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## TRUMP INVITES AMIR TO 'BOARD OF PEACE'

# Kuwait OKs anti-terror bill

UAE, Bahrain, Egypt join Peace Council on Gaza

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21, (KUNA):** The Kuwaiti Cabinet on Tuesday approved a draft decree-law on the fight against terrorism crimes, which comes as part of a national blueprint to overhaul the legislative system.

The legislation was okayed during a customary Cabinet meeting held at Bayan Palace under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

It aims at protecting state security and community safety against terrorism risks and fighting terror finance and cutting off its sources by establishing updated legal mechanisms and deciding

strict penalties.

When this draft law was enacted, relevant international criteria and agreements were taken into consideration and the necessary equilibrium between national security requirements and constitutionally enshrined basic rights and freedoms was attained.

Several state and judicial bodies partook in the writing of the draft decree-law, which comes in the context of Kuwait's approach of strengthening its security and stability and overhauling its legislative system in a bid to address fresh security challenges.

The bill was then referred to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for final approval.

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## Kuwait bids farewell to martyr Sergeant Al-Hajri

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21:** Kuwait on Wednesday bid farewell to the martyr of duty, Sergeant Mohammad Saad Al-Hajri, who succumbed to injuries sustained in the fire that broke out in the General Directorate of Correctional Institutions building last week.

Al-Hajri passed away two days after the death of his colleague, Colonel Saud Nassar Al-Khamisan (May God have mercy on them both). The fire injured six people and the two martyrs later succumbed to their injuries.

A large number of mourners, led by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Major General Abdulwahab Al-Wuhaib, and senior security and military officials attended the solemn military funeral at Su-laibikha Cemetery.

The Ministry of Interior, represented by Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, Al-Wahib and all its employees, mourns with deep sadness the passing of Al-Hajri. They pray to God Almighty to have mercy on him, grant him Paradise, and inspire his family and relatives with patience and solace.

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First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah at the funeral of martyr Sergeant Al-Hajri.

## Kuwait faces showers until Sunday

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21, (KUNA):** The Meteorological Department has forecast scattered and light rain throughout the country on Thursday, becoming moderate on Friday, and occasionally thundery on Saturday evening and during Sunday daytime.

Director of the department, Dhirar Al-Ali, told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Wednesday that weather maps and numerical models show the country



Gusty winds sweep across Kuwait City on Wednesday, bringing a sharp chill to the daytime skyline.

## Residential real estate is safe haven amid new regulations

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21:** In recent years, residential real estate in Kuwait has been one of the most prominent safe havens for capital, serving not only as a means of securing housing but also as an effective tool for preserving purchasing power and a reliable store of wealth in an economy with limited investment options.

Today, however, the real estate sector faces a new crossroads with the issuance of the law on monopolizing vacant land, along with growing discussions about a comprehensive legislative framework designed to reorganize the market, control price inflation, and limit liquidity outside the economic cycle.

These developments have brought back to the forefront funda-

mental questions about the historical role of residential real estate.

The daily spoke with several real estate experts and researchers regarding the future of residential real estate in light of the new legislative changes.

Real estate expert Alaa Behbehani believes that assessing the impact of the law restricting the monopolization of vacant land on the real estate market must begin by distinguishing between different types of real estate, noting that conflating them can lead to inaccurate conclusions.

He emphasized that residential real estate in Kuwait continues to serve as a hedge against inflation, describing the law's impact as limited.

Behbehani explained that the law does not address the core issue of the imbalance between supply and demand. Price increases are likely to continue, and may even accelerate, so long as the allocation of land and housing projects fails to keep pace with the rapidly growing housing demand and the actual needs of citizens.

Real estate in Kuwait has never been limited to residential use alone but has evolved over the years into a tool for speculation and income generation for a large segment of the population. This is a consequence of the rentier nature of Kuwait's oil-dependent economy, where liquidity is injected into the market through salaries and government projects, in the absence of real productive investment channels capable of absorbing capital.

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## Debt relief campaign raises KD 15 mln, frees thousands

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21:** Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs Dr. Khaled Al-Ajmi confirmed that the third national campaign for debtors launched by the ministry is a resounding success, with donations exceeding KD15 million -- the highest compared to the previous two campaigns.

The decree is based on the provisions of civil service and administrative organization laws, the law governing the practice of medicine and related professions, and the recommendations of a committee formed to standardize official work identities, seals, uniforms, and digital



Al-Awadhi

In a televised interview, Al-Ajmi asserted this is a clear indication of the deep-rooted charitable work and human solidarity in the Kuwaiti society. He pointed that the abovementioned figure is a manifestation of the major support that the campaign received from civil society organizations, private sector, individual donors and government entities.

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## EU prioritizes strengthening relations with GCC countries

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21:** Ambassador of the European Union (EU) to Kuwait Anne Koistinen said the rapid developments concerning Greenland prompted the EU leadership to call for an extraordinary meeting of the Council of the European Union, with the participation of the leaders of the member states.

The meeting, scheduled for Thursday, reflects the importance and seriousness of the issue and the commitment of EU to address it with utmost seriousness.

In a press statement marking Cyprus' assumption of the rotating presidency of the Council for the first half of 2026, and in the presence of Cypriot Ambassador Andreas Panayiotou, Koistinen



Photo by Mohammad Morsi  
Ambassador of the European Union (EU) to Kuwait Anne Koistinen

highlighted the priorities of the Cypriot presidency and efforts to strengthen relations between the EU, Kuwait and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

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## HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

### Uncle, your five dinars made me a doctor

In 1994, my 14-year-old daughter fell seriously ill

The doctors recommended transferring her to the capital

The old age, the exhausting journey, my daughter's illness, and lack of money weighed on me

Every now and then, tears welled up in my eyes, and I hid them from my daughter and others

He asked, "Uncle, do you have any medical papers? Give me your card."

His expression shifted from surprise to bewilderment, and he then let out a deep sigh

He examined my features and softly kissed my forehead, unable to hold back his tears

He lifted my daughter into his arms and said, "Come with me."

I told him, "Your kindness and generosity will remain a debt I can never repay."

He said, "We have met again 30 years later after I became a doctor of medicine."

## Day by Day

THIS is life. If you smile at your brother, he asks, "What do you want from me?"

If you smile at your mother, she says, "What trouble have you caused?"

If you smile at your father, he says, "I have no money to give you."

If you smile at a stranger, they ask, "Why are you smiling at me? Do you know me?"

If you smile at a woman, they might accuse you of harassment.

If you smile in a gathering, they say, "He looks abnormal."

If you smile at an official, they accuse you of hypocrisy, thinking you want a favor or are offering a bribe.

If you smile to yourself, they say you are crazy.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

## Gold prices hit historical high

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21, (KUNA):** Gold prices reached a new historical high on Wednesday, surpassing \$4,870 per ounce and achieving record levels for the third consecutive day. The increase comes amid rising global geopolitical tensions and fears of a trade war between the United States and Europe, boosting demand for gold as a safe-haven asset.

Bader Al-Ruzaihan, Head of Strategic Planning and Follow-up at Dar Al-Sabah Kuwait, told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the rise was mainly driven by escalating disputes related to Greenland, along with high levels of instability in global markets, prompting investors to increase their exposure to gold in investment portfolios.

Continued on Page 5



Burgan Bank deepens investment in local talent in 2025: 200 new hires, 94.29% Kuwaitization rate

## Prayer Timings

Fajr ..... 05:19 Asr ..... 14:57  
 Sunrise .. 06:42 Maghrib .. 17:17  
 Zohr ..... 11:59 Isha ..... 18:37

# Local



HH the Amir

HH the Crown Prince

HH the Prime Minister

## Amir congratulates Sultan of Brunei on successful surgery

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent a cable to the Sultan of Brunei, Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaullah, congratulating him on the successful surgical procedure.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir expressed his sincere congratulations on the success of the surgery undergone by the Sultan of Brunei, and wished him continued health and well-being and further progress and prosperity for Brunei and its people.

## Crown Prince

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent a cable on Wednesday to the Sultan of Brunei, Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaullah, congratulating him on the successful surgical procedure.

In the cable, His Highness the Crown Prince expressed his sincere congratulations on the success of the surgery undergone by the Sultan of Brunei, and wished him continued health and well-being.

## Prime Minister

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdulla Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah then sent a cable to the Sultan of Brunei, Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaullah, congratulating him on the successful surgical procedure.



KUNA photo  
 Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights, Ambassador Sheikha Jawaher Al-Sabah, and the daughter of the current Italian President Sergio Mattarella, First Lady of Italy, Laura Mattarella.

## Women need more power in global decision-making roles

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21, (KUNA): Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Ambassador Sheikha Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaj Al-Sabah said women are qualified, trained and possess the expertise needed to contribute effectively to peacebuilding.

She noted the real challenge lies in limited opportunities to engage women and enable their access to decision-making positions and negotiation tables.

The remarks came in a statement to KUNA on Wednesday following her participation in a high-level dialogue on enhancing peace, stability and security, hosted by Italy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in Rome.

Sheikha Jawaher stressed that effective women's participation in peace processes requires clear political will, which translates international commitments into practical policies.

She added that involving women in me-

diation and peacebuilding efforts is essential to achieving comprehensive and sustainable conflict solutions.

She said strengthening selection systems, appointment mechanisms and expanding nomination pools are key to broader and more impactful women's participation in peace operations.

Opening the dialogue, Italian Political Director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Cecilia Piccioni highlighted the importance of enhancing women's leadership in mediation and peace efforts.

The event was attended by Laura Mattarella, daughter of Italian President Sergio Mattarella, the First Lady of Italy, and senior decision-makers and international experts in peace, security and human rights.

The participation reflects Kuwait's commitment to supporting international efforts to advance sustainable peace and cement women's role as essential partners in conflict prevention and resolution.



Mol photo  
 Traffic police checking documents of motorists.

## GTD detects 27,969 traffic violations in 1-week raids

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: The Traffic and Emergency Police general departments at the Interior Ministry recorded 27,969 traffic violations in the first seven days of this month, reports Al-Rai daily.

From Jan 11-17, the Emergency Police General Department conducted extensive security campaigns throughout the country, resulting in the arrest of individuals wanted by law for drug-related offenses, reckless drivers and those who violated the Residency and Labor laws, as well as the seizure of vehicles wanted by the courts, and impounding of vehicles and motorcycles.

According to the statistics from the Emergency Police General Department, 2,316 traffic violations were recorded, 1,154 security operations were carried out, 32 individuals were apprehended for holding expired residency permits or absconding, six vehicles were impounded for traffic violations, four individuals without identifi-

cation were apprehended, and nine vehicles wanted by the courts were seized.

During the same period, assistance was provided to 410 individuals, 11 fights were resolved, 141 traffic accidents were handled, one hit-and-run incident was addressed, and seven suspects were referred to the Drug Control General Department.

Meanwhile, statistics from the General Traffic Department between Jan 12 and 18 revealed that 25,653 traffic violation citations were issued, 25 juveniles were referred to the Public Prosecution, 45 violators were detained, and 58 individuals with expired residency permits were apprehended.

Within the same period, 333 vehicles and 25 motorcycles were impounded, one person was referred to the Drug Control General Department, three individuals without identification were apprehended, 53 wanted individuals with outstanding arrest warrants were arrested, and 32 vehicles wanted by the courts were seized.

## Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

**By Day:** Rather cold and cloudy with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-38 km/h with a slight chance for scattered rain.

**By Night:** Cold to very cold with

## Weather

light variable wind, with speeds of 06-22 km/h with a chance for frost forming over agricultural and desert areas.

**Station** Max Exp Min Rec

Kuwait City 14 04

Kuwait Airport	13	06
Abdaly	13	01
Failaka Island	13	02
Salmiyah	14	07
Ahmadi	13	02
Nuwaib	14	08
Salmy	11	-1

## ICDO awards Kuwait's 1st Deputy Prime Minister



KUNA photo  
 ICDO Secretary General Arguj Kalantari presents the order and certificate of appreciation to Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah. Kuwait Fire Force Chief Major General Talal Al-Roumi was also present during the presentation.

## KPC offers engineering jobs for Kuwaiti 'grads'

Oil sector eyes 98% Kuwaitization by 2030

By Najeh Bilal  
 Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21:** KPC announced the availability of job opportunities for recent university graduates in several engineering and science disciplines including chemical engineering, mechanical and industrial engineering, electronic and electrical engineering, computer engineering, safety and environmental engineering, chemistry, cybersecurity, and mathematics. Applications started from January 20 and will continue till February 10.

This decision is in confirmation of an article published by the daily in November last year regarding KPC's plan to hire Kuwaiti engineering graduates.

According to informed sources, KPC is currently leading a large-scale recruitment campaign to hire the largest possible number of Kuwaiti nationals in all its subsidiaries during 2026. This aligns with KPC's goal of increasing the Kuwaitization rate in its subsidiaries from the current 91 percent to at least 98 percent by 2030.

The total number of Kuwaiti nationals working in the oil sector under last

year's budget was 20,336, in addition to 349 Kuwaitis appointed to administrative positions in KPC's subsidiaries in September 2025.

KPC is placing special focus on increasing the percentage of women in leadership positions in KPC and its subsidiaries.

Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC) leads in female representation on its boards of directors at 43 percent, followed by Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI), each with 33 percent. Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) and KPC both recorded 29 percent, placing them in third position.

Kuwait Oil Tanker Company ranked fourth with 17 percent, while Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) had the lowest representation at 14 percent.

Women occupy 14 percent of senior administrative positions, including deputy managing director and above, while their representation in middle management roles, such as directors and department heads, reaches approximately 20 percent.

At the senior administrative level and below, the percentage of female employees with university degrees stands at 32 percent, while the lowest representation, 3 percent, is among female employees holding a diploma or lower.

The sources confirmed that KPC is committed to protecting Kuwaiti employees on its contracts by requiring contracting and oil services companies to pay salaries on time and safeguard their rights and job benefits.

According to KPC's latest statistics, the number of Kuwaiti employees in these contracts reached 5,236.

## PAHW details power, water needs of new cities

By Mohammad Ghanem  
 Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) estimated its electricity needs to cover the requirements of three major cities -- about 16,300 megawatts, while it projected the water demand in these cities to be 16,698 liters per second.

The newspaper obtained a copy of the letter to the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy indicating the timeline for major development projects, including the survey of new

residential sites and land, to provide housing for citizens, specifying their coordinates based on information available to the PAHW at the time.

The letter included the electricity loads and freshwater quantities as follows : Khairan City -- 6,000 megawatts of electricity and 5,857.36 imperial gallons of water, Nawaf Al-Ahmad City -- 5,500 megawatts and 5,419.86 gallons of water, and Sabriya City -- 4,800 megawatts and 5,419.86 gallons of water daily.

Sources affirmed that the ministry and PAHW are coordinating their efforts to meet the needs of new residential cities. Sources

said electricity and water services are considered essential components of the infrastructure for any new housing project, through which the State intends to provide suitable housing for citizens and secure the necessary budgets for these projects, particularly electricity and water production projects, which receive significant attention from the relevant authorities that are exerting tremendous efforts to present and implement them according to the timetables, away from the routine and bureaucracy that hinder the implementation of such giant development projects.

## Asian sold padlocks for phones; fraudster runs

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: In a bizarre incident, an Arab deceived an Asian when he sold nine iPhone Pro Max phones, an Apple Watch and headphones for KD 3,838, reports Al-Anba daily.

The perpetrator replaced the nine smartphones with used iron padlocks, the smartwatch with a small padlock and left the headphone cases empty. It turned out that the accused meticulously planned the entire operation, leaving the country just hours after the victim received the iPhone padlocks!

A security source suggested that the victim was aware the deal was suspicious, given that the value of the phones and other devices exceeded KD 5,000, while the total amount of his purchases did not exceed KD 4,000.

The source stated that an Asian, born in 1986, reported to Jahra police station that he was swindled. He disclosed that he had an agreement with an Arab, born in 1996, to purchase from him nine iPhone 17 Pro Max phones, an Apple Watch and headphones for KD 3,838. He met the perpetrator when the latter closed the phone shop where he worked, handed over the phones, and received the money in cash. Upon returning home, the victim discovered that the iPhones were replaced with used metal locks.

The source added that inquiries were made about the suspect, revealing that he left the country just hours after the fraudulent transaction was completed.

## Walk-in MoJ interviews on

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: The Ministry of Justice confirmed the start of personal interviews for candidates applying for the position of Junior Legal Researcher, which qualifies successful applicants for appointment as Public Prosecutor C, provided they meet the conditions set out in the announcement issued on July 12, 2024.

The ministry stated that the interviews shall commence Thursday at the Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies, indicating that the selection committee carries out the interviews in accordance with the approved procedures.

It added that each applicant was informed about their interview date two days in advance, underscoring the importance of following official communication channels and complying with the schedule.

## Other Voices

### Opinion of Mulham Al-Malaika

By Ahmad alsarraf

Iraqi journalist Mulham Al-Malaika, a relative of the renowned Iraqi poet Nazik Al-Malaika and an expert on Persian culture, published an opinion piece that can be summarized as follows:

"When the Islamic Republic was established, Khomeini envisioned building it on several foundations, including abolishing the nation-state, weakening the middle class and creating an alternative class, dividing society into elite men and veiled women of a lower class, and imposing strict religious laws.

After 45 years, it appears that the regime's project is facing several difficulties, amid Iran's involvement in foreign wars and internal conflicts, its insistence on extending its costly influence to several Arab capitals, its determination to develop its nuclear capabilities, and its clear hostility towards Israel.

This prompted the United States to impose various sanctions on Iran, which contributed to the weakening of the middle class. Over time, however, public awareness grew, and women took on a significant role in undermining the structure of the religious state. Among the most prominent of these women are the slain Kurdish activists Mahsa Amini, the influential im-



prisoned human rights activist Narges Mohammadi, and the less visible leftist revolutionary Maryam Rajavi, who has spent more than 40 years in exile."

A question often overlooked by analysts is whether women will lead change in Iran, and whether Narges Mohammadi will emerge as a leader. Mulham Al-Malaika says this is possible, as women have become the most important drivers of change in Iran, though not in the traditional sense of leadership. Instead, they are driving change culturally, morally, and symbolically.

The reason, simply put, is that the religious regime is built on an ideology of oppressing and controlling women, both physically and intellectually, through the use of hijab, the family, and forced obedience. When women began to resist these restrictions, the foundations of the religious narrative of legitimacy were shaken, and the most popular slogan became "Women, Life, Freedom," inspired by the Kurdish slogan that emerged spontaneously after the assassination of Mahsa Amini in 2022.

As for Narges Mohammadi, who has spent, and continues to spend, nine years of her life in prison and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2023, she represents a living conscience. She possesses high moral integrity, an impeccable human rights record, extraordinary personal courage, and independence from external influences, as well as the ability to communicate in a language that resonates with ordinary Iranian citizens, not just the elite.

e-mail: a.alsarraf@alqabas.

## HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah



# Uncle, your five dinars made me a doctor

LOYALTY is not just a slogan, but it is a daily attitude that reflects a person's morals and values. The following story is a testament to loyalty, even after many years.

A villager from the Algerian countryside recounted, "In 1994, my 14-year-old daughter fell seriously ill. The doctors recommended transferring her to a hospital in the capital. I had lived all my life in a small village on the outskirts. When I arrived at the hospital, I asked for the ward, only to discover it was very far away."

I hadn't expected the hospital to be so vast that a car was needed just to get around, let alone for an old man like me. I walked as far as I could, but no one offered help. The hardships of old age, the exhausting journey, my daughter's illness, and my own lack of money all weighed on me. Exhausted, I eventually sat down to rest in the parking lot.

Every now and then, tears welled up in my eyes, and I hid them from my daughter and others so no one would see me crying.

While I was in such a state, a luxury car pulled up beside me. A tall young man in a white coat stepped out. He came over and asked what I needed. I was choked with tears and couldn't speak. He gently asked, "Uncle, do you have any medical papers?" and added, "Give me your card."

When I handed him the card, he studied me closely, from head to toe, his expression shifting between surprise and bewilderment, before letting out a deep sigh.

The young man then sat beside me, examining my features and softly kissing my forehead, unable to hold back his own tears.

I asked him, "What's wrong, my son? Has something happened to you?" He replied, "No, I just felt sorry for you and your daughter."

The young man lifted my daughter into his arms and said, "Come with me." He led her into a specialized medical ward and placed her in a wheelchair. He gave instructions, and everyone greeted him with respect and deference. I thought to myself, "He must be a very important person in this hospital."

He guided the girl through the emergency room, the lab, the radiology department, and the anesthesia, intensive care, and general surgery wards. By around four o'clock in the afternoon, she had successfully undergone surgery and regained consciousness.

I thanked God repeatedly and expressed my gratitude to the young man, who had become my support and helper, sent by God. I told him, "By God, your kindness and generosity will remain a debt I can never repay."

Three days later, the doctor who had performed the surgery discharged my daughter from the hospital.

The young man asked if my daughter could stay at his home for another week to fully recover, as the journey back to our village was long and exhausting.

- In 1994, my 14-year-old daughter fell seriously ill
- The doctors recommended transferring her to the capital
- The old age, the exhausting journey, my daughter's illness, and lack of money weighed on me
- Every now and then, tears welled up in my eyes, and I hid them from my daughter and others
- He asked, "Uncle, do you have any medical papers? Give me your card."
- His expression shifted from surprise to bewilderment, and he then let out a deep sigh
- He examined my features and softly kissed my forehead, unable to hold back his tears
- He lifted my daughter into his arms and said, "Come with me."
- I told him, "Your kindness and generosity will remain a debt I can never repay."
- He said, "We have met again 30 years later after I became a doctor of medicine."

Humbled by his generosity, I initially suggested returning home, but he insisted. I agreed, and we stayed with him for seven nights. His wife cared for my daughter, while he and his children treated both of us with the utmost kindness, gentleness, and respect.

On the seventh night, the food was placed on the table, but I refused to eat and stayed silent. The young man said to me, "Eat, uncle. What's wrong?"

I exclaimed loudly and firmly that I would not take a single bite until he told me who he was.

I told him, "You have been taking care of me and my daughter for an entire week, and before that at the hospital, yet I don't even know you. You serve us and treat us with such kindness, as if you know me or as if I were a relative. I have only met you once before, at the hospital. Who are you, for God's sake?"

He replied, "Uncle, eat now, and I will tell you after dinner." I insisted, "By God, not a single bite will enter my mouth until you tell me who you are."

The man tried to evade the question, but faced with my insistence, he lowered his head slightly and then

said in a low voice, "Uncle, if you remember, I am that child you gave five dinars to in 1964, when I was sitting behind you on the bus. I am so-and-so." And he mentioned his full name.

I told him I remembered him and his father (May God have mercy on him). I said, "Yes... yes, I remember."

That day I was on the bus traveling from our rural village to a nearby town. Two boys, no older than fifteen, were sitting behind me. I overheard one of them say to the other, "This year the rains have been scarce, and autumn is almost over. The land isn't growing anything. My father is a poor farmer and can't afford to support me. So, I have to drop out of school this year."

When I heard the two children speak of poverty and deprivation with such an awareness that only adults can grasp, I was deeply moved and felt distressed. I immediately took five dinars from my pocket and gave them to the boy. I told him, "Take these dinars. They are enough to buy all your school supplies." But the boy refused to take the money.

I asked him, "Why are you refusing the money, my son?"

He said that his father might think he had stolen it.

I told him to tell his father that I was the one who had given him the money, since his father knew me well.

The child's face lit up, and he took the five dinars, smiling with contentment and joy as he slipped them into his pocket.

After that day, I forgot all about that encounter with the boy.

The young man said, "Uncle, I am that boy. Thanks to God, and then to those few dinars, I am now a doctor at the largest hospital in Algeria. Here we are, meeting again after God has blessed me with such a high position."

We parted ways in 1964, and here we are meeting again in 1994, thirty years later. Thank God that He enabled me to repay you, Uncle. The five dinars you gave me made me a doctor of medicine. By God, even if someone gave me all the treasures of the world, I would not be as happy now as I was that day with those few dinars. Uncle, your favor upon me is immense. By God, no matter what I do, I will never be able to repay your kindness. I ask God to reward you with the best reward in this life and a great reward in the Hereafter."

Therefore, good deeds protect against misfortune. It is said, "Sow something beautiful, even in an unexpected place."

Kindness is never lost wherever it is sown. Even if time passes, only the one who sowed it will reap its rewards.

Experienced men say: "Do not marry a woman who grew up in a home where men's dignity was lost."

Do not marry a woman whose mother controls her father. The risks are huge, and it is best to wait.

Do not have too many children if your financial situation is limited.

••••

Want to attract skilled professionals and talented individuals?

Offer incentives and encouragement, and help them acquire the necessary skills. Win them over, and you will profit instead of driving them away.

••••

No one will truly support you twice. The first time is sincere; the second is flattery.

Opportunity knocks only once, so do not let it slip away.

••••

Do not be overconfident. Be very careful; otherwise, your teeth may bite your own tongue.

# Jail overruled in drugs case

Court rejects two testimonies

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: The Court of Cassation overturned the Court of Appeal's ruling that had sentenced a defendant to five-year imprisonment for trafficking and using psychotropic substances. It instead acquitted him of both charges despite



Al-Nassar

the testimony of the first and second defendants against him and the police investigation.

Lawyer Bashar Al-Nassar argued that the appealed ruling was invalid due to flawed reasoning, a violation of the right to defense, and a breach of the law.

He explained that his client was not caught in the act and was implicated solely based on the confessions of the first and second defendants, without any material evidence or serious investigation to corroborate those confessions. The investigating officer did not conduct any actual investigation regarding the third defendant and that the investigation revealed no role or connection between his client and the incident. The testimony of one defendant against another, when conveyed through the officer and unsupported by evidence, is insufficient on its own to establish guilt.

The first defendant confessed after his arrest to possessing a quantity of psychotropic substances belonging to himself and the third defendant and stated that they were being hid-

den on a farm owned by the second defendant.

Following this, the investigating officer, guided by the first defendant, searched the farm. A search of the second defendant's bedroom led to his arrest and the seizure of bags containing a white substance, which he admitted to possessing for personal use.

The charges stated that the first and third defendants were hiding psychotropic substances in a room on the farm. Two bags containing 139,919 Captagon tablets were found inside the room. The Court of Cassation ruled that the case file lacked conclusive evidence linking the third defendant to the incident and that the charges against him were based solely on hearsay and investigations unsupported by evidence.

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**Full pension granted:** In a legal precedent that strengthens the protection of the rights of families caring for people with disabilities, a final court ruling was issued obligating the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) and the Public Authority for Disability Affairs (PADA) to grant a citizen the right to a pension equal to 100 percent of her salary, as she is responsible for caring for a person with a third-degree disability.

The Court of First Instance (Administrative Circuit) accepted the case in form, and based on the merits, overturned the negative decision issued by the administrative body, which refused to refer the plaintiff to retirement, with all the legal consequences, particularly the payment of the full pension, based on Article 42 of Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law No. 8/2010.

The court also ordered the first and third defendants, in their official capacities, to shoulder the expenses, in addition to KD 200 for actual legal fees. Attorney Nasser Al-Ajrah filed the lawsuit and established the correct application of the provisions of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law, confirming through this judicial victory that caring for persons with disabilities is a societal and legal responsibility, which necessitates full protection and support.

## 'Nazaha' fights corruption spread

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) announced the implementation of 58 awareness and training programs in the year 2025, in cooperation with 255 entities, which benefited nearly 4,000 individuals, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The initiative is part of Nazaha's efforts to promote the values of integrity and transparency and to raise public awareness of the dangers of corruption and ways to combat it.

In a press release issued on Tuesday, Nazaha explained that the programs covered topics such as promoting integrity and combating corruption, the Conflict of Interest Law, the Right to Access Information Law, and the Code of Conduct for Public Officials. They also included field training programs for students, an introduction to Nazaha's role, and concepts of governance and corruption prevention.



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Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habashi received Brigadier General Abdullah Al-Jazzaf, Director of the Jahra Fire Department, and Brigadier General Othman Al-Wazq, Director of the Jahra Fire Department for External Centers.

### Gov., KFF officers meet

Talks focus on response to emergencies and fire

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habashi received Brigadier General Abdullah Al-Jazzaf, Director of the Jahra Fire Department, and Brigadier General Othman Al-Wazq, Director of the Jahra Fire Department for External Centers.

According to a press release issued by Jahra Governorate, the meeting was held to monitor field efforts and enhance coordination among relevant authorities, thereby contributing to increased readiness and preparedness to respond to emergencies.

During the meeting, work plans and development mechanisms were reviewed, and ways to support the public safety system and improve field performance were discussed, with the aim of enhancing the security and safety of citizens and residents in Jahra Governorate.

The governor emphasized the importance of continued coordination and integration among all relevant entities.

He praised the vital role played by the Jahra Fire Department and its personnel in protecting lives and property, and wished them continued success.

### GTD details conditions to register tow vehicles

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: The General Traffic Department (GTD) confirmed that towing vehicles are subject to a number of conditions, especially the need to register these vehicles in the vehicle ownership document, reports Al-Anbaa daily.

The conditions include installation of special side mirrors, putting a warning triangle, lights and reflective tape, adherence to driving on the right side of the road, and ban on carrying passengers in trailers.

In addition, the towing equipment must be in good working condition, legally specified lengths must be observed, safety chains must be installed, weight must be properly distributed, and the equipment must be removed after use.

The department also announced on its X platform account the start of technical inspections for taxis at the technical inspection departments in the Capital and Ahmadi governorates in the morning shift -- from 7:30 am to 2:30 pm.

### Two Arab drug traffickers held

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Security personnel in Farwaniya arrested two Arab men for distributing small bags of methamphetamine (crystal meth) to users. According to a security source, officers assigned in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh apprehended the two men after noticing their suspicious behavior. Small bags containing methamphetamine ready for sale were found in their possession. The men and the seized drugs were referred to the concerned authorities.

# MoSA begins annual staff performance evaluations

Ratings to determine bonuses and promotions

By Fares Chaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21:** The Ministry of Social Affairs has started uploading the annual employee performance evaluation data into the approved automated system and completing the evaluation forms for more than 5,400 employees.

Sources from the ministry confirmed that the evaluation forms have been distributed to all departments, indicating this follows the addition of 30 percent mandated by the Civil Service Commission (CSC), which is based on attendance records, adherence to the three fingerprint attendance system

and compliance with the specified working hours, while the remaining 70 percent will be assessed by the ministry based on job performance.

Sources confirmed that the deadline for submitting and approving evaluations through the automated system is at the end of next week. They explained that evaluations are calculated according to established percentages, classifying performance as 'weak' (54 percent or lower), 'good' (55-74 percent), 'very good' (75-89 percent) and 'excellent' (90 percent or higher). Sources said this classification is based on various factors like individual and team performance, personal capabilities, competence of supervisory staff and adherence to work hours.

Regarding bonuses, sources expect that employees will be notified about their evaluation results upon completion, paving the way for

identifying those eligible for selection and outstanding performance awards. They affirmed the commitment to disburse these bonuses as quickly as possible.

Sources added that once the evaluation results are approved, the Personnel Affairs Committee will start filling supervisory vacancies, followed by a comprehensive reshuffling in all departments, which is expected to include department heads, supervisors and directors.

Sources revealed that placement and rotation will be carried out according to these criteria -- efficiency, experience, and ability to accomplish and work in a manner that is appropriate to the nature of each sector, department, unit or division. Sources explained that the goal of this step is not just to fill vacancies, but also to improve institutional performance and the work environment.

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21, (Agencies):** As part of its efforts to enhance cooperation and institutional integration among government entities, the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAAR) hosted a coordination meeting with Kuwait Municipality, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The meeting, chaired by Director General Salem Al-Hai and attended by representatives from Kuwait Municipality, focused on discussing ways to maintain the cleanliness of agricultural areas and regulate mechanisms for managing agricultural waste.

Discussions highlighted the importance of developing a comprehensive plan to identify locations for agricultural waste and refuse collection centers, ensuring easy access and minimizing haphazard waste disposal, which negatively affects the agricultural environment and public health.

The meeting is part of a series of coordination sessions aimed at establishing a collaborative work system and achieving a clean and safe agricultural environment, in line

## Kabad sheep farm plots seized

## PAAAAR pushes farm waste plan



PAAAAR photo  
PAAAAR hosts coordination meeting with Kuwait Municipality to discuss agricultural waste management and clean farm initiatives.

daily.

In a press statement issued Monday, the Authority revealed that the seizure was carried out during an inspection tour as per the directive of PAAAAR Director General Salem Al-Hai.

The Authority stressed the need for owners of agricultural holdings and plots to comply with the allocation terms and conditions in order to avoid legal and administrative measures in accordance with the regulations.

### Proposed PIFSS mandate seeks to mitigate risks

## Banks push to require standard loan clearance for retirees

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21:** Some banks are considering submitting a proposal to the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) requiring retirees to provide a clearance certificate if they decide to transfer their accounts from one bank to another, reports Al-Rai daily quoting sources.

Sources disclosed this will ensure the retirees follow the procedures applied to all other clients, reflecting the principle of equality without procedural discrimination.

Sources indicated that this proposal is part of banking efforts to safeguard banks' credit rights and to avoid legal action against retirees in the event of outstanding financial obligations.

This is not the first time such a proposal was discussed between the banks and the institution. Banks previously presented this idea to the institution, but it was rejected at the time. The institution justified its position by stating that it is legally unable to oblige retirees to provide a clearance

certificate if they choose to transfer their benefits from one bank to another. It explained that this stance is intended to prevent legal action that banks might take against retirees in case of outstanding financial obligations, adding that "this practice contradicts the Social Security Law and the relevant decisions."

However, recent developments in the banking sector suggest a shift in this position, as banks have become more sensitive to the application of such restriction. This led to renewed discussions, with banks aiming to convince the institution about the necessity of requiring retirees to submit a clearance certificate before transferring their accounts from one bank to another, in order to mitigate the risk of exposure to defaults. Therefore, the institution's application of this procedure is no longer viewed as a matter of banking discretion.

Sources pointed that activating the requirement for a clearance certificate for retirees is important within the bank-

ing sector, particularly amid increasing discussions about PIFSS refunding contributions to individuals registered in its system whose Kuwaiti citizenship was revoked prior to retirement, resulting in their ineligibility to receive a pension.

Sources clarified that under these circumstances, banking concerns are growing over the possibility that some retired borrowers may transfer their accounts to another bank before receiving their pension, thereby, depriving the lending bank of the ability to deduct loan installments until the borrower proves compliance with the repayment schedule.

Sources stated that banks extend credit to retired clients based on their retirement benefits, whether in the form of a lump-sum bonus or a monthly pension. Sources pointed out that if retirees are allowed to transfer their accounts from one bank to another without obtaining a clearance certificate, the lending bank risks losing control over the primary collateral securing the loan.

Sources explained that the seizure of a client's funds, whether the client is retired or not, requires specific procedures to be followed by banks, foremost among them is that the funds should be deposited in the client's account. They stated that once funds are transferred to another bank, the creditor bank can no longer deduct installments in the event of default.

Sources added that banks recently adopted a unified approach to streamline the issuance of clearance certificates, allowing same-day issuance in certain cases—particularly for clients who have not obtained credit cards—and within a maximum of 10 days, compared to the previous period of up to 45 days.

Sources stressed that banks are keen on avoiding unjustified delays in issuing clearance certificates to clients wishing to change banks, while protecting their credit rights from the risk of default.



## JANUARY

Room Description	Price
One night stay in a Queen Bed Cabana for 2 persons inclusive of Breakfast	BD46.000 /-net
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## Farwaniya Governor hosts official luncheon for UK envoy to Kuwait

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21:** Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi hosted a luncheon in honor of the UK Ambassador to Kuwait, Qudsi Rasheed. Both sides discussed issues of mutual interest and exchanged viewpoints.

Following the luncheon, Governor Sheikh Athbi, accompanied by Ambassador Rasheed, toured the Grand Avenues Mall, where they viewed prominent commercial and tourism facilities that reflect the development of infrastructure and the growth of the tourism sector.

### Enhancing academic excellence

## KU set to hold 5th Scientific Research Conference Feb 9

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21:** Kuwait University, represented by its Research Sector, announced its plan to hold its fifth Scientific Research Conference on February 9 under the patronage of the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal, and in the presence of President of Kuwait University Prof. Dina Musaed Al-Mailem, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The theme of the conference is "Enhancing Academic Excellence through Interdisciplinary Research and Innovation."



In a press release issued on Tuesday, the Vice Director for Research at Kuwait University, Dr. Abdullah Sultan, said scientific research is a core pillar of the university's vision and a top strategic priority.

He emphasized the university's commitment to supporting scientific research and boosting innovation by providing funding, encouraging researchers, and promoting collaborations and community partnerships with various state institutions.

Dr. Sultan explained that the fifth Scientific Research Conference supports academic and research development at Kuwait University and serves as an effective tool for advancing the research system. It plays a major role in promoting knowledge production and applying research outputs to support sustainable development and scientific progress.

Meanwhile, Dr. Makhout Al-Dousari, Head of the Organizing Committee of the conference and Assistant to the Vice President for External Research Cooperation and Consulting at the university, stated that the conference aims to provide a comprehensive scientific platform to strengthen collaboration among researchers in academic and research institutions, government agencies, and the private sector.

He stressed that the two-day conference will include several panel discussions with leading experts from Kuwait and abroad, covering topics such as innovation in interdisciplinary research and digital transformation.

Dr. Al-Dousari highlighted the conference's role in promoting scientific research and national development, indexing scientific journals in global databases, supporting interdisciplinary research from patents and discoveries to commercialization, and discussing the impact of interdisciplinary research on global university rankings.

He affirmed that the conference will include a scientific poster exhibition showcasing 430 posters that highlight the contributions of faculty members, teaching assistants, and graduate students.

Dr. Al-Dousari highlighted the participation of several researchers from local institutions with which the university has cooperation agreements, including the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET), the Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences, and Abdulla Al-Salem University.

# Kuwait advances global cooperation at WEF

Ministers Al-Ajeel and Al-Mukhaizeem showcase economic vision at Davos

**DAVOS, Jan 21, (KUNA):** Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalifa Al-Ajeel affirmed Wednesday that Kuwait's participation in the World Economic Forum (WEF) reflects its belief in international dialogue to confront global economic challenges and consolidate its position as a partner.

In a statement to KUNA on the sidelines of the WEF annual meeting in Davos, Al-Ajeel stressed Kuwait's keenness to enhance its presence at international economic forums and contribute to discussions on global economic issues.

He expressed Kuwait's aspiration, through this participation, to present its

economic priorities, strengthen partnerships with the public and private sectors, and benefit from global experiences supporting economic diversification, digital transformation, and a competitive business environment.

Al-Ajeel also noted that Kuwait's participation comes within a unified Gulf presence reflecting the advanced standing of the Gulf Cooperation Council states as among the world's most stable and influential economic blocs on global stage.

He added that Kuwait seeks, through this participation, to contribute to shaping international economic debates, enhance strategic partnerships, and consolidate the GCC's role as a key partner in supporting global growth and sustainable development worldwide.

The WEF annual meeting, held in the Swiss city of Davos, continues until January 23, with high-level participants



Khalifa Al-Ajeel, Minister of Commerce and Industry (left), and Sabeeh Al-Mukhaizeem, acting Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment (right), attend the World Economic Forum in Davos.

## Continued from Page 1

### Kuwait OKs

The Cabinet, further, consented to a draft decree-law amending some provisions of Law No. 20/2015 regarding national military service, and sent it to His Highness the Amir.

In addition, the Cabinet approved another draft decree pertinent to the honoring of martyrs, putting the office of honoring martyrs and their families under the purview of the Defense Ministry.

In this regard, the Cabinet mourned the death of the Minister of Interior's colonel Saud Nassar Al-Khamisan, who fell martyred while he was on duty.

Also during the meeting, the Cabinet listened to a briefing from Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah about the outcomes of his recent visit to the Italian capital, Rome, which focused on military and defensive cooperation between Kuwait and Italy.

Minister of Education Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei kept the Cabinet posted on the results of his recent tour to the Saudi capital, Riyadh, which mainly discussed Gulf education cooperation.

In other news, the Cabinet, in its weekly meeting on Tuesday, welcomed the US President Donald Trump's invitation to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to contribute to the international efforts related to the Board of Peace.

The Cabinet also welcomed the launch of the second phase of the Gaza ceasefire agreement, said Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereeda Al-Mousherji in a statement following the meeting.

It hopes that this important step will help consolidate the truce and address the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Strip. It further welcomed the establishment of the Palestinian National Committee.

The Cabinet expressed the State of Kuwait's appreciation for President Trump's role in achieving a permanent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and for announcing the establishment of the Board of Peace. It also commended the international efforts exerted in this regard.

The Cabinet reaffirmed the State of Kuwait's firm political and humanitarian support for the Palestinian people until they obtain all their rights.

Elsewhere, UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed announced on Tuesday that President of the UAE Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed accepted the invitation from the United States to join the Peace Council regarding the Gaza Strip.

Sheikh Abdullah stated that the decision reflects the UAE's importance of moving forward with the implementation of the peace plan proposed by US President Donald Trump regarding the Gaza Strip, which includes twenty points due to its pivotal role in safeguarding the rights of the Palestinian people, reported Emirates News Agency (WAM).

He also renewed the UAE's affirmation towards achieving the goals of the Peace Council and to support efforts aimed at enhancing cooperation, consolidating stability, and achieving prosperity for all.

In Manama, the Bahraini Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced Tuesday that King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa has accepted an invitation from US President Donald Trump to join the "Board of Peace," an international body tasked with overseeing regional stability and reconstruction.

In an official statement, the Ministry underscored that Bahrain's decision is rooted in its steadfast commitment to the comprehensive implementation of President Trump's 20-point peace plan for the Gaza Strip.

The Kingdom emphasized that its participation aims to safeguard the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

King Hamad expressed his appreciation for President Trump's mediation efforts, acknowledging the US administration's role in advancing global and regional security.

The Ministry further voiced its optimism that the Board of Peace will serve as a vital mechanism for strengthening international cooperation, bolstering regional stability, and driving economic prosperity for all stakeholders.

Egypt announced Wednesday its acceptance of an invitation from US President Donald Trump to President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi to join the Gaza Peace Council, affirming it will complete the relevant legal and constitutional procedures.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigration renewed Egypt's appreciation for the US president's leadership and commitment to ending the war in Gaza and promoting security, peace, and stability in the Middle East.

Egypt expressed support for the Peace Council's mandate within the second phase of the comprehensive plan to end the Gaza conflict, in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2803.

The statement affirmed Egypt's continued coordination with the United States and partners to consolidate the ceasefire, ensure unrestricted humanitarian aid delivery, deploy an international stabilization force, empower Gaza's national administration committee, and launch early recovery projects ahead of reconstruction.

Egypt also stressed the importance of advancing a path toward a just and lasting peace that fulfills the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and statehood, supporting security and stability for all countries and peoples of the region.

### Residential real

While the stock market is dominated by short-term speculation, real estate investment is driven by real demand linked to housing needs, compounded by the slow pace of government housing projects relative to growing demand.

Residential real estate continues to preserve its purchasing power for two main reasons. First is the lack of a diversified, productive economy with industries and companies offering significant investment potential as viable alternatives. Second is the continued strong demand for housing and real estate investment, which makes real estate a safe haven for preserving and even increasing savings.

The law regulating the monopolization of vacant land is still in its early stages, and its impact cannot be fully assessed until the seriousness of its implementation and the strictness of government oversight are tested.

Bebbehani predicted that some affected parties may pass the costs of fees and taxes onto final sale prices, potentially driving further price increases, indicating that others might convert their land into rental units in response to high demand for rentals.

He suggested allowing landowners with plots larger than 15,000 square meters to develop their land through regulatory exemptions granted by Kuwait Municipality, which could involve building modern townhouses or establishing fully serviced residential areas.

Bebbehani believes this approach serves the interests of both citizens and landowners, and offers a practical solution to the housing crisis.

Meanwhile, real estate researcher Fawaz Al-Maimouni stressed that the vacant land fees law is not an isolated measure but part of a comprehensive legislative framework aimed at addressing long-standing deficiencies in the housing sector.

He emphasized that vacant land is only one manifestation of these issues, not the primary cause.

Al-Maimouni explained that the real estate market is currently experiencing a period of stagnation and uncertainty, reflected in a noticeable reluctance to buy, even among investors. This slowdown represents a shift of capital toward other real estate sectors, particularly investment properties, which are less affected by these laws.

Residential real estate has been one of the highest-yielding investment fields for over twenty years. However, this massive influx of capital has distorted the original residential purpose of model areas, turning residential real estate into a form of investment property driven primarily by the pursuit of high returns.

Residential real estate is no longer a safe haven in the traditional sense, as its economic returns have become uncertain and increasingly threatened by new regulations. The market is currently in a phase of stagnation and waiting, followed by a second phase that is beginning to take shape, marked by a growing shift toward investment-focused real estate.

Al-Maimouni emphasized that the completion of the legal framework, along with the finalization of the Kuwaiti-Chinese agreement to develop at least 170,000 housing units, could transform the residential sector entirely, resulting in lower returns and a fundamentally different character.

He predicted that the residential sector may experience an unprecedented transition from long-term investment to medium-term or short-term investment, with returns potentially approaching those of stocks or bank deposits.

On the other hand, real estate researcher Abdulrahman Al-Hussainan believes that residential properties continue to serve as a safe haven, noting that recent laws have not disrupted the market but have instead provided greater clarity

for buyers.

Al-Hussainan stated that demand for residential properties has actually increased since the law's enactment, with significant individual transactions recorded, indicating that the market is functioning normally.

He predicted that mid-2026 would see better performance compared to the previous year.

Al-Hussainan explained that real estate remains the best avenue for investing money compared to the stock market or bank deposits. Real estate trading is more stable and speculation in the sector continues to yield positive results. Investors who focused on investment properties while awaiting the housing laws capitalized on opportunities for speculation and trading, making 2025 a busy year for the sector, marked by significant transactions and large deals.

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### Common mistakes buyers make when signing property contracts

Many buyers make recurring mistakes when signing property purchase contracts, often due to haste or limited legal knowledge. These mistakes can lead to long-term financial and legal obligations that may negatively affect the buyer's interests.

The most prominent mistakes to avoid include:

■ Signing without proper checks

Signing without professional legal review and relying solely on a quick reading or verbal explanation of the contract may cause buyers to overlook penalty clauses or unclear obligations.

■ Paying a deposit before verifying ownership

Always ensure the property's ownership documents are valid and that the property is free of mortgages or legal encumbrances before making any payment.

■ Unclear penalty clauses

Lack of clearly defined penalties for contract breaches can leave the buyer in a weak legal position.

■ Not specifying ownership transfer or handing over

Failing to set clear dates may result in delays or future disputes.

■ Relying on undocumented verbal promises

Any agreement not included in the contract is not legally valid, regardless of trust.

■ Failing to inspect the property's condition

Ignoring the building's age, maintenance, or defects may lead to unexpected costs after purchase.

■ Relying solely on the broker

While brokers are important, they do not replace the buyer's responsibility to review official documents personally.

■ Not comparing the price to market value

Accepting the offered price without examining similar transactions may result in overpaying.

■ Not verifying the consent of all heirs

For inherited properties, ensure a certificate of inheritance is issued and all heirs' consent is obtained before signing or paying a deposit.

■ Not confirming the legal status of the contracting party

Request a power of attorney. If the agent is a guardian or custodian of minors, verify their legal authority before proceeding with any payments or agreements.

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### Important real estate transactions in the second week of January

■ Al-Waha in Jahra Governorate: Building (sale) of size 300 square meters for KD 193,000

■ Yarmout in Capital Governorate: Investment house (sale) of size 1,000 square meters for KD 1,625 million

■ Hawally: Commercial building (sale) of size 1,002 square meters for KD 2.7 million.

■ Salmiya in Hawally Governorate: Industrial building (sale) of size 2,090 square meters for KD 2.5 million

■ Fahabeel in Ahmadi Governorate: Land (sale) of size 500 square meters for KD 1.3 million

### EU prioritizes

She said the position of the EU on tensions surrounding Greenland is based on firm principles, foremost among them is respect for international law, territorial integrity and national sovereignty. She affirmed EU's full support and solidarity with Denmark, Greenland and their people, stressing that EU recognizes a shared transatlantic interest in maintaining peace and security in the Arctic region. She pointed out that work is being carried out in cooperation with partners

for buyers.

Acting Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Sabeeh Al-Mukhaizeem affirmed Wednesday Kuwait's keenness to enhance its presence at international economic forums.

In a statement to KUNA on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos, also Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Al-Mukhaizeem said participation comes implementing directives of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. He explained that active participation serves government orientations toward implementing development plans, highlighting Kuwait's economic strengths, reflecting

its national vision, and enhancing strategic partnerships that achieve mutual interests while supporting sustainable growth and diversification paths.

Al-Mukhaizeem noted he participated in meetings discussing reforms in housing welfare, private housing development, public debt management, increasing non-oil revenues, and broader economic reforms aimed at advancing diversification plans and strengthening long-term financial sustainability nationwide.

He stressed that global ambiguity and uncertainty are far removed from Gulf Cooperation Council states, particularly Kuwait, whose political path provides stability and a low-risk environment attractive to foreign investors seeking secure long-term investment opportunities.

— See Also Page 10

### Debt relief

He emphasized that this collaborative effort contributed to achieving the desired results, and that the campaign is a model of institutional humanitarian work based on transparency and governmental integration.

He revealed that the Social Affairs Ministry, through the four consecutive phases of the campaign, liberated 2,635 citizens from debt and closed more than 4,000 enforcement cases at the Ministry of Justice. He explained that the primary objective of the campaign is to enable beneficiaries to completely escape from the cycle of financial hardship and return to their normal lives without financial burdens, which hinder them or affect their family's stability.

He said the first phase of the campaign targeted citizens whose debts did not exceed KD5,000 and the full debt amount was paid. "The campaign then moved to the second phase, which included those whose debts did not exceed KD10,000, while the third phase was for those whose debts did not exceed KD15,000 and the debt limit for the fourth phase was KD16,500 depending on the amount of donations," he elaborated.

He disclosed that the operational mechanism relied on the joint Sharia and technical committees, comprising of representatives from the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Zakat House, Secretariat General of Endowments, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Social Affairs. He affirmed that these committees worked for more than nine consecutive months to establish the rules and criteria to distinguish between genuine debtors and those who are not, ensuring the donations reach the rightful recipients in a fair and transparent manner.

On the international trade system, she affirmed that the EU regards the World Trade Organization (WTO) as the optimal framework for regulating multilateral trade. She warned about the risks of trade wars, asserting that trade and investment relations between the EU and the United States are the largest globally, with the two sides representing around 30 percent of global trade and 43 percent of global GDP.

On regional matters, she said the EU is monitoring with concern the acceleration of the Iranian nuclear program and its departure from the commitments of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). She also confirmed the re-imposition of sanctions related to the nuclear program, while underscoring the need to avoid escalation and affirming the continuation of political and security dialogue with the Gulf states to maintain stability.

On the other hand, Panayiotou revealed that her country was among the first EU member states to recognize the State of Palestine in 1988, citing Cyprus' unwavering commitment to support the Palestinian cause and the two-state solution in accordance with United Nations resolutions.

He said Cyprus enjoys excellent relations with Arab states and other countries in the region, which qualifies it to play a supportive role in international efforts to achieve stability without acting as a political mediator. He added his country welcomes the idea of moving to the next phase of stabilization efforts in the Gaza Strip, in line with the Security Council resolution and the proposed peace plan.

He pointed out that security inspections are conducted in Cyprus with the participation of joint teams and the presence of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), paving the way for transfer of aid without further inspection. He revealed that more than 30,000 tons of aid had been delivered so far with broad international support, praising Kuwait's role and the contributions of Kuwaiti charitable organizations, specifically the Peace Society for Humanitarian and Charitable Works.

He then affirmed the commitment of his country to strengthen Gulf-European relations, building upon the outcomes of the first EU-GCC Summit held in Brussels in October 2014, and to continue diplomatic coordination with Arab and Gulf partners in support of regional stability.

He stated that Cyprus is contributing through a dynamic six-point plan focused on security, humanitarian aid and reconstruction, taking advantage of its geographical location and balanced relationships, similar to its role in the Almatra Plan.

He disclosed that the Cypriot maritime humanitarian aid corridor, launched in January 2014 and fully operational in 2014, is a key component of this effort.

He went on to say that in March, an additional safe route was provided for delivering aid to civilians in Gaza, through the ports of Larnaca and Limassol, in cooperation with the United Nations and the United Arab Emirates.

The regulations include general appearance guidelines such as requiring employees to wear official identification cards, maintain personal hygiene and a professional appearance, and prohibiting inappropriate, indecent, or unsuitable clothing.

The regulations also govern the use of clinical and professional attire, limiting it to healthcare service areas and prohibiting

## America

**Zohran, Sanders rally with nurses:** New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani and US Sen Bernie Sanders rallied with nurses Tuesday in Manhattan during the ninth day of the largest strike of its kind that the city has seen in decades.

The democratic socialists, speaking to a boisterous crowd of nurses in front of Mount Sinai West on the Upper West Side, called on hospital executives to return to the negotiating table to resolve the contract impasse that prompted some 15,000 nurses to walk off the job last week.

"The people of this country are sick and tired of the greed in this health care industry," said Sanders, the long-serving Vermont senator and a native of Brooklyn, as he rattled off the multimillion-dollar salaries of the CEOs of the three hospital systems affected by the strike.

"Now is your time of need, when we can assure that this is a city you don't just work in, but a city you can also live in," Mamdani added.

The nurses union says it has held one bargaining session with each of the three hospital systems impacted - Mount Sinai, Montefiore and New York-Presbyterian - since the strike began on Jan 12.

But the sides say those hours-long meetings have ended with little progress, and there are no plans so far this week to resume talks. "They offered us nothing. It was all performative," said Jonathan Hunter, a registered nurse at Mount Sinai and a member of the negotiating team.

The New York State Nurses Association met Sunday evening with officials from Montefiore after holding negotiations Friday with Mount Sinai administrators and Thursday with New York-Presbyterian officials. (AP)

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**Utah's chief justice speaks out:** The chief justice of Utah's state Supreme Court cautioned lawmakers against meddling with the judiciary as Republicans pushed to add justices to the high court during their annual 45-day session that began Tuesday.

Republican legislative leaders and Gov. Spencer Cox



Mayor Zohran Mamdani and Senator Bernie Sanders speak in front of members of the New York State Nurses Association during a picket outside Mount Sinai West Hospital on Jan 20, in New York. (AP)

have said they support a proposal to expand the five-judge panel to seven, arguing it would help speed up decision-making. Legal experts say the move could have the opposite effect and set a dangerous precedent at a time of tension between the two branches.

The move comes as Utah courts have dealt lawmakers a string of defeats on abortion restrictions, transgender athletes and the Legislature's ability to change or repeal voter-approved initiatives. The Legislature is also preparing to appeal a redistricting ruling that gave Democrats a strong shot at picking up one of Utah's four Republican-held congressional seats in the midterms this fall.

"I ask that your disappointment with a few results not lead to penalties for an entire branch of government and, by extension, penalties for your constituents," Chief Justice Matthew Durrant said Tuesday in his yearly address to lawmakers. The state Supreme Court does not challenge the Legislature's integrity in its opinions, he said, asking lawmakers for the same courtesy when they challenge legal outcomes. (AP)

## Legal battles over massive immigration enforcement op in Minnesota intensify

MINNEAPOLIS, Jan 21, (AP): As confrontations with federal officers over their massive immigration enforcement operation in Minnesota showed no signs of stopping Wednesday, legal battles over the surge and the local response were also intensifying.

Federal prosecutors served grand jury subpoenas Tuesday to Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz's office and five other officials in the state as part of an investigation into whether they obstructed or impeded law enforcement during a sweeping immigration operation in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, a person familiar with the matter said.

The subpoenas, which seek records, were also sent to the offices of Attorney General Keith Ellison, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey, St. Paul Mayor Kahola Her and officials in Ramsey and Hennepin counties, the person said.

The person was not authorized to publicly discuss an ongoing investigation and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

The subpoenas came a day after the government urged a judge to reject efforts to stop the immigration enforcement surge that has roiled Minneapolis and St. Paul for weeks. The Justice Department called the state's lawsuit, filed soon after the fatal shooting of



US Border Patrol Cmdr Gregory Bovino departs following a news conference on Jan 20, in Minneapolis. (AP)

Renee Good by an immigration officer, "legally frivolous." Ellison has said the government is violating free speech and other constitutional rights.

Vice President JD Vance, meanwhile, is expected to travel to Minneapolis on Thursday for a roundtable with local leaders and community members, according to sources familiar with his plans who spoke on condition of anonymity.

tion on anonymity because the trip had not yet been officially announced.

The subpoenas are related to an investigation into whether Minnesota officials obstructed federal immigration enforcement through public statements they made, two people familiar with the matter said Friday. They said that it was focused on the potential violation of a conspiracy statute.

## Air Force One returns to Washington area due to minor electrical issue: White House

### Trump recaps first year back in office with winding remarks, paper tossing and impressions

WASHINGTON, Jan 21, (AP): US President Donald Trump wanted to recap his first year back in office. And it felt like he wanted to spend the next year doing it.

For more than 100 minutes, the president held forth Tuesday at the White House, where he went on a winding journey through his last year, interspersed with plenty of asides, a few impressions of other politicians and critics and, eventually, questions from the media.

Trump riffed on things his administration has done, starting with an awkwardly quiet stretch of show-and-tell in which he held up photographs of people he said immigration officers had arrested in Minnesota.

"I'm going through this because I think we have plenty of time," Trump said.

The drawn-out performance came at a moment of international alarm and domestic tension. Trump over the weekend shook the NATO alliance by threatening tariffs on Europe to strong-arm his aim of taking over Greenland. At home, tensions were high after his administration ordered 1,500 active-duty soldiers to be ready to possibly deploy to the streets of Minneapolis as he threatens to impose the Insurrection Act.

Tuesday's news conference came just hours before Trump was set to

head to Europe for a meeting with global leaders anxious to discuss his designs on Greenland, the new international peacemaking body he wants to form and a myriad of other global issues.

His fellow Republicans have been urging him to speak more to voters' concerns about affordability as they stare down crucial midterm elections this year.

"One of the reasons I'm doing this news conference, I think it's important - we have taken a mess and made it really good," Trump said. "It's going to get even better."

For more than 10 minutes, he showed off mugshots of people he said had been arrested, remarking on their alleged crimes. At one point, he asked the reporters in the room, "You're not getting bored with this, right?"

Seeming to realize he was losing his audience, Trump told them they were lucky that he only went through "like 100" mugshots, then tossed the stack on the Briefing Room floor next to his lectern.

After futzing with a large binder clip, remarking on how it could have taken his finger off, he assured everyone, "I would not have shown the pain." He threw the binder clip on the floor, too.

Not long after, he hoisted into the air a thick stack of paper with the word



US President Donald Trump calls on reporter to ask a question during a press briefing at the White House in Washington on Jan 20. (AP)

"Accomplishments" written in bold letters on top, a list he said would take him more than a week to read.

"It's big stuff too. We have the hottest test country in the world," Trump said.

And then the president threw the accomplishments onto the floor, where they landed with a loud thud.

Trump has long said he is his best spokesman, dating back to his real estate days, when he was known for calling reporters to promote projects

or pitch ideas. On Tuesday, he seemed to acknowledge that some of his economic arguments weren't landing with voters. "Maybe I have bad public relations people, but we're not getting it across," Trump said.

But as he touted accomplishments, he also went on some tangents.

In talking about immigration enforcement actions, Trump claimed that the immigrants his administration has removed from the US make the

Hell's Angels "look like the sweetest people on Earth," only to then pause and compliment the infamous motorcycle gang. "I like the Hell's Angels," Trump said. "They voted for me. They protected me, actually."

On his signing of an executive order "to bring back mental institutions and insane asylums," Trump waxed nostalgic, telling a story of walking to Little League baseball with his mother, who told him a nearby psychiatric facility was home to "very sick people."

Also:

**WASHINGTON:** US President Donald Trump's plane, Air Force One, returned to Joint Base Andrews about an hour after departing for Switzerland on Tuesday evening.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said the decision to return was made after takeoff when the crew aboard Air Force One identified "a minor electrical issue" and, out of an abundance of caution, decided to turn around. A reporter on board said the lights in the press cabin of the aircraft went out briefly after takeoff, but no explanation was immediately offered.

About half an hour into the flight reporters were told the plane would be turning around.

Trump boarded another aircraft, an Air Force C-32, a modified Boeing 757 normally used by the president for domestic trips to smaller airports, and continued on with his trip to the World Economic Forum in Davos shortly after midnight.

The two planes currently used as Air Force One have been flying for nearly four decades. Boeing has been working on replacements, but the program has faced a series of delays. The planes are heavily modified with survivability capabilities for the president for a range of contingencies, including radiation shielding and antimissile technology. They also include a variety of communications systems to allow the president to remain in contact with the military and issue orders from anywhere in the world.

Last year, the ruling family of Qatar gifted Trump a luxury Boeing 747-8 jumbo jet to be added into the Air Force One fleet, a move that faced great scrutiny. That plane is currently being retrofitted to meet security requirements.

Leavitt joked to reporters on Air Force One Tuesday night that a Qatari jet was sounding "much better" right now. Last February, an Air Force plane carrying Secretary of State Marco Rubio to Germany had to return to Washington because of a mechanical issue. In October, a military plane carrying Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth had to make an emergency landing in United Kingdom due to a crack in the windshield.



An Aurora Borealis is seen in the sky above Nuuk, Greenland, on Jan 20. (AP)

### Trump's threats challenge Europe's security and prosperity, says EU chief



Greenland Minister for Foreign Affairs and Research Vivian Motzfeldt, center right, hugs a woman after arriving at the airport in Nuuk, Greenland on Jan 20. (AP)

last July, but have threatened not to do so over Trump's tariff threats. Costa said that "we stand ready to defend ourselves, our member states, our citizens, our companies, against any form of coercion. And the European Union has the power and the tools to do so."

Also:

**COPENHAGEN, Denmark:** More than 15 years ago, Danish platoon commander Martin Tamm Andersen was leading his countrymen and US Marines through the heat and sand of southern Afghanistan after a Taliban attack.

As Andersen's vehicle moved at the rear of the column, everything was normal - until in one instant the world

turned sand-colored. His body shook violently. "I had no idea what was going on," he recalled. He ran his hands over his arms and legs to make sure they were still there.

When the dust settled, he saw one of his soldiers bleeding heavily from his face. Another had been hurled from the turret and lay on the ground, groaning in pain, his back broken in two places. The blast had torn the vehicle apart.

Andersen called in help from the US Marines, who halted a firefight with the Taliban, returned to secure the site, treated the wounded and helped prepare them for evacuation. At the time, American and Danish troops were comrades in arms who risked their lives for each other in common cause.

### Another train crashes in Spain, killing one person after fatal high-speed train collision

GELIDA, Spain, Jan 21, (AP): Commuter rail service in Spain's northeastern Catalonia region was suspended Wednesday after a Barcelona commuter train crashed the night before, Spanish authorities said.

At least one person died in the Barcelona-area crash, and 37 others were injured as crews worked at night to complete the rescue effort. The train hit a retaining wall that fell onto the tracks, authorities said.

The news late Tuesday of another train crash mere days after Spain's worst railway disaster since 2013 left many Spaniards in disbelief. Emergency workers were still searching for victims in the wreckage from Sunday's high-speed crash in southern Spain that killed at least 42 people and injured dozens some 800 kilometers (497 miles) away.

Three days of national mourning were underway, while the cause of that crash was being investigated.

The victim of Tuesday night's crash was a conductor in training, regional authorities said. Most of the injured had ridden in the first train car.

The disruptions Wednesday morning caused significant traffic jams on roads leading into Barcelona. Regional authorities in Catalonia asked people to reduce unnecessary travel and companies to allow remote work while the disruptions continued.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez offered condolences to



Police officers and firefighters inspect the damage after a commuter train derailed as a retaining wall collapsed onto the tracks in Gelida, near Barcelona, Spain on Jan 21. (AP)

those affected in the Barcelona crash, writing on X: "All my affection and solidarity with the victims and their families."

While Spain's high-speed rail network generally runs smoothly, and at least until Sunday had been a source of confidence, commuter rail services are plagued by reliability issues. However, accidents causing injury or death are not common.

The commuter train crashed near the town of Gelida, located about 37 kilometers (23 miles) outside Barcelona.

Spain's railway operator ADIF said

#### Europe

**'Meeting with Witkoff constructive':** Russia's presidential special envoy Kirill Dmitriev said his meeting with US presidential special envoy Steve Witkoff in Davos, Switzerland was constructive, the Russian daily Izvestia reported Tuesday.

"The meeting is proceeding constructively, and more and more people are realizing the correctness of Russia's position," he said.

Dmitriev held talks with Witkoff and US President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos on Tuesday.

Witkoff described the talks that lasted over two hours as "very positive" when asked by the media.

Meanwhile, in a drone attack Tuesday night in the Takhthamukaysky District of Russia's Republic of Adygea, said Murat Kumpilov, head of the republic, on his Telegram channel. Kumpilov said nine of the injured were hospitalized, and all victims are in stable condition. Two children were among those injured, and no fatalities were reported.

The attack struck the village of Novaya Adygea, where a large fire broke out, damaging an apartment building and a nearby parking lot. According to preliminary information, 15



Dmitriev

cars were destroyed, and another 25 were damaged. (Xinhua)

□ □ □

**Romania to deploy anti-drone system:** Romania will soon deploy an anti-drone system to strengthen its airspace defense, Chief of Defense Staff General Gheorghe Vlad announced Tuesday.

Speaking at a press conference in Sibiu, Vlad said Romanian forces have already completed training for the teams that will operate the U.S.-made Merops system, which will be integrated "very soon" into ongoing air defense operations across the country.

Merops, which uses artificial intelligence to detect and intercept hostile drones, is one of several counter-drone systems being tested by member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). (Xinhua)

□ □ □

**Car accident kills one in Warsaw:** One minor was killed and four others injured in a traffic accident on Monday afternoon at an intersection in Warsaw, Poland.

According to local media outlet RMF24, two cars collided at the intersection of Grochowska and Zamienicka streets, and police received a report of the crash shortly after 3:00 p.m. local time (1400 GMT).

One of the cars overturned and struck pedestrians, injuring three passersby and the two drivers. A 4-year-old boy was later confirmed dead after being taken to the hospital.

The intersection where the accident occurred was completely blocked. (Xinhua)

'Governments powerful deciders of how country operates'

## New Zealand election scheduled for November 7 with costs of living, housing top issues

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, Jan 21, (AP): New Zealand will hold a national election on Nov 7, Prime Minister Christopher Luxon announced Wednesday.

Luxon, the leader of a center-right government, will seek a second term in office, with the election likely to be a ballot on whether his pledges to improve the economy after the COVID-19 pandemic have gained enough traction to convince voters still struggling with living and housing costs. The main center-left opposition Labour Party, lead by Chris Hipkins, has regained support since its poor showing in the previous 2023 election and analysts forecast a tight race.

New Zealand elections are held every three years with the government selecting the exact date. Voters choose which party they prefer to see in government and also select a local candidate to represent their constituency in Parliament.

The country of 5 million people has a unicameral parliament, which means governments are powerful deciders of how the country operates. The National Party and Labour usually must form coalitions with smaller parties to hold a majority in parliament, giving the minor parties unusual sway in which major party leads.

Announcing the election date at a retreat for his party's lawmakers in the city of Christchurch on Wednesday, Luxon underlined what he said was his party's track record on working to rebuild a post-pandemic economy. Days earlier in a speech to a business audience in Auckland on Monday, he acknowledged that reversing the country's fortunes had not been simple and that many New Zealanders have endured "two years of hard grind."

The economy has contracted a further 0.5 percentage point in the most recently measured 12 months, and migration to neighboring, wealthier Australia has at times hit record highs during Luxon's tenure. Luxon on Monday blamed the former Labour-led government for the country's woes, saying he had "inherited a mess."

Analysts said that with inflation trending down and business confidence beginning to grow, Luxon will hope the months until this year's election will be long enough to convince New Zealanders that the economic reversal he pledged in 2023 is taking root.

Hipkins, his main challenger to lead the country, on Monday dismissed Luxon's remarks as "a whole lot of management-speak mumbo-jumbo." The opposi-



New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon announces the 2026 election date at the National annual away caucus in Christchurch on Jan 21 as Finance Minister Nicola Willis, (right), looks on. (AP)

tion leader added that Luxon hadn't delivered on political promises he had made, including making housing more affordable in what has been one of the world's hottest markets and ensuring access to public health care for all.

Paying for the country's aging infrastructure and how to fund pensions will also be central economic issues. Luxon decries Labour's approach as one reliant on accruing national debt, while Hipkins said Monday that National had squandered money on unaffordable tax cuts.

An unusual quirk of the election is that the premiership will once again be contested by two men named Christopher, as it was in 2023. Luxon, 55, is still a

relative newcomer to politics, making a rapid ascent to National party leader in 2021 after entering parliament as a constituency lawmaker at the 2020 election.

The millionaire former business executive was the head of the national carrier Air New Zealand before turning to politics and previously worked as an executive for Unilever when he lived in the United States. Luxon pledged to bring managerial experience, but his detractors highlight his political inexperience and say his wealth means he is out of touch with ordinary New Zealanders.

Hipkins, the opposition leader, entered Parliament in 2008 and held major portfolios in the previous Labour government, including as minister for health and education. The 47-year-old, who presents himself as a humble man from an ordinary background, briefly became prime minister in 2023 when incumbent leader Jacinda Ardern abruptly quit, citing exhaustion.

Labour was already flagging in the polls and Hipkins was unable to reverse the party's fortunes, with a dismal result ushering in Luxon's center-right government. Critics of Hipkins on the left decry him for being too timid, while those on the right often seek to remind voters of his role in Ardern's government as its strict COVID-19 lockdowns lost public confidence in some parts of the country.

Under New Zealand's proportional voting system, political parties must generally form alliances to govern. That makes the votes won by smaller parties crucial to the outcome. Following the election, whichever major party holds the most votes begins negotiations with their traditional governing parties, with minor party leaders sometimes extracting steep policy concessions to secure their support.

Luxon's government was formed with the libertarian ACT party and populist New Zealand First. Winston Peters, the leader of New Zealand First and current foreign minister, is New Zealand's longest-serving current lawmaker and has crowned both National and Labour governments before - but has animosity with Labour and Hipkins after their last period in government together.

