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TRUMP SIGNS GAZA PEACE CHARTER WITH GLOBAL SUPPORT

Kuwait to join Board of Peace

Rafah border crossing to open in both directions next week



Left: US President Donald Trump holds up a signed Board of Peace charter during the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Thursday, Jan. 22, 2026. Right: Trump signs the charter of his Board of Peace initiative at the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Thursday, Jan. 22, 2026. (AP)

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22, (Agencies): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed Kuwait's welcome of the invitation extended to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah by President Donald Trump, President of the friendly United States of America to join the Board of Peace for Gaza.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced, in a statement on Wednesday, that Kuwait will join the Board of Peace, with the accession documents to be signed in accordance with the constitutional and legal procedures in Kuwait.

According to the statement, Kuwait commended the peace efforts led by President Trump, affirming its support for the implementation of the Board's mandate as a transitional body under the comprehensive plan to end the conflict in Gaza, which was adopted by the United Nations Security Council under Resolution No. 2803.

This plan aims to consolidate a permanent ceasefire, support reconstruction in Gaza, advance toward a just and lasting peace, and fulfill the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the establishment of their independent state in accordance with international law, in order to achieve security and stability for the region and its peoples.

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Unstable weather hits Friday

Fierce storms to lash Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22, (KUNA): The Meteorological Department has forecast scattered rain this weekend, starting from Friday evening, with intensity varying from light to moderate and occasional thunderstorms, while unstable weather is expected from Saturday evening.

Acting Director of the department, Dhirar Al-Ali, told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the country is currently under the influence of a high-pressure system that gradually retreated from Thursday evening.

This allowed a surface low-pressure system to advance from the southwest, deepening gradually along with another upper-atmosphere low, accompanied by a relatively cold and humid air mass, leading to the buildup of low and medium clouds interspersed with some cumulonimbus clouds.

The weather is expected to be unstable from Saturday evening, with gradual improvement forecast for Monday morning.

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Authorities strike at food safety violators

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: Acting Deputy Director General for Inspection and Control at the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN), Dr. Saud Al-Humaidi Al-Jallal, announced the seizure of a house operating food production without a valid health license, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an official statement, Dr. Al-Jallal explained that the seizure followed a report received through a social media platform.

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Charcoal indoors poses deadly risk

By Munif Naif
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) has warned about the dangers of leaving charcoal in enclosed spaces, as it poses a threat to life and it is known as the 'silent killer' due to the carbon monoxide gas it produces, especially during the camping season and low temperatures.

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Ambassador Sönmez highlights bilateral cooperation

Kuwait-Türkiye trade volume surges 52% to \$1.08 bln

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Kuwait, Tuba Nur Sönmez, stated that the total trade volume between Kuwait and Türkiye rose by 52 percent compared to the previous year, reaching approximately \$1.08 billion.

She highlighted that the leaders of both countries have set a target to increase this figure to \$5 billion.

In her speech during the opening session of the Kuwaiti-Turkish Business Forum, organized by the Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (MUSIAD) in cooperation with the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) and the Turkish Embassy, Ambassador Sönmez emphasized the pivotal role of trade forums in achieving the goal of boosting trade volume.

She affirmed that the embassy is fully prepared to provide comprehensive support to the Turkish and Kuwaiti business communities to achieve this goal.

Ambassador Sönmez explained that the two countries cooperate in numerous sectors, including trade, defense, tourism, and investment. Kuwaiti investments in Türkiye have reached approximately \$2 billion, with 427



Photo by Mohammad Morsi

Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Kuwait, Tuba Nur Sönmez, delivers a speech during the opening session of the Kuwaiti-Turkish Business Forum.

Kuwaiti companies operating in the Turkish market.

She expressed confidence that there are significant opportunities to further increase these figures in the coming period by fully utilizing the potential between Türkiye and Kuwait.

Ambassador Sönmez emphasized that businesspeople and traders have

always been the main drivers of economic progress in both countries, adding that this event serves as further evidence of the commitment to deepening and developing the growing ties between Türkiye and Kuwait.

She stated that Kuwaiti-Turkish relations go beyond commercial interests, reflecting mutual respect and

shared values.

The ambassador expressed confidence that the bonds being forged today will lay the foundation for a prosperous future, highlighting that this forum, along with the meetings held on its sidelines, has played a pivotal role in shaping the future of the Turkish economy.

She affirmed that the event, with the participation of strong and dynamic trade delegations, represents an important step in strengthening trade relations with Kuwait and opening new avenues for partnerships in multiple sectors.

Ambassador Sönmez emphasized that MUSIAD is not merely a business association but a powerful platform representing national vision and values.

Meanwhile, KCCI Deputy General Manager Emad Al-Zaid stated that over the past years, Kuwaiti and Turkish companies have built strong partnerships in numerous sectors, including industry, trade, projects, and services, catering to genuine business needs.

He emphasized that the relationship is strong, with bilateral trade exceeding one billion US dollars, reflecting stable demand and continued private sector engagement, adding that Kuwait is looking beyond simple imports.

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2 A clouded winter with heavy decisions

8 KFH honors the winners of its Environmental Sustainability Award

Mobile vehicles now regulated in Kuwait

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalifa Abdullah Al-Ajeel issued a ministerial decree on forming the Permanent Committee for Mobile Vehicles, chaired by the undersecretary of the ministry, with representatives of the concerned authorities as members.

This step aims to regulate mobile vehicles, and ensure compliance with legal and technical requirements.

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Experts urge strategic planning as US considers taxes on SWFs

By Najeh Bilal
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: While US authorities are considering significant legal changes to impose taxes on sovereign wealth funds investing in the US market, according to major newspapers, a number of Kuwaiti analysts and economists have urged Kuwait to prepare for these steps.

Economic expert and CEO of the Center for Future Foresight Consulting and Studies, Qais Al-Shatti, explained that the current discussions about the US moving toward taxing sovereign wealth funds would likely not impose a direct tax on all fund assets.

Instead, they may involve changes to how tax exemptions are applied to certain types of income



Al-Shatti



Al-Sadhan



Al-Mutairi

and investments.

Estimating potential losses for Kuwaiti sovereign wealth funds, and others, is difficult without knowing the answers to three key questions:

- What will the final text of these amendments be?
- What portion of the fund's investments could be subject to tax reclassification?
- What is the nature of the assets involved - public stocks, bonds, or private trust real estate?

Al-Shatti emphasized the need to handle the issue from a risk management perspective, carefully review investment structures without exaggeration or incomplete conclusions, and develop conservative, moderate, and aggressive scenarios to guide investment restructuring decisions when necessary.

He stressed that the real pressure on sovereign wealth funds does not arise from unfounded fears, but from changes that impose a significant and ongoing annual burden on profits.

Al-Shatti explained that the Kuwaiti sovereign wealth fund typically addresses such challenges through restructuring, asset allocation, and prudent, risk-aware management. It has extensive experience in this area, having successfully grown over decades and navigating several economic and geopolitical challenges.

The fact that 50 percent of the Kuwaiti sovereign wealth fund is invested in the United States does not automatically make it subject to new taxes.

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Other Voices

Lebanon when the rule of law falls: From state to open arena

By Khalaf Ahmad Al Habtoor
UAE Businessman

Nothing is more dangerous for a state than a passing economic crisis, except the moment when the absence of the rule of law becomes the norm, when slander replaces truth, and defamation takes the place of accountability.

At that point, it is not investment alone that collapses; the very idea of the state begins to unravel. What Lebanon is experiencing today is neither a media debate nor a personal dispute. It is a decisive test of whether the rule of law still exists.

Lebanon was never, to me, a temporary venture, a testing ground, or a transactional deal. It is a country I genuinely loved, invested in with conviction, and stood by during its darkest times; when remaining was a risk, not a gain. My investments in Lebanon have exceeded USD 1.7 billion, and despite the continuous financial haemorrhage and heavy losses we have endured, I did not abandon the country, shut down my institutions, or leave employees to face their fate.

I did not do so because circumstances were favourable, but because I believe that people are a trust. Hundreds of families who work with us should never pay the price for chaos, negligence, or the absence of the state. We endured patiently, absorbed losses, and chose to remain when others chose to withdraw, out of respect for livelihoods and human dignity.



Al Habtoor

But what is happening in Lebanon today has crossed every red line.

This is no longer merely a difficult investment environment. It has become a complete legal exposure, where anyone who seeks to help, invest, or even defend themselves is subjected to orchestrated campaigns of defamation, false accusations, and media attacks, without evidence, without accountability, and without deterrence.

Here, the truth must be stated clearly: no state can invite people to invest while abandoning the defence of their most basic rights. Investment is not a favour to be granted; it is a partnership built on trust, and the first pillar of that trust is legal protection.

What we are witnessing is a dangerous transformation in the role of the media; from a watchdog to an instrument of violation. The media is not a court. Defamation is not criticism. False reporting is not opinion. Constructive criticism is legitimate, and offering advice is a duty. But insult, baseless accusations, and systematic incitement are acts punishable by law in any state that respects itself.

In fairness, it must be said that this conduct does not represent Lebanese media as a whole. There remains professional, national media that we respect and value. What we are addressing is a segment of paid media that has deliberately chosen to become a tool of distortion and slander rather than a platform for truth and responsibility.

No one should be blamed for defending themselves when they are unjustly targeted. Silence in the face of defamation is not wisdom; it is encouragement. Dignity is not a luxury that can be bargained away under any pretext.

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Prayer Timings			
Fajr	05:19	Asr	14:57
Sunrise ..	06:42	Maghrib ..	17:17
Zohr	12:00	Isha	18:38

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:			
By Day: Rather cold and cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speeds of 08-35 km/h with a chance for scattered rain later on.			
By Night: Cold and partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind, with speeds of 12-40 km/h with a chance for scattered rain.			
Station	Max Exp	Min Rec	Weather
Kuwait Airport	15	06	

Abdaly	16	-1
Bubyan	13	-3
Failaka Island	13	03
Salmiyah	15	08
Ahmadi	14	02
Nuwaisib	15	04
Salmy	12	-3
Jal Aliyah	14	01

PM: Leadership keen to achieve sustainable development vision



PM Diwan photo
His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chairs the 44th ministerial committee meeting at Bayan Palace.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired on Thursday the 44th ministerial committee meeting at Bayan Palace to follow up on the implementation of major development projects.

The meeting reviewed the latest reports from relevant government bodies on procedures related to key development projects, including Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, the electricity sector, renewable energy development, low-carbon green waste recycling systems, housing development, environmental infrastructure for wastewater treatment plants, free zones, economic zones and efforts to combat desertification.

He reaffirmed the keenness of Kuwait's leadership on providing continuous guidance toward achieving Kuwait's comprehensive and sustainable development vision, and speeding up all active projects.

For his part, Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs and committee rapporteur Ambassador Sameeh Hayat said the meeting reviewed key achievements and possible challenges related to new major development projects proposals and opening avenues for strategic cooperation with various countries to deepen economic, trade and investment relations in line with Kuwait's strategic objectives.

Hayat pointed out that the committee also discussed updating laws and regulations, as well as developing the Central Agency for Public Tenders system in order to ease all obstacles that might face upcoming government contracts in terms of implementing agreements and MoUs signed with brotherly and friendly countries.

According to Ambassador Hayat, Head of Central Agency for Public Tenders Issam Al-Marzouq put on a detailed presentation of such approach in a manner that would upgrade quality control of government projects in line with international standards.

Attending the meeting were Defense Minister Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Minister of Public Works Dr. Nora Al-Mashaan, Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Abdulatif Al-Mashari, Acting Director of Premier's Diwan Sheikh Khaled Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Head of Head of the Fatwa and Legislation Department Counselor Salah Al-Majed, Head of Central Agency for Public Tenders Issam Al-Marzouq, Kuwait Investment Authority member Sheikh Saud Salem Abdulaziz Al-Sabah, and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Adel Al-Zamel, in addition to Ambassador Hayat.

Trade cornerstone of Kuwait, German ties

Roadmap set to bolster bonds: envoy

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: German Ambassador to Kuwait Hans-Christian Freiherr von Reibnitz hosted a musical event on the occasion of the 63rd anniversary of the signing of the historic Elysée Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between France and West Germany on Jan 22, 1963.

In his speech, the Ambassador stated that the gathering is held at a highly sensitive international political juncture, amidst worrying developments on the global stage -- in Europe, the United States or other parts of the world, emphasizing the importance of highlighting positive examples in facing these challenges.

He said the treaty was the bedrock for rebuilding European friendship, particularly between Germany and France, after a devastating war that tore apart the European continent in the mid-20th century. He added that both countries realized at the time that the new phase required a radical change based on joint action and cooperation instead of conflict, indicating this path was not easy, but it succeeded and proved its effectiveness.

He explained that Germany and France together form a pillar of stability in the heart of Europe, striving to maintain the cohesion of the continent amidst the global turmoil, in accordance with the values of friendship, rapprochement and intergenerational cooperation. He pointed out that challenges and disagreements are addressed through dialogue and responsibility, making this experience a model worthy of emulation globally.

Regarding bilateral relations between Germany and Kuwait, he stated that relations witnessed a significant development with the signing of the agreement to launch the strategic dialogue in the last quarter of last year. He expects that the first dialogue sessions will be held in the first half of this year, in coordination with the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in order to establish a clear roadmap for future areas of cooperation.

He affirmed that economic cooperation is the cornerstone of relations between the two countries, given the availability of promising opportunities. He stressed the importance of clarifying frameworks that guarantee fair and transparent partnerships based on trust and mutual respect.

He underscored the importance of strengthening cooperation in security fields, particularly with regard to external security and the exchange of strategic risk assessments, while emphasizing respect for the sovereignty of states and non-interference in their internal affairs. He also expressed his aspiration to expand cooperation to include joint work with NATO and the Gulf states.

He then confirmed the commitment to strengthen cooperation in technical and economic fields, and update the agreement on the avoidance of double taxation to keep pace with modern economic changes. He is hoping for progress in the next six months to strengthen the sustainable partnership between Germany and Kuwait.



Freiherr von Reibnitz

Farwaniya co-op, KLA ink deal

Focus on drug abuse effects on society

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: Chairman of the Board of Directors of Farwaniya Cooperative Society Fawaz Al-Murshad said the cooperative is proud to be the first cooperative to reach a cooperation agreement with Kuwait Lawyers Association (KLA), based on its commitment to activate the community role of cooperative societies and expand partnerships with the concerned civil society organizations.

In a statement to the newspaper on the occasion of signing the agreement, Al-Murshad pointed out that this step is according to the belief of the cooperative in the importance of spreading legal and social awareness, especially regarding the dangers of drugs and their negative effects on individuals and society, in addition to supporting various legal aspects that affect the lives of citizens and residents.

He asserted that the cooperative is always keen on being at the forefront of everything that serves the community, indicating the agreement will contribute to providing legal consultations and awareness services at the individual and institutional levels, which will positively impact those residing in the area while solidifying concepts of responsibility and adherence to the law.

He added this initiative proves the commitment of the cooperative to build strategic partnerships, affirming that the cooperative will continue to support everything in the interest of the community and strengthen cooperation with official and non-governmental entities for the good of the public.

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'Steer clear' of hospitals

By Munif Naif
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: The General Traffic Department (GTD) continues its traffic campaigns targeting violators of traffic rules and regulations in front of hospitals, resulting in the issuance of 349 traffic violation citations in just 24 hours.

A security source confirmed that the department continued to issue violation citations to erring motorists in front of hospitals. The violations recorded in the recent campaign include 88 at Amiri and Sabah hospitals, 56 at Jaber Hospital, 59 at Farwaniyah Hospital, 92 at Adan Hospital and 54 at Jahra Hospital.

The source indicated that the traffic campaigns are ongoing, urging motorists to park their vehicles in designated parking areas.

Meanwhile, traffic officers assigned in Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate arrested a reckless driver who drove his vehicle in a manner that endangered the lives and properties of others.

A security source said the traffic officers apprehended the motorist after a series of reckless driving incidents in Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate.

KFAS, KISR and Mitsubishi peruse plan on carbon policy mechanism

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: The Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) hosted a workshop titled "The Road to Decarbonization: Developing a Carbon Policy Mechanism for Kuwait", which was held in collaboration with the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) and with the participation from the Mitsubishi Research Institute and Mitsubishi Corporation.

According to a press release issued by KFAS, the workshop aimed to initiate a structured national dialogue on the establishment of a carbon policy mechanism tailored to Kuwait's economic and institutional context.

The workshop brought together leading Japanese researchers and experts along with counterparts from KISR, as well as representatives from the Japanese Embassy, the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), Environment Public Authority (EPA), Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The event enhanced collaboration, integration of roles, and exchange of knowledge on the development of climate policies.

Discussions focused on Kuwait's progress towards New Kuwait 2035 vision for enhancing the implementation of its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), and striving to achieve its stated ambitions of net-zero carbon emissions.

Emphasis was placed on the importance of moving from high-level commitments to practical and implementable policy tools.

Organizing this workshop is part of KFAS' efforts to support the implementation of the Energy Transformation Plan launched in 2025, contributing to achieving environmental sustainability goals and enhancing Kuwait's readiness for the requirements of the energy sector's transformation.

Participants of the KFAS-hosted workshop.

Woman jailed 15 years for growing hash

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: The Criminal Court sentenced a Kuwaiti woman to 15 years in prison and fined her KD10,000 for cultivating, trafficking and using hashish, and psychotropic substances.

The case was filed after the Drug Control General Department at the Interior Ministry raided the woman's home.

The court found the defendant guilty of cultivating narcotics in her residence and possessing materials and equipment used for cultivating drugs, with the intent to traffic and use them. The search resulted in the seizure of huge quantities of narcotics and psychotropic substances, along with equipment used for cultivation and processing.

As for the other defendant -- a Kuwaiti man, the court refrained from sentencing him on the charge of drug use, as his involvement was limited to personal use, without evidence of trafficking or cultivation. The court showed leniency in light of the circumstances of the case.

The court indicated in its ruling that the arrest and search procedures were correct and in accordance with the provisions of the law, and were carried out based on a valid legal authorization. It rejected the arguments on the invalidity of procedures.



KUNA photo
Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Chief Major General Talal Al-Roumi receives Secretary General of the International Civil Defence Organization (ICDO) Arguj Kalantarli.

KFF Chief & ICDO Sec. Gen. discuss crisis management

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22, (KUNA): Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Chief Major General Talal Al-Roumi discussed issues of mutual interest with Secretary General of the International Civil Defence Organization (ICDO) Arguj Kalantarli, focusing on the organization's work.

A KFF press statement on Thursday said the meeting also reviewed future projects to develop civil protection systems and boost countries' readiness in crisis and disaster management in line with the highest international standards and best practices.

AG leads funds probe

11 Kuwaitis in Doha cadets graduation event

KEPS, CITRA to secure border area networks

Co-op expansion sought for better service quality

Many more lose nationality

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Kuwait, UK explore stronger judicial co-op

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22, (KUNA): Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait discussed ways to strengthen judicial and legal cooperation with UK Ambassador to Kuwait Qudsi Rasheed and Prof. Dapo Akande, UK National Group's candidate at the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) for the International Court of Justice (ICJ) elections.

In a statement issued on Thursday, the Ministry of Justice said the meeting reviewed the strong Kuwait-UK relations and discussed issues of mutual interest to support legal and judicial partnership on regional and international levels.



Ministry of Justice photo
Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait with UK Ambassador.

Volunteers remove abandoned fishing nets

Kuwait Dive Team launches bay cleanup

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: Kuwait Dive Team, which is affiliated with the Environmental Voluntary Foundation, announced the removal of abandoned fishing nets from Kuwait Bay and the launch of a cleanup campaign on Umm Al-Namil Island, south of the bay, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Team leader Waleed Al-Fadhel told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Wednesday that the campaign used five fully equipped boats, and all available logistical resources and technical equipment to ensure the targeted sites were cleared of pollutants and the marine environment was protected. Al-Fadhel highlighted the difficult work conditions in Kuwait Bay due to strong currents, shallow shores, and high waves.

He revealed that the efforts were carried out in coordination with the General Directorate of Coast Guard, the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR), and the Environment Public Authority (EPA).

Al-Fadhel said removing the entangled fishing nets helps eliminate the so-called "ghost fishing nets," which pose a serious threat to marine life.

Meanwhile, he explained that the cleanup campaign on the shores of Umm Al-Namil Island focused on removing plastic waste and debris that harm the island's aesthetic appeal and environmental value. Umm Al-Namil Island is the fourth largest island in Kuwait and serves as a vital stopover for migratory birds traveling from North Asia to Africa, providing safe havens for rest, food, and nesting during their migration.

Al-Fadhel expressed the Kuwait Dive Team's appreciation for the government's pioneering plan to preserve Kuwait Bay, emphasizing that the combined efforts of volunteers and strict government oversight help restore ecological balance and ensure the continued cleanliness and sustainability of the marine environment.



Kuwaiti diving team removes two tons of debris and fishing nets from Umm Al-Namil Island.

CAPT seeks extension of bid bonds for KPA tender

Ports Authority eyes flexible system

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: The Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) has requested the six companies competing in the tender for providing consultancy services and preparing the strategic plan for Kuwait Ports Authority (KPA) to extend

the initial bid bonds submitted with their bids until the beginning of May, instead of Feb 1, as per Article 46 of the 2016 Public Tenders Law, say reliable sources.

It is worth mentioning that through this tender, KPA intends to achieve several institutional transformation goals towards a flexible and effective system capable of responding to future challenges.

These goals include governing operations and procedures, activating accountability and transparency systems, and improving operational efficiency and revenues. This will be achieved through the development of services and activities in the ports and logistics services, improvement of port infrastructure and technology to keep pace with best global practices, building the capabilities of national staff, and preparing middle management to assume senior positions.

Hotels under regulatory check

Kuwait steps up tourism oversight

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: As part of governmental efforts to improve tourism services and establish hospitality standards, the concerned regulatory authorities conducted field visits to a number of hotel establishments, reports Al-Anba daily.

This move is a component of the joint work system, which focuses on regulation and performance improvement before resorting to punitive measures.

According to sources who spoke to the daily, during recent inspection tours in Sharq and Bneid Al-Gar, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry recorded six regulatory observations related to consumer protection and commercial activity regulation at five hotels within its jurisdiction.

Sources said these tours are among the tasks of a team at the Permanent Committee for the Classification of Tourist and Hotel Establishments, which was formed as per an administrative decision issued in 2025. The team consists of representatives from the ministries of Information, Commerce and Interior, as well as Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), Kuwait Municipality and Public Authority for Manpower (PAM).

This integrated structure is a manifestation of a coordinated approach aimed at unifying oversight efforts and ensuring that hotel establishments adhere to approved

standards in service, safety or administrative organization. It will positively impact the guest experience and the reputation of the tourism sector.

Sources indicated that the recorded observations are on procedural aspects, particularly the failure to of display price lists for services rendered, in addition to issuing invoices in English – a violation of regulations designed to enhance transparency and protect consumer rights.

Sources emphasized that these observations do not pertain to safety standards or structural aspects, thereby, reflecting the general commitment of the establishments to meet the basic requirements, while acknowledging the need to complete certain regulatory procedures.

The responsibilities of the team extend beyond conducting inspection tours, as they include recording technical observations related to international hospitality standards, developing organized plans for field visits, and proposing joint decisions in cases where recurring practices requiring attention are identified.

The team also aims to raise the quality of hotel services, combat irregular practices, and reduce exploitation or uncivilized behavior by enforcing the laws and regulations of each relevant authority and seeking support from other entities when needed.

Ministry urges adherence to deadlines

Islamic Affairs finalizes 2025 staff performance evaluations

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: The Ministry of Islamic Affairs is finalizing its employee performance evaluations for 2025, and two timeframes have been set for completing the evaluation process, which will conclude within days.

Sources told the newspaper that department heads will evaluate the employees through the annual automated evaluation program, within a regulatory framework designed to guarantee employee rights and their legal implications.

Sources revealed that a circular was issued on the launching of the automated

evaluation program for ministry employees for 2025. They said the annual performance evaluation is a fundamental employee right, given its legal and regulatory implications, adding that the evaluation process covers the period from Jan 1 to Dec 31 of the previous year and includes all employees in the teaching and non-teaching departments.

Sources stated that the automated evaluation program was designed for sector officials to assess their employees within the specified periods, indicating that the period from Jan 1-17 was designated for evaluating employees in various sectors, while the second period -- Jan 11-24 -- was allocated for evaluating employees in Quranic Affairs and Islamic Studies sectors.

Other Voices

Water dreams, sparrow funds

By Ahmad alsarraf

THE idea was brilliant, but the intention wasn't quite there. It aimed to establish a project to ensure water security for countries facing fresh water shortages, particularly the wealthy Gulf states.

The founders managed to raise more capital than expected for the water company project. Yet, after years of work, travel, advertising, promotion, and spending millions of dollars, no Gulf government was convinced by the idea, even though communication often reached the highest government levels. With momentum for that idea lost, a new idea was needed.

The second idea emerged, which was bigger and more compelling than the first - establishing a water bank. The original partners of the water company became founding partners of the water bank.

Attracting new partners was easier this time, as the bank's mission was truly remarkable - to increase the fresh water reserves of the Gulf states through various means.

The bank's establishment process began in 2019, and the founders successfully released their first prospectus that same year, outlining the bank's unique structure and objectives, which were financing desalination projects, dam construction, wastewater treatment, and providing consulting services.

It became the world's first bank dedicated to overcoming obstacles and challenges of investing in water infrastructure, technologies, and innovations. It was a remarkable idea that, surprisingly, no one else had pursued before.

After a long struggle with European bureaucracy, which proved as challenging as that in many Arab countries, all obstacles were overcome in record time.



alsarraf

The first meeting of the Water Bank's Board of Directors took place in a European capital in 2023. It raises the question of why it wasn't held in Oman or Kuwait at a fraction of the cost, though security and legal considerations likely influenced the choice.

Although the Water Bank project's supervisors claimed that the initiative was launched with support from the World Bank, research shows no sources confirming such support, funding, or partnership. It is widely known that the World Bank primarily works with governments, not individuals or private companies.

There is no evidence to support claims that the Water Bank has collaborated, or will collaborate, with international organizations such as the World Bank, the United Nations, or others in financing water projects. Neither the Water Bank's official website nor those of related entities mention any direct investment, partnership, or contribution from any international organization.

If any cooperation exists, it is likely limited to advisory roles. Documents and reports published on the World Bank's website related to the water sector and water finance do not list the Water Bank as a participant in any projects, agreements, or formal financing arrangements.

The Water Bank's introductory brochure does not mention collaboration with any specific international institution, funder, or sustainable development initiative.

Those overseeing the Water Bank continue to state in interviews that the idea for establishing the bank was first proposed in the mid-2000s, emphasizing that the official launch and commencement of operations will take place soon.

* * *

Meanwhile, I would like to congratulate our colleague, journalist Ammar Taqi, on his well-deserved selection among the fifty most influential media figures in the Arab world.

✉ ✉ ✉

email: a.alsarraf@alqabas.com.kw



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LOCAL



KRCS photo
The President of the Red Crescent receives the Ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia at the Society's headquarters.

Tunisian envoy commends Kuwait's humanitarian role

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22, (KUNA): Tunisian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Boudali praised Kuwait's leading regional and international role in humanitarian work, highlighting its pioneering initiatives and sustained efforts that embody solidarity and humanitarian values.

Ambassador Boudali told KUNA on Thursday after his meeting with the Chairman of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), Khaled Al-Maghamis, that the visit aimed to strengthen bilateral ties and cooperation.

He pointed out that Kuwaiti humanitarian work enjoys widespread respect and appreciation on the international stage.

Boudali said the meeting discussed ways to enhance cooperation between KRCS and its Tunisian counterpart,

including unifying efforts, exchanging expertise, and strengthening joint humanitarian work to achieve a sustainable positive impact.

In a similar statement to KUNA, Al-Maghamis said that the society is committed to building effective partnerships that create a sustainable humanitarian impact and promote solidarity and support.

He praised Ambassador Boudali's efforts to strengthen communication and cooperation between humanitarian institutions in both countries.

Al-Maghamis affirmed the society's commitment to continue its humanitarian and development efforts, reflecting Kuwait's leadership vision to strengthen the country's humanitarian role regionally and internationally.

Kuwait looks to Finland's top-tier education model for local reform

MoE speeds up textbook printing to meet deadline

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22, (Agencies): Kuwait's Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei discussed boosting education cooperation and expertise exchange with Juha Mustonen, Finland's non-resident ambassador to Kuwait (based in Qatar).

The meeting, also attended by Finnish MP and Chairman of the Finland-Qatar Parliamentary Friendship Group Ville Skinnari, and Commercial Counsellor at the Finnish Embassy in Doha Kimmo Laaksonen, explored ways to develop cooperation in the education sector and reviewed issues of mutual interest, aiming to support education development, benefit from Finland's leading experience, and enhance future partnerships between educational institutions in both countries, said a ministry press release.

Meanwhile the concerned departments at the Ministry of Education are racing against time to complete the printing of textbooks for the second semester, the printing presses awarded the contracts received the textbook samples on Jan 9 and work is underway at maximum capacity to accelerate the printing process, reports Al-Jarida daily quoting sources.

Sources said Minister of Education Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei is following up the textbook printing operations daily. They revealed that he issued a directive on the removal of all obstacles to the printing procedures, and played a vital role in expediting the



Ministry of Education photo
The Minister of Education discusses with the Finnish Ambassador prospects for joint cooperation in the field of education.

completion of approvals from regulatory authorities.

Sources confirmed that the ministry distributed the workload among 10 approved printing presses, awarding contracts in accordance with the established procedures. They added that the General Directorate of Guidance and Curricula requested the supervisors assigned to oversee textbook printing to be present at the printing presses and closely monitor the work to

ensure rapid execution and reduce the time needed to review and approve the drafts.

Sources affirmed that supervisors were at the printing presses throughout the previous period, working until late hours, including during official holidays, motivated by a strong sense of responsibility, belonging and patriotism, especially since this work has a direct impact on the well-being of students.

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait to

On Thursday, US President Donald Trump signed the Board of Peace charter under the Gaza peace plan, formalizing a framework to support stability and end the war in Gaza Strip.

The charter was signed during an official ceremony on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, attended by state and government leaders from countries that have formally agreed to join the council.

Trump explained that the Board of Peace will operate in coordination with the United Nations, describing it as one of the most consequential bodies ever created.

He said the Gaza plan was unanimously adopted by the UN Security Council and that the current phase focuses on maintaining the ceasefire and ensuring the flow of humanitarian aid.

"We are committed to ensuring Gaza is demilitarized, properly governed, and rebuilt in a way that guarantees a better future for its people," he added.

Trump described the signing as a "first step toward a brighter future for the Middle East and a safer future for the world," saying it offers a real chance to end decades of suffering, halt generations of hatred and bloodshed, and forge a lasting, comprehensive peace.

The signing ceremony was attended by prominent leaders joining the Board of Peace charter, including Argentine President, the Prime Minister of Armenia, the Turkish and Saudi foreign ministers, Jordan's Deputy Prime Minister, presidents of Pakistan and Indonesia, and Morocco's foreign minister, along with other leaders.

In a speech at the World Economic Forum, Trump sought to create momentum for a project to map out a future of the war-torn Gaza Strip that has been overshadowed this week, first by his threats to seize Greenland, then by a dramatic retreat from that push.

"This isn't the United States, this is for the world," he said, adding, "I think we can spread it out to other things as we succeed in Gaza."

The event featured Ali Shaath, the head of a new, future technocratic government in Gaza, announcing that the Rafah border crossing will open in both directions next week. That's after Israel said in early December it would open the crossing, which runs between Gaza and Egypt, but has yet to do so.

Shaath, an engineer and former Palestinian Authority official from Gaza, is overseeing the Palestinian committee set to govern the territory under U.S. supervision.

The new peace board was initially envisioned as a small group of world leaders overseeing the ceasefire, but it has morphed into something far more ambitious - and skepticism about its membership and mandate has led some countries usually closest to Washington to take a pass.

Trump tried not to let those not participating ruin his unveiling party, saying 59 countries had signed onto the board - even though heads of state, top diplomats and other officials from only 19 countries plus the U.S. actually attended. He told the group, ranging from Azerbaijan to Paraguay to Hungary, "You're the most powerful people in the world."

Trump has spoken about the board replacing some U.N. functions and perhaps even making that entire body obsolete one day. But he was more conciliatory in his remarks on the sidelines of the forum in the Swiss Alps.

"We'll do it in conjunction with the United Nations," Trump said, even as he denigrated the U.N. for doing what he said wasn't enough to calm some conflicts around the globe.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that some countries' leaders have indicated they plan to join but still require approval from their parliaments, and the Trump administration says it has also gotten queries about membership from countries that hadn't been invited to participate yet.

Big questions remain, however, about what the eventual board will look like.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said his country is still consulting with Moscow's "strategic partners" before deciding to commit. The Russian president on Thursday is due to host Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas for talks in Moscow.

Others are asking why Putin and other authoritarian leaders had even been invited to join. Britain's foreign secretary, Yvette Cooper, said her country wasn't signing on "because this is about a legal treaty that raises much broader issues."

"And we do also have concerns about President Putin being part of something which is talking about peace, when we have still not seen any signs from Putin that there will be a commitment to peace in Ukraine," she told the BBC.

Norway and Sweden have indicated they won't participate, after France also said no. French officials stressed that while they support the Gaza peace plan, they were concerned the board could seek to replace the U.N. as the main venue for resolving conflicts.

Canada, Ukraine, China and the executive arm of the European Union also haven't committed. Trump calling off the steep tariffs he threatened over Greenland could ease some allies' reluctance, but the issue is still far from settled.

The Kremlin said Thursday that Putin plans to discuss his proposal to send \$1 billion to the Board of Peace and use it for humanitarian purposes during his talks with Abbas. But it noted that the use of those assets will require the U.S. action to unblock them.

The idea for the Board of Peace was first laid out in Trump's 20-point Gaza ceasefire plan and even was endorsed by the U.N. Security Council.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced he's agreed to join, after his office has earlier criticized the makeup of the board's committee tasked with overseeing Gaza.

Months into the ceasefire, Gaza's more than 2 million Palestinians continue to suffer the humanitarian crisis unleashed by more than two years of war. And violence in Gaza, while not at the same level as before the October ceasefire and hostage deal was agreed on, continues.

Key to the truce continuing to hold is the disarming of Hamas, something that the militant group that has controlled the Palestinian territory since 2007 has refused to do and that Israel sees as non-negotiable. Trump on Thursday repeated his frequently mentioned warnings that the group will have to do so or face dire consequences.

He also said the war in Gaza "is really coming to an end" while conceding, "We have little fires that we'll put out. But they're little," and they had been "giant, giant, massive fires."

Trump's push for peace also comes after he threatened military action this month against Iran as it carried out a violent crackdown against some of the largest street protests in years, killing thousands of people.

Trump, for the time being, has signaled he won't carry out any new strikes on Iran after he said he received assurances that the Islamic government would not carry out the planned hangings of more than 800 protesters.

But Trump also made the case that his tough approach to Tehran - including strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities in June last year - was critical to the Israel-Hamas ceasefire deal coalescing. Iran was Hamas' most important patron, providing the group hundreds of millions of dollars in military aid, weapons, training and financial support over the years.

Trump also spoke with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who arrived in Davos. Trump, who continues to struggle to get Zelenskyy and Putin to agree to terms to end their nearly 4-year-old war, has repeatedly expressed frustration with both sides.

"I believe they're at a point now where they can come together and get a deal done," Trump said Wednesday. "And if they don't, they're stupid - that goes for both of them."

Lebanon when

In this context, I extend my sincere appreciation to Ahmed Al Jarallah, Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism, and to Fouad Al Hashem, for their principled and professional positions. This is the media we respect: media that speaks the truth, defends human dignity, and does not trade in reputations or hide behind hollow slogans.

This breakdown has not stopped at defaming individuals and institutions. It has expanded to include attacks on Gulf states and their leaderships; an unacceptable violation that strikes at sovereignty and dignity and violates all political and ethical norms. Allowing insults against states and their leaders, or dragging their names into populist smear campaigns, does not merely damage historic relations; it constitutes a serious offense, and tolerance of such conduct once again exposes the absence of a legal authority capable of imposing limits.

Most alarming is that Lebanese law itself explicitly criminalizes insults against a sister state or its leadership, and obliges judicial authorities to act when such offenses occur. In such cases, the Public Prosecution is expected to act ex officio, on its own initiative, without awaiting any complaint or request from any party. This article itself constitutes a clear legal notification to the Public Prosecution, from which action is expected, in accordance with due process, to initiate the necessary measures.

Any state that respects itself does not allow its territory or media platforms to become arenas for attacks against others, nor does it permit international relations to be violated under the pretext of freedom of expression. Official silence in the face of such abuses cannot be interpreted as neutrality; it is read as weakness, and sends a dangerous message that there are no limits, no red lines, and no accountability.

What is happening in Lebanon today is a clear institutional failure.

The state is absent. Institutions are paralyzed. The law is not enforced. I have explicitly called on the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister to take concrete steps to put an end to this lawlessness, yet to this day, no meaningful action has been taken; not even a symbolic measure to restore the minimum authority of the state.

One legal principle must be reaffirmed without ambiguity: the application of the law is not optional, not selective, and not subject to public mood. The law must apply to all and must stand as the highest authority, not as a tool used at times and suspended at others.

This is not a personal assessment.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights and poverty has confirmed that impunity and corruption are deeply entrenched in Lebanon's political and economic system, and that the absence of accountability is a central cause of institutional failure. The United Nations further affirms that the rule of law is the foundation of peace, stability, and economic progress, and that its absence opens the door to abuse and collapse.

The legal philosopher Montesquieu summarized this reality with precision: "There is no liberty if the law is not above all, and no state without an independent judiciary."

Most dangerous of all is that this approach does not merely destroy investment, it threatens the interests of more than two million Lebanese living in Gulf countries, and the millions inside Lebanon whose livelihoods depend on them.

No investor, partner, or visitor will return if this approach persists. The problem is not the Lebanese people; it is a system that consumes, through corruption and indifference, all who become part of it.

When investors feel exposed, unprotected, and targeted by media attacks without legal safeguards, the message is unmistakable: no state, no law, no safety.

I say this today clearly and responsibly: there is no investment without dignity, no economy without law, and no state without institutions that protect people, not slogans.

Every defamation campaign without accountability is another blow to what remains of Lebanon's credibility, reputation, and future. Every instance in which slander goes unchecked is another nail in the coffin of the state.

Lebanon deserves better. It deserves a state that protects it, not one that looks on. It deserves a law that is applied, not exploited.

And I say this as someone who loves Lebanon, not one who has abandoned it; as a responsible investor, not a bystander: A state that does not protect the rule of law cannot ask for trust.

Charcoal indoors

Director of Public Relations and Media Department at KFF Brigadier General Mohammad Al-Gharib told the newspaper that citizens and expatriates should avoid using charcoal inside homes or unventilated areas, particularly in camps during cold weather. He stressed the importance of good ventilation and using safety measures to reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning, which is invisible and odorless, making it a "silent killer". He said the symptoms include headache, nausea and shortness of breath.

He affirmed that KFF is committed to continuing its public awareness campaigns to prevent accidents related to charcoal use and to ensure the safety of everyone.

Mobile vehicles

The newspaper obtained a copy of the decree, stipulating that the committee consists of representatives from the Commercial Control Department, Kuwait Business Center, Public Authority for Food and Nutrition, Kuwait Municipality and Ministry of Interior, while Tahani Abdullah Al-Humaidi shall serve as rapporteur.

According to the decree, the tasks of the committee are as follows:

■ Review applications for mobile vehicle licenses and ensure they meet all the requirements and conditions stipulated in the relevant laws and regulations,

■ Review and approve the technical specifications for mobile vehicles in accordance with the regulations issued by the Ministry of Interior,

■ Identify and approve locations for mobile vehicle operations, in coordination with the relevant authorities,

■ Revoke any licensed location provided the reason is valid and a suitable alternative location is offered,

■ Monitor the mobile vehicles' compliance with their licensed activities and licensing requirements,

■ Propose the revocation of mobile vehicle licenses in the cases stipulated in Ministerial Resolution No. 426/2019,

■ Ensure regulation of the market, and achieve balance between regulation and support for small businesses.

The decree states that the committee shall convene at the invitation of its chairperson. A meeting is valid with the presence of majority of members, provided the chairperson or his deputy is present. Decisions are made through majority vote, with the chairperson's vote prevailing in case of a tie.

It also authorizes the committee to request any necessary data or documents from within or outside the ministry, obligating all relevant entities to fully cooperate. The committee has the right to consult experts, although these experts have no voting rights.

It added the committee should begin its work from the date of the issuance of the decree for a period of one year, which is renewable with the approval of the concerned minister. The committee should submit a monthly report to the minister, including the results of its work and its recommendations.

Kuwait-Türkiye

Al-Zaid highlighted the growing interest in developing stronger local

industrial capabilities through joint ventures that promote skills development and knowledge exchange, in line with Kuwait's ambition to enhance its role as a regional logistics and distribution hub.

In addition, Selim Sar, a member of MÜSAD (Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association) stated, "On this visit, we represent diverse sectors, from energy and food industries to chemicals and tourism."

It is worth highlighting that MÜSAD is an independent industrial business association founded in the 1990s with just 11 businessmen. Today, it has over 14,000 members worldwide, 98 branches in 82 countries, and more than 3,000 members living outside Türkiye. Some branch heads are not Turkish citizens, making it a global business network. MÜSAD focuses on trade, building relationships, and communicating with local partners, trade organizations, and chambers of commerce.

Fierce storms

Winds will be southeasterly, turning later to northwesterly, moderate in speed but gradually intensifying, occasionally exceeding 60 km/h, raising dust, reducing horizontal visibility in some areas, and causing sea waves to rise above seven feet.

On Friday, daytime weather will be cold to mildly cold and cloudy, with variable to southeasterly light to moderate winds ranging from 8 to 38 km/h, and a chance of scattered rain later. Expected maximum temperatures will range between 16°C and 18°C, and the sea will be light to moderate, with waves between one and five feet.

Friday night will be cold, partly to mostly cloudy, with southeasterly light to moderate winds occasionally intensifying to 12-40 km/h, accompanied by a chance of scattered rain. Expected minimum temperatures will range between 11°C and 13°C, and the sea will be light to moderate, occasionally rising between two and six feet.

Saturday's daytime weather will be mildly cold to moderate and cloudy, becoming unstable in the evening, with southeasterly light to moderate winds occasionally intensifying between 15 and 50 km/h, raising dust, and a chance of scattered rain, sometimes accompanied by thunder. Expected maximum temperatures will range between 19°C and 21°C, and the sea will be light to moderate, gradually rising between two and seven feet.

Saturday night will be unstable, mildly cold to cold, and cloudy, with southeasterly to northwesterly moderate to strong winds occasionally reaching 25-65 km/h, raising dust, and a chance of scattered rain, sometimes with thunder. Expected minimum temperatures will range between 10°C and 12°C, and the sea will be moderate to high, turning rough, with waves between four and eight feet.

Authorities strike

Coordination was carried out with the relevant security authorities, and the necessary legal measures were taken against the violators. The case has been referred to the Public Prosecution.

Dr. Al-Jallal affirmed PAFN's commitment to continuing decisive action against all violators to protect consumer health and ensure food safety.

Experts urge

This geographic distribution of assets, often highlighted in media reports, does not constitute a taxable base. Tax liability is linked to the nature of returns and the investment structure, not the location of the assets.

Meanwhile, economic expert Ahmed Al-Sadhan stated that if the US proceeds with imposing taxes on sovereign wealth funds, the Kuwaiti fund would naturally be affected, as it would directly reduce the net profits of

Kuwaiti investments in the US market, where about 50 percent of its assets are allocated.

He explained that the expected impact would primarily be a decline in investment returns without affecting the sovereign wealth fund's principal. However, this could place real pressure on the state's general reserve by reducing the resources available to finance the budget.

The additional tax burdens would represent potential losses, requiring the restructuring of some investments, but would not reach a level that threatens the fund's overall financial stability.

To mitigate potential economic repercussions, Al-Sadhan advised accelerating global geographic diversification.

He highlighted opportunities in the Chinese, European, and Gulf markets to reduce excessive reliance on the US market, and emphasized the importance of restructuring the portfolio toward more tax-efficient assets both inside and outside the United States.

Al-Sadhan stressed the need to prepare for multiple tax scenarios to minimize potential negative impacts, while also enhancing diplomatic and investment coordination with global sovereign wealth funds and national markets to seek exemptions or solutions that preserve the sustainability of future generations' funds and ensure mutual benefit.

In addition, financial and economic expert Nasser Al-Mutairi stated that the issue of imposing taxes on sovereign wealth funds in the US requires careful consideration and a wise approach to navigating the evolving situation, adding that this highlights the need to revive the proposal to establish a local Kuwaiti sovereign wealth fund to lead large-scale commercial and industrial investments and projects.

He said, "If implemented, the fund could be initially financed by redirecting ten percent of the assets currently held by Kuwaiti sovereign wealth funds in the United States, with the possibility of increasing this percentage in line with international developments."

Al-Mutairi emphasized the importance of coordinating with Gulf states that have sovereign wealth funds in the US and elsewhere to counter potential taxes on Gulf sovereign wealth funds, which could affect up to 35.3 percent of their assets, amounting to approximately five trillion dollars out of a total global sovereign wealth fund value of 14.5 trillion dollars.

He indicated that GCC countries should consider withdrawing a portion of their investments from global sovereign wealth funds and redirecting them into large-scale joint Gulf projects that would generate strong returns and enhance the prosperity of the Gulf populations.

□ □ □

The ten largest funds in the GCC

According to the Al-Shall Report issued in July 2025, the Kuwaiti sovereign wealth fund ranked fifth among the largest sovereign wealth funds in the world, with total assets of approximately \$1.03 trillion. This represents 7.2 percent of the total global sovereign wealth fund assets and 10.4 percent of the share held by the top ten funds.

The Global SWF report, issued in October 2025, on sovereign wealth fund investments worldwide, listed the ten largest Arab sovereign wealth funds for 2025 as follows:

1. Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA)
2. Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA)
3. Public Investment Fund (PIF) of Saudi Arabia
4. Qatar Investment Authority (QIA)
5. Investment Corporation of Dubai (ICD)
6. Mubadala Investment Company (Mubadala)
7. Holding Company (HK)
8. National Development Fund of Saudi Arabia
9. Emirates Investment Authority (EIA)
10. Investment Fund of Dubai (IFD)

Canadian PM Carney calls on so-called middle powers to ‘act together’

Trump’s European threats could make it harder for future US leaders to repair ties

WASHINGTON, Jan 22, (AP): Barely a month into his presidency, Joe Biden had a message for Europe.

“America is back,” Biden told the Munich Security Conference in 2021. “The transatlantic alliance is back.”

It was a promise Biden delivered often as he sought to cast the disruptions of his predecessor, Donald Trump, as an anomaly. But nearly five years later, Biden’s assurances have proven short-lived.

In his second term, Trump has cast aside alliances forged over seven decades with Europe that helped lead to the reunification of Germany and the collapse of the Soviet Union. He has hectoring leaders, making demands and leveling accusations more commonly associated with enemies. In the process, he has rocked the stability that has sustained the relationships and left countries to chart a course without US leadership.

The most stark example of this shift has been Trump’s threat to take over Greenland, dismissing the nation as a large “piece of ice” as he demanded that Denmark cede control to the US, a move that could have caused NATO to rupture.

He called Denmark, which had the highest per capita death toll among coalition forces in Afghanistan, “ungrateful” for US protection during World War II. He posted private text messages that showed European leaders trying to court him. Trump shared images of him planting the US flag in Greenland and, in an extraordinary speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, said Europe was “not heading in the right direction.” At one point, he said that “sometimes you need a dictator.”

Then, hours later, he announced a “framework of a future deal” on Arctic security. Following a long pattern, however, he offered scant details.

Though Trump has for now backed away from his most potent threats to obtain Greenland, the episode has left



US President Donald Trump, right, meets with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte during a meeting on the sidelines of the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Wednesday, Jan. 21, 2026. (AP)

America’s standing in the world uncertain.

NATO leaders already were responding to Trump’s threats by sign-

aling strategies that don’t include the US. That could make it much harder for the next president - whether they are a Democrat or Republican - to attempt the same type of reputational repair that Biden sought.

“To an extent, things can be improved,” said Jon Finer, who was Biden’s deputy national security adviser and is now a distinguished senior fellow at the Center for American Progress. “But they will never be the same in large part because I think any country that is behaving rationally in terms of its relationship with the United States will realize that we can only be counted on in four year increments, if at all.”

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, who parried Trump’s gambit to make Canada the 51st state, has already set out on a more independent path. In Davos, Carney was candid that the notion of the longstanding rules-based order was an “illusion.”

“Let me be direct: We are in the midst of a rupture, not a transition,” Carney said as he called on so-called middle powers to “act together.”

Unable to reach a deal with Trump to cut tariffs, Carney was in Beijing last week meeting with President Xi Jinping and brokering a deal that cut levies on Chinese electric cars in return for lower tariffs on certain agricultural and food products including Canadian canola, lobsters and crab. While there, he said ties between Ottawa and Washington were “much more multifaceted” than with Beijing, but added “the way our relationship has progressed in recent months with China, it is more predictable.”

Over the weekend, the European Union and the Mercosur bloc of South American countries formally signed a long-sought free trade agreement, which European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen portrayed as a bulwark against the Trump administration. EU lawmakers narrowly voted on Wednesday to hold up the deal for now.



Storm clouds that had brought brief snow flurries begin to clear on Jan 20, over Portland, Maine. (AP)

Crews spread salt on roads as winter storm threatens US

Bags of ice-thwarting salt aren’t usually a hot item at Bates Ace Hardware in Atlanta, but store manager Lewis Pane sold all 275 he had in stock in one morning as residents braced for a major storm to deliver heavy snow, sleet and freezing rain on a broad section of the US in coming days.

Payne said he had 30 online orders for “ice melt” before 8 am. People sprinkle the salts on the ground before a storm to disrupt the formation of ice.

“It’s impossible to get right now,” Payne said. “We have had to make special trips to our warehouse to pick up extra items because people need them.”

The storm was expected to hit starting Friday, stretching from New Mexico to New England and across the Deep South. The damage could rival that of a major hurricane.

Meteorologists say ice may linger on roads and sidewalks because temperatures will be slow to warm in many areas. Ice could also weigh down trees and power lines, triggering widespread outages. (AP)

Denmark sovereignty not negotiable after Trump’s Greenland about-turn

COPENHAGEN, Denmark, Jan 22, (AP): Denmark’s prime minister insisted that her country can’t negotiate on its sovereignty on Thursday after US President Donald Trump said he agreed a “framework of a future deal” on Arctic security with the head of NATO.

Trump on Wednesday abruptly scrapped the tariffs he had threatened to impose on eight European nations to press for US control over Greenland, a semiautonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark. It was a dramatic reversal hours after he insisted he wanted to get the island “including right, title and ownership” - though he also said he would not use force.

He said “additional discussions” on Greenland were being held concerning the Golden Dome missile defense program, a multilayered, \$175 billion system that for the first time will put US weapons in space. Trump offered few details, saying they were still being worked out.

NATO said its secretary general, Mark Rutte, hadn’t proposed any compromise to Danish sovereignty.

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said security in the Arctic is a matter for all of NATO, and it is “good and natural” that it be discussed be-



Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen after a meeting in the Foreign Policy Committee at Christiansborg in Copenhagen, Denmark on Jan 20. (AP)

that anything political can be negotiated on, including security, investment and economic issues - “but we cannot negotiate on our sovereignty.”

“I have been informed that this has not been the case,” she said, adding that only Denmark and Greenland can make decisions on issues concerning Denmark and Greenland.

Frederiksen said that Denmark wants to continue engaging in constructive dialogue with allies on how to strengthen security in the Arctic, including the US Golden Dome program, “provided that this is done with respect for our territorial integrity.”

Asked in an interview with Fox News whether Greenland would remain part of the kingdom of Denmark under the framework deal Trump announced, Rutte replied that “that issue did not come up anymore in my conversations tonight with the president.”

“He’s very much focused on what do we need to do to make sure that huge Arctic region, where change is taking place at the moment, where the Chinese and Russians are more and more active, how we can protect it,” he said. “That was really the focus of our discussions.”

Trump to meet with Zelenskyy as Ukraine endures bitter winter after Russia attacks

KYIV, Ukraine, Jan 22, (AP): About 4,000 buildings in Kyiv lacked heat Wednesday and nearly 60% of the Ukrainian capital was without power, Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, after days of Russian bombardment of Ukraine’s power grid and as US President Donald Trump prepared to hold talks with the Ukrainian leader.

Trump’s delegates also were expected in Moscow later this week for talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

With temperatures falling as low as minus 20C (minus 4F) in Kyiv, Ukraine is seeing one of the coldest winters in years, deepening the hardship of Ukrainians almost four years after Russia launched a full-scale invasion.

A yearlong push by the Trump administration to stop the fighting hasn’t yielded any breakthrough, despite the American president issuing a series of deadlines, though efforts were set to continue.

Trump said at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland that he would meet Thursday with Zelenskyy.

“I want to stop it,” Trump said of the fighting. “It’s a horrible war.”

U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff told The Associated Press on Wednesday that he plans to discuss peace proposals with Putin as well as hold talks with a Ukrainian delegation.

“We need a peace,” Witkoff said at Davos.

Putin confirmed late on Wednesday that Witkoff and Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner are expected in Moscow on Thursday for talks. The Russian leader said that Moscow and Washington, among other things, are discussing the possibility of using Russian assets frozen in the US for rebuilding “territories damaged by the hostilities” after a peace agreement is reached.



Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, center, walks in the corridor as he arrives for the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland on Jan 22. (AP)

GOP and some Dems back contempt for Clintons in House Epstein probe

WASHINGTON, Jan 22, (AP): A House committee advanced resolutions Wednesday to hold former president Bill Clinton and former secretary of state Hillary Clinton in contempt of Congress over the Jeffrey Epstein investigation, opening the prospect of the House using one of its most powerful punishments against a former president for the first time.

In bipartisan votes, the Republican-controlled House Oversight Committee approved the contempt of Congress charges, setting up potential votes in the House early next month. In a rare departure from party lines, some Democrats supported the contempt measures against the Clintons, with several progressive lawmakers emphasizing the need for full transparency in the Epstein investigation.

The votes were the latest turn in the Epstein saga as Congress investigates how the late financier was able to abuse dozens of teenage girls for years.

“No witness, not a former president or a private citizen, may willfully defy a congressional subpoena without consequence. But that is what the Clintons did and that is why we are here,” Rep James Comer, the chairman, said at the session on Wednesday.

The repercussions of contempt charges loomed large, given the possibility of a substantial fine and even incarceration. Still, there were signs of a potential thaw as the Clintons appeared to be searching for an off-ramp to testify. In addition, passage of contempt charges through the full House was far from guaranteed, requiring a majority vote - something Republicans increasingly struggle to achieve.

The Clintons have said they had nothing to do with Epstein for decades and are seeking a resolution to the dispute. This week, they offered to have the committee leadership and staff interview Bill Clinton in New York.



Former US president Bill Clinton and former secretary of state Hillary Clinton listen during the state funeral for former president Jimmy Carter at Washington National Cathedral in Washington on Jan 9, 2025. (AP)

Comer rejected that offer Tuesday, insisting that any interview also have an official transcript.

The push in Washington for a reckoning over Epstein has shown details of the connections between the wealthy financier and both Bill Clinton and Trump, among many other high-powered men. Epstein killed himself in 2019 in a New York jail cell while awaiting trial.

Bill Clinton, President Donald Trump and many others connected to Epstein have not been accused of wrongdoing. Yet lawmakers are wrestling over who receives the most scrutiny.

A spokesman for the Clintons, Angel Ureña, said on social media that the Clintons are trying to help the Epstein investigation but that “both Clintons have been out of office for over a decade. Neither had anything to do with him for more than 20 years.”

Behind the scenes, longtime Clinton lawyer David Kendall has tried to negotiate an agreement with Comer for months. Kendall raised the prospect of having the Clintons testify on Christmas and Christmas Eve, according to the committee’s account of the negotiations.

The Clintons, who contend the subpoenas are invalid because they do not serve any legislative purpose, have also offered the committee written declarations about their interactions with Epstein.

Democrats have largely been focused on advancing the investigation into Epstein rather than mounting a defense of the Clintons, who led their party for decades. They agreed that Bill Clinton should inform the committee if he has any pertinent information about Epstein’s abuses.



Pedestrians with an umbrella walk in Monastiraki square during a rainstorm in Athens on Jan 21, as a wave of severe weather brings heavy rain, thunderstorms, snowfall and gale-force winds across the country. (AP)

Two killed by high waves, as severe weather hits Greece

Two people were killed on Wednesday as a severe weather system swept across Greece, authorities said.

In southern Greece’s Peloponnese peninsula, a Coast Guard officer lost his life after being swept away by strong waves at the port of Astros Kynourias and sustaining serious head injuries, according to local officials. In the southern Athens suburb of Glyfada, a woman was killed when floodwaters carried away her car, Greek national broadcaster ERT reported.

Large parts of the country were affected by the weather front, which brought heavy rainfall, gale-force winds and snowfall in mountainous areas. At least six regions, including Attica, were placed under a “Red Code” state of emergency, with residents receiving alerts urging them to stay indoors and follow official instructions.

As a precautionary measure, authorities ordered the closure of schools in Attica and other affected regions. Traffic disruptions were reported nationwide, with several motorists stranded in hard-hit areas, while ferry services were suspended at ports across the country. (AP)

EU embezzlement trial

Marine Le Pen admits ‘mistake’

PARIS, Jan 22, (AP): French far-right leader Marine Le Pen acknowledged “a mistake” on Wednesday at an appeals trial hearing in Paris that could derail her presidential ambitions, but firmly denied accusations she was at the center of a fraudulent system to siphon off European Union funds.

Le Pen, 57, is seeking to overturn a March 2025 ruling that found her guilty of misusing EU Parliament funds in the hiring of aides from 2004 to 2016.

She acknowledged some people paid as EU parliamentary aides performed work for her party, then known as the National Front, during that period.

“The mistake lies here: there were certainly some aides, on a case-by-case basis, who must have worked either marginally, more substantially, or entirely ... for the benefit of the party. And voilà,” Le Pen told the three-judge panel.



Far-right leader Marine Le Pen, (left), walks outside the courtroom during a short break in her appeals trial in Paris, on Jan 20. (AP)

INTERNATIONAL

President Marcos quits hospital after abdominal health problem

MANILA, Philippines, Jan 22, (AP): Philippine President **Ferdinand Marcos Jr** was taken to a hospital for an abdominal ailment that he ascribed to stress and age, but insisted he’s fine in a video released on Thursday, laughing off rumors of his demise.



Marcos

The 68-year-old leader was observed by his doctors and was released back home, attending two private meetings Thursday, according to Communications Undersecretary Claire Castro. “I’m fine,” a smiling Marcos in a white long-sleeve office shirt said in a video released by Castro. “I’m feeling very, very different from the way I was feeling before, but the problem has been fixed.”

Marcos added that he has diverticulitis, a “common complaint amongst, apparently people who are heavily stressed and people who are, I have to admit, growing old.” The condition involves inflammation of small pouches in the digestive tract, usually in the colon, that causes pain, fever, nausea or constipation.

Asked by Castro what was his message to opponents wishing he would

lose the presidency, Marcos responded with a laugh: “Don’t get too excited yet because it’s not a life-threatening condition.”

“Don’t worry. The rumors of my death are highly exaggerated,” he added.

Since taking office in mid-2022, Marcos has grappled with multiple complex problems and political dilemmas.

Those include an increasingly hostile territorial dispute with Beijing in the South China Sea, devastating earthquakes, typhoons and floodings, economic difficulties, tumultuous relations with his vice president and a corruption scandal involving powerful legislators that has sparked public outrage.

Also:

MANILA, Philippines: A Philippine court Thursday found a Filipina journalist guilty of financing terrorism in a verdict that was condemned by press freedom watchdogs but welcomed by anti-communist insurgency officials.

Presiding Judge **Georgina Perez** of the Regional Trial Court in central **Tacloban** city convicted **Frenchie Mae Cumpio** and human rights missionary **Marielle Domequil** - who have been jailed for nearly six years - of financing terrorism charges. They were acquitted on separate charges of illegally possessing firearms and explosives, court officials said.



In this image from a video, rescuers and fire crews work near the site of a landslide at the base of Mount Maunganui on New Zealand's North Island on Jan 22. (AP)

Landslides hit New Zealand campground and house with 2 confirmed dead

Landslides hit a house and a campground in New Zealand on Thursday, leaving at least two dead while emergency crews were trying to rescue others buried in rubble, officials said.

The first hit a house in the community of Welcome Bay on New Zealand's North Island at 4:50 a.m., police said. Two people escaped the house, and the bodies of two who were trapped inside were recovered hours later, Emergency Management Minister Mark Mitchell said.

Later the same morning, emergency services were called to a second slide at the base of nearby Mount Maunganui. The rubble hit Beachside Holiday Park in a town named after the extinct volcano. Images showed

vehicles, travel trailers and an amenities block crushed by debris.

Police Superintendent Tim Anderson said the number of people missing was in the “single figures.”

No survivors or bodies had been recovered by late Thursday from the Mount Maunganui rubble, where dogs were being used to sniff for human victims, Mitchell said.

“There was a shower block and a, sort of, combined shower block-kitchen block and there were people using that at the time the slide came through and they are some of the ones that we’re working hard to try and recover now,” Mitchell told Australian Broadcasting Corp. (AP)

US govt warns it will take action if Haitian politicians destabilize country

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico, Jan 22, (AP): The US warned the transitional council in charge of Haiti against making changes to the troubled country’s government on Wednesday, as pressure mounts for the unelected body to move toward elections for the first time in a decade.

In a statement posted on X, the US Embassy in Haiti wrote that “The United States would consider that any person who supports such a destabilizing initiative, which favors the gangs, would be acting against the interests of the United States, the region, and the Haitian people, and will take appropriate measures accordingly.”

The U.S. Embassy added that such a maneuver would undermine efforts to establish “a minimal level of security and stability” in Haiti, where gang violence is surging and poverty deepening.

The statement came as some members of the council are at odds with Haitian Prime Minister Alix Didier Fils-Aimé, although it wasn’t immediately clear why. The council met behind closed doors earlier Wednesday.

A spokesman for the prime minister’s office said late Wednesday that he could not comment on the situation. The council’s seven members with voting powers did not return messages for comment.

It’s the latest episode in years of political chaos that erupted after Haiti’s last elected president, Jovenel Moïse, was slain at his home in July 2021.



Police and civilians attempt to put out a fire set by gang members on an armored police vehicle in a gang-controlled area of Port-au-Prince, Haiti on Jan 19. (AP)

The council has been one of the country’s top authorities since April 2024, when it was created with the help of Caribbean leaders after powerful gangs seized control of Haiti’s main international airport and targeted key state infrastructure in a series of unprecedented attacks that eventually led former Prime Minister Ariel Henry to resign.

The council was charged with selecting Haiti’s prime minister in a bid to quickly bring some stability to the beleaguered country.

Fils-Aimé is the third person chosen by the council. A businessman and former head of Haiti’s Chamber of Commerce and Industry, he was appointed in November 2025 after the council fired previous leader Garry Conille.

The council is supposed to step down by Feb. 7, but it’s unclear if that will happen. Critics say some council members are trying to stay in power longer, and many fear the move could unleash a fresh round of violent protests.

Cambodia to send 73 online scam suspects to South Korea: officials

SEOUL, South Korea, Jan 22, (AP): Dozens of South Koreans detained in Cambodia for alleged involvement in online scams will be sent home this week to face investigations, officials said Thursday, in what would be the largest group repatriation of Korean criminal suspects from abroad.

The 73 South Korean suspects allegedly scammed fellow Koreans out of 48.6 billion won (\$33 million), according to a South Korean government statement.

The suspects, 65 men and eight women, were among about 260 South Koreans detained in a crackdown in Cambodia in recent months. Public outrage over scam centers in Southeast Asia flared in South Korea when a Korean student was found dead last summer after reportedly being forced to work at a scam compound in Cambodia.

Authorities said at the time he died after being tortured and beaten, and South Korea sent a government delegation to Cambodia in October for talks on a joint response.

South Korea will send a chartered plane to Cambodia, which is scheduled to return Friday with the suspects who will be immediately handed over to investigative authorities upon arrival, according to the statement.

The suspects include a couple who allegedly operated a deepfake romance scam to dupe 12 billion won (\$8.2 million) from about 100 people in fraudulent invest-



South Koreans, walking in the line to the left, who are allegedly involved in online scams in Cambodia arrive at the Incheon International Airport, in Incheon, South Korea, on Oct 18, 2025. (AP)

ment schemes. South Korea has made various efforts to bring them back home, including more than 10 rounds of video meetings with Cambodian officials, the Justice Ministry said in a statement.

Cybercrime has flourished in Southeast Asia, particularly in Cambodia and Myanmar, as trafficked foreign nationals were employed to run romance and cryptocurrency scams, often after being recruited with false job offers and then forced to work in conditions of near-slavery. Accord-

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

In January, Cambodia said it had arrested and extradited to China a tycoon accused of running a huge online scam operation.

Since October, about 130 South Korean scam suspects from Cambodia as well as more than 20 such Korean suspects from Laos, Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines have been sent back home.



Police officers frisk men during the country’s state of emergency, following an escalation of gang-related violence, on the outskirts of Guatemala City on Jan 20. (AP)

Guatemala police begin to flex powers to fight gangs

GUATEMALA CITY, Jan 22, (AP): Days after suspected gang members killed 10 Guatemalan police officers, police and soldiers took their new powers granted under a state of emergency to the Barrio 18 gang’s center of operations in the north of the capital.

Dozens of police officers and soldiers, some carrying rifles and wearing bulletproof vests or with their faces covered, patrolled the narrow warren of streets in the cluster of neighborhoods called Zone 18 on Tuesday. At a checkpoint, they asked for identification of passing motorists and told some to stand against a wall to be patted down for weapons.

On Wednesday, Guatemalan President Bernardo Arévalo said in a press conference that during the first 48 hours of the state of emergency he declared to deal with the gangs, some 293 people had been detained, including 23 gang members, among others caught in the act of committing crimes or who had pending arrests orders.

There were 126 homicides in Zone 18 last year, the most of any of the capital’s 24 districts. Police say it is a “red zone” where the gang dominates. Early Tuesday, the bodies of three females, one pregnant and including two teens, were found shot in the street.

“This state of emergency is focused on head-on confrontation with the Barrio 18 and Mara Salvatrucha criminal structures,” said Jorge Aguilar, National Civil Police spokesman.

By Tuesday evening, dozens of police and soldiers lined up on a dusty soccer pitch where children kicked about a ball.

“We’re in a high risk moment. Don’t get separated from the group, we have the soldiers accompanying us, we’re going to work together, may God be with you,” a police commander told officers before the patrol.

Gangs have long oppressed neighborhoods in Guatemala where they recruit children, extort businesses and execute rivals. The problem came to a head over the weekend when gang members rioted in seemingly coordinated actions in three prisons on Saturday, taking dozens of guards hostage. On Sunday, police retook control of the prisons and freed the hostages, but almost immediately police around the capital were attacked.

So far 10 police officers have died and several more remain hospitalized.

Arévalo declared a 30-day state of emergency Sunday and on Monday the Congress overwhelmingly approved it. It restricts some rights of movement and assembly, as well as allowing police to detain people on suspicion of gang activity without a judge’s arrest order.

Fire at Cox's Bazar destroys homes, displaces Rohingya

Campaigning starts for Bangladesh’s first national election

DHAKA, Bangladesh, Jan 22, (AP): Campaigning began Thursday for Bangladesh’s first national elections since the 2024 uprising that ousted longtime Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The major political parties held campaign rallies in the capital, Dhaka, and elsewhere ahead of Feb. 12 election, which is seen as the most consequential in Bangladesh’s history as it follows Hasina’s ouster and is being held under an interim government with voters also deciding on proposed political reforms.

The interim government led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus has pledged to hold a free and fair election, but questions were raised after his administration banned Hasina’s former ruling Awami League party. The Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party have historically dominated the country’s electorate.

There are also concerns about the country’s law and order situation, but the government says they will keep the voting peaceful.

Yunus assumed office three days after Hasina left the country for India on Aug. 5, 2024, following the deaths of hundreds of protesters and others in a violent crackdown.

With the Awami League excluded from the election, a 10-party alliance led by Jamaat-e-Islami, an Islamist party, is seeking to expand its influence. Jamaat-e-Islami has long faced criticism from secular groups who say its positions challenge Bangladesh’s secular foundations. A new party



Children walk near the site of a fire that broke out in Camp 16, one of more than 30 Rohingya refugee camps in the Cox’s Bazar district, Bangladesh on Jan 20. (AP)

formed by student leaders of the uprising, the National Citizen Party, or NCP, is also part of the alliance.

Tarique Rahman, BNP chairman and the son of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, is widely seen as a leading contender for prime minister. His party has drawn strong support rooted in the political legacy of his mother, who died last month. Rahman returned to Bangladesh last month after 17 years in exile in the United Kingdom.

Rahman launched his campaign in the northeastern city of Sylhet with an address to thousands of supporters at a rally Thursday. He is scheduled to visit several other districts in the coming days.

In Sylhet, Rahman criticized the Jamaat-e-Islami party for using religious sentiment to get votes. He said that if elected, he would uphold national sovereignty and work for women and young people.

“Now we must establish the right to vote, rebuild the nation, and make it economically self-reliant,” he said.

Jamaat-e-Islami and the NCP began their campaigns in the capital, Dhaka.

“There are terrorism (crimes), extortion, corruption and forcible possession, (our fight) is against them to establish a just Bangladesh, and alongside to build a safe Dhaka for women and children,” said Nasiruddin Patwari, a leader of the National Citizen Party.

Thursday, local rescue officials said.

The accident occurred in Bhalwal city of Sargodha district, state-run Rescue 1122 said in a statement.

According to the official, the truck was carrying fodder and had 12 laborers on board at the time of the accident. The vehicle reportedly lost balance and overturned on the roadside, trapping several people underneath. (Xinhua)



Roof collapse kills 6 in Afghanistan: At least six children were killed after the roof of a mud house collapsed amid heavy storms and rainfall in southern Afghanistan’s Kandahar province on Wednesday night, a local official said on Thursday.

The incident occurred in the Karz region of Dand district, where intense storms and torrential rain caused the structure to give way, according to Mullah Abdul Salam Omari, director of the provincial disaster management authority.

In a separate incident, three people were killed and two others injured when a mudslide struck a residential house following heavy rain and snowfall in eastern Nuristan province on Wednesday. (Xinhua)

Subcontinent

6 killed in India steel plant blast: At least six workers were killed and five others injured Thursday in a blast inside a steel plant in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh, officials said.

The blast took place inside the steel plant at Bakulahi village in the Balodabazar-Bhatapara district, about 101 km northeast of Raipur, the capital city of Chhattisgarh.

According to officials, the explosion occurred in the dust settling chamber of the plant, spewing hot dust on the workers present there, causing serious burns.

Eyewitnesses told officials the explosion triggered panic inside the plant premises, and workers were seen rushing out amid thick smoke and flames. (Xinhua)



Pakistan road accident kills 4: At least four people were killed and eight others injured when a truck overturned in Pakistan’s eastern Punjab province on

Kuwaiti oil price up to \$61.02

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti crude oil rose by 41 cents to USD 61.02 per barrel in Wednesday’s trading, compared with USD 60.61 per barrel the previous day, said Kuwait Pe-

troleum Corporation (KPC) on Thursday. In global markets, Brent crude futures increased by 32 cents to USD 65.24 per barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate crude futures rose by 26 cents to USD 62.6 per barrel.

Business

At the conclusion of the 49th Engineering Design Exhibition

KFH honors the winners of its Environmental Sustainability Award



Crowning the female winners of the Sustainability Award from Kuwait Finance House.



Honoring the winners of the Sustainability Award.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) honored the winners of its Environmental Sustainability Award during a ceremony celebrating student projects from Kuwait University’s College of Engineering and Petroleum. The ceremony took place as part of the 49th Engineering Design Exhibition, which was held under the patronage of Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and Acting Minister of Finance, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investments, Dr. Sabeeh Abdulaziz Al-Mukhaizeem.

The winners were announced during the closing ceremony of the exhibition. The project Plasnix, developed by students Farah AlRabea, Salma Ezzat,

Farah Al-Shaiji, and Malak AlKandari, was awarded first place. The second-place award was granted to the project Life-Cycle Exergy Assessment, created by students Salwa Ben Bilal, Dana Al-Ajmi, Saud Al-Mutairi, Taiba Hammad, Fatma Muhanna.

KFH’s efforts to organize and allocate an award for sustainability and environment represent its commitment to supporting projects that promote sustainability and environmental awareness, in line with its Keep it Green campaign. This award also aligns with KFH’s integrated sustainability strategy and its commitment to environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards.

KFH is the main and largest supporter of the students at the College of Engineering and Petroleum at Kuwait University. The Bank is also a key partner of the Engineering Design Exhibition, providing support to approximately 300 students each year. This support is part of KFH’s strategy to support students, youth, and the community, and support creative projects and scientific initiatives.

It is worth noting that KFH’s long standing participation in the Engineering Design Exhibition, as a strategic partner, has played a key role in promoting engineering creativity among students and graduates and encouraging scientific initiatives that contribute to sustainable development across various aspects.

General index inclines 17.80 points

Boursa Kuwait closes trading session higher

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait closed trading on Thursday with its general index inclining by 17.80 points, or 0.20 percent, to reach 8,864.81 points, with 267 million shares traded through 18,471 cash deals, valued at KD 80.15 million (about USD 244.4 million).

The Main Market Index inclined by 45.31 points, or 0.55 percent, to reach 8,276.03 points, through trading of 115.4 million shares across 9,361 cash deals, valued at KD 20.7 million (about USD 63.13

million).

The Premier Market Index also rose up by 11.98 points, or 0.13 percent, to reach 9,449.36 points, through trading of 151.6 million shares across 9,110 deals, valued at KD 59.3 million (about USD 180.8 million).

Meanwhile, the Main 50 Index fell 10.45 points, or 0.12 percent, to reach 8,792.70 points, through trading of 70.6 million shares across 5,571 cash deals, valued at KD 14.3 million (about USD 43.6 million).

Middle East trade surplus falls 27.8%

Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan shrinks 19.9% in Dec

TOKYO, Jan 22, (KUNA): Kuwait’s trade surplus with Japan in December narrowed 19.9 percent from a year earlier to JPY 55.8 billion (USD 331 million), down for the second consecutive month due to slow exports, government data showed Thursday.

However, Kuwait remained in black ink with Japan for 17 years and 11 months, as exports still outpaced imports in value, the Finance Ministry said in a preliminary report.

Overall Kuwaiti exports to Japan shrank 13.3 percent year-on-year to JPY 87.4 billion (USD 529 million) for the second straight month of decline. Imports from Japan grew 1.7 percent to JPY 31.6 billion (USD 185 million), up for the first time in two months.

For the whole of 2025, Kuwait saw a trade surplus of JPY 548.0 billion (USD 3.4 billion), down 34.9 percent from the previous year. Kuwait’s exports to Japan fell 20.7 percent to JPY 886.2 billion (USD 5.6 billion), while imports jumped 22.5 percent to JPY 338.2 billion (USD 2.1 billion) last year.

Middle East’s trade surplus with Japan plunged 27.8 percent to JPY 571.1 billion (USD 3.6 billion) in December, with Japan-bound exports from the region shrinking 10.8 percent from a year earlier.

Crude oil, refined products, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and other natural resources, which accounted for 94.7 percent of the region’s total exports to Japan last month, dropped 11.1 percent.

The region’s overall imports from Japan rose 18.8 percent on robust demand for automobiles, machinery and steel.

The world’s third-biggest economy logged a global trade surplus of JPY 105.7 billion (USD 6.4 billion) in December for the second month.

Exports increased 5.1 percent from the year before, buoyed by sales of semiconductors and other electronic parts, non-ferrous metal and material.

Imports also went up 5.3 percent on computers and units and pharmaceutical products.

For the full year 2025, the world’s third-biggest economy logged a 2.7 trillion (USD 16.7 billion) red ink for the fifth consecutive year, but its size plummeted 52.9 percent from a year earlier.

Exports expanded 3.1 percent, while imports edged up 0.3 percent last year.

China remained Japan’s biggest trade partner for both December and the full year, followed by the US.

The trade data are measured on a customs-cleared basis before adjustment for seasonal factors.

Destinations include Alexandria, Zurich, Mykonos, Malaga and several others

Kuwait Airways prepares for the 2026 summer season with new destinations and seamless travel experience

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: Kuwait Airways has announced the launch of its new destinations for the summer 2026 season, commencing in June. The company also launched an exclusive offer for its valued customers, offering a 15% discount on all economy class flights to and from Kuwait.

This comes as part of the national carrier’s commitment to meeting travelers’ expectations and providing a wide range of travel options tailored to diverse preferences and needs. The expanded network includes prominent tourist and cultural cities across several countries worldwide, in line with the company’s operational plans to expand and diversify its destinations during the summer season.

Kuwait Airways Acting Chief Executive Officer, Captain Abdulwahab Ibrahim Al-Shatti stated, “Kuwait Airways is pleased to announce the launch of new destinations for the summer 2026 season, as part of the company’s operational plans aimed at strengthening its network of destinations and providing broader travel options for our valued customers. This initiative reflects our commitment to meeting passengers’ aspirations and delivering a distinguished travel experience that embodies the status of Kuwait Airways as the national carrier of the State of Kuwait.”

Al-Shatti explained that the new summer destinations include Alexandria starting 9 June; Sharm El Sheikh and Salalah starting 10 June; Zurich starting 12 June; Mykonos starting 14 June; An-



Captain Abdulwahab Ibrahim Al-Shatti.

talya starting 15 June; Trabzon, Sarajevo, and Vienna starting 16 June; and Bodrum starting 17 June. This expansion is part of a carefully planned strategy aimed at diversifying destinations and meeting the growing demand during the summer

season.

Al-Shatti revealed that Kuwait Airways has also launched an exclusive offer for its valued customers, providing a 15% discount on all economy class flights to and from Kuwait. The booking period runs from 22 January to 15 February 2026, while the travel period extends from 25 January to 30 April 2026. He also noted that the offer is available through the Kuwait Airways website, mobile application, sales offices, and the Call Center at 171, but is not applicable on codeshare flights.

Al-Shatti added, “Kuwait Airways places passenger comfort at the forefront of its priorities. The company operates a modern fleet of new aircraft equipped with the latest in-flight entertainment systems, offers a variety of menus catering to diverse tastes, and is supported by highly experienced and well-trained cabin crew dedicated to delivering the highest standards of service. This ensures our customers enjoy a comfortable and pleasant travel experience from the moment they board until they reach their destinations.”

Al-Shatti emphasized that Kuwait Airways is committed to providing the highest levels of comfort and service to its customers, both on board its aircraft and from the moment they enter Terminal 4, through advanced services and qualified staff. He noted that the national carrier continuously strives to enhance the travel experience and provide services of the highest quality, reflecting its ongoing commitment to fully serving its customers.

As part of its ‘Let’s Be Aware’ Campaign

National Bank of Kuwait calls customers to verify banknotes before accepting and circulating them

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: As part of its commitment to actively taking part in raising awareness and promoting financial inclusion and culture among all society segments, National Bank of Kuwait continues to support the banking awareness campaign “Let’s Be Aware”, launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait in collaboration with local banks and the Kuwait Banking Association.

In this light, NBK is intensifying its educational material and awareness content, including video clips, text messages, and tips, across all its social media platforms and digital channels, in addition to reposting CBK material to educate all segments of society financially and raise their awareness about various fraud methods and ways to avoid them.

Through this campaign, NBK highlights the issue of counterfeit banknotes, stressing the necessity to be cautious and verify the security features of the banknote before accepting and circulating it.

With the constantly advancing and growingly deceptive methods of counterfeiting, NBK is keen to educating the public about these methods and ways to avoid them to protect their



money and contribute to combating these financial crimes that threaten economic stability.

To this end, NBK advised the public to follow a set of basic rules that ensure safe handling of banknotes, based on the security features officially approved by CBK, because the customers’ awareness of these features is the first line of defense against forgery attempts.

Moreover, the Bank emphasized the need to carefully inspect the banknote’s design, texture, and integrated security threads before accepting it, which relies on an integrated approach that consists of five steps: (look, feel, lift, move, verify). The steps begin with “look” to observe the

clarity of the colors and distinctive drawings for each category, then “feel” to check the raised printing and symbols designed for people with visual impairments. As for the “lift” step, it involves checking the watermark in the shape of a falcon’s head and observing the completion of the irregular elements when exposed to light, while the “move” step focuses on tracking the change in the color of the wave in the security strip and the change in the color of the security thread when tilted.

Finally, the process concludes with a “verify” step using ultraviolet (UV) light to detect phosphorescent elements, which are among the most accurate and tamper-proof security features. These steps represent a practical

and quick mechanism that everyone can follow to ensure the authenticity of the banknote in circulation.

NBK called on all citizens and residents to take the time to examine the banknotes they receive, especially after large transactions or in crowded places where fraudsters find it easy to distract attention.

It is worth noting that NBK is making enormous efforts to keep communicating with customers and utilizing all its digital channels, which have the largest following among Kuwaiti banks, to support the efforts of CBK in protecting customers and the economy.

It is also worth mentioning that NBK is a key promoter and participant in all CBK’s campaigns and initiatives to increase financial and banking awareness among different segments of society. As one of the leading financial institutions in Kuwait, the Bank frequently organizes various activities to raise awareness on all topics related to the banking sector, as well as a wide range of training courses for its employees to enhance their knowledge and expertise in the areas of combating fraud and financial crime, in addition to its presence on all its social media platforms.

WEF26: Saudi Arabia leads new global push to protect coral reefs, unlock AI potential

DAVOS, Jan 22, (BUSINESS WIRE): The Saudi delegation to the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting 2026 today observed a series of announcements aimed at addressing urgent global challenges.

Her Royal Highness Ambassador Reema Bandar Al-Saud, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United States of America, announced that Saudi Arabia will host the first Global Coral Reef Summit in 2026, bringing together global leaders, scientists, and investors to drive solutions for the protection and recovery of coral reef ecosystems.

The summit will address key challenges and policy and regulatory gaps, develop science-based solutions, and advance sustainable financing and investment mechanisms to scale coral reef protection and recovery.

Building on the call for constructive dialogue in an era of fragmentation, His Excellency Ahmed A. Alkhateeb, Minister of Tourism, said: “Tourism brings peace at a time when it’s needed - connecting people and encouraging dialogue. Tourism growth is good for peace, it’s good for people, good for youth, and good for women.”

On the Kingdom’s ambitions to become a global hub for AI, His Excellency Abdullah A. Alswaha, Minister of Communications and Information Technology, commented: “Saudi Vision 2030 was about economic diversification and empowering youth. Fast forward to today and we’ve achieved 56% non-oil contribution to GDP, and in terms of talent and youth, our tech force has increased dramatically.”

Earlier in the day, HUMAIN and the National Infrastructure Fund (“Infra”) announced a Strategic Financing Framework Agreement of up to \$1.2 billion to support the expansion of AI and digital infrastructure projects in the Kingdom. The agreement outlines non-binding financing terms for HUMAIN’s development of up to 250 MW of hyperscale AI data center capacity.

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) COP16 Presidency also launched the Business4Land (B4L) Champions’ Council. This high-level coalition brings together CEOs, sustainability leaders, investors, and policymakers to accelerate land restoration, combat land degradation, and strengthen drought resilience.

The Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources (MIM), in collaboration with WEF, announced the Lighthouse Operating System, a country-level framework designed to accelerate manufacturing transformation. Developed in partnership with WEF’s Advanced Manufacturing and Production Centre (AMPC), this initiative aims to diversify the Kingdom’s economy, build robust non-oil industries, and position Saudi Arabia as a global hub for advanced manufacturing and logistics.

MIM and WEF announced a cooperation agreement on the sidelines of the Future Minerals Forum, which took place the week before the WEF Annual Meeting. The agreement runs until September 2027 and aims to unify efforts to strengthen partnerships around critical minerals required for energy and other technologies, contributing to the assurance of resilient, sustainable, and responsible mineral supplies aligned with industrial objectives and the energy transition.

According to the agreement, the initiative will be overseen by a joint executive committee comprising representatives from the ministry and WEF.

Kavanaugh warns Trump’s move could ‘shatter’ Fed independence

Supreme Court appears likely to block Trump’s bid to fire Fed Governor Lisa Cook

WASHINGTON, Jan 22, (AP): The Supreme Court seemed inclined to keep Federal Reserve governor Lisa Cook in her job, casting doubt on President Donald Trump’s bid to wrest control of the nation’s central bank.

The justices heard arguments over Trump’s effort to fire Cook based on allegations she committed mortgage fraud, which she denies. No president has fired a sitting governor in the 112-year history of the Fed, which was structured to be independent of day-to-day politics. The case presented the court with one of the more extraordinary efforts by Trump to expand presidential power. Though the court has frequently sided with him on emergency petitions, Cook’s case could prove to be an exception.

Allowing Cook’s firing to go forward “would weaken, if not shatter, the independence of the Federal Reserve,” said Justice Brett Kavanaugh, one of three Trump appointees on the nation’s highest court.

At least five other justices on the nine-member court also sounded skeptical about the effort to remove her from office.

Both Cook and Federal Reserve chairman Jerome Powell sat through nearly two hours of arguments in the packed courtroom.

“For as long as I serve at the Federal Reserve, I will uphold the principle of political independence in service to the American people,” Cook said in a statement issued after the arguments.

The true motivation for trying to fire Cook, Trump’s critics say, is the Republican president’s desire to exert control over U.S. interest rate policy. If Trump succeeds in removing Cook, the first Black woman Federal Reserve governor, he could replace her with his own appointee and gain a majority on the Fed’s board. The case is being closely watched by Wall Street investors and could have broad impacts on the financial markets and U.S. economy.

Trump has been dismissive of worries that cutting rates too quickly could trigger higher inflation. He wants dramatic reductions so the government can borrow more cheaply and Americans can pay lower borrowing costs for new homes, cars or other large purchases, as worries about high costs have soured some voters on his economic management.

During a speech earlier Wednesday in Davos, Switzerland, Trump reiterated his

Administration eyes 10% cap

Trump unveils housing plan to enhance homeownership

DAVOS, Jan 22, (AP): President Donald Trump’s plans for bringing homeownership within reach of more Americans involve pushing for lower interest rates on home loans and credit cards, and banning large institutional investors from buying single-family homes.

In his address Wednesday at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Trump outlined four policies his administration is pursuing in a bid to make homeownership more affordable. Each had been previously mentioned by him or his administration in recent weeks, part of a broader push to address affordability generally, a hot-button issue with voters heading into the midterms.

The U.S. housing market has been in a sales slump dating back to 2022, when mortgage rates began to climb from pandemic-era lows. The combination of higher mortgage rates, years of skyrocketing home prices and a chronic shortage of homes nationally following more than a decade of below-average home construction have left many aspiring homeowners priced out of the market. Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes remained stuck last year at 30-year lows.

In his remarks, Trump stressed the need to lower interest rates on home loans and credit cards in order to give aspiring homebuyers more financial flexibility to save up for a down payment on a home and more purchasing power when it comes time to buy.

“We can drop interest rates to a level, and that’s one thing we do want to do,” said Trump. “That’s natural. That’s good for everybody. You know, the dropping of the interest rate, we should be paying a much lower interest than we are.”

homeowners face is being able to save up for a down payment.

To that end, Trump said he is asking Congress for legislation that would mandate credit card issuers cap interest rates at 10% for one year - after the industry ignored his demand earlier this month that they implement the cap by Jan. 20. The average rate on credit cards is around 21%, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

Trump also reiterated that he wants to block large institutional investors from buying single-family homes, so that Americans don’t have to compete with such well-funded rivals when they shop for a home.

“Homes are built for people, not for corporations, and America will not become a nation of renters,” he said.

While touting his plans to open up the housing market to more Americans, Trump stressed that he didn’t want to take any actions that would tip the housing market too far in favor of buyers at the expense of millions of homeowners who have benefited from strong home equity gains.

“Every time you make it more and more and more affordable for somebody to buy a house cheaply, you’re actually hurting the value of those houses, obviously, because the one thing works in tandem with the other,” he said, adding: “Now, if I want to really crush the housing market, I could do that so fast that people could buy houses, but you would destroy a lot of people that already have houses.”

Trump didn’t specify which policies would cause that to happen.

Trump issued an executive order late Tuesday directing his administration to review the laws that govern how big institutional investors make large purchases of single-family homes and determine whether such investors are engaging in anti-competitive practices.

The order, which exempts companies that build homes for rent, also includes provisions to give ordinary home shoppers the opportunity to buy foreclosed homes before investors do and bars government housing agencies from guaranteeing, insuring or otherwise facilitating large institutional investors from buying single-family homes.

Still, it’s unclear how the administration will define a large investor. And while some metro areas, like Atlanta and Phoenix, have a larger share of corporate-owned single-family homes for rent, the vast majority of rental houses are owned by small individual investors, which wouldn’t be barred from buying more homes.

“It probably won’t make a noticeable impact on the housing market,” said Daryl Fairweather, chief economist at Redfin.

Trump was expected to give more details about his housing policy in the speech, but devoted most of it to other subjects. Kevin Hassett, director of Trump’s National Economic Council, told Bloomberg that Trump was just “foreshadowing” an upcoming policy announcement. The White House is reportedly considering a new way for Americans with a 401(k) retirement savings plan to fund the down payment on a home, among other policies.

call for the Fed to sharply lower rates, arguing that the United States should pay “the lowest interest rate of any country in the world.”

The board cut a key interest rate three times in a row in the last four months of 2025, but that’s more slowly than Trump wants. The Fed also suggested it may leave rates unchanged in coming months over inflation worries.

The issue before the court is whether Cook can stay on the job while her challenge to the firing plays out in court. Judges on lower courts have allowed her to remain in her post as one of seven central bank governors. The justices could simply deny the emergency appeal Trump is seeking and allow the case to continue playing out in lower courts.

Chief Justice John Roberts, who also seemed skeptical of Trump’s actions, suggested it may be pointless to return the case to lower courts rather than issue a more enduring ruling.

A decision is expected by early summer.

With Cook’s case under review at the high court, Trump dramatically escalated his confrontation with the Fed. The Justice Department has opened a criminal investigation of Powell and has served the central bank with subpoenas.

Powell himself took the rare step of responding to Trump, calling the threat of criminal charges “pretexts” that mask the real reason, Trump’s frustration over interest rates. The Justice Department has said the dispute is ostensibly about Powell’s testimony to Congress in June over the cost of a massive renovation of Fed buildings.

In Trump’s first year of his second term, the justices generally, but not always, went along with Trump’s pleas for emergency action to counteract lower-court rulings against him, including allowing the firings of the heads of other governmental agencies at the president’s discretion, with no claim that they did anything wrong.

But the court has sent signals that it is approaching the independence of the nation’s central bank more cautiously, calling the Fed “a uniquely structured, quasi-private entity.”

In Cook’s case, Trump is not asserting that he can fire Fed governors at will, Solicitor General D. John Sauer said. Cook is one of several people, along with Democratic New York Attorney General Letitia James and Democratic Sen. Adam

Schiff of California, who have been accused of mortgage fraud by federal housing official Bill Pulte. They have denied the allegations against them.

The case against Cook stems from allegations she claimed two properties, in Michigan and Georgia, as “primary residences” in June and July 2021, before she joined the Fed board. Such claims can lead to a lower mortgage rate and smaller down payment than if one of them was declared as a rental property or second home.

Those applications, Sauer said, are evidence of “gross negligence at best” and give Trump reason to fire her. In any event, he argued, courts shouldn’t be reviewing his decision and Cook has no right to a hearing.

Giving Cook a chance to sit down with Trump and respond to the allegations her, Justice Amy Coney Barrett said, “just wouldn’t be that big a deal, it seems.”

Cook has denied any wrongdoing and has not been charged with a crime. “There is no fraud, no intent to deceive, nothing whatsoever criminal or remotely a basis to allege mortgage fraud,” a Cook lawyer, Abbe Lowell, wrote to Attorney General Pam Bondi in November.

Cook specified that her Atlanta condo would be a “vacation home,” according to a loan estimate she obtained in May 2021. In a form seeking a security clearance, she described it as a “2nd home.” Lowell wrote that the case against her largely rests on “one stray reference” in a 2021 mortgage document that was “plainly innocuous in light of the several other truthful and more specific disclosures” about the homes she has purchased.

Roberts and Justice Sonia Sotomayor, both owners of multiple residential properties, expressed some sympathy for Cook.

“I suppose we can debate that, how significant it is in a stack of papers you have to fill out when you’re buying real estate,” Roberts said, responding to Sauer’s assertion that Cook had made a “quite a big mistake” in her mortgage application.

Sotomayor said there was something familiar to her in Cook’s need to move to Washington after her appointment to the Fed and rent out her Michigan home.

“I had to move from New York when I got my job in Washington, and, frankly, I renovated my apartment the year before, thinking I would be in New York for the rest of my life,” Sotomayor recalled, alluding to her Supreme Court appointment. “Things change.”

Trump backs off tariff threats on European allies over Greenland

Wall Street cheers as Trump softens stance on allies

DAVOS, Jan 22, (AP): Investors appeared to have gotten through to President Donald Trump about the risk posed by his designs for Greenland with a message he wasn’t hearing from European leaders: Threatening allies with tariffs and land seizure isn’t exactly the type of policy that generates confidence in the global economy.

boasting that the framework was “going to be a very good deal for the United States” and allies.

He downplayed the role that the jittery market played on his decision on tariffs. “No, we took that off because it looks like we have pretty much a concept of a deal,” Trump said.

Trump on Wednesday backed off his threat to slap punishing tariffs on eight European allies for opposing his insistence on acquiring Greenland from longtime ally Denmark after the plan spooked Wall Street by sparking serious talk within NATO about a fundamental rupture to the transatlantic military alliance that’s been a linchpin of post-World War II security.

Markets had seen their biggest losses since October as Trump prepared to travel to Davos, Switzerland, to give a keynote address to leaders and the global elite at the World Economic Forum.

Trump grumbled about what he called a stock market “dip” with some annoyance during the speech, complaining the market gyrations happened despite the U.S. “giving NATO and European nations trillions and trillions of dollars in defense.”

But during that speech, he made his first abrupt shift in position for the day: He took off the table the option of using military force to take over Greenland.

“I won’t do that. OK?” Trump told the packed conference room.

Then, hours later, Trump announced he was retreating from the tariffs altogether after he said he had come to terms with NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte on a “framework” on Greenland that “gets us everything we needed to get” if the agreement is consummated.

Trump promptly took to financial network CNBC just before Wall Street trading ended for the day,

Trump didn’t offer details on the terms of that framework. But the S&P 500 rallied 1.2% after his remarks, recovering about half the ground it had lost a day earlier. The Dow Jones Industrial Average also rose 1.2%, as did the Nasdaq Composite.

After the retreat, Denmark’s foreign minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen cautiously offered that “the day is ending on a better note than it began” but said the details of the agreement still need to be worked out.

One idea NATO members have discussed as part of the compromise would see Denmark and the alliance working with the U.S. to build out more U.S. bases in Greenland, according to a European official familiar with the matter but not authorized to comment publicly. The official said it was not immediately clear if that idea was included in the contours of the framework that Trump and Rutte discussed on the sidelines of Davos on Wednesday.

Rutte in an appearance on Fox News on Wednesday evening gave little hint about what precisely he and Trump agreed to.

“We agreed that he’s right, and he’s right that collectively we have to protect the Arctic regions,” Rutte said. “But also, of course, the U.S. continue its conversations with Greenland and Denmark when it comes to how can we make sure that the Russians and China will not gain access to the economy or a military sense of Greenland.”

It wasn’t just the financial markets that were telling Trump to rethink the tariffs and tough rhetoric toward allies.

A number of U.S. officials had also been concerned about Trump’s headline stance and bellicose language toward Greenland, Denmark and other NATO allies because they feared it could harm other foreign policy goals.

These officials thought the fixation on Greenland and Trump’s earlier comments suggesting

that the potential splintering of NATO was a cost he might be willing to pay were complicating the president’s effort to form the Board of Peace, which he’s expected to spotlight Thursday in Davos. The U.S. officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss concerns being floated inside the administration.

Many European countries, which were already skeptical of the proposed board’s broad global mandate, had reacted even more negatively to the concept after Trump’s tariff threat. The board, which was born from Trump’s 20-point plan to end the Israel-Hamas war, was initially envisioned as a small group of world leaders overseeing the Gaza ceasefire but has morphed into something far more ambitious.

A few European nations have even declined their invitations.

“The interpretation that European leaders are going to take from this is that actually standing up and being firm defused the crisis,” said Max Bergmann, director of the Europe, Russia and Eurasia Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. “Trump is acting like a bully, and the only way that we’re going to have a stable relationship is if we push back.”

But Matthew Kroenig, vice president and senior director of the Atlantic Council’s Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security, countered that the idea that Trump would seize Greenland seemed more like a bluff all along - and one that may have worked.

“Most of the world was freaking out over these threats,” Kroenig said. But he he noted there are some downsides to that negotiating style.

For one, it drove the prime minister of Canada, a close U.S. ally, to propose that smaller countries unite against aggressive superpowers.

“It’s been unnecessarily dramatic, costly and damaging, but all the damages so far are repairable,” added Daniel Fried, a former U.S. ambassador to Poland who is now a distinguished senior fellow at the Atlantic Council in Washington.

That possibility, Fried noted, would be harder to achieve had Trump continued on the path with Greenland where he appeared to be heading.

Labor market shows ‘low hire, low fire’ pattern

Unemployment filings rise slightly but remain low

WASHINGTON, Jan 22, (AP): The number of Americans who applied for unemployment benefits inched up last week but U.S. layoffs remain historically low despite signs of a softening labor market.

U.S. filings for jobless aid for the week ending Jan. 17 rose by 1,000 to 200,000, up from 199,000 the previous week, the Labor Department reported Thursday. That’s fewer than the 207,000 new applications that analysts surveyed by the data firm Fact-Set were expecting.

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

Earlier this month, the government reported that hiring remained sluggish in December, capping a year of weak employment gains that have frustrated job seekers even though layoffs and unemployment remained low.

Employers added just 50,000 jobs last month, nearly unchanged from a downwardly revised figure of 56,000 in November, the Labor Department said.

The unemployment rate slipped to 4.4%, its first decline since June, from 4.5% in November, a figure also revised lower.

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

Businesses and government agencies posted 7.1 million open jobs at the end of November, down from 7.4 million in October. Layoffs also dropped as companies seem to be retaining workers even as they are reluctant to add staff, a trend economists refer to as “low hire, low fire.”

Recent government data has revealed a labor market in which hiring has clearly lost momentum, hobbled by uncertainty raised by President Donald Trump’s tariffs and the lingering effects of the high interest rates the Fed engineered in 2022 and 2023 to rein in a spike of pandemic-induced inflation.

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

cut. Fed officials meet again next week, with most analysts and traders expecting central bank officials to keep the benchmark lending rate where it is.

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

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

Thursday’s report from the Labor Department also showed that the four-week average of jobless claims, which softens some of the week-to-week volatility, fell by 3,750 to 201,500.

The total number of Americans filing for jobless benefits for the previous week ending Jan. 10 declined by 26,000 to 1.85 million, the government said.

As Trump talks tariffs, his Argentine ally welcomes a first shipload of Chinese EVs

ZÁRATE, Jan 22, (AP): The vast field of over 5,800 electric and hybrid vehicles gleamed on the cargo deck of the BYD Changzhou, an Chinese container vessel unloading Wednesday at a river port in eastern Argentina.

In other places, such a scene would not be noteworthy. Chinese automaker BYD has sped up its exports and undercut rivals the world over, alarming Washington, upsetting Western and Japanese auto giants and unnerving local industries across Southeast Asia, Africa and Latin America.

But the sight of so many new Chinese EVs gliding onto a muddy river bank in Buenos Aires province was unprecedented for Argentina, its crisis-stricken economy dominated for years by a left-wing populist movement that protected local industry with stiff tariffs and import restrictions.

“For decades people in Argentina had this vision that everything here must be manufactured here,” said Claudio Damiano, a professor in the Institute of Transportation at Argentina’s National University of San Martin. “The boat has a symbolic value as the first step for BYD. Everyone’s wondering how far it will go.”

The shipment also came in stark contrast to the news in Brussels, where on Wednesday European Union lawmakers voted to delay ratification of a landmark free trade deal with the Mercosur group of South American countries, including Argentina, which promises to tear down trade barriers for European industrial imports and supercharge consumption of German EVs.

“For the Europeans, there’s just no possibility of competing with the Chinese,”

Damiano said.

Argentina became one of the region’s most closed economies under Kirchnerism - the movement formed by ex-President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and her late husband, former President Néstor Kirchner, which championed the rights of the downtrodden, defaulted on sovereign debt and disdained global trade as a destructive force.

A chronically depreciating peso and sky-high taxes constrained consumer choice, compelling well-heeled Argentines to smuggle iPhones and Zara hauls into the country when returning from vacations abroad.

Fed up with cycles of economic crisis, Argentines vaulted radical libertarian President Javier Milei to power in 2023. He rallied against Kirchnerism, vowed to destroy the state and praised U.S. President Donald Trump as an ideological soulmate.

For the last two years, Milei has has done the exact opposite of his most powerful ally in Washington.

While Trump has waged trade wars, Milei has flung open Argentina’s doors to imports, slashed trade barriers, unwound customs red tape and shored up the local currency to make foreign goods more affordable.

Last year Argentina logged a record 30% increase in imports compared to the year before - much of it in the form of \$3 milk frothers and \$10 dresses piling up on Argentines’ doorsteps from Asian online retailers such as Temu and Shein.

Now Chinese automakers - once choked by 35% levies on imports - are seizing on a new measure to allow 50,000 electric and hybrid cars into the country this year tariff-free. The first shipment arrived Monday at Zárate Port after a 23-day voyage from Singapore.

Telling business and political leaders Wednesday at the World Economic Forum in Davos that that his drastic deregulation measures “allow us to have a more dynamically efficient economy,” Milei declared: “This is MAGA, ‘Make Argentina Great Again.”

Milei and Trump share a contempt for perceived “wokeness,” a resentment of multilateral institutions like the United Nations, a denial of climate change and a zeal for massive budget cuts.

The ideological bond has paid dividends for Milei: Argentina is a rare place in the region where Trump has wielded the might of the U.S. to help an ally rather than enforce demands with military threats, as he has in Colombia and Mexico. Last year he offered Milei a \$20 billion credit swap to boost his friend’s chances in a crucial midterm election.

Yet at Davos, the leaders’ differences were on display. Milei delivered his anti-interventionist, libertarian interpretation of MAGA shortly after Trump laid out his own vision for making America great: demanding control of Greenland and threatening allies with tariffs and other consequences if they don’t fall in line.



Sheikh Faisal Al-Saud, His Highness Sheikh Dr. Mohammed Al-Sabah, Sheikh Mubarak Al-Faisal, Sheikh Abdulah Salem Al-Ali, and Sheikh Jaber Al-Faisal



Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali, Sheikh Khalid Al-Abdullah, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem, Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Al-Nasser, and Sheikh Abdullah Ali Al-Abdullah



Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali welcoming Sheikh Ali Al-Jaber



Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali welcoming Sheikh Dr. Ibrahim Al-Duaij.



Sheikh Mubarak Salem Al-Ali, Sheikh Azzam Al-Sabah, and Sheikh Khalid Al-Abdullah



Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya, Mahmoud Boushahri, and Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali



Sheikh Nasser, Sheikh Khalid Jaber Al-Ahmad, Sheikh Thamer Al-Jaber, and Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali



Marzouq Al-Ghanim shaking hands with Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali.



Sheikh Nasser, Ahmed Mubarak Al-Faisal, Abdullah Al-Salem, Mubarak Al-Faisal, and Athbi Al-Athbi



Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali flanked by Sheikh Abdullah and Sheikh Fahad Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad.



Mubarak Al-Salili, Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali, Bahraini Ambassador, and Sheikh Ali Hamad Al-Jaber



Sheikh Hamad Al-Ali, Dharar Al-Ghanim, Sheikh Fahad Al-Jaber, and Eid Hadhhal



Mubarak Al-Jallal, Hazmi Al-Jallal, Ambassador Dhari Al-Ajran, and Sattam Al-Jallal



Faisal Al-Waqyan and Lieutenant General Engineer Abdullah Al-Fares



The Jordanian Ambassador, the British Ambassador, the Palestinian Ambassador, the Moroccan Ambassador, the Indian Ambassador, and Ahmed Behbehani



Essam Al-Saqr, Sheikh Hamad Al-Ali, Fawaz Al-Mazrouei, and Hamed Al-Omairi



Ahmed Al-Aswad Al-Azmi, colleague Bassam Al-Qassas, Sheikh Hamad Al-Ali, and Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem



Talal Al-Qahs, Faisal Al-Dousari, Sheikh Hamad Al-Ali, and Lieutenant General Engineer Mahmoud Al-Dousari

Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs receives guests at his weekly diwan

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs, Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, welcomed guests at his weekly diwan, including sheikhs, public figures, senior officials, and citizens, in a warm and friendly atmosphere that reflected the unity of the Kuwaiti family, reports Al-Seyasah daily.

Attendees at Salwa Diwan exchanged cordial conversations and discussed

various local affairs and public issues.

Sheikh Hamad affirmed that Kuwaiti diwans will always be a cornerstone of direct communication with the people, serving as a platform to strengthen social cohesion and uphold the values of dialogue.

He emphasized the importance of preserving this authentic social heritage.

'Carousel' leads lineup of powerful premieres at festival

Sundance kicks off in Utah with emotional tributes to Redford

PARK CITY, Utah, Jan 22, (AP): Robert Redford liked to say that everybody has a story. He's not the only person who said it, but he is one of the few who did something to celebrate it, his daughter, Amy Redford, said Wednesday evening ahead of the Sundance Film Festival's opening day.

Thanks to her father's vision, the Sundance Institute he founded and its year-round programs have helped shape and nurture American independent film for the past 40 years. This year's Sundance Film Festival is a grand goodbye party: It's the first without Redford following his death in September, and the last in Utah before the festival relocates to Boulder, Colorado.

"This is a festival of new beginnings and endings," his daughter said in an interview with The Associated Press. "I'm going to look around and drink it up and enjoy it and just not take anything for granted."

Robert Redford's legacy and Sundance's decades-long history in Utah are key themes of the 2026 festival, which officially begins Thursday morning with over a dozen films premiering throughout the day.

By the time the dust has settled from Oscar nominations, the festival will already be in full swing with the world premieres of Amir Bar-Lev's documentary "The Last First: Winter K2" about the changing culture of extreme mountain climbing, Rachel Lambert's tender drama "Carousel," starring Chris Pine and Jenny Slate, and Judd



This image released by the Sundance Institute shows Jenny Slate (left) and Chris Pine in a scene from 'Carousel,' an official selection of the 2026 Sundance Film Festival. (AP)

Apatow's portrait of comedian Maria Bamford's mental health journey on the opening day list.

Also upcoming is David Alvarado's "American Pachuco: The Legend of Luis Valdez" about the legacy of the playwright and director, and Joanna Natasegara's "The Disciple," which delves into the stranger-than-fiction story of how Dutch-Moroccan record producer Cilvaringz found his way into the inner circle of the Wu-Tang Clan. "Too Many Cooks" creator Casper Kelly will also debut his midnight movie "Buddy," starring Cristin Mili-

oti, about escaping a children's television show.

Pine gets a lot of scripts sent his way, but when Rachel Lambert's "Carousel" landed on his proverbial desk it was like he'd stumbled on something from a different filmmaking era. In Lambert's lyrical prose was a story that, to him, felt very Robert Redford, very "Ordinary People."

"My favorite word for this film is quotidian," Pine said in a recent interview with The Associated Press. "It's a film in which nothing happens and yet everything happens."

It's fitting then that "Carousel" is having its world premiere Thursday at the Sundance Film Festival, where it is seeking distribution. The film is a story about love in all its messy incarnations, centered on a single father in Cleveland, Ohio, whose small medical practice is struggling, whose divorce is complicated and whose teenage daughter (Abby Ryder Fortson) is slipping into depression when his high school girlfriend (Jenny Slate) comes back to town and they start up again.

Pine felt himself leaning into the script, wanting to know more about the characters and the filmmaker behind it. After watching Lambert's previous film, "Sometimes I Think About Dying," he saw a filmmaker whose cinematic vision was so unique, so distinctly her own that he joined "Carousel" not just as the star but a producer as well.

Lambert had admired Pine from afar for years, for his intelligence and sensitivity on screen, and saw potential for him in the part of Noah.

"There's a rareness to him that I don't see very often in performers," Lambert said. "He reminds me of Jimmy Stewart or Cary Grant, these sort of towers of performers."

The actual experience of it turned out to be more special than she could have dreamed. Yes, he showed up as an actor, generous and receptive, but he also became a protector of sorts as well. Knowing how much Lambert wanted to shoot both in America and on film,

two relatively expensive dreams for an indie, he made his own participation contingent on celluloid.

"It's an enormous act that I think about a lot," Lambert said. "There are very few films shot in America and there are very few films shot on film ... it lends a kind of extra emotional layer to the viewing experience."

For Lambert, shooting on film was an act of preservation. This was a story that she dreamed up during COVID lockdowns at her childhood home, a location she also used in "Carousel." The homespun feeling of it added a texture and intimacy to the environment, whether it was using her mom's frozen fruit as a prop or literally chopping down a tree in the backyard, as Slate's character Rebecca does at one point.

"You just plunk right into whatever that closeness or intimacy is," Slate said.

Chemistry is always a gamble, especially in indies where there's never enough time or money, but Lambert was blown away by just how well Pine and Slate worked out as these two characters attempting to start up again after many years apart.

"We just had an immediate affinity for one another," Pine said. "Jenny is so smart, and I'm sort of a lover of smart people, so immediately she had me. And she likes to laugh and she makes me giggle. So we just had a really, really easy time getting to know one another."

While actors can wax poetic about

how much they like and respect one another, ultimately it's what's on screen that counts. Lambert remembered getting chills (the good kind) when shooting Rebecca and Noah's intimate scene.

"Shooting that scene felt to me like it was in slow motion. It felt like such a beautiful thing to enact, really. But I mean, also that's something that you get with another actor who's really, really focused on landing it just right."

Of course, love is never as simple as it is in the movies, and Lambert wanted to reflect that in "Carousel." At its heart there is a central romantic love story, but there are other love stories refracted throughout, through their families and professions. None are obstacles that need to be overcome exactly, but they're part of the fabric of a life.

"There's this mantra I have already: 'Have you ever wanted something so much in life you do all you could not to get it? That's what Noah is going through,'" Lambert said. "He wants so much to love this person, Rebecca, to feel love, to feel renewed. But there's all these other repairs he must attend to and all these fears he must attend to. I wanted to take that seriously."

Lambert is hesitant to prescribe what an audience might feel when watching her film. For her actors, though, it meant one of the richer creative experiences of their careers, getting to hone their craft in a way that might really resonate with audiences and speak to the human experience.

Emotional testimony

Publisher made Meghan's life 'a misery:' Prince Harry

LONDON, Jan 22, (AP): **Prince Harry** struck a defensive tone at the start of his testimony on Wednesday against the publisher of the Daily Mail tabloid newspaper and left the witness box hours later on the brink of tears.

After disputing that reporters used legitimate sources to publish revealing details of his life, he provided an emotional glimpse into the toll that a life in the spotlight and his battle against the British media had taken on him and his family.



Harry

"They continue to come after me, they have made my wife's life an absolute misery," he said as he choked back tears in London's High Court.

Harry and six other prominent figures, including the singer Sir Elton John and actor Elizabeth Hurley, allege that Associated Newspapers Ltd. invaded their privacy by engaging in a "clear, systematic and sustained use of unlawful information gathering" for two decades, attorney David Sherborne said.

The publisher has denied the allegations, called them preposterous and said the roughly 50 articles in question were reported with sources that included close associates willing to inform on their famous friends. It is expected to name sources during the nine-week trial.

Harry said in his 23-page witness statement that he was distressed and disturbed by intrusions by the Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday into his early life and it made him "paranoid beyond belief."

It was Harry's second time testifying after he bucked House of Windsor tradition and became the first senior royal to testify in a court in well over a century when he took the stand in his similar lawsuit against the publisher of the Daily Mirror in 2023.

Harry, dressed in a dark suit, held a small Bible in his right hand in London's High Court and swore to "almighty God that the evidence I shall give will be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth."

Under the English court practice, Harry presented written testimony of his claims and after asserting it was true under oath, he was immediately put under cross-

examination.

Defense lawyer Antony White, in a calm and gentle tone, began to put questions to Harry to determine if the sourcing of the articles, in fact, had come from royal correspondents legitimately working their sources at official events or from friends or associates of the prince.

Harry denied suggestions he was friendly with journalists who covered the royal family or that his friends gave details about him to the tabloids.

"My social circles were not leaky," he declared.

His curt replies and efforts to explain what it's like living under what he called "24-hour surveillance" eventually brought the intervention of the judge, who told him not to argue with the defense lawyer.

"You don't have to bear the burden of arguing the case today," Justice Matthew Nicklin told the frustrated prince.

As Harry became increasingly defensive, White said: "I am intent on you not having a bad experience with me, but it is my job to ask you these questions."

Harry suggested that details in articles had come from eavesdropping on his phone calls or having private investigators snoop on him. He said journalist Katie Nicholl had used the term "unidentified source" deceptively to hide unlawful measures of investigation.

"If you complain, they double down on you in my experience," he said as he explained why he had not objected to the articles at the time.

Harry said he had had an "uneasy" relationship with the media for many years while following the royal family's protocol of "never complain, never explain."

The litigation is part of Harry's self-proclaimed mission to reform the media that he blames for the death of his mother, Princess Diana, who was killed in a car crash in 1997 while being pursued by paparazzi in Paris.

He also said persistent press attacks on his wife, Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, led them to leave royal life and move to the United States in 2020.

He said "vicious persistent attacks," harassment and event racist articles about Meghan, who is biracial, had inspired him to break from family tradition to finally sue the press.

After cross-examination, Harry's lawyer asked him how he felt about the way Associated Newspapers was defending the case.

Film



This image released by Amazon MGM Studios shows Chris Pratt in a scene from 'Mercy.' (AP)

Near-future thriller falls short

In 'Mercy,' Pratt is on trial with an AI judge

LOS ANGELES, Jan 22, (AP): It's a bold filmmaking choice to have a countdown clock on the screen for most of your movie.

In the best-case scenario for a movie like "Mercy," in which a Los Angeles detective has to prove his innocence to an artificial intelligence judge within said time limit, it heightens the tension. Who hasn't gotten sweaty palms in, say, a "Mission: Impossible" movie when the bomb is ticking down and Tom Cruise still hasn't cleared the building? Why not just extend it for the duration?

Perhaps in a better movie it might have worked. Sadly in "Mercy," in theaters Thursday, it's an ever-present reminder of just how much longer you must endure until you too are free of Chris Pratt, Rebecca Ferguson and that chair.

In "Mercy's" near-future Los Angeles, AI has been adopted by law enforcement and the judicial system to more efficiently clean up the city's crime and blight problem. It's a potent and not too far-flung idea that might have been a fascinating and provocative premise for a movie attempting to grapple with the implications of so-called progress that had the potential to be a worthy companion to another Cruise movie, "Minority Report." But that would have required a more serious script than screenwriter Marco van Belle's

and more vision than filmmaker Timur Bekmambetov managed to muster.

When Pratt's character, Chris Raven, wakes up, barefoot and strapped into an electric chair sitting in the middle of an oddly large room that looks a bit like the holodeck, he's informed by an IMAX-sized AI judge (Ferguson) that he has 90 minutes to prove he didn't kill his wife (Annabelle Wallis). In this world, the incarcerated are guilty until proved innocent. They've cut lawyers and juries out of the equation as well. Instead, the accused have everyone's digital footprint at their disposal to help build their own case. For Raven, that means everything from ring cam footage to his teenage daughter's secret Instagram account.

Unfortunately for Raven, he woke up with some gaps in his memory between angrily busting into his home to confront his wife about something and being arrested and bludgeoned at a bar later that day. Raven was also one of the original champions of the AI judge system, which in a more curious script might have resulted in some real stakes. This story is more hung up on increasingly tortured plot contrivances, however, including Raven's drinking problem following the death of a partner killed on the job. To its credit, the story does really keep it ambiguous as to

whether Raven did it or not, but to say that it earns any sort of investment in the outcome is a stretch.

One of the most confounding choices is to have a real actor playing the AI judge. Wouldn't it have been more interesting and provocative to use an AI creation as the impartial Judge Maddox instead of stripping Ferguson of all emotion and charisma in the role? At times, it feels as tedious as watching a stranger's increasingly frustrating call with a robotic customer service representative play out in real time.

For how reliant this movie is on screens and keeping Pratt alone, one might assume that "Mercy" was a socially distanced, COVID-era leftover instead of something made in 2024. Kali Reis, playing another LAPD agent named Jaq who decides to help Raven investigate on the ground is the one that gets to be out in the real-world chasing leads and hunches. But for the most part, she's seen only through FaceTime and bodycam footage. Like Raven, we're largely stuck in the chair watching things play out on multiple screens, acutely aware of just how much time is left.

"Mercy," an Amazon MGM release in theaters Thursday, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association for "drug content, bloody images, some strong language, teen smoking and violence." Running time: 101 minutes. One and a half stars out of four.

Variety

NEW YORK: Taylor Swift, Kiss' Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley, Christopher "Tricky" Stewart, Alanis Morissette and Kenny Loggins make up the 2026 Songwriters Hall of Fame inductees.

Swift's songwriting has undeniably shaped contemporary pop music trends - and she'll no doubt bring extra attention to this year's new class.

Kiss founders Simmons and Stanley - fresh off the band's farewell - will also be recognized for their glam rock classics "Rock and Roll All Nite" and "I Love It Loud."

In addition to Swift, Simmons and Stanley, nominees this year include the soft rock legend Loggins ("Footloose," "Danny's Song"), the alt-rock icon Morissette ("You Oughta Know," "Ironie") and the game-changing R&B songwriter, producer and rapper



Swift

Christopher "Tricky" Stewart, best known for work like Rihanna's "Umbrella," Beyoncé's "Single Ladies" and "Break My Soul."

The 2026 Songwriters Hall of Fame induction ceremony will be held June 11 in New York City.

The Hall annually inducts performers and nonperformers alike. This year, the latter category includes the duo Terry Britten and Graham Lyle (Tina Turner's "What's Love Got To Do With It.")

It's also not uncommon for performers to gain entry after multiple nominations. Walter Afanasieff, who helped Mariah Carey with her smash "All I Want for Christmas Is You," was previously nominated in the 2025 Songwriters Hall of Fame class. He didn't make the cut then, but this year, will be inducted.

"The music industry is built upon the incredible talent of songwriters who create unforgettable songs. Without their artistry, there would be no recorded music, concert experiences, or engaged fans. Everything originates from the song and its creator," Songwriters Hall of Fame chairman Nile Rodgers said in a statement. "This year's lineup not only showcases iconic songs but also celebrates unity across various genres." (AP)

WASHINGTON: The Washington Post asked a federal court on Wednesday for an order requiring federal authorities to return electronic devices that they seized from a Post reporter's Virginia home last week, accusing the government of trampling on the reporter's free speech rights and legal safeguards for journalists.

A magistrate judge in Alexandria, Virginia, temporarily barred the government from reviewing any material from the devices seized from Post reporter Hannah Natanson's home. The judge also scheduled a Feb. 6 hearing on the newspaper's request.

Federal agents seized a phone, two laptops, a recorder, a portable hard drive and a Garmin smart watch when they searched Natanson's home last Wednesday, according to a court filing. The search was part of an investigation of a Pentagon contractor accused of illegally handling classified information.

"The outrageous seizure of our reporter's confidential newsgathering materials chills speech, cripples reporting, and inflicts irreparable harm every day the government keeps its hands on these materials," the Post said in a statement. (AP)

NEW YORK: In a dispute of operatic proportions, the pro-

Jonathan Anderson hones his vision

Dior is back: Sharp silhouettes and visionary menswear in Paris

PARIS, Jan 22, (AP): Dior’s menswear show arrived with a stripped-back set and a loud signal of confidence: neon-yellow wigs that read like a flag of authority planted in the Paris runway, after a couple of runway wobbles from their new designer.

In an annex of the Rodin Museum lined with curtain fabric, Jonathan Anderson - the 41-year-old Northern Irish designer celebrated for turning Loewe into one of luxury’s most admired labels and now serving as Dior’s creative director - pared the décor down to near-nothing.

On Wednesday, Anderson’s clothes finally carried the argument.

The stakes were visible in the room: Robert Pattinson, Lewis Hamilton and SZA were among the VIPs packed in close.

Then came the refrain: As one person in the front row put it: “Dior is back. It’s a good day for fashion.”

This show felt like authority.

Anderson’s Dior, at its weakest, has read like a montage of strong ideas still searching. Here, the principle was clear: tighten the story, sharpen the silhouettes, and ground the house in something firm.

The gender-bending came through, but it was not weightless.



Models wear creations as part of the Dior Fall/Winter 2026-2027 Men's collection presented in Paris, Wednesday, Jan. 21. (AP)



It was anchored, literally, in masculine boots and small-heeled lace-ups.

It was a smart back-and-forth signature for the designer who garnered laudits at Loewe, and now seems to



have found his groove again amid the heritage house’s weighty legacy.

The strongest argument came in outerwear.

Coats were sublime - the collec-

tion’s backbone in cut and stance.

He riffed, lightly but knowingly, on Dior’s most guarded code: the Bar jacket and the New Look line.

The nod was subtle: an ever-so-faint curve at the hip, a hint of structure, a memory of the house’s postwar hourglass without the old ceremony.

Dior is one of luxury goods conglomerate LVMH’s flagship houses, a pillar of the group’s fashion-and-leather-goods engine at a moment when luxury demand has been under pressure.

Across the sector, the terrain has turned harsher: rival luxury group Kering has been battling a prolonged slump at Gucci, with results showing steep sales declines that have weighed on the group.

And in Paris this week, Kering’s biggest runway names are absent from the official menswear and couture schedules - leaving the spotlight, and the scrutiny, on LVMH’s tentpoles.

After Dior’s first ever female designer Maria Grazia Chiuri’s long run ended last year with increasingly mixed critical notices in some quarters, the company has placed an unusually large wager on Anderson - the first designer in Dior’s modern history to oversee women’s ready-to-wear, haute couture and menswear under a single creative hand.

Dior’s house notes cast the characters as modern-day flâneurs: an aristo-

youth roaming Paris, jolted into new connections by couture history.

The brand pointed to Paul Poiret, a designer known for fluid forms and far-reaching references, and pitched the collection as contradiction made coherent: Dior formality with denim and parkas; tailoring with technical outerwear; old with new.

On the runway, those collisions worked best when treated as construction rather than mood.

Tailoring was slender and precise - elongated jackets, mercilessly shrunk blazers, tailcoats, cropped Bar jackets and lean trousers - while outerwear fused the pragmatic and the dramatic, with bombers flowing into brocade capes, balloon-back field jackets and cocooning coats.

The palette stayed somber, which only sharpened the punctuation marks: the shock of yellow hair, and glittering glam-rock epaulettes that suggested a designer in full command of his own drama.

Accessories reinforced the same strategy.

Lace-ups with small heels and loafers kept the body planted: blur the masculine-feminine line, but do not let the clothes drift. The wigs shouted. The clothes did not need to.

Film



This image released by Warner Bros Pictures shows Michael B. Jordan portraying two characters in a scene from 'Sinners.' (AP)

Michael B. Jordan earns first Oscar nod

‘Sinners’ makes Oscar nomination history

LOS ANGELES, Jan 22, (AP): Ryan Coogler’s blues-steeped vampire epic “Sinners” led all films with 16 nominations to the 98th Academy Awards on Thursday, setting a record for the most in Oscar history.

Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences voters showered “Sinners” with more nominations than they had ever bestowed before, breaking the 14-nomination mark set by “All About Eve,” “Titanic” and “La La Land.” Along with best picture, Coogler was nominated for best director and best screenplay, and double-duty star Michael B. Jordan was rewarded with his first Oscar nomination, for best actor.

Paul Thomas Anderson’s father-daughter revolutionary saga “One Battle After Another,” the favorite coming into nominations, trailed in second with 13 nominations of its own. Four of its actors - Leonardo DiCaprio, Teyana Taylor, Benicio del Toro and Sean Penn - were nominated, though newcomer Chase In-finiti was left out in best actress.

In those two top nominees, the film academy put its full force behind a pair of visceral and bracingly original American epics that each connected with a fraught national moment. Coogler’s Jim Crow-era film - the rare horror movie to win the academy’s favor - conjures a mythical allegory of Black life. In “One Battle After Another,” a dormant spirit of rebellion is revived in an out-of-control police state.

Both are also Warner Bros. titles. In the midst of a contentious sale to Netflix, the 102-year-old studio had its best Oscar nominations morning ever. As the fate of Warner Bros., which Netflix is buying for \$72 billion, hangs in the balance amid a challenge from Paramount Skydance, Hollywood is bracing for potentially the largest realignment in the film industry’s history.

The 10 films nominated for best picture are “Bugonia,” “F1,” “Frankenstein,” “Hamnet,” “Marty Supreme,” “One Battle After Another,” “The Secret Agent,” “Sentimental Value,” “Sinners” and “Train Dreams.”

Guillermo del Toro’s “Frankenstein,” Josh Safdie’s “Marty Supreme” and Joachim Trier’s “Sentimental Value” all scored nine nominations.

The nine for “Marty Supreme” included a third best actor nod for 30-year-old Timothée Chalamet, the favorite in the category he narrowly missed winning last year for “A Complete Unknown.” With Jordan and Chalamet, the nominees are Leonardo DiCaprio for “One Battle After Another,” Ethan Hawke for “Blue Moon” and Wagner Moura for “The Secret Agent.”

Nominated for best actress was the category favorite, Jessie Buckley (“Hamnet”), along with Rose Byrne (“If I Had Legs I’d Kick You”), Kate Hudson (“Song Sung Blue”), Renate Reinsve (“Sentimental Value”) and two-time winner Emma Stone, who landed her sixth nomination, for “Bugonia.”

The year’s most-watched movie, with more than half a billion views on Netflix, “KPop Demon Hunters,” scored nominations for both best song (“Golden”) and best animated feature. Sony Pictures developed and produced the film, but, after selling it to Netflix, watched it become a worldwide sensation.

Blockbusters otherwise had a difficult morning. Universal Pictures’ “Wicked: For Good” was shut out entirely. While “Avatar: Fire and Ash” notched nominations for costume design and visual effects, it became the first “Avatar” film not nominated for best picture. The biggest box-office hit nominated



Lewis Pullman, (left), and Danielle Brooks present the nominees for the 98th Academy Awards on Thursday, Jan. 22, 2026, at the Samuel Goldwyn Theater in Beverly Hills, Calif. (AP)

for Hollywood’s top award instead was “F1,” an Apple production. The streamer partnered with Warner Bros. to distribute the racing drama.

The first category read by presenters Danielle Brooks and Lewis Pullman was supporting actress. The nominees are Elle Fanning and Inga Ibsdotter Lilleaas for “Sentimental Value,” Amy Madigan for “Weapons,” Wunmi Mosaku for “Sinners” and Teyana Taylor for “One Battle After Another.”

For supporting actor, the nominees are Jacob Elordi for “Frankenstein,” Sean Penn for “One Battle After Another,” Stellan Skarsgård for “Sentimental Value,” Benicio del Toro for “One Battle After Another” and Delroy Lindo for “Sinners.”

This year, the Oscars are introducing a new category for casting. That new honor helped “Sinners” and “One Battle After Another” pad their already impressive stats. Along with those two films, the nominees are “Hamnet,” “Marty Supreme” and “The Secret Agent.”

The 98th Academy Awards will take place on March 15 at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles and will be televised live on ABC and Hulu. YouTube’s new deal to exclusively air won’t take effect until 2029. This year, Conan O’Brien will return as host.

Here is a full list of nominees for the 98th annual Academy Awards, which will be presented March 15 in Los Angeles:

■ Best picture: “Bugonia”; “F1”; “Frankenstein”; “Hamnet”; “Marty Supreme”; “One Battle After Another”; “The Secret Agent”; “Sentimental Value”; “Sinners”; “Train Dreams.”

■ Best actress: Jessie Buckley, “Hamnet”; Rose Byrne, “If I Had Legs I’d Kick You”; Renate Reinsve, “Sentimental Value”; Emma Stone, “Bugonia”; Kate Hudson, “Song Sung Blue.”

■ Best actor: Timothée Chalamet, “Marty Supreme”; Leonardo DiCaprio, “One Battle After Another”; Ethan Hawke, “Blue Moon”; Michael B. Jordan, “Sinners”; Wagner Moura, “The Secret Agent.”

■ Best supporting actress: Elle Fanning, “Sentimental Value”; Inga Ibsdotter Lilleaas, “Sentimental Value”; Amy Madigan, “Weapons”; Wunmi Mosaku, “Sinners”; Teyana Taylor, “One Battle After Another.”

■ Best supporting actor: Jacob Elordi, “Frankenstein”; Sean Penn, “One Battle After Another”; Stellan Skarsgård, “Sentimental Value”; Benicio

del Toro, “One Battle After Another” Delroy Lindo, “Sinners.”

■ Director: Paul Thomas Anderson, “One Battle After Another”; Ryan Coogler, “Sinners”; Chloé Zhao, “Hamnet”; Josh Safdie, “Marty Supreme”; Joachim Trier, “Sentimental Value.”

■ Original song: “Golden” from “KPop Demon Hunters”; “Train Dreams” from “Train Dreams”; “Dear Me” from “Diane Warren: Relentless”; “I Lied To You” from “Sinners”; “Sweet Dreams Of Joy” from “Viva Verdi!”

■ Animated film: Arco; “Elio”; “KPop Demon Hunters”; “Little Amélie or the Character of Rain”; “Zootopia 2.”

■ International film: The Secret Agent, Brazil; “It Was Just an Accident,” France; “Sentimental Value,” Norway; “Sirat,” Spain; “The Voice of Hind Rajab,” Tunisia.

■ Documentary feature: “The Perfect Neighbor”; “The Alabama Solution”; “Come See Me in the Good Light”; “Cutting Through Rocks”; “Mr. Nobody Against Putin.”

■ Casting: “Hamnet”; “Marty Supreme”; “One Battle After Another”; “The Secret Agent”; “Sinners.”

■ Best sound: “F1”; “Frankenstein”; “One Battle After Another”; “Sinners”; “Sirat.”

■ Cinematography: “Frankenstein”; “Marty Supreme”; “One Battle After Another”; “Sinners”; “Train Dreams.”

■ Original Screenplay: “Blue Moon,” Robert Kaplow; “It Was Just an Accident,” Jafar Panahi, with script collaborators Nader Saïvar, Shadmehr Rastin, Mehdi Mahmoudian, “Marty Supreme,” Ronald Bronstein and Josh Safdie; “Sentimental Value,” Eskil Vogt and Joachim Trier; “Sinners,” Ryan Coogler.

■ Adapted screenplay: “Bugonia”; “Hamnet,” Chloé Zhao and Maggie O’Farrell; “One Battle After Another,” Paul Thomas Anderson; “Train Dreams,” Clint Bailey and Greg Kwedar.

■ Live action short film: “Butcher’s Stain”; “A Friend of Dorothy”; “Jane Austen’s Period Drama”; “The Singers”; “Two People Exchanging Saliva.”

■ Animated short film: “Butterfly”; “Forevergreen”; “The Girl Who Cried Pearls”; “Retirement Plan”; “The Three Sisters.”

■ Documentary short film: “All the Empty Rooms”; “Armed Only with a Camera: The Life and Death of Brent Renaud”; “Children No More: Were and Are Gone”; “The Devil Is Busy”; “Perfectly a Strangeness.”

■ Visual effects: “Avatar: Fire and Ash”; “F1”; “Jurassic World Rebirth”; “The Lost Bus”; “Sinners.”

■ Production design: “Frankenstein”; “Hamnet”; “Marty Supreme”; “One Battle After Another”; “Sinners.”

■ Film editing: “F1”; “Marty Supreme”; “One Battle After Another”; “Sentimental Value”; “Sinners.”

■ Makeup and hairstyling: “Frankenstein”; “Kokuho”; “Sinners”; “The Smashing Machine”; “The Ugly Stepsister.”

■ Costume design: “Avatar: Fire and Ash”; “Frankenstein”; “Hamnet”; “Marty Supreme”; “Sinners.”

Music

‘Interesting manifestation’

Duckwrth’s fake Grammy button scores a real nod

LOS ANGELES, Jan 22, (AP): Duckwrth manifested a 2026 Grammy nomination for his album while in the recording studio. He just didn’t know it.

The singer, songwriter and producer would pretend to press an imaginary Grammy button whenever he and his friends finished a new track.

“It would be certain moments when we’ll be done with the song, and we’ll come up with this thing called ‘Grammy button.’ It’s an invisible Grammy button - we’ll be like, ‘Grammy, Grammy.’ And we said that over and over again ... it was an interesting, beautiful manifestation,” the artist told The Associated Press.

The 37-year-old musician first started turning heads with his genre-fluid debut mixtape “I’m Ugly” in 2016. Soon his eclectic sound could be heard across films and television shows like “Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse” and HBO’s “Insecure.” Since then, Duckwrth’s music has gone against the grain, seamlessly blending elements of hip-hop, funk, rock and soul throughout his projects.

Duckwrth’s latest album, “All American F-Boy,” is nominated at the 68th annual Grammy Awards on Feb. 1 for best immersive audio album, a category that honors the technical work of albums mixed using multi-channel audio recordings.

If they win, the trophy will be awarded to immersive mix engineer Andrew Law, who formatted the album’s previously mixed stereo recording for Dolby Atmos surround sound, a three-dimensional experience that allows listeners to feel as if they are at the center of the songs’ layered instruments and melodies.

“The difficult part is you have to keep the essence of the actual song so that when people listen to it on headphones or on other mediums, and not like in the (Dolby Atmos) studio, that it still sounds like the song without making it too crazy,” said Law. “I try to take the approach of keeping the song how it was meant to be heard. And then turn it into a big soundscape and something really, really fun when you’re sitting in an Atmos studio.”

Immersive

The project is immersive in more ways than one. While brainstorming his next project, Duckwrth knew he wanted to center it on a character who was a bit more “brash and more a Sid Vicious type.”

“So, I feel I had to find a way to blend what they already knew me for,” he said. “I told my friend I gotta trick people, I gotta secretly drop a rock album, but people not know it’s a rock album.”

At the time, he was listening to audiobooks, like George Orwell’s “1984,” and wanted the album to feel like the layered soundscapes in a film or audiobook. So, he sat down and, over the course of 2 ½ years, created his own audio drama within the album, starring himself and featuring narration from actor LaKeith Stanfield. The album was produced alongside BLK ODYSSEY and 2Fresh, featuring artists like Taneerêlle, Sherwyn, Tommy Newport and IDK.

The album follows the titular “All American F-Boy” as he navigates the ups and downs of dating while grappling with a fear of commitment. His character ultimately is forced to confront his toxic playboy tendencies and break the patterns that have kept him in a constant loop of failed relationships. The loosely autobiographical project weaves into its coming-of-age story the invitation to explore the ways generational trauma, patriarchy and toxic masculinity affect romantic relationships.

“I was highly uncomfortable dropping this album, but I think when the wind pushes you so hard, it’s like when you’re like a child throwing a tantrum, and you’re just like, ‘No, I don’t wanna, I don’t wanna go to school,’ but then your mom is like pushing you out the door, like ‘Boy, if you don’t get in that car,’” said Duckwrth. “So I think making this album, it was a strong wind against my back, pushing me forward to go as deep as possible and be as vulnerable as possible.”

When looking back at the album’s journey, both Law and Duckwrth knew they had something great on their hands. For Law, it was an instant win from the narration to the music.

“I was like, this is the one,” he said.

Duckwrth says the album and Law’s immersive engineering work receiving a Grammy nomination is rewarding and a reminder to trust himself, his creative intuition and to be just as vulnerable with future projects.

“Yeah, to get a Grammy nomination for just being all out rebellious is pretty cool,” he said with a smile on his face. “And I’m excited for the kids who come after me to see that, whether we win or not, just having a nomination, especially for my album.”



Duckwrth poses for a portrait at Amazon’s studio 126 in Culver City, Calif on Monday, Dec. 29, 2025. (AP)

‘Extended heating use may cause carbon monoxide poisoning’

Take these steps to protect yourself from winter weather dangers

HOUSTON, Jan 22, (AP): Winter weather brings various hazards that people have to contend with to keep warm and safe.

These dangers can include carbon monoxide poisoning, hypothermia and frozen pipes that can burst and make homes unlivable.

Public safety officials and experts say there are multiple ways people can prepare themselves to avoid these winter weather hazards and keep themselves safe.

The hazards are on the radar this week because millions of people in the United States are set to be hit with heavy snow, sleet and freezing rain from a “significant winter storm” this weekend that will impact the Midwest, the East Coast as well as much of the southern US, including Texas, Georgia and the Carolinas, according to the National Weather Service.

Officials say that during a winter storm, people should stay indoors. But home heating systems running for hours can increase the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning as the deadly fumes can be produced by



People walk their dogs on an ice covered beach at the Lake Michigan shore, Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2026, in Chicago. (AP)

furnaces, stoves and heaters, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Carbon monoxide can also be created when people use portable generators or run cars in their garages to stay warm or charge their phones.

Dr. Alex Harding, assistant professor of emergency medicine at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, said that because carbon monoxide is odorless and colorless, people won’t necessarily be aware of it.

“The symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning can be really insidious. They can sneak up on patients

and can range from just developing a headache or maybe a little bit of nausea to all the way to losing consciousness and seizures,” he said.

The cold weather hitting the US this weekend has the ability to be dangerous or deadly because of unsafe exposure to elements.

The cold temperatures could sneak up on people in parts of the country, including Texas, that have largely experienced a mild winter so far.

“Really cold temperatures and winds can make temperatures feel a lot colder, and the result of that could be cold air that could eventually lead to frostbite at a much faster rate or hypothermia at a much faster rate than normal,” said Jon Palmer, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Gray, Maine.

Prolonged exposure to frigid temperatures can put people at risk to hypothermia, a condition that happens when one’s body loses heat faster than it can produce it.

“Hypothermia is definitely one of the bigger concerns, especially if we do have any kind of certainty in like power grids or electricity failing,”

Harding said.

The danger of hypothermia is greater for someone who is outside, exposed to wind gusts and isn’t wearing appropriate clothing or has clothing that gets wet.

“If they have a safe place that’s warm, where they can hunker down, where they have water and food and all those kind of necessities ... then that’s going to limit their exposure to those risks,” Harding said.

But vulnerable populations like people with disabilities or homeless individuals can have problems finding a warm and safe place to stay.

Frozen pipes in a home during severe winter weather is a particular problem in parts of the South because such equipment is often located outside structures. But other parts of the country also have to deal with this problem.

Jose Parra, a master plumber with Abacus Plumbing, Air Conditioning & Electrical in Houston, advises people to insulate any pipes that are exposed to the outside, turn off and drain sprinkler systems and let faucets inside a home drip during freezing temperatures so water can run through the pipes and protect them.

“A lot of what we’re fixing, I would say 80% to 90%, could have been prevented with just a little bit of work ahead of time,” Parra said.

Experts acknowledge that cold weather can be hard for electric vehicles. But they say with some planning and a little adjustment, owners should be able to travel pretty much as normal.

Inside EV batteries, lithium ions flow through a liquid electrolyte, producing electricity. But they travel more slowly through the electrolyte when it gets cold and don’t release as much energy. That cuts into the range and can deplete a battery faster.

In the short run, automakers are likely to come up with better ways to protect battery life and warm them for charging, Neil Dasgupta, associate professor of mechanical and materials science engineering at the University of Michigan, told The Associated Press. And there are new battery chemistries in development that are more resilient in cold weather.

‘Lower mental load to help brain truly recover’

Why ‘unwinding’ with screens may be adding to stress, expert warns

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



By Robin Pickering
Gonzaga University

As Americans increasingly report feeling overwhelmed by daily life, many are using self-care to cope. Conversations and social media feeds are saturated with the language of “me time,” burnout, boundaries and nervous system regulation.

To meet this demand, the wellness industry has grown into a multitrillion-dollar global market. Myriad providers offer products, services and lifestyle prescriptions that promise calm, balance and restoration.

Paradoxically, though, even as interest in self-care continues to grow, Americans’ mental health is getting worse.

I am a professor of public health who studies health behaviors and the gap between intentions and outcomes. I became interested in this self-care paradox recently, after I suffered from a concussion. I was prescribed two months of strictly screen-free cognitive rest - no television, email, Zooming, social media, streaming or texting.

The benefits were almost immediate, and they surprised me. I slept better, had a longer attention span and had a newfound sense of mental quiet. These effects reflected a well-established principle in neuroscience: When cognitive and emotional stimuli decrease, the brain’s regulatory systems can recover from overload and chronic stress.

Obviously, most people can’t go 100% screen-free for days, much less months, but the underlying principle offers a powerful lesson for practicing effective self-care.

Americans’ self-rated mental health is now at the lowest point since Gallup started tracking this issue in 2001. National surveys consistently detect high levels of stress and emotional strain.

Roughly one-third of US adults report feeling overwhelmed most days. Sleep disruption, anxiety, poor concentration and emotional exhaustion are widespread, particularly among young adults and women.

Chronic disease patterns mirror this strain. When daily stress becomes chronic, it can trigger biological changes that increase the risk of long-term conditions like heart disease and diabetes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 6 in 10 US adults live with at least one chronic condition, and 4 in 10 live with multiple chronic conditions.

Many Americans say they actively practice self-care in everyday life. For example, they describe taking mental health days, protecting personal time, setting boundaries around work and prioritizing rest and leisure.

The problem lies in how they use that leisure time.

Over the past 22 years, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics’ American Time Use Survey has consistently found that

watching television is the most popular leisure activity for US adults. Americans spend far more time watching TV than exercising, spending time with friends or practicing reflection through activities like yoga. Other common self-care activities include watching movies and gaming.

Modern leisure time increasingly includes smartphone use. Surveys suggest that mobile phones have become the dominant screen for many Americans, with adults spending several hours per day on their phones.

For many adults, checking social media or watching short videos has become a default relaxation behavior layered on top of traditional screen use. This practice is often referred to as second screening.

Although many people turn to screen-based activities to wind down, these activities may have the opposite effect biologically.

Pre-internet forms of leisure often involved activities such as watching scheduled television programs, listening to radio broadcasts or reading books and magazines. For all of these pastimes, the content followed a predictable sequence with natural stopping points.

However, pairing rest with screen use may undermine the very restoration that people are seeking. Digital media stimulate attention, emotion and sensory processing. Even while people are sitting or lying still, being onscreen can keep their nervous systems in a heightened state of arousal. It may look like downtime, but it doesn’t create the biological conditions for restoration.

Evidence suggests that mental relief comes not from adding new coping strategies, but from reducing the number of demands placed on the brain.

Here are some evidence-based strategies that support genuine restoration:

- Reduce digital multitasking, such as using your phone while watching television. This lowers stress and cognitive strain.
- Limit task-switching and interruptions. This improves focus and reduces cognitive fatigue.
- Spend time in low-stimulation environments, including quiet spaces and outdoor settings. This supports mood and emotional well-being.
- Unwind with analog or low-novelty activities, such as reading print, journaling, gentle movement or device-free walking. These pastimes allow mental engagement without overload.

The goal is to intentionally reduce mental load, not to abandon all digital devices.

To improve well-being in our overstimulated society, it’s important to understand the difference between feeling as though you are unwinding and actually allowing your brain and body to recover. In my view, fewer screens, fewer inputs, fewer emotional demands and more protected time for genuine cognitive rest are important components of an effective wellness strategy. (AP)



From left, NASA astronaut Butch Wilmore, Russia’s Alexander Gorbunov, and NASA astronauts Nick Hague and Suni Williams sit inside a SpaceX capsule onboard the SpaceX recovery ship Megan after landing in the water off the coast of Florida, March 18, 2025. (AP)

Ultrasound machines urged on future spaceflights

Astronauts say space station’s ultrasound machine was critical during medical crisis

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., Jan 22, (AP): The astronauts evacuated last week from the International Space Station say a portable ultrasound machine came in “super handy” during the medical crisis.

During their first public appearance since returning to Earth, the four astronauts refused Wednesday to say which one of them needed medical attention and for what reason. It was NASA’s first medical evacuation in 65 years of human spaceflight.

NASA’s Mike Fincke said the crew used the onboard ultrasound machine once the medical problem arose Jan. 7, the day before a planned spacewalk that was abruptly canceled. The astronauts had already used the device a lot for routine checks of their body changes while living in weightlessness, “so when we had this emergency, the ultrasound machine came

in super handy.”

It was so useful that Fincke said there should be one on all future spaceflights. “It really helped,” he said.

“Of course, we didn’t have other big machines that we have here on planet Earth,” he added. “We do try to make sure that everybody before we fly are really, really not prone to surprises. But sometimes things happen and surprises happen, and the team was ready ... preparation was super important.”

The space station is set up as well as it can be for medical emergencies, said NASA’s Zena Cardman, who commanded the crew’s early return flight with SpaceX. She said NASA “made all the right decisions” in canceling the spacewalk, which would have been her first, and prioritizing the crew’s well-being.

Japanese astronaut Kimiya Yui said he was surprised how well all the preflight training paid off in dealing with the health concerns.

“We can handle any kind of difficult situation,” Yui said. “This is actually very, very good experience for the future of human spaceflight.”

Joining them on what turned out to be a 5 1/2-month mission - more than a month shorter than planned - was Russia’s Oleg Platonov. They launched last August from Florida and splashed down in the Pacific off the San Diego coast last week.

Welcoming them back to Houston were their replacements, who aren’t due to launch until mid-February. NASA and SpaceX are working to move up the flight.

“We were hoping to give them hugs in space, but we gave them hugs on Earth,” Fincke said.

Social ties cut depression risk

Prenatal smoke exposure tied to autism risk

LOS ANGELES, Jan. 22, (Xinhua): A newly published study reported an association between prenatal exposure to wildfire smoke in Southern California and a higher likelihood of autism diagnosis in early childhood.

According to a study published online Tuesday in the journal Environmental Science and Technology, researchers examined a large pregnancy cohort in Southern California and estimated mothers’ exposure to wildfire smoke and wildfire-related fine particulate matter known as PM2.5 at their residential addresses during their pregnancies from 2006 to 2014. The researchers then linked those exposure estimates to autism diagnoses by age 5, using time-to-event statistical modeling.

The study reported that the association was most consistent in the third trimester and appeared clearer when exposure was measured by the number of days or waves of wildfire smoke, rather than by the average concentration of wildfire PM2.5 alone.

In a sensitivity analysis focusing on mothers who did not change address during pregnancy, the study reported that third-trimester exposure to more than 10 wildfire smoke days, compared with none, was associated with a hazard ratio of 1.225. The study also reported smaller increases for fewer smoke days.

The findings are relevant to the Los Angeles region because wildfire smoke can travel long distances and affect downwind communities, including the Los Angeles basin, even when fires burn outside city limits.

These findings align with broader

research on air pollution and autism risk. A 2021 meta-analysis from Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health reported higher autism risk associated with PM2.5 exposure, with prenatal risk appearing strongest in the third trimester.

Meanwhile, researchers cautioned that while observational studies can identify correlations, they cannot prove that wildfire smoke causes autism. Estimates of exposure based on home addresses cannot fully capture individual behaviors, such as time spent indoors or use of air filtration, and other factors may contribute to the observed patterns.

■ ■ ■

Depression: Social life in later years is shaped more by life experience than genes, and staying connected with friends, neighbors and the community may help protect older adults from depression, a new twin study shows.

The study from the Center for Healthy Brain Ageing (CHeBA) at Australia’s University of New South Wales analyzed more than 560 twins aged 65 and over across six years to understand how social connections relate to mental and cognitive health, a CHeBA statement said Wednesday.

Researchers found that social connections, including friendships, family interactions, and community participation, were only weakly influenced by genetics, meaning they are mostly shaped by each person’s individual experiences and environment.

“Because social connections are not strongly determined by genes,

Flexible dialysis

Portable artificial kidney tested

THE HAGUE, Jan 22, (Xinhua): A portable artificial kidney is being tested in patients for the first time at University Medical Center Utrecht (UMC Utrecht), Karin Gerritsen, internist-nephrologist and clinical scientist at UMC Utrecht, confirmed to Xinhua on Monday, calling it a major step toward more flexible dialysis treatment.

The device, known as NeoKidney, is a lightweight, portable hemodialysis machine designed primarily for home use. Unlike conventional dialysis systems, it is significantly more compact and uses far less water.

According to Karin Gerritsen, the device is roughly the size of a suitcase and weighs about 13 kilograms, a substantial reduction compared with hospital dialysis machines, which can weigh close to 100 kilograms. The device uses only 5 liters of water per 2 hour-treatment, compared with approximately 120 liters for standard four-hour treatment with hospital dialysis machines and 30 to 40 liters for two to three-hour treatments with the smallest existing home dialysis systems.

“Dialysis is life-saving, but also very burdensome,” Gerritsen said. “With a portable artificial kidney, we want to give patients more freedom and make the treatment fit better into their daily lives.”

Gerritsen added that the compact design allows patients not only to use the device at home, but also to travel with it. “It can be taken on a plane, for example. That provides patients with much more freedom,” she said. “It uses a standard power outlet and does not require earthing, allowing use outside the patient’s home, for example in a hotel.”



A member (first left) of the 35th Chinese medical team in Zanzibar provides free medical services on Pemba Island of Zanzibar, Tanzania, on Jan. 20. (Xinhua)

Chinese experts provide free health services in Zanzibar

DAR ES SALAAM, Jan. 22, (Xinhua): Chinese medical experts launched the “100 Medical Teams in 1,000 Villages” free medical services program at a community health service center on Pemba Island in Tanzania’s Zanzibar.

The campaign was jointly organized by the expert team of the China-aided Zanzibar schistosomiasis prevention and control project and the 35th Chinese medical team in Zanzibar, combining schistosomiasis health education and free medical consultations.

More than 300 community residents and local officials attended the event.

Wang Wei, leader of the China-aided Zanzibar schistosomiasis control expert team, said the campaign

responds to the initiative for the 2026 China-Africa Year of People-to-People Exchange and aims to strengthen grassroots medical services and disease prevention and deepen China-Africa cooperation in public health.

Local health officials on Pemba Island praised China’s long-term support in schistosomiasis control and healthcare, noting that the cooperation has enhanced primary medical services and disease prevention and control capacity.

Following the launch, the Chinese experts provided schistosomiasis prevention education and free medical services to residents, including physical examinations, health risk assessments, and advice on chronic disease management and medication use.

Knicks crush Nets in franchise-record blowout

SGA scores 40 pts as OKC rolls past Bucks

NEW YORK, Jan 22, (AP): The New York Knicks broke a four-game losing streak without breaking a sweat, crushing the Brooklyn Nets 120-66 on Wednesday night in the most lopsided victory in franchise history.

Jalen Brunson scored 20 points and Landry Shamet was 6 for 6 on 3-pointers and added 18 for the Knicks, who led by as much as 59 points before the 54-point victory that surpassed the previous largest victory margin of 48 points.

The Knicks had lost nine of their last 11 games so this was a good time to play Brooklyn, because they never lose to the Nets these days. New York won its 13th straight meeting in the local rivalry.

The Knicks were already on track to win this one easily before outscoring the Nets 16-0 to open the fourth quarter, extending a 32-point lead to 104-56.

Michael Porter Jr. shot 4 for 14 and was limited to 12 points, but was still the leading scorer for a Nets team that has lost eight of nine.

Two days after the Knicks were booed frequently while trailing by 30 points in the first half of their 114-97 loss to Dallas, the scoreboard was crooked in their favor.

Thunder 122, Bucks 102

In Milwaukee, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 40 points, 11 assists and seven rebounds and the NBA-leading Oklahoma City Thunder withstood multiple injury-related absences to trounce the Milwaukee Bucks.

The Thunder won for the seventh time in eight games despite playing without Jalen Williams (strained right hamstring), Isaiah Hartenstein (strained right soleus), Alex Caruso (strained right adductor), Aaron Wiggins (sore right groin) and Jaylin Williams (bruised left glute).

Gilgeous-Alexander picked up the slack, as the reigning MVP shot 16 of 19 from the floor.

According to Sportradar, this marked just the second time since at least the 1980-81 season that a player had at least 40 points and 10 assists in a game while shooting 80% or better. Coincidentally, the other instance was just a day earlier, when Toronto's Immanuel Quickley had 40 points and 10 assists while shooting 11 of 13 in the Raptors' 145-127 victory over the Golden State Warriors on Tuesday.

Pistons 112, Pelicans 104

In New Orleans, Jalen Duran scored 20 points and grabbed 15 rebounds, Daniss Jenkins added 17 points and the Detroit Pistons never trailed while cruising to their fourth straight victory, 112-104 over the New Orleans Pelicans .

Duncan Robinson had 15 points while shooting 4 of 9 from 3-point range for the Eastern Conference-leading Pistons, who have won seven of their last eight.

Saddiq Bey scored 20 points to lead the Western Conference-worst Pelicans, who have lost 14 of their last 16.

Celtics to 119, Pacers 104

In Boston, Jaylen Brown had 30 points and 10 rebounds and the Boston Celtics opened a 23-point first-half lead before coasting to victory over the Indiana Pacers.

Sam Hauser hit five 3-pointers, scoring 17 points for Boston, and Neemias Queta had 17 points and nine rebounds. The Celtics bounced back from Monday night's one-point loss at Eastern Conference-leading Detroit.

Pascal Siakam had 32 points and 10 rebounds for the Pacers, who had won four of seven games since losing 13 in a row in December and January. Jarace Walker scored 19 points off the bench for Indiana.

Cavaliers 94, Hornets 87

In Charlotte, Donovan Mitchell scored 24 points, Evan Mobley added 14 points and 14 rebounds and the Cleveland Cavaliers jumped out to 21-point first-quarter lead and held on to beat the Charlotte Hornets for their fifth road win in the last



Toronto Raptors guard Immanuel Quickley (5) is fouled by Sacramento Kings guard Malik Monk (0) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Sacramento, Calif. (AP)

six games.

Jaylon Tyson scored 14 points and Jarod Allen added 13 points and nine rebounds for the Cavaliers, who held the Hornets to 32 points in the first half on 26% shooting.

Raptors 122, Kings 109

In Sacramento, Scottie Barnes scored 14 of his 23 points in the third quarter and the Toronto Raptors beat the Sacramento Kings.

Barnes shot 8 of 17 and had eight rebounds, seven assists and four steals while posting his season-high fifth consecutive game with 22 or more points.

Brandon Ingram also had 23 points for the Raptors, who outscored the Kings 43-21 in the third quarter and won in Sacramento for the first time since Jan. 25, 2023. Sandro Mamukelashvili added 22 points and nine rebounds. Immanuel Quickley scored 18 points.

One day after shooting 59% overall while tying its season high with 21 3-pointers in an 18-point win over the Golden State Warriors, Toronto's offense had spo-

radic success against Sacramento.

The Raptors blew a nine-point lead in the first quarter and trailed by nine at halftime before Barnes found his rhythm. He made five of six shots in the third quarter to help Toronto regain the lead and take control.

Russell Westbrook scored 23 points for the Kings. Zach LaVine had 19 points and five assists. Malik Monk scored 17.

Hawks 124, Grizzlies 122

In Memphis, Jalen Johnson had 32 points and 15 rebounds and a key basket in the closing minute as the Atlanta Hawks used a fourth-quarter burst and held on to defeat the Memphis Grizzlies.

Luke Kennard and Onyeka Okongwu added 18 each for the Hawks, who snapped a four-game losing streak.

Ja Morant led Memphis with 23 points and 12 assists. His 3-point attempt at the horn was off the mark. Jaylen Wells finished with 18 points, while Jaren Jackson Jr. and Cedric Coward scored 17 points apiece.

Ilia poised for Olympic breakthrough

Malinin: The 20-year-old American figure skater redefining the sport

ST. LOUIS, Jan 22, (AP): The best figure skater of his generation may yet be remembered as the best of any generation. Ilia Malinin is capable of landing jumps nobody else can, blending nearly unmatched creativity with refined artistry and otherworldly execution.

All that remains now is delivering on the Olympic stage.

The 20-year-old American phenom has waited four long years for the Milan-Cortina Olympic Winter Games, after being controversially left off the U.S. team for the Beijing Olympics. The decision was largely due to his age and inexperience — not his ability, which had already placed him in rarefied air — and it fueled Malinin throughout the past quadrennial as he rose to the top of the sport.

Malinin has won the past two world titles, most recently last year in Boston with relative ease. He has not lost a competition in nearly two years, whether at lower-level tune-ups, elite Grand Prix events, or the national championships, where he claimed his fourth consecutive title earlier this month in St. Louis.

The scores he has posted rival the best in history, including the standard set by his countryman Nathan Chen.

"Ilia is a whole different factor," said U.S. teammate Amber Glenn. "He's the son of two incredible figure skaters, and he's just built — quite literally — different. It's insane. He's both talented and hard-working, and what he does is amazing."

Malinin's Russian-born mother, Tatiana Malinina, competed at the 1998 Olympics for Uzbekistan and won the prestigious Grand Prix Final the following year. His Russian-born father, Roman Skorniakov, represented Uzbekistan at both the 1998 and 2002 Winter Games.

The lineage runs even deeper. His grandfather, Valery Malinin, competed for the Soviet Union and still coaches in Russia.

So it was never really a question whether Malinin would enter the family business.

He tagged along to the rink with his parents as a child, though he initially preferred soccer to skating. Once he began landing the big jumps



Gold medalist Ilia Malinin poses with his medal during the men's free skate competition at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships in St. Louis. (AP)

that have become his hallmark, Malinin committed fully. Coached by his parents, he won the junior world title in 2022 after missing out on the Beijing Games.

With Hall of Fame coach Rafael Arutyunyan later joining his team, Malinin won his first senior U.S. title and soon began dominating the Grand Prix circuit. Gold medals followed at the sport's most elite competitions.

"Ilia challenges himself constantly," said Arutyunyan, who coached Chen to Olympic gold in Beijing. "Our biggest challenge is keeping everyone on the same page. We're all there for him when he needs his team most."

Malinin has never needed that support more than now.

As the Milan-Cortina Games draw closer, pressure is mounting both on and off the ice. Malinin has multiple corporate sponsors, and with that comes added weight. His face is omnipresent in NBC promotional spots ahead of the Olympic broadcast, and he is frequently stopped by fans for photos and autographs.

"With my team, we've been planning a strategic approach to prepare myself mentally and physically, so that when I get to the Olympics, I'm at my peak," Malinin told The Associated Press in a wide-ranging interview. "We've talked for months about managing what I train, how I train, and what I do at the competi-

tions leading up to the Olympics."

Malinin opened his season by winning the Lombardia Trophy, then dominated both the Grand Prix de France and Skate Canada, where his score of 333.81 was nearly 80 points higher than second-place finisher Aleksandr Selevko of Estonia.

That personal-best score came close to breaking the world record of 335.30, set by Chen at the 2019 Grand Prix Final.

Malinin then added another Grand Prix Final title in December and another national championship in January.

He won that title comfortably, despite dialing back his free skate while working through issues with a new pair of skates.

"He has such a passionate fire for skating," said his choreographer, Shae-Lynn Bourne. "He's on the ice an hour before we work and an hour after. He puts in the time. He never coasts — he constantly wants to be challenged."

That mindset led Malinin to land the quad axel, a 4½-rotation jump no other skater has landed in competition. It also inspired his signature "raspberry twist" and a variety of spins, leaps, and movements that seem to defy gravity and logic.

"It's been amazing to see not only how he handles pressure, but how he's matured as a person," said two-time Olympian Jason Brown. "We're behind him every step of the way. Everyone feels that."

'It is going to be incredible'

IOC president confident Milan-Cortina on track despite logistical challenges

BEIJING, Jan. 22, (Xinhua): With 16 days remaining until the 2026 Milan-Cortina Olympic Winter Games, International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Kirsty Coventry said she was confident the Games would be successfully staged, while acknowledging the operational challenges posed by geographically dispersed venues.

Speaking during an online press conference, Coventry said the countdown has generated excitement within the Olympic movement.

"We're at the 16-day countdown, so we're all very excited. A lot of the IOC team is already in Milan and Cortina, and I, along with the rest of the team, will be arriving on Monday," she said.

"I'm really excited about being able to get there and see the blend of tradition and innovation, and the beautiful venues," she added.

On preparations, Coventry said the organizers are making strong progress.

"We've seen really good test events. The organizing committee is working very closely with all of the IOC departments on the last few areas they need to focus on," she said.

Coventry also said she was looking forward to the opening ceremony.

"I think it is going to be incredible, and Italian creativity will be fully on display. So make sure you're all a part of it," she said.

The Milan-Cortina 2026 Games are expected to be among the most geographically dispersed Winter Olympics, with venues spread across four clusters and eight locations across Italy. Coventry said the model can enhance sustainability but also adds complexity.

"If we look at how the model is set up today, I do believe we made the right decision in having more dispersed Games," she said. "But we can also say very openly and honestly that it has added additional complexities for media, transport, the IOC, and Olympic Broadcasting Services."

She added that a post-Games evaluation will assess whether the sustainability benefits outweigh the increased costs and operational challenges.

IOC Olympic Games Executive Director Christophe Dubi said significant work remains at some venues but described it as manageable.

Addressing the Cortina Sliding Center, Dubi said the core systems are already operational.

"Yes, there's still a lot to do, but it's not complex work," he said. "Everything related to the core systems — refrigeration, electricity, timing, and scoring — is in place."

Best of the Rest

Seth Jones won't play for the US: Seth Jones won't play for the U.S. at the upcoming Milan Cortina Olympics because of injury.

USA Hockey announced the Stanley Cup champion with the Florida Panthers was out and fellow defenseman Jackson LaCombe of the Anaheim Ducks would replace him on the 25-player roster.

Jones was injured when he was hit in the right collarbone by a puck during the Winter Classic against the New York Rangers on Jan. 2 and has not played since. He was going to be one of only a few newcomers to a group heavily comprised of members of the U.S. 4 Nations Face-Off team that reached the final before losing to Canada.

LaCombe, who recently turned 25, helped the U.S.

Issa Sy was protected from angry Algeria staff and escorted from the field.



Right wingback **Richard Ledezma** has switched allegiance from the United States and will play for Mexico's national soccer team.

The 25-year-old Ledezma, who was born in Phoenix to Mexican parents, played for the United States at the U-20 World Cup in Poland and had one appearance with the

senior squad in a friendly match against Panama on Nov. 16, 2020.

The Mexican soccer federation made the announcement late Tuesday. The switch is on the FIFA Change of Association platform.

Ledezma was included on Mexico's 27-man roster that was called up by coach **Javier Aguirre** last week to play friendly matches against Panama on Thursday and Bolivia on Sunday.



In this file photo, International Olympic Committee President Kirsty Coventry delivers her speech during the Milan Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics cauldron lighting, in front of the Quirinale Presidential Palace, in Rome. (AP)

He added that what remains are finishing touches.

"What I saw while walking through the venue was a lot of final work: concrete pavements, additional tents for hospitality, and groundwork to prepare areas for spectators, which are currently a bit uneven. But it's not complex, and they have a large workforce on site."

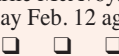
At the Milan Santiagiulia Ice Hockey Arena, which hosted a test event from January 9 to 11, Dubi said efforts are accelerating toward completion.

"It started late," he said. "But the objective is clear — to provide the best possible conditions for the athletes. That means all hands on deck, with about 1,600 workers at the venue each day to get it ready."

Coventry also addressed the protection of women's sports, saying a dedicated IOC working group is studying ways to further safeguard and promote women's participation. She noted that the 145th IOC Session, scheduled during the Games, will not take decisions on the issue.

win the world championships last year for the first time since 1933. His addition to the roster gives the U.S. six left-handed-shooting defensemen and just two righties: Brock Faber and Charlie McAvoy.

The U.S. begins play Feb. 12 against Latvia. (AP)



Williams suffers broken foot: Kentucky coach Mark Pope said guard Kam Williams "will be out for a while" with a broken foot suffered in 85-80 win over Texas.

"Kam's foot's broken," Pope said, adding he hoped to "get him back healthy as soon as we possibly can, but he'll be out for a while and it's certainly a blow to us."

Williams scored nine points in only 16 minutes before suffering the injury for Kentucky (13-6, 4-2 Southeastern Conference).

Williams, a sophomore, was averaging 6.8 points and 2.6 rebounds before the game. (AP)

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Algeria's Luca Zidane banned 2 games for Africa Cup clashes

ALGIERS, Algeria, Jan 22, (AP): Algeria goalkeeper Luca Zidane was banned for two games for on-field clashes after his team's exit from the Africa Cup of Nations, but he should not miss facing Lionel Messi and Argentina at the World Cup.

The Algerian soccer federation said it will appeal against a range of sanctions including bans for Zidane and defender Rafik Belghali imposed by the Confederation of African Football.

Belghali was banned for two games, with a further two games deferred. The Hellas Verona defender and Granada goalkeeper Zidane, the 27-year-old son of France great Zinedine Zidane, will serve the bans in qualifying for the 2027 AFCON. Algeria's qualifying group starts in September.

Algeria players and staff were involved in skirmishes on the field after a 2-0 loss to Nigeria in their quarterfinal game played Jan. 10 in Marrakech, Morocco. Match referee

Arsenal hosts Man United

City spends \$500M in a year but flaws remain in bid to be best

LONDON, Jan 22, (AP): Manchester City has spent more than \$500 million over the past 12 months to overhaul an aging squad in a bid to regain the team's status as the best in England.

On current evidence, it won't be a quick fix.

A 2-0 derby loss at Manchester United on Saturday was followed by a surprising 3-1 defeat at Bodø/Glimt in the Champions League on Tuesday. Both matches exposed the deficiencies in City's squad despite the club's remarkable spending spree that has continued in January with the arrival of Antoine Semenyo and Marc Guehi.

Sure, injuries aren't helping. Pep Guardiola has, for example, been robbed of his entire first-choice defense, with center backs Ruben Dias, Josko Gvardiol and John Stones currently injured.

Yet, there are still flaws.

There's still no real backup to striker Erling Haaland, who might be showing the effects of barely missing a game. He has scored one goal in his last eight matches - and that was a penalty.

Despite all the arrivals, City hasn't signed a right back to replace Kyle Walker so has been relying on midfielder Matheus Nunes to fill in there. Nunes has done a good job - he is one of City's most improved players - but is unlikely to be the long-term solution.

Guardiola's decision to play virtually the same team for the final weeks of 2025 also highlighted his lack of faith in his back-ups, some of whom - like Omar Marmoush and Rayan Ait-Nouri, for example - were bought as part of the expensive rebuild.

It all means City's home match against a last-place Wolverhampton team with just one win all season in the Premier League is no longer a gimme. How could it be given City's performances over the last week that might rank as among the worst in Guardiola's decade at the club?

While City has won just two of its last seven matches in all competitions, Wolves is improving and unbeaten in its last five matches.

City starts the league's 23rd round of games in second place and seven



Manchester City's Erling Haaland, right and Glimt's Nikita Haikin battle for the ball during the Champions League soccer match between Bodo/Glimt and Manchester City in Bodo, Norway. (AP)

City and is again likely to play on the counterattack at Emirates Stadium.

Third-place Aston Villa, which is level on points with Man City, travels to Newcastle.

Liverpool is seven points behind City and Villa in fourth place ahead of a trip to Bournemouth.

Because of Man City's defensive crisis, Marc Guehi is set to be selected for his debut against Wolves. Max Allegre, a 20-year-old center back brought back from a loan spell at second-tier Watford, should make way.

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta must decide who to play up front out of fit-again Gabriel Jesus and summer signing Viktor Gyokeres, who has been the starting striker so far this season, against United. Both scored in the Champions League win over Inter Milan on Tuesday.

Aston Villa's unlikely title ambitions - or even its attempts to qualify for the Champions League - have been hit by a knee injury to Boubacar Kamara that could keep the defensive midfielder out for the rest of the sea-

son.

The France international is an unsung star for Villa, which badly missed Kamara when he tore his ACL in February 2024, keeping him out for eight months and forcing him to miss the European Championship.

Everton winger Jack Grealish is being assessed because of a foot injury that could reportedly keep him out for three months, which would be a blow to his hopes of getting back in the England squad ahead of the World Cup.

There was some respite for Tottenham manager Thomas Frank this week with a win over Borussia Dortmund in the Champions League.

Before that, fans had expressed their unhappiness with Frank by taunting him with songs calling for his departure during a 2-1 loss to West Ham in the league last weekend.

Losing at next-to-last Burnley on Saturday would likely revive complaints about the Danish coach, who has only been in charge for seven months but has been criticized for his pragmatic tactics.

Djokovic closes in on 400 Grand Slam wins



Novak Djokovic of Serbia plays a forehand return to Francesco Maestrelli of Italy during their second round match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

Wawrinka becomes oldest Slam third rounder

MELBOURNE, Australia, Jan 22, (AP): Novak Djokovic and Stan Wawrinka made it a day for the ages at the Australian Open.

Djokovic improved to 399 wins in Grand Slam matches with a 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 victory over Francesco Maestrelli on Thursday, making the 38-year-old, 24-time major winner just one shy of becoming the first player ever to 400.

He's aiming to win an unprecedented 25th Grand Slam title. And if he does, he'll beat Ken Rosewall's record (aged 37 in 1972) as the oldest man in the Open era to win a major singles championship.

The Rosewall name was prominent on Day 5 at Melbourne Park, where he was among the invited VIPs.

Wawrinka, at 40 years, 310 days, became the first man over 40 to reach the third round of a major since Rosewall in 1978. It took a 4 1/2-hour 4-6, 6-3, 3-6, 7-5, 7-6 (3) comeback victory over 21-year-old qualifier Arthur Gea. That's the longest match of the 2026 tournament so far.

Wawrinka, who is retiring at the end of the

year, will next face No. 9 Taylor Fritz.

Before then, he told the crowd at John Cain Arena: "I think I'll pick up a beer. I deserve one!"

His was one of three high-profile matches that finished around the same time, with Jannik Sinner continuing his bid for an Australian Open three-peat after beating James Duckworth 6-1, 6-4, 6-2 on Rod Laver Arena.

The defining feature of Naomi Osaka's first two rounds quickly moved from fashion to friction when her 6-3, 4-6, 6-2 win over Sorana Cirstea ended in tension.

With Sinner facing an Australian wild card, he got the prime time night slot and bumped 10-time Australian Open winner Djokovic into the afternoon session.

That didn't bother Djokovic as much as the dropped service game in the third set - his first of the tournament. It stung Djokovic, who broke the Italian qualifier at love in the next game and finished on an eight-point roll.

He said he took extra time out in the offseason and fine-tuned some skills as he chases his biggest goals.

Iga Swiatek beat Marie Bouzkova 6-2, 6-3 and later said she's been trying to take lessons from Djokovic's attitude to sustained success and longevity.

Defending champion Madison Keys was down a double break in the second set before rallying to beat Ashlyn Krueger 6-1, 7-5 and advancing to a third-round match against former No. 1 Karolina Plisková.

Melbourne is where Keys made her Grand Slam breakthrough 12 months ago and since her return people have been asking her how confident she is about retaining the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup.

In that tough quarter of the draw, No. 4 Amanda Anisimova fended off doubles champion Katerina Siniakova 6-1, 6-4 and sixth-seeded Jessica Pegula won 6-0, 6-2 over McCartney Kessler, her doubles partner.

Anisimova, who has been runner-up at the last two major tournaments, will next play fellow American Peyton Stearns. Pegula will next face Oksana Selekhmeteva, who upset 2025 semifinalist Paula Badosa 6-4, 6-4.

No. 5 Elena Rybakina advanced over Varvara Gracheva and No. 10 Belinda Bencic was ousted by Nikola Pietrangola.

Eighth-seeded Ben Shelton, a semifinalist here last year, reached the third round with a 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 win over Australian qualifier Dane Sweeny.

Milan takes on fourth place Roma

'Napoli should be ahead of Juventus clash'

MILAN, Jan 22, (AP): Napoli players are making life difficult for themselves and face an uphill struggle in Europe and at home.

Coach Antonio Conte was fuming after Napoli could only draw against 10-man Copenhagen to leave it on the brink of Champions League elimination, saying he and his players should be "angry and disappointed" in themselves.

"We all have to hold our hands up, there's little to talk about, we just need to be angry - very, very angry - with ourselves," Conte said. "Maybe we didn't perceive the importance of what was at stake."

"It's as if we were running a race downhill and somehow we made it uphill all by ourselves."

Napoli's injury problems continue to mount but Conte said his team should still have beaten Copenhagen, especially with a man advantage for most of the match.



Juventus' Pierre Kalulu, left, challenges for the ball with Benfica's Leandro Barreiro during the Champions League opening phase soccer match between Juventus and SL Benfica in Turin, Italy. (AP)

Napoli has slipped to third, six points behind league leader Inter Milan after last weekend's victory over Sassuolo ended a run of three straight draws. The defending champion is only four points above fifth-placed Juventus.

The match in Turin sees both coaches face their former teams.

Spalletti left Napoli in 2023 after steering it to its first league title in 33 years, saying at the time that he needed a year off. However, just three months later he was appointed as the new Italy coach after Roberto Mancini surprisingly resigned.

Spalletti was fired from the Italy job in June and Juventus hired him in October after the Bianconeri fired Igor Tudor for a poor start to the season.

Conte played for Juventus for 13 years and steered the team to three straight titles as coach from 2011-14.

Napoli beat Juventus 2-1 at home seven weeks ago.

Kazma and Kuwait Club aim for victory

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: The fifth round of the second division national basketball league will feature two key matchups at Union Hall, Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex.

The first game, scheduled for 5:00 PM, pits Kazma against Al-Nasr. Third-placed Kazma (19 points) will be looking to move past its early exit from the Asian Super League by asserting dominance over Al-Nasr (14 points). Kazma won convincingly in the first round, 110-47, and will aim to secure a semifinal spot. For Al-Nasr, the game is largely symbolic, as it is already out of contention for the playoffs.

The second game, at 7:30 PM, features league leader and defending champion Kuwait Club (22 points) against Al-Qurain (18 points). Al-Qurain is in close contention for the fourth semifinal spot alongside Kuwait Club, Al-Qadisiya, and Kazma. However, the defending champion is heavily favored, with a roster packed with top talent. Kuwait Club defeated Al-Qurain 122-101 in their first-round meeting and will aim to repeat that



An Al-Qurain player goes for a basket as a Kuwait Club defender attempts to block the shot.

Esports World Cup 2026 returns to Riyadh with \$75M prize pool

RIYADH, Jan 21, (Xinhua): The Esports World Cup Foundation (EWC) announced on Tuesday Esports World Cup 2026 (EWC), the world's largest esports event, set to return to Riyadh from July 6 to August 23 with a total prize pool of 75 million U.S. dollars.

More than 2,000 players and 200 clubs from over 100 countries and regions will compete across 24 games over seven weeks to crown the next Esports World Cup Club Champion.

In 2026, the EWC Club Championship, the EWC's flagship cross-game competition, will award 30 million U.S. dollars to the top 24 clubs, an increase of three million U.S. dollars year-on-year.

The winning club will receive seven mil-

lion U.S. dollars, with increased prize allocations distributed across the remaining top finishing positions.

Fortnite and Trackmania are new additions in the EWC. The full lineup of games features: Apex Legends, Call of Duty: Black Ops 7, Call of Duty: Warzone, Chess, Counter-Strike 2, Crossfire, Dota 2, EA Sports FC 26, FATAL FURY: City of the Wolves, Fortnite, Free Fire, Honor of Kings, League of Legends, Mobile Legends: Bang Bang, Overwatch 2, PUBG: Battlegrounds, PUBG Mobile, Rocket League, Street Fighter 6, Teamfight Tactics, TEKKEN 8, Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege X, Trackmania, and VALORANT.

France not considering World Cup boycott over Greenland for now

PARIS, Jan 22, (AP): France's sports minister says her country is not currently thinking about boycotting the soccer World Cup in the United States amid growing tensions related to Donald Trump's quest to control Greenland.

"At the moment we are speaking, there is no desire from the ministry to boycott this major, much-anticipated competition," sports minister Marina Ferrari told reporters. "That said, I am not prejudging what might happen."

Ferrari added that she wants to keep sports separate from politics. "The 2026 World Cup is an extremely important moment for all sports lovers," she said.

With the tournament kicking off in June in the United States, Canada and Mexico, the U.S. president's ambitions to wrest control of Greenland from NATO ally Denmark has the potential to tear relations with European allies.

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NEWS



India's Arshdeep Singh plays a shot during the first T20 cricket match between India and New Zealand in Nagpur, India. Sharma scored 84 off 35 balls as India beat New Zealand by 48 runs in the opener of a five-match T20 series. (AP)

Sports

Clash of titans as Kuwait Club takes on Al-Arabi in Zain Premier League

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: The 12th round of the Zain Premier League kicks off today with two matches. Al-Salmiya faces Al-Tadhamon at Thamer Stadium at 4:25 PM, while Al-Qadsia hosts Al-Fahaheel at Naif Al-Dabbous Stadium at 6:50 PM.

The spotlight shifts to the top-of-the-table clash, as Kuwait Club (29 points) takes on Al-Arabi (24 points) on Saturday at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium at 5:45 PM.

Fans are eagerly awaiting this pivotal encounter between league leaders Kuwait Club and its closest challengers Al-Arabi. A win for Kuwait Club would strengthen its bid to defend the league title, bringing it closer to a fifth consecutive championship and the 21st overall in club history. Kuwait Club has been remarkably consistent this season and is aiming to maintain its unbeaten run.



In this file photo, Kuwait Club and Al-Arabi players vie for the ball.

Al-Arabi, meanwhile, hopes to bounce back after a 1-1 draw against Al-Fahaheel in the previous

round. It is eager to close the gap with the leader and to deal Kuwait Club its first defeat of the season, a team that last year denied it multiple trophies including the Amir Cup, Crown Prince Cup, and the league title. Their first-round match ended in a 1-1 draw.

The clash between third-placed Al-Qadsia (18 points) and fourth-placed Al-Fahaheel (17 points) is a battle for the third spot. Al-Qadsia aims to keep their slim title hopes alive, while Al-Fahaheel is seeking revenge after suffering a heavy 5-1 loss in the first-round matchup.

Al-Salmiya (6th, 14 points) enters its match against Al-Tadamon looking to restore pride, having been eliminated from the Crown Prince Cup by the same team. It also aims to climb out of the relegation danger zone.

Al-Tadamon (9th, 5 points) hopes to exploit home advantage and secure its second win of the season, keeping its campaign alive.



Representatives of local and Gulf media outlets pose for a group photo after the press conference.

Kuwait launches Mini Goal academy to develop local talent

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: The launch of a Mini Goal academy was announced in Kuwait during a press conference attended by representatives of local and Gulf media outlets, along with several sports enthusiasts. The initiative reflects an organized effort to develop the Kuwaiti-origin sport and expand it toward broader professional horizons.

The conference outlined the overall vision and future direction of Mini Goal. Media personality Mohammad Akbar presented an overview of the game's origins since its launch in 2017, highlighting its developmental stages, organizational and community-driven efforts, as well as events that helped strengthen its presence on the sports scene and establish it as a modern team sport.

International referee Abdulaziz Aman provided a detailed explanation of the game's official rules and their application in accordance with international regulations. He emphasized that strict adherence to organizational standards is essential to the academy's success and to reinforcing its professional identity in line with international competition benchmarks.

In remarks during the conference, Hassan Al-Khawaja, head of the Mini Goal Committee, described the academy's launch as a pivotal milestone in the sport's journey, noting that the primary objective is to build a strong base of young players and promote the culture of Mini Goal at the local level.

Bayern advances as five English clubs eye last 16

Barcelona scrambles for playoff survival

MANCHESTER, England, Jan 22, (AP): Premier League teams are powering ahead in the Champions League, with five of England's top-flight clubs in position to advance to the round of 16.

Arsenal tops the standings and has already secured its place in the next round, while wins for Liverpool, Newcastle, and Chelsea on Wednesday saw them move into the top eight automatic qualifying positions with one game of the league phase to go. Tottenham is fifth, with Manchester City the only English team in the playoff positions going into next week's matches.

Liverpool is fourth after a 3-0 win at Marseille. Newcastle beat PSV Eindhoven by the same score, and Chelsea won 1-0 against Pafos.

Bayern Munich is second and joined Arsenal in advancing to the round of 16, with Harry Kane scoring twice in a 2-0 win over Union Saint-Gilloise.

Barcelona is in ninth place after a 4-2 win at Slavia Prague and risks having to go through the playoffs to advance.

But there is much to play for in the final round of league phase games, with just three points separating third-place Real Madrid and Juventus in 15th.

The top eight qualify directly to the round of 16. Teams placed from nine to 24 enter a two-legged playoff to advance.

Prepare for a dramatic final round of games before the knockouts.

While the remaining six automatic qualification spots are still up for grabs, just two points separate the last of the playoff places and Ajax, which is 32nd in the standings.

One standout game sees Italian champion Napoli host Chelsea. Napoli is 25th, one place below the playoffs.

Defending champion Paris Saint-Germain hosts Newcastle, and dropped points for either team could see them fall into the playoffs.

Man City's home game against Galatasaray also has much riding on it if the 2023 European champion is to avoid the danger of the playoffs.

Jose Mourinho needs a win at his former club, Madrid, to give Benfica any chance of making the playoffs.

Liverpool topped the league phase last year - only to be eliminated by PSG in the round of 16. Arne Slot's team has made harder work of it this time around, but victory in Marseille leaves the Premier League champion in a strong position going into its final game at home to Qarabag.

Dominik Szoboszlai's free kick put Liverpool ahead in the first half. A Geronimo Rulli own goal doubled the advantage, and Cody Gakpo sealed the win that also saw Hugo Ekitike hit the bar and Mohamed Salah miss a golden chance.

Newcastle cruised past PSV at St James' Park, with Yoane Wissa, Anthony Gordon, and Harvey Barnes on the score sheet, while it took a Moises Caicedo header to see Chelsea break down a stubborn Pafos.

Kane scored goals number 35 and 36 in a remarkable season for the Bayern striker - but he was left to rue missing out on a fourth hat trick of the season when his second-half penalty struck the crossbar.

The England captain scored twice in the space of three minutes in the second half against Union Saint-Gilloise - first with a near-post header and then winning and converting from the penalty spot.

Fermin Lopez also scored twice as Barcelona fought back to beat Slavia



Bayern's Harry Kane, left, scores the opening goal during the Champions League opening phase soccer match between Bayern Munich and Union Saint-Gilloise, in Munich, Germany. (AP)

Prague, with a stunning long-range effort the pick of his goals.

Prague led after 10 minutes through Vasil Kusej, but Lopez struck twice to give Barcelona the lead. Robert Lewandowski's own goal leveled the game before halftime.

Substitute Dan Olmo curled into the top corner to put Barcelona in front again, and Lewandowski scored at the end to seal the 4-2 win.

United States international Weston McKennie scored for the third time in the Champions League this season as Juventus beat Benfica 2-0.

Juve is 15th and guaranteed to at least make the playoffs.

Atalanta is 13th after losing 3-2 at home to Athletic Bilbao, which is 23rd.

Tiny Qarabag is making a big impression in the competition and picked up

its third win in the league phase after Bahlul Mustafazade scored deep into stoppage time to beat Eintracht Frankfurt 3-2.

The Azerbaijani team edged closer to securing a place in the playoffs with just one game remaining, thanks to its late comeback, which also confirmed Frankfurt's elimination.

Camilo Duran had put the home team ahead in the fourth minute, but Frankfurt responded through Can Uzun and Fares Chaibi. Duran leveled the game in the 80th before Mustafazade's winner in the 94th.

A Marcos Llorente own goal denied Atletico Madrid victory as the Spanish team drew 1-1 at Galatasaray. Giuliano Simeone scored early for Atletico before Llorente's own goal in the 20th.

Madrid heads to third-placed Villarreal

Title race tightens as drop pressure mounts in La Liga

MADRID, Jan. 22, (Xinhua): The 21st round of matches in La Liga begins on Friday with the title race and European places tightening among the top seven, while the rest of the league is increasingly preoccupied with relegation.

Last weekend shook the standings as FC Barcelona lost 2-1 away to Real Sociedad, and Real Madrid beat Levante to move within a point of the top.

Madrid heads to third-placed Villarreal on Saturday night, fresh from a confidence-boosting 6-1 home win over Monaco in the Champions League on Sunday. It remains to be seen whether that result marks a turning point for new coach Alvaro Arbeloa.

Madrid's defensive issues persist. Eder Militao and Antonio Rudiger are still sidelined, Raul Asencio is struggling with a calf problem and Aurelien Tchouameni is suspended.

Villarreal, coached by Marcelino Garcia Toral, endured a tough week with a 2-0 league loss to Real Betis and a 2-1 home defeat to Ajax in the



Ajax's Youri Regeer, rear, and Villarreal's Santiago Comesana jump for the ball during the Champions League opening phase soccer match between Villarreal and Ajax in Villarreal, Spain. (AP)

Champions League, although key players were rested in Europe.

A Real Madrid win would see Los Blancos top on Saturday night, with Barcelona hosting bottom side Oviedo on Sunday. In theory, Hansi Flick's team should have few problems, but Barcelona's injury list is growing. Pedri is out for several weeks with a hamstring injury and Ferran Torres is sidelined by a calf problem.

Oviedo has shown improvement under new coach Guillermo Almada, pressing higher up the pitch, but that progress has yet to translate into points.

Atletico Madrid hosts Mallorca and would move third with a win if Villarreal drop points. Mallorca's home victory over Athletic Club last weekend eased its relegation worries.

Friday's action opens with second-bottom Levante at home to an Elche side still searching for its first away win. Rayo Vallecano entertains Osasuna, who is also yet to win away from El Sadar.

Valencia climbed out of the bottom

three by beating Getafe last weekend but faces a stern test at home to Espanyol, who remains fifth despite a run of two defeats and a draw.

Athletic Club visits Sevilla with both sides hovering just above the relegation zone. Athletic's league form has dipped, leaving the club five points clear of the bottom three, but Ernesto Valverde's team gained a major lift from a Champions League win away to Atalanta on Wednesday.

Real Sociedad hosts Celta Vigo in a meeting of two in-form teams. Sociedad will be without suspended Carlos Soler and injured Take Kubo.

Just one point from the last 15 has dropped Alaves into the bottom three, increasing the pressure on coach Eduardo Caudet ahead of a difficult match against Betis.

The weekend concludes with Girona chasing a fourth straight win at home to Getafe. Marc-Andre ter Stegen and Claudio Echevarri could make their debuts for Girona, while Getafe arrives in freefall after five defeats and a draw from their last six matches.

Bangladesh reaffirms refusal to travel to India for T20 World Cup

DHAKA, Bangladesh, Jan 22, (AP): Bangladesh has reiterated its decision not to travel to India for the T20 World Cup, despite being warned it could be replaced if it does not reverse its stance.

The decision was reaffirmed on Thursday following a meeting involving the government, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), and senior national team players, held on the deadline set by the International Cricket Council (ICC) for a final ruling.

"It is the Bangladesh government's decision not to play in India due to security concerns," Bangladesh sports adviser Asif Nazrul said after the meeting.

Bangladesh had earlier requested that its matches be moved from India to co-host Sri Lanka, citing security reasons. However, the ICC rejected the request this week, stating that there were no known security threats and warning that Bangladesh could be replaced by Scotland.

The T20 World Cup is scheduled to begin on Feb. 7, with Bangladesh set to face the West Indies

in Kolkata on the opening day. Bangladesh is due to play three Group C matches in Kolkata and its final group game in Mumbai.

Strained political relations between India and Bangladesh escalated after fast bowler Mustafizur Rahman was removed from the Indian Premier League by order of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). That decision prompted the BCB to ask the ICC to relocate its World Cup fixtures to Sri Lanka.

"The security threat is not theoretical; it is based on a real incident," Nazrul said. "The BCCI bowed to pressure from fundamentalist groups and removed Mustafizur from their tournament."

Nazrul added that the ICC failed to convince Bangladesh that its team would be safe in India, saying it "only discussed standard security protocols rather than addressing our specific concerns."

He said there was no "scope" for changing Bangladesh's position, noting that India did not communicate with Bangladesh regarding Mustafizur's removal from the IPL.