al-Omar, Alaa Hamad Al-Roumi (owner of Al-Rayah Stud), and Sheikh Fahad Al-Nasser, Secretary General of the Supreme Equestrian Committee.

Al-Omar praised the Shooting and Equestrian Club for its continued support of Egyptian-blooded Arabian horses and lauded the efforts of Mohammed Jasim Al-Marzouq, honorary president of the Arab Horse Center "Beit Al-Arab," Alaa Hamad Al-Roumi, and Sheikha Sara Al-Sabah in promoting equestrian sports.

In other highlights, "Siyah," owned by Al-Zoubi, won the Late Sheikh Khalid Duaij Al-Sabah Cup for mixed horses over 1,600 meters in the sixth race, clocking 1:40.45 minutes. Meanwhile, "Al-Maqam," owned by Al-Jaidiya, claimed the Late Sheikh Khalid Duaij Al-Sabah Cup for handicap horses over 2,400 meters in the fifth race, finishing in 2:37.52 minutes.

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Senegal's President Bassirou Diomaye Faye, center left, delivers a speech as Senegal's team arrives at Blaise Diagne International Airport following its victory in the Africa Cup of Nations soccer tournament, in Ndiass, Senegal. (AP)

Sports

Championship takes a breather

All hands on deck: Kuwait set for Asian Handball Championship title push

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The 22nd Asian Men's Handball Championship, serving as qualifiers for the 2027 World Championship in Germany, pauses for a rest day today at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex, with action continuing until January 29.

Competition resumes tomorrow with the launch of the main round, in addition to the classification matches for the President's Cup. The teams advancing to the main round are Qatar and South Korea from Group A, Bahrain and Iraq from Group B, Kuwait and the UAE from Group C, and Saudi Arabia and Japan from Group D.

The main round gets underway tomorrow, with Kuwait's national team placed in Group One alongside Iraq, Japan; and Kuwait will begin its main-round campaign against Iraq at 6:00 pm tomorrow.

Talal Al-Otaibi, a member of the Kuwait Handball Federation, stated



Talal Al-Otaibi, member of the Kuwait Handball Federation.



Kuwait head coach Aron Kristjánsson (center) with captain Abdullah Al-Khamees (right) and Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi address the media during press conference.

that the strong performances delivered by the national team so far in the 22nd Asian Championship have been no coincidence, but rather the result of hard work and full commitment from all parties involved.

Al-Otaibi noted that over the past three months, players and administrative staff have shown exemplary discipline during overseas training camps, daily training sessions, and preparations for the continental tournament.

He added that the impressive level shown by the team reflects the dedication and effort of the players, as well as the administrative and technical staff, stressing that strong results on the court are a natural outcome of sustained hard work.

Al-Otaibi expressed confidence in Kuwait's ability to progress deep into the tournament, citing the team's technical quality and the strong support they receive from home fans, which he described as the true source of motivation behind the team's success.

He also praised the Handball Federation for its success in hosting the championship, commending the smooth organization and professionalism shown throughout the event.

Meanwhile, Kuwait head coach Aron Kristjánsson said the team produced a good performance against the UAE in the final match of the preliminary round which it won 27-22.

Speaking after Kuwait's victory, the Icelandic coach explained that injuries have sidelined several players, which has affected the team's overall balance, particularly on the defensive side, during the previous matches.

He acknowledged some defensive shortcomings that need to be addressed, while also pointing out that

the team missed several clear scoring chances in attack, issues that the coaching staff aims to correct quickly.

Kristjánsson added that the recent rise in injuries has forced the technical staff to rotate players to cover gaps in certain positions, noting that the upcoming main-round matches will be tough and decisive. He expressed hope that the injured players will return soon so the team can perform at full strength.

Team captain Abdullah Al-Khamees said the players take responsibility for the defensive and attacking mistakes made against the UAE and are determined to learn from them in the matches ahead.

Al-Khamees emphasized that the Kuwaiti fans that have backed the team throughout the tournament are the real stars, adding that the players are eager to repay that support by competing strongly in the main rounds. He also expressed confidence that the fans will continue to stand behind the team in the coming matches.



Indiana holds the trophy after their win against Miami in the College Football Playoff national championship game in Miami Gardens, Fla. (AP)

Indiana wins first national title with unbeaten season

Mendoza bulldozes way into end zone

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla., Jan 20, (AP): Fernando Mendoza bulldozed his way into the end zone and Indiana bullied its way into the history books Monday night, toppling Miami 27-21 to put the finishing touch on a rags-to-riches story, an undefeated season and the national title.

The Heisman Trophy winner finished with 186 yards passing, but it was his tackle-breaking, sprawled-out 12-yard touchdown run on fourth-and-4 with 9:18 left that defined this game - and the Hoosiers' season.

Indiana would not be denied.

"I had to go airborne," said Mendoza, who had his lip split and his arm bloodied

by a ferocious Miami defense that sacked him three times and hit him many more. "I would die for my team."

Mendoza's TD gave turnaround artist Curt Cignetti's team a 24-14 lead - barely enough breathing room to hold off a frenzied charge by the hard-hitting Hurricanes, who came to life in the second half behind 112 yards and two scores from Mark Fletcher but never took the lead.

The College Football Playoff trophy now heads to the most unlikely of places: Bloomington, Indiana - a campus that endured a nation-leading 713 losses over 130-plus years of football before Cignetti arrived two years ago to embark on a revival for the ages.

"Took some chances, found a way. Let me tell you: We won the national championship at Indiana University. It can be done," Cignetti said.

Indiana finished 16-0 - using the extra games afforded by the expanded 12-team playoff to match a perfect

season win total last compiled by Yale in 1894.

In a fitting bit of symmetry, this undefeated title comes 50 years after Bob Knight's basketball team went 32-0 to win it all in that state's favorite sport.

That hasn't happened since, and there's already some thought that college football - in its evolving, money-soaked era - might not see a team like this again, either.

Players like Mendoza - a transfer from Cal who grew up just a few miles away from Miami's campus, "The U" - certainly don't come around often.

Two fourth-down gambles by Cignetti in the fourth quarter, after Fletcher's second touchdown carved the Hurricanes' deficit to three, put Mendoza in position to shine.

The first was a 19-yard completion to Charlie Becker on a back-shoulder fade that those guys have been perfecting all season. Four plays later came a decision and play that wins championships.



Kuwait Figure Skating team.

ISU-supervised camp kicks off in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The Kuwait Winter Games Club launched an international training camp for Kuwaiti female figure skaters, with supervision from the International Skating Union (ISU). The camp, held at the club's ice rink, features 70 participants and includes guidance from Latvian skating expert Yegor Admiral.

Club president Fahad Al-Ajmi said the four-week camp is designed to boost the athletes' technical skills and performance levels using the latest internationally approved training programs. He also thanked the ISU for its support in organizing the camp.

Al-Ajmi emphasized the importance of bringing in the expert, recommended by the ISU, to encourage Kuwaiti skaters and help them continue their progress. The initiative is part of the club's strategic plan to develop Kuwait's five winter sports, including figure skating.

The intensive camp aims to prepare a new generation of standout athletes for regional and international competitions. Among the highlights, the team is set to compete in the 2026 Berlin International Figure Skating Championship in mid-February, showcasing the rising talent in the country.

Kuwait remains 135th in rankings, Morocco enters top 10

DAVOS, Jan 20, (KUNA): FIFA released its January 2026 national team rankings, confirming Spain's continued hold on first place, Morocco's historic entry into the global top ten, and Kuwait's stable position.

According to FIFA, Kuwait remains 135th in the world with 1,105.1 points.

Spain leads the rankings with 1,877.18 points, narrowly ahead of world champions Argentina, who sit second with 1,873.33 points.

France remains third at 1,870 points, followed by England (4th, 1,834.12), Brazil (5th, 1,760.46), and Portugal (6th, 1,760.38). The Netherlands

rounds out the top seven with 1,756.27 points.

Morocco enters the top ten for the first time since April 1998, jumping to 8th place with 1,736.57 points, marking the country's best ranking in history - a rise of 20.23 points. Senegal, winners of the recent Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON), continued their upward climb, moving into 12th place, highlighting their growing international stature.

Meanwhile, Belgium slipped to 9th, Germany sits 10th with 1,724.57 points, and Croatia is 11th at 1,716.88 points. FIFA also noted impressive progress from Nigeria and Cameroon, both of

whom reached the AFCON quarter-finals and climbed 12 places each. Algeria advanced six places to 28th globally, followed by Egypt at 31st, while Tunisia dropped six places to 47th.

FIFA highlighted that the AFCON reshaped the rankings among top confederations. The CAF now has nine nations in the top 50, up from seven at the end of 2025, while the AFC and CONCACAF each dropped to four teams in the top 50. UEFA continues to dominate with 26 of the leading 50 teams, while CONMEBOL has seven representatives and OFC remains unrepresented.

Sinner's bid for Australian Open three-peat begins with anticlimactic win

MELBOURNE, Australia, Jan 20, (AP): Two sets and just over an hour of tennis wasn't what Jannik Sinner wanted at Rod Laver Arena for the start of his bid for an Australian Open three-peat.

In his first competitive match since beating Carlos Alcaraz at the ATP Finals in November, Sinner was leading 6-2, 6-1 when No. 93-ranked Hugo Gaston suddenly retired from their match Tuesday night with an undisclosed injury.

"I saw that he was not serving with a very high pace," Sinner said, but "it's not the way you want to win the match."

After signaling he had to quit, Gaston went to a courtside chair and bowed his head into his hands. Sinner went to console him, putting a hand on the Frenchman's shoulder and wishing him a speedy recovery.

For Sinner, it was an anticlimactic return to Melbourne Park's main arena 12 months after clinching back-to-back Australian titles with a win over Alexander Zverev in the final.

He played Alcaraz in the finals of the other three majors, winning at Wimbledon and finishing runner-up at Roland Garros and the U.S. Open, as the so-called Sincaraz rivals extended their dominance of Grand Slam tournaments to a second full year.

Sinner isn't content with evenly splitting the titles with Alcaraz, though. He used his time off to concentrate on adjusting his service motion and tweaking other parts of his game in the search for incremental improvements.

Sinner is aiming to become the fourth player to win three consecutive men's titles at the Australian Open.

Wearing a wide-brim hat, veil and holding a white parasol as she walked onto Rod Laver Arena for the last night match, Naomi Osaka made a grand entrance.



Jannik Sinner of Italy plays a forehand return to Hugo Gaston of France during their first round match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

The four-time major winner went on to beat Antonia Ruzic 6-3, 3-6, 6-4, and later explained the inspiration for her design.

Madison Keys had a tough start to her title defense, struggling early against the offbeat style of Oleksandra Oliynykova before advancing 7-6 (6), 6-1.

Ninth-seeded Keys, playing in her 50th Grand Slam tournament, trailed 4-0 before finding her rhythm.

Oliynykova gained a lot of attention with her unique body art and ink, and a printed message for Ukraine on a T-shirt she wore in her post-match news conference.

No. 5 Elena Rybakina and No. 10 Belinda Bencic advanced in straight sets, but two women's seeds were ousted in straight sets early on Day 3, with Janice Tjen upsetting 2021 U.S. Open finalist Leylah Fernandez and Tereza Valentova beating Australia's Maya Jant.

Sloane Stephens, the 2017 U.S. Open champion who had to qualify the season-opening major, lost Karolina Pliskova 7-6 (7), 6-2.

In a match between left-handers, Ben Shelton, a semifinalist a year ago in Australia, overcame Ugo Humbert 6-3, 7-6 (2), 7-6 (5).

Shelton said it was one of the toughest first-round matches he could have faced, with No. 33 Humbert having the highest ranking of the unseeded players.

He'll next face Australian qualifier Dane Sweeny, who ended the 20th and final Australian Open campaign for 39-year-old Gael Monfils.

Also advancing were No. 5 Lorenzo Musetti, No. 9 Taylor Fritz, 2023 runner-up Stefanos Tsitsipas and Eliot Spizzirri, who beat 19-year-old Joao Fonseca 6-4, 2-6, 6-1, 6-2.