On the left, Hipkins would seek support from the left-leaning Green party and Te Pāti Māori, a minor party which contests seats reserved for Indigenous lawmakers. The Māori party too has sided with both National and Labour governments before, but has supported Labour more recently.

It is rare for New Zealand governments to survive only one term. The last time a government was voted out after a single three-year cycle was in 1975.

### Drug seizures surge more than fourfold in 2025

#### S.Korea's former PM Han jailed for 23 years in martial law case

SEOUL, South Korea, Jan 21, (Agencies): A South Korean court ruled Wednesday that the ill-fated imposition of martial law by the then President Yoon Suk Yeol constituted an act of rebellion, as it sentenced his prime minister to 23 years in prison for his involvement.

Ex-prime minister Han Duck-soo became the first Yoon administration official convicted of rebellion charges in relation to the martial law imposition in December 2024. The verdict is expected to set the stage for upcoming rulings involving Yoon and his other associates, who also face rebellion charges.

Han, who was appointed by Yoon, served as one of the three caretaker leaders during the martial law crisis that led to Yoon's impeachment and eventually his removal from office.

Rebellion is one of the gravest criminal charges in South Korea, with the independent counsel recently demanding the death penalty for Yoon, who was charged with masterminding a rebellion. The Seoul Central District Court is to rule on Yoon's rebellion charges on Feb. 19.

In a televised verdict, the Seoul court determined Yoon's martial law decree amounted to a rebellion, viewing his dispatch of troops and police officers to the National Assembly and election offices as "a riot" or "a self-



Former South Korean prime minister Han Duck-soo, (center), arrives at the Seoul Central District Court for his first sentencing trial in the insurrection case, in Seoul on Jan 21. (AP)

coup" that was meant to undermine the constitutional order and was serious enough to disrupt stability in South Korea.

The court sentenced Han for playing a key role in the rebellion by trying to give procedural legitimacy to the martial law decree by getting it passed through a Cabinet Council meeting. The court also convicted Han of falsifying the martial law proclamation and destroying it and lying under oath.

Han, 76, who could appeal the ruling, has steadfastly maintained that he had told Yoon that he opposed his martial law plan. He has denied most of the other charges.

The court said Han neglected his responsibilities as prime minister - the No. 2 post in South Korea - to protect the constitution, choosing instead to take part in Yoon's rebellion in the belief that it might succeed.

"Because of the defendant's action,

the Republic of Korea could have returned to a dark past when the basic rights of the people and the liberal democratic order were trampled upon, becoming trapped in the quagmire of dictatorships for an extended period," judge Lee Jin-gwan said.

Han's lengthy sentence came as a surprise as the independent counsel earlier requested a 15-year prison term.

He is a career bureaucrat who served as prime minister twice during his 40 years of public service - first under liberal President Roh Moo-hyun from 2007 to 2008 and later under Yoon.

#### Also:

**SEOUL:** Drug seizures in South Korea surged more than fourfold last year due to a higher amount confiscated from travelers, the customs office said Wednesday.

Narcotics seized at the border amounted to 3,318 kg in 2025, more than four times of 787 kg in 2024, according to the Korea Customs Service.

The number of drug confiscation cases jumped 46 percent to 1,256 last year. Both the amount and the number hit all-time highs.

By smuggling route, the amount of drug seizures from travelers doubled to 280 kg in 2025 from a year earlier, but the figures from express cargo and international mail declined in double digits to 273 kg and 157 kg each.

### Colombia's President Petro reduces wages for legislators

BOGOTA, Colombia, Jan 21, (AP): Colombia's President Gustavo Petro on Tuesday reduced wages for members of Congress by approximately 30%, as the South American nation faces a budget crunch and gets ready to hold elections in the first semester of this year.



Congress members in Colombia earned approximately \$13,000 a month last year, an amount that was about 32 times greater than the nation's minimum wage.

The vast disparity in the earnings of legislators and average Colombians has often come under scrutiny in the South American country, with some members of Congress in recent years proposing bills to reduce their own wages.

But those initiatives have failed multiple times, and have been blocked by legislators who have argued that they need high wages for myriad reasons, that include investing their savings into future political campaigns.

With a decree issued on Tuesday, Petro eliminated a portion of the wages of Congress members known as the "bonus for special services" that was introduced over a decade ago to help cover relocation costs for members of Congress.

Without this bonus, wages received by Colombia's pampered legislators will drop to about \$9,400 a month, in a country where most workers earn monthly wages of about \$500 or less.

In its decree Tuesday, Colombia's government said that wages currently received by legislators are "disproportionate in relation to the average income of the (nation's) population and the country's economic reality."

"Austerity measures are necessary to the extent that they don't affect the fundamental rights of citizens" the decree said.

The measure will come into effect in July once a new Congress has been elected. Colombia holds legislative elections in March, which will be followed by presidential elections in May. The move was praised by some members of Congress, including senator Angélica Lozano who described it on X as "a minor measure of equity."

However the president of Colombia's senate Lidio García criticized the wage reduction, saying that Petro was trying to "punish" legislators who did not approve his social and economic reforms, including a tax bill that was rejected by Congress in December.

A Japanese court sentenced a man who admitted assassinating former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to life imprisonment on Wednesday. The case has revealed decades of cozy ties between Japan's governing party and a controversial South Korean church.

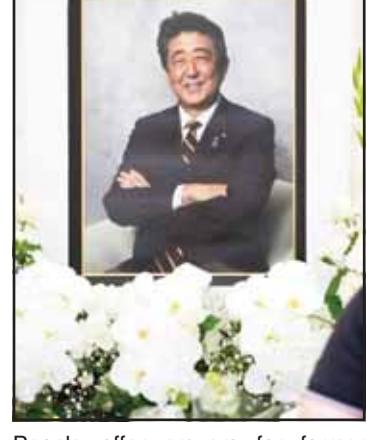
Tetsuya Yamagami, 45, earlier admitted to killing Abe in July 2022 during his election campaign speech in the western city of Nara.

Abe, one of Japan's most influential politicians, was serving as a regular lawmaker after leaving the prime minister's job when he was killed in 2022 while campaigning in the western city of Nara. It shocked a nation with strict gun control.

Yamagami pleaded guilty to murder in the trial that started in October. The Nara District Court announced Wednesday that it had issued a guilty verdict and sentenced Yamagami to life in prison, as prosecutors requested.

Takashi Fumimoto, one of the defense lawyers, said the decision did not take into consideration their request for clemency and was "regrettable," adding that Yamagami's legal team would consider an appeal after consulting with him.

Yamagami said he killed Abe after seeing a video message the former leader sent to a group affiliated with the Unification Church. He added that his goal was to hurt the church, which



People offer prayers for former prime minister Shinzo Abe at Zōjōji temple in Tokyo, Japan, July 8, 2023. (AP)

he hated, and expose its ties with Abe, investigators have said.

Prosecutors demanded life imprisonment for Yamagami, noting the seriousness of the attack and the danger it caused at a crowded campaign venue. His lawyers sought sentence of no more than 20 years, citing his troubles as the child of a church adherent. Japanese law authorizes the death penalty in murder cases, but prosecutors do not usually request it unless at least two people are killed.



Flames rise from flare stacks at the Amuay refinery in Los Taques, Venezuela on Jan 14. (AP)

#### US forces seize 7th oil tanker

US military forces boarded and took control of a seventh oil tanker connected with Venezuela on Tuesday as part of the Trump administration's broader efforts to take control of the South American country's oil.

US Southern Command said in a social media post that US forces apprehended the Motor Vessel Sagitta "without incident" and that the tanker was operating in defiance of President Donald Trump's "established quarantine of sanctioned vessels in the Caribbean." The military command did not say whether the US Coast Guard took control of the tanker as has been the case in prior seizures. Both the Pentagon and Southern Command said they had nothing to add when asked for more details.

The Sagitta is a Liberian-flagged tanker and its registration says it is owned and managed by a company in Hong Kong. The ship last transited its location more than two months ago when exiting the Baltic Sea in northern Europe. The tanker was sanctioned by the US Treasury Department under an executive order related to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The post from US Southern Command indicated the ship had taken oil from Venezuela. It said the capture of the tanker "demonstrates our resolve to ensure that the only oil leaving Venezuela will be oil that is coordinated properly and lawfully." (AP)

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Mexican Security and Citizen Protection Minister Omar Garcia Harfuch attends a news conference in Mexico City on Aug 13, 2025. (AP)

### Mexico sends 37 cartel members to US

Mexico's security minister said Tuesday that it had sent another 37 members of Mexican drug cartels to the United States, as the Trump administration ratchets up pressure on governments to crack down on criminal networks it says are smuggling drugs across the border.

Mexican Security Minister Omar Garcia Harfuch wrote in a social media post on X that the people transferred were "high impact criminals" that "represented a real threat to the country's security."

It is the third time in less than one year that Mexico has sent detained cartel members to the US as the country attempts to offset mounting threats by US President Donald Trump. Garcia Harfuch said the government has sent 92 people in total.

Video shared by Mexican authorities shows a line of handcuffed prisoners surrounded by heavily armed and masked officers being loaded onto a military jet at an airport on the outskirts of Mexico City.

"As the pressure increases, as demands from the White House dial up, (Mexico's government) needs to resort to extraordinary measures, such as these transfers," said David Mora, a Mexico analyst at the International Crisis Group. The US State Department and Justice Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment. (AP)

#### Africa

**S.Sudan's Kiir fires interior minister:** The president of South Sudan has dismissed his interior minister, the wife of a detained opposition leader with whom he was running a unity government following a peace agreement that ended a five-year civil war.



Kiir

President Salva Kiir on Monday removed Interior Minister Angelina Teny, a senior opposition figure and the wife of detained First Vice President Riek Machar. No reasons were given for the dismissal.

Kiir replaced her with Aleu Ayieny Aleu, a veteran loyalist who previously served as interior minister from 2013 to 2015.

The move further weakens the 2018 peace agreement, which allocated the Interior Ministry to the opposition under a power-sharing arrangement. The opposition accused Kiir of undermining the power-sharing framework. (AP)

**Ambush in northwest Nigeria kills 6:** Five soldiers and one police officer have been killed in an ambush in

northwest Nigeria, the Nigerian army said on Tuesday.

The attack occurred in Zamfara state on Monday, army spokesman David Adewusi said in a statement.

"Despite the surprise of the ambush, the troops responded gallantly, engaging the terrorists and preventing further harm to nearby communities," he said. "Regrettably, five soldiers and one police officer paid the supreme sacrifice during the encounter." The ambush followed successful operations last week, where three suspects were arrested and weapons recovered, said the spokesman. (AP)

The attack took place Sunday in the

# Business

## Kuwait oil price down to \$60.61 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil went down 12 cents to reach USD 60.61 per barrel on Tuesday, compared to USD 60.73 pb on Monday, said Kuwait Petroleum Corpora-

tion (KPC).

In global markets, Brent crude futures climbed 98 cents to USD 64.92 pb, while US West Texas Intermediate rose 90 cents to USD 60.34 pb.

A new achievement that confirms its leadership in the field of social responsibility

## NBK wins gold medal in global CSR from Brandon Hall Group Excellence Awards

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: In a new achievement that confirms its leadership in social responsibility and commitment to sustainability, National Bank of Kuwait won the Gold Medal in the Corporate Social Responsibility category of the Brandon Hall Group Excellence Awards.

This international recognition comes in appreciation of NBK's exceptional efforts during 2025 that strengthened its position as the largest contributor to the field of social responsibility in Kuwait's private sector and proved its success in realizing its vision of becoming an active partner in national development through global initiatives that leave positive impact and serve upcoming generations and society.

Brandon Hall Group based its selection of winners in the Corporate Social Responsibility category on an evaluation of entries by a panel of experts and executive analysts within the group, in addition to several strict measures that assess the quality and effectiveness of programs and initiatives, such as design quality, innovation, clarity of objectives, the effectiveness of the tools and processes used, and finally the measurable results that determine the tangible impact of such programs on society.

This award comes in recognition of NBK's exceptional efforts and achievements in several areas, most notably:

The "Bankee" financial literacy program, which focuses on instilling financial awareness through applied learning, achieving a clear improvement in financial behavior among young people from an early age.

Employee health and well-being: NBK promotes a culture of physical and mental care within the work environment, through visits to the in-house clinic, visiting doctors, mental health sessions and workshops.

Community initiatives: NBK's launch of several community initiatives contributed to obtaining this remarkable global recognition.

Among the most prominent of these initiatives is NBK's annual NBK Run, which always achieves unparalleled success. This grand sporting event supports the adoption of a healthy lifestyle and includes the category of people with disabilities, which enhances their integration with other groups within society.

Additionally, NBK continues to launch its Ramadhan "Do Good in the Holy Month" campaign, which highlights the values of solidarity and safety, including diverse programs, such as distributing Iftar meals at traffic lights in various areas of Kuwait.

Promoting environmental awareness: NBK implemented several environmental programs in collaboration with "Omnia" for plastic recycle and "LOYAC" environmental programs, in which young men and women participated, with the aim to integrate environmental activities with practical application, encourage volunteer work, and empower young people to be part of sustainable environmental solutions.

### An Exceptional Year of Giving

2025 was another year full of achievements for NBK in the field of social responsibility, as it launched a range of initiatives and projects that



NBK Headquarters

- This win is a global testament to NBK's success in realizing its vision of being an active partner in sustainable development.
- NBK solidified its position as the largest contributor to the field of social responsibility in Kuwait through pioneering projects and initiatives.

covered various health, educational, environmental and sports aspects, within a comprehensive approach aimed at improving the quality of life, supporting sustainable development and youth empowerment.

### Among the most prominent initiatives and projects launched and implemented by NBK in 2025:

- The Project of Shuwaikh Beach Development and Beautification was inaugurated with funding from NBK amounting to KD 3 million, transforming the 1.7 KM-long Shuwaikh Beach waterfront into an integrated urban haven that includes modern facilities, green spaces, and areas for sports and recreation. This project stands as remarkable model of effective public and private partnerships.
- The foundation stone was laid for the expansion of NBK's Children Hospital for the treatment of blood diseases, cancer and stem cell transplantation, valued approximately at KD 19 million, which is a step that reflects the bank's commitment to providing the highest levels of specialized healthcare.
- Contributing to the East Area Development Project by constructing a multi-story parking building and a public park valued at around KD 7 million, in support of the infrastructure and quality of life in the capital.
- Launching innovative awareness campaigns to combat digital fraud.
- Maintaining the strategic partnership with LOYAC by sponsoring

leaders in the future.

■ Sponsoring the KALD Award ceremony for outstanding students, as part of its strategic partnership with the Kuwait Association for Learning Differences, with the participation of 1700 students, in addition to supporting 85 participants at Center 21 for people with special needs by organizing periodic activities and exhibitions.

■ Implementing programs aimed at developing young talents, most notably the Aspire National Summer Training Program, which is specifically designed for male and female school students aged between 14 and 18 years to provide them with a unique opportunity to gain valuable professional experience through theoretical and practical training. The program attracted 142 male and female students in four training courses at NBK headquarters during the period from June 10 to August 7, 2025.

■ Launching and sponsoring cultural and artistic initiatives in cooperation with the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre, in addition to supporting sports through an ongoing partnership with the Rafa Nadal Academy, including 3 training camps and tournaments in 2025.

■ Continuing work on the Bankee program, which now covers 104 schools with a total of 13,000 female teachers and 53,000 male and female students.

■ Continued focus on the health and well-being of employees through organizing programs, doctor visits, workshops, physical and mental therapy sessions, trips, activities, competitions and recreational programs in which more than 2,000 employees participated, while the NBK clinic recorded about 4,000 visits for general medical check-ups throughout the year.

■ NBK continued to launch social solidarity and corporate social responsibility programs as part of its annual Ramadhan campaign, with the number of beneficiaries of these programs reaching approximately 6,800.

■ NBK Run, which the bank has been organizing for more than three decades, saw the participation of more than 7,000 runners in the 2025 edition, including people with disabilities, who have always been part of the culture of this race with the aim of promoting awareness of the importance of social inclusion.

Through its corporate social responsibility initiatives, NBK affirms that it is not merely a financial institution, but a true partner in building a prosperous society and a sustainable future.

With its firm belief that investing in human capital is investing in the future, NBK places youth empowerment at the heart of its priorities through training programs and educational and sporting initiatives that meet their needs and prepare them to be an effective and dynamic workforce in the future.

For more information about the 2025 Brandon Hall Group Excellence Awards winners, please visit: Past Winners of The Excellence Awards



Kuwait Finance House pavilion

Offering benefits tailored to customers' needs

## KFH showcases premier financing solutions at Auto World Show 2026

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) is participating in the Auto World Show, which runs from January 19th to 24th at Kuwait International Fair, Mishref. This involvement highlights the bank's commitment to offering premier financing solutions and actively supporting major economic events.

The event was inaugurated under the patronage and presence of the Governor of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate and Acting Governor of Hawally Governorate, Sheikh Bader Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

The Auto World Show unites all major brands in one location, offering car enthusiasts a unique opportunity to explore the latest industry trends and developments, along with special offers that KFH provides to its customers.

A dedicated team from KFH is available at the bank's booth to answer the visitors and customers' questions. They'll also explain the financing services, including the 0% profit on selected brands of new cars. The team will also guide visitors on all financing products and services, such as financing the purchase of used and new cars, leasing products, boats, and motorcycles available at KFH Auto showroom in Shuwaikh and other KFH showrooms.

The event provides a platform where KFH engages with customers and participating companies, showcasing its financing services, strengthening cooperation ties, and driving

agencies business with suppliers and merchants. This participation supports the local market by helping customers achieve their financing needs. It also aligns with KFH's commitment to delivering outstanding customer service, retaining its large customer base, attracting new customers, and increasing market share. It also highlights the Bank's crucial role in supporting the economy.

Among the main services of KFH is the Trust Sale Service, allowing customers to sell their cars at KFH Auto showrooms across Kuwait. Under this service, customers can authorize KFH to sell their cars through its widespread showrooms and the available sales channels. Additionally, KFH provides a car valuation service, one of its core auto services that allows customers to sell their cars to purchase a new one.

Customers opting for finance to purchase a car, a boat or a motorbike, against collaterals can enjoy flexible repayment terms extending to 10 years with competitive profits and diverse payment schemes. The financing is offered against a full collateral covering the total indebtedness and secured by booking the customer's fixed deposits. This product caters to retail customers' commercial needs, whether for cars, boats, or motorcycles, with a financing limit determined by the deposit value. The product provides other advantages including continuous deposit profits throughout the credit period, expedited processing and competitive rates.

## Main market slips, premier index inches up

## Borsa Kuwait ends session mixed

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21, (KUNA): Borsa Kuwait closed trading on Wednesday with mixed performance as the general market index slipped slightly by 0.47 points, or 0.01 percent, to settle at 8,847.01 points.

Trading activity saw 292.5 million shares exchanged through 385 cash transactions, amounting to a total value of KD 84.5 million (about USD 257.7 million).

The Main Market Index declined by 7.13 points, or 0.09 percent, ending at 8,230.72 points. Investors traded around 166.8 million shares via 11,269 transactions, totaling KD 32.7 million (approximately USD 99.7 million).

In contrast, the Premier Market Index edged up 1.13 points, or 0.01 percent, to close at 9,437.38 points. It recorded a trading volume of 125.6 million shares through 9,116 transactions, valued at KD 51.7 million (around USD 157.6 million).

Meanwhile, the Main 50 Index posted a solid gain of 43.74 points, or 0.50 percent, finishing at 8,803.15 points, with 109.9 million shares changing hands through 7,058 cash transactions amounting to KD 22.4 million (roughly USD 68.3 million).

## Nokhatha, Julaia fields mark exploration success

## KOC advances offshore drilling to boost national oil production

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21, (KUNA): Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) offshore exploration and drilling is one of the vital pathways to enhancing Kuwait's production capacity and ensuring the sustainability of its hydrocarbon resources, said Director of Public Relations and Petroleum Media at the Ministry of Oil, Sheikha Tamadher Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

In a speech during a specialized seminar organized by the Ministry of Oil under the title (Jazza-1 Offshore Field), Sheikha Tamadher said organizing the session reflects the Ministry's keenness to shed light on strategic national projects in the oil sector.

She also noted that the Ministry of Oil places special importance on highlighting the pivotal role of national cadres across all stages of the project, from geological studies to technical operations and future development.

Highlighting national achievements in major exploration projects, including offshore drilling, falls within the Ministry's responsibility to document efforts exerted and showcase accomplishments achieved by national hands, she added.

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# Burgan Bank deepens investment in local talent in 2025: 200 new hires, 94.29% Kuwaitization rate

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Reinforcing its commitment to developing local talent and supporting Kuwait's national workforce priorities, Burgan Bank announced the hiring of 200 new employees in 2025, with Kuwaitis representing 94.29% of all new joiners.

The announcement was marked by an internal recognition event held in the presence of the Group Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Tony Daher, Chief Executive Officer – Kuwait, Mr. Fadel Abdullah, and General Manager – Human Resources and Development, Mr. Naqeeb Amin, alongside members of the Bank's leadership and senior management. The event reflected Burgan Bank's people-centric culture and its long-term investment in talent development, particularly in advancing national capabilities – especially as the first bank in Kuwait to be certified as a Great Place to Work®.

The hiring of 200 new employees forms part of Burgan Bank's broader talent acquisition and development strategy, aimed at building a highly skilled, future-ready workforce capable of supporting the Bank's long-term growth and evolving business needs. By prioritizing local talent, the Bank continues to play an active role in advancing national employment objectives and reinforcing workforce sustainability across Kuwait's banking sector.

Commenting on the milestone, Mr. Abdulwahab Jamal Abdulraheem, Executive Manager – Talent Acquisition, said: "Building a strong bedrock of local talent is fundamental to Burgan Bank's long-term success. Talent development for us is a strategic priority, not a short-term objective. Our focus remains on attracting, developing, and retaining professionals who will shape the future of the Bank and contribute meaningfully to the evolution of Kuwait's financial sector."

This recruitment milestone further underscores Burgan Bank's position as an employer of choice in Kuwait's banking sector, extending beyond recruitment to encompass a comprehensive human capital strategy. The Bank places strong emphasis on structured onboarding, continuous learning, leadership development, and clear career progression pathways designed to enhance employee engagement, nurture potential, and foster long-term professional growth.

Mr. Abdulwahab Abdulraheem added: "By providing our employees with clear development pathways and a culture that values learning and engagement, we are creating an environment where individuals can grow their careers while playing an active role in the Bank's long-term success."

The Bank's flagship Ro'ya program plays a central role in this approach, preparing high-potential talent for leadership through structured development pathways supported by mentorship from senior executives. Program has undergone several enhancements since launching in 2020, culminating in its modern structure that features four streams: Future Leaders, Rising Leaders, Transformational Leaders, and Visionary Leaders – each tailored to align with talents' length of experience, needs, and aspirations. In its latest edition, the 35 distinguished talents were enrolled either in the one-month Future Leaders program for fresh graduates, the six-month Rising Leaders program for employees with up to four years of experience, or the six-month Transformational Leaders modular program for managers and senior managers with up to 10 years of experience.

Complemented by specialized programs delivered in collaboration with leading institutions, Burgan Bank ensures its workforce remains equipped with the skills and capabilities required to support its strategic priorities and future growth.

As a testament to its efforts in this area, Burgan Bank has earned two consecutive Brandon Hall Group Human Capital Management (HCM) Awards of Excellence, along with the GCC Excellence Award in Recruitment and Development of Nationals from the



Abdulwahab Jamal Abdulraheem, Executive Manager – Talent Acquisition at Burgan Bank.

- The Bank welcomed 200 new employees hired in 2025, with Kuwaitization rate of 94.29%
- Recruitment aligned with national employment priorities and Kuwait Vision 2035
- Burgan Bank reinforces employer-of-choice positioning through structured talent development
- The Bank's flagship Ro'ya leadership program advances high-potential talent across four leadership streams
- Strategic partnerships with leading institutions support continuous skills development
- Burgan Bank recognized with regional and international awards for talent development excellence
- First bank in Kuwait to be certified as a Great Place to Work®



Mr. Tony Daher, Group Chief Executive Officer and Mr. Naqeeb Amin, General Manager – Human Resources and Development Group.



Burgan Bank employees during the event.



Group Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Tony Daher, Chief Executive Officer – Kuwait, Mr. Fadel Abdullah, and General Manager – Human Resources and Development Group, Mr. Naqeeb Amin with the Bank's team, leadership and senior management.

Council of Ministers of Labor and Social Affairs in the GCC States Executive Bureau.

As part of its comprehensive talent acquisition and

development strategy, Burgan Bank continues to play an active role in shaping early career pathways by leading and participating in major career fairs across

Kuwait. The Bank engages with public and private universities through on-campus events and maintains its platinum sponsorship of Kuwait's largest career fair, Watheefi, reinforcing its commitment to identifying and nurturing high-potential local talent at an early stage.

Concluding on the importance of these initiatives, Mr. Abdulwahab Abdulraheem said: "Maintaining a strong presence at career fairs allows us to engage directly with ambitious young professionals who are eager to learn, grow, and innovate. These platforms enable us to introduce emerging talent to the breadth of opportunities available within Kuwait's dynamic banking and financial sector, while reinforcing Burgan Bank's role as an employer of choice committed to long-term career development."

This approach to human capital development also reflects Burgan Bank's alignment with Kuwait Vision 2035 and the Bank's Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) priorities, reinforcing a responsible approach to talent acquisition that supports workforce sustainability, economic growth, and the continued advancement of Kuwait's banking sector.

## About Burgan Bank

Established in 1977, Burgan Bank is a Kuwait-based conventional bank with a significant focus on the corporate and financial institution sectors. From its earliest days, the Bank has significantly sought to diversify its offering to cater to its growing retail and private banking customer base.

Burgan Bank has majority-owned subsidiaries, collectively known as the "Burgan Bank Group", in the MENAT region. This Group is supported by one of the largest branch networks across the region and includes: Gulf Bank Algeria – AGB (Algeria), Tunis International Bank – TIB (Tunisia), Burgan Bank Turkey (Turkey) and United Gulf Bank (Bahrain). Furthermore, Burgan Bank has a presence in the UAE through its corporate office, Burgan Financial Services Limited.

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

Burgan Bank has achieved the LEED v4.1 O+M: EB Gold Certification for its Head Office in Kuwait City. The Bank has also obtained the ISO/IEC 27001: 2022 Information Security Management Systems certificate (ISMS), ISO /IEC 27001:2019 Privacy Information Management Systems (PIMS), ISO/IEC 20000-1: 2018 Information Technology Service Management System (ITSMS) and was re-certified with the prestigious ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System (QMS), making it one of the few banks in the GCC and Kuwait to receive such certification for five consecutive times. At the same time, the Bank has the distinction of being the only Bank in Kuwait to have won the JP Morgan Chase Quality Recognition Award for twenty consecutive years. Moreover, in a testament to its dedication to the development of its human capital, Burgan Bank is the first bank in Kuwait to be certified as a Great Place to Work®, earning the distinct honor in 2023.

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

## European gas prices drop, US LNG exports surge

# Global natural gas demand rises 1.6% in 2025, led by North America

By KAMCO Invest

GLOBAL natural gas consumption exhibited moderate growth in 2025. According to the GECF (Gas Exporting Countries Forum), total natural gas consumption for a group of major gas-consuming nations, representing approximately 75% of global demand, increased by 1.6% year-over-year (yo-y) to reach 2,902 billion cubic meters (bcm) for the initial ten months of 2025. Contextually, natural gas consumption rose in key regions including North America and the EU, whereas, by contrast, consumption declined within the Asia region during the same period. Overall global natural gas consumption is projected to average a growth rate of 1.5% throughout 2025, a consequence of subdued activity in the industrial sector. For comparison, global natural gas production is projected to experience a marginally higher growth rate than consumption, at 1.7% in 2025, as per the GECF. The majority of this additional global gas production is predominantly driven by increased output from the North American region. Conversely, natural gas production within the Asia region is forecast to decrease in 2025.

Global natural gas production attained 3,506 bcm, registering a 1.6% yo-y increase, for the first ten months of 2025, a performance underpinned by robust production growth in North America which counterbalanced a decline in output from the Eurasia and European regions during this timeframe.

Global natural gas price movements were stable but mixed during the year. Towards the end of the year, according to the World Bank, the US average monthly natural gas price for December 2025 surged by 40.6% yo-y to reach USD 4.25/MMBtu, attributable to factors such as a polar vortex event, i.e., extreme cold weather. In contrast, European natural gas prices for December 2025 declined by 31.6% yo-y, averaging USD 9.48/MMBtu for the month, primarily due to a global increase in LNG supply particularly from the USA which outpaced demand and mitigated concerns regarding relatively low storage levels. According to Kpler data, US LNG exports constituted approximately 56% of Europe's LNG imports in 2025. Mirroring the European gas price decline, the average monthly Japanese LNG price for December 2025 experienced a 12.5% yo-y drop to USD 11.06/MMBtu.

The decrease in Asia's natural gas prices during 2025 was largely attributed to weakened gas demand from major consuming countries, including China and India. Overall, the World Bank's natural gas price index recorded a 6.2% yo-y decline during December 2025, concluding the year at an average of 104.2 points, reflecting the downturn in both Asian and EU natural gas prices.

The United States emerged as the largest global LNG exporter in 2025. US LNG exports during 2025 were sufficiently robust for the nation to become the first country to exceed 100 million metric tons of LNG exports within a single year. The expansion in US LNG exports was supported by new American export capacity, such as the Venture Global Plaquemines facility, combined with substantial domestic gas consumption, thereby further solidifying the United States' dominant and enduring role as a global LNG exporter and underscoring its critical importance to worldwide natural gas supply.

### Natural Gas Consumption

Global natural gas consumption exhibited a moderated growth trajectory during 2025. According to Kpler, Asian LNG demand declined from 254 million tonnes in 2024 to 240 million tonnes in 2025. The most significant LNG import reduction originated from Asia's largest LNG importer in 2024, China, a development which enabled Japan to reclaim the top position as Asia's premier LNG importer. The contraction in China's LNG imports was principally attributable to escalating geopolitical tensions between China and

the United States.

Certain policy responses by China, driven by these tensions, involved a deliberate reduction in LNG imports and a strategic initiative to bolster national energy security by favoring fuel sources with closer geographical proximity. Furthermore, the availability of more economical energy alternatives including expanded domestic gas production, pipeline gas imports, coal, and domestically manufactured renewable energy – collectively facilitated China's unexpected 16% reduction in LNG imports during 2025. Consequently, China's overall natural gas demand registered a modest increase of 0.9% year-over-year (yo-y) throughout the first ten months of 2025. Concurrently, Japan's LNG imports are anticipated to decline by 1% in 2025, while India's LNG purchases are projected to decrease by 8% over the year, outcomes primarily driven by elevated price levels and increasing renewable energy output which diminished LNG utilization within its power generation, refining, and fertilizer sectors.

United States natural gas consumption is projected to achieve record levels during 2025. According to the American Gas Association, US natural gas demand averaged 90.4 billion cubic feet (Bcf) per day during the initial eleven months of 2025, representing a 1.9% increase compared to the corresponding period in 2024. This expansion in gas demand was chiefly propelled by heightened activity within the Commercial and Industrial sectors.

It is noteworthy to emphasize that current demand levels within the US Commercial and Industrial sectors are exceeding historical peaks by 1.8% and 1.1%, respectively. Per data from the Energy Information Administration (EIA), US natural gas consumption increased from 90.43 Bcf per day in 2024 to 91.45 Bcf in 2025, a rise which occurred despite the natural gas share of electricity generation declining from 42% in 2024 to 40% in 2025. In aggregate, according to the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF), North America's total natural gas consumption attained 991 billion cubic meters (bcm) for the first eleven months of 2025, as contrasted with 984 bcm for the analogous period in 2024.

Regarding European natural gas demand for the year, escalating LNG imports fundamentally reshaped the region's gas supply dynamics as traditional pipeline supplies from sources such as Russia diminished and global LNG availability expanded. According to S&P Global, the European gas market observed an increase in market participants during 2025 as the United States consolidated its role as the predominant LNG supplier to Europe. The US accounted for 77.5% of Europe's (including the United Kingdom and Turkey) LNG imports in 2025, a substantial increase from a 57.6% share in 2024.

### Natural Gas Production

Global gas production increased by 1.6% year-over-year (yo-y) for the first ten months of 2025, reaching 3,506 billion cubic meters (bcm) compared to 3,452 bcm during the corresponding period in 2024. This growth was primarily driven by robust production expansion in North America, which compensated for declines in production levels within Europe and Eurasia. European natural gas production recorded a 2.1% yo-y decrease for the first ten months of 2025, falling to 152.2 bcm from 155.5 bcm in the same period of 2024, according to the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF), indicating a downward production projection for Europe for the entirety of 2025.

The decline in European gas output was largely attributable to a fall in Norwegian gas production during the period, followed by similar production reductions in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. According to the GECF, Norwegian natural gas production declined by 4.1% yo-y to 100.3

bcm for the first ten months of 2025.

In the Asia Pacific region, natural gas production remained stable, recording marginal growth of 0.3% for the first ten months of 2025 to reach 584.6 bcm, underpinned by robust gas output from China. China's natural gas production improved by 6.9% yo-y, rising from 204 bcm during the first ten months of 2024 to 216.9 bcm during the analogous period in 2025. The increase in China's natural gas production was buoyed by strong growth from unconventional sources, such as shale gas extracted from the Sichuan and Shanxi basins.

In North America, cumulative natural gas production for the first ten months of 2025 increased by 3.4% yo-y to reach 1,109 bcm. Natural gas production in Canada rose by 2.5% yo-y to 193.8 bcm. Comparatively, United States natural gas production increased by 4.4% yo-y to 914 bcm, during Jan-Nov 2025, up from 971 bcm during the same period in 2024. In its latest Short-Term Energy Outlook, the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) forecast that US natural gas consumption in 2026 would be 1.2% lower than in 2025, at 91.45 billion cubic feet per day (bcf/d) or 2.59 bcm per day, reflecting an expected stabilization in demand. The EIA also estimates that US marketed natural gas production will reach 108.8 bcf/d (3.08 bcf/d) in 2026, representing an increase of 1.4% from 2025 to 2026. By sector, the EIA forecasts the US natural gas share of electricity generation to decline from 40% in 2025 to 39% in 2026. Regarding natural gas prices in the US, the EIA forecasts the Henry Hub natural gas spot price to average USD 3.53 per million British thermal units (MMBTU) during 2025 and to maintain that level at USD 3.46/MMBTU in 2026, due to an expected moderation in demand for LNG exports concurrent with rising production. The United States was the largest global LNG exporter in 2025, selling 111 million metric tonnes (mmt) of LNG during the year.

The growth in US LNG exports was primarily driven by Venture Global's Plaquemines facility, the second-largest LNG export plant in the United States, which exported 16.4 million metric tonnes of LNG during 2025. Some market estimates suggest the United States could increase its LNG exports by a further 20 million metric tonnes in 2026 as the Plaquemines facility targets full operational capacity. Europe remained the principal destination for US LNG exports throughout the year.

### GCC

In the GCC region, Aramco has commenced natural gas production at the Jafurah field, the world's largest shale gas development outside of the United States. This step underlines a major shift in global natural gas production as the Kingdom pivots to scale its unconventional resources and expand its domestic supply. It is expected that natural gas from Jafurah will primarily be consumed within Saudi Arabia itself, utilized mainly as fuel for power generation. The Jafurah gas field is estimated to contain approximately 200 trillion cubic feet (tcf) of gas, equivalent to 5.7 trillion cubic meters (tcm). Current production stands at 450 million cubic feet per day (MMcf/d), or 0.01 billion cubic meters per day (bcm/d), with plans to increase output to 2 billion cubic feet per day (Bcf/d), equivalent to 0.06 bcm/d.

On the other hand, Qatar, the world's second-largest LNG exporter, has awarded a USD 4 billion engineering, procurement, construction, and installation (EPCI) contract to a consortium led by Italian and Chinese contractors. This award is part of a strategic drive to meet its expanding LNG output targets. The contract is expected to take five years to complete. In 2025, Qatar exported nearly 80 million tonnes (mmt) of LNG, with Asian countries serving as the primary destination. China, India, and South Korea were the top three importers of Qatari LNG.

# President Trump at Davos presses claim to Greenland, threatens allies with tariffs

Europe rejects Trump's Greenland ultimatum

DAVOS, Jan 21, (AP): President Donald Trump insisted he wants to "get Greenland, including right, title and ownership," but he said he wouldn't employ force to achieve that - using his speech Wednesday at the World Economic Forum to repeatedly deride European allies and vow that NATO shouldn't stand in the way of U.S. expansionism.

"What I'm asking for is a piece of ice, cold and poorly located," Trump said, declaring of NATO: "It's a very small ask compared to what we have given them for many, many decades."

He urged NATO to allow the U.S. to take Greenland from Denmark and added an extraordinary warning, saying alliance members can say yes "and we'll be very appreciative. Or you can say, 'No,' and we will remember."

"This enormous unsecured island is actually part of North America," Trump said. "That's our territory."

Trump also said that the U.S. is booming but Europe is "not heading in the right direction." His ambitions to wrest control of Greenland from NATO ally Denmark threaten to tear apart relations with many of Washington's closest allies.

He tried to focus on his efforts to tame inflation and spur the economy back home. But his appearance at the gathering of global elites focused more on his gripes with other countries.

"I love Europe and I want to see Europe go good, but it's not heading in the right direction," Trump said. He added, "We want strong allies, not seriously weakened ones."

Trump also proclaimed that, "When America booms the whole world booms," and, "You all follow us down and you follow us up."

His arrival in the Swiss Alps community of Davos was delayed after a minor electrical issue aboard Air Force One had forced a return to Washington to switch aircraft, but it wasn't expected to push back his scheduled keynote speech.

Billionaires and business leaders sought seats inside the forum's Congress Hall, which had a capacity of around 1,000, to hear Trump. Michael Dell, founder of the eponymous Dell Technologies, weaved through the crowd to get toward the front of the line. Marc Benioff, the Salesforce chief and a World Economic Forum board member, wiggled his way through the press line to get inside.

Trump is expected to have around five bilateral meetings with foreign leaders, though further details weren't provided. There are more than 60 other heads of state attending the forum.

Trump came to the international forum at Davos on the heels of threatening steep U.S. import taxes on Denmark and seven other allies unless they negotiate a transfer of the semi-autonomous territory - a concession the European leaders indicated they are not willing to make.

Trump said the tariffs would start at 10% next month and climb to 25% in June, rates that would be high enough to increase costs and slow growth, potentially hurting Trump's efforts to damp down the high cost of living.

The president in a text message that circulated among European officials this week also linked his aggressive stance on Greenland to last year's decision not to award him the Nobel Peace Prize.



President Donald Trump speaks during the 56th annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF), in Davos, Switzerland, Wednesday, Jan. 21, 2026. (AP)

In the message, he told Norway's prime minister, Jonas Gahr Støre, that he no longer felt "an obligation to think purely of Peace."

In the midst of an unusual stretch of testing the United States' relations with longtime allies, it seems uncertain what might transpire during Trump's two days in Switzerland. Before Trump spoke, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer vowed, "I will not yield."

"Britain will not yield on our principles and values about the future of Greenland under threats of tariffs, and that is my clear position," Starmer said during his weekly questioning in the House of Commons.

Trump promised before leaving the White House, "This will be an interesting trip" and things did indeed get off to a difficult start. There was a small electrical problem on Air Force One, leading the crew to turn around the plane about 30 minutes into the flight out of an abundance of caution.

"It's clear that we are reaching a time of instability, of imbalances, both from the security and defense point of view, and economic point of view," French President Emmanuel Macron said in his address to the forum. Macron made no direct mention of Trump but urged fellow leaders to reject acceptance of "the law of the strongest."

Meanwhile, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen warned that should Trump move forward with the tariffs, the bloc's response "will be unflinching, united and proportional." She pointedly suggested that Trump's new tariff threat could also undercut a U.S.-EU trade framework reached this summer that the Trump administration worked hard to seal.

"The European Union and the United States have agreed to a trade deal last July," von der Leyen said in Davos. "And in politics as in business - a deal is a deal. And when friends shake hands, it must mean something."

Trump planned to use his Davos appearance to talk about making housing more attainable and other affordability issues that are top priorities for Americans.

But Trump's Greenland tariff threat could disrupt the U.S. economy if it blows up the trade truce reached last year between the U.S. and the

EU, said Scott Lincicome, a tariff critic and vice president on economic issues at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank.

"Significantly undermining investors' confidence in the U.S. economy in the longer term would likely increase interest rates and thus make homes less affordable," Lincicome said.

Trump also on Tuesday warned Europe against retaliatory action for the coming new tariffs.

"Anything they do with us, I'll just meet it," Trump said on NewsNation's "Katie Pavlich Tonight." "All I have to do is meet it, and it's going to go ricocheting backward."

Davos - a forum known for its appeal to the global elite - is an odd backdrop for a speech on affordability. But White House officials have promoted it as a moment for Trump to try to rekindle populist support back in the U.S., where many voters who backed him in 2016 view affordability as a major problem. 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.

U.S. home sales are at a 30-year low with rising prices and elevated mortgage rates keeping many prospective buyers out of the market. So far, Trump has announced plans to buy \$200 billion in mortgage securities to help lower interest rates on home loans, and has called for a ban on large financial companies buying houses.

On Thursday, Trump plans talk about the "Board of Peace," meant to oversee the end of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, and possibly take on a broader mandate, potentially rivaling the United Nations.

Fewer than 10 leaders have accepted invitations to join the group so far, including a handful of leaders considered to be anti-democratic authoritarians. Several of America's main European partners have declined or been noncommittal, including Britain, France and Germany.

Trump on Tuesday told reporters that his peace board "might" eventually make the U.N. obsolete but insisted he wants to see the international body stick around.

"I believe you got to let the U.N. continue, because the potential is so great," he said.

## First increase in five months

# UK inflation surges to 3.4% in December

LONDON, Jan 21, (AP): Inflation in the United Kingdom rose in December for the first time in five months, pushing further above the Bank of England's target, according to official figures released on Wednesday.

The Office for National Statistics said the consumer prices index rose by an annual rate of 3.4% in December, up from 3.2% the month before. It said increases in taxes on tobacco products and trips abroad over Christmas contributed to the increase.

The increase was slightly lower than anticipated, with most economists predicting a rise to 3.5%. They predicted that December's rise will be a temporary blip on a downward path toward the Bank of England's target rate of 2%.

James Smith, research director at the Resolution Foundation economic

think tank, said that "big falls are due in 2026, with inflation finally returning to back to more normal levels."

With inflation trending downwards, economists expect the Bank of England to further cut its main interest rate from the current rate of 3.75%.

Britain's Labour government hopes that taming inflation and the associated reduction in borrowing costs will help bolster economic growth.

Electron in a landslide victory just 18 months ago, Labour has since seen its poll ratings tank badly, partly because an uptick in growth - its number one priority in the election - has remained largely elusive.

Treasury chief Rachel Reeves pledged after the release of the inflation data that 2026 would be the "year that Britain turns a corner."

# What the EU's 'trade bazooka' is and how it works

BRUSSELS, Jan 21, (AP): Rattled by U.S. President Donald Trump's threats over Greenland, the European Union is readying countermeasures against the United States.

As primarily a trading bloc, the EU's toolkit is mostly financial instruments, from steep tariffs on U.S. goods to the so-called trade bazooka touted by French President Emmanuel Macron. So far, most of the 27 EU nations remain skeptical about using it.

The term is shorthand for the bloc's Anti-Coercion Instrument, which includes a raft of measures for blocking or restricting trade and investment from countries found to be putting undue pressure on EU member nations or corporations.

The measures could include curtailing the export and import of goods and services, barring countries or companies from EU public tenders, or limiting foreign direct investment. In its most severe form, the bazooka would essentially close off access to the EU's 450-million customer market.

The bazooka could inflict billions of dollars of losses on U.S. companies

and the American economy. The ACI was established by the European Commission in 2021 after China restricted trade to Lithuania over its ties with Taiwan, which is claimed by Beijing as its own territory.

"The primary objective of the ACI is deterrence. The instrument will, therefore, be most successful if there is no need to use it," according to a commission statement issued before the dispute over Greenland.

It would take at least six months to activate the ACI.

The value of EU-U.S. trade in goods and services amounted to 1.7 trillion euros (\$2 trillion) in 2024, or an average of 4.6 billion euros a day, according to EU statistics agency Eurostat.

Europe's biggest exports to the U.S. are pharmaceuticals, cars, aircraft, chemicals, medical instruments, and wine and spirits. Among the biggest U.S. exports to the bloc, meanwhile, are professional and scientific services like payment systems and cloud infrastructure, oil and gas, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, aerospace products and cars.

## Brussels unveils plan to ban Huawei, ZTE

# EU moves to phase out high-risk telecom gear, targeting Chinese suppliers

LONDON, Jan 21, (AP): The European Union said Tuesday it plans to phase out gear supplied by companies based in "high risk" countries from critical infrastructure such as high-speed telecom networks, in a move seen as targeting Chinese companies including Huawei and ZTE.

Brussels' proposed measures to tighten up cybersecurity come amid rising concerns that the bloc's 27 member countries are vulnerable both to the dominance of Chinese high tech manufacturing and U.S. Big Tech services.

Under the draft legislation released by the EU's executive commission, telecom equipment from so-called high risk suppliers in third countries would be phased out within three years.

The proposals don't mention any countries or companies by name, but the term "high risk" has been previously used to refer to countries like China, home to tech

giant Huawei. The company is the world's biggest maker of networking equipment but has long been banned from the United States.

The bloc's executive said in 2023 that EU countries were justified in restricting or excluding Huawei and ZTE, another Chinese tech company sanctioned by the U.S., because they posed higher risks. But previous EU measures for 5G cybersecurity were recommended or voluntary, which resulted in uneven application across the bloc, with some countries buying Chinese gear while others shunned it.

Under the new rules, the cybersecurity measures would become mandatory.

Huawei said that as a "legally operating company in Europe," it reserves the right to safeguard its "legitimate interests."

# Berkshire Hathaway may cut ties with Kraft Heinz

OMAHA, Jan 21, (AP): Warren Buffett's successor appears to be considering his first significant move after taking over as CEO this month.

Kraft Heinz warned investors Tuesday that Berkshire Hathaway may be interested in selling its 325 million shares in the name brand food giant that Buffett helped create back in 2015. The news came in a filing with stock market regulators.

Buffett and the Brazilian investment firm 3G Capital orchestrated the merger of Kraft and Heinz back then because they already owned Heinz and believed in the power of their brands. Now Greg Abel may be plotting a different course.

Over the years since Buffett had come to realize that the company's competitive moat around its brands wasn't as strong as he thought as consumers have increasingly been willing to switch to store brands and move away from processed foods.

Berkshire took a \$3.76 billion writedown on its Kraft-Heinz stake last summer. Buffett said last fall that he was disappointed in Kraft Heinz' plan to split the company in two, and Berkshire's two representatives resigned from the Kraft board last spring.

But still it was rare for Buffett to unload an acquisition during his six decades leading Berkshire even when he soured on a business' prospects.

Berkshire didn't respond to questions Tuesday about the filing where Kraft Heinz disclosed that its largest shareholder "may offer to sell, from time to time, 325,442,152 shares."

Kraft Heinz shares fell nearly 4% to \$22.85 after the announcement.

There's no sign Berkshire has started selling yet, but CFRA Research analyst Cathy Seifert wonders if this could be just the beginning.

## Warner Bros bid weigh on stock

# Netflix posts strong earnings but slower subscriber growth

WASHINGTON, Jan 21, (AP): Netflix capped last year with another solid financial performance despite slowing subscriber growth that underscored the importance of its contested \$72 billion bid to take over Warner Bros. movie studio and slot HBO Max into its video streaming line-up.

The fourth-quarter results announced Tuesday eclipsed the projections of stock market analysts, but Netflix's report also noted that the video service ended the year with more than 325 million worldwide subscribers, a figure indicating it had added about 23 million subscribers since 2024.

The 2025 subscriber increase marked a dramatic slowdown from the 41 million picked up during 2024, amplifying investor worries that Netflix's growth has peaked since the 2022 introduction of a low-priced, advertising-supported version of its service that triggered a massive surge in subscribers.

Management also forecast a profit for the January-March period that was below analysts' predictions and announced Netflix would stop buying back its own stock while trying to complete the Warner Bros. deal. Even though its ad sales are expected to double, Netflix also projected its revenue growth would taper off from 16% in 2025 to 12% to 14% this year.

"Overall, this points to a challenging start to the year," said Investing.com analyst Thomas Montero.

Netflix's shares sank nearly 5% in extended trading, even though its profit and revenue for the past quarter were better than anticipated. The company earned \$2.4 billion, or 56 cents per share, 29% increase from the same time in the previous year. Revenue rose 18% from the previous year to more than \$12 billion.

The results almost seemed like a footnote next to the stakes involved in Netflix's bidding war to

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"A legislative proposal to limit or exclude non-EU suppliers based on country of origin, rather than factual evidence and technical standards, violates the EU's basic legal principles of fairness, non-discrimination, and proportionality, as well as its WTO obligations," the company said in a statement.

The proposed restrictions also cover equipment in other sectors like security scanners used at border checkpoints, water supply systems and health and medical devices.

"Our proposal is about protecting EU citizens and businesses by securing the ICT supply chains that support the critical sectors of our economy and society," European Commission Vice President Henna Virkkunen told lawmakers at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France, which will need to approve the proposal.

# Features

ARAB TIMES

THURSDAY, JANUARY 22, 2024

## Taylor, McNally and Sorkin are among Gotham Book Prize finalists

## Han Kang, Angela Flournoy, Arundhati Roy nominated for NBCC awards

NEW YORK, Jan 21, (AP): Novels by Nobel laureate Han Kang and Angela Flournoy and a memoir by Arundhati Roy are among the finalists for National Book Critics Circle (NBCC) awards.

The critics association announced nominees in eight competitive categories and three honorary winners, including the celebrated author-journalist Frances Fitzgerald, who will receive a lifetime achievement award.

"Out of the many hundreds of titles that our organization carefully considered this year, these singular and striking finalists rose to the top," NBCC President Adam Dalva said in a statement Tuesday. "They interrogate the lives we lead, broaden our creative and social horizons, move us, and continually surprise us. Especially in this difficult time, every one of these writers and translators

deserves to be celebrated -- and to be widely read."

Han's "We Do Not Part" (translated from the Korean by e. yae-won and Paige Aniyah Morris) is a fiction finalist, along with Karen Russell's "The Antidote"; Katie Kitamura's "Audition"; Solvej Balle's "On the Calculation of Volume (Book III)," translated from the Danish by Sophia Hersi Smith and Jennifer Russell; and Flournoy's "The Wilderness."

Roy is a nominee in autobiography for "Mother Mary Comes to Me," with other books cited including Geraldine Brooks' "Memorial Days"; Beth Macy's "Paper Girl"; Hanif Kureishi's "Shattered"; and Miriam Toews' "A Truce That Is Not Peace."

Finalists in other categories range from Viet Thanh Nguyen's "To Save and to Destroy" for criticism to



Nobel laureate in literature Han Kang speaks during the Nobel Banquet in City Hall in Stockholm, Dec. 10, 2024. (AP)

Nicholas Boggs' "Baldwin: A Love Story" for best first book to Kevin

Young's "Night Watch" for poetry. Winners will be announced March 26.

Meanwhile, a book of essays by actor Lili Taylor, a memoir by restaurateur Keith McNally and a best-seller from Andrew Ross Sorkin about the stock market crash that helped lead to the Great Depression are among the 11 finalists for a \$50,000 literary prize.

The Gotham Book Prize, launched in 2020 by bookstore owner-philanthropist Bradley Tusk and political strategist Howard Wolfson, honors fiction or nonfiction about New York City.

Each of the 11 nominated books touch upon a different facet of New York, whether Taylor's love for quiet moments and the outdoors in "Turning to Birds," the dining life in McNally's "I Regret Almost Everything" or the panic on Wall Street in Sorkin's "1929."

Finalists also include Mark Ron-

son's memoir, "Night People: How to Be a DJ in '90s New York City"; Adam Ross' novel of the city in the 1980s, "Playworld"; and a novel centered on the 1920s Harlem Renaissance, Victoria Christopher Murray's "Harlem Rhapsody."

"It's clearer than ever that our city is an object of fascination and the ideal setting for countless books, both fiction and nonfiction," Tusk and Wolfson said in a statement Tuesday. "When great writers focus on New York City, that maintains our status as the place that the best and brightest from all of the world want to be."

The winner will be announced in the spring. Previous Gotham prize recipients include Colson Whitehead's novel, "Crook Manifesto," and Andrea Elliott's investigative "Invisible Child: Poverty, Survival & Hope in an American City."

### \$72B all-cash offer

## Netflix intensifies its bid for Warner Bros

NEW YORK, Jan 21, (AP): Netflix is now offering to buy Warner Bros. Discovery's studio and streaming business in all cash - in an effort to win over the Hollywood giant's shareholders for its \$72 billion merger and potentially thwart a hostile bid from Skydance-owned Paramount.

Back in December, Netflix struck a cash and stock deal with Warner valued at \$27.75 per share, giving it a total enterprise value of \$82.7 billion, including debt. But on Tuesday, the companies announced that they would be revising the transaction to simplify its structure, provide more certainty of value for Warner stockholders and speed up the path to a shareholder vote - which they said could arrive by April.

The all-cash transaction is still valued at \$27.75 per Warner share. Warner stockholders will also receive the additional value of shares of Discovery Global, which would become a separate public company following a previously-announced separation from Warner Bros.

Warner leadership has repeatedly backed a merger with Netflix - and the boards of both companies approved the all-cash deal announced Tuesday. In a statement, Warner CEO David Zaslav said the revised agreement "brings us even closer to combining two of the greatest storytelling companies in the world."

A spokesperson for Paramount declined to comment when reached by The Associated Press on Tuesday. Unlike Netflix, Paramount wants to acquire Warner's entire company - including networks like CNN and Discovery - and went straight to shareholders with all cash, \$77.9 billion offer last month.

Warner stockholders have until 5 p.m. ET Wednesday to tender their shares in support of Paramount's bid, which has an enterprise value of \$108 billion including debt. But that deadline could be pushed back further. While Paramount declined to share further details on Tuesday, the Wall Street Journal reported last week that the company was planning on another extension.

Beyond its tender offer, Paramount has promised a proxy fight. Last week, the company said it would nominate its own slate of directors before the Warner's next shareholder meeting, the date of which has still not been set.

Paramount also filed a suit in Delaware Chancery Court seeking to compel Warner Bros. to disclose to shareholders how it values its bid and the competing offer from Netflix. But a judge on Thursday denied Paramount's request to expedite that proceeding.

In a statement at the time, Warner applauded the court's decision and called Paramount's lawsuit "yet another unserious attempt to distract." Paramount, meanwhile, maintained that the ruling wasn't about the merits of its allegations and said Warner shareholders "should ask why their Board is working so hard to hide this information."

Regardless of who eventually wins the upper hand, a Warner Bros. Discovery sale could be a long, drawn-out process that is almost certain to attract tremendous antitrust scrutiny. On Tuesday, Netflix and Warner maintained that they expect to close on a merger 12 to 18 months from December's agreement.

Still, Paramount's hostile bid could complicate that timeline. Politics are also expected to come into play under President Donald Trump, who has made unprecedented suggestions about his personal involvement on whether a deal will go through.

Trade groups across the media and entertainment industry have sounded the alarm over both bids, warning that further consolidation in the industry could result in job losses and less diversity in content - with particularly negative consequences for filmmaking.

The companies have spoken on those concerns. On Tuesday, Netflix co-CEO Ted Sarandos said combining with Warner "will deliver broader choice and greater value to audiences worldwide" both at home and in theaters - while "driving job creation and long-term industry growth."

### Music



Lady Gaga performs during the 67th annual Grammy Awards on Feb 2, 2025, in Los Angeles. (AP)

## Lamar, Bad Bunny and Gaga go head-to-head

## 2026 Grammys set for history-making moments

NEW YORK, Jan 21, (AP): The 68th annual Grammy Awards will take place Feb. 1 at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles. This year marks a return to normalcy after the 2025 award show was altered to focus on supporting relief efforts following the devastating Los Angeles-area wildfires.

"I think we will see some history-making moments," Recording Academy CEO and President Harvey Mason jr. told The Associated Press. "With artists being nominated in categories they haven't been previously nominated in, and a new crop of talent coming through the system this year - I think we're going to see some really exciting results."

Here's what you need to know about the 2026 Grammys, including how to stream and where you can see music's biggest stars walking the red carpet.

The main show will air live on CBS beginning at 8 p.m. Eastern on Feb. 1.

The Grammys can also be watched through live TV streaming services that include CBS in their lineup, like Hulu + Live TV, YouTube TV and FuboTV.

Paramount+ premium plan subscribers will be able to stream the Grammys live; Paramount+ essential subscribers will have on-demand access the next day.

The premiere ceremony will take place just ahead of the Grammys' ceremony at 3:30 p.m. Eastern, 12:30 p.m. Pacific at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles. It can be streamed at the Recording Academy's YouTube channel and on live.

On Tuesday, the Recording Academy announced Sabrina Carpenter will perform at the Grammys. She's the first of many. Others will be revealed in the coming days.

Carpenter is a leading nominee at this year's ceremony, with six nods for record, album and song of the year as well as pop solo performance, pop vocal album and music video.

Comedian Trevor Noah will host the show for the sixth consecutive time - and it will be his last.

"I am beyond thrilled to welcome Trevor Noah back to host the Grammys for his sixth, and sadly, final time," Grammys' executive producer Ben Winston said in a statement. "He's been the most phenomenal host of the show. He's so smart, so funny, and such a true fan of the artists and music. His impact on the show has been truly spectacular, and we can't wait to do it together one last time."

The only other people to host six or more Grammy telecasts were musical artists: Andy Williams hosted seven shows, followed by John Denver with six. Noah previously tied LL Cool J, with five.

Noah himself is a four-time Grammy nominee and is up this year in the audio book, narration, and storytelling recording category for "Into The Uncut Grass," a children's story.

"He's a special host. He really finds the right balance between being funny and smart and knowledgeable but also being a fan of music. And I love that. It's so hard to find that combination," Mason jr. said.

As for his departure? "Every person at some point in their career, they decide they want to do something else," Mason jr. said. "And we're so appreciative of the years that we got from Trevor. He's really helped define the show and make the show what it's become over the last six years."

The Associated Press will stream a four-hour red carpet show with interviews and fashion footage. It will be streamed on YouTube and APNews.com.

Kendrick Lamar leads the nominations with nine total. He's up for record, song and album of the year - marking the third time he's had simultaneous nominations in those big categories - as well as pop duo/group performance, melodic rap performance, rap song and rap album. He's also nominated twice in the rap performance category.

Lady Gaga, Jack Antonoff and Canadian record producer/songwriter Cirkut follow Lamar with seven nominations each.

Bad Bunny, Leon Thomas, Serban Ghenea and the aforementioned Carpenter all boast six nominations. Andrew Watt, Clipse, DoeChii, Sounwave, SZA, Turnstile and Tyler, the Creator have five each.

And in the best new artist category, Thomas, global girl group Katseye, Olivia Dean, The Marias, Addison Rae, somi, Alex Warren and Lola Young will go head-to-head.

There are a number of first-time nominees as well this year, including Tate McRae, Zara Larsson, PinkPantheress, JID and ... Timothée Chalamet. You read that correctly.

### Variety

LOS ANGELES: A Beckham family falling-out has spilled further into public view in a series of social media posts from Brooklyn Beckham alleging that his parents David and Victoria Beckham have tried to sabotage his marriage and have always prioritized public branding over their family relationships.

"For my entire life, my parents have controlled narratives in the press about our family. The performative social media posts, family events and inauthentic relationships have been a fixture of the life I was born into," Brooklyn Beckham wrote in several pages of text posted via Instagram stories.

At 26, he's the eldest of the four children of the retired English soccer superstar and former Spice Girl-turned-fashion designer and has worked as a model and photographer, even aspiring to be a chef. He married American actress Nicola Peltz, daughter of activist investor Nelson Peltz, in 2022.

"Recently, I have seen with my own eyes the lengths that they'll go through to place countless lies in the media, mostly at the expense of innocent people, to preserve their own facade. But I believe the truth always comes out," the post said.

The posts make public a barely veiled feud that had been brewing in anonymously sourced stories in tabloids for months. Younger brother Cruz Beckham said on Instagram in December that Brooklyn had blocked family members on social media.

"I do not want to reconcile with my family," Brooklyn Beckham wrote. "I'm not being controlled, I'm standing up for myself for the first time in my life."

Leaked from jail Tuesday night in New Mexico, where he is facing counts of child sexual abuse.

Hours earlier, Busfield's attorneys successfully argued that the actor best known for appearances in "The West Wing," "Field of Dreams" and "Thirtysomething" wasn't a danger to the community and shouldn't be behind bars while he awaits trial. Prosecutors sought to keep him in jail, outlining what they said was grooming behavior and abuse of power by Busfield over three decades.

State District Court Judge David Murphy said while the crimes Busfield is accused of are inherently dangerous and involve children, prosecutors didn't prove the public wouldn't be safe if he's released.

"There's no evidence of a pattern of criminal conduct, there are no similar allegations involving children in his past," Murphy said. "Rather this defendant self-surrendered and submitted himself to this court's jurisdiction, demonstrating compliance with the court order for his arrest."

Outside the courthouse, Busfield's wife, actress Melissa Gilbert, thanked Murphy for the ruling. (AP)

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.: Actor Timothy Busfield was re-



Paris Hilton arrives at the world premiere of 'Infinite Icon: A Visual Memoir' on Tuesday, Jan. 20, at The Grove in Los Angeles. (AP)

Beckham

I'm standing up for myself for the first time in my life."

(AP)

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.: Actor Timothy Busfield was re-

## NEWS/FEATURES

### Celebrities and citizens to honor fashion icon

## Rome pays its last tribute to fashion 'Emperor' Valentino

ROME, Jan 21, (AP): Rome is paying its final tribute to legendary designer Valentino, who made his high-glamour gowns and trademark shade of red an iconic symbol of Italian elegance.

Valentino Garavani, who died aged 93 at his Rome residence on Monday, built his house in the Italian capital, where he will be lying in state at his foundation in Piazza Mignanelli on Wednesday and Thursday, just a few steps away from the world-known Spanish Steps.

His funeral will be held on Friday in the Basilica di Santa Maria degli Angeli e dei Martiri in central Rome.

The jet-set Italian designer, universally known by his first name, was adored by generations of royals, first ladies and movie stars, from Jackie Kennedy Onassis to Julia Roberts and Queen Rania of Jordan,

who swore the designer always made them look and feel their best.

Hundreds of fashion celebrities, authorities and regular citizens are expected to honor the "last emperor" of Italian fashion during the public viewing. He always maintained his atelier in Rome, while he mostly unveiled his collections in Paris.

Hailing him as one of "Italy's most luminous and beloved figures," Rome's mayor, Roberto Gualtieri, underlined the designer's strong links with the Italian capital.

Never one for edginess or statement dressing, Valentino's nearly half-century career stretched from his early days in Rome in the 1960s through to his retirement in 2008.

He founded the house of Valentino on Rome's

central Via Condotti in 1959.

Valentino's fail-safe designs made him 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.

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.



The coffin of fashion designer Valentino Garavani arrives for the lying in state at the Valentino Garavani and Giancarlo Giammetti foundation headquarters in central Rome, Wednesday Jan. 21. (AP)

### Fashion



A model wears a creation as part of the Louis Vuitton Fall/Winter 2026-2027 Men's collection presented in Paris, Tuesday, Jan. 20. (AP)



Designer Pharrell Williams accepts applause after the Louis Vuitton Fall/Winter 2026-2027 Men's collection presented in Paris. (AP)



A model wears a creation as part of the Louis Vuitton Fall/Winter 2026-2027 Men's collection. (AP)

### Paris mourns Valentino

## Pharrell opens Vuitton's monogram anniversary year

PARIS, Jan 21, (AP): Pharrell Williams opened a celebration year for Louis Vuitton's monogram - marking the house's 130th anniversary of its most recognizable signature - with a Fall-Winter 2026 men's show that was equal parts brand pageant and movie set.

Inside the Louis Vuitton Foundation in Paris, the guests encircled the grassy runway.

At its center sat a glass-walled, minimalist apartment - part bedroom, part display box - where models kept entering and exiting like characters crossing movie scenes.

It was also a celebrity-heavy room, with a front row mixing music, film and online fame - SZA, Usher, Future, Jackson Wang and others, plus a runway debut to seal the crossover: BamBam of Korean boy band GOT7.

The soundtrack did as much scene-setting as the set.

A gospel choir and full orchestra performed live from the balconies, lifting what could have been a straightforward runway lap into something closer to a staged sequence: romantic, controlled, faintly grand.

On the clothes, Williams stayed inside his Vuitton DNA: readable from a distance, richer up close, and always tethered to the idea of travel and the house's heritage goods.

This season's lens was 1970s ease spiked with utility. The palette sat firmly in autumn-tonal grays, browns, black, denim, cream - then broke into jolts of bubblegum pink, baby blue and emerald green that kept the mood from turning too polite.

It was Vuitton in full brand mode: monogram year messaging, hero outerwear, high-gloss accessories, and a set built for cameras.

Silhouettes ran long and loose, with baggier trousers that swung into an A-line sweep; suits were often topped with parka coats, a high-low collision that has become one of his signatures.

The details - always his style argument - did the work.

Shirts flashed with glimmering surfaces.

Bows and jabot-style collars delivered the 70s note without going costume.

Utility came through in the hardware language: toggles, belts, zippers; faux-fur collars that read both functional and decorative.

Patent Oxford shoes added a hard, glossy punctuation under the softer shapes.

A monogrammed puffer arrived as the obvious anniversary-era hero item.

Williams also pushed a slightly "undone" finish - wrinkled tops that looked intentionally lived-in rather than sloppy - while widening the fit menu beyond the season's broader swing toward slimness: skin-tight knits, cleanly fitted suits and oversized tailored shorts.

Then came the Vuitton wink at travel as culture-object: an Art Nouveau travel case in stained glass, rolled through on a trolley - absurd, beautiful, and perfectly on-message for a house that still sells the idea of departure as luxury.

Meanwhile, Valentino Garavani's death cast a long shadow over the opening day of Paris Fashion Week menswear Tuesday, with front-row guests and industry figures mourning the passing of one of the last towering names of 20th-century couture - an Italian designer whose working life was closely entwined with the Paris runways.

Valentino, 93, died at his Rome residence, the Valentino Garavani and Giancarlo Giammetti Foundation said in a statement announcing his death. While he built his house in Rome, he spent decades presenting collections in France.

He "was one of the last big couturiers who really embodied what was fashion in the 20th century," said Pierre Groppe, fashion editor-in-chief at Vanity Fair France.

On a day meant to sell the future, many guests said they were thinking about what fashion has lost: the couturier as a living institution.

Groppe pointed to the codes that made Valentino instantly legible - "the dots, the ruffles, the knots" - and to a generation of designers who, he said, "in a way, invented what is celebrity culture."

Valentino's vision was built on a simple idea: make women look luminous, then make the moment unforgettable.

He dressed Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and Elizabeth Taylor, among others, fixed his signature "Valentino red" in the public imagination, and - through his decades-long partnership with Giancarlo Giammetti - helped turn the designer himself into part of the spectacle, as recognizable as the clients in his front row.

Prominent fashion writer Luke Leitch framed the loss in similarly outsized terms, calling Valentino "the last of the fashion 'leviathans' of that generation," and saying it was "absolutely" the end of a certain class of designer: figures whose names could carry a global house, and whose authority came not from viral speed but from permanence.

Trained in Paris before founding his maison in Rome, Valentino became a rare bridge figure: Italian by origin, but fluent in the rituals that made Paris couture an institution. His career moved between those two capitals of elegance, bringing Roman grandeur into a system that still treats fashion not only as commerce, but as ceremony.

Even as he aged, the house's founder kept turning up at its couture and ready-to-wear shows, as observed by one Associated Press journalist - until he eventually retreated from public life, all the while radiating quiet grandeur from his front-row seat.

For some in Paris on Tuesday, the loss felt personal precisely because Valentino's world was never only Italian.

"No option off the table"

## Britain considers Australia-style social media ban for young teens

LONDON, Jan 21, (AP): The British government says it will consider banning young teenagers from social media as it tightens laws designed to protect children from harmful content and excessive screen time.

The government said it would consult with parents, young people and other interested parties about the safe use of technology amid growing concern that children are being harmed by exposure to unregulated social media content.

"As I have been clear, no option is off the table, including looking at what age children should be able to access social media and whether we need restrictions on things such as addictive features like infinite scrolling or streaks in apps," Prime Minister Keir Starmer wrote on Substack.

As part of their investigation, government ministers will travel to Australia to learn about the country's recent move that requires major social media apps such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X to bar children under 16 from their platforms.

More than 60 lawmakers from Starmer's center-left Labour Party earlier this week wrote to the prime minister calling on the government to introduce an Australia-style ban in Britain.

"Successive governments have done far too little to protect young people from the consequences of unregulated, addictive social media platforms," they wrote. "We urge the government to show leadership on this issue by introducing a minimum age for social media access of 16 years old."

LOS ANGELES, Jan 21, (AP): After more than 40 guitar-shredding years, Megadeth is going out on their own thunderous terms.

The Grammy-winning thrash metal pioneers' self-titled 17th and final studio album, out Friday, quickly establishes that this is no sappy farewell.

"Today, I may bleed, but tonight you will die," frontman Dave Mustaine snarls in "Tipping Point," the album's furious opener that oozes classic Megadeth with blistering guitar solos, crunchy riffs and some mile-a-second double-bass.

That is, until Mustaine abruptly changes the pace with an ominous warning. The music slows with each line, as if whoever he's angry at - could be personal, political or both, which has been Megadeth's agenda for decades - is meeting an untimely end.

"You try to stop the footsteps/And stop the heart that beats," Mustaine growls. "You will beg for silence/You will pray for peace."

Mustaine, the band's founder and only constant member, announced in August that it was the "perfect time" - still at the top of the game and on their own

terms - for Megadeth to release a final album.

Mustaine and Chris Rakestraw teamed as co-producers for a third straight album. It's the Megadeth debut for guitarist Teemu Mäntysaari and the first studio release with bassist James LoMenzo since "Endgame" in 2009. Dirk Verbeuren is back on drums for his second album.

Megadeth stays true to its aggressive, fast-tempo roots while also sprinkling in midtempo grooves. And there's a bonus track that'll have fans of the genre fired up: a reimagined, sped-up version of Metallica's "Ride The Lightning." Mustaine, who co-wrote the metal classic before he was fired by the band in 1983 in his pre-Megadeth days, added it to "pay my respects to where my career first started," he said in a press statement.

Mustaine, 64, takes listeners inside his angst-filled thoughts on "Hey, ..?!" He apologizes for being "missing lately," but adds: "I've had a lot of things on my mind."

No kidding. Megadeth fans have rocked out to it all for four decades.

### Megadeth is going out on top with ferocious final album



This cover image released by Tradecraft/BLK shows the self-titled album by Megadeth. (AP)

### Metal pioneers stay true to thrash roots

## MoH concludes pediatric stem cell transplantation conference

## First patient set to receive gene therapy in Kuwait within weeks

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: President of Kuwaiti Pediatric Association and Gulf Pediatric Society Dr. Sundus Al-Shuraida said the Ministry of Health has approved gene therapy for thalassemia and sickle cell anemia patients, describing the move as historic in the advancement of pediatric healthcare.

In a press statement on the sidelines of the closing ceremony of the Fifth

Pediatric Stem Cell Transplantation Conference, Al-Shuraida disclosed that the first patient to undergo gene therapy will begin cell collection within four weeks, marking the beginning of a new phase in localizing advanced treatment technologies in the country.

She revealed that 97 advanced procedures have been performed at the Pediatric Stem Cell Transplantation and Cell Therapy Unit since 2020, in addition to providing healthcare services to around 2,000 patients annually and performing 700 therapeutic apheresis procedures, including phototherapy. She emphasized that these figures reflect the magnitude of the clinical burden and

the growing national confidence in these advanced services.

She pointed out that the scientific program of the two-day conference included more than 40 lectures, presented by 35 international and regional speakers from reference centers in Europe, United States, United Kingdom and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. She added that the conference tackled several topics, such as the developments of CAR-T treatment for children, gene therapy for genetic and immune diseases, stem cell transplantation strategies for non-malignant diseases, and managing post-transplant complications.

## Experts warn low vaccination rates fuel measles comeback

## US on the verge of losing its measles-free status

NEW YORK, Jan 21, (AP): It's been a year since a measles outbreak began in West Texas, and international health authorities say they plan to meet in April to determine if the US has lost its measles-free designation.

Experts fear the vaccine-preventable virus has regained a foothold and that the US may soon follow Canada in losing the achievement of having eliminated it.

The reevaluation is largely symbolic and hinges on whether a single measles chain has spread uninterrupted within the US for at least 12 months.

Public health scientists around the country are investigating whether the now-ended Texas outbreak is linked to active ones in Utah, Arizona and South Carolina. But doctors and scientists say the US - and North America overall - has a measles problem, regardless of the decision.

"It is really a question of semantics," said Dr. Jonathan Temte, a Wisconsin family physician who helped certify the US was measles-free in 2000. "The bottom line is the conditions are sufficient to allow this many cases to occur. And that gets back to de-emphasizing a safe and effective vaccine."

Last year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed 2,242 measles cases across 44 states - the most since 1991 - and nearly 50 separate outbreaks.

The problem has been years in the making, as fewer kids get routine vaccines due to parental waivers, health care access issues and rampant disinformation. More recently, Trump administration health officials including Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. have questioned and sown doubt about the established safety of vac-



Health department staff members enter the Andrews County Health Department measles clinic carrying doses of the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine, Tuesday, April 8, 2025, in Andrews, Texas. (AP)

cines at an unprecedented level while also defunding local efforts to improve vaccination rates.

"The most important thing that we can do is to make sure the people who aren't vaccinated get vaccinated," said Jennifer Nuzzo, director of Brown University's Pandemic Center. "We have not issued a clear enough message about that."

A Department of Health and Human Services spokesperson said Thursday that Kennedy has emphasized vaccines as the best way to prevent measles, adding that the CDC is responding to outbreaks and working to increase vaccination rates.

In a briefing Tuesday, department officials said they don't yet have evi-

dence that a single chain of measles has spread for a year.

But CDC's principal deputy director said he would consider the loss of elimination status to be the "cost of doing business" globally.

"We have these communities that choose to be unvaccinated," said Dr. Ralph Abraham. "That's their personal freedom."

There is little room for error in trying to stop measles. The virus is one of the most contagious, infecting 9 out of every 10 unvaccinated people exposed. Community-level protection takes a 95% vaccination rate. The current rate nationally is 92.5%, according to CDC data, but many communities fall far below that.

The patient in Texas' first known case developed the telltale rash on Jan. 20, 2025, according to state health department data.

From there, the outbreak exploded. Officially, 762 people fell ill, most of them in rural Gaines County, and two children died. Many more got sick and were never diagnosed: 182 potential measles cases among children in Gaines County went unconfirmed in March 2025 alone, state health officials said, a possible undercount of 44% in that county.

Such data gaps are common, though, making it especially hard to track outbreaks. Many people living in communities where the virus is spreading face barriers, including access to health care and distrust of the government.

Contact tracing so many cases is also expensive, said behavioral scientist Noel Brewer, who chairs the U.S. committee that will finalize the data for international health officials. Research shows a single measles case can cost public health departments tens of thousands of dollars.

CDC data on measles is still among the best worldwide, Brewer said, but "the U.S. has changed its investment in public health, so we're less able to do the case tracking that we used to do."

Genetic sequencing can fill some gaps.

Scientists have confirmed the same measles strain in Texas, New Mexico, Utah, Arizona, South Carolina, Canada, Mexico and several other North American countries, said Sebastian Oliel, a spokesperson for the Pan American Health Organization, which plans to make the final decision on U.S. measles elimination at an April 13 meeting.

## Suni Williams, NASA astronaut stuck at ISS for months, retires



Astronaut Suni Williams is interviewed at Johnson Space Center on March 31, 2025, in Houston. (AP)

years at NASA, logging 608 days in space over three station missions. She also set a record for the most spacewalking time by a woman: 62 hours during nine excursions.

NASA's new administrator Jared Isaacman called her "a trail-blazer in human spaceflight."

"Congratulations on your well-deserved retirement," he added in a statement.

## Human insight key

## AI can't automate science, philosopher explains why

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



By Alessandra Buccella  
University at Albany, State  
University of New York

Consistent with the general trend of incorporating artificial intelligence into nearly every field, researchers and politicians are increasingly using AI models trained on scientific data to infer answers to scientific questions. But can AI ultimately replace scientists?

The Trump administration signed an executive order on Nov. 24, 2025, that announced the Genesis Mission, an initiative to build and train a series of AI agents on federal scientific datasets "to test new hypotheses, automate research workflows, and accelerate scientific breakthroughs."

So far, the accomplishments of these so-called AI scientists have been mixed. On the one hand, AI systems can process vast datasets and detect subtle correlations that humans are unable to detect. On the other hand, their lack of common sense reasoning can result in unrealistic or irrelevant experimental recommendations.

While AI can assist in tasks that are part of the scientific process, it is still far away from automating science - and may never be able to. As a philosopher who studies both the history and the conceptual foundations of science, I see several problems with the idea that AI systems can "do science" without or even better than humans.

AI models do not learn directly from the real world: They have to be "told" what the world is like by their human designers. Without human scientists overseeing the construction of the digital "world" in which the model operates - that is, the datasets used for training and testing its algorithms - the breakthroughs that AI facilitates wouldn't be possible.

Consider the AI model AlphaFold. Its developers were awarded the 2024 Nobel Prize in chemistry for the model's ability to infer the structure of proteins in human cells. Because so many biological functions depend on proteins, the ability to quickly generate protein structures to test via simulations has the potential to accelerate drug design, trace how diseases develop and advance other areas of biomedical research.

As practical as it may be, however, an AI system like AlphaFold does not provide new knowledge about proteins, diseases or more effective drugs on its own. It simply makes it possible to analyze existing information more efficiently.

As philosopher Emily Sullivan put it, to be successful as sci-

tific tools, AI models must retain a strong empirical link to already established knowledge. That is, the predictions a model makes must be grounded in what researchers already know about the natural world. The strength of this link depends on how much knowledge is already available about a certain subject and on how well the model's programmers translate highly technical scientific concepts and logical principles into code.

AlphaFold would not have been successful if it weren't for the existing body of human-generated knowledge about protein structures that developers used to train the model. And without human scientists to provide a foundation of theoretical and methodological knowledge, nothing AlphaFold creates would amount to scientific progress.

But the role of human scientists in the process of scientific discovery and experimentation goes beyond ensuring that AI models are properly designed and anchored to existing scientific knowledge. In a sense, science as a creative achievement derives its legitimacy from human abilities, values and ways of living. These, in turn, are grounded in the unique ways in which humans think, feel and act.

Scientific discoveries are more than just theories supported by evidence: They are the product of generations of scientists with a variety of interests and perspectives, working together through a common commitment to their craft and intellectual honesty. Scientific discoveries are never the products of a single visionary genius.

For example, when researchers first proposed the double-helix structure of DNA, there were no empirical tests able to verify this hypothesis - it was based on the reasoning skills of highly trained experts. It took nearly a century of technological advancements and several generations of scientists to go from what looked like pure speculation in the late 1800s to a discovery honored by a 1953 Nobel Prize.

Science, in other words, is a distinctly social enterprise, in which ideas get discussed, interpretations are offered, and disagreements are not always overcome. As other philosophers of science have remarked, scientists are more similar to a tribe than "passive recipients" of scientific information. Researchers do not accumulate scientific knowledge by recording "facts" - they create scientific knowledge through skilled practice, debate and agreed-upon standards informed by social and political values.

I believe the computing power of AI systems can be used to accelerate scientific progress, but only if done with care. (AP)



The northern lights illuminate the sky in Anchorage, Alaska, Tuesday, Jan. 20. (AP)

## Aurora lights up Alaska skies

Streaks of shimmering green and red bands exploded in the dark skies above Alaska's largest city Tuesday as the aurora provided a light show for early morning dog walkers, joggers and commuters.

Anchorage was not alone in seeing vivid displays of the aurora following a major disturbance in the Earth's magnetic field.

The aurora didn't disappoint, and its reach overnight Monday and into Tuesday was wide. Social media was lit up with stunning au-

thor photos from places including Alaska, San Francisco, Chicago, Canada and across Europe.

The intense displays came amid intense geomagnetic and solar radiation storms, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Space Weather Prediction Center.

In November, solar storms brought vibrant auroras to parts of Europe including Hungary and the United Kingdom, and as far south in the United States as Texas. (AP)

## Bulgaria's third region declares flu epidemic

## Experts develop new H5N1 avian influenza vaccine

ST. PETERSBURG, Jan 21, (Xinhua): Russian scientists have developed a new vaccine strain against the highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza virus, the Russian Science Foundation announced on Tuesday.

The new strain precisely matches currently circulating variants and targets contemporary H5N1 viruses while remaining safe for both animals and humans, the foundation said on its website, adding that the research was carried out by scientists from the St. Petersburg State University of Veterinary Medicine and the A.A. Smorodintsev Research Institute of Influenza.

Highly pathogenic H5N1 contin-

ues to circulate worldwide, causing mass mortality among domestic and wild birds and significant economic losses. Its high variability and ability to cross species barriers reduce the effectiveness of older vaccines that do not match circulating strains, it said.

The scientists used reverse genetics to engineer the virus. Genes encoding hemagglutinin and neuramidase from an H5N1 virus isolated from a black-headed gull in 2023 were modified to reduce pathogenicity and combined with genes from a safe laboratory H1N1 strain, producing a hybrid virus that replicates efficiently in chicken embryos.

In vaccination experiments, chicks receiving two doses 14 days apart developed antibody levels against H5N1 ten times higher than the minimum required for protection, demonstrating the high immunogenicity of the new vaccine strain, according to the Russian Science Foundation.

In another related development, Bulgaria's Health Ministry announced on Tuesday that the coastal Burgas District has become the third region this year to declare a flu epidemic.

From January 22 to 30, temporary anti-epidemic measures will be enforced in Burgas. These include the suspension of in-person classes,

extracurricular activities, and hospital visits.

Similar measures are already in place in two other districts. Varna's restrictions, initially set for January 14-20, have been extended to January 26 due to high case numbers. In Dobrich, measures will remain until the end of this week.

National data for the week of January 12-18 show 121,254 people were examined for influenza and acute respiratory diseases (ARD), with 4,194 hospitalized.

Children aged 5-14 were the most affected group, with 7,670 cases per 100,000 population. They were followed by children aged 0-4, with 6,108 cases per 100,000.

## SPORTS

# Doncic takes charge as Lakers top injury-ravaged Nuggets

Sengun powers Rockets' comeback win over Spurs

**DENVER, Jan 21, (AP):** Luka Doncic had 38 points, 13 rebounds and 10 assists, and the Los Angeles Lakers rallied to beat the Denver Nuggets 115-107.

LeBron James, who was not voted an All-Star starter for the first time since his rookie season, scored 19 points for Los Angeles, which played the second half without center Deandre Ayton due to a left eye injury.

Jamal Murray scored 26 of his 28 points in the first half for Denver and added 11 assists, but shot just 1 for 5 in the second half.

With Denver Broncos cornerback Patrick Surtain II sitting courtside, the short-handed Nuggets led by 16 in the third quarter despite missing four rotation players, including Nikola Jokic, who has missed the last 12 games with a hyperextended left knee.

Aaron Gordon and Peyton Watson scored 18 apiece for the Nuggets.

A close game added to the budding rivalry that began in the 2023 Western Conference finals, when Denver swept the Lakers on its way to the NBA title.

**Rockets 111, Spurs 106**

In Houston, Alperen Sengun had 20 points, 13 rebounds and nine assists to help the Houston Rockets rally for victory over the San Antonio Spurs.

Reed Sheppard scored 12 of his 21 points in the fourth quarter and Kevin Durant added 18 points to help the Rockets to their third straight victory.

Tipoff was delayed by 22 minutes after a player bent one of the rims during warmups and it had to be replaced.

The Rockets trailed by as many as 16 and were down by 10 before opening the fourth quarter with a big run to close the gap.

The game was tied with about two minutes to play when Sheppard blocked a 3-point attempt by Julian Champagnie. Jabari Smith Jr. put the Rockets on top 106-104 with a fade-away shot a few seconds later.

Sengun made a basket with about 30 seconds left to extend the lead to 108-104 before Stephon Castle missed a 3-point attempt. Sheppard added two free throws after that to seal the victory.



Golden State Warriors' Jonathan Kuminga (1) reaches for a rebound ahead of Toronto Raptors' Jonathan Mogbo (2) in the second half of an NBA basketball game in San Francisco. (AP)

Champagnie made eight 3-pointers and led the Spurs with 27 points on a night Victor Wembanyama was held to 14 points with 10 rebounds. Champagnie's performance came after he set the franchise record by sinking 11 3-pointers in a win over the Knicks on Dec. 31.

**Raptors 145, Warriors 127**

In San Francisco, Immanuel Quickley matched his career high with 40 points and added 10 assists, and the Toronto Raptors ran away from Golden State early in the Warriors' first game since losing star guard Jimmy Butler to a season-ending right knee injury.

Quicklime shot 11 for 13 and made all 11 of his free throws, while Scottie Barnes added 26 points and 11 assists in the Raptors' highest-scoring game and the Warriors' worst defensive performance this season.

Buddy Hield had season highs of 25 points and six 3-pointers - making all of his attempts from deep - while Stephen Curry scored 16 points and Draymond Green added six points, six rebounds and five assists.

**Heat 130, Kings 117**

In Sacramento, Bam Adebayo scored 25 points, Norman Powell added 22 and the Miami Heat cruised to road win over the Sacramento Kings.

The Heat have won three of their last five and led by double digits the entire fourth quarter. Andrew Wiggins added 19 points, while Pelle Larsson had 16 points and a team-high nine assists.

Simone Fontecchio scored 15 points off the bench on five 3-pointers. Miami shot 50% from 3-point range, hitting 21 of 42.

Miami guard Tyler Herro (ribs) and center Kel'el Ware (hamstring) missed the game, leaving the Heat

without two key rotation players. Ware - who is averaging a team-high 9.8 rebounds - missed his first game of the season.

Sacramento has dropped two straight games after winning a season-high four in a row. DeMar DeRozan led the Kings with 23 points, while Russell Westbrook added 22 on 9-of-14 shooting.

**Jazz rally 127, Timberwolves 122**

In Salt Lake City, Keyonte George scored a career-high 43 points, Jusuf Nurkic recorded his second career triple-double, and the Utah Jazz rallied to beat the Minnesota Timberwolves.

Nurkic finished with 16 points, 18 rebounds and 10 assists in his first triple-double since Jan. 16, 2019, with Portland in a 129-112 win over Cleveland.

Rookie Ace Bailey scored 20 points and Isaiah Collier had 18 points and 10 assists for the Jazz (15-

29), who delivered coach Will Hardy his 100th career victory.

George scored more than 30 points for the third time in his last six games.

Anthony Edwards scored 38 points for the Timberwolves (27-17), who squandered a 15-point lead and closed out a four-game trip with three straight losses. Julius Randle scored 19 points and Rudy Gobert added 11 points, 10 rebounds and four blocks.

Edwards had a three-point play that pulled Minnesota within 121-119 before George responded with a 3-pointer from the corner with 59.2 seconds left that give the Jazz the cushion needed to halt their four-game skid.

**Bulls 138, Clippers 110**

In Chicago, Coby White scored 27 points and hit six of Chicago's franchise record-tying 25 3-pointers, and the hot-shooting Bulls beat the sur-

ing Los Angeles Clippers.

White had the touch again after hitting a season-high seven 3s in Sunday's blowout win over Brooklyn, and the Bulls made 25 of 47 from beyond the arc.

Matas Buzelis added 21 points, Ayo Dosunmu scored 18 and Kevin Huerter added 14. All three players made four 3s.

Nikola Vucevic added 19 points and eight rebounds, and the Bulls had their way with a team that came in rolling. The Clippers had won six straight and 13 of 15 since a 6-21 start.

Chicago led by 21 points at the half after matching a season high with 45 points in the second quarter and broke the game back open after Los Angeles made a run in the third.

James Harden led Los Angeles with 24 points. John Collins scored 23 and matched a season high with five 3-pointers.

**Suns 116, 76ers 110**

In Philadelphia, Devin Booker scored 27 points and Jalen Green added 12 points in his return to the lineup as the Phoenix Suns beat the Philadelphia 76ers in a matchup of teams playing the second game of a back to back.

Grayson Allen and Jordan Goodwin scored 16 points apiece and Collin Gillespie and Oso Ighodaro each added 12 as the Suns won their third straight game and for the 12th time in 16 games.

Rookie VJ Edgecombe led the 76ers with 25 points. Kelly Oubre Jr. finished with 21 points and Tyrese Maxey added 20. Andre Drummond finished with 15 rebounds and eight points for the Sixers, who lost for the fourth time in six games.

Philadelphia was without Joel Embiid (right ankle injury management) and Paul George (left knee injury management).

Green played in just his third game of the season, and his first since Nov. 8, because of a right hamstring injury. He is in his first season with the Suns, arriving in the offseason as part of the trade in which Kevin Durant was sent to the Houston Rockets.

Green came off the bench to score seven points in nine minutes of the first half, and went on to shoot 4 for 11 from the field, including 2 for 4 from distance, in 20 minutes, with three assists and two rebounds.

Two to cheer as sisters fall short

## Jamaican teen triplets send one to Olympics



Skier Henniyah Rivers rounds a gate during a slalom training run at Loveland Ski Area in Dillon, Colo. (AP)

**NEW HAMPSHIRE, Jan 21, (AP):** The teenage triplets who represent Jamaica in ski racing will be heading to the Milan Cortina Olympics - one to race and two to cheer him on from the stands.

The bid of Helaina and Henniyah Rivers to earn a spot with their brother, Henri IV, came to a close over the weekend as they fell just short. But Team Rivers will still all be heading to Bormio, Italy, next month to watch Henri IV compete in the slalom.

The triplets were on a quest this winter to represent their mother's country of Jamaica at the Olympics and fulfill a family dream that started when their father found a pair of skis and boots in an attic as a kid. They want to be a catalyst to inspire other Black ski racers in what is a predominantly white sport.

Sure, the sisters were disappointed. Since November, they've each competed more than 20 times at races all over in an effort to earn a spot. But it's turned into nothing but support and happiness for their brother.

"I just told them how proud I was of everything that they've done up to this point," their father, Henri, said in a phone interview with The Associated Press. "It doesn't matter if you qualify or not, you attempted to and you did your best. You left it out on the slope and that's it. You do your best every time and wherever the results are, that's what they are."

The 18-year-olds born minutes apart in Brooklyn have been all over the globe competing in lower-tier races in an effort to qualify for the technical events, slalom and giant slalom. Their last chance was over the weekend at the Proctor Ski Area in New Hampshire, in a slalom race. Henniyah was 55th while Helaina made it to the second run but didn't finish. They simply ran out of time to lower their ranking enough to earn a place in Cortina, the site of the women's races that will feature Mikaela Shiffrin and 41-year-old Lindsey Vonn.

"They look at it like, 'Oh, I didn't make it,'" their father said. "It has nothing to do with that. They persevered. We've just been on the road for the last eight weeks and they just stuck it out and they did what they had to do. They came up a little short. That's OK."

In two weeks, the family leaves for Italy. They will watch Henri IV walk in the opening ceremony, in his new Team Jamaica gear, and later root for him when he competes Feb. 16 in the slalom.

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## US and Canada could put North American dominance on display at Olympics in Milan

**MONTREAL, Jan 21, (AP):** One more goal. That's how close the U.S. was to beating Canada in the final at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics before losing in overtime.

One more goal. That's how close the U.S. was from tying Canada in the semifinals at the 2014 Sochi Olympics before losing 1-0.

One more goal. That's how close the U.S. was to beating Canada in the final at the 4 Nations Face-Off a year ago before losing in overtime.

"Canada won, right?" U.S. center Jack Eichel said. "So, they're obviously on top."

Canada has won every major international men's hockey tournament featuring a the NHL's best players over the past 16 years, a run that includes the 2016 World Cup of Hockey. With Sidney Crosby, Connor McDavid, Nathan MacKinnon and Cale Makar joining forces for the first time on the same sheet of ice, the nation known as the cradle of the sport goes into the Milan Cortina Olympics next month as the gold medal favorite.

"It's always been Canada," longtime U.S. star Patrick Kane said.

The U.S. has been closing ground for decades, and the fight-filled 4 Nations put the border rivalry in the spotlight while ramping up expectations that the Games will be another showcase of North American dominance.

"The men haven't been able to get over that hump and defeat Canada and win a gold medal, and I think this is their best chance to do it," said retired U.S. winger T.J. Oshie, whose shootout heroics against host Russia in Sochi is one of the most memorable Olympic moments in history. "This is the best U.S.A. team that I've seen. And if they can come together like they did in the 4 Nations, I think that for the first time, I'd say it's a pretty fair fight going into it."

European powerhouses Sweden and Finland, the latter being the defending Olympic champion, will be in the mix, as could the Czechs or Germans. But in a tournament without the Russians, the U.S. and Canada look like the teams to beat. BetMGM Sportsbook set Canada as a 5-4 favorite ahead of the U.S. at just over 2-1.

Canada won the 4 Nations on McDavid's goal in Boston last February and has the deepest, most talented forward group of any of the 12 countries involved. That includes 19-year-old Macklin Celebriani, who was on the couch cheering last February while in awe of the quality of play on display.

"That was the best hockey I've ever watched," Celebriani said. "Just the pace, the amount of skill,

### Sweden and Finland in the mix



In this file photo, United States' Adam Fox, left, battles Canada's Mitch Marner for the puck during the first period of the 4 Nations Face-Off championship hockey game in Boston. (AP)

physicality - all of it combined is the best."

It could be even faster in Milan, and not only because the rinks are more than 3 feet shorter than NHL-regulation length.

"That'll probably make the game a lot tighter, too," Makar said. "The Olympics will be a completely different kind of thing, almost even more amplified."

The U.S. has hopes for its first men's hockey gold medal at the Olympics since the 1980 "Miracle on Ice" team. That's not a pipe dream, as the U.S. National Team Development Program and grassroots growth of the sport has closed the gap on Canada.

"The talent pool and the level of the players of the Americans now I think is as high as it's ever been," Kane said. "That's kind of how we felt in 2010, 2014, (and it) keeps getting better."

The teams split at the 4 Nations, games that U.S. center Jack Hughes described as crazy and just a taste of what he and other players are in for in Milan.

"Once you see the level of competition at the 4 Nations, you're so hungry to get back to that and you want to be in the Olympics so bad just because the level of hockey was so high," said Hughes, who is set to play with older brother Quinn at the Games.

Oshie grew up in Warroad, Minnesota, a 20-minute drive from the Canadian border. He described the simmering rivalry as hatred: "For a long time, they were just almost too good to get past."

Maybe not anymore, particularly given Canada's seeming vulnerability in goal and the U.S. strength at hockey's most important position. But there is no guarantee these teams face off in single-elimination play at the Olympics, so USA Hockey general manager Bill Guerin insists he and his staff did not construct a roster just to beat Canada.

"We built the best team possible," Guerin said. "We did that with us in mind. We're worried about us, not anybody else."

## Steve Waugh among investors in European T20 league

**SYDNEY, Jan 21, (AP):** Australia great Steve Waugh wants to help cricket flourish in its "last great frontier" after investing in a franchise in Amsterdam as part of a proposed T20 league in Europe.

The European T20 Premier League is scheduled to begin in August, organizers said Wednesday in a news conference in Sydney where they announced the first three franchises to join the competition: Amsterdam, Edinburgh and Belfast.

The venture is set to include three more teams in a tournament held across continental Europe, a largely untapped market for cricket.

Amsterdam will be co-owned by Waugh, a former Australia captain and one of the country's best-ever players, and he is excited about taking the sport to a new part of the world.

"This opportunity stood out because it is driven by aspiration and long-term thinking," Waugh said. "In many ways, it marks a return to the game for me - but

'The legacy goes on'

## Sheikh Duaij reaffirms support for horse racing

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Sheikh Khaled Al-Salman Al-Sabah, head of Al-Masayel Stable, has reaffirmed his commitment to supporting horse racing at the Hunting and Equestrian Club, citing his deep passion for equestrian sports and his desire to honor the legacy of his late father, Sheikh Khaled Duaij Al-Salman Al-Sabah, and his grandfather, Sheikh Duaij Al-Salman.

The 12th race meeting saw notable successes for Al-Masayel Stable, with the horse "Siyah" claiming the cup named after the late Sheikh Khaled Duaij Al-Salman Al-Sabah, while "Al-Maqam" won the cup named in honor of the late Sheikh Duaij Al-Salman Al-Sabah.

Speaking on the occasion, Sheikh Duaij said his father was among the founders of Kuwaiti equestrian sports and the Hunting and Equestrian Club, and one of the sport's most prominent supporters. He stressed that he remains dedicated to continuing this



In this file photoSheikh Al-Nasser honors Sheikh Duaij Khaled.

legacy, describing Al-Masayel as a historic stable that achieved numerous landmark victories during the golden era of Kuwaiti horse racing in the 1970s.

He added that Al-Masayel's

horses were among the finest to compete on local tracks, earning widespread recognition and respect among horse owners and equestrian enthusiasts for their outstanding achievements.

## Kuwait Club beats Sharjah to reach playoffs

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Kuwait Club secured a convincing 111-86 victory over Sharjah in the penultimate round of Group B in the West Asia Super League for the Gulf region, "Wasl." In the same group, Al-Ahly Saudi defeated Al-Arabi Qatar 91-79.

With these results, Al-Ahly Saudi claimed direct qualification to the Gulf final, finishing first with 10 points from 4 wins and 2 losses, edging out Kuwait, who also ended with 10 points but second due to scoring differential. Al-Arabi finished third, while Sharjah was eliminated in fourth place.

Kuwait Club will now face Al-Muharraq of Bahrain, the third-placed team from Group A, in a best-of-three playoff series. The winner will advance to the semifinals to take on Al-Ittihad Saudi. Meanwhile, Al-Arabi will meet



A player from the Kuwait Club maintained control of the ball during the game.

Shabab Al-Ahli of the UAE under the same playoff system, with the winner set to face Al-Ahly Saudi.

Kuwait's coach, Serbian Dushan Stojicov, commented: "Our aim was

direct qualification, but finishing first in the group only offers a slight advantage. Our focus remains on reaching the final and competing for the championship."

## Top seeds Sabalenka, Alcaraz lead Australian Open charge

Melbourne draws historic crowd



Alex de Minaur of Australia plays a forehand return to Hamad Medjedovic of Serbia during their second round match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

MELBOURNE, Australia, Jan 21, (AP): Another day, another record crowd. Top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka and Carlos Alcaraz advanced in straight sets Wednesday and the No. 3 seeds - Coco Gauff and Alexander Zverev - also progressed to the third round of the Australian Open.

The combined numbers for day and night sessions, 103,720 fans, set a full-day record for the third time in four days of the main draw at the season-opening major, which has become a festival of tennis.

Two-time Australian Open champion Sabalenka opened Day 4 with a 6-3, 6-1 win over Bai Zhouxuan on Rod Laver Arena, and Gauff beat left-hander Olga Danilovic 6-2, 6-2 at Margaret Court Arena.

Alcaraz fended off Yannick Hanfmann 7-6 (4), 6-3, 6-2 in an afternoon encounter on the center

court, and then reflected on his own performance and on his golf outing with Roger Federer.

Alcaraz, 22, is trying to win his first title at Melbourne Park to become the youngest man to complete a career Grand Slam.

Zverev, who lost last year's final here to Jannik Sinner, had to wait through a half-hour rain delay and concern over a sore left ankle before beating Alexandre Muller 6-3, 4-6, 6-3, 6-4.

He was leading the fourth set 2-1 and serving at 15-0 when he had to halt the match and sit in a court-side chair for treatment.

"I took a painkiller. It was fine after that," he said. "I was a bit scared because it was toward the Achilles tendon. I just wanted the physio to check it out. After the medical timeout I was moving fine, playing fine."

He was playing a night match on John Cain Arena, the third of Melbourne Park's arenas with a retractable roof, where only ground pass tickets are needed for entry. So on a day with a massive crowd, it was still full late.

Local hope Alex de Minaur beat

Hamad Medjedovic 6-7 (5), 6-2, 6-2, 6-1 on Rod Laver Arena around the same time.

He next faces No. 29 Frances Tiafoe, who beat Francisco Comesana 6-4, 6-3, 4-6, 6-2.

Sabalenka won the Australian Open in 2023 and 2024 and was the runner-up a year ago against Madison Keys. She is after her fifth Grand Slam title and has two trophies at the U.S. Open.

She raced to a 5-0 lead but then needed seven set points to take the first set against the defensive-minded Bai, who used clever drop shots to help her stay in the match.

Sabalenka will next face Anastasia Potapova, who ousted former U.S. Open champion Emma Raducanu 7-6 (3), 6-2.

Teenagers Mirra Andreeva (No. 8), Victoria Mboko (17) and Iva Jovic (29) advanced to the third round.

The 12th-seeded Elina Svitolina defeated Linda Klimovicova 7-5, 6-1 a day after her husband, Gael Monfils, said goodbye at Melbourne Park in his retirement year.

Zeynep Sonmez of Turkey, who was highly praised during her first-

round match Sunday for assisting an ill ballkid, advanced 6-2, 6-4 over Anna Bondar.

Former U.S. Open winner and 11th-seeded Daniil Medvedev beat Quentin Halys 6-7 (9), 6-3, 6-4, 6-2, 13th-seeded Andrej Rublev beat Jaime Faria 6-4, 6-3, 4-6, 7-5 and 19th-seeded Tommy Paul defeated Thiago Agustin Tirante 6-3, 6-4, 6-2.

No. 10 Alexander Bublik, No. 25 Learner Tien and No. 26 Cameron Norrie progressed along with No. 14 Alejandro Davidovich Fokina, who won the first two sets but then had to struggle to beat big-serving American Reilly Opelka 6-3, 7-6 (3), 5-7, 4-6, 6-4.

Two days after winning for the 100th time at Melbourne Park, 24-time major champion Novak Djokovic has an afternoon second-round against Francesca Maestrilli. The prime time night slot on Rod Laver Arena goes to two-time defending champion Sinner against Australia's James Duckworth.

Naomi Osaka, who made quite the fashion statement in her tournament opener, has another night match against Sorana Cirstea.

Fans, officials celebrate second continental title

## Senegal receives heroic welcome in Dakar

DAKAR, Senegal, Jan 21, (AP): The triumphant Senegal team received a heroes welcome during its parade in the capital Dakar on Tuesday following their victory in a tense Africa Cup of Nations final that saw the players briefly walk off the pitch to protest a penalty decision deep into second-half stoppage time.

The team rolled slowly through Dakar in an open-top bus in the afternoon, greeted by the deafening sound of vuvuzelas, car horns and festive chants from tens of thousands of fans, many wearing Senegal jerseys.

Standing atop a double-decker bus, players took turns hoisting the trophy and a Senegalese flag, clapping and waving to the crowd.

Fans climbed atop billboards and car roofs for a glimpse of the champions, using any vantage point they could find to see the Teranga Lions.

Pape Lo said he traveled 200 kilometers (124 miles) from the religious city of Touba.

"We had to be here with them. I came to thank them for this title, which puts Senegal at the forefront of world football," he said.



The Senegalese soccer team rides through thousands of cheering fans celebrating their victory in the Africa Cup of Nations soccer tournament, in Dakar, Senegal. (AP)

Another fan, Marcel Ndeky, called the victory historic: "This is our second title, but winning in Morocco is special. The team fought with dignity to win the continental trophy. They deserve the nation's recognition."

Senegal had won its first African

sports and reflects the determination of Senegal's youth."

The players arrived at the international airport outside Dakar early Tuesday morning and were greeted by Senegalese President Bassirou Diomaye Faye, who praised their performance.

"They did it heroically, they played beautiful football, they were incredibly fair and they were exemplary both on and off the field. We can only be proud of them," he said.

Outside the airport, fans dressed in national colors gathered to welcome the players, waving Senegalese flags, blaring horns and chanting in celebration.

Senegal defeated tournament host Morocco in dramatic fashion after a heated final in Rabat on Sunday.

Pape Gueye scored the only goal of the game - in extra time for the Teranga Lions. A chaotic game saw some fans trying to storm the field at one point.

FIFA president Gianni Infantino called the Senegalese team's decision to walk off the pitch "unacceptable" in a statement echoed by the Confederation of African Football.

## Al-Ahly Saudi defeats Al-Arabi

Kuwait Club beats Sharjah to reach playoffs

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

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Muharraq of Bahrain, the third-

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The winner will advance to the

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Meanwhile, Al-Arabi will meet

Shabab Al-Ahli of the UAE under

the same playoff system, with the

winner set to face Al-Ahly Saudi.

Kuwait's coach, Serbian Dushan

Stojicov, commented: "Our aim was

direct qualification, but finishing first in the group only offers a slight advantage. Our focus remains on reaching the final and competing for the championship."

## Event highlights Gov backs health initiatives

AI-Maqseed: Turning sport into daily culture with Kuwait Sports Day



Faisal Al-Maqseed

major national activities.

Al-Maqseed emphasized that strong government backing and the Public Authority for Sport's full support highlight the country's commitment to promoting public health and fostering an active, balanced community, adding that Kuwait Sports Day has become a fixed annual date on the national events calendar.

## Best of the Rest

**China reaches AFC U23 Asian Cup final:** China reached the final of the AFC U23 Asian Cup for the first time after defeating Vietnam 3-0 in the semifinals in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on Tuesday.

The victory marks a historic step forward for China in the tournament, who had failed to advance to the group stage in any of their prior attempts.

Vietnam reached the knockout stage as Group A winner, scoring eight goals in four matches, second only to Japan. China scored once since the quarterfinal but has kept a clean sheet throughout the tournament.

After making several changes to the starting lineup, China put seven of its 16 shots on target. Defender Peng Xiao broke the deadlock in the 47th minute with a header, before Xiang Yuwang doubled the lead five minutes later. Wang Yudong sealed the victory with a close-range finish in stoppage time. (Xinhua)

**Salford faces Man City in FA Cup:** Salford City set up a meeting with Manchester City in the fourth round of the FA Cup by beating Swindon Town 3-2 on Tuesday.

Luke Garbutt curled in a 68th-minute free kick for the winner for the fourth-tier club owned by a consortium containing former Manchester United players David Beckham and Gary Neville.

Salford advanced from the third round for the first time and the reward is another trip to Etihad Stadium on Feb. 14.

City beat Salford 8-0 in the third round last season. (AP)

**Barcelona loans Ter Stegen to Girona:** FC Barcelona goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen has joined Girona on loan until the end of the current season, the La Liga club announced on Tuesday.

"FC Barcelona has reached an agreement with Girona FC for the loan of Marc ter Stegen until 30 June 2026," Barcelona confirmed on its official website and social media channels.

The 33-year-old moves after losing his place in Barcelona's first team to summer signing Joan Garcia. He also needs a back operation in the summer, while a serious knee injury last season limited him to just a handful of appearances. (Xinhua)

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# Sports

In this file photo, Barcelona's goalkeeper Marc-André ter Stegen warms up prior to the start of the Copa del Rey soccer match between Guadalajara and Barcelona in Guadalajara, Spain. Stegen joined Girona on loan until the end of the current season, the La Liga club announced. (AP)

Media center earns praise during Championship

## Kuwait road to World Cup begins against Iraq

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Kuwait will kick off its main round campaign in the 22nd Asian Handball Championship, currently being held in Kuwait until January 29, with a match against Iraq at 6:00 PM in Group A at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex. Earlier today, Japan faces South Korea at 12:00 PM in the same group. In Group B, UAE meets Bahrain at 2:00 PM, followed by Saudi Arabia against Qatar at 4:00 PM.

Under the tournament format, the top two teams from each preliminary group advance to the main round, and the top two from each main round group qualify for the semifinals, securing one of the four spots in the 2027 World Cup in Germany.

Kuwait is aiming to overcome Iraq as its first hurdle, moving closer to the semifinals and continuing to compete for the championship, while Iraq looks to disrupt Kuwait's ambitions with an early tournament upset.

Asian Handball Federation President and International Handball Federation Vice President Badr Al-Dhiab lauded the high level of organization and the quality of play in the 22nd Asian Championship. He expressed confidence in Kuwait's ability to host such a major continental event, highlighting the strong capabilities demonstrated by the country's youth in previous sports events.

Al-Dhiab added that the organizers provided all necessary resources to ensure the tournament's success, noting that all participating teams and officials expressed satisfaction with

the arrangements and management—a factor recognized by both the Asian and International Handball Federations.

Several Gulf and Arab media outlets have praised the Asian Handball Media Center for its role in delivering outstanding coverage of the championship.

Jordanian journalist Mohammed Al-Jaloudi, Editorial Secretary of Al-Dustour's sports section, said Kuwait organized a world-class edition of the tournament, reflecting long-term institutional planning and the professionalism of its technical and administrative teams. He added that the media center staff worked tirelessly, providing constant updates and comprehensive coverage of all aspects of the championship.

Saudi sports journalist Zuhair Al-Dhamin also commended the media center, headed by Handball Federation member Mishal Al-Qabandi, noting that it greatly facilitated journalists and photographers covering the event.

Similarly, Saudi journalist Ahmed Al-Baqaal praised the organizing and media committees for their meticulous attention to detail, which enabled media professionals to present the championship effectively to regional and international audiences.

Meanwhile, Abdullah Al-Mutairi, presenter at Tel Gulf Sports Events Company, highlighted his company's role in providing logistical and operational support before, during, and after matches, including player and team announcements, the closing ceremony, and awards distribution. He emphasized that this support forms a key part of the media coverage, contributing significantly to the tournament's overall success.



Kuwaiti player shoots as UAE defense tries to block. KUNA photo

## Bodø/Glimt stuns City as Arsenal marches into last 16

Vinícius turns jeers to cheers

**BODO, Norway, Jan 21, (AP):** Manchester City lost 3-1 at tiny Norwegian club Bodø/Glimt in one of the biggest upsets in Champions League history, while defending champion Paris Saint-Germain also was on the end of an unexpected defeat at Sporting Lisbon.

Vinícius Júnior turned jeers from his own fans to cheers by scoring for Real Madrid in a 6-1 win over Monaco and Arsenal became the first team to secure direct qualification for the round of 16 after a 3-1 victory at Inter Milan, maintaining its 100% record in the league stage after seven rounds.

Pep Guardiola's squad of City

superstars was humbled inside an 8,000-capacity stadium in Bodø, a Norwegian fishing town north of the Arctic Circle whose soccer team is playing in the Champions League for the first time this season.

City fell 3-0 behind at one point and had 2024 Ballon d'Or winner Rodri sent off in the second half.

"In the end, it's embarrassing," said City's Norwegian striker Erling Haaland, whose team was coming off an abject derby loss to Manchester United in the Premier League on Saturday.

After Kasper Høgh's first-half double for Bodø/Glimt, Jem Petter Hauge curled into the top corner in the 58th to make it 3-0. City replied through Rayan Cherki but hopes of a comeback were damaged soon after by Rodri collecting two yellow cards in quick succession.

City didn't look like a team that has had \$500 million spent on players over the last 12 months, with its flimsy, injury-hit defense constantly pierced on the counterattack. The hosts had two would-be goals disallowed for narrow offside decisions and also hit the crossbar.

Add this upset to the most unlikely results down the years in the Champions League. They include Moldovan club Sheriff beating Real Madrid 2-1 in 2021, Rubin Kazan winning 2-1 at Guardiola's Barcelona in 2009, and Swiss underdog Basel beating Alex Ferguson's Manchester United by the same score in 2011.

Colombia international Luis Suárez's 90th-minute goal earned Sporting a 2-1 win over PSG, which - like City - now has work to do in next week's final round to qualify automatically to the last 16 by finishing in the top eight and avoid needing to go through the two-legged playoffs for a second straight season.

That was Suárez's second goal of the game. He put Sporting ahead before an equalizer by substitute Khvicha Kvaratskhelia.



Tottenham's Pedro Porro, left, kicks the ball ahead of Dortmund's Ramy Bensebaini during the Champions League opening phase soccer match between Tottenham Hotspur and Borussia Dortmund in London, England. (AP)

Alvaro Arbeloa, Madrid's new coach, was taking charge of a Champions League game for the first time and it was again an unusual atmosphere at Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

Part of the crowd jeered Vinícius nearly every time he touched the ball, like during Saturday's win over Levante in the Spanish league. The Brazil forward has been having an overwhelming season and some fans view him as one of the reasons why coach Xabi Alonso was replaced last week.

However, the home fans were applauding Vinícius after his solo goal

that made it 5-0 in the 63rd minute. Kylian Mbappé, with a double against his first club, and 18-year-old Franco Mastantuono had already scored for Madrid and Jude Bellingham grabbed its sixth goal.

Madrid, the record 15-time champion, climbed to second place.

Arsenal is now on its longest-ever winning streak in the Champions League and is guaranteed a top-two finish.

Gabriel Jesus scored the first two goals for the Premier League leaders and the man he started ahead of - Victor Gyokeres - came off the bench to

net the third.

Peter Sucic had made it 1-1 with a goal for Inter, the heavily beaten finalist last season which has lost three straight games in the competition for the first time.

Inter slipped to ninth place.

Eleven teams in the Champions League have changed coaches already this season and Tottenham manager Thomas Frank was being tipped as the next to go heading into a home match against Borussia Dortmund.

However, Spurs won 2-0 against the 2024 runner-up, which had midfielder

Daniel Svensson sent off in the first half, to give Frank some respite and move into fourth place.

The Dane has been jeered by Tottenham's own fans in recent games.

Cristian Romero and Dominic Solanke scored Tottenham's goals.

The Italian champions are in danger of elimination.

Napoli was held to a 1-1 draw at 10-man FC Copenhagen and dropped to 23rd place before Wednesday's games. Those finishing 25th or lower in the 36-team standings won't even qualify for the playoffs.

## Al-Qadsia signs Bahraini star Hamidan to replace Kahraba

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Al-Qadsia has officially signed Bahraini international Mahdi Hamidan as a replacement for Egyptian forward Mohamed Abdellatif "Kahraba", with a contract lasting until the end of the current season.

Kahraba struggled to meet expectations since joining Al-Qadsia last summer and missed several matches due to recurring injuries. Additionally, the club terminated Libyan player Mohamed Soula's contract due to declining form and an eight-match suspension for misconduct, bringing in Senegalese Abdoulaye Mbingui as his replacement.

Hamidan joins Al-Qadsia's roster of foreign players, which includes Algerians Sofiane Bouchare and Victor Lekhel, Congolese Nescin Kipano, and Senegalese Abdoulaye Mbingui.

Born in 1993, Hamidan began his career with Al-Ahli Bahrain in 2013, helping the team secure promotion to the Premier League in 2014-2015 and winning the Bahraini Federation Cup the following season. He remained at Al-Ahli until 2020 before moving to Al-Qadsia Saudi, later returning to Bahrain to play for Al-Riffa and Al-Khalidiya, with professional stints also at Al-Nasr Oman. Earlier this season, he joined Al-Zawraa Iraq, playing 10 matches and scoring 2 goals before mutually terminating his contract.

Internationally, Hamidan has a distinguished career, highlighted by helping Bahrain win the Gulf Cup 24 in Qatar in 2019—the first in the nation's history.

Hamidan arrived in Kuwait earlier today and is expected to make his debut for Al-Qadsia tomorrow against Al-Fahaheel in the 12th round of the Zain Premier League.

Al-Qadsia aims to challenge for the Crown Prince Cup and the Gulf Club Champions League, after exiting the Crown Prince Cup, while still holding slim hopes in the league, currently trailing Kuwait Club by 11 points with 13 rounds remaining.



In this file photo, Mahdi Hamidan celebrates after scoring.

## Bangladesh loses bid to move its T20 World Cup games from India

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates, Jan 21, (AP): Bangladesh's request to move its T20 World Cup games from India to Sri Lanka has been turned down by the International Cricket Council.

The ICC's board of directors met Wednesday and world cricket's governing body said afterward that its security assessments indicated "there was no threat to Bangladesh players, media persons, officials and fans at any of the tournament venues in India."

The World Cup will be jointly hosted by India and Sri Lanka from Feb. 7-March 8. Bangladesh is due to play three group games in Kolkata and one in Mumbai.

Cricinfo.com said the BCB has one more day to agree to play in India, or it will be replaced by Scotland, based on current rankings.

Pakistan is already scheduled to play all its group games in

Sri Lanka - and beyond if it advances in the tournament - because of political tensions with India that brought both countries to the brink of war last year.

Bangladesh had asked for the move due to security reasons after fast bowler Mustafizur Rahman was removed from Indian Premier League franchise Kolkata Knight Riders on the instructions of the Board of Control for Cricket in India.

The ICC called Rahman's removal an "isolated and unrelated development."

The board meeting was held via video link with Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Aminul Islam among those participating.

The ICC said it had shared information about security for the tournament with Bangladesh, and that relocating its games would not be fair to other teams.

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