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KD 603 mln fuels rapid project execution

Kuwait nears halfway mark on annual plan

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25: Kuwait has achieved remarkable progress in its 2025/2026 Annual Plan, with spending on projects reaching about KD603 million in the third quarter -- more than 44 percent of the total annual budget of KD1.361 billion.

The newspaper obtained a copy of the statistics from the website of the Secretariat General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, highlighting the accelerated execution of the plan, which is integral to achieving the national vision.

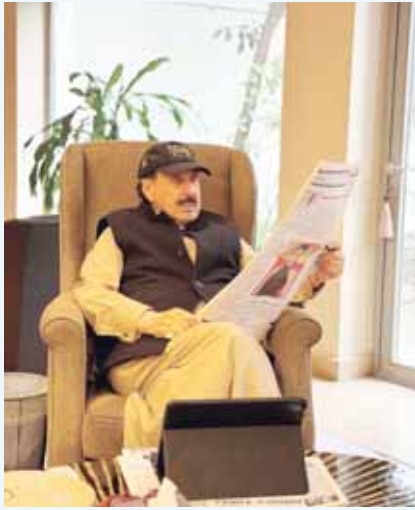
The comprehensive plan includes 134 projects that are at various stages of development. These projects are distributed to four main phases: the implementation phase with the highest number at 67 projects, preparation phase with 44 projects, yet-to-start phase with 13 projects, and handover phase with 10 projects.

The 2025/2026 Annual Plan is structured around seven main pillars, with 32 development programs. The selection of projects under these programs is aimed at boosting the global competitiveness of the State and to support its long-term goal of transforming into an investment-attractive financial and commercial hub.

The report stated that the development plan is aligned with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, focusing on five key pillars: developing the northern region, building a knowledge-based economy, developing a supportive government, ensuring sustainable well-being, and empowering citizens.

These pillars, approved by the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, consists of nine major development programs: building an international economic zone, privatization, vibrant private sector, developing the capabilities of citizens and institutions, cohesive and transparent government, robust infrastructure, creating environmentally harmonious living areas, promoting health and well-being, and making an effective contribution.

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Al-Jarallah back home after surgery

— Details Page 2 —



Ministry of Oil photo

Undersecretary of the Kuwait's Ministry of Oil Sheikh Dr. Nimer Fahad Al-Malik Al-Sabah (right) with Saudi Assistant Minister of Energy Mohammad Al-Brahim during the meeting.

Unified tax mechanism eyed

Kuwait and Saudi boost oil cooperation in Divided Zone

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti-Saudi Permanent Joint Committee held its 119th meeting on Sunday at the committee's headquarters in Al-Khaffi, in the presence of Head of the Kuwaiti side Undersecretary of the Ministry of Oil Sheikh Dr. Nimer Fahad Al-Malik Al-Sabah and chaired by Saudi Assistant Minister of Energy Mohammad Al-Brahim.

In a press statement, the Ministry of Oil said the meeting comes as part of ongoing efforts to implement the provisions of the memorandum of understanding signed between the two countries on December 24, 2019, which was approved under Law No. 2 of 2020 issued on January 29, 2020.

The MoU aims to enhance joint coordination and serve the strategic interests of both sides in the Divided Zone.

The ministry noted that the meeting reviewed reports on petroleum operations in the onshore Divided Zone and the adjacent offshore Divided Zone, including strategic plans, current and future major projects, and potential challenges to implementation.

Discussions also covered the use of modern and advanced technologies in petroleum operations, as well as environmental and safety projects, development plans, and national workforce training.

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Kuwait regulates medicine prices

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25: Minister of Health Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi issued Ministerial Decree No. 062/2026, marking a significant step toward reforming pharmaceutical governance in the private sector.

The new decree establishes a clear and comprehensive pricing mechanism for human medicines in order to guarantee transparency, fairness and consumer protection in the local market.

This legislative move is a response to the need to advance the national healthcare system and adapt to the current economic shifts. Its primary goals are

to effectively control drug prices, ensure a stable supply of necessary medicines, and prevent any form of unjustified pricing.

Under the new regulations, human medications must undergo official registration and pricing by the ministry before they are sold, displayed or distributed to private pharmacies and retail outlets.

A crucial provision of the decree is that the ministry-approved prices must be clearly printed on the medication's packaging in local currency. Only the medication in a complete and priced package will be allowed for sale.

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Security campaign nets 25 arrests in single day

Liquor sellers caught in Jleeb sweep

By Munif Naif
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25: The General Traffic Department conducted comprehensive security and traffic campaigns in various governorates, leading to the arrest of 25 individuals within 24 hours.

These individuals are wanted by law for various offenses, including residency violations. They were referred to the concerned authorities.

A security source disclosed that the violations include expired residency permits, absconding, outstanding arrest warrants and involvement in suspicious activities.

Meanwhile, an Asian man and woman were arrested in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh for selling locally made liquor.

According to security sources, police officers caught the two individuals in the act of selling the contraband and found around 30 bottles of locally made liquor ready for sale in their possession.

Both the suspects and the seized items were handed over to the concerned authorities.

Central control room strengthens food oversight

191 cameras track cooperative societies operations

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25: Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah inaugurated the central control room for monitoring cooperative societies in Abdullah Al-Salem suburb, which falls under the ministry's jurisdiction.

The step marks a major advancement in field, administrative, and financial monitoring, utilizing modern technologies to enhance oversight and improve coordination among relevant government agencies.

During the tour, Dr. Al-Huwailah explained that this system is essential, reflecting the cooperation and integration between the Ministry of Social Affairs, which oversees cooperative societies, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Ministry of Interior, and other government entities. This integration and cooperation contributes to preserving strategic reserves, ensuring food security, and monitoring the prices of essential goods offered to consumers in cooperative societies.

Dr. Al-Huwailah indicated that the coming period will witness an increase in the number of cameras and expanded monitoring coverage.

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KUNA photo

Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah inspects the central control room for monitoring cooperative societies in Abdullah Al-Salem suburb.

Gold prices in Kuwait near KD 50 per gram

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25, (KUNA): Gold prices in Kuwait followed global trends, reaching record levels this week, with 24-carat gold rising to about KD 49.35 per gram (around 150 US dollars) and 22-carat gold reaching KD 45.24 (around 138 dollars). Silver prices also surged, trading at approximately KD 1,145 per kilogram (around 3,500 dollars).

Globally, gold concluded an exceptional week, continuing to record new historical levels near 5,000 US dollars per ounce. This surge was driven by growing geopolitical and economic concerns, declining confidence in US assets, and a weaker dollar, boosting demand for precious metals as a safe haven.

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Precautionary recall for 'specific' baby formulas

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25, (KUNA): The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) announced on Sunday that certain baby formula products were recalled as a precautionary measure.

In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), the authority clarified that the products, manufactured in France by Lactalis Nutrition Sante under the brand name ENFASTAR, were subject to a voluntary precautionary recall by the company, have not been imported into Kuwait and have not been detected in local markets to date.

PAFN said it received a notification through the rapid alert system for food and the international food safety authorities network indicating that Lactalis had initiated a voluntary recall due to the possible presence of the substance cereulide.

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Heavy rain expected Wednesday

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25, (KUNA): Acting Director of the Meteorological Department Dhirar Al-Ali predicted that the country will most likely experience rainfall on Wednesday and Thursday.

He said the country witnessed an increase in low and medium-level clouds starting Saturday evening, interspersed

with some cumulonimbus clouds, which led to scattered rainfall, sometimes thundery, in some areas.

Al-Ali told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that rainfall amounts varied from light to moderate, and heavy, especially in some northern areas.

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Newswatch

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates announced on Sunday the agenda for the Emirati-Kuwaiti Relations Week, set to launch next Thursday, featuring more than 40 community, cultural, and entertainment events under the slogan "UAE and Kuwait ... Brothers Forever."

The initiative comes in the implementation of directives from the UAE leadership to celebrate the deeply rooted fraternal relations between the two brotherly countries across all emirates of the state. (KUNA)

Citizenship of 65 individuals revoked

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25: Four decrees and a Cabinet decision revoking Kuwaiti citizenship from 65 individuals, including those who acquired it dependently, were published on Sunday in the official gazette "Kuwait al-Yaum", reports Al-Seyassah daily.

These decrees and decision are the following:
■ Decree No. 4/2026 revokes citizenship from 54 individuals

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Students resume lessons after mid-year break



MoE photo

Students engaged in learning as the new semester begins.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25: The second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year began on Sunday morning, with schools welcoming back students of all grade levels after the mid-year break, in an atmosphere of optimism and discipline.

In a press release issued by the Ministry of Education, Khaled Al-Enezi, the supervisor of intermediate schools in the Hawally Educational Zone, explained that the Ministry of Education is giving students its utmost attention by ensuring a comfortable and safe learning environment that meets the demands of the educational process as the second semester begins.

The ministry has mobilized all available human and technical resources.

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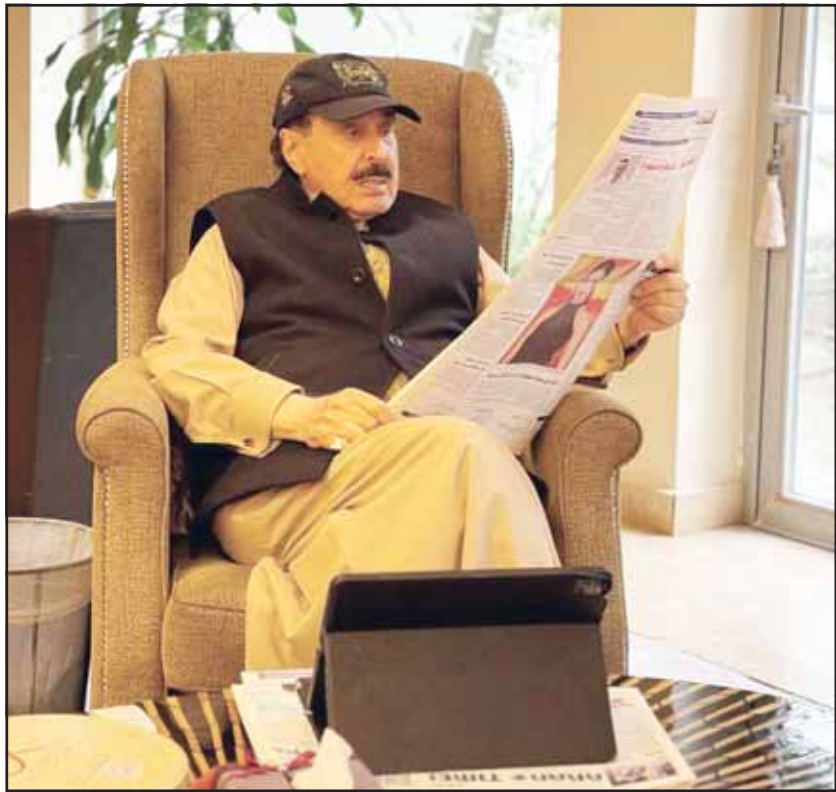
Prayer Timings			
Fajr	05:19	Asr	15:00
Sunrise ..	06:41	Maghrib ..	17:20
Zohr	12:00	Isha	18:40

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:
By Day: Rather cold to mild with light to moderate freshening at times over coastal areas north-westerly wind, with speeds of 12-45 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.
By Night: Rather cold to cold

Weather			
and partly cloudy with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 06-28 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.			
Station	Max Exp	Min Rec	
Kuwait Airport	17	13	

Abdaly	18	11
Bubyan	14	09
Jahra	17	12
Failaka Island	16	10
Salmiyah	16	13
Ahmadi	15	08
Jal Aliyah	17	11
Nuwaisib	18	14



Editor-in-Chief Ahmed Al-Jarallah



Al-Jarallah and Dr. Adam Raphael



HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad



Minister Nasser Al-Sumait

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25: Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah returned to Kuwait after undergoing successful surgery in Paris.

He attributed his recovery to Allah's grace and the esteemed efforts of his doctors.

Upon his return, Al-Jarallah expressed his deep gratitude for the immense outpouring of love and support he received from friends, colleagues and well-wishers through visits, phone



Sheikh Abdullah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad

calls, and other communication channels. He emphasized that this "brotherly affection had a profound impact on me, and perhaps, even contributed to my full recovery."

He thanked His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad and Sheikh Abdullah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad. He also expressed appreciation for the concern and brotherly support of Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait, Yousef Al-Sumait, Abdulaziz Al-Dughaishim, Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi and Sattam Al-Jalal,



Ambassador Abdullah Al-Shaheen

indicating that their actions reflect the strength of human and social bonds.

He acknowledged the crucial support received abroad, thanking Ambassador of Kuwait to France Abdullah Al-Shaheen, Head of the Health Office Dr. Ali Al-Mousawi and Dr. Adam Raphael.

He concluded by thanking "everyone who was present through prayers or follow-up," stating that this sincere concern embodies "the true character of the people of Kuwait."



Yousef Al-Sumait



Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi



Abdulaziz Al-Dughaishim



Sattam Al-Jalal



Dr. Ali Al-Mousawi

True investment lies in human resources

Minister honors outstanding minor students



Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times Ahmed Al-Jarallah is received by the Minister of Justice and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Minors' Affairs (PAMA) Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait.

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25: Minister of Justice and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Minors' Affairs (PAMA) Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait affirmed that serving those under the care of PAMA is both a great honor and a significant responsibility that must be upheld, stressing that true investment lies in human development, enhancing knowledge, values, and behavior.

In a speech delivered during a ceremony held in honor of outstanding minor students from various educational levels, the minister highlighted



Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait and acting Director General of PAMA Alia Al-Saqr at the ceremony.

that the recognition is in appreciation of their efforts and affirms the importance of maintaining excellence and continuing academic achievement.

He said PAMA's approach is in line with the directives of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who emphasizes the need for PAMA to be managed with integrity and fairness.

He urged the outstanding minors to continue their path of diligence and excellence and to make knowledge and ethics the foundation for building their future and serving their homeland.

He affirmed that PAMA is committed to providing all means of support and care that enable minors to face future challenges with confidence and competence.

He said PAMA is open to all initiatives and proposals that ensure the success of those under its care.

Present at the event were acting PAMA Director Alia Al-Saqr, Directors



Photos by Mohammad Morsi
Some of the minor students honored by the minister at the ceremony.

of the two sectors Manar Al-Subaie and Fahad Al-Mansour, and a number of educational officials and parents.

Meanwhile, acting Director General of PAMA Alia Al-Saqr confirmed the authority's commitment to providing comprehensive support and care, as well as creating an environment that enables minors under its care to excel, stand out, and achieve their aspirations.

Al-Saqr stressed that PAMA firmly believes that true investment lies in human capital, with education serving as the cornerstone for building a bright future.

Around 990 outstanding minors in various educational levels were honored at the ceremony, which concluded with commemorative photos taken in an atmosphere of pride and appreciation for the children's achievements, reflecting the humanitarian and national mission of PAMA to care for minors and safeguard their future.

Other Voices

President Trump, Federal Reserve battle simmers

By Ahmad alsarraaf

A long-standing dispute between US President Donald Trump and Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell has come to a head.

Trump accused Powell of hesitating to lower interest rates and hampering the US economy, labeling him the worst person to ever lead the Federal Reserve and calling for his dismissal, a demand he first made during his 2018 term.

Powell defended his decisions, explaining that they are guided by inflation and employment data, and stressed the importance of maintaining the Federal Reserve's independence.

Trump escalated the conflict by referring Powell for investigation over suspicions related to the \$4 billion cost of renovating the Federal Reserve headquarters.

Powell viewed this as a pretext to pressure him into changing his stance on monetary policy, and issued an unprecedented statement in the history of the Federal Reserve to defend his position.

But how does the Federal Reserve operate?



alsarraaf

The Federal Reserve, or central bank, was established by Congress in 1913 with a hybrid public-private structure designed to prevent any single sector from dominating the economy. Private national banks can become members of the 12 regional Federal Reserve Banks, earning limited profits but having no role in setting U.S. monetary policy.

The Federal Reserve's primary objectives are to provide a flexible currency, act as a lender of last resort for banks, rediscount commercial paper, and strengthen banking supervision to prevent financial panics and bank runs.

Its structure consists of three main components - the Board of Governors in Washington, whose chair and members are appointed by the U.S. president and confirmed by the Senate, the 12 regional Federal Reserve Banks, each serving a specific geographic region, and the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC), the most influential body, responsible for setting monetary policy, including interest rates and asset purchases.

The FOMC is composed of 12 members - five regional Federal Reserve Bank presidents, whose voting rights rotate, and seven governors, including the permanent governor of New York.

The president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York holds a vote at every meeting.

The other 11 governors are divided into four groups, each voting roughly every three years. This structure com-

bines public and private elements and distributes power geographically, ensuring that no single entity, whether Wall Street, the White House, or Congress, can dominate monetary policy. This system has allowed the Federal Reserve to maintain its independence since its creation.

Some private national banks hold shares in their respective regional Federal Reserve Banks. These shares are a requirement for membership, not optional investments. They are non-tradable, cannot be pledged, and legally receive dividends capped at six percent.

The 12 Federal Reserve Banks serve as central banks for their respective regions but do not control interest rates, issue currency, or make other federal policy decisions.

Instead, the Federal Reserve is managed by the Board of Governors, overseen by the Chair and the Commissioners, all of whom are federal employees paid by the government. The President does not have the authority to dismiss them.

Any profits generated by the Federal Reserve are transferred to the U.S. Treasury, even though the bank has incurred accounting losses in recent years due to high interest rates. Despite this, the Chairman has refused to lower interest rates, insisting on the Federal Reserve's independence in decision-making.



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KFAED, UN ink \$5 million accord to support people

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25, (KUNA): Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) signed a USD five million grant agreement with UN, allocated to International Labour Organization (ILO), UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Health Organization (WHO), and UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), to promoting inclusive employment and rehabilitation in Kuwait.

Speaking to KUNA following the signing ceremony, KFAED Acting Director General Waleed Al-Bahar said the agreement reaffirms the Fund's commitment to supporting comprehensive development initiatives that enhance human dignity.

Al-Bahar noted that the program seeks to support and enhance the social and economic inclusion of persons with disabilities in Kuwait through a package of strategic interventions led by specialized international organizations, in close coordination with relevant national entities.

He added that the program focuses on improving access to technical education and entrepreneurship opportunities, as well as promoting the use of digital analytics tools and artificial intelligence to support evidence-based planning and the formulation of effective policies, contributing to the development of a more inclusive and sustainable society.

Al-Bahar also highlighted the program's role in enhancing inclusive employment opportunities, alongside supporting national efforts in the prevention of substance abuse, the development of treatment and rehabilitation services, and empowering recovered individuals to reintegrate effectively into society within a supportive and sustainable environment.

For her part, the UN Secretary-General's Representative and Resident Coordinator in Kuwait Ghada Al-Taher said the signing marks a milestone in the decades-long partnership between the UN and KFAED.

'Elaph'... hope for people with autism and families

"KUWAIT has lacked targeted media initiatives and systematic campaigns in recent years aimed at raising public awareness of critical health issues. These issues require early knowledge, whether in terms of diagnosis or treatment methods," columnist **Khaled Ahmed Al-Tarrah** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Autism spectrum disorder is one of the most prominent challenges facing the world today. It is a significant factor in academic difficulties and the struggle for full integration into daily life if not detected early, and if supportive scientific, educational, and social tools are not made available.

"The new year will witness a remarkable media development through the "Elaph" digital platform, which is dedicating new, high-quality content to address the challenges of autism, stemming from its media and educational responsibility.

"Elaph" electronic newspaper, the first international Arabic electronic newspaper, has launched an innovative digital platform to restore hope to individuals with autism and their families.

"Elaph is set to launch "The World of Autism" in the first quarter of 2026, a new media project aimed at expanding scientific knowledge about the causes of autism, its early symptoms, and medical and social treatment methods based on the latest global expertise.

"This underscores the importance of collaboration between relevant educational, media, and health stakeholders and the Elaph digital platform in developing tools for diagnosing and treating autism. Such collaboration will establish an effective partnership that contributes to creating sustainable community awareness.

"The world of autism is not limited to a single group. It includes both gifted individuals and those with learning difficulties. By spreading and establishing knowledge within the community at an early stage, we can mitigate the effects of autism and help those affected integrate naturally into society and achieve their aspirations.

"It is important to recall the initiative of the late Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (May God have mercy on him), in studying and adopting the "Gifted" schools project, which was pioneered in the Soviet Union before its collapse.

"The Amir's initiative focused on identifying pathways for creativity and educational skills and refining them scientifically. This initiative was unprecedented in Kuwait, but unfortunately, it did not receive the official attention it deserved at the time.

"His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (May God protect him) has emphasized on multiple occasions the importance of investing in youth and focusing on enhancing their skills.

The "Elaph" platform initiative dedicated to the world of autism presents an opportunity for investment and collaboration between Kuwait and the "Elaph" newspaper. Joining the Elaph digital platform dedicated to the world of autism offers a valuable opportunity to address autism at its early stages through integrated educational, health, and media cooperation."

Also:

"In a previous article, I discussed statistics from the US State Department regarding the number of visas granted to certain countries. At the time, I expressed surprise at the number issued to holders of Kuwaiti passports, as Kuwaitis generally do not emigrate because they have no need to do so," columnist **Eng. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Subsequently, the US President issued an executive order suspending visas to 75 countries, including Kuwait. Soon after, an official at the US Embassy clarified that the suspended visas were limited to immigration purposes only. This clarification was important to ensure that Kuwaitis understood they were not the intended target of this decision.

"Furthermore, there are individuals born on this land who are considered Kuwaiti even if they do not hold a Kuwaiti passport. This is because many countries around the world view a person's place of birth as the basis of citizenship. In Europe and the West in general, citizenship is granted to newborns at birth. As a result, anyone born in a country is regarded as a citizen of that country, regardless of whether they formally hold its citizenship.

"For decades, this ambiguity has caused considerable confusion and many problems for Kuwait. Today, the issue is becoming even more complex due to the withdrawal of citizenship from those who obtained it through forgery or dual nationality, creating significant difficulties for Kuwaiti embassies.

"While this matter is undoubtedly complex and sensitive, a solution must be found to ease these challenges for Kuwait. It is unclear how these issues can be overcome without developing a comprehensive vision to address them. Perhaps certain ideas could be considered, such as specifying permitted destinations for holders of Article 17 passports within a defined timeframe. This approach is applied in many coun-

tries and could represent one possible solution.

"It is true that the Ministry of Interior has commendably set certain conditions for obtaining an Article 17 passport, namely for medical treatment, study, and national missions. These conditions require official documentation proving continued study.

"In addition, a new mechanism has been introduced for issuing electronic passports with embedded chips for these categories, following a temporary suspension of issuing the old passports and a review of previous cases.

"However, there are still individuals abroad using this type of passport. Last year, French authorities, according to reports in foreign media, though I am not certain of their accuracy, announced the death of a "Kuwaiti migrant who suffered a heart attack aboard the boat he was traveling on with other migrants." It was surprising to hear of a Kuwaiti citizen migrating illegally, but there is no doubt that this individual was not a Kuwaiti citizen; rather, he held an Article 17 passport. This highlights the significant ambiguity surrounding this issue, which must be clearly addressed.

"It is not Kuwait's fault that it approaches this matter from a humanitarian perspective, even if that results in certain measures that may affect its reputation. Nonetheless, steps must be taken to curb the misuse of these documents."



"Every time he said, "It's okay," something inside him broke a little more. He preferred to avoid confrontation and didn't know how to explain what was bothering him, so he chose silence as the easier path. Days passed, and the distress quietly accumulated until a small trigger, a careless word or a simple situation, set off an explosion of everything that had been hidden," writer on family and psychological matters **Fahd Al-Rifai** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Many people experience this without even noticing. They don't complain, they don't object, and they believe patience will solve every problem. But what remains unspoken doesn't disappear but it waits silently inside. Over time, silence shifts from a temporary wisdom into a heavy burden, and unexpressed feelings become the source of outbursts that neither the person experiencing them nor anyone else can fully understand.

"Silence in itself is not a problem; in fact, it can be a conscious choice in certain situations. The problem arises when it becomes a habit, when we resort to it out of fear of disagreement or confrontation, a desire to please everyone, or to avoid expressing what we truly feel.

"In such cases, emotions do not fade; they quietly accumulate, waiting for an opportunity to erupt. The moment of explosion is rarely caused by a single incident; rather, it stems from a long accumulation of internalized grievances including pent-up anger, minor disappointments, and feelings of being unappreciated.

"These emotions build until they suddenly erupt, leaving behind regret and the inevitable question - how could such a simple incident provoke such a strong reaction? It is here that the importance of emotional awareness becomes clear.

"Awareness does not mean suppressing our feelings, nor does it mean letting them control us. It means recognizing them early and understanding what we are experiencing before trying to silence them.

"The problem is not the feelings themselves, but the timing of their expression. Many people speak when their emotions are at their peak, and their words can turn into attacks, with the true meaning lost amid the intensity.

"Choosing the right moment to express oneself is therefore not a minor detail but a crucial step. Once we have calmed down, we can communicate our feelings without causing harm to ourselves or others.

"While waiting for this calm, we should not let our emotions remain trapped inside. Emotions that find no safe outlet will seek another path, often a painful one. Consciously releasing them is a healthy way to cope, through writing, walking, talking to someone we trust, or even a moment of honest self-reflection. These simple practices prevent feelings from piling up and help keep emotions in balance.

"Ultimately, silence is not heroism, nor is an outburst courage. Both are incomplete attempts to manage what we feel. Between them lies a safer space called awareness. Awareness allows us to listen to ourselves before we are overwhelmed, to speak before we break down, and to understand our emotions instead of fighting them.

"When we learn to manage our emotions consciously, we do not become harsher but we become more honest. We draw closer to ourselves first, and then to others, without unnecessary noise or hurt. Silence does not always mean running away, and discussion does not always mean conflict; rather, both can be the beginning of a lighter life and more compassionate relationships."

— Compiled by Simi K.Kutty



Dr. Khaled Al-Tarrah



Fahd Al-Rifai

Customs role vital in protecting societies



Director General of Kuwait's General Administration of Customs Yousef Al-Nuwaif talking to the press.



KUNA photos
Director General of Kuwait's General Administration of Customs Yousef Al-Nuwaif at the Kuwait Airport.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25, (KUNA): Director General of Kuwait's General Administration of Customs Yousef Al-Nuwaif said World Customs Day, observed this year highlights the vital role authorities play safeguarding societies.

In a press statement issued Sunday on the occasion, which falls on Monday, Al-Nuwaif said customs plays a pivotal role in facilitating legitimate trade while firmly confronting smug-

gling attempts in all forms, particularly drugs materials.

He noted that the General Administration of Customs in Kuwait takes pride in the sincere efforts and continuous sacrifices of its male and female personnel, who embody the highest standards of vigilance, discipline and responsibility.

Al-Nuwaif added that the administration is keen on developing national cadres and

strengthening cooperation with local and international entities, foremost among them the World Customs Organization, to enhance efficiency and keep pace with evolving challenges.

He expressed his appreciation and gratitude to all members of the General Administration of Customs for their dedicated efforts in serving the nation, wishing Kuwait continued security and safety, stability, prosperity, and enduring public confidence.

Court adjudicates 93% appeals in year 2025

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25: The Court of Appeals adjudicated 62,511 appeals in 2025, achieving a completion rate exceeding 93 percent, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

Court of Appeals President Judge Mohammad Ahmad Al-Rifai stated that according to statistics issued by the Clerical Department at the court, attached to its letter dated Jan 21, 2026, and compiled based on data from the Ministry of Justice's Systems and Information Program, the Court of Appeals received a total of 67,020 appeals last year and 62,511 of these appeals were adjudicated -- a completion rate of 93.3 percent.

Al-Rifai clarified that the appeals which were not adjudicated were delayed for reasons beyond the court's control, including referrals to the Experts Department or other specialized technical authorities.

He pointed out that this achievement is unprecedented in light of the rising number of appeals and the declining number of court judges, indicating that the Court of Appeals annually supplies the Court of Cassation with a huge number of judges.

He asserted that this situation required a doubling of workloads and the introduction of evening sessions to address the challenge in the aforementioned year and in subsequent years, during which the number of judges is expected to decrease substantially.

He expressed his appreciation to the court's representatives and judges for their tremendous efforts over the past year, urging them to continue exerting more efforts to uphold the principle of prompt justice.

4th Ring Road opens

5th Ring Road two lanes closed for repairs - GTD

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25: The General Traffic Department announced the reopening of the Fourth Ring Road, from the intersection of Al-Ghazali Road with the Fourth Ring Road to the intersection of Mohammad Bin Qasim Street towards the United Nations Roundabout, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

This section of the Fourth Ring Road was reopened on Sunday, January 25 at 5:00 am, following the completion of necessary road maintenance work.

Meanwhile, the General Traffic Department announced the closure of the right, slow, and middle lanes on Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahyan Road (Fifth Ring Road) towards Jahra, opposite Qortuba from Sunday, January 25, for a period of 10 days, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily. The closure is part of ongoing development and maintenance work on the road. King Faisal Expressway will remain open during this period.

Attendance tampering leads to KD 2,000 fines

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25: The Criminal Court, presided over by Judge Abdulwahab Al-Muaili, fined several defendants in the Ahmadi Court attendance forgery case KD2,000 each, as they were proven to have manipulated the attendance system and misappropriated public funds.

The defendants repaid the salaries they received unlawfully after it was proven that the forged attendance records, created by falsifying fingerprints, allowed them to receive salaries and bonuses without performing their assigned duties. This was established through technical reports and investigations.

Special US units part of joint Gulf security drill

DOHA, Jan 25, (KUNA): The joint field security exercise of the security agencies of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, titled "Arabian Gulf Security 4," kicked off on Sunday in Qatar, with the participation of GCC security forces and specialized security units from the US.

In a statement, Kuwait's Ministry of Interior said the opening ceremony was held under the patronage of Qatar's Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al-Thani.

The ceremony was attended by Undersecretary of the Qatari Ministry of Interior Abdullah Al-Ka'abi and Assistant Secretary General for Security Affairs at the GCC General Secretariat Brig. Hamad Al-Ameemi.

The Kuwaiti delegation was headed by Chairman of the Higher Committee for the exercise and Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic and Operations Affairs Brigadier Abdullah Al-Otaibi, along with Deputy Chairman of the Higher Committee Colonel Yousuf Al-Mishal and Field Exercise Commander Colonel (GS) Mohammad Al-Attar.

The event was also attended by heads of higher committees from GCC states, in addition to some security leaders, officers, and representatives of participating security agencies.

The exercise will continue until February 4, 2026, with the participation of security agencies and forces from GCC member states and specialized US security units.

It includes the implementation of more than 70 training scenarios, amounting to over 260 hours of intensive field training.

The exercise aims to raise security readiness levels, enhance integration and field coordination, and test the efficiency of operational plans and response mechanisms.

Hoax callers rob 2 women

Elderly fall victim to fraudsters

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25: Two elderly women were defrauded of a total of KD4,400 after receiving phone calls during the morning hours -- a time when their children were at work, reports Al-Anba daily.

The callers impersonated a bank employee and another individual who claimed to be working at the Ministry of Commerce.

Despite repeated warnings against responding to people who claim to be employees of official or banking institutions, and against sharing highly sensitive banking information, such as full card numbers or PINs, fraudsters continue to target the elderly through increasingly sophisticated methods.

A security source stated that two elderly women fell victim to fraud in Ahmadi Governorate after receiving phone calls during the morning hours, when their children are usually away at work.

The callers posed as an employee of a local bank and another as an employee of the Ministry of Commerce, and succeeded in stealing about KD4,400.

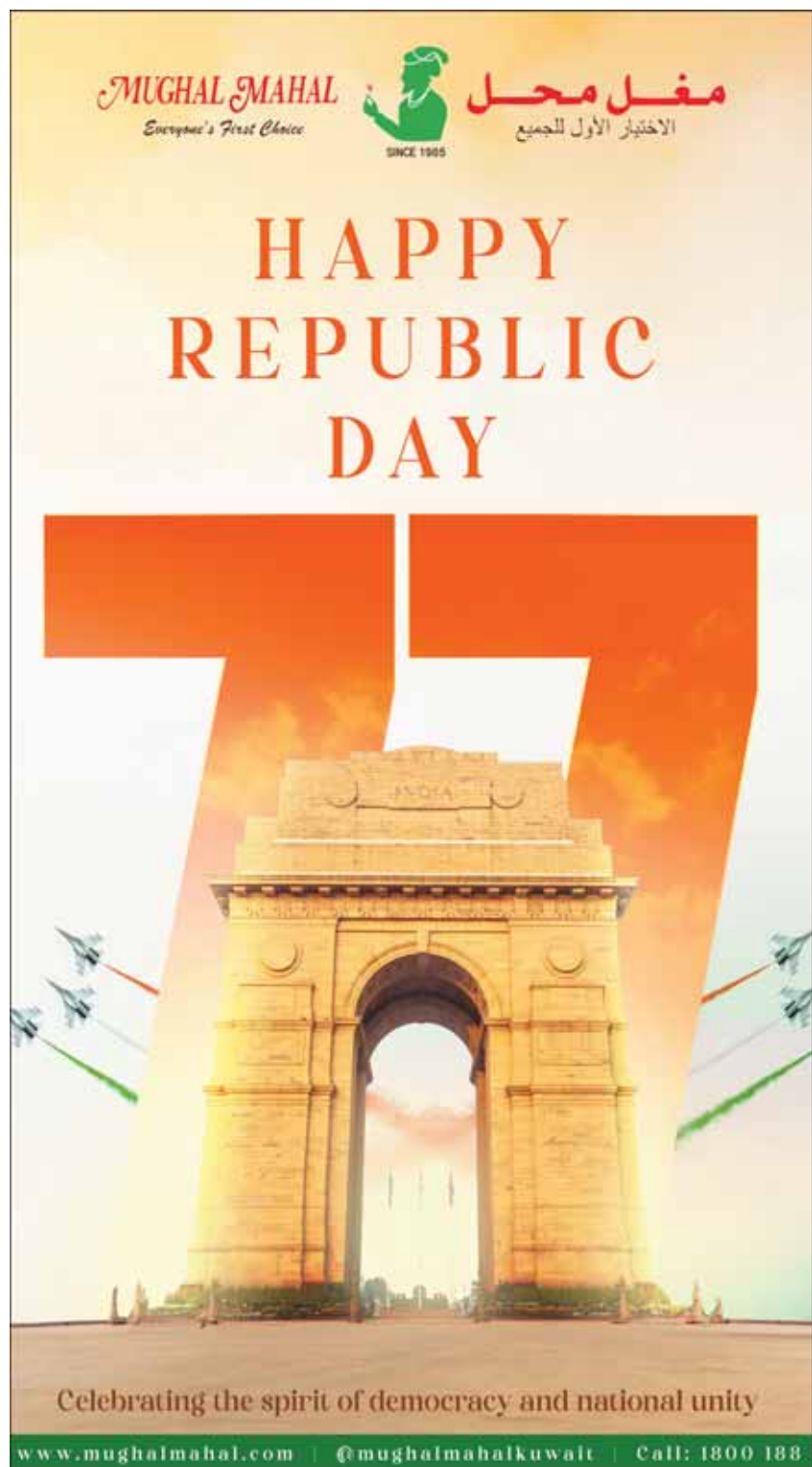
The source revealed that the first incident involved a woman in her 60s who received a call from a person claiming to work for a local bank. The caller requested her banking details, alleging that there was an attempt to steal from her account and that he wanted to prevent it. She later received text messages, indicating withdrawals totaling more than KD3,000 carried out through several separate transactions.

In the second incident, another retired woman reported that she received a call from someone impersonating an employee of the Ministry of Commerce. The caller obtained her bank details, which led to the deduction of more than KD1,400 from her account.

Both cases were referred to the Commercial Affairs Prosecution.

The security source confirmed that the competent authorities launched investigations into both incidents. He stressed that the Ministry of Interior, or any other government or banking institution, never requests bank details or PINs over the phone, urging the public not to respond to such suspicious calls and to report them immediately.

He added that the Cybercrime Department at the Ministry of Interior regularly issues awareness messages, warning against fraud tactics to protect the public from falling victim to such crimes.





His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah

Crown Prince receives top officials

HH Amir holds receptions

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Sunday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Amir also received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Amir received the President of the National Guard, Sheikh Mubarak Homoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Amir received First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.

Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

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His Highness the Crown Prince also received First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.

MoJ prioritizes child welfare in visitation center development

Minister Al-Sumait stresses care and service quality

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25: Minister of Justice, Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait, affirmed that children’s best interests and psychological well-being are the cornerstones of the planned development plans for visitation centers, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The minister said this in a press statement issued during his field visit to the visitation center in Al-Zahraa, accompanied by the acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice, Awatif Al-Sanad, and several other officials.

Minister Al-Sumait reviewed the workflow and listened to feedback from visitors and staff regarding their needs.

The Ministry of Justice clarified that the visit is part of its ongoing field monitoring efforts and highlights its commitment to improving the quality of services while respecting the privacy of the children and families benefiting from these centers.



Ministry of Justice photo
The Minister of Justice makes a field visit to the Child Visitation Center in the Zahraa area.

Grand Mosque inspected ahead of Ramadan



Ministry of Islamic Affairs photo
Undersecretary of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs Dr. Suleiman Al-Suwailem during his tour of the Grand Mosque.

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs Dr. Suleiman Al-Suwailem stressed the need to finalize preparations for the holy month of Ramadan during the inspection tour at the Grand Mosque on Saturday.

Al-Suwailem called for immediate resolution of any outstanding issues to ensure the mosque is fully ready for Ramadan.

The purpose of the inspection tour was to evaluate the readiness of the facilities and ongoing preparations, confirming that essential requirements for a suitable worshipping environment were met.

He reviewed the technical and service preparations, noting the needs and observations to ensure they are addressed according to established priorities.

He reaffirmed the commitment of the ministry to continue the field monitoring of mosques and guarantee the smooth flow of preparations for the comfort of worshippers. He appreciated and commended the efforts exerted by the Grand Mosque personnel in this regard.

Event set to kick off next Monday

31st Al-Qurain Cultural Festival to launch under PM’s patronage

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25, (KUNA): The 31st Al-Qurain Cultural Festival will begin next Monday under the theme “A Renewed Heritage and Inexhaustible Creativity,” under the patronage of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

In a press statement, Assistant Secretary-General for the Cultural Sector at the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters Aisha Al-Mahmoud said the festival, running until February 11, will feature diverse events highlighting local, Arab, and international culture.

She explained that since its launch in 1994, the festival has become a source of inspiration and pride, and a beacon of Kuwaiti cultural excellence, showcasing diverse activities such as poetry, storytelling, visual arts, performances, and intellectual seminars and lectures.

She emphasized Kuwait’s commitment to promoting culture and preserving the heritage, while engaging with modernity in a way that enhances culture’s role in development and public awareness.

Al-Mahmoud pointed out that this edition coincides with the conclusion of the “Kuwait, Capital of Arab Culture and Media 2025” celebrations.

She said the festival will open with a ceremony featuring the State Appreciation Awards and the State Award for Creativity, honoring Professor Dr. Sulaiman Al-Askari, along with a musical performance titled “Saffar” by Maestro Khaled Nouri at Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center.

She also highlighted a range of art and cultural exhibitions during the festival to be held at the Graduates Association in Bneid Al-Qar, the Kuwait National Museum, Museum of Modern Art, Bait Al-Sadu.

She added that the festival features the National Mural Art Project, alongside a cultural evening and a screening of the film “Bas Ya Bahar” by director Khaled Al-Siddiq at the National Council’s General Secretariat.

Al-Mahmoud outlined a lineup of artistic events, including a concert by Kankouni Folk Band at The Avenues Mall, a jazz evening at Yarmouk Cultural Center, and two concerts at Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center.

She added that the program also features a concert by the Hamad Bin Hussein Folk Band at Assima Mall, a



NCCAL photo
Aisha Al-Mahmoud, Assistant Secretary-General for the Cultural Sector at the National Council for Culture Arts and Letters.

Kuwaiti heritage night at the JW Marriott Hotel, and a poetry recital at the same venue with winners of the Suad Al-Sabah Literary Creativity Awards, in cooperation with the Suad Al-Sabah House for Culture and Creativity.

She noted that an evening celebrating the poetic journey of Prince Bader bin Abdulmohsen will be held in collaboration with the Suad Al-Sabah House for Culture and Creativity.

She added that the festival also hosts the World Crafts Forum in partnership with the World Crafts Council, running until February 3, with a crafts exhibition and training workshops at the Kuwait National Library.

Al-Mahmoud said the festival’s main seminar, “From Heritage to Creativity: Kuwait and the Journey of Arab Culture,” will run for three days with morning and evening sessions, featuring exhibitions, lectures, and panels with thinkers and intellectuals.

Highlights include a lecture on AI and creativity, a Turkish ceramicist’s talk on contemporary murals, a photography exhibition with the Kuwaiti Photographic Arts Society, and a panel on establishing the Arabic Language Academy.

She added that poetry and storytelling will be featured through the “Spaces: Poems and Stories” event, with dialogue sessions including participants from Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, UAE, and Oman.



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JANUARY



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Kuwait Fire Force officers conduct a safety inspection at a heritage site in Kuwait's old town.



Kuwait Fire Force photos
Kuwait Fire Force personnel conduct a preventive fire safety inspection at the Heritage Museum.

KFF conducts heritage site inspections

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25: Kuwait Fire Force recently conducted field inspections in a number of vital and heritage sites, including the Kuwait National Museum, Mubarak Kiosk, Kuwait National Library, Beit Al-Sadu, Beit Al-Badr, and the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) building, reports

Al-Jarida daily.

These inspections were carried out in co-operation with the NCCAL, in accordance with the joint cooperation protocol between the two entities. The aim of these inspections is to implement preventive measures and ensure compliance with safety and fire prevention regulations.



Photo by Rezk Tawfik

Heavy rainfall in Kuwait as drivers navigate the highways safely; Public Works teams monitor water accumulation to ensure smooth traffic flow.

MPW closely monitors rainfall

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25: The Ministry of Public Works teams are closely monitoring the rainfall situation and are present in various areas to deal with water accumulations and ensure smooth traffic flow, reports Al-Rai daily quoting sources.

Sources affirmed “all highways are open and free of water accumulations, with the exception of some minor accumulations in inland areas, which are being handled by the emergency teams.”

Sources indicated that the concerned ministry officials are regularly checking the rainfall situation from the control room in coordination with the Meteorological Department, urging all road users to exercise caution while driving due to the unstable weather conditions.

New facility to boost primary healthcare services

Farwaniya Governor, Health Minister open West Abdullah Al-Mubarak Health Center

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah and Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi inaugurated the West Abdullah Al-Mubarak Health Center, in the presence of several senior officials from the Ministry of Health.

The inaugural ceremony was attended by Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, Assistant Undersecretary for Engineering Affairs Ibrahim Al-Naham, Assistant Undersecretary for Primary

Healthcare Dr. Nadia Jumaa, Assistant Undersecretary for Dental Services Dr. Ahmad Asad, Director of the Farwaniya Health Zone Dr. Mohammed Al-Rashidi, and Director of the West Abdullah Al-Mubarak Health Center Dr. Sarah Al-Suhaibi.

During the inauguration, the Farwaniya Governor expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the Minister of Health, the Director of the Farwaniya Health Zone, the Director of Farwaniya Hospital, and everyone who contributed to the success of this vital project, which provides comprehensive healthcare services.

Sheikh Athbi said the project contributes to raising the level of healthcare services and meeting the needs of the area's residents, in line with the state's overall strategy and the Ministry of Health's plans to develop the health sector.

The opening of the center is part of the Ministry of Health's efforts to strengthen the primary healthcare infrastructure, and reflects the Farwaniya Governorate's commitment to supporting and improving the quality of health services provided to citizens and residents, in accordance with the highest approved standards.



Farwaniya Governorate photo

Farwaniya Governor and Health Minister lead inauguration of West Abdullah Al-Mubarak Health Center in Farwaniya.

Continued from Page 1

191 cameras

She highlighted that the electronic administrative and financial monitoring system allows ministry employees to monitor operations via smartphones, with reports accessible at any time.

Dr. Al-Huwailah revealed that 191 cameras, distributed across 76 cooperative societies, are currently connected to the system, and this number will be increased in the future.

Meanwhile, Dr. Sayed Issa, Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Administrative, Financial, and Cooperative Affairs, explained that the central control room is equipped with several systems, including a surveillance network covering cooperative societies, their central markets, and food supply centers, with 191 monitoring points in various cooperative societies.

The system is connected to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and the Ministry of Interior. The surveillance cameras have a storage capacity of up to four months. The control room operates continuously, 24/7, throughout the year.

He announced the completion of the project to connect the central markets and food supply branches of cooperative societies, covering 191 locations, to monitor the markets and the operations of the supply branches through the central operations room in Al-Siddiq, which is affiliated with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Dr. Issa highlighted the connection with the Ministry of Interior's Security Systems Department and the provision of a link to the control room in Abdullah Al-Salem suburb for viewing data from the control room at the Ministry of Social Affairs.

He explained that this linkage comes in implementation of ministerial decisions, circulars from the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies, and Law No. 61/2015 concerning the regulation and installation of security cameras and monitoring devices at the Ministry of Interior, under the supervision of the Assistant Undersecretary for Financial and Administrative Affairs and Cooperative Affairs, the Director General of the General Department of Cooperative Affairs, and the Committee for Monitoring Supply Branches in Cooperative Societies.

Dr. Issa revealed that they have received 1,554 applications so far for the position of Financial and Administrative Controller, adding that the applications will be reviewed, with 30 vacancies allocated for Financial Controllers and 60 vacancies for Administrative Controllers.

Stating that applications will close next Thursday, Dr. Issa explained that applicants will take a test, followed by a personal interview for those who pass. In the event of a tie between two or more applicants, the selection will be made through a public lottery.

Kuwait and

The statement quoted Sheikh Dr. Nimer Al-Sabah as saying that the meeting discussed completed procedures for vacating administrative buildings and the residential area used by Chevron Saudi Arabia at the Al-Zour site.

He noted that close coordination was carried out through joint meetings with relevant authorities to ensure the successful implementation of the evacuation procedures, and that the sites were officially handed over to the Government of Kuwait on January 20, 2026, reflecting the level of cooperation and institutional integration between the two sides.

The meeting also addressed efforts to allocate a dedicated road and corridor at Al-Nuwiseeb and Al-Khafji border crossings.

A new route was opened for employees of joint operations through the land ports (Al-Nuwiseeb-Hama), alongside the provision of necessary technical requirements, including the programming of magnetic cards, gate preparation, and internet equipment.

These measures have facilitated employee movement and eased challenges related to access to operational sites and oil facilities.

The committee further reviewed programs and plans for developing and investing in onshore and offshore fields, accelerating their implementation in line with approved plans and timelines, while emphasizing the provision of necessary support to enable execution of development programs and associated engineering, technical, and construction works through continuous coordination with relevant authorities.

The meeting discussed establishing a unified mechanism for tax-related transactions between the Kuwaiti and Saudi sides, with the aim of creating a clear regulatory framework for concerned entities to help regulate revenues, enhance procedural efficiency, and ensure fairness and transparency in a manner that serves mutual interests.

During the meeting, the heads of both sides signed the

principles and treatments approved by the competent authorities regarding tax matters and implementation mechanisms for collection, in accordance with the laws and regulations in force in both countries.

Sheikh Dr. Nimer Al-Sabah stressed the importance of holding the joint committee's meetings on a regular basis, given their pivotal role in monitoring petroleum operations, addressing challenges, and supporting the implementation of strategic projects in the Divided Zone.

He expressed appreciation for the positive spirit of cooperation prevailing in the committee's work.

Students resume

Schools were fully prepared through general maintenance of the buildings, provision of essential classroom supplies, and implementation of organizational plans to ensure a smooth school day and the efficient movement of students entering and leaving the premises.

Hassan Al-Sabbagh, the principal of Saad Al-Awsi Intermediate School for Boys in the Hawally Educational Zone, stated that the school has completed its preparations to receive 388 students distributed across 16 classrooms, with clear organizational arrangements and full readiness in place.

Al-Sabbagh stressed that the teaching and administrative staff are exerting great efforts to welcome students in an atmosphere of discipline and reassurance, with a focus on the educational and psychological aspects that enhance students' motivation to learn.

He emphasized that cooperation between the family and the school is a fundamental pillar in supporting the educational process during the second semester.

In this regard, Al-Seyassah daily reported that students of all educational levels returned to their classrooms on Sunday morning amid pleasant rainy weather following the mid-year break.

Public, religious, and special education schools reported good student attendance, thanks to careful organization and preparations by school administrations and teaching staff.

Due to the weather, morning assemblies were canceled, and classes proceeded according to the published schedules.

Since early morning, school corridors were bustling with activity, and classes began in an atmosphere of discipline and focus, signaling the start of a new semester in which students and teachers alike look forward to a period of hard work and dedication.

Gold prices

A report issued on Sunday by Dar Al-Sabaek stated that gold closed the week at a record level near 4,987 dollars per ounce, achieving gains exceeding eight percent, which is the strongest since the COVID-19 crisis in 2020. During trading, it reached a historic peak near 4,990 dollars per ounce amid rising concerns over tensions between the United States and NATO regarding Greenland, ongoing uncertainty over US trade policy, and the independence of the Federal Reserve.

This strong performance was supported by the US dollar index falling to its lowest levels in several months, relatively stable Treasury yields, and growing expectations for continued accommodative monetary policy during 2026, despite no immediate rate cuts expected in the upcoming Federal Reserve meeting.

Gold experienced notable fluctuations during the week, starting near 4,650 dollars per ounce at the beginning of the week before accelerating upward with Asian demand, then continuing as US liquidity returned, surpassing 4,800 and 4,900 dollars, and testing the psychological level of 5,000 dollars by the end of the week, signaling strong buying momentum and a continued short-term uptrend.

Silver showed even stronger performance, with futures surpassing 100 dollars per ounce for the first time in history, achieving weekly gains exceeding 14 percent. This was driven by strong investment momentum and notable inflows into metals with both investment and industrial appeal, outperforming gold in terms of year-to-date growth.

Despite warnings about the potential impact of high prices on future industrial demand, continued dollar weakness and elevated global volatility kept silver in focus, with expectations of increased fluctuations in the coming period.

Dar Al-Sabaek's report indicated that technical forecasts suggest gold is poised to test the 5,000-dollar level again in the near term, with 4,900 dollars considered a major support level in case of temporary profit-taking. The overall outlook remains supportive of continued upward trends for both gold and silver as long as geopolitical uncertainty

persists and the US dollar remains weak, placing precious metals at the forefront of defensive assets.

The last week of January is crucial for global markets, with anticipation of the Federal Reserve's first decision of the year amid differing views within the Federal Open Market Committee regarding interest rates, along with announcements from major companies such as Apple, Meta, and Microsoft, which will provide important indicators of demand for artificial intelligence and investment in data centers.

Markets are also awaiting important US economic data, including durable goods orders and the producer price index, as well as GDP data for the Eurozone and Canada, inflation data in Germany, Spain, and Australia, and purchasing managers' indices in China, making this week decisive in determining the direction of the global economy and markets.

The ounce, one of the units of mass measurement used in several systems, is equal to 28.349 grams, while as a unit for precious metals it equals 31.103 grams.

Kuwait nears

Each program has its own objectives, policies, and proposed implementation mechanisms.

The report added that the plan adopted indicators to measure its developmental impact on the progress of the country toward achieving its overarching vision. These indicators were used to identify gaps in each program and determine the implementation mechanisms to bridge these gaps. The implementation mechanisms include systems and standards, institutional capacities, automation, laws, regulations, private investment and government investment.

The report also pointed out that the annual development plan is managed as a package of initiatives that is reviewed annually. It is subject to modification according to the performance of the initiatives or the development of new initiatives to achieve the policies.

The new annual development plan is distinguished from the previous annual plans as it is based on more specific criteria in the selection of development initiatives and the determination of the legislative regulations to drive development in the various programs of the plan. A governance system was put in place for each program to ensure its success in achieving the results and policies. All of these aim to improve the ranking of the State in international indices to be among the top 35 countries by 2035.

Kuwait regulates

The decree also prohibits alteration of the expiration date or batch number on the packaging to ensure product integrity.

The decree stipulates the responsibilities of the Drug Pricing Committee as follows: conducting detailed studies to propose and determine suitable pricing mechanisms, benchmarking submitted company prices against those in other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and global markets, closely monitoring prices to prevent overpricing, and taking proactive measures in the interest of the public.

The decision incorporates a wide array of regulations that govern all aspects of drug pricing, including the requirements for pricing submissions, validity period of price certificates, mechanisms for officially announcing approved prices, and determination of permissible profit margins.

It also states pricing rules distinguishing between innovative and generic drugs, as well as the procedures for price review and appeals.

The ministry asserted that this decree is a clear manifestation of its dedication to develop a stable and fair drug pricing system.

The new framework is based on scientific principles and professional benchmarking, an effort to boost public confidence in the pharmaceutical market and safeguard the interests of all stakeholders -- from consumers to distributors.

Citizenship of

- Decree No. 5/2026 revokes citizenship from one individual
- Decree No. 6/2026 revokes citizenship from two individuals
- Decree No. 7/2026 revokes it from another two individuals
- Cabinet Decision No. 1768/2025 revokes citizenship from six individuals, including those who acquired it via dependency.

Heavy rain

He revealed that varying amounts of rain were recorded -- 35 mm in Abdally, 14 mm in Sabriya and seven mm at Kuwait International Airport.

He clarified that the rainfall was due to the country being affected by an extension of a surface low-pressure system, coinciding with another deep low-pressure system in the upper atmosphere, which gradually receded since Sunday morning, allowing the advance of an extension of a high-pressure system accompanied by a cold air mass.

He reported that the air mass sweeping across the country will cause a noticeable drop in temperatures, accompanied by active northwesterly winds that will occasionally exceed 60 kilometers per hour.

He stated that the winds will stir up dust, reducing horizontal visibility in some areas, especially the open ones, and causing sea waves to rise to more than six feet. He disclosed that the maximum temperatures ranged from 14 to 17 degrees Celsius, while the minimum temperatures ranged from six to nine degrees Celsius.

Precautionary recall

The authority urged consumers to verify product batch numbers and, if they match those included in the recall, to immediately stop using the product and follow instructions issued through official PAFN channels.

PAFN also noted receiving a notification regarding a voluntary precautionary recall by Danone of specific formula products manufactured in Ireland under the brand Aptamil Advance, also due to the presence of cerulide.

The authority affirmed that it has taken all necessary precautionary measures in line with food safety regulations, including monitoring recall procedures in coordination with suppliers and distributors and immediately halting the circulation of affected batches to safeguard consumer health and safety.



Ambasciata d'Italia in Kuwait

Referendum
Costituzionale
Italiano – Marzo 2026

I cittadini italiani in
Kuwait sono invitati a
visionare l'informativa
sulle modalità di voto per
il Referendum
Costituzionale di marzo
2026, cd. “Riforma della
giustizia”, disponibile
presso la pagina
web e i social media
dell'Ambasciata d'Italia
in Kuwait.

Orbán praises US action in Venezuela

US President Trump’s Greenland ambitions strain MAGA ties with Europe’s far-right

BRUSSELS, Jan 25, (AP): Tensions over US President Donald Trump’s plans to take control of Greenland have driven a wedge in the once iron-clad link between MAGA and Europe’s far-right.

The rift seems to signal that ideological alignment alone may not be enough to temper worries among European nationalists over Trump’s interventionism abroad.

Far-right leaders in Germany, Italy and France have strongly criticized Trump’s Greenland plans. Even Nigel Farage, a longtime ally of Trump and head of the Reform UK nationalist party, called Trump’s Greenland moves “a very hostile act.”

During a debate Tuesday in the European Parliament, far-right lawmakers typically aligned with Trump overwhelmingly supported halting a EU-US trade pact over their uneasiness with his threats, calling them “coercion” and “threats to sovereignty.”

Such a divergence between Trump and his European acolytes came as some surprise.

Far-right parties surged to power in 2024 across the European Union, rattling the traditional powers across the bloc’s 27 nations from Spain to Sweden. Their political groupings now hold 26% of the seats in the European Parliament, according to the German Institute for International and Security Affairs.

Less than a year ago, Europe’s far-right parties gathered in Madrid to applauded Trump’s election under the banner “Make Europe Great Again,” while Elon Musk, before his fall from Trump’s graces, had boosted European far-right influencers and figures on X, including Germany’s radical right Alternative for Germany party.

U.S. Vice President JD Vance drew scorn from within Germany and across Europe after he met with AfD leader Alice Weidel during elections in February. The party, with which mainstream parties refuse to work, upset German politics by doubling its presence in the Bundestag to become the nation’s second-largest party.

Yet deep divisions within MAGA it-



US President Donald Trump shakes hands with Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orbán, (left), during a signing ceremony on his Board of Peace initiative at the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland on Jan 22, (AP)

self over Trump’s approach to foreign affairs has reverberated in Europe, with his actions over Greenland, Ven-

ezuela and Iran forcing his political allies to favor their ideological convictions over their deference to the US president.

France’s far-right National Rally has at times vaunted its ideological closeness to Trump, particularly on immigration.

A year ago, the party sent one of its senior figures, Louis Aliot, to attend Trump’s inauguration. In turn, Trump has staunchly defended party leader Marine Le Pen, describing her conviction for embezzling EU funds as a “witch hunt.”

Jordan Bardella, the 30-year-old National Rally’s president and a MEP, has praised Trump’s nationalist views, saying to the BBC last month that a “wind of freedom, of national pride” was blowing across Western democracies.

In recent days, however, Bardella has appeared to distance himself from the U.S. administration. In his New Year’s address, he criticized US military intervention in Venezuela aimed at capturing then-President Nicolás Maduro, calling it “foreign interference” designed to serve “the economic interests of American oil

companies.”

Going further, Bardella on Tuesday denounced Trump’s “commercial blackmail” over Greenland.

“Our subjugation would be a historic mistake,” Bardella said.

Another Trump ally, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, echoed this sentiment. In an interview on Rai television Wednesday, she said that she told Trump during a call that his tariffs threat over Greenland was “a mistake.”

Trump, Orbán has insisted, is Europe’s only hope for peace amid the war in Ukraine and a guarantor of national sovereignty.

Orbán has sought to cast Trump’s threats on Greenland and capture of Maduro either as beneficial for Hungary, or none of its business.

Despite his staunch advocacy of national sovereignty, Orbán also praised the US action in Venezuela, calling the country a “narco state” and suggesting Maduro’s ouster could benefit Hungary through future cheaper oil prices on world markets.

America

Protesters demand agents leave Minneapolis: Democrats demanded that federal immigration officers leave Minnesota after a US Border Patrol agent fatally shot a man in Minneapolis, drawing hundreds of protesters onto the frigid streets and increasing tensions in a city already shaken by another shooting death weeks earlier.



Pretti

Family members identified the man who was killed as Alex Pretti, a 37-year-old intensive care unit nurse who protested President Donald Trump’s immigration crackdown in his city. After the shooting, an angry crowd gathered and protesters clashed with federal officers, who wielded batons and deployed flash bangs.

The Minnesota National Guard was assisting local police at the direction of Gov. Tim Walz, officials said. Guard troops were sent to both the shooting site and a federal building where officers have squared off with demonstrators daily.

Information about what led up to the shooting was limited, Police Chief Brian O’Hara said.

Department of Homeland Security spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said in a statement that federal officers were conducting an operation and fired “defensive shots” after a man with a handgun approached them and “violently resisted” when they tried to disarm him. (AP)

US airlines, airports brace for brutal travel day: A massive winter storm set the stage for a brutal travel day Sunday, with airlines warning of widespread cancellations and delays at some of the nation’s busiest airports.

Widespread snow, sleet and freezing rain threatened nearly 180 million people – more than half the U.S. population – in a path stretching from the southern Rocky Mountains to New England, the National Weather Service said Saturday night. After sweeping through the South, forecasters said the storm was expected to move into the Northeast, dumping about 1 to 2 feet (30 to 60 centimeters) of snow from Washington through New York and Boston.

More than 13,500 flights have been canceled across the US since Saturday, according to flight-tracking site FlightAware. About 9,600 of those were scheduled for Sunday. Aviation analytics company Cirium says its data shows that Sunday will be the highest cancellation event since the pandemic, with over 29% of all US departing flights axed. (AP)

Trump impeachment different

Dems Crockett and Talarico align on much in Texas Senate debate

WASHINGTON, Jan 25, (AP): Democrats Jasmine Crockett and James Talarico differed more on style than substance in their first debate for US Senate in heavily Republican Texas, though they distinguished themselves somewhat on the future of ICE and impeachment of President Donald Trump.

Crockett, an outspoken second-term US House member, and Talarico, a more soft-spoken four-term state representative, generally echoed each other on economic issues, health care and taxes.

Both called for a “fighter” in the role. Crockett, who is Black, said she was better positioned to attract disaffected Black voters, while Talarico, a Presbyterian seminarian who often discusses his Christian faith, suggested he could net rural voters unhappy with Republicans.

The hour-long discussion, before hundreds of labor union members and their families at the Texas AFL-CIO political convention, served as an early preview for themes Democrats hoping to overtake the Republican majority in the Senate in November are likely to stress throughout the midterm campaign.

The nominee chosen in the March 3 primary will face the winner of a Re-



Democratic primary candidates for US Senate, Texas state Rep James Talarico (left), and Rep. Jasmine Crockett (right), participate in a debate during the Texas AFL-CIO Committee on Political Education Convention, Saturday, Jan. 24, 2026, in Georgetown, Texas. (AP)

publican contest between four-term Sen. John Cornyn, Rep. Wesley Hunt and state Attorney Gen. Ken Paxton.

Crockett said she would support impeachment proceedings against Trump, beginning with investigating his use of tariffs. Crockett has supported impeachment measures in the

House, and would be in a position to promote them as a member of the House Judiciary Committee, should Democrats take control of the House in November.

“I think that there is more than enough to impeach Donald Trump,” Crockett said. “Ultimately, do I think

we should go through the formal process? Absolutely.”

Talarico stopped short of suggesting whether he would support impeachment proceedings, except to say, “I think the administration has certainly committed impeachable offenses.”

Instead, Talarico said he would, as a senator, weigh any evidence presented during an impeachment trial fairly, given that the Senate does not bring impeachment charges but votes to convict or acquit. “I’m not going to articulate articles of impeachment here at a political debate,” he said.

Both candidates condemned the shooting of a man in Minneapolis by federal immigration officers Sunday, and ICE’s heavy presence in the city, though Talarico was more adamant about cutting funding to the agency.

Both said they support bringing impeachment proceedings against Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, under whom ICE serves. But Crockett was less specific about cutting their funding.

“We absolutely have to clean house,” she said. “Whatever that looks like, I’m willing to do it.”

Talarico more specifically said of ICE funding, “We should take that money back and put it in our communities where it belongs.”



Lithuania’s President Gitanas Nausėda, (left), and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy review an honor guard, during a welcome ceremony at the Presidential Palace in Vilnius, Lithuania on Jan 25. (AP)

Trilateral talks ended constructively and more possible next week: Ukraine leader

KYIV, Ukraine, Jan 25, (Agencies): Two days of talks involving representatives from Ukraine, Russia and the United States wrapped up Saturday with “constructive” discussions on “possible parameters” for ending the war, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said. Negotiators will return to the United Arab Emirates for the next round on Feb. 1, according to a U.S. official who described the meetings as upbeat and positive.

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.

“All parties agreed to report to their capitals on each aspect of the negotiations and to coordinate further steps with their leaders,” Zelenskyy wrote on Telegram.

The meetings covered a broad range of military and economic matters and

included the possibility of a ceasefire before a deal, said the official. There was not yet an agreement on a final framework for oversight and operation of Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, which is occupied by Russia and is the largest in Europe.

The power generated from the plant will be shared “on an equitable basis,” according to the official, but control of it was still undecided.

Zelenskyy, meanwhile, said there was “an understanding of the need for American monitoring and control of the process of ending the war and ensuring real security.”

U.S. envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner participated alongside Ukrainian officials, including chief negotiator Rustem Umerov and Kyrylo Budanov, Zelenskyy’s chief of staff. Russia sent military intelligence and army representatives, according to Zelenskyy.

While Zelenskyy said in Davos, Switzerland, on Thursday that a po-

tential peace deal was “nearly ready,” certain sensitive sticking points – most notably those related to territorial issues – remain unresolved.

The U.S. official said Russian and Ukrainian officials likely would need to hold further talks in Russia or Ukraine before there was a chance of Zelenskyy meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, or even a joint session with President Donald Trump. There seemed to be momentum to reach the stage of leader meetings, according to the official, who spoke to reporters in Washington on condition of anonymity to describe the private talks in Abu Dhabi.

Just hours before the three-way talks began Friday, Putin discussed a Ukraine settlement with Witkoff and Kushner during marathon overnight talks. The Kremlin insists that to reach a peace deal, Kyiv must withdraw its troops from the areas in the east that Russia illegally annexed but has not fully captured.

Vance to visit Azerbaijan, Armenia to build on peace agreement

WASHINGTON, Jan 25, (Agencies): US Vice President JD Vance will visit Azerbaijan and Armenia in February to continue building on a “historic” peace agreