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PRECIOUS METALS RALLY FUELS INVESTOR INTEREST IN KUWAIT

Gold could reach \$7,200 soon

Al-Mousawi predicts strong long-term growth for safe-haven gold

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: Precious metals expert Alamdar Al-Mousawi says gold and other precious metals are experiencing a rapid upward trend, extending beyond gold to include silver, platinum, and palladium, amid a global economic environment marked by

heightened geopolitical risks and major shifts in the monetary policies of major central banks.

In a statement to the daily, Al-Mousawi explained that technical and wave analyses indicate gold is following a clear upward trajectory, targeting initial levels between \$5,400 and \$5,700 per ounce, followed by a period of sideways movement to rebuild momentum. A second upward wave could push prices toward \$7,200 per ounce.

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Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah
Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

We are like those in Samuel Beckett's play 'Waiting for Godot'

WHEN Manuel Fraga Iribarne joined the Spanish government in 1962 under President Franco, he was appointed Minister of Information and Tourism. Fraga developed a tourism strategy for the country called "A Different Spain," aimed at opening Spain to the world and allowing foreigners to own property. After some time, some influential figures in the economy and politics expressed their displeasure with the strategy and sent a delegation to the president to voice their objections. Among their concerns was the claim that Spanish society was conservative by nature and would not accept such a strategy. The following day, Franco informed his minister of the delegation's concerns. The minister replied, "Mr. President, it is true that the land was purchased by a foreigner, but the construction and all work on the project are carried out by Spanish workers and employees. The guard, the cook, the greengrocer, and the service providers are all citizens. Therefore, the benefit accrues to all of Spain, not just one individual." Franco responded, "Go ahead with your strategy, and pay no attention to the beneficiaries of the country's closure." This policy transformed Spain from the "land of the sunset," as it was once called, into a distinguished tourist destination. Spain enjoyed substantial financial returns, which significantly boosted its GDP and helped it recover from the economic crises following World War II and the Spanish Civil War.

This strategy helped Spain overcome the crises that affected Europe throughout the Cold War and turned it into a preferred destination for many Europeans and Westerners who chose to make it their home. Even today, Spain continues to benefit from this unique tourism policy, implemented during a period when many European and Western countries pursued policies driven by national and partisan interests. In this regard, I recall, something I have mentioned in my articles more than once, an incident involving the late Ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al-Maktoum (may God have mercy on him), in the early 1980s. Some residents of Dubai approached him to object to allowing Kuwaitis to own property in the emirate and construct buildings and homes. At that time, Sheikh Rashid said, "The Kuwaitis are building on barren land, and they will not take the buildings they have constructed with them when they leave. Therefore, this benefits Dubai and its people." Today, Dubai, and indeed the entire UAE, is bustling with people of various nationalities, all working diligently. Dubai's GDP alone reached 241 billion dirhams in the first half of last year.

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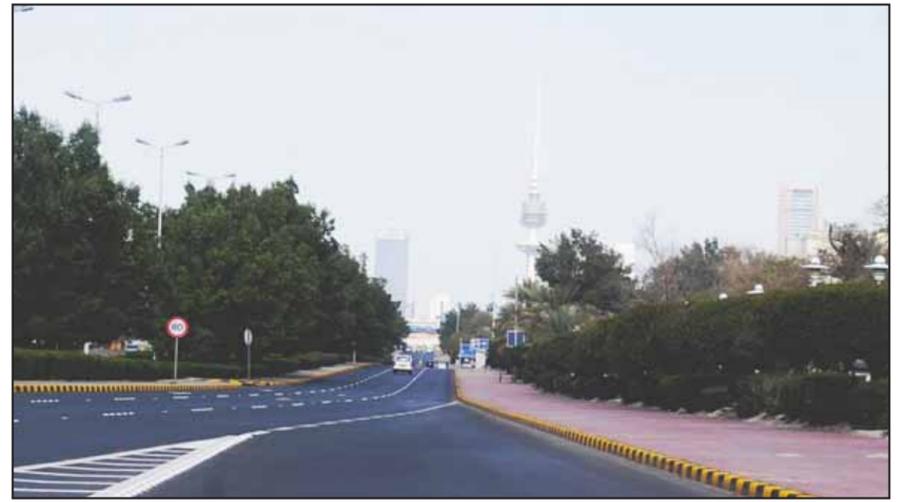


Photo by Rezk Tawfiq

Blustery Saturday winds sweep through Kuwait City, challenging drivers while the majestic Liberation Tower rises above the chaos.

Weather turmoil continues through Sunday afternoon

Severe storm front pounds Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24, (KUNA): The acting Director of the Meteorological Department, Dhair Al-Ali, forecasted that Kuwait will experience unstable weather from Saturday evening due to the formation of cumulonimbus clouds. Scattered rain of varying intensity, sometimes accompanied by

thunder, is expected in some areas until Sunday afternoon, along with dust-raising winds and reduced horizontal visibility.

Al-Ali told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that weather maps and numerical forecasts indicate the unstable conditions are caused by the passage of

a cold air front accompanied by a surface low-pressure extension, coinciding with an upper-atmosphere low-pressure system. This is expected to produce low to medium clouds interspersed with cumulonimbus clouds at times.

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Kuwait Navy joins 'Gulf Peace 1' drill

RIYADH, Jan 24, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Naval Force, in collaboration with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Royal Navy, carried out the joint bilateral military exercise "Gulf Peace 1" at King Abdulaziz Naval Base on Friday.

In a press release, the Kuwaiti army said that the drills included the implementation of several field scenarios aimed at advancing the level of the participating units' combat readiness, enhancing joint coordination, and unifying tactical concepts in naval operations.

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KUNA photo

Part of the joint bilateral military exercise 'Gulf Peace 1' at King Abdulaziz Naval Base on Friday.

Kuwait cracks down on 'non-compliant' hotels

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: Director of the Commercial Control Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Faisal Al-Ansari, announced that inspection campaigns targeting tourist and hotel establishments uncovered 17 violations.

The violations ranged from refusing to sell goods or provide services, issuing invoices in languages other than Arabic, to the absence of clear and approved price lists for services offered.

In a press statement, he explained that the inspection teams dealt with these violations in accordance with established legal procedures.

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Kuwait police put lid on Kabad booze gang

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: The General Department of Criminal Investigation, represented by the Department of Public Morals Protection and Combating Human Trafficking at the Ministry of Interior, raided a factory producing alcoholic beverages inside a rest house in Kabad, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The ministry explained that the rest house was fully equipped with specialized machinery and tools used in the production of alcoholic drinks, in addition to bottles and labels identical to those of several imported beverages, intended for illegal distribution and sale.

The individuals operating the factory were arrested, and large quantities of filled bottles ready for sale, along with numerous empty containers, were seized.

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Photo of the Kuwaiti medical team.

Kuwaiti team successfully replaces aortic valve in 111-year-old patient

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: Kuwait's healthcare sector has recorded a world-first medical achievement following the successful performance of a highly advanced interventional cardiology procedure on a 111-year-old patient by a Kuwaiti medical team.

The operation was carried out by Dr. Ahmed Al-Shatti, Consultant of Cardiology and Catheterization and Head of the Cardiac Catheterization Unit at

Al-Dabbous Center, Al-Adan Hospital, and Dr. Abdullah Al-Ismail, Consultant of Cardiology and Catheterization and Head of the Cardiology Department at Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital, who is also a Board Member of the Kuwait Heart Association. The team used the Evolute FX Plus, the latest aortic valve available globally.

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Court closes door on allowance suit

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: The Court of Cassation ended the legal dispute concerning the eligibility of some public school teachers to receive the KD200 rare specialization allowance per month, clarifying that this allowance is not granted to all teachers, as it is limited to certain specializations that meet the criteria of scarcity according to the standards approved by the Civil Service Commission.

The court dismissed the lawsuit filed by a Geology teacher who demanded for the rare specialization allowance for the 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 academic years.

The plaintiff was ordered to pay court costs and KD10 in legal fees, as the condition of scarcity in his specialization was not met. The court explained in its ruling that eligibility for the rare specialization allowance hinges on proving that the teaching staff's specialization is indeed rare.

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Relations poised to grow: Chmiel

Medical and leisure tourism drive Kuwait-Czech travel ties

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: Czech Ambassador to Kuwait Juraj Chmiel said the bilateral relations between Kuwait and the Czech Republic is "excellent," expressing a strong desire to elevate this relationship to encompass broader cooperation and partnership in various sectors.

The Ambassador made these remarks during the New Year celebration held at the Czech Embassy on Jan 21 -- a date chosen to maximize the participation of diplomats and friends returning from vacation.

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Photo by Rezk Tawfiq

Czech Ambassador to Kuwait Juraj Chmiel speaks during the New Year celebration held at the Czech Embassy on Jan 21.

NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: The Amiri Diwan on Saturday mourned the demise of **Sheikha Badriah Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah** at the age of 82.

The funeral service is set to take place on Sunday and Monday afternoon. (KUNA)

WASHINGTON: The Embassy of the State of **Kuwait** in Washington urged its nationals on Friday to keep vigilant for a massive winter storm that is forecast to hit mid-west and eastern coastal states this weekend.

It is advisable for all nationals to abide by the safety instructions and relevant guidance of the local and federal authorities, and remain on alert for potential problems, including dangerous snow, the Embassy said in a statement. (KUNA) — See Also Page 6

8 Kuwait Finance House leads ILM 2025 Program issuances

11 Lulu Hypermarket Kuwait concludes grand 'India Utsav' celebrations

15 KIB, Suffix announce details of 4th season of KIB |The Stadium, with equestrian sport entering its third consecutive year

Prayer Timings

Fajr	05:19	Asr	14:59
Sunrise ..	06:41	Maghrib ..	17:19
Zohr	12:00	Isha	18:39

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:
By Day: Unstable, rather cold and cloudy to partly cloudy with moderate to fresh strong at times southeasterly wind changing to northwesterly wind, with speeds of 25-65 km/h causing rising dust

Weather

and a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.
By Night: Cold with light to moderate freshening at times over coastal areas northwesterly wind, with speeds of 15-45 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait Airport	22	14
Abdaly	21	07
Bubyan	17	09
Failaka Island	18	10
Salmiyah	18	15
Ahmadi	18	10

Kuwait reaffirms strategic partnership with Bahrain at higher committee meeting

MANAMA, Jan 24, (KUNA): Kuwait reaffirmed the depth of its strategic partnership with Bahrain and its commitment to strengthening bilateral and Gulf cooperation during the 12th session of the Kuwait-Bahrain Joint Higher Committee.

This came in a speech delivered by the head of the Kuwaiti delegation, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Al-Yahya.

Minister Al-Yahya expressed appreciation for the invitation extended by Bahrain's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Abdullah Al-Zayani, thanking the Bahraini leadership and people for the warm reception and generous hospitality.

He stressed that the meeting is held in line with the directives of the wise leadership of both nations, expressing hope that the committee's outcomes would further enhance bilateral cooperation across various fields.



Bahrain's Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Khalid bin Abdullah Al-Khalifa receives Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya during his official visit to the Kingdom.

Minister Al-Yahya also praised the efforts of members of the preparatory committee for their diligent work in organizing the session, noting that



Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Al-Yahya meets Bahrain's Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al-Khalifa.

their efforts reflect the shared determination of both countries to advance cooperation toward a sustainable strategic partnership.

He underlined that this approach stems from the guidance of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa.

Furthermore, he commended Bahrain's presidency of the current session of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), lauding its pivotal role in promoting joint Gulf action.

The Kuwaiti minister also congratulated Bahrain on the start of its membership in the UN Security Council for the 2026-2027 term, expressing pride in Bahrain's constructive role in addressing regional and international issues.

He emphasized that Kuwait-Bahrain relations go beyond traditional bilateral cooperation, representing a deeply rooted strategic vision based on long-standing solidarity and shared political will.

20 power reforms tenders await bid opening: report

CAPT rejects over KD 4 mln MEWRE tender request

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: The Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) rejected the recommendation of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy to award a tender, valued at KD4.651 million, for the annual maintenance of cranes and handling equipment at power generation and water desalination plants due to failure to comply with the terms and conditions.

CAPT will now review the remaining bids, and then the ministry will study these bids and submit a new recommendation.

CAPT also requested all participating companies to extend their initial bid bonds, in compliance with Article 46 of Law No. 49/2016.

In another development, the newspaper obtained information that 20 tenders are awaiting bid opening before being referred to the ministry for review and award decision. These tenders are for the development and modernization of the electricity network, including generation, transmission and distribution. The network requires regular maintenance, replacement and upgrades to ensure its readiness to handle the increased operational demands of the summer months, when electricity consumption rates are high.

One of the important tenders is the modernization

of eight boilers at Subiya power and water desalination plant. This modernization will enhance the efficiency of the boilers and extend their lifespan, particularly since Subiya plant is one of the major power stations upon which the ministry relies for electricity and water production to meet the increasing annual demand.

Another project under consideration is the supply and installation of three main substations for the cloud data center project in various parts of the country. This project will contribute to the implementation of the agreement signed between the Kuwaiti government and Google. The tender includes the repair of underground cables and the extension and splicing of low-voltage cables for new consumers in the northern part of Ahmadi Governorate. This will enable the ministry to supply electricity to new consumers who will submit applications for new homes in Ahmadi.

Kuwait to host annual radiology conference from February 4 to 7

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: The 2026 Annual Radiology Conference will be held on Feb 4-7, under the patronage of Health Minister Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi.

Dr. Buthaina Al-Kandari, Head of the Radiology and Radiotherapy Departments Council at the Ministry of Health and Conference Chairperson, made the announcement on Saturday.

With the theme, "From Vision to Precision," the conference aims to highlight diagnostic accuracy and the development of clinical practices in line with the latest scientific and technological standards. The primary objectives are to update scientific knowledge, improve the skills of medical personnel, and develop diagnostic services to adopt the best global practices. The focus areas for the conference include the musculoskeletal system,



Dr. Al-Kandari

sports injuries and pulmonary diseases.

The comprehensive program will feature scientific sessions, specialized lectures, practical workshops, and scientific competitions. An exhibition showcasing the latest radiological technologies and innovations is also a major component.

Workshops, scheduled before and during the conference, cover diverse needs in various medical specializations. Topics include musculoskeletal and chest radiology, Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), ultrasound, interventional radiology-guided procedures, scientific research and occupational health for medical staff.

The event is expected to attract local and international experts and speakers from Kuwait, other Gulf countries, other Arab nations, Europe, America and Canada.

Organizers believe the conference will serve as a vital platform for participants to exchange experiences, review cutting-edge technologies, support continuing medical education and scientific research, and cultivate national talent.

These efforts are intended to develop clinical practices, forge links between medical specializations, and positively impact the overall quality and efficiency of healthcare services and the diagnostic system.

Kuwait City 2nd among most expensive Arab cities

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: The latest Numbeo report revealed that Kuwait City ranked second among the most expensive Arab cities in terms of purchasing residential apartments in 2026 -- at a price of KD1,633 per square meter in the city center, reports Al-Rai daily.

This is a 10.9 percent decrease compared to 2025, when the price was around KD1,833 per square meter.

Outside the city center, the price per square meter reached KD816.7 -- 11.3 percent lower than the previous year's KD921.

According to the specialized real estate price index, the average monthly rent in Kuwait for a

one-bedroom apartment in the city center amounted to KD258.33, compared to the KD188.5 average outside the city center. A three-bedroom apartment in the city center averaged KD560.13, compared to KD405.55 outside the city center.

The ranking of Kuwait as the second most expensive city could be attributed to a combination of structural and economic factors, such as limited supply of housing in the city center, coupled with stable demand, particularly for apartments in areas near the business and service centers. The high cost of land within the city also contributes to the high prices, compared to other Arab cities.

These rental levels indicate the resilience of de-

mand in the Kuwaiti market. Despite high prices, apartments in the city center remain attractive due to demand from middle and upper-income residents.

On the other hand, the big price difference between the city center and outside it suggests a growing trend towards outlying areas as a more affordable alternative, which may boost real estate activity in those areas in the coming period.

Dubai topped the list by a huge margin, with the price per square meter in the city center reaching \$7,172, making it the most expensive destination for real estate investment in the Arab world.

Kuwaiti, Gulf national perish in Salmi mishap

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: Two young men, a Kuwaiti citizen and a Gulf national, died when their vehicle overturned on Salmi Road. The Operations Unit at the Interior Ministry received a report about the accident. Security personnel immediately went to the scene, where they discovered that both men already succumbed to their injuries.

The necessary procedures were taken, and an investigation was launched to determine the circumstances leading to the fatal accident.

Meanwhile, a collision between two vehicles on the Sixth Ring Road resulted in one vehicle being burned beyond recognition, while two people escaped unharmed, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to a security source, the Operations Unit at the Ministry of Interior received a report about the accident. Security personnel immediately responded and found that the accident involved an SUV and a sedan. The collision caused the sedan to catch fire.

A case of collision and injury was registered. Investigations are ongoing to establish the circumstances leading to the accident.

In a separate incident, a cement mixer overturned, injuring an expatriate and causing severe traffic congestion near Shuaiba Bridge.



The Kuwaiti force leaving for Qatar to take part in the security exercise.

Kuwaiti force heads to Qatar for Arabian Gulf security drill

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24, (KUNA): The Kuwait Ministry of Interior (MoI) announced on Friday the departure of the force participating in the joint Gulf tactical exercise "Arabian Gulf Security 4" in Qatar, reflecting the depth of security cooperation and integration among the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

In a press statement, the ministry said departure flights were carried out in accordance with the approved plan after the participating force completed its deployment with all equipment, gear, technical and logistical supplies, demonstrating a high level of readiness and unified Gulf efforts to efficiently carry out joint field missions.

The ministry added that the exercise aims to enhance field coordination, raise levels of preparedness and security readiness and exchange expertise among Gulf security agencies, contributing to the development of the joint security framework and the ability to address various challenges and potential scenarios in a spirit of unified Gulf teamwork.

The MoI noted that this participation underscores its commitment to supporting the course of joint Gulf action and strengthening cooperation and integration among Gulf security agencies, in a manner that bolsters the foundations of security and stability of GCC states.

Coal fumes hospitalize woman

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: An Arab woman was admitted to Jahra Hospital due to carbon monoxide poisoning as a result of inhaling smoke from a charcoal stove, reports Al-Anba daily.

A security source stated that a report was received indicating that a woman born in 1998 was exposed to carbon monoxide poisoning. Ambulance and patrol teams rushed to the incident site in Mutlaa desert, where first aid was

administered on location before she was transported to the hospital to complete her treatment.

In this context, a source from Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) warned about the serious risks of using charcoal stoves inside tents or in enclosed or poorly ventilated areas due to the release of carbon monoxide gas, which is colorless and odorless and can cause suffocation and loss of consciousness.

Other Voices

The perfect calendar chaos

By Ahmad alsarraf

MOST countries follow the Gregorian calendar. Some Gulf countries use the Islamic calendar along with the Gregorian calendar, and a few other countries follow different calendars, though most are solar-based and accurate. There may be political, religious, or folkloric reasons behind this, as seen in China.

The Gregorian calendar may seem somewhat confusing due to the varying number of days in its months, leap years, and even missing days in history. However, it is the most effective, as it is the result of a persistent effort to design an ideal system.

The ancient Roman calendar originally consisted of 10 months (6 months of 30 days and 4 months of 31 days, totaling 304 days annually). The year began in March and ended in December, followed by an uncalculated period of inactivity during the winter months.

According to Roman tradition, as documented on the "History" website, in an attempt to eliminate the unaccounted-for winter gap and synchronize the calendar with the lunar year, the legendary King Pompilius added January and February to the calendar around 713 BC, bringing the total number of months to 12.

However, because the newly created year consisted of 355 days (based on 12 lunar cycles), it was mathematically inevitable that one of the months would have an even number of days. February, dedicated to the gods of the underworld, was designated an unlucky month consisting of 28 days.

Although King Pompilius's reforms brought the Roman calendar closer to the lunar year, it was still about 10.25 days shorter than the solar year, causing it to gradually fall out of sync with the

seasons.

To address this problem, the Romans added an extra month called Mercedonius every two or three years. However, its application was inconsistent, leading to continued confusion with the seasons.

To further standardize the calendar and align it with the solar year, Julius Caesar implemented the Julian calendar in 46 BC. This calendar had been developed by the Alexandrian astronomer and mathematician Sosigenes and was based on the Egyptian solar calendar, the first known calendar to use 365 days, very similar to the Julian calendar we use today. The Egyptian calendar consisted of 365 days and 12 months, all with 30 or 31 days except for February, which had 28 days.

The Julian calendar calculated the solar year as 365.25 days, introducing regular and predictable leap years. However, it was not perfect, as there was a discrepancy of about 11 minutes between the Julian year and the actual time it takes the Earth to orbit the Sun (365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, and 45.25 seconds). This issue was addressed in 1582 when Pope Gregory XIII introduced the Gregorian calendar, created by the Italian astronomer Lilius, which is the most widely used calendar worldwide today.

Lilius realized that adding a leap year every four years made the calendar slightly too long. He therefore devised a system that added a leap day to years divisible by four, unless the year was also divisible by 100.

Years divisible by 400, however, still included a leap day.

Although this system is highly accurate, it is still about 26 seconds longer than the solar year. As a result, by the year 4909, the Gregorian calendar will be one day ahead of the solar year. This discrepancy, however, has little practical impact in most countries, where such small increments of time are largely negligible.

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diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Everything is hunky dory in queer ministers recoil

"AFTER every weekly Cabinet meeting, we read in the newspapers the following morning that the Prime Minister is urging ministers to tour ongoing projects. As for the extent of the ministers' response, that remains a complete mystery."

Kuwaiti journalist **Hassan Ali Karam** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.



However, here lies the crux of the matter. When we watch news coverage of Cabinet meetings, we see Hassan Ali Karam ministers sitting face to face, smiling, while the news anchor continues reading the rest of the meeting's proceedings from a paper in front of him.

"I am certain that three-quarters of Kuwait TV viewers, especially those who follow the news, including Cabinet meetings, turn away from the screen and the rest of the broadcast, preferring instead to play on their mobile phones. I have never heard of, or read about, a minister daring to oppose or object to the details or outcomes of a Cabinet meeting."

"Ministers in Kuwait do not oppose, do not object, and do not resign. I recall that one minister, after leaving office, published an article on the front page of a weekly newspaper. The article was filled with observations that could easily have been raised during the weekly Cabinet meetings. I asked him why he was publishing an article about matters that could have been discussed in the Cabinet. He replied, 'How do you know I didn't say them?'"

"Since the formation of the first government until the current one, only two ministers have resigned from Kuwaiti Cabinets, and they remain remembered by history. The first was Mohammad Youssef Al-Nisf, Minister of Social Affairs, who reportedly felt that he did not align with government policies. The second was Saad bin Tefla Al-Ajmi, Minister of Information in the first government of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad. Al-Ajmi's resignation was private, or so we were told, but God's ways are mysterious."

"As for the current Cabinet, there have also been two resignations. The first was that of the Minister of Electricity and Water, Mahmoud Boushahri, and the second was that of the Minister of Finance, Noura Al-Fassam."

Also:

"In 1954, scientists James Olds and Peter Milner conducted an experiment that would later become one of the most famous studies in the field of brain and behavior," Kuwaiti writer **Hussein Al-Rawi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Olds was an American psychologist and neuroscientist, and Milner was a British-Canadian neuroscientist. The experiment took place at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, a prestigious institution known for its pioneering work in neuroscience."

"The goal of the study was to understand the role of pleasure in guiding behavior. A mouse was placed in a simple cage containing food and water, with no objects that might cause fear or stress. A small button was installed on one side of the cage, seemingly without any function or significance."

"When the mouse first accidentally touched the button, it felt no pain or harmful shock, but instead experienced a brief, intense flash of pleasure. The sensation was strong enough to leave a lasting impression. From that moment on, the mouse's motive became clear - the pursuit of pleasure, and nothing else."

"The mouse returned to the button without hesitation, pressing it repeatedly to recreate that desired feeling. Over time, the button became the primary focus of the mouse's attention within the cage."

"Food and water lost their importance, replaced entirely by the fleeting moments of pleasure it experienced each time it pressed the button."

"The mouse pressed the button again and again. The pleasure it received was enough. As time passed, it became impossible for the mouse to stop. Pressing the button was no longer a choice. It became a habit, and then an urgent need."

"The button gave the mouse an immediate sensation of pleasure, but in return, it drained its focus, its strength, and its ability to look away."

"The scientists observed this

closely, noting how a fleeting, artificial sensation could overpower basic instincts, and how a living being could choose momentary pleasure over what sustains life."

"The mouse was neither forced nor punished, but it acted entirely of its own free will. Yet its choice was dictated by the pleasure it derived. The sensation did not diminish, and the mouse continued to pursue it until the very end, pressing the button persistently despite its weakening body and fading endurance."

"The pleasure offered repeated flashes of the desired feeling, yet it never satisfied, nor did it set any limit on when to stop."

"The significance of this experiment extends far beyond a mouse in a cage. It speaks to the very essence of humanity."

"A person who is oblivious to their own needs and cannot distinguish between what benefits them and what depletes them may gradually become a human version of the experimental mouse, chasing fleeting pleasure, repeating the same actions, believing they are choosing freely, while in reality losing more with each pursuit than they gain."

"This loss can affect their reputation and even the meaning of their life. Blind indulgence in false pleasures brings no true satisfaction or salvation, but instead leads step by step into a cycle of accumulating losses, until quitting becomes impossible."

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"There is a Chinese proverb - 'The frog in the well thinks the sky does not extend beyond the top of the well.' It is simple in wording, yet profound in meaning," Kuwaiti writer **Youssef Rashid Al-Hajri** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"It captures the tragedy of humanity when a person confines their thinking within narrow limits, measuring the world only through limited eyesight rather than through the mind or experience. The frog in the well was not wrong to see the sky as small, but wrong in not trying to climb out. The problem is not ignorance alone, but accepting it, being content with an incomplete view, and clinging to an idea that has never been examined beyond its limited scope."

"How many people live in wells of their own making? The well of a single thought, the well of a single experience, and the well of an opinion that allows no discussion. Such people refuse to listen, fear differing views, and believe that what they have not seen with their own eyes does not exist, and that what they have not experienced has no value. Thus, the sky shrinks in their eyes, not because the universe is small, but because their horizons are blocked."

"A mind that does not travel, does not read, does not engage in dialogue, and does not question its assumptions is like a frog in a well, living its entire life beneath an imaginary roof, and arguing with those who have ventured into vast open spaces that the sky is nothing more than a small circle. Even more dangerous is that the frog in the well often mocks those who speak of the sky's vastness, accusing them of exaggeration or delusion. At times, the truth frightens those accustomed to darkness and unsettles those who have grown used to confinement."

"Intellectual humility is the first step toward escaping the well. It begins with acknowledging that what you know is not everything, that what you see is not the whole truth, and that life is broader than any single experience, deeper than any opinion, and richer than any one stance. Emerging from the well does not mean abandoning convictions, but refining them, testing them, and exposing them to the light of day. They will either grow stronger or collapse, revealing that they were never fit to survive outside the shadows."

"In a world where knowledge advances rapidly and cultures intersect, the frog in the well becomes more isolated, louder, and less understanding. A conscious person knows that broadening one's horizons is not a threat, but a path to clarity and growth. So do not be like the frog in the well. Step out, look around, ask questions, and learn. The world is bigger than you imagined, and the sky is wider than you can see."

- Compiled by Simi K. Kutty

PAM detects 44 violations in Shuwaikh raids

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) carried out a large-scale inspection campaign in Shuwaikh Industrial Area as part of its emergency inspection plan, led by Director General Rabab Al-Osaimi and involving 37 inspectors.

The campaign included 123 inspection visits to various industrial facilities, covering labor compliance as well as occupational safety and health standards.

A total of 44 violations were recorded, and 79 facilities were found to be in full compliance with legal requirements.

Al-Osaimi affirmed that these campaigns are part of a comprehensive oversight plan aimed at enhancing adherence to laws, reducing violations, and establishing principles of fairness and balance in labor relations.

In an official statement, PAM highlighted that the electronic emergency inspection was implemented for the first time through the field campaign system, enabling immediate electronic recording of violations for em-



Director General Rabab Al-Osaimi on an inspection visit.

KUNA photo

ployers.

It affirmed its commitment to intensifying field inspection visits in various areas, emphasizing their pivotal role in supporting

the economy, ensuring labor market stability, and strengthening partnerships with the private sector, all in service of the public interest.

Military training pivotal in troops 'competency'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Armed Forces Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Shuraiaan emphasized the pivotal role of military education in preparing and qualifying personnel, thereby enhancing their efficiency in line with the requirements of the upcoming phase.

In a press statement, the General Staff stated that the remarks were made during a tour conducted by Lt. Gen. Al-Shuraiaan to the Military Education Authority, the 25th Commando Brigade, and the Artillery of the Land Forces, as part of his ongoing field follow-up of various army units.

During his visit to the Military Education Authority, Lt. Gen. Al-Shuraiaan reviewed military education and training plans and programs, as well as mechanisms for developing curricula to keep pace with modern military requirements.

The inspection tour also included the 25th Commando Brigade and the Land Forces Artillery, where he was briefed on combat readiness levels, military discipline and the efficiency of field training.



Al-Shuraiaan



Al-Seyassah photo

The Attorney General visited the site last week in person.

Travel bans imposed in funds probe case

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: Within its constitutional and legal mandate to protect public funds and uphold the rule of law, and in connection with national development projects and urban planning, the Public Prosecution has launched a comprehensive investigation into the West Abu Fatira Industrial and Service Zone project, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

This investigation follows a report received on December 9 regarding serious irregularities in the contracting and execution of the project, which threaten the integrity of state property management and risk the misappropriation of public funds.

In an official statement, the Public Prosecution revealed that the Attorney General issued immediate directives to form a specialized investigation team within the Capital Governorate to study the report and initiate the investigation.

The Public Prosecution explained that it has taken a series of urgent precautionary measures, including orders to freeze all plots within the project area and the assets of the individuals involved. Travel bans have been issued against those connected to the case, in addition to international arrest warrants, all in accordance with established legal procedures to ensure the integrity of the investigation and prevent tampering with evidence or funds related to the incident.

The investigation covers suspicions of crimes including gross damage to public funds, facilitating the seizure of state-owned real estate, forgery of official documents, illicit enrichment, and money laundering.

It also examines compliance with the approved frameworks of the development plan, the compensation system for expropriation, the integrity of contractual procedures, and the controls for monitoring, evaluation, and supervision, as well as any resulting damages to public funds.

Furthermore, the investigation covers the technical and environmental aspects of the project's infrastructure works. The Public Prosecution has formed a specialized engineering committee to assess the infrastructure, determine the percentage of completion, verify whether the wastewater treatment plant was designed and constructed in accordance with the contract, and inventory the works carried out by the state on behalf of the investor. A joint committee, headed by the State Property Administration, was also formed to conduct a field survey of the area, verify any surveying irregularities or changes in plot locations, determine their number, and ensure their conformity with the contract.

Driving test center in Kuwait City relocated

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: The General Traffic Department (GTD) announced the relocation of the driving test building for the Capital Governorate, starting Sunday.

The new premises are situated next to the main GTD building in Shuwaikh.

A security source told the newspaper that this move is aimed at improving performance and the work environment. It aligns with a broader Ministry of Interior plan, directed by senior leadership, to develop GTD buildings in various departments and sections to improve services for citizens and expatriates.

The source affirmed that the new, modern driving test building is adjacent to the previous location and is equipped with the latest technologies, reflecting the ongoing development efforts of GTD.

Father wins right to look after son

From 10 years jail to acquittal

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: The Administrative Circuit of the Court of First Instance ruled to overturn the decision of the administrative authority and appointed a father as the caregiver of his son with a disability, instead of the mother, granting him all legal rights and benefits stipulated under the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The father had submitted a formal request to the competent administrative authority to change the designated caregiver after the mother, who was previously assigned the role, resigned due to health reasons that prevented her from continuing care.

However, the administrative authority rejected the request without any legal basis or legitimate justification.

The father then appealed to the courts through his lawyer, Eid Al-Khayari. The lawyer based his argument on the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, emphasizing that changing the designated caregiver is legally permissible when it is proven that the previous caregiver is unable to continue.

Lawyer Al-Khayari said the decisive factor is the best interest of the person with a disability and the caregiver's actual ability to meet their needs.

The court concluded by establishing a fundamental principle - the best interests of the person with a disability take precedence over any administrative considerations.

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10-year jail overturned: The Court of Appeals overturned the 10-year prison sentence imposed on a citizen accused of trafficking and using psychotropic substances, thereby, acquitting him of all charges.

The acquittal decision was issued after Attorney Al-Anoud Al-Fadhli argued that the confession of her client was invalid due to procedural irregularities. She asserted that a confession obtained under such circumstances is inadmissible and cannot serve as evidence for conviction.

The court accepted the lawyer's arguments and was satisfied with the procedural flaws she raised regarding the arrest and interrogation procedures.

Consequently, the court overturned the initial ruling, dropped the prison sentence and acquitted the defendant.

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Hearing set for Jan 28: The Criminal Court scheduled a hearing for Jan 28 for the defense team to present their arguments for three defendants, including a lawyer, in a drug smuggling case.

The defendants were apprehended by the Drug Control General Department in possession of drugs suspected of being smuggled from London.

Case details revealed that security authorities received information and conducted investigations that foiled the smuggling attempt.



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Ministry of Finance photo
Kuwait's delegation, led by Undersecretary Aseel Al-Munaifi, attends the 11th Arab Deputy Ministers of Finance meeting in Abu Dhabi.

Al-Munaifi outlines fiscal responses

Kuwait joins 11th Arab Finance Deputies meeting in Abu Dhabi

ABU DHABI, Jan 24: Kuwait participated in the 11th meeting of Deputy Ministers of Finance of Arab States held on January 21-22 in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates.

According to a press release issued by the Ministry of Finance, the meeting was chaired by Undersecretary of Kuwait's Ministry of Finance Aseel Sulaiman Al-Munaifi who represented Kuwait. Participants included Deputy Ministers of Finance from other Arab countries, as well as representatives from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

During the meeting, they discussed several topics relevant to Arab finance ministries, including fiscal policy reforms to enhance resilience against shocks and uncertainties, lessons learned for Arab countries, the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in fiscal policy and public finance, addressing challenges, sustainable financing for infrastructure, countercyclical fiscal policies and their impact on growth, and the

latest developments in implementing tax decisions related to Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS).

The meeting also focused on progress on the four minimum standards, fiscal consolidation, and public debt sustainability.

On the first day, Al-Munaifi gave a presentation on fiscal policy reforms in response to economic shocks and uncertainties.

She highlighted the Kuwaiti Ministry of Finance's efforts to diversify revenue sources and reduce reliance on oil, emphasizing the sovereign wealth fund's role in absorbing shocks and providing financing while enhancing financial liquidity.

On the second day, Al-Munaifi gave a presentation on the latest developments in implementing tax decisions related to BEPS, focusing on the development of the four minimum standards.

It is worth noting that Kuwait's participation in the meetings contributed to strengthening Arab cooperation on fiscal and tax policies, thus supporting the achievement of shared goals of economic and financial stability in the region.

Fishermen's Union releases 1st imported fish shipment

Imports aim to boost food security

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: In an unprecedented move to bolster food security through the fisheries and meet growing local demand, the Kuwaiti Fishermen Union released a ton of imported fish into the local market last Friday -- its first practical step after obtaining a general fish import license from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The newspaper toured the fish market in Sharq to assess its readiness to receive imported shipments of various fish species and to gauge the impact of this move on supply and price stability.

Chairman of the Union Abdullah Al-Sarheed, Director of the Commercial Control Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Faisal Al-Ansari, and Director of the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) Eng. Saleem Al-Hay were present during the tour.

The visit included monitoring the fish unloading process at the stalls of the Union, as well as ensuring compliance with health and regulatory regulations. Sales and customer turnout were also observed, with citizens and expatriates expressing their satisfaction with the variety of fish available and the prices offered.

In a statement to the newspaper, Al-Sarheed pointed out that this step is in line with the commitment of the Union



Photo by Samer Tawfiq
Abdullah Al-Sarheed, Head of the Kuwaiti Fishermen's Union, inspects imported fish at Sharq market as workers prepare the first PAFN-approved batch for sale at affordable prices.

to guarantee the availability of imported fish in the local market at affordable prices for everyone. He emphasized that the Union sells fish at cost price to support the consumers.

He asserted that the Union, immediately upon obtaining its general import license, prepared a comprehensive plan to regulate the flow of imported fish into the country. He said air freight was chosen as the primary option despite the higher cost, because it is one of the safest methods for preserving the quality of perishable food products, especially fish.

He expects prices in the local market to decrease gradually in the next few weeks, as the supply increases and reaches optimal levels with the start of

the local summer fishing season.

He indicated that the import plan includes daily shipments to Sharq market, ranging between two to four tons of various types of fish. He said the first shipment came from Pakistan, while the next shipments will be from Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia, Iran and Bangladesh. He added that a team from the union will travel to Indonesia in the coming hours to finalize agreements for new shipments.

On the other hand, Al-Hay praised the efforts of the Union in providing diverse fish alternatives. He affirmed that the arrival of the first shipment of imported fish and its distribution at the Sharq Market and the stalls of the

Union increased fish supplies and stabilized prices.

Al-Hay confirmed that this step supports the food security system in terms of fish resources and meets the need of consumers for diverse protein sources. He added the PAAAFR is keen on continuously coordinating with the concerned authorities to ensure the safety of the products and their compliance with health standards.

Regarding the fishermen operating the stalls, the newspaper observed full adherence to the published prices and types of fish offered, amidst a huge turnout of shoppers who appreciated the variety of products and the range of prices to suit different segments of the market.

Five programs available until March 9

Abdullah Al-Salem University opens Master's applications for 2026/2027

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: Abdullah Al-Salem University has announced the opening of applications for its Master's degree programs for the 2026/2027 academic year, offering five specialized programs, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Applications will be accepted until March 9, reflecting the university's commitment to advancing higher education and meeting the needs of national development and the labor market.

The available Master's programs cover modern and strategically prioritized fields - Energy Systems, Biomedical Engineering, Cybersecurity, Finance, and Artificial Intelligence.

These specializations are in line with the demands of digital transformation, technological advancement, and the knowledge economy, while keeping pace with global scientific developments.

According to academic sources, the opening of applications is based on the university's vision to prepare qualified national talent with strong scientific and research capabilities, enabling them to contribute to sustainable development plans, promote innovation and scientific research, and support the country's vital sectors.

The offered Master's programs focus on the integration of academic, research, and applied components, providing students with wide opportunities for in-depth specialization, conducting scientific research, and participating in projects that address national priorities. The university invited those interested in enrolling in graduate programs to review admission requirements, academic criteria, and application procedures through official channels.

PAAET announces cutoff for rare specialization incentive

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: The Deanship of Student Affairs at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) has emphasized the necessity for students in colleges who have not yet received the rare specialization incentive for the second semester (2024-2025) to review their applications with the An-

nouncements and Incentives Department by Feb 2, reports Al-Jarida daily.

In a press statement, the Deanship explained that the incentive will not be disbursed retroactively after this deadline, stressing the importance of ensuring that all eligibility criteria for the incentive are met.

MoU set for signing

MEW and KOC to partner on 1,200-MW Ratqa power plant

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy is expected to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) on Sunday regarding the establishment of Ratqa power plant for the production of steam and electricity with a capacity of about 1,200 megawatts.

The project will be tendered through the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP).

Sources informed the newspaper that the signing of the MoU is part of the concerted efforts with KOC to implement the project through KAPP, affirming that the project is vital due to the benefits it offers to both parties.

Sources explained that the project is an initiative of the ministry to support KOC in reducing its reliance on heavy oil production and enabling the company to utilize steam in its production processes. They said this will lead to lower oil production costs and increased production volumes, in addition to the ministry benefiting from the project by increasing its

electricity production capacity. Sources said the project is a model of integration and cooperation among government entities in the service of the public, proving their commitment to realize the development goals of the country.

Sources revealed that the winning investor will sign two sales contracts -- one with KOC and the other with the ministry -- to purchase the plant's steam and electricity production.

Sources confirmed that the ministry officials -- led by Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem who also serves as Minister of Finance and acting Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment and Undersecretary of the ministry Dr. Adel Al-Zamel -- are keen on implementing electricity generation and water desalination projects to meet the current and future needs of the country, ensure the sustainability of vital services, and keep pace with population and urban growth.

Sources added the officials in both entities previously held a series of meetings to discuss the technical aspects of the project, resulting in the agreement that contributed to the advancement of this vital project.



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GCC church leaders gather in Kuwait under the Amir's patronage for the annual Christian Churches conference.

Strengthening unity and spiritual dialogue

Kuwait hosts GCC Christian Churches annual conference

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: Kuwait hosted the annual conference of the Association of Christian Churches in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries from January 19 to 21, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The conference was held at the invitation of Bishop Aldo Berardi, Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia and representative of the Catholic Church, with the support and patronage of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

The conference brought together members of the Association of Churches from various Christian denominations and nationalities, all serving churches and Christian communities in the GCC countries.

The gathering provided a platform for constructive dialogue, the exchange of pastoral experiences, and the strengthening of cooperation and Christian unity amid the shared challenges facing churches in the region.

Participants discussed a number of pastoral and ecclesiastical issues, explored ways to support spiritual and social services, and emphasized the importance of a collective witness to the values of peace, love, and mutual respect, while enhancing a spirit of fraternity among churches in accordance with the laws, culture, and traditions of Gulf societies.

The program included a visit by the heads of local churches in Kuwait to learn about their locations and pastoral roles and to participate in prayer services, highlighting the deep spiritual and fraternal connection between the churches and their congregations.

The convening of this conference in Kuwait affirms the country's leading role in the region as a model for respecting freedom of worship, promoting interfaith dialogue, and strengthening the values of peaceful co-existence.

In conclusion, the church leaders expressed their gratitude to Kuwait, its leadership, government, and people for the warm welcome and excellent organization, and wished the country continued security and stability.

They affirmed their commitment to continuing collaborative efforts for the benefit of the churches and the communities they serve in the Gulf countries.



Participants pose for photo during annual Christian Churches conference.

KOTC nets KD16.5 mln amid Mideast tensions

Cargo tonnage reaches 32.7m tons in 2025

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: Despite the escalating geopolitical tension in the Middle East in recent years, Kuwait Oil Tanker Company (KOTC) -- the maritime transport arm of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) achieved net profits of KD16.513 million in the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Sources attributed the company's success in achieving these results, in spite of the political challenges that the region is currently facing, to the modernization of its fleet, implementation of an effective cost-cutting policy that contributed to reducing operating costs, and adopting a balanced approach to replace older vessels when needed.

Sources revealed that the total cargo tonnage of the KOTC tankers in the past fiscal year reached 32.7 million metric tons, compared to 31.7 million

metric tons in the preceding year.

Sources said the KOTC fleet consists of 31 tankers, including 11 Very Large Crude Carriers (VLCCs) for transporting crude oil, 15 tankers for transporting petroleum products and five LPG carriers. Sources disclosed that these tankers transported around 25.5 million metric tons of crude oil, 5.2 million metric tons of petroleum products, and two million tons of liquefied gas in the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Sources added that the company achieved several milestones in fleet development last year, particularly the introduction of an environmental index designed to improve the environmental performance of vessels calling at European Union (EU) ports. Sources pointed out this index contributes to reducing carbon dioxide and air emissions, and ensuring compliance with emissions standards set by the International Maritime Organization.

On the tanker hull integrity management system, sources confirmed that the company implemented this system to build a comprehensive database of ship hulls, defects, inspections and paint conditions. Sources explained this enabled the company to repair 15 vessels.

In terms of waste management, sources indicated that the company introduced a robust waste management system on board all its vessels as part of a strict policy prohibiting the dumping of any type of waste at sea. They said the system emphasizes the collection of hazardous and recyclable waste and its safe transport to shore for disposal.

Sources added the company also highlighted its success in implementing a system to control gaseous emissions from cargo-related operations, minimizing the leakage of cargo vapors from tanks into the atmosphere.

Sources affirmed the adoption of a plan for each tanker to develop monitoring, along with the maintenance and operation of pressure control valves for each tank and the implementation of a system for the safe collection and return of vapors to oil facilities during loading operations.

Sources stressed that KOTC, as the maritime arm KPC for transporting oil exports to various countries around the world, continues to meticulously implement its strategy in terms of protecting the marine environment, ensuring profitability and developing the maritime transport system in Kuwait.

Kuwait's envoy presents credentials to ASEAN

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 24, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ambassador to Indonesia Khaled Al-Yassin presented his credentials to ASEAN Secretary General Kao Kim Hourn as Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN).

In a statement to KUNA, Ambassador Al-Yassin said Kuwait is keen to strengthen cooperation with ASEAN across various fields and looks forward to elevation relations to broader horizons that serve the economic and development interest of both sides. He stressed that Kuwait views ASEAN as an important partner in Southeast Asia, underscoring the importance of expanding institutional cooperation to exchange expertise, develop investment and trade opportunities, and enhance political and cultural dialogue based on

mutual interests and respect. For his part, ASEAN Secretary General praised the distinguished relations between Kuwait and ASEAN, affirming full support to further develop bilateral ties and expand cooperation in line with member states' aspirations for development and stability. He also commended Kuwait's role during its presidency of the GCC last year, particularly its joint chairmanship with Malaysia of the second GCC-ASEAN Summit and the GCC-ASEAN-China Summit held last May, which helped advance trilateral cooperation and political and economic coordination.

ASEAN was established in 1967 and comprises 11 member states: Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia and Timor-Leste.

Continued from Page 1

We are

Undoubtedly, this policy has reshaped the economic landscape of one of the seven emirates. The UAE's overall GDP reached 1.77 trillion dirhams, equivalent to approximately 482 billion US dollars.

This forward-looking economic policy contributes significantly to the nation's overall development, prompting countries to actively seek marketing and investment opportunities in various sectors.

Saudi Arabia, for instance, has been developing its economy for several years, allowing foreigners to own property and providing them with numerous incentives. As a result, Saudi Arabia's GDP grew by 5.1 percent, driven by expansion in non-oil sectors, reaching approximately 1.27 trillion US dollars.

Oman has also allowed foreign ownership of property and introduced several incentives, attracting significant foreign investment. Foreign direct investment in the country has risen to OMR 30.3 billion.

Oman is pursuing a capital attraction strategy as part of its "Oman Vision 2040," which focuses on economic diversification.

Despite turbulent global events, all these countries are currently experiencing unprecedented economic growth. The region offers numerous opportunities, positioning it as one of the most stable for years to come.

As a result, these nations have benefited from this growth to improve living standards for their citizens, while capital continues to flow in rapidly.

By the way, when Britain raised property taxes, around 16,000 of its citizens emigrated to the UAE and Greece. These emigrants injected substantial capital into the local markets of both countries, fueling economic growth.

Kuwait, as we have said before and reiterate today, has vast opportunities. It is more dynamic culturally, socially, and economically than many countries in the region. Its strategic geographic location gives it a competitive advantage, if it chooses to capitalize on it.

However, Kuwait lost valuable time by isolating itself, rejecting experienced professionals and small and medium-sized enterprises, and following the agenda of those who sought to impose further restrictions.

Today, a golden opportunity exists to attract foreign capital and establish industrial and service projects in Kuwait. This can be achieved if the government realizes that time waits for no one.

The government must accelerate the process of opening the country further. We should not be like the Merchant of Venice, waiting for oil prices to rise for temporary gains.

Birds must fly to secure their food, while we risk staying on the platform, waiting like the characters in Samuel Beckett's play "Waiting for Godot."

Gold could

Indicating that reaching \$10,000 per ounce is possible if supportive geopolitical and monetary conditions persist, Al-Mousawi predicted that gold prices could reach between \$6,500 and \$7,200 per ounce by the end of 2026 if current geopolitical instability and flexible monetary policies continue worldwide.

He indicated that this upward trend resulted from an early analytical assessment when gold was trading near \$3,333 per ounce, at which time a continued rise was anticipated, which materialized as prices later reached \$4,300 per ounce.

Al-Mousawi emphasized that the current increase in gold and precious metal prices is not temporary, but reflects a global economic shift driven by geopolitical risks and the strategic repositioning of major central banks.

He affirmed that gold continues to strengthen its role as one of the most important hedging and investment tools in the coming period.

Al-Mousawi confirmed that the Kuwaiti market responds directly to global price movements and benefits from a high level of stability and investment awareness.

He noted a recent trend toward investing in gold bullion of various weights, reflecting a strategic shift among local investors toward long-term hedging instruments.

Al-Mousawi highlighted that rising geopolitical tensions, widening regional conflicts, and global political and economic uncertainty have increased investor anxiety, prompting a shift of liquidity toward safe-haven assets, primarily gold and other precious metals.

He indicated that this surge aligns with clear policy shifts by major central banks, particularly the US Federal Reserve,

as markets anticipate the direction of interest rates in the coming period, with an increasing likelihood of either maintaining or reducing them.

Al-Mousawi noted that several central banks, especially in Asia and the Middle East, have continued to strengthen their gold reserves as part of long-term strategies to diversify assets and reduce reliance on traditional currencies.

Severe storm

He explained that there are chances of scattered rain ranging from light to moderate intensity, with occasional heavy showers, particularly over coastal areas, and sometimes accompanied by thunderstorms in some regions until Sunday afternoon. Southeast winds will be active, shifting later to strong northwesterly winds.

Winds may occasionally exceed 60 kilometers per hour, raising dust and reducing horizontal visibility in some areas, with sea waves reaching over seven feet.

Expected minimum temperatures will range between 12 and 15 degrees Celsius, while maximum temperatures are forecasted between 17 and 22 degrees Celsius, with gradual improvement in the weather anticipated after Sunday afternoon.

Kuwaiti team

The medical team explained that the patient had been living a normal daily life and attending regular check-ups at the clinic. However, his condition recently deteriorated, marked by repeated hospital admissions due to severe aortic valve narrowing, causing recurrent low blood pressure, fluid accumulation in the lungs, and shortness of breath, which necessitated urgent medical intervention.

The team confirmed that the decision to perform the procedure was based on the patient's worsening condition and increasing severity of symptoms. Thanks to the team's extensive expertise and high competence, the procedure was successfully completed in a record 40 minutes, without any complications.

Following the operation, the patient's condition stabilized completely, and he returned to his daily life normally, reflecting the significant advancements in interventional cardiology in Kuwait.

This achievement comes as part of the ongoing support provided by the Ministry of Health to develop healthcare services and adopt the latest medical technologies, demonstrating Kuwait's commitment to delivering the highest standards of healthcare and reinforcing its position as a leading regional and international medical center.

Kuwait police

The suspects and seized items have been referred to the competent authorities to take all necessary legal measures against them.

The Ministry of Interior reaffirmed its commitment to ongoing security campaigns, its firm stance, and its zero-tolerance policy toward any illegal activities that threaten public safety and security.

Kuwait cracks

The inspections are part of a comprehensive plan to regulate the tourism market and ensure that hotel establishments comply with laws and regulations for protecting consumer rights and enhancing the quality of services, in cooperation with relevant government agencies.

These inspections were conducted under the mandate of the committee responsible for classifying tourist and hotel establishments and ensuring service quality, which was formed last November. The committee is tasked with establishing a clear mechanism for inspections, recording violations, and monitoring the extent to which hotels adhere to approved quality and hospitality standards. The committee is also organizing inspection visits according to a structured schedule to avoid overlap or randomness, proposing corrective measures for recurring violations, monitoring negative practices, and coordinating with relevant government agencies to enforce laws and regulations, while submitting periodic reports to the competent authorities.

Al-Ansari emphasized the ministry's commitment to dealing with issues before applying legal penalties, indicating that officials at violating establishments have been notified to comply with all decisions and regulations.

Court closes

This necessitates referring to the officially approved tables from the Civil Service Commission, which identify specializations where the percentage of Kuwaiti and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nationals occupy positions is less than 30 percent of the manpower needs of the ministry, categorized by specialization and gender.

The court pointed out that the Civil Service Commission, in its official letters to the Ministry of Education, dated Jan 21, 2019 and Sept 7, 2020, approved the tables of rare specializations for the two academic years in dispute. These tables exclude Geology, and all documents contained no evidence that this specialization was recognized as rare during that period.

In a related development, the court affirmed that Arabic language is a common and readily available specialization within the teaching profession and does not fall under the definition of 'rare specializations' targeted by the legislator in granting this allowance. Therefore, teachers of this specialization are not entitled to the KD200 allowance. The court emphasized that granting the rare specialization allowance is subject to precise criteria related to actual need and the scarcity of qualified individuals. It is impermissible to broaden the interpretation of these criteria or apply them by analogy in a way that leads to the generalization of the allowance to those who are not entitled to it, as this will violate the law and the legislator's intent.

The court noted that the Ministry of Education's position was in accordance with the law, as it adhered to the decisions and regulations of the Civil Service Commission and the Civil Service Council, which the legislator entrusted with determining the conditions and regulations for granting allowances and financial benefits to teachers. With this ruling, the Court of Cassation settled the debate and closed the door on a series of similar lawsuits filed by a number of teachers demanding for the rare specialization allowance. The court affirmed that this allowance is an exception, determined on a case-by-case basis, and disbursed only to those whose specializations meet the criteria of scarcity according to the applicable regulations and decisions.

Medical and

The event featured musical performances, a collaboration with Kuwait Music Academy that included a mix of European classical and a Czech composition, symbolizing the spirit of cultural exchange between the two nations.

Regarding the political and economic dialogue, the Ambassador pointed out that efforts are being exerted to update existing bilateral agreements and to prepare for political consultations between the two countries, pending official scheduling. He emphasized that such meetings are crucial, indicating the strength of political ties and a mutual commitment to improve dialogue and exchange perspectives, especially in light of current global challenges.

He also affirmed the Czech Republic's involvement in the EU-GCC Business Summit, during which high-level officials discussed ways to enhance economic and trade cooperation. He affirmed that the ongoing dialogue and reciprocal visits are vital to strengthening the relationship between Kuwait and the Czech Republic.

According to the Ambassador, the Czech Republic is a significant destination for Kuwaiti citizens, particularly for medical tourism. Last year, the embassy issued around 6,000 visas, and the newly renovated visa application center has reopened, with the expectation of increasing the number of visitors from Kuwait.

Currently, many Kuwaitis travel to the Czech Republic through other European countries, such as Germany, due to flight availability. The Ambassador confirmed that Jazeera Airways will resume direct flights to Prague, operating twice a week starting May 23. He is hoping that these direct flights will continue throughout the year, not just during the summer season.

Kuwaiti citizens' interest extends beyond medical tourism to include leisure tourism, with attractions, such as historical castles, mountainous landscapes, and the diverse cultural offerings available year-round.

The Ambassador highlighted ongoing efforts in education, mentioning the number of Kuwaiti students in Czech universities. He stated that discussions are underway with the relevant authorities in both countries to restore the accreditation of university degrees. He praised Kuwait University for consistently offering annual scholarships to Czech students, underscoring the role of this academic exchange in reinforcing cultural and scientific bonds.

Concerning bilateral relations, he confirmed the progress of several memoranda of understanding, one of which is on the health sector. He asserted that cooperation extends beyond simply renewing current agreements to include initiating new partnerships in crucial sectors.

He pointed out the current trade imbalance, which favors the Czech Republic, expressing interest in boosting Kuwaiti exports to his country and encouraging Kuwaiti investors to explore the diverse and open investment opportunities available in the Czech market.

He added that the Czech real estate market is accessible to foreigners, indicating that many Kuwaiti citizens already own properties there, particularly in the healthcare and business sectors. He stressed that property ownership is legally permissible for anyone who fulfills the legal conditions.

He then expressed his best wishes for a happy and successful 2026 to Kuwaitis. He urged them to visit the Czech Republic throughout the year to experience its natural and cultural attractions, adding that the simplified visa procedures are helping to strengthen human and tourism bonds between the two nations.

Kuwait Navy

The exercise included command and control procedures via naval operation centers, training on search and rescue operations, managing naval battles, repelling unmanned boats' threats, defense and protection exercises for oil platforms at sea, along with live-fire exercises for participating ships and boats, according to the release.

The drills are part of the Kuwaiti Navy's scheduled trainings with sisterly and friendly countries' naval forces, which contribute to boosting the efficiency and performance of participating forces.

UN projects

According to the report, the total population of GCC countries reached around 61.5 million by the end of 2024, reflecting an increase of 8.5 million compared to 2019, with an average annual growth rate of 2.8 percent - nearly three times the global average - highlighting the region's rapidly evolving demographic dynamics.

Regarding age structure, the report noted that the working-age population group (15-64 years) accounted for the largest share, representing 76.7 percent of the GCC population, compared to 20.6 percent for children (0-14 years) and around 2.6 percent for older persons (65 years and above).

The report further indicated that males accounted for 62.7 percent of the population, compared to 37.3 percent for females across GCC countries. This imbalance is largely attributed to the demographic structure associated with expatriate labour.

The Statistical Center for the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, based in the Sultanate of Oman, was established to be the official authorized body for data, information and statistics related to the GCC countries.



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INTERNATIONAL



People walk on an ice covered beach along the shore of Lake Michigan on Jan 23, in Chicago. (AP)

Almost 10,000 flights canceled as storm bears down across US

Almost 10,000 flights across the US set to take off over the weekend have been canceled as a major storm expected to wreak havoc across much of the country threatens to knock out power for days and snarl major roadways.

Roughly 140 million people, or more than 40% of the US population, were under a winter storm warning from New Mexico to New England. The National Weather

Service forecast warns of widespread heavy snow and a band of catastrophic ice stretching from east Texas to North Carolina.

Forecasters say damage, especially in areas pounded by ice, could rival that of a hurricane.

Ice and sleet that hit northern Texas overnight were moving toward the central part of the state on Saturday, the National Weather Service in Fort Worth said. Expect-

ing ice and hazardous conditions, officials said all schools in Houston will be closed on Monday.

"Dangerously cold temperatures and wind chills are spreading into the area and will remain in place into Monday," the agency said on X. Low temperatures will be mostly in the single digits for the next few nights, with wind chills as low as minus 12 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 24 Celsius). (AP)



Protesters gather on Jan 23 in downtown Minneapolis. (AP)

Thousands rally against immigration enforcement in Minnesota

Police arrested about 100 clergy demonstrating against immigration enforcement at Minnesota's largest airport Friday, and several thousand gathered in downtown Minneapolis despite Arctic temperatures to protest the Trump administration's crackdown.

The protests are part of a broader movement against President Donald Trump's increased immigration enforcement across the state, with

labor unions, progressive organizations and clergy urging Minnesotans to stay away from work, school and even shops.

The faith leaders gathered at the airport to protest deportation flights and urge airlines to call for an end to what the Department of Homeland Security has called its largest-ever immigration enforcement operation.

The clergy were issued misde-

meanor citations of trespassing and failure to comply with a peace officer and were then released, said Jeff Lea, a Metropolitan Airports Commission spokesman. They were arrested outside the main terminal at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport because they went beyond the reach of their permit for demonstrating and disrupted airline operations, he said. (AP)

34-page document highly political for military blueprint

Trump administration's defense strategy tells allies to take control of own security

WASHINGTON, Jan 24, (AP) - The Pentagon released a priority-shifting National Defense Strategy late Friday that chastised US allies to take control of their own security and reasserted the Trump administration's focus on dominance in the Western Hemisphere above a longtime goal of countering China.

The 34-page document, the first since 2022, was highly political for a military blueprint, criticizing partners from Europe to Asia for relying on previous US administrations to subsidize their defense. It called for "a sharp shift - in approach, focus, and tone." That translated to a blunt assessment that allies would take on more of the burden countering nations from Russia to North Korea.

"For too long, the US Government neglected - even rejected - putting Americans and their concrete interests first," read the opening sentence.

It capped off a week of animosity between President Donald Trump's administration and traditional allies like Europe, with Trump threatening to

impose tariffs on some European partners to press a bid to acquire Greenland before announcing a deal that lowered the temperature.

As allies confront what some see as a hostile attitude from the US, they will almost certainly be unhappy to see that Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's department will provide "credible options to guarantee US military and commercial access to key terrain," especially Greenland and the Panama Canal.

Following a tiff this week at the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland, with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, the strategy at once urges cooperation with Canada and other neighbors while still issuing a stark warning.

"We will engage in good faith with our neighbors, from Canada to our partners in Central and South America, but we will ensure that they respect and do their part to defend our shared interests," the document says. "And where they do not, we will stand ready to take focused, decisive action that concretely advances US interests."



US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth speaks at Mar-a-Lago on Jan 3, in Palm Beach, Fla. (AP)

Much like the White House's National Security Strategy that preceded it, the defense blueprint reinforces Trump's "America First" philosophy,

which favors nonintervention overseas, questions decades of strategic relationships and prioritizes US interests. The National Defense Strategy last was pub-

lished in 2022 under then-President Joe Biden and focused on China as America's "pacing challenge."

The strategy simultaneously courts help from partners in America's backyard, while warning them that the US will "actively and fearlessly defend America's interests throughout the Western Hemisphere."

It specifically points to access to the Panama Canal and Greenland. It comes just days after Trump said he reached a "framework of a future deal" on Arctic security with NATO leader Mark Rutte that would offer the US "total access" to Greenland, a territory of NATO ally Denmark.

Danish officials, who spoke Thursday on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive negotiations, say formal negotiations have yet to begin.

Trump previously suggested that the US should potentially consider retaking control of the Panama Canal and accused Panama of ceding influence to China. Asked this week if the US reclaiming the canal was still on the table, Trump demurred.

"I don't want to tell you that," the president responded. "Sort of, I must say, sort of. That's sort of on the table."

The Pentagon also touted the operation that ousted Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro earlier this month, saying "all narco-terrorists should take note."

The new policy document views China - which the Biden administration saw as a top adversary - as a settled force in the Indo-Pacific region that only needs to be deterred from dominating the US or its allies.

The goal "is not to dominate China; nor is it to strangle or humiliate them," the document says. It later adds, "This does not require regime change or some other existential struggle."

"President Trump seeks a stable peace, fair trade, and respectful relations with China," it says, which follows efforts to climb down from a trade war sparked by the administration's sky-high tariffs. It says it will "open a wider range of military-to-military communications" with China's army.



Residential multistory buildings are seen in the dark during large-scale power outages following Russian strikes on Ukraine's power grid in Kyiv, Ukraine on Jan 20. (AP)

Russian attacks on Kyiv kill 1

Abu Dhabi welcomes Russia-Ukraine-US talks

KYIV, Ukraine, Jan 24, (AP) - Russian attacks on Ukraine killed at least one person and wounded 31 overnight into Saturday as negotiators from Ukraine, Russia and the United States were to meet in the United Arab Emirates for a second day of talks to end Russia's nearly four-year full-scale invasion.

One person was killed and four were wounded in Russian drone attacks on the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, according to Kyiv City Military Administration head Tymur Tkachenko.

In Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv, drone attacks wounded 27 people, Kharkiv regional head Oleh Syniehubov said Saturday.

The attacks came as envoys were expected to meet in Abu Dhabi, the UAE capital, for a second day of talks on Saturday. The talks are the first known instance that officials from the Trump administration have sat down with both countries as part of Washington's push for progress to end Moscow's nearly 4-year-old invasion.

The UAE's foreign ministry said the talks are part of efforts "to promote dialogue and identify political solutions to the crisis." The White House described Friday's first day as productive.

Following the latest attacks,



A paramedic gives first aid to a resident who was injured in a Russian airstrike in Kharkiv, Ukraine on Jan 24. (AP)

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha slammed Russian President Vladimir Putin over the onslaught.

"Cynically, Putin ordered a brutal massive missile strike against Ukraine right while delegations are meeting in Abu Dhabi to advance the American-led peace process," Sybiha wrote on X. "His missiles hit not only our people, but also the negotiation table."

There has been a flurry of diplomatic activity in recent days, from Switzerland to the Kremlin, even though serious obstacles remain between both sides.

While Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in Davos, Switzerland, on Thursday that a potential peace deal was "nearly ready," certain sensitive sticking points - most notably those related to territorial issues - remain unresolved.

Friday's announcement and the recount, which is expected to last for a few weeks, have fueled fears that a yearlong political crisis would continue.

The prosecutors in the southern town of Prizren said the suspects are facing charges of falsifying election results and exerting pressure, threats and bribery. Chief local Prosecutor Petrit Kryeziu said the alleged fraud involves 68,017 ballots in Prizren municipality alone.

Turnout at the Kosovo election was 44% of the country's 1.9 million voters. It was not immediately clear whether more people could be detained.

Starmer slams Trump remarks on non-US NATO troops in Afghanistan as 'insulting'

LONDON, Jan 24, (AP) - British Prime Minister Keir Starmer signaled Friday that US President Donald Trump should apologize for his false assertion that troops from non-US NATO countries avoided the front line during the Afghanistan war, describing Trump's remarks as "insulting" and "frankly appalling."

Trump's comment that he wasn't sure the other 31 nations in NATO would be there to support the United States if and when requested, provoked outrage and distress across the United Kingdom, regardless of individuals' political persuasion.

"We've never needed them, we have never really asked anything of them," Trump said of non-US troops in an interview with Fox Business Network in Davos, Switzerland, on Thursday. "You know, they'll say they sent some troops to Afghanistan, or this or that, and they did - they stayed a little back, a little off the front lines."

That view stands at odds with the reality that in October 2001, nearly a month after the Sept. 11 attacks, the US led an international coalition in Afghanistan to destroy al-Qaida, which had used the country as its base, and the group's Taliban hosts. Alongside the U.S. were troops from dozens of countries, including from NATO, whose mutual-defense mandate had been triggered for the first time after the attacks on New York and Washington.



In this image made available in London on Feb 28, 2008, Britain's Prince Harry patrols through the deserted town of Garmisr, Afghanistan, close to Forward Operating Base Delhi, on Jan 2, 2008. (AP)

In the UK, the reaction to Trump's comments was raw.

Starmer paid tribute to the 457 British personnel who died and to those who have been left with profound life-long injuries.

"I will never forget their courage, their bravery and the sacrifice they made for their country," Starmer said. "I consider President Trump's remarks to be insulting and frankly appalling and I am not surprised they have caused such hurt to the loved ones of those who were killed or injured and,

in fact, across the country." Without naming Trump, Prince Harry weighed in to the furor too, saying the "sacrifices" of British soldiers during the war "deserve to be spoken about truthfully and with respect."

"Thousands of lives were changed forever," said Harry, who undertook two tours of duty in Afghanistan in the British Army and who lost friends there. "Mothers and fathers buried sons and daughters. Children were left without a parent. Families are left carrying the cost."

Europe

Kosovo authorities detain 109 people: Authorities in Kosovo on Friday detained 109 people in connection with alleged vote manipulation that has led to a recount of last month's early parliamentary election in the Balkan country.

Friday's announcement and the recount, which is expected to last for a few weeks, have fueled fears that a yearlong political crisis would continue.

The prosecutors in the southern town of Prizren said the suspects are facing charges of falsifying election results and exerting pressure, threats and bribery. Chief local Prosecutor Petrit Kryeziu said the alleged fraud involves 68,017 ballots in Prizren municipality alone.

Turnout at the Kosovo election was 44% of the country's 1.9 million voters. It was not immediately clear whether more people could be detained.

Prime Minister **Albin Kurti's** Vetevendosje, or Self-Determination, party swept the vote in December winning some 51% of the ballots. The same party previously failed to form a government despite also winning the most votes in an election in February 2025, which led to a monthslong political deadlock and the early election in December. (AP)



Kurti

3 killed in Germany vehicle crash: A series of accidents caused by icy road conditions on a major motorway in western Germany left three people dead and more than 10 others injured early Friday, police said.

In one accident near the city of Paderborn, a lorry collided with an articulated truck carrying paper, causing the trailer to catch fire. The lorry driver could not be freed from the cab and died at the scene. The articulated truck driver was taken to the hospital.

Two other people were killed in another crash, police said. Several additional accidents were reported in both directions, and the motorway was closed as emergency crews responded.

The German Weather Service issued widespread warnings for dangerous ice and freezing temperatures on Friday, with some regions put on the second-highest severe weather alert. Schools were closed in several districts, and authorities urged people to avoid travel and outdoor activities where possible. (Xinhua)

Belgium knife attack injures 6: Six people were injured in a knife attack on Thursday evening in the Belgian city of Antwerp, two of them in critical condition, local media reported.

The incident occurred near the city's Opera House, where a Kurdish demonstration involving about 50 people was taking place. The gathering was initially peaceful, but a knife attack took place at around 7:20 p.m. (1820 GMT), reported the Belga News Agency.

According to Antwerp police spokesman Wouter Bruyck, four suspects have been arrested and all the injured have been taken to the hospital for treatment. (Xinhua)

Liberal Democratic Party could still face some challenges

Japan PM dissolves parliament after only 3 months in office, setting up early election

TOKYO, Jan 24, (AP): Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi dissolved the lower house of parliament on Friday, paving the way for an early election on Feb 8.

The move is an attempt to capitalize on her popularity to help the governing party regain ground after major losses in recent years, but it will delay parliamentary approval for a budget that aims at boosting a struggling economy and addressing soaring prices.

Takaichi, elected in October as Japan's first female leader, has been in office only three months, but she has seen strong approval ratings of about 70%.

Takaichi's Liberal Democratic Party could still face some challenges as it reels from a series of scandals about corruption and the party's past ties to the Unification Church. But it's not clear if the new opposition Centrist Reform Alliance can attract moderate voters, while opposition parties are still too splintered to pose a serious threat to the LDP.

Takaichi is also seeing rising animosity with China, since making remarks on Taiwan. And US President Donald Trump wants her to spend

more on weapons, as Washington and Beijing pursue military superiority in the region.

The dissolution of the 465-member lower House of Representatives paves the way for a 12-day campaign that officially starts Tuesday. When Speaker Fukushima Nukaga declared the dissolution, lawmakers stood up, shouted banzai - "long live" - three times and rushed out to prepare for the campaign.

Takaichi's plan for an early election aims to capitalize on her popularity to win a governing majority in the lower House, the more powerful of Japan's two-chamber parliament called the National Diet.

The scandal-tainted LDP and its coalition had a slim majority in the lower House after an election loss in 2024. The coalition lacks a majority in the upper House of Councillors and relies on winning votes from opposition members to pass its agenda.

Opposition leaders criticized Takaichi for delaying passage of a budget needed to fund key economic measures.

"I believe that the only option is for the people, as sovereign citizens, to decide whether Sanae Takaichi should



Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, (center), bows as the lower house of Parliament was dissolved in Tokyo on Jan 23. (AP)

be prime minister," she told a news conference Monday when announcing plans for the election. "I'm staking my career as prime minister" on it.

Takaichi, a hard-line conservative, wants to highlight differences with her centrist predecessor, Shigeru Ishiba.

and fans of her personal style, the LDP isn't popular as it recovers from a political funds scandal. Many traditional LDP voters have shifted to emerging far-right populist opposition parties, such as the anti-globalist Sanseito.

Meanwhile, Japan faces escalating tensions with China after Takaichi made remarks suggesting that Japan could become involved if China takes military action against Taiwan, a self-governing island that Beijing claims as its own. A furious China has increased economic and diplomatic retribution.

Takaichi wants to push further a military buildup and spending increases, while Trump has pressured Japan to spend more on defense.

Takaichi says she needs a mandate to push policies she's agreed on with her new coalition partner, the right-wing Japan Innovation Party, or JIP. They struck a deal in October to pursue goals that include a stronger military, continuing male-only imperial succession, and accelerating the reactivation of offline nuclear reactors.

Takaichi struck a deal with the JIP after the LDP's longtime ally Komeito, a Buddhist-backed centrist party, left the governing bloc over her ideologi-

cal views and reluctance to pursue anti-corruption measures. With the new partner's help, she secured just enough votes to become prime minister.

Komeito turned to the main liberal-leaning opposition, the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, to form the Centrist Reform Alliance just in time for the election.

"Now is our chance to start the centrist movement," said Yoshihiko Noda, a former prime minister and leader of the Constitutional Democrats.

He said the new alliance seeks to achieve a diverse, gender equal and inclusive society with "people-first politics," speaking at joint news conference with co-leader Tetsuo Saito, head of Komeito.

As divisions and confrontations spread globally and economic disparity widens at home, the new group is promising a "realistic" security policy and efforts to achieve a nuclear weapons-free world. Opposition groups in Japan are seen as too splintered to win an election, and so far, polling for the alliance isn't promising. But Komeito's ability to turn out votes from the Soka Gakkai sect makes it a force to be reckoned with.

Vietnam targets 10% growth

Lam consolidates power with reelection

HANOI, Vietnam, Jan 24, (AP): To Lam was reelected Friday as general secretary of Vietnam's ruling Communist Party and appears poised to become the country's most powerful figure in decades, with analysts expecting him to assume the presidency in a break from Vietnam's tradition of collective leadership.

Lam, 68, pledged to accelerate economic growth and was reappointed unanimously by the 180-member Central Committee at the conclusion of the National Party Congress that ran from Monday through Friday.

No formal announcement was made about the presidency. But the composition of the newly elected 19-member Politburo, the party's top decision-making body, "strongly suggests" Lam will further concentrate his power with the presidency, said Le Hong Hiep, a fellow at Singapore's ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

Such consolidation could speed decisions and push through reforms, he said, but risks weakening intra-party checks and complicating succession. The model mirrors power structures in China under Xi Jinping and neighboring Laos.

The Congress was shaped by the central question of whether Vietnam can transform itself into a high-income economy by 2045, setting a target of



Vietnam's General Secretary of the Communist Party To Lam waves as he attends a press conference after being re-elected to the post in Hanoi, Vietnam on Jan 23. (AP)

10% or higher annual growth from 2026 to 2030.

Party leaders say this will require moving beyond cheap labor and export-led growth toward productivity, technology and a stronger private sector.

"We must achieve double-digit growth to reach the set goals," Lam said.

Lam's reappointment caps the rise of a career policeman who climbed

from the security services to the apex of Vietnam's political system.

His ascent was propelled by a sweeping anti-corruption campaign launched under his predecessor, Nguyen Phu Trong, which Lam oversaw as head of the powerful Ministry of Public Security. That sidelined or removed dozens of senior officials including two former presidents and Vietnam's parliamentary head, dramatically reshaping the party's balance of power.

Asia

Landslide on Indonesia's Java island kills 8: A pre-dawn landslide triggered by torrential rains on Indonesia's main island of Java killed at least eight people on Saturday and left 82 missing as rescuers struggled through deep mud, searching for survivors.

Days of torrential rains had caused rivers to burst their banks, tearing through Pasir Langu village in West Bandung district of West Java province. Mud, rocks and trees tumbled down mountainside hamlets, burying some 34 houses.

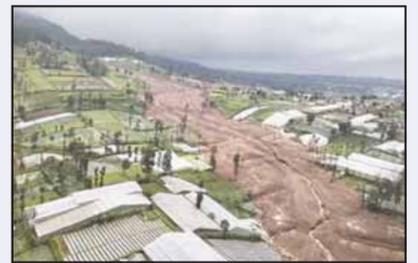
Rescuers were searching for the 82 residents feared buried under heaps of mud and debris, while 24 people managed to escape the disaster, said spokesperson Abdul Muhi of the National Disaster Management Agency.

Some eight bodies were pulled out in the worst-hit hamlet of Pasir Kuning after the 3 a.m. landslide swept away homes and people.

Television stations broadcast footage of workers and residents digging desperately in Pasir Langu, where roads and green-terraced rice fields were transformed into murky brown mud as the village was covered with thick mud, rocks and uprooted trees.

"Unstable soil and heavy rain continue to complicate search and rescue operations," said Teten Ali Mungku Engkun, who heads the West Java's Disaster Management Office.

He said local authorities rapidly assessed the damage and deployed emergency response teams immediately after the landslide. Families living within 100 meters (yards) of the landslide zone were evacuated due to fears of further slope failures. (AP)



In this photo released by the Indonesian National Search and Rescue Agency (BASARNAS), an aerial shot taken using a drone shows an area affected by landslides in Pasir Langu village, in West Bandung district of West Java province, Indonesia on Jan 24. (AP)

son of the ethnic Kachin Independence Army or KIA.

Naw Bu said a jet fighter bombed a compound where mourners had gathered for prayers for the deceased, a camp for displaced persons, as well as a school and a village market. He said about 500 people, including displaced residents, were staying in the village at the time. Among the injured is an infant, and several people are in critical condition, he said.

The reports could not be independently confirmed and internet access and cellphone service in the area were mostly cut off. Kachin-based media outlets posted photos and videos showing what they said was the aftermath of the strike, with images of dead bodies and damaged buildings.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the army seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi on Feb. 1, 2021, triggering widespread popular opposition. After peaceful demonstrations were put down with lethal force, many opponents of the military rule took up arms, and large parts of the country are now embroiled in conflict.

More than 7,000 people are estimated to have been killed by security forces since then, according to figures compiled by nongovernmental organizations. (AP)



Local residents clear the rubble at the site of Friday's suicide bombing on a wedding ceremony, on the outskirts of Dera Ismail Khan, a district in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Jan 24. (AP)

9 killed as avalanche strikes house

Suicide bombing at Pakistan wedding kills 7

DERA ISMAIL KHAN, Pakistan, Jan 24, (Agencies): A suicide bomber detonated an explosive vest among guests at a wedding ceremony in northwestern Pakistan on Friday, killing at least seven people and wounding 25, police said.

The attack took place at the home of Noor Alam Mehsud, a pro-government community leader in Dera Ismail Khan, a district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, said local police chief Adnan Khan. He said officers transported the victims to a hospital, where some of the wounded were listed in critical condition.

The ceremony was underway, with guests dancing to the beat of drums, when the bomber struck.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. However, suspicion is likely to fall on the Paki-

stani Taliban, also known as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan or TTP, who have carried out numerous attacks in the country in recent years. The group is separate from but allied with the Afghan Taliban.

Also:

ISLAMABAD: At least nine people were killed and one child was rescued alive after an avalanche struck a house in Chitral district of Pakistan's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Friday, officials said.

The incident occurred in the mountainous area of the district, where heavy snowfall triggered an avalanche that buried a family of 10 under snow and debris. **Bilal Faizi**, spokesperson of state-owned Rescue 1122, told Xinhua.

He said that ongoing heavy snow-

fall and extreme weather conditions have significantly increased the risk of avalanches and similar incidents in mountainous regions, urging residents to avoid unnecessary travel and remain cautious.

Rescue 1122 Chitral has been placed on high alert as adverse weather conditions persist in the region, Faizi said.

ISLAMABAD: A collision between a car and a truck left at least nine people killed and several others injured in Pakistan's southern Sindh province, police said on Saturday.

According to the police in the area, the accident occurred when an over-speeding truck collided with the car on Mehran Highway of Jamshoro district of the province, killing nine people, including women and children, and injuring four others.

US strike on drug boat kills 2 in Pacific

WASHINGTON, Jan 24, (AP): The US military said Friday that it has carried out a deadly strike on a vessel accused of trafficking drugs in the eastern Pacific Ocean, the first known attack since the raid that captured Venezuelan President **Nicolás Maduro** earlier this month.

US Southern Command said on social media that the boat was "engaged in narco-trafficking operations" and that the strike killed two people and left one survivor. It said it notified the Coast Guard to launch search and res-



Maduro

cue operations for that person.

A video accompanying the post announcing the latest strike shows a boat moving through the water before exploding in flames. The U.S. military has focused lately on seizing sanctioned oil tankers with connections to Venezuela since the Trump administration launched an audacious raid to capture Maduro and bring him to New York to face drug trafficking charges.

With the latest military action, there have been 36 known strikes against alleged drug smuggling boats in South American waters since early September that killed at least 117 people, according to announcements from the US military and Trump. The majority of those of strikes have occurred in the Caribbean Sea.

Colombia president optimistic about high-stakes WH meeting with Trump

BOGOTA, Colombia, Jan 24, (Agencies): Colombian President Gustavo Petro said Friday he was optimistic about a high-stakes White House meeting with US President Donald Trump scheduled for Feb 3. The announcement marks a significant de-escalation after months of hostility that saw the US revoke Petro's visa and impose sanctions on him and his family over unproven drug-trafficking allegations.

"The talks are going well," Petro said in a brief message on X, after citing an announcement from the foreign ministry regarding preparations for the meeting. In a significant diplomatic shift, Colombian Foreign Minister Rosa Villavicencio and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio held a cordial call to finalize preparations. According to Tommy Pigott, a State Department spokesman, Rubio confirmed during the exchange Friday that President Petro would receive full diplomatic guarantees - a sharp reversal from September, when Washington threatened to revoke Petro's visa following his criticism of US foreign policy at a New York rally.

According to both governments, the upcoming meeting will pivot from recent tensions toward "common priorities," including trade, joint economic opportunities, and regional security. Discussions are also expected to focus on intensifying the fight against transnational organized crime.



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

Tensions between the presidents eased in early January when Trump took a phone call from Petro, who called to "explain the drug situation and other disagreements we've had," according to the US president.

Also:

BOGOTA: At least seven people were killed and more than eight others injured in an explosion in a rural area of

Tumaco in Colombia's southern department of Narino, local authorities said Friday. Police said the explosion occurred late Thursday in a village in Llorente district, about 25 km from Tumaco's urban center.

Narino Governor Luis Alfonso Escobar said the cause of the blast remains under investigation and stressed that the incident was not related to armed conflict.

Heavy snow and rainfall kill 61, injure 110 over 3 days in Afghanistan, say authorities

KABUL, Afghanistan, Jan 24, (AP): Heavy snow and rainfall over the past three days have killed more than 60 people and injured over 100 across Afghanistan, the country's disaster management authority said Saturday, as authorities in the impoverished country struggled to open roads and gain access to cut-off villages.

National Disaster Management Authority spokesman Yousaf Hammad said 61 people had died and 110 were injured, while 458 homes had been completely or partially destroyed and hundreds of animals had died in 15 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. The numbers, he said, could change as authorities gathered more information from the provinces.

Afghanistan is highly vulnerable to extreme weather events, with snow and heavy rain that triggers flash floods often killing dozens, or even hundreds, of people at a time. In 2024, more than 300 people died in springtime flash floods. Decades of conflict coupled with poor infrastructure, a struggling economy, deforestation and the intensifying effects of climate change have amplified the impact of such disasters, particularly in remote areas where many homes are built of mud and offer limited protection against sudden deluges or heavy snowfall.

The country's eastern provinces are also still struggling to recover from devastating earthquakes that struck last year, in late August and again in November, destroying villages and killing more than 2,200 people.

Those displaced by the quakes are particularly vulnerable



People walk in snow in Kabul, Afghanistan on Jan 22. (Xinhua)

to the extreme cold and bad weather conditions. In December, UNICEF said an estimated 270,000 children in the areas affected by the quakes were at "severe risk of life-threatening diseases related to the cold."

Earlier this month, the United Nations said Afghanistan would "remain one of the world's largest humanitarian crises in 2026." The U.N. and its humanitarian partners launched a \$1.7 billion appeal to assist nearly 18 million people in urgent need in the country.

Kuwaiti oil barrel price down at \$60.96

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil barrel went down 92 cents to reach USD 60.96 per barrel on Friday, compared with USD 61.88 pb on Thursday, according to Kuwait Petroleum Corporation

(KPC) on Saturday.

In international markets, Brent crude oil price went up USD 1.82 to stand at USD 65.88 pb, while West Texas crude rose USD 1.71 to stand at USD 61.07.

Business

In primary and secondary markets

Kuwait Finance House leads ILM 2025 Program issuances

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has strengthened its leadership in the primary and secondary markets for the International Islamic Liquidity Management (ILM) Sukuk Program. KFH secured the top position as both a Primary and Secondary Dealer, outperforming a peer group of several local, regional, and international banks.

The ranking of the Primary Market is based on the total amount allocated at primary level FY 2025, namely a total of 69 Sukuk issued for a cumulative amount of USD 22.91 billion.

The ranking of the Secondary market is based on the total trading volume of USD 3.80 billion on series active in 2025.

KFH Chief Treasury Officer Kuwait, Ahmad Eissa Al-Sumait said: "KFH is a pioneering leader in the primary and secondary Sukuk markets. As at the end of 2025, the programme reached an all-time high outstanding volume of USD 6.4 billion of ILM Sukuk in the market. This milestone reaffirms KFH's leading position as a primary dealer in the ILM short-term Sukuk program since its inception."

Al-Sumait emphasized KFH's ongoing commitment to enhancing its role, maintaining its market leadership, and achieving the highest standards of professionalism and efficiency, thereby driving the growth and advancement of the Sukuk market both locally and globally.

He added: "Global economic challenges, characterized by a trend toward lower yields in fixed-income markets and declining interest rates, are exerting pressure on investors. Nevertheless, indicators point to sustained activity in both the volume and frequency of issuances in the Primary market, alongside robust trading in the Secondary market. This environment presents attractive opportunities, attracts new segments of market dealers, and bolsters confidence in Sukuk as a financing instrument that offers diversified



Ahmad Al-Sumait

- A Renewed affirmation of leadership, trust, and efforts in Sukuk market
- Programme reached an all-time high outstanding volume of USD 6.4 billion of ILM Sukuk in the market

investment options."

Meanwhile, the International Islamic Liquidity Management (ILM) commended KFH's strong performance in the Sukuk Market and its high efficiency in expanding its distribution network, which has significantly enhanced the recognition of ILM Sukuk as a leading Shariah-compliant liquidity management solution. The ILM also praised KFH's active role in Secondary market-making, improving market liquidity, and reinforcing investor confidence in the ILM program.

The ILM also pointed out that KFH topping the Primary and Secondary market lists confirms its market leadership, pivotal role, and strong commitment to supporting the continued development and success of the ILM program.



Other Voices

Oil is back at the \$60 level!

By Kamel Al-Harami
Independent Oil Analyst

Oil has returned to the \$60 level, but will it last, or is this just speculation for driving prices up from the low \$50s? The attempt to raise oil prices could simply be aimed to earn profits.

Certainly, the market is full of oil. With market speculation, some are using situations, such as current tensions in Iran, as an excuse to raise oil prices and gain a few extra dollars. The fact remains that oil markets are awash with surplus oil, which recently pushed prices down to the \$50 level.

Perhaps the US administration has issued new permits for American oil companies to drill more oil domestically. However, oil prices are weak and below the breakeven point for US producers, which ranges between \$62 and \$65 per barrel. This makes US producers reluctant to increase drilling as long as profit margins remain slim.

Meanwhile, OPEC is not inclined to intervene in the market, knowing that any rise in oil prices would be temporary. The

organization is leaving market forces to play out, or letting the US continue drilling and producing more, as it leads the world in production at 13.6 million barrels per day, a figure not much different from 2025. Output is expected to decline in 2027, which may eventually push prices higher, despite the "dig, baby, dig" approach.

The question is what action OPEC will take, or whether it will continue to stay out of the oil market, ignoring its own policy and doctrine of oil stability.

Over the past two years, the oil market has lacked stability, with new producers entering and causing prices to weaken. OPEC has lost some of its market share and is now reluctant to intervene to maintain a specific global price range, while newcomers from the US and Brazil seek new outlets at the expense of OPEC members' long-term captive markets.

OPEC+ is facing the challenge of these new entrants, which have created a surplus of more than 3.5 million barrels per day. Despite this, OPEC+ is unwilling to interfere significantly in the market, allowing prices to hover around \$65 per barrel. A price of \$70-\$75 per barrel would provide more stability and comfort for OPEC+, though it is still below the level the organization considers fully satisfactory.

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Al-Harami

PIC advances industrial innovation

KPC's \$9 billion digital overhaul powers oil sector modernization

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: The Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and its subsidiaries have invested between \$9 billion and \$9.5 billion in technology and digital transformation projects over the past five years.

According to informed sources, KPC's oil subsidiaries have achieved significant successes in recent years due to the increased adoption of modern technologies, which have played a major role in enhancing operational performance and data analysis.

KPC's Global Marketing sector, in collaboration with the Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC), has successfully digitized loading documents, resulting in time savings and providing accurate, detailed data.

KNPC has also implemented the use of drones for technical inspections, trained technical staff to operate these technologies, and deployed advanced digital systems to monitor and analyze the performance of operational units, linking the data to environmental and industrial metrics.

Regarding the Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC), a digital platform has been activated for energy and sustainability management, linking operational systems to smart tracking platforms and using Artificial Intelligence to predict malfunctions and enhance the business environment at the Al-Zour Refinery.

The Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (KUFPEC) implemented compre-

hensive digital solutions to assess reserves, monitor the performance of global assets and projects, and develop a strategic database to support investment decision-making.

The Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC) carried out specialized technical studies and implemented technology acquisition projects based on industrial innovation, contributing to improved petrochemical product quality and strengthened supply chain resilience.

Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI) developed AI-based solutions to optimize pricing strategies, enhance customer experience, and analyze global market data in real time, significantly improving operational efficiency in Europe and Asia.

Kuwait Oil Tanker Company (KOTC) introduced advanced electronic systems for vessel tracking and environmental performance analysis, along with smart applications for maintenance scheduling.

Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) has implemented advanced digital projects, including automating drilling data, integrating artificial lift data, and deploying real-time production monitoring systems, in addition to establishing a petroleum research center to develop smart solutions.

KOC continues to implement high-impact digital initiatives that improve data quality, enhance automation, and support decision-making through analytical dashboards for production performance indicators, digitizing geological demand data, and transforming historical data.

Kuwait's Khalifa Al-Ajeel touts capital market appeal at Davos

Tunisia, Kuwait commit to mutual economic stability

DAVOS, Jan 24, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Commerce and Industry, Khalifa Al-Ajeel affirmed on Saturday the strong appeal of Kuwait's capital market, citing a comprehensive reform path linking legislation, market efficiency, and infrastructure modernization to enhance long-term institutional investor confidence.

In a statement to KUNA on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos, Al-Ajeel said he met with senior representatives from leading global investment and asset management firms, including Goldman Sachs, BlackRock, Franklin Templeton, and Investcorp.

Discussions focused on Kuwait's economic environment, available investment opportunities, and the growing attractiveness of its capital mar-

ket to foreign investors.

Al-Ajeel stressed Kuwait's clear vision to create a stable and competitive economic climate through legislative and regulatory reforms, with strong support from the Council of Ministers.

He highlighted the development of Kuwait's financial markets, noting that market capitalization rose from USD 131 billion in 2023 to around USD 175 billion in 2025, with annual growth averaging 14.5 percent, while trading values reached USD 87 billion in 2025. Foreign investor ownership also increased to approximately USD 27 billion, reflecting rising international confidence.

Al-Ajeel pointed to key market infrastructure reforms implemented in July 2025 under Capital Markets Authority Decision No. 101 of 2025, as well as the new digital trade law, which was welcomed by global investors as a major step toward supporting the digital economy.

He concluded by reaffirming Kuwait's commitment to strengthening dialogue and partnerships with international investment institutions to support economic development and position Kuwait as a leading regional investment hub.

Also:

DAVOS: Kuwait's Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalifa Al-Ajeel discussed on Friday with Tunisian Minister of Economy and Planning Samir Abdelhafidh ways to strengthen bilateral relations and expand horizons of economic, trade, and investment cooperation.

This came during a meeting on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, where they tackled economic cooperation between Kuwait and Tunisia.

They discussed opportunities to enhance joint investment and encourage partnerships between both countries, particularly in priority sectors like tourism, industry, and renewable energy.

Minister Al-Ajeel emphasized the importance of developing the volume and quality of trade between the two countries and working together to expand the need for cooperation.

For his part, Minister Abdelhafidh emphasized strengthening the interests of both countries and supporting their economic stability.

Both sides emphasized the strength of the historical relations between Kuwait and Tunisia, which are built around trust and mutual understanding.

Competitive interest rates & monthly returns

Gulf Bank promotes saving culture & financial stability

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: As part of its support for the Diraya campaign, which aims to enhance financial awareness and promote sound financial planning for the future, Gulf Bank continues its efforts to encourage members of the community to adopt a culture of saving as a fundamental step toward achieving financial stability and economic security.

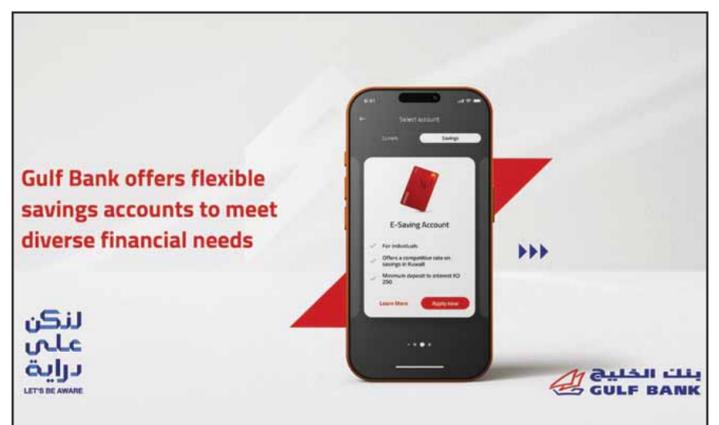
Gulf Bank urges all segments of society to take advantage of its savings accounts, which are designed to meet various financial needs and help build regular savings in a safe and flexible manner. These accounts offer competitive benefits that contribute to achieving customers' future goals with confidence and peace of mind.

The bank also encourages customers to rely on Gulf Bank credit cards for their daily transactions, as they provide ease of use and security, in addition to benefiting from the Gulf Points program. This program rewards customers with points for card usage, which can be redeemed for a wide range of rewards and services, making spending smarter and more rewarding.

Gulf Bank emphasizes that financial awareness begins with simple and well-thought-out choices, such as regular saving and responsible use of credit cards. Accordingly, the bank offers a variety of savings accounts that help customers save and earn regular returns, including:

■ e-Savings Account with a minimum balance of KWD 250 to earn interest credited monthly, offering competitive interest rates on savings.

■ Gulf Savings Account with a minimum balance of KWD 500 to earn interest calculated daily and credited monthly.



Gulf Bank offers flexible savings accounts to meet diverse financial needs

■ Golden Investor Account with a minimum balance of KWD 500 to earn interest calculated daily and credited monthly.

■ red Youth Account, specially designed for high school, college, and university students aged between 15 and 25.

■ neo Children's Account, specifically designed to teach children the value of saving and financial responsibility from an early age.

■ Dana Millionaire Account, the most popular savings and prize draw account in Kuwait since 1998.

Competitive Deposits, which are considered one of the key channels for saving and achieving attractive returns.

In addition to these options, customers can benefit from the wide range of advantages offered by the Gulf Points program, including cash redemption, booking airline tickets and hotels, car rentals worldwide, as well as an innovative e-store—the first of its kind in the banking sector—that allows products to be priced directly using points.

It is worth noting that the Gulf Points program promotes a culture of saving within the community by encouraging customers to use credit cards instead of debit cards, rewarding them for their daily purchases and contributing to enhanced savings in an innovative and effective manner.

Real GDP grows 3.5% after years of contraction

World Bank: Lebanon enters modest recovery in 2025

WASHINGTON, Jan 24, (KUNA): World Bank Lebanon Economic Monitor (LEM) showed that Lebanon's economy registered in 2025 positive growth signaling the start of a modest recovery following years of severe contraction.

Real GDP expanded by 3.5 percent in 2025, reflecting early signs of macroeconomic stabilization, a rebound in tourism, and the impacts of crucial - though uneven, reform progress, according to the latest LEM, released on Thursday.

The Winter 2025 edition of the LEM titled "A Fragile Rebound" highlights notable progress on Lebanon's reform agenda with the passing of important economic and judicial laws and key appointments in the civil service, which contributed to greater political and institutional stabilization.

Despite these achievements, critical structural reforms, including the "financial gap law" and key sector reforms, are still pending.

These reforms are crucial for Lebanon to restore macroeconomic and financial stability and strengthen the impact and effectiveness of sectoral reforms. "Lebanon's recent economic gain underscores the importance of ongoing

reforms," said Jean-Christophe Carret, World Bank Country Director for the Middle East Department.

"Sustaining this fragile recovery will require pursuing swifter and more ambitious macro-financial and sectoral reforms to achieve lasting stability and inclusive growth," he noted.

The LEM revised Lebanon's real GDP growth for 2025 downward to 3.5 percent (from an original estimate of 4.7 percent in Spring 2025) due to a weaker than expected tourism season given the ongoing conflict, subdued investment and limited reconstruction spending amid uncertainty.

The 2025 economic upturn was driven mainly by increased private consumption - supported by strong remittance inflows and greater dollarization of wages, tourism, as well as renewed activity in real estate and construction.

Exchange rate stability has held since August 2023, supported by improved tax compliance and prudent fiscal management.

Lebanon's debt-to-GDP ratio is projected to decline in 2025 due to higher

nominal GDP, though public debt remains high and the country is still out of international capital markets.

The fiscal balance is expected to reach surplus territory on a cash basis, yet revenue mobilization and progressive taxation require further enhancement.

Headline inflation is projected to fall to 15.2 percent in 2025 and is expected to reach single digits in 2026 for the first time since 2019.

This downward trend is attributed to the stabilization of the exchange rate and the near-complete dollarization of consumer prices, despite persistent inflation in domestic service sectors such as rent and education.

Looking ahead, Lebanon's economic momentum is forecast to continue, with real GDP growth projected at four percent in 2026 - provided reform efforts persist, and modest reconstruction inflows materialize, and political stability is maintained.

Remittances and tourism will remain critical growth drivers, but risks - including delay on critical reforms and regional instability, threaten the fragile recovery, the report added.

In strategic partnership with Al Rashoud & Al Ramadan



ABK launches the 'ABK Build' platform



Signing of the agreement between Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait and Dar Al-Rashoud & Al-Ramadan Engineering Consultancy.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: In a strategic step aimed at redefining the concept of housing finance and simplifying customers' journey toward building their lifetime home, Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) has launched the ABK Build platform, specifically designed to meet the needs of customers planning to build their home of a lifetime. The platform offers financing solutions and exclusive, exceptional discounts in collaboration with numerous companies across various sectors.

The new ABK Build platform is distinguished by its ease and speed in serving customers, offering them a wide range of options to secure the best benefits, products, and solutions. This is achieved through collaboration with a select group of specialized partners in the local market, enabling customers to enjoy a seamless experience in building their dream home from design to execution.

This initiative comes at a time when the housing sector is witnessing growing demand for construction solutions. The platform aims to reduce the time and effort associated with selecting designs by establishing strategic partnerships with leading companies contracted to provide key construction requirements.

All details and discounts will be available within the platform, allowing customers to access them quickly, as part of the Bank's commitment to providing the financial solutions customers need during the construction phase.

The launch of this platform represents a qualitative addition to the diverse financing solutions offered by ABK, in line with its commitment as a leading and responsible banking institution in the Kuwaiti market. The bank recognizes that building a home is the most important investment in a customer's life and therefore designs flexible and fast solutions to ensure a smooth transition from the planning phase to occupancy, while maintaining the highest standards of financial stability.

Through the ABK Build platform, the Bank will establish numerous partnerships that give



Mohammad Al Qattan, Chief Consumer Officer

- Mohammad Al Qattan: The launch of the ABK Build platform comes amid housing developments in the local market
- Emad Al Rashoud: The partnership with the Bank reflects our shared values and continuous pursuit of customer satisfaction

customers access to various facilities and exclusive discounts on engineering designs, building materials, furniture, and more. On this occasion, the bank announced its strategic partnership with Dar Al-Rashoud & Al-Ramadan Engineering Consultancy to deliver distinguished and exceptional services that enhance the integrated banking experience provided by the bank, meet customer needs, and offer solutions that facilitate banking and financial transactions at the highest standards.

Through this strategic partnership, customers can use the app to select from approximately 195 different engineering designs that meet their diverse requirements in less than three minutes, compared to an average period of one month. This reflects ABK's ongoing commitment to keeping pace with the continuous growth of the construction sector, which includes the development of multiple new cities to meet citizens' housing demands.

Through the ABK Build platform, the Bank aims to strengthen its position as the preferred financing partner in the local market by offering an integrated experience that starts from plan-



ning and extends through execution. The platform is designed to suit individual customer needs, whether they seek to renovate, furnish, restore their homes, or build from scratch.

The Bank offers the ABK Build platform through its website and mobile application, enabling customers to benefit from its various features when transferring their salaries to the bank and applying for a loan, subject to meeting the minimum requirements in accordance with approved regulatory guidelines.

On this occasion, Mohammad Al Qattan, Chief Consumer Officer at ABK, said, "We continuously strive to leverage the best opportunities in the market to strengthen our position in the banking sector, enhance customer trust, and attract customers to conduct their various banking and financial transactions through the diverse solutions we

provide."

Al Qattan added that the launch of ABK Build comes at a time when the market is anticipating the introduction of mortgage loans in the near future, and amid significant developments in Kuwait's real estate sector, as relevant authorities work to introduce more modern real estate solutions to meet citizens' needs.

He expressed pride in the partnerships the bank will establish under the program, starting with Dar Al-Rashoud & Al-Ramadan Engineering Consultancy, to deliver banking solutions that keep pace with the evolving needs of customers over time.

Al Qattan noted that the agreement reflects the extensive expertise of Dar Al Rashoud & Al Ramadan Engineering Consultancy and the increasing demand for engineering services related to construction. He added that the firm's

team will work to meet the needs of ABK customers by enabling them to select engineering designs that align with their aspirations at the beginning of their journey to build their lifetime home, in accordance with the highest industry standards.

He further explained that ABK, in collaboration with Dar Al Rashoud & Al Ramadan Engineering Consultancy, will offer exclusive promotions on a range of engineering services, including various engineering plans and supervision services, to meet customer needs in the engineering consultancy domain.

He noted that this agreement adds to the suite of solutions offered by the Bank to serve customers in the real estate sector under the ABK Build program. These include a housing loan of up to KD 70,000, mortgage loans for customers in the United Arab

Emirates, and other solutions. He reaffirmed the bank's commitment to introducing additional new services in the coming period to attract more customers to its growing family.

Exclusive Services
For his part, Emad Al Rashoud, Chairman of Dar Al Rashoud & Al Ramadan Engineering Consultancy, stated, "We are pleased to collaborate with ABK to provide distinguished and exclusive services to its customers and help them obtain the best engineering consultations related to building their dream homes.

This partnership reflects the shared values between us and the Bank, as well as our continuous pursuit of customer satisfaction and keeping pace with developments across the real estate and engineering sectors, in a way that benefits all parties."

He added that Dar Al Rashoud & Al Ramadan Engineering Consultancy offers a wide range of solutions, including engineering design preparation and supervision of construction project execution. He noted that the firm is accredited by the Kuwait Society of Engineers, the Central Tenders Committee, and Kuwait Municipality, confirming the readiness of its team to deliver the best services to Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait customers in the coming period.

Continuing Innovation
This initiative reflects ABK's commitment to being part of its customers' journey toward achieving their housing aspirations, in line with its steadfast dedication to continuous innovation and delivering excellence. The bank's strategy aims to strengthen its position as a leading financial institution that places customer needs at the core of its priorities, offering innovative solutions that enhance the banking experience and support customers' aspirations for a more stable and prosperous life.

ABK also continues to develop its banking services through collaboration with reputable and leading entities across various sectors, contributing to the creation of more innovative solutions and services that enhance the banking experience at all levels.



A group photo taken on the sidelines of the partnership announcement.

Board of Peace sparks concern among Western allies

Trump stirs talk of 'new world order' as leaders signal shifting global alliances

WASHINGTON, Jan 24, (AP): President Donald Trump gives. And he takes away.

Offended by Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's increasingly assertive posture toward the U.S., Trump revoked an invitation to join his Board of Peace. Many Western allies are suspicious of the organization, which is chaired by Trump and was initially formed to focus on maintaining the ceasefire in Israel's war with Hamas but has grown into something skeptics fear could rival the United Nations.

Appearing at the World Economic Forum, Trump spoke of imposing tariffs on Switzerland - which he ultimately lowered - because the country's leader "rubbed me the wrong way" during a phone call. Before shelving sweeping tariffs on multiple European countries, Trump pressed Denmark to "say yes" to the U.S. push to control Greenland "and we will be very appreciative. Or you can say no and we will remember," he said, imperiling the NATO alliance.

Over his decades in public life, Trump has never been one for niceties. But even by his standards, the tumult of the past week stood out because it crystallized his determination to erase the rules-based order that has governed U.S. foreign policy - and by extension most of the Western world - since World War II.

The president and his supporters have dismissed that approach as inefficient, overly focused on compromise and unresponsive to the needs of people contending with rapid economic change. But in its place, Trump is advancing a system that is poorly understood and could prove far less stable, driven by the whims of a single, often mercurial, leader who regularly demonstrates that personal flattery or animus can shape his decisions.

Returning to the U.S. from Davos, home to the World Economic Forum, Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska said the phrase she heard "over and over" was that "we are entering this new world order" as she described a sense of confusion among allies.

"It may be you just had a bad telephone call with the president and now you're going to have tariffs directed at you," she told reporters. "This lack of stability and reliability, I think, is causing what were traditionally reliable trade partners to be saying to other countries, 'Hey, maybe you and I should talk because I'm not sure about what's going on with the United States.'"

The Trump-centric approach to governing is hardly surprising for someone who accepted his first Republican presidential nomination in 2016 by declaring that "I alone can fix" the nation's problems. As he settles into his second term with a far more confident demeanor than his first, he has delighted supporters with his to-the-victor-goes-the-spoils style.

Steve Bannon, Trump's former adviser, recently told the Atlantic that Trump is pursuing a "maximalist strategy" and that he must keep going "until you meet resistance."

"And we haven't met any resistance," Bannon said.

That's certainly true in Washington, where the Republican-controlled Congress has done little to check Trump's impulses. But leaders of other countries, who have spent much of Trump's administration trying to find ways to work with him, are increasingly vocal.

Carney is quickly emerging as a leader of a movement for countries to find ways to link up and counter the U.S. Speaking in Davos ahead of Trump, Carney said, "Middle powers must act together because if you are not at the table, you are on the menu."

"In a world of great power rivalry, the countries in between have a choice: to compete with each other for favor or to combine to create a third path with impact," he continued. "We should not allow the rise of hard powers to blind us to the fact that the power of legitimacy, integrity, and rules will remain strong - if we choose to wield it together."

Trump did not take kindly to those remarks, responding with threats in Davos before yanking the Board of Peace invitation.

"Canada lives because of the United States," Trump said. "Remember that, Mark, the next time you make your statements."

Carney, however, was unbowed, speaking of Canada as "an example to a world at sea" as he crafted a potential template for other world leaders navigating a new era.

"We can show that another way is possible, that the arc of history isn't destined to be warped toward authoritarianism and exclusion," he said in a speech before a cabinet retreat in Quebec City.

In the UK, Prime Minister Keir Starmer blasted Trump on Friday for "insulting and frankly appalling" comments in which he expressed doubt that NATO would support the U.S. if requested. The president seemingly ignored

that the only time Article 5 of NATO's founding treaty, which requires all member countries to help another member under threat, was invoked was after the 9/11 attacks on the U.S.

Referring to non-US troops, Trump told Fox Business Network, "You know, they'll say they sent some troops to Afghanistan, or this or that, and they did, they stayed a little back, a little off the front lines."

Starmer, noting the 457 British personnel who died and those with life-long injuries, said he will "never forget their courage, their bravery and the sacrifice they made for their country." Denmark, which Trump has belittled as "ungrateful" for U.S. protection during World War II, had the highest per capita death toll among coalition forces in Afghanistan.

His tactics have raised fears that Trump is imposing long-term damage on the U.S. standing in the world and encouraging countries to rethink their alliances and deepen their ties with China. Carney already traveled there earlier this month to meet with President Xi Jinping.

"China's leadership watched an American president fight with allies, insult world leaders, and engage in bizarre antics, and thought to themselves - this is nothing but good for us," Jake Sullivan, former President Joe Biden's national security adviser, said in an email.

The administration is showing no sign of backing down. The Pentagon released a defense strategy late Friday telling allies to handle their own security. And Trump on Saturday threatened to impose a 100% tariff on goods imported from Canada if the country went ahead with its China trade deal.

Sen. Chris Coons of Delaware, a Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee, was in Davos and participated in a bipartisan delegation to Denmark with Murkowski that was intended to show unity amid Trump's bid for Greenland. Recalling his conversations with other leaders, he told reporters on Friday that Trump has shown he only backs down when countries like China "showed toughness and a resiliency."

"Those who were accommodating and who negotiated in good faith, like the EU, which did not impose retaliatory tariffs, seemed to have not won any of his respect," Coons said. "They can reach their own conclusions, but it would seem to me that trying to find a way to accommodate him when the foundation of his demands about Greenland is unshinged ... seem to me to suggest a course of action."

Tensions escalate between Trump & Carney

Trump threatens 100% tariff on Canadian imports

WASHINGTON, Jan 24, (AP): President Donald Trump on Saturday threatened to impose a 100% tariff on goods imported from Canada if America's northern neighbor went ahead with its trade deal with China.

Trump said in a social media post that if Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney "thinks he is going to make Canada a 'Drop Off Port' for China to send goods and products into the United States, he is sorely mistaken."

While Trump has waged a trade war over the past year, Canada this month negotiated a deal to lower tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles in return for lower import taxes on Canadian farm products.

Trump initially had said that agreement was what Carney "should be doing and it's a good thing for him to sign a trade deal."

Carney's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Trump's threat came amid an escalating war of words with Carney as the Republican president's push to acquire Greenland strained the NATO alliance. Trump had commented while in Davos, Switzerland, this week that "Canada lives because of the United States." Carney shot back that his nation can be an example that the world does not have to bend toward autocratic tendencies.

Trump later revoked his invitation to Carney to join the president's "Board of Peace" that he is forming to try to resolve global conflicts.

Trump's push to acquire Greenland has come after he has repeatedly needled Canada over its sovereignty and suggested it also be absorbed the United States as a 51st state.

He resumed that this week, posting an altered image on social media showing a map of the United States that included Canada, Venezuela, Greenland and Cuba as part of its territory.

In his message Saturday, Trump continued his provocations by calling Canada's leader "Governor Carney." Trump had used the same nickname for Carney's predecessor, Justin Trudeau, and his use of it toward Carney was the latest mark of their soured relationship.

Carney has not yet reached a deal with Trump to reduce some of the tariffs that he has imposed on key sectors of the Canadian economy. But Canada has been protected by the heaviest impact of Trump's tariffs by the Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement. That trade agreement is up for a review this year.

IMF forecasts 3.3% growth but warns against complacency

Global leaders urge growth focus amid Davos turmoil

DAVOS, Jan 24, (AP): Leading global economic policymakers at the World Economic Forum in Davos urged countries and businesses to filter out the turmoil from a week of clashes with the Trump administration and focus on boosting growth and fighting inequality in a world where trade will continue to flow and international cooperation is still badly needed.

The global economy is showing unexpected resilience despite the noise, European Central Bank head Christine Lagarde, International Monetary Fund head Kristalina Georgieva and World Trade Organization head Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said in a panel discussion Friday. But while growth is holding up, troubles like worrisome levels of government debt and inequality loom.

That resilience continues despite disruptions from US trade policy under President Donald Trump, who roiled the weeklong forum with threats to impose tariffs on countries supporting Greenland against a US takeover bid, then withdrew the tariff proposal.

What is now needed, they said, are efforts to boost growth to offset heavy debt levels around the world and ensure that disruptive technologies like artificial intelligence don't worsen inequality or devastate labor markets. And Europe needs to boost productivity and improve its business climate for investment.

Georgieva said the IMF's recently raised forecast of 3.3% global growth for this year was "beautiful but not enough... do not fall into complacency."

She said that level of growth wasn't enough to wear down "the debt that is hanging around our necks" and that governments need to take care of "those

who are falling off the wagon."

"We have to look at Plan B, or Plans B," said Lagarde. "I think we've had a lot of noise this week... and we need to distinguish the signal from the noise... we should be talking about alternatives."

She responded to the "Europe bashing" heard during the summit by saying, "we should say thank you to the bashers" for underlining Europe's need to improve its investment climate and promote innovation.

Lagarde downplayed a provocative speech at the forum from Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, who called Trump's approach a "rupture" with an international order based on rules, trade and cooperation and said that way of doing business was "not coming back." "From an economic and business point of view we depend on each other," she said.

Okonjo-Iweala pointed out that 72% of global trade still takes place under WTO rules, where countries agree to charge all trading partners the same tariffs. That's despite "the biggest disruption in 80 years."

"Resiliency is built into the system, and that is showing up," she said. She conceded that "I don't think we'll go back to where we were."

Georgieva offered a historical perspective: "We have always traded and we will always trade. Trade is like a river, water. You put obstacle, it goes around it. Yes, it would be different, but there would be always the necessity of Dr. Ngozi to look over world trade."

Georgieva also conceded things had changed for good: "How many of you have seen the movie, 'The Wizard of Oz?' We are not in Kansas any more."

Von der Leyen: 'We will be ready when they are ready'

EU ready to provisional free trade deal with Mercosur

FRANKFURT, Jan 24, (AP): The European Union is willing to implement a sweeping free trade agreement with the Mercosur group of South American countries on a provisional basis, the head of the EU's executive commission said Friday, despite a vote by the EU parliament to delay ratification for legal review.

The EU would be ready to act as soon as at least one Mercosur country ratifies, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said at the conclusion of a summit of EU leaders in Brussels where several national leaders raised the issue.

"There is a clear interest that we ensure that the benefits of this agreement apply as soon as possible," von der Leyen said at a news conference. "In short, we will be ready when they are ready."

No formal decision to implement the deal had been taken yet, she said.

At the same news conference, Antonio Costa,

head of the EU council of member governments, said the executive commission had the authority to move ahead on interim implementation.

A decision to do that is likely to provoke criticism from opponents of the deal, led by France. On Wednesday, the parliament narrowly voted to refer the trade deal to the European Court of Justice for legal review, holding up ratification since the parliament cannot vote on ratification until the court rules. That could take months.

The deal is central to Brussels' plan to form trade relations outside a historic dependency on the U.S. in the wake of antagonism and aggression during U.S. President Donald Trump's second term. They've struck deals from Japan to Mexico and are expected to sign a similar accord with India later this month.

Supported by South America's cattle-raising countries and European industrial interests, the accord is aimed at gradually eliminating more than

90% of tariffs on goods ranging from Argentine beef to German cars, creating one of the world's largest free trade zones and making shopping cheaper for more than 700 million consumers.

France, Europe's major agricultural producer, wanted stronger protections for farmers and has sought to delay the pact.

However German Chancellor Friedrich Merz called the vote to delay "regrettable" and has urged provisional application of the agreement.

Ratification is considered all but guaranteed in South America, where the agreement has broad support.

Mercosur consists of the region's two biggest economies, Argentina and Brazil, as well as Paraguay and Uruguay. Bolivia, the bloc's newest member, is not included in the trade deal, but could join in the coming years. Venezuela has been suspended from the bloc and is not included in the agreement.

Rate decision passed with 8-1 board vote

BOJ keeps policy rate unchanged at 0.75%

TOKYO, Jan 24, (KUNA): Japan's central bank decided Friday to leave its short-term policy rate unchanged at around 0.75 percent, while upgrading its economic outlook for fiscal 2026.

At the end of its two-day policy meeting, Bank of Japan's (BOJ) Governor Kazuo Ueda and his eight board colleagues voted 8-1 to maintain the benchmark rate, holding the policy the BOJ made in December, according to a statement released by the central bank.

Last month, the BOJ raised the rate to around 0.75 percent from 0.5 percent, the highest level in about 30 years.

Meanwhile, in its quarterly outlook report issued after the gathering, the BOJ upgraded its growth projection of the world's third-largest economy for fiscal 2025 through March, saying gross domestic product (GDP) will grow at a 0.9 percent annual pace, up from an earlier estimate of 0.7 percent it released in October.

The central bank also revised upward its forecasts for fiscal 2026 to 1.0 percent expansion, compared with the previous 0.7 percent estimate.

"Japan's economy is likely to continue growing moderately, with overseas economies returning to a growth path, and as a virtuous cycle from income to spending gradually intensifies, supported by factors such as the government's economic measures and accommodative financial conditions," the BOJ said in the report.

The central bank also cautioned against uncertainties, saying, "Risks to the outlook include developments in overseas economic activity and prices under the impact of trade and other policies in each jurisdiction, wage- and price-setting behavior of firms, and developments in financial and foreign exchange markets." It is necessary to pay due attention to the impact of these risks on Japan's economic activity and prices, the bank noted.

NBK Wealth: Geopolitics & portfolio construction

Geopolitics as the Foundation of Portfolio Construction

For two decades, investors operated under the banner of hyper-globalization. This era was defined by a core belief: the world was becoming a seamlessly connected, predictable marketplace. In this environment, geopolitical tension was dismissed as "noise", a temporary distraction from the march of efficiency and low-interest-rate growth. Today, that paradigm has collapsed. We have moved from an era of maximizing efficiency to one of ensuring resilience. Geopolitics is no longer a minor consideration; it is the primary lens through which modern portfolios must be constructed.

The End of Easy Money and the Birth of Fragmentation

The most profound shift is the end of the low-inflation, low-interest-rate environment that followed the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. This change has introduced three major shifts that make old investment playbooks obsolete:

1. Higher Interest Rates: The era of "free money" is over, which means companies that survived only on cheap debt are now struggling.

2. Persistent Inflationary Pressure: The drive to bring manufacturing back home ("reshoring") and the rising cost of labor signal a permanent departure from the lowcost era of the 2010s.

3. Geopolitical Fragmentation: The global economy is fracturing into distinct blocs. These blocs prioritize supply chain security over absolute price efficiency.

A New Approach to Diversification

The classic 60/40 portfolio, 60% equities and 40% bonds, was the industry gold standard for decades. However, the fundamental correlation that supported this strategy is broken. Historically, when equities fell, bonds rose. Today, inflation is one of the primary risks. When it spikes, both equities and bonds often decline in tandem, leaving investors without a safety net.

Resilience now requires moving toward assets that can absorb geopolitical friction:

■ Infrastructure as the New Safe Haven: Essential assets like power grids, water systems, and transport hubs provide steady, inflation-linked income. These "real assets" offer meaningful protection that government bonds now provide to a lesser extent.

■ The Private Credit Boom: As traditional banks become more cautious, private lending has emerged as a modern version of fixed income investing. These loans often feature floating interest rates, ensuring returns remain robust even as central banks raise rates to fight inflation.

The Shift to Critical Infrastructure

In this new era, government policy has replaced consumer trends as the primary market driver. National mandates are creating pockets of guaranteed



growth, particularly in Sovereign AI. Nations are no longer content to rely on foreign tech giants; they are racing to build domestic, end-to-end AI frameworks to ensure data residency and national security.

This has triggered a massive infrastructure surge. Investment is flowing beyond semiconductor manufacturers and into the "physicality" of AI: data center operators, cooling systems, and specialized real estate. Furthermore, the immense power demands of AI are transforming the utilities sector. What was once a historically low-growth, defensive part of a portfolio is now a high-growth engine. This shift has specifically revived the nuclear power sector, as governments seek consistent, low-carbon energy capable of supporting massive AI workloads.

The Rise of the "Global Link" Nations

As the United States and China increasingly decouple their technological and economic alliances, trade is not disappearing; it is being rerouted. This has given rise to "Connector Economies", nations such as India, Vietnam, and Mexico, which maintain strategic neutrality.

These countries serve as vital bridges between competing power blocs, hosting Western and Eastern manufacturing side-by-side.

For investors, these regions offer a way to capture global growth without being forced to "pick a side" in the ongoing geopolitical rivalry. They represent the essential bottlenecks of the new global trade map.

Key Takeaway: Investing in a Divided World

This shifting geopolitical and technological landscape suggests a need for a different investment approach. Simply "owning the whole market" may face new challenges. In a fragmented world, high returns are often observed in high-conviction choices involving "National Champions", companies essential to a country's security, and Real Assets. The rules seem to be redrawing; understanding the geopolitical "why" may now be as vital as analyzing a balance sheet. Disciplined investors might recognize that fragmentation is not just a risk, it could be a new source of growth.

What's On

SPOTLIGHT

Got a birthday or event?

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



Photos from the inauguration of the week-long 'India Utsav' celebrations at Lulu Hypermarket.

Week-long festivities bring special offers and discounts

Lulu Hypermarket Kuwait concludes grand 'India Utsav' celebrations

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: Lulu Hypermarket celebrated the spirit of Indian Republic Day with a grand week-long "India Utsav", held from 21st to 27th January 2026 across its outlets in Kuwait. The celebration drew enthusiastic crowds, offering a perfect blend of culture, cuisine, fashion, and exciting shopping offers.

The festivities were inaugurated on 22nd January 2026 at Lulu Hypermarket, Al-Rai, by the Indian Ambassador to Kuwait, H.E. Paramita Tripathi, alongside Lulu Kuwait's top management and officials. The event commenced with a traditional Indian welcome music band, setting a lively and festive tone for the celebrations.

Visitors enjoyed amazing discounts and special offers on a wide range

of Indian branded products, including groceries, meat, fruits and vegetables, health and beauty items, fresh and frozen foods, fashion and garments, footwear, and more. A flat 25% discount on sarees, churidars, and lehengas added to the excitement, delighting shoppers across all age groups.

The celebration also featured an Indian Ethnic Wear Fashion Show and an Indian Patriotic Group Song Competition, with participation from more than 15 Indian schools in Kuwait. The winners of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd prizes received gift vouchers and trophies, while all other participants were awarded participation certificates, recognizing their talent and enthusiasm.

The event's special attractions included traditional Indian monument decorations and displays, creating a vibrant cultural ambiance; Indian special food stalls and free sampling counters, offering visitors a taste of authentic Indian flavors; displays of Indian organic products, highlighting the richness of Indian agriculture; and exclusive Indian ethnic wear collection stalls, featuring a variety of traditional and contemporary fashion.

Lulu Hypermarket's "India Utsav" successfully brought together the Indian community in Kuwait, celebrating heritage, culture, and national pride. Shoppers and participants alike enjoyed an immersive experience combining entertainment, education, and shopping delights, making the event a memorable tribute to Indian Republic Day.

Over 500 attend program on spiritual guidance

IMA Kuwait commemorates Al Isra wal Mi'raj with community program

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: Muslim Ummah has been designated as "Khair-e-Ummah" (the Best of Nations) not for privilege, but for the sole purpose of serving humanity. The responsibility of this Ummah is to work for the welfare of all people - relieving societal burdens, guiding mankind toward justice and liberating humanity from all forms of exploitation and servitude, were the opening remarks of the guest speaker Professor Mohammad Saleem Engineer while addressing the gathering on the occasion of Jalsa Al-Isra Wal-Mi'raj organized by Indian Muslim Association (IMA) Kuwait on Thursday, Jan 15, at Masjid Muzaini, Salmiya, Kuwait. More than 500 people attended the program showing a strong community engagement and spiritual enthusiasm.

The program was held under the supervision of Kuwait's Foreign Relations Department and aimed to highlight the spiritual, moral and civilizational lessons of the historic event of Isra wal Mi'raj, while ad-



dressing contemporary challenges faced by the Muslim Ummah.

The program commenced with the recitation of the Holy Qur'an by Master Abdul Rafe, followed by its Urdu translation, setting a deeply reflective and spiritual tone.

Professor Saleem Engineer, National General Secretary of the Forum for Democracy and Communal



Photos from the event.

Amity (FDCA) and visiting scholar from India further highlighted that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was sent as "Rahmatul-lil-Aalameen" (Mercy to all Worlds), making it clear that Islam's message is universal and meant for all of humanity, not restricted to any single group or nation.

He further emphasized that justice

is the foundation of lasting peace and Islam presents a comprehensive system that organizes life from the individual to the collective level in a society. Concluding his address, Professor Saleem called upon Muslims to convey the message of Islam through their character and conduct, urging them to embody the Prophetic model in their personal lives, fam-

ily environments and professional dealings. He reminded the audience that the life of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is the "Usawah Hasanah" (the best example) and that only by living this example with sincerity and integrity, the Muslim Ummah can fulfill its mission of guiding humanity toward peace, dignity and success.

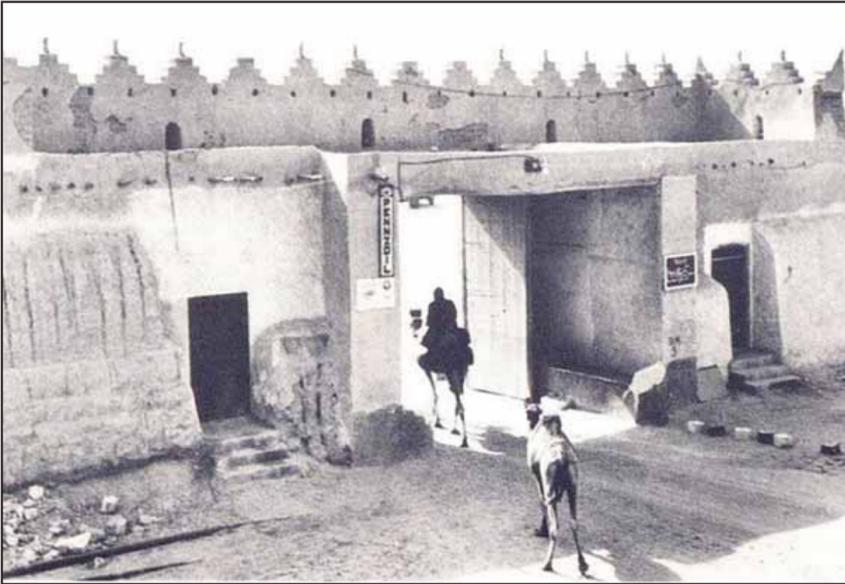
Shaikh Waleed Umri, the General Secretary of IMA Kuwait and a renowned Khateeb in Kuwait delivered his speech on the topic of 'Isra wal Mi'raj: Guidance for today's challenges.' In his inspiring speech, Shaikh presented Isra wal Mi'raj not merely as a miraculous historical event, but as a divine roadmap for the revival and progress of the Ummah. He explained that this journey of Isra wal Mi'raj occurred during one of the most difficult phases of the Prophet Muhammad's life (PBUH), conveying a powerful message of hope, perseverance and complete reliance on Allah, especially during times of hardship.

Mohammed Umar, the IMA President, while delivering his concluding remarks, expressed his sincere gratitude to the speakers, organizers, volunteers and the large gathering of attendees for making the event Meaningful and successful. He reiterated IMA Kuwait's commitment to organizing programs that nurture spiritual awareness, moral responsibility and community development.

The program concluded with the distribution of food packets among the attendees, reflecting the spirit of fellowship and community service.

IMA Kuwait, an Indian socio-religious organization, operates under the patronage of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs Kuwait. It focuses on providing a platform for the spiritual and social enhancement of expatriates living in Kuwait through various programs and social gatherings. It looks forward to organizing more beneficial programs in the future, catering to the needs of the expatriate community, especially the Indian diaspora.

Kuwait's historic walls stand as symbols of unyielding resilience



Kuwait's historic walls, built over two centuries, stand as emblems of resilience, unity, and heritage.

KUNA photos



Guardians of the past



Kuwait's surviving gates stand as living witnesses to centuries of perseverance and the spirit of its people.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24, (KUNA): Over more than two centuries, Kuwait's epic of resilience was etched through three defensive walls whose story began in the 18th century, evolving from simple mud structures into enduring symbols of existence that embodied solidarity and documented pivotal moments in the history of the state and its people.

Construction of this historic landmark began in 1760, during the reign of Sheikh Abdullah bin Sabah (1762-1813), the first and second walls were built to protect Kuwait from external attacks.

The first wall extended 750 meters along the coastline north of the Bahita slope, the site of Seif Palace, its eastern boundary started from the shoreline opposite the current Ministry of Planning and curved in a semi-circular arc to the coast facing the Central Bank to the west.

The second wall stretched for 2,300 meters, enclosing an area of approximately 274 square kilometers, and was restored in 1845 after parts of it had collapsed.

Following the Battle of Hamdh, the entire population mobilized in an inspiring 60 day effort to build the

third wall in 1920. Each neighborhood constructed the section closest to it at night under the light of primitive lamps, with donkeys transporting mud, camels bringing water, and men chanting in public squares and performing the traditional Ardah dance (folkloric sword dance) that broke the stillness of the night.

Kuwait's walls were not merely silent barriers, but vibrant structures brought to life through their gates, known as Al-Dirwaza.

These imposing entrances were carefully designed to accommodate camel caravans laden with goods, serving as the city's beating heart by ensuring movement and security.

The gates were closed at sunset and reopened at dawn in a daily ritual that reflected the city's discipline and stature.

In 1957, with the launch of Kuwait's modern urban development, a difficult decision was taken to demolish the third wall to accommodate expansion, whereas the mud structure disappeared, its five gates remain standing amid modern buildings and green parks, living witnesses to the story of a people who refused to bend.

2025 sees return of long-unrecorded species

KEPS adds five bird species, Kuwait list rises to 424

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: The Bird Monitoring and Protection Team at the Kuwait Environment Protection Society (KEPS) on Saturday announced that the number of bird species recorded on Kuwait's bird list has risen to 424, after five new species were documented in 2025.

Team head Mohammad Shah said in a press statement following the group's final field tour in Al-Abrq, northwest Kuwait, that the outing aimed to complete the final annual report and review the latest observations, including counts and newly recorded species.

Shah said the team spotted 24 bird species during the tour, most of them winter visitors, including the European Robin and the Song Thrush, in addition to other wildlife such as the Barn Owl and the Sand Cat, which was documented in its natural habitat.

He noted that 2025 also saw the return of species not recorded for long periods, including the Greater White-fronted Goose, observed by team members Mohammad Al-Hudaina and Talal Al-Muwaizri in November.

Shah added that monitoring efforts recorded the return of Eversmann's Redstart, seen four times at separate locations including Al-Abrq, Al-Mutlaa and Al-Julaia late last year after a five-year absence, noting it is considered a rarely recorded species in Kuwait.

He said the data collected during the field tours were distributed into research lists on the global eBird platform in preparation for issuing Kuwait's 2025 annual bird monitoring report.



Left: The common goose, whose return to the Kuwaiti environment has been documented after a 10-year absence. Right: Red-shouldered bird



Left: The red-legged bird, which was seen in various locations including Al-Abrq, Al-Mutla' and Al-Julaia'a. Right: The woodcock bird that was spotted in the Kuwaiti environment.



KUNA photos

Variety

TAIPEI, Taiwan: Organizers delayed professional rock climber Alex Honnold's ropeless ascent of the Taipei 101 skyscraper for 24 hours due to weather, they said.

Honnold's free solo climb of the iconic building in Taiwan's capital city was supposed to be broadcast live on Netflix on Saturday local time, or Friday evening for viewers in the US.

But it was still raining in Taipei less than an hour before the event's scheduled start. Organizers have delayed Honnold's climb until Sunday morning in Taiwan, where the weather forecast shows sunnier skies.

Netflix said in their announcement that safety was their top priority. (AP)

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NEW YORK: Meta is halting teens' access to artificial intelligence characters, at least temporarily, the company said in a blog post Friday.

Meta Platforms Inc., which own Instagram and WhatsApp, said that starting in the "coming weeks," teens will no longer be able to access AI characters "until the updated experience is ready"

This applies to anyone who gave Meta a birthday that makes them a minor, as well as "people who claim to be adults but who we suspect are teens based on our age prediction technology."

The move comes the week before Meta - along with TikTok and Google's YouTube - is scheduled to stand trial in Los Angeles over its apps' harms to children.

Teens will still be able to access Meta's AI assistant, just not the characters. (AP)

□ □ □

DENVER: Investigators in Colorado confirmed Friday that the 2005 shooting death of journalist Hunter S. Thompson was a suicide, following a review requested by local authorities at the behest of his widow.

The probe, announced in September, was opened after Anita Thompson contacted the sheriff for the Aspen area, Michael Buglione, with "new concerns and potential information regarding the investigation" into Thompson's death, the Colorado Bureau of Investigation said.

The bureau did not explain what that information was, but it noted that the review found that his body "was not moved or 'staged' after death." (AP)

□ □ □

NEW YORK: Renée Fleming has withdrawn from two scheduled May appearances at the Kennedy Center, the latest in a wave of cancellations since President Donald Trump ousted the previous leadership and the new leadership's announcement that the venue would be renamed the Trump Kennedy Center.

The Grammy-winning soprano was to have appeared with conductor James Gaffigan and the National Symphony Orchestra. Her decision is unsurprising; a year ago she resigned as "Artistic Advisor at Large," citing the forced departures of Kennedy Center Chair David Rubenstein and its president, Deborah Rutter. The center itself referred to "a scheduling conflict" as the reason she dropped out of the May concerts. (AP)

HEALTH/SCIENCE

Conference focuses on pharmacy innovation, patient safety

Kuwait participates in 7th Qatar Int'l Pharmacy Conference

DOHA, Jan 24, (KUNA): The Kuwait Pharmaceutical Association (KUPHA) participated with a delegation of elite pharmacists, headed by the association's president Dr. Ahmad Taqi in the 7th Qatar International Pharmacy Conference (7th QIPC), Friday.

The conference brings together pharmacists, researchers, and healthcare leaders to discuss developments and innovations that contribute to the advancement of pharmacy practice, enhance drug safety, and improve healthcare quality.

President of the KUPHA Dr. Ahmad Taqi emphasized to KUNA

the importance of representing Kuwait in regional and international events, noting that the Association's participation in representing Kuwaiti pharmacists to enhance their presence and keep up with latest practices.

In a similar statement, Secretary General of the KUPHA Dr. Faisal Al-Enezi added that the participation is an opportunity to explore ways of cooperation with various pharmaceutical entities.

The conference sessions are being held on January 23 and 24 in the Qatari Capital, Doha.



Delegation from the Kuwait Pharmaceutical Association.

KUNA photo



Photo of the conference participants with the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health.

KUNA photo

Kuwait hosts Eastern Mediterranean Region Conference on Toxicology

Kuwait's Poison Control Center a model for emergency care

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Mutairi disclosed that all types of poisoning are among the growing health challenges the modern health systems are currently facing due to the clinical burdens they impose and the repercussions that extend to the health security system and emergency preparedness and response, given the diversity of exposure sources and the emergence of new and complex patterns of poisoning cases.

Al-Mutairi revealed this in his opening speech at the Eastern Mediterranean Region Conference on Toxicology, which he delivered Thursday on behalf of Health Minister Dr. Ahmed Abdul Wahab Al-Awadhi who sponsored the event.

He affirmed the commitment of the ministry to develop the toxicology system and enhance its integration with emergency, critical care, surveillance, early warning and rapid response systems. He explained this move guarantees institutional readiness, rapid intervention, and improved efficiency and quality of

healthcare.

He stressed that the Kuwait Poison Control Center is a national model, considering its institutional affiliation with the Emergency Departments Council, hence, underscoring the vital role of toxicology in the national emergency system and its importance in supporting clinical decision-making in critical cases.

He revealed that since its opening in May 2023, the center has quickly proven its effectiveness and has become a fundamental component of the national healthcare system, through its continuous support of medical decision-making, enhancing the quality of care for poisoning cases, and establishing an integrated institutional approach in various relevant specializations.

Meanwhile, Conference Chairman Dr. Abdullah Al-Awmi disclosed that toxicology experts from 14 countries participated in the conference, with the support of the World Health Organization (WHO). The five-day event reflects its significance and regional standing.

He added that integrating the Kuwait Poison Control Center into the National Emergency and Disaster

Plan of the ministry was a milestone, contributing to the development of hospital preparedness plans for handling chemical and radiological incidents. He stressed that toxicology is now an integral part of the disaster management and health security system of the country.

Dr. Asaad Hafeez, representative of WHO in Kuwait, affirmed the organization's full commitment to support the Kuwait Poison Control Center. He took note of the continuous provision of technical assistance, facilitation of dialogue between countries and experts, resource mobilization, and ensuring the alignment of regional networks with global chemical health and safety initiatives.

He pointed out that a regional network of poison control centers enables countries to immediately exchange information on toxic substances, emerging threats, unusual poisoning cases, and best practices in clinical management. He stressed that poison centers play a vital role in diagnosis and treatment, data analysis, and acting as a chemical hazard observatory as per the International Health Regulations for preparedness and response to public health incidents.

COVID-19 failure cited

US completes withdrawal from WHO, halts funding

WASHINGTON, Jan 24, (Agencies): The US government announced its formal withdrawal from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the suspension of all funding to the world's largest global health body.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy said in a joint statement issued Thursday evening that "today, the United States withdrew from the World Health Organization (WHO), freeing itself from its constraints."

Washington said the move came in response to WHO failures during the COVID-19 pandemic and aims to address the damage those failures inflicted on the American people.

The statement said that, like many international organizations, WHO had abandoned its core mission and repeatedly acted against US interests despite Washington being a founding member and the organization's largest financial contributor.

It added that WHO adopted a bureaucratic political agenda driven by countries hostile to US interests and obstructed timely and accurate sharing of vital information that could have saved American lives.

The statement said WHO later concealed those failures under the pretext of acting in the interest of public health.

Rubio and Kennedy stressed that future US engagement with WHO will be limited to implementing the withdrawal and safeguarding the health and safety of the American people.

They confirmed that US funding for all WHO initiatives has fully stopped, along with the provision of American personnel to the organization.

The two officials said the United States will continue global

leadership in public health through direct, bilateral, results-based partnerships to save lives and protect Americans from infectious disease threats.

They reaffirmed continued cooperation with trusted countries and health institutions to enhance preparedness and protect communities through a more focused, transparent and effective model.

President Donald Trump had previously withdrawn the United States from dozens of international organizations, including several UN bodies, accusing them of hostility to US interests or wasteful use of American funds.

The US owes about \$280 million to the global health agency, according to WHO. And Trump administration officials acknowledge that they haven't finished working out some issues, such as lost access to data from other countries that could give America an early warning of a new pandemic.

The withdrawal will hurt the global response to new outbreaks and will hobble the ability of US scientists and pharmaceutical companies to develop vaccines and medicines against new threats, said Lawrence Gostin, a public health law expert at Georgetown University.

"In my opinion, it's the most ruinous presidential decision in my lifetime," he said.

The WHO is the United Nations' specialized health agency and is mandated to coordinate the response to global health threats, such as outbreaks of mpox, Ebola and polio. It also provides technical assistance to poorer countries; helps distribute scarce vaccines, supplies and treatments; and sets guidelines for hundreds of health conditions, including mental health and cancer.

Nearly every country in the world is a member.



Jane Smith-Wolcott, (center), widow of Challenger pilot Michael Smith and daughter Alison Smith Balch put flowers on a memorial during NASA's Day of Remembrance for the 40th Anniversary of the Challenger tragedy at the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex in Cape Canaveral, Fla., Thursday, Jan. 22. (AP)

NASA marks Challenger loss

Families of the astronauts lost in the space shuttle Challenger accident gathered back at the launch site Thursday to mark that tragic day 40 years ago.

All seven on board were killed when Challenger broke apart following liftoff on Jan. 28, 1986.

At the Kennedy Space Center memorial ceremony, Challenger pilot Michael Smith's daughter, Alison Smith Balch, said through tears that her life forever changed that frigid morning, as did many other lives. "In that sense," she told the hundreds of mourners, "we are all part of this story."

"Every day I miss Mike," added his widow, Jane Smith-Holcott, "every day's the same."

The bitter cold weakened the O-ring seals in Challenger's right solid rocket booster, causing the shuttle to rupture 73 seconds after liftoff. A dysfunctional culture at NASA contributed to that disaster and, 17 years later, shuttle Columbia's. Kennedy Space Center's deputy director Kelvin Manning said those humble and painful lessons require constant vigilance "now more than ever" with rockets soaring almost every day and the next astronaut moonshot just weeks away. (AP)

US govt bans human fetal tissue use in NIH research

WASHINGTON, Jan 24, (AP): The Trump administration announced Thursday that human fetal tissue derived from abortions can no longer be used in research funded by the National Institutes of Health.

The policy, long urged by anti-abortion groups, expands restrictions issued during President Donald Trump's first term.

The government has funded research involving fetal tissue for decades, under both Republican and Democratic administrations. The tissue, which otherwise would be thrown away, has been critical for certain research, including ways to fight HIV and cancer. Opponents of fetal tissue use say there are now alternatives, although many scientists say there aren't always adequate substitutes.

In a statement Thursday, NIH Director Jay Bhattacharya acknowledged the agency "has long maintained policies governing the responsible and limited use of human fetal tissue in biomedical research."

Its use has declined since 2019. The \$47 billion agency counted just 77 projects funded in 2024 that included fetal tissue.

The first Trump administration ended the use of fetal tissue on NIH's campus and set up additional hurdles for non-government scientists seeking NIH funding, restrictions that were subsequently lifted by the Biden administration. Thursday's new policy covers all NIH-funded research.

NIH documents say the policy doesn't end the use of "cell lines" created years ago from fetal cells. Those are cloned copies of cells, such as embryonic stem cells, adapted to grow continuously in labs. Bhattacharya's statement said NIH will soon seek comment about potential ways "to reduce or potentially replace reliance on human embryonic stem cells."

Anti-tobacco advocates warn of teen risks

FDA reviews new ad proposal for Zyn: What to know

WASHINGTON, Jan 24, (AP): Americans who smoke may soon be hearing a lot more about Zyn, the flavored nicotine pouches that have generated billions in sales while going viral on social media.

The Food and Drug Administration convened a public meeting Thursday to consider whether Philip Morris International should be allowed to advertise its pouches as a less-harmful alternative for adults who smoke cigarettes.

Government documents and presentations made at the meeting suggest FDA regulators are leaning toward approving the company's request.

But a panel of independent experts asked pointed questions about the company's research, the risks of underage use and whether the new marketing language would really steer smokers away from cigarettes. Nevertheless, they said the proposed risk statement is likely accurate.

"There are very few things that are legally available and worse for you than cigarettes, so it's a pretty low bar to be safer than cigarettes," said Lisa Postow, a panel member and scientist at the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute.

The FDA is not bound to follow the panel's guidance and will make the final decision on whether to approve the marketing claims. There is no deadline for a decision.

Zyn contains nicotine powder and comes in 10 flavors, including mint, coffee and citrus. Nicotine pouches have been a rare source of growth in the tobacco industry, where companies have struggled to replace shrinking



Containers of Zyn, a smokeless nicotine pouch, are displayed for sale among other nicotine and tobacco products at a newsstand on Feb. 23, 2024, in New York. (AP)

revenue from cigarettes, chewing tobacco and other legacy products.

Here's what to know about Zyn's review before the FDA:

Philip Morris asked the agency to approve new marketing language for Zyn, emphasizing its relative health benefits when compared with cigarettes.

Specifically, the company wants to say that using Zyn reduces the risk of "mouth cancer, heart disease, lung cancer, stroke" and other smoking-related diseases. Adding that language to Zyn promotional materials would further cement the brand in the U.S., where it dominates sales

of nicotine pouches.

Last January, the FDA authorized Zyn to remain on the market after years of federal review, saying company data showed the small pouches are less harmful than cigarettes and other traditional tobacco products. Zyn was the first nicotine pouch to win FDA authorization.

If FDA signs off on the "reduced risk" claims, Philip Morris would be able to use the language in ads, mailing materials and online posts.

Adults who smoke need accurate information about different tobacco products and the relative risks associ-

ated with them," said Keagan Lenihan, a Philip Morris vice president.

FDA scientists appeared to back the company's proposal, saying "the totality of the evidence" supports the statement that Zyn reduces the risk of various smoking-related illnesses.

But the outside experts noted that Philip Morris did not conduct long-term studies of Zyn users or whether reading messages about lower risks led more smokers to switch.

"Whether or not the claim is going to accelerate that switching, there is no data here to answer that question," said Cristine Delnevo of the Rutgers Institute for Nicotine and Tobacco Studies, who led the panel.

Philip Morris already sells a similar oral tobacco product, snus, a type of tobacco pouch popular in Sweden and other Scandinavian countries. Studies in those countries have consistently shown lower rates of lung cancer, mouth cancer and related diseases among snus users when compared with smokers.

The FDA approved a reduced-risk claim for the company's snus in 2019 and panelists noted that there has been little uptake of those products by U.S. smokers. But Philip Morris executives said the language could have an impact over time.

"The more you communicate to adult smokers with this type of claim it will hopefully only increase switching to Zyn," Lenihan said.

In addition to considering potential benefits for smokers, the FDA is required to review the potential harms to young people and nonsmokers.

Sonic booms help quake sensors

Study shows quake sensors can trace space debris

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., Jan 24, (AP): As more and more space junk comes crashing down, a new study shows how earthquake monitors can better track incoming objects by tuning into their sonic booms.

Scientists reported Thursday that seismic readings from sonic booms that were generated when a discarded module from a Chinese crew capsule reentered over Southern California in 2024 allowed them to place the object's path nearly 20 miles (30 kilometers) farther south than radar had predicted from orbit.

Using this method to track uncontrolled objects plummeting at supersonic speeds, they said, could help recovery teams reach any surviving pieces more quickly - crucial if the debris is dangerous.

"The problem at the moment is we

can track stuff very well in space," said Johns Hopkins University's Benjamin Fernando, the lead researcher. "But once it gets to the point that it's actually breaking up in the atmosphere, it becomes very difficult to track."

His team's findings, published in the journal Science, focus on just one debris event. But the researchers already have used publicly available data from seismic networks to track a few dozen other reentries, including debris from three failed SpaceX Starship test flights in Texas.

A growing concern among scientists and others is that falling space debris could strike a plane in flight.

"There are thousands, tens of thousands, more satellites in orbit than there were 10 years ago," including SpaceX's Starlinks and other companies' internet satellites, said Fernando.

"Unfortunately, we don't really have anything other than the word of the company to say that when they break up, they completely burn up in the atmosphere."

Fernando, who normally studies quakes on the moon and Mars, teamed up with Imperial College London's Constantinos Charalambous the day after the Chinese debris streaked across the California sky in 2024. Over time, they gathered data from more than 120 seismometers that captured the sonic booms from the reentry, using that data to plot the object's suspected path.

China's out-of-control module had been abandoned in a decaying orbit ever since it was cut loose from the Shenzhou-15 capsule returning three Chinese astronauts from their country's space station in 2023.

Africa lifts mpox emergency status

ADDIS ABABA, Jan 24, (Xinhua): The Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) has announced the lifting of a multi-country mpox outbreak in Africa as a public health emergency of continental security.

The Africa CDC, in a statement issued late Thursday, said the decision, following recommendations from the Africa CDC Emergency Consultative Group, highlights the continent's strengthened health security, effective leadership, regional cooperation, and successful international partnerships in managing complex public health challenges.

Short-handed Pacers outlast Thunder in Finals rematch



Brooklyn Nets forward Michael Porter Jr. (17) is blocked by Boston Celtics guard Jaylen Brown (7) during the 2nd overtime period of an NBA basketball game in New York. (AP)



Indiana Pacers Aaron Joshua Nesmith (23) celebrates during the second half of an NBA basketball game against Oklahoma City Thunder, Friday, Jan. 23, 2026, in Oklahoma City. (AP)

Rockets end Pistons' 4-game winning streak

OKLAHOMA CITY, Jan 24, (AP): Andrew Nembhard had 27 points and 11 rebounds, and Jarace Walker added a career-high 26 for the Indiana Pacers, who withstood a late rally to beat the Oklahoma City Thunder 117-114 in a rematch of last season's NBA Finals.

Walker, whose previous high was 21 points, sank four free throws in the final 10 seconds to lift injury-riddled Indiana (11-35), which snapped a three-game skid. Pascal Siakam added 21 points.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 47 points for the NBA-best Thunder, who were also depleted by injuries with Jalen Williams, Isaiah Hartenstein and Alex Caruso among those sidelined. Chet Holmgren added 25 points, 13 rebounds and three blocks.

It was the second and final meeting this season between the Pacers and Thunder, whose fortunes have diverged since Indiana star Tyrese Haliburton tore an Achilles tendon early in Game 7 of last season's NBA finals. Oklahoma City went on to win its first title and has the league's best record (37-9), although the Thunder have slowed after a 24-1 start.

Rockets 111, Pistons 104

In Detroit, Kevin Durant scored 32 points as the Houston Rockets ended the Detroit Pistons' four-game winning streak.

Durant averages 30.6 points in 32 career games against the Pistons - his highest average against any other team. He added seven rebounds and three assists in 40 minutes without a turnover.

Alperen Sengun scored 19 points and Reed Shephard added 18 points for the Rockets, who have won four of five. Amen Thompson had 15 points, nine rebounds and seven assists for Houston, which had lost five straight on the road.

Jalen Duren led Detroit with 18 points and seven rebounds, but Detroit's other four starters combined for 37 points on 13-of-35 shooting (37.1%).

Celtics 130, Nets 126 2nd OT

In New York, Payton Pritchard scored 32 points, Jaylen Brown had 27 points, 12 assists and 10 rebounds, and the Boston Celtics outlasted the lottery-bound Brooklyn Nets 130-126 in double overtime.

Hugo González forced the second OT on a 3-pointer with 0.4 seconds left in the first extra period. Baylor Scheierman found the 19-year-old Spanish rookie with a no-look pass and González buried the wide-open shot from the corner.

The Celtics, who have won four of five, never trailed in the second OT. Anfernee Simmons put Boston ahead for good with a three-point play, and Sam Hauser's 3-pointer made it 128-124 with 1:51 left.

Cavaliers to 123, Kings 118

In Cleveland, Donovan Mitchell scored 33 points, Evan Mobley matched a season high with 29 and the Cleveland Cavaliers showed some more encouraging signs in win over the Sacramento Kings.

The Cavs, who have been streaky through much of this season, won for the fourth time in five games. They also improved to 16-5 against teams with losing records.

Cleveland coach Kenny Atkinson has been hoping to get more consistency from his team, which can look like title contenders one night and dismal the next. That trend continued against the Kings, who rallied from an 11-point deficit to take a 114-113 lead with four minutes left.

But Mitchell, who has carried the Cavs through several rough patches, dropped a big 3-pointer with 2:29 remaining to put Cleveland up 118-114.

Nuggets 102, Bucks 100

In Milwaukee, Julian Strawther scored a season-high 20 points and the short-handed Denver Nuggets built a 23-point lead before hanging on to beat the slump-

ing Milwaukee Bucks.

After trailing 86-63 with 10½ minutes left, Milwaukee cut Denver's lead to 99-97 on Ryan Rollins' 3-pointer with 29.3 seconds remaining. Denver made it 101-97 when Tim Hardaway Jr. sank two free throws with 10.6 seconds left.

Rollins hit another 3 to make it 101-100 with 5.4 seconds left. Jalen Pickett got fouled with 4.5 seconds remaining and hit his first free throw, but missed the second. Antetokounmpo had his lower right leg wrapped in the first half and never appeared to be comfortable the rest of the way.

Hawks 110, Suns 103

In Atlanta, Jalen Johnson scored 23 points and tied a career high with 18 rebounds for his NBA-leading 30th double-double, and the Atlanta Hawks rallied to beat Phoenix after the Suns lost Devin Booker to a right ankle injury.

Onyeka Okungwu had 25 points for the Hawks, who trailed 91-84 late in the third quarter but gained momentum after Booker went down. The Suns star scored a team-high 31 points and added four rebounds and three assists before leaving.

CJ McCollum extended his double-digit scoring streak to 34 games, scoring 21 points off the bench and adding four rebounds. McCollum and Corey Kispert were acquired in a trade with Washington in exchange for Trae Young in early January.

Pelicans 133, Grizzlies 127

In Memphis, Saddiq Bey scored 19 of his season-high 36 points in the fourth quarter and the New Orleans Pelicans erased a double-digit second-half deficit to defeat the Memphis Grizzlies.

Trey Murphy III scored 32 points for New Orleans, while Zion Williamson finished with 24 points and 11 rebounds as the Pelicans snapped a three-game losing streak.

Jaren Jackson Jr. led Memphis with 26 points and 12 rebounds, while Jock Landale added 24 points and 11 rebounds. Cam Spencer had 21 for Memphis, shooting 7 of 9, including 4 of 6 from outside the arc.

Japanese women set Olympic tone

Zingas and Kolesnik lead US sweep at Four Continents

BEIJING, Jan 24, (AP): Olympic ice dancers Emilea Zingas and Vadym Kolesnik tuned up for the Milan Cortina Games in the best possible way Friday.

The up-and-coming duo won the Four Continents Figure Skating Championships at the National Indoor Stadium in Beijing, leading the first U.S. ice dance sweep at the event since 2005.

Zingas and Kolesnik ended with 202.86 points after the free dance to top Caroline Green and Michael Parsons, while Oona Brown and Gage Brown rounded out the podium.

Zingas and Kolesnik are not among the favorites at the upcoming Winter Games in Italy, though their performance in the last major international competition before the Olympics underscores the strength of the American squad.

Their teammates and reigning world champions, Madison Chock



From left silver medalists Caroline Green and Michael Parsons of the United States and gold medalists Emilea Zingas and Vadym Kolesnik of the United States celebrate after the Ice Dance Free Dance of the ISU Four Continents Figure Skating Championships in Beijing, China. (AP)

and Evan Bates, are favored to win the Olympic gold medal.

In the women's competition

at Four Continents, rising star Yuna Aoki led a Japanese podium sweep with 217.39 points after her

free skate. Ami Nakai, the leader after the short program, wound up second while Mone Chiba finished third.

There are usually few Olympians at Four Continents in an Olympic year because it takes place so close to the opening ceremony, but the short travel distance from Japan to China made it a natural tune-up event for the Japanese women. They are considered the stiffest competition for the American team of Amber Glenn, Alysia Liu and Isabeau Levito when they arrive in Milan in two weeks.

None of those U.S. women were at Four Continents. Bradie Tennell, the first alternate for the Olympic team, ended up fourth while Sarah Everhardt finished eighth and Starr Andrews finished 15th in what is likely her final singles competitions.

Andrews is planning to switch to pairs competition next season.

Point considered week to week

Injury questions linger for many top men's hockey teams at Oly



Vancouver Canucks' Zeev Buium (24) and New Jersey Devils' Connor Brown (16) vie for the puck during the second period of an NHL hockey game in Vancouver, British Columbia. (AP)

EAST MEADOW, N.Y., Jan 24, (AP): With less than three weeks to go before the start of the men's hockey tournament at the Olympics in Milan, several of the top contenders have significant injury questions.

One of those looked to be answered as Canada's Bo Horvat was back practicing after missing 14 of the New York Islanders' past 18 games. Horvat, who was out with a lower-body injury, had been sidelined for nine in a row but the entire time was tracking toward being healed up by February.

"There's always that little - not doubt - but it's in your mind, right, that hopefully it's not too bad," Horvat said. "We knew that it wasn't too serious, that I'll be good to go and ready to get back for the Olympics. I was pretty confident in that."

Horvat produced at a nearly point-a-game pace from the start of the season until the roster deadline on Dec. 31 to earn one of the final forward spots. The 30-year-old scoring center is one of just a few players picked who didn't take part in the 4 Nations Face-Off last year, and Hockey Canada general manager Doug Armstrong was kept well apprised of his status in recent weeks.

"(Islanders GM Mathieu Darche) has been in contact with Doug and their staff and just kind of keeping them updated," Horvat said. "That's all you can ask for. I was hoping to be back as soon as possible and get some games in before the break and to go over to Milan. I'm happy to be back in this good a time, get some games in and be ready to go."

Much like Horvat, goaltender Darcy Kuemper returned from an injury scare well ahead of the time his availability would have been in jeopardy.

Playmaker Brayden Point, one of the first six players Canada named for the Olympics, has not played for the

Tampa Bay Lightning since his right leg bent awkwardly during a game at Philadelphia on Jan. 12.

Jon Cooper, the Lightning and Canada's coach, told reporters in Pittsburgh the following day of Point they "avoided the worst-case scenario (as) his season is not over."

Point is considered week to week, and the two-time Stanley Cup champion's status could go right down to the wire. Charter flights are set to take off from New York on Feb. 7, and replacements can be made to the 25-player roster up until the first game on Feb. 11.

Sam Bennett, Wyatt Johnston and Connor Bedard figure to be among the most likely options if Point cannot go.

Seth Jones, who helped Florida win the Stanley Cup last season after being picked up before the trade deadline, earlier this week became the first injured player replaced on an Olympic roster when USA Hockey announced Jackson LaCombe would take his place.

"A very fluid, active defenseman, always in the rush," said forward Tage Thompson, who played with LaCombe at the world championships last year when the U.S. won the tournament for the first time since 1933. "Great shot and sees the ice really well. He's just a smooth skater, and I think it makes the game really easy for him because he's got a lot of hockey smarts, too."

LaCombe and Thompson are among the five players from that team heading to Milan, along with Zach Werenski, Clayton Keller and Jeremy Swayman.

"We had such great chemistry and such a good team over there," Thompson said after Buffalo Sabres practice Friday. "Obviously we won and it was a lot of fun, so it's nice to be going through this new opportunity and experience with some familiar faces."

Nearly 1.6 million cubic meters produced: Organizing committee

Italian expert's manufactured snow will play big role at the Milan Cortina Games

MILAN, Jan 24, (AP): Davide Cerato will play a major role in skiing and snowboarding events at the upcoming Olympics, but he won't be competing.

The Italian snowmaking expert is responsible for perfecting several of the courses that will feature in the 2026 Milan Cortina Winter Games, and he takes his job seriously.

"It's the most important race of their life," Cerato said. "Our duty is to give them the best, to deliver the best courses where they can perform their best after training so hard."

Cerato oversees operations at venues where new snowmaking systems were installed, including in Bormio for Alpine ski racing and ski mountaineering, and in Livigno for freestyle skiing and snowboarding

events. He has been working with the International Ski and Snowboard Federation and the International Olympic Committee since the 2014 Sochi Olympics.

These days, manufactured snow - "technical snow" as Cerato calls it - is a way of life in ski racing, so much so that Olympic athletes don't think twice about competing on it. Above all else, they want a course that will hold up over multiple training runs and the races themselves without becoming too mushy or rutted.

Mother Nature can't always provide for that, and with climate change affecting winter sports in particular, snowmaking has become essential.

The organizing committee said Friday that it has produced nearly 1.6 million cubic meters (2 million

cubic yards) of technical snow for all the venues, which is less than forecasted. Cerato oversaw the work to carve out new high-elevation water reservoirs to store water for snowmaking.

At the Livigno Snow Park, they built a basin capable of holding about 200 million liters (53 million gallons) of water. It's now one of the biggest reservoirs on the Italian side of the Alps, Cerato said. They added more than 50 snow guns there to produce about 800 million liters (211 million gallons) of snow in roughly 300 hours. In Bormio, Cerato said they constructed a lake at an elevation of 2,300 meters (2,515 yards) to hold 88 million liters (23 million gallons) of water. They also added 75 snow guns for Alpine skiing and ski mountaineering.

Vlhova included in Slovakia's team

BRATISLAVA, Slovakia, Jan 24, (AP): Olympic slalom champion Petra Vlhova has been included in the Slovakia team for next month's Milan Cortina Games as she aims to make to a comeback from more than two years out with a knee injury.

The 30-year-old Vlhova hasn't competed since tearing ligaments in her right knee in January 2024 but will be among the 52 athletes to represent Slovakia at the Winter Games, the Slovak Olympic Committee announced. Vlhova said last week she was cleared by her medical team "for full skiing intensity."

"I've decided to fight for the chance to compete,"

she said then, but acknowledged that with the short time to prepare for the Olympics, "it might sound a bit crazy." "I will do my absolute best every single day to earn the chance to be part of the Slovak Olympic team," she said.

Vlhova has long been American standout Mikaela Shiffrin's main rival in slalom.

The women's slalom at the 2026 Olympics - the last skiing race on the schedule - is scheduled for Feb. 18 in Cortina d'Ampezzo. Vlhova said she would wait until 48 hours before the race before making her final decision on whether to compete.

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Event reflects the Bank's commitment to Kuwait Vision 2035

KIB, Suffix announce details of 4th season of KIB | The Stadium, with equestrian sport entering its third consecutive year



Top and above photos from the event.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: In support of Kuwait Vision 2035 and in line with strengthening the State of Kuwait's position as an attractive destination for tourism and major sporting events, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) recently held a press conference to unveil the details of the fourth season of its flagship sporting event, KIB | The Stadium. Organized by the Bank's strategic partner, Suffix, the upcoming season will be dedicated to equestrian sport for the third consecutive year and will take place over two weekends, from February 5 to 14, at Marina Beach.

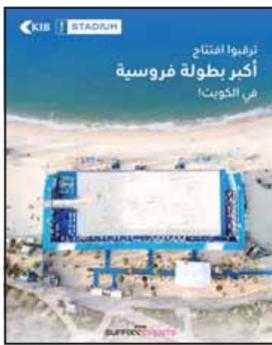
KIB | The Stadium embodies the Bank's commitment to supporting national initiatives that contribute to boosting tourism, enhancing community engagement and reinforcing Kuwait's role as a regional hub for world-class sporting events, through strategic partnerships that bring together the private sector and government entities.

The press conference was attended by Marwa Marafie, Manager of Corporate Communications at KIB; Ahmed AlHuzami, CEO of Suffix; Abdulrahman Al Fuzae, representative of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation; Abdulaziz AlNasser, Senior Vice President of Property Manage-

ment at United Real Estate Company (URC); Abdullah Shaaban, member of the Board of Directors and Chairman of the Athletes Committee at the Kuwait Olympic Committee; in addition members of KIB's Executive Management Team, along with a distinguished group of partners, sponsors, and media representatives.

The show jumping championship enters its third consecutive year, featuring an expanded range of competitions and an enhanced experience for both participants and spectators. A standout feature of this season is the introduction of polo entertainment for the very first time, underscoring KIB's ambition to champion new sporting disciplines each year, following the remarkable success of incorporating dressage in the previous season.

Building on this, the show jumping championships are scheduled over two phases. The first week, running from February 5 to 7, will host a 3-star competition (CSI3-W*), qualifying for the World Cup, alongside a CSI1 category. The second week, from February 12 to 14, will be dedicated to a 2-star international competition (CSI2*), also featuring a CSI1 category to ensure inclusive participation across all levels.



Commenting on the event's new season, Marafie stated: "The launch of the fourth season of KIB | The Stadium, dedicated to equestrian sport for the third consecutive year, marks a pivotal milestone in the Bank's journey to further enrich Kuwait's sports landscape. We are not providing a mere sporting championship, but a fully integrated community experience that blends world-class professionalism with Kuwait's authentic identity. This year, we have raised the bar by expanding the

show jumping categories to include the one-star division, offering young and emerging riders a valuable opportunity to compete alongside international champions."

She added: "At KIB, we believe sport is a universal language. Through our partnership with Suffix, we have successfully transformed Marina Beach into a premier sports and tourism destination that attracts audiences from within and beyond Kuwait. Our continued support for this event reflects our commitment to corporate social responsibility and our institutional promise, 'Bank for Life'. We strive to create an environment that celebrates talent, such as last season's champion Yara Al-Hunaidi, the outstanding rider Ali Al-Kharafi, and many other athletes who proudly elevate Kuwait's profile on the global stage."

On his part, Suffix's AlHuzami expressed his pride in the longstanding partnership with the Bank, saying: "KIB | The Stadium is the product of a shared vision to redefine the sporting events landscape in the region. In its fourth edition, we placed a strong focus on enhancing the visitor experience by significantly expanding and upgrading the championship village

and fan zone, while introducing dedicated, interactive family programs and activities. We transformed the event into a complete entertainment destination for the entire family, not just equestrian enthusiasts."

Al Huzami added: "The arena has been designed to meet the highest international standards, and this year's championship serves as a World Cup qualifier, attracting strong international interest. We are proud to welcome riders from across the globe to compete on Kuwaiti soil, further strengthening the country's position as a leading regional sports hub."

The fourth season of this flagship event also welcomes new partners and sponsors who share the championship's developmental vision, contributing to expanded logistical capabilities and enhanced facilities. The organizing committee has further opened the door to international participation, with the final lineup featuring riders from across multiple continents competing alongside Kuwait's local champions in an atmosphere defined by sportsmanship and spirited competition.

Alongside the high-intensity competitions on the field, The Village will serve as the heart of the event. This

year, the Bank has focused on expanding it, creating newly developed zones, dedicated restaurant and café spaces, and curated programs and activities designed to enrich the experience for visitors and families. Through these enhancements, KIB aims to foster a meaningful connection between audiences and both traditional and modern sports, while inspiring younger generations to embrace an active lifestyle.

The fourth season of KIB | The Stadium underscores KIB's commitment to supporting initiatives and events that advance Kuwait's sports and entertainment landscape, in alignment with national efforts to promote sport, empower talent, and deliver events with a lasting and meaningful community impact.

By embracing new sports, expanding participation, and delivering a fully integrated experience for audiences and families, KIB continues to play a meaningful community role, supporting initiatives that blend professionalism, social impact, and a forward-looking vision. In doing so, the championship remains a dynamic platform that reinforces Kuwait's position as a progressive sports and event-hosting destination at both the regional and international levels.

Kazma signs Haddad as Dhiya joins Al-Salmiya

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: Kazma has strengthened its squad by signing Algerian midfielder Mouad Haddad on a contract running until the end of the current season.

Haddad (born 1997) replaces Jordanian Youssef Abu Al-Jazar, who failed to convince the technical staff under Croatian coach Dragan Tadic.

Last week, Kazma also added Cameroonian forward Didier Lamkel to the roster, taking over for Beninese player Samuel Akinola, sidelined for at least 60 days due to injury.

In other transfer news, Al-Salmiya SC announced the signing of Bahraini attacker Sayed Dhiya Saeed, who will replace Gambian forward Sang Pierre. Dhiya Saeed (born 1992) has previously played for Al-



Sidi Dhiya

Nasr, Al-Khalidiya, and Al-Riffa, and has represented the Bahrain national team on multiple occasions.

Kuwait to hold six community e-sports tournaments this season

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: The Kuwait E-Sports Club announced that it will organize six community tournaments this season, open to all citizens and residents of the country. The initiative comes amid the rapid growth of e-sports globally and locally, and reflects the increasing interest in competitive gaming.

Club President Abdullah Al-Ali said the tournaments are being organized in collaboration with the Public Authority for Sports, aiming to further promote e-sports in Kuwait.

Al-Ali expressed his gratitude to Bashar Abdullah, Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Sports, praising his continuous support for e-sports and his efforts to ensure the sector receives the attention it deserves. He also highlighted the recent achieve-



Abdullah Al-Ali

ment of Kuwaiti players, who won a silver medal at the 6th Islamic Solidarity Games.

He added that the future of e-sports in Kuwait looks bright, thanks to strong government backing through the Public Authority for Sports and growing support from the Kuwait Olympic Committee. This support, he said, is key to advancing professionalism and development in this fast-growing and dynamic sector.

Saudi Olympic and Paralympic Committee, OCA set new path for Asian Winter Games

RIYADH, Jan 24: The Saudi Olympic and Paralympic Committee and the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) have agreed on an updated framework for the future hosting of the Asian Winter Games, confirming the postponement of the 2029 edition to a later date, which will be announced in due course.

The decision follows extensive consultations between the two organizations and reflects a shared strategic commitment to the long-term and sustainable development of winter sports in Saudi Arabia and across West Asia.

Under the revised framework, Saudi Arabia will host a series of standalone winter sports events in the coming years. These competitions are designed to promote winter sports, broaden participation, and develop a stronger pipeline of athletes, technical

officials, and practitioners, while providing additional preparation time to support wider regional representation at future Asian winter events.

The Olympic Council of Asia commended Saudi Arabia's ongoing efforts to establish comprehensive and sustainable winter sports programs, noting that the agreed direction supports a structured, phased development of the disciplines in West Asia and aligns with the Council's broader continental objectives.

Saudi Arabia reaffirmed its commitment to advancing sport across all disciplines, including winter sports, through continued investment in athlete development pathways, infrastructure enhancement, and hosting international-standard ice-based competitions, as part of its wider national development agenda.

Shiffrin back on GS podium after 2 yrs

Defending champion Hector takes victory

SPINDLERUV MLYN, Czechia, Jan 24, (AP): Mikaela Shiffrin earned a place on the podium of a World Cup giant slalom for the first time in two years Saturday, finishing third in the last GS before the Milan Cortina Olympics.

The race was won by defending Olympic champion Sara Hector, who held on to her opening run lead for her first victory since January 2025.

"You always have to keep working, it's so many strong girls as you can see today," the Swedish winner said in a course-side interview. "I am super happy that in the end I crossed the finish line first. That's a really cool feeling."

Shiffrin, the 2018 Olympic GS gold medalist, trailed Hector by 0.23 seconds and the American shared the podium with second-placed teammate Paula Moltzan, who was 0.18 off the pace.



Sweden's Sara Hector competes on her way to win a women's alpine ski, World Cup giant slalom, in Spindleruv Mlyn, Czech Republic. (AP)

Shiffrin holds the women's record for most career World Cup GS wins with 22 but hadn't had a top-three result in the discipline in 11 events since coming runner-up at a race in Slovakia in January 2024.

Six days later, she crashed in a downhill on the course that will be used for the Olympics next month and then didn't compete in GS

again until the start of the 2024-25 season.

In November 2024, she sustained a puncture wound to the right side of her abdomen and severe damage to her oblique abdominal muscles in a crash at her home GS in Killington, Vermont, and subsequently suffered from lingering post-traumatic stress disorder.

This season, Shiffrin racked up three fourth places before ultimately returning to the podium Saturday, three weeks before the Olympic race in Cortina d'Ampezzo.

Moltzan, who's chasing her maiden career win, got her third podium of the season, leading a strong showing by the U.S. team, with Nina O'Brien in fifth and AJ Hurt in eighth.

In the opening run, Hector edged out Camille Rast of Switzerland by 0.02 seconds, with GS rankings leader Julia Scheib of Austria 0.26 back in third.

Rast dropped to fourth, while Scheib skied out in the final run.

Overall World Cup champion Federica Brignone, who made a strong return to racing from a nine-month injury layoff on Tuesday, and her Italian teammate Sofia Goggia, the 2018 Olympic downhill champion, sat out the event in Czechia, with a week-end of speed racing coming up in Switzerland next week ahead of their home Olympics.

A slalom on the same hill is scheduled for Sunday.

German official wants World Cup boycott considered

BERLIN, Jan 24, (AP): A German soccer federation executive committee member says it's time to consider a World Cup boycott because of the actions of U.S. President Donald Trump.

Oke Göttlich, the president of Bundesliga club St. Pauli and one of the German federation's 10 vice presidents, told the Hamburger Morgenpost newspaper in an interview on Friday that "the time has come" to "seriously consider and discuss this."

Trump has sowed discord in Europe with his takeover bid for Greenland - a semi-autonomous territory of NATO member Denmark - and his

subsequent threat to impose tariffs on eight European countries who opposed the takeover. It left many of America's closest allies warning of a rupture with Washington capable of shattering the NATO alliance.

"What were the justifications for the boycotts of the Olympic Games in the 1980s?" Göttlich said.

"By my reckoning the potential threat is greater now than it was then. We need to have this discussion." The United States is co-hosting the World Cup from June 11-July 19 with Canada and Mexico. Fans have concerns about high ticket prices,

while travel bans imposed by the Trump administration are also prohibiting supporters from some competing nations from attending.

Göttlich, who has called for the defense of values, is likely to meet resistance to calls for a boycott from federation president Bernd Neundorff and FIFA president Gianni Infantino.

"Qatar was too political for everyone and now we're completely apolitical? That's something that really, really, really bothers me," Göttlich said of the German federation's opposition to the previous World Cup host.

Best of the Rest

West Ham beats Sunderland: West Ham's bid to escape the Premier League's relegation zone gathered pace with a 3-1 win over Sunderland on Saturday.

It was a second straight victory for West Ham, which surged into a three-goal lead by the 43rd minute thanks to Crystiano Summerville's header, Jarrod Bowen's penalty, and a long-range strike by Mateus Fernandes. Brian Brobbey scored for Sunderland in the second half. West Ham, which won 2-1 at Tottenham last weekend for its first win in any competition since early November, stayed in the bottom three but is now just two points behind fourth-to-last Nottingham Forest. Forest visits Brentford on Sunday. (AP)

□ □ □

FIFA to award record prize money to participants: A record-breaking prize money will be awarded to the inaugural FIFA Women's Champions Cup winner, the world football governing body announced.

The final champion of the Women's Champions Cup will receive 2.3 million U.S. dollars while the runner-up will earn one million, FIFA said. (Xinhua)

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West Ham United's Jarrod Bowen, right, is challenged by Sunderland's Daniel Ballard, during the English Premier League soccer match between West Ham United and Sunderland in London. West Ham's bid to escape the Premier League's relegation zone gathered pace with a 3-1 win over Sunderland. It was a second straight victory for West Ham. (AP)

Sports

Saudi Arabia clashes with Bahrain

Kuwait qualification hopes on the line against South Korea



Kuwaiti player is blocked by opponents as he goes for a shot during the Asian Handball Championship match between Kuwait and Japan.

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: Kuwait faces a critical "do-or-die" showdown against South Korea today at 6:00 pm at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex, needing a victory to guarantee a spot in the semi-finals of the 22nd Asian Men's Handball Championship, a qualifier for the 2027 World Championship in Germany. Earlier in the day, Japan faces Iraq at 12:00 in the same group. In Group B, UAE meets Qatar, while Saudi Arabia clashes with Bahrain.

Results from the second round saw Japan narrowly defeat Kuwait 28-27, South Korea beat Iraq 35-30, Bahrain overcome Qatar 31-28, and Saudi Arabia triumph over the UAE 33-18.

With those outcomes, South Korea top Group A on goal

difference ahead of Japan, both holding three points, while Kuwait sits third with two points, followed by Iraq with none. In Group B, Bahrain leads with four points from two wins, securing a strong position for the semi-finals. Saudi Arabia and Qatar each have two points, while UAE remains at the bottom without a point, ending its qualification hopes.

Despite Kuwait's narrow loss to Japan, head coach Icelandic Aron Kristjansson expressed satisfaction with his team's performance. Speaking at the post-match press conference on Saturday, he attributed the defeat to technical mistakes in offense and defense, as well as a high number of player suspensions -12 in total.

Kristjansson emphasized that today's match against South Korea is equally crucial, noting that the Koreans are among Asia's strongest teams. He expressed confidence that careful preparation and strong fan support could help Kuwait achieve their goal of advancing to the semi-finals.

Kuwait swimming team secures 45 medals at Gulf Championships



Kuwaiti swimmers display their medals on the podium.

DUBAI, Jan 24: The Kuwait swimming team continued its stellar performance at the Gulf Swimming Championships in the United Arab Emirates, boosting its medal tally to 45 and finishing second overall.

The men's team claimed 33 medals - 14 gold, 13 silver, and 6 bronze - while the women's team contributed 12 medals, including 1 gold, 5

silver, and 6 bronze. Kuwait's total medal count for the championship now stands at 15 gold, 18 silver, and 12 bronze, with the event having started last Thursday.

Kuwaiti delegation head Musa Bushahri said the results reflect the growing technical level of Kuwait's swimmers and highlighted that this championship serves as an important

step in preparing the national teams for upcoming competitions.

Bushahri added that the event featured high-level competition and close contests among Gulf teams, which pushed athletes to perform at their best. He also noted that the impressive results demonstrate the success of Kuwait's technical training programs.

ICC replaces Bangladesh with Scotland at T20 World Cup

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates, Jan 24, (AP): The International Cricket Council has replaced Bangladesh with Scotland for the upcoming T20 World Cup because of an impasse over security concerns that Bangladesh raised about playing in India.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board wanted to have its games shifted from India to Sri Lanka due to security concerns, but the sport's governing body refused to make changes so close to the start of the tournament.

The ICC said in a statement Saturday it rejected Bangladesh's demand because there was no "credible or verifiable

security threat to the Bangladesh national team in India" for the month-long tournament that starts Feb. 7.

"In light of these findings, and after careful consideration of the broader implications, the ICC determined that it was not appropriate to amend the published event schedule," it said.

The ICC said the BCB didn't respond to a request to confirm its participation at the World Cup. "As no confirmation was received within the stipulated deadline, the ICC proceeded in line with its established governance and qualification processes to identify a replacement team," the ICC said.

Djokovic hits 400 victories

Sinner survives, Wawrinka bids farewell

MELBOURNE, Australia, Jan 24, (AP): Limping and desperately trying to stretch out cramps in his arms and legs, Jannik Sinner had just gone down a break in the third set when the extreme heat rules saved him.

Play was suspended for eight minutes while the roof was closed on Rod Laver Arena on Saturday afternoon, and the two-time defending Australian Open champion returned a revitalized man.

After being on the verge of an unlikely exit - one of his coaches, Darren Cahill, was urging the 24-year-old Italian just to stick it out for a few more games - Sinner won five of the next six games to take the set against No. 85-ranked Eliot Spizzirri.

Another 10-minute "cooling break" between the third and fourth sets followed - an allowance under the extreme heat policy - and Sinner returned for a 4-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 victory that highlighted a dramatic contrast of intense light and shade.

"I struggled physically today. I got lucky with the heat rule," Sinner said, agreeing that the cooler indoor conditions suited him much more than the energy-sapping heat of the first two sets. "I try to stay calm even in a moment like this. If he keeps playing the way he was playing, maybe I was dropping a little bit, maybe my tournament was over today. I don't know."

Spizzirri was magnanimous about it, adding: "That's the rules of the game, and, you know, you got to live with it." Novak Djokovic became the first player ever to notch 400 match wins at the majors when he beat Botic van de Zandschulp 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 (4) in a night match.

The 24-time major winner improved his win-loss record to 102-10 at the Australian Open, equaling Roger Federer's career haul for the most-ever match wins at the season's first major.

Two-time Australian Open champion Naomi Osaka withdrew because



Novak Djokovic of Serbia plays a backhand return to Botic van de Zandschulp of the Netherlands during their third round match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

of an abdominal injury before her scheduled third-round match against Australian qualifier Maddison Inglis, ending a campaign noted strikingly for fashion and friction.

That sent Inglis into a fourth-round match against No. 2-ranked Iga Swiatek, who had a 6-1, 1-6, 6-1 win over Anna Kalinskaya.

No. 4 Amanda Anisimova beat Peyton Stearns 6-1, 6-4 in an all-American encounter and will next face Wang Xinyu, who upset No. 13 Linda Noskova.

No. 5 Elena Rybakina advanced to a fourth-round match against No. 21 Elise Mertens.

Stan Wawrinka said goodbye after his loss to Taylor Fritz and then grabbed two beers from a court-side ice box, cracked the cans with the Australian Open tournament director and saluted the crowd.

"Cheers everybody!" the 40-year-old Wawrinka said after Saturday's 7-6 (5), 2-6, 6-4, 6-4 third-round loss to No. 9 Fritz. "And thank you so much."

Fritz will next face No. 5 Lorenzo Musetti, who held off Tomas Machac 5-7, 6-4, 6-2, 5-7, 6-2 to become the third Italian man to reach the fourth round.

No. 8 Ben Shelton beat Valentin Vacherot of Monaco, 6-4, 6-4, 7-6 (5) on Margaret Court Arena and said having the roof closed "just amplified the noise."

Large crowd fills the stands

Rising Riders Cup Championship ends on high note



Winners celebrate on the podium during the awarding ceremony as officials look on.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 24: The Rising Riders Cup Show Jumping Championship, organized by the Police Sports Federation, concluded successfully at the Federation Arena in Subhan, drawing wide participation from riders representing all local clubs.

Rising star of Sahari Club and the national team, Anaz Al-Anaz, was crowned champion after delivering an outstanding performance in the main event. The championship unfolded in a vibrant and competitive atmosphere, with strong contests across the beginner, intermediate and

advanced categories, while a large crowd filled the stands from morning until the end of the day.

In the featured 130 cm round, Al-Anaz secured first place with a time of 34.01 seconds, finishing ahead of Saleh Al-Tabtaeai, Abdulaziz Al-Ajeel, Britain's Nick Channing, Yousef Al-Nuaimi, and Alaa Al-Sultan.

Meanwhile, Abrar Al-Musallam claimed top honors in the 120 cm class, and Sujo Babi emerged victorious in the 110 cm event.

The beginner rounds, featuring obstacle

heights ranging from 50 to 100 cm, also saw strong participation, with most riders successfully clearing the courses without faults.

The championship served as an important preparatory event ahead of a major international sporting fixture set for the coming weekend, as the Federation Arena in Subhan gears up to host its first international show jumping championship, with riders from Kuwait as well as several Arab, Gulf and European nations competing from January 28 to 31.

ARAB TIMES

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY IN FREE KUWAIT

Published by: Arab Times Publishing House

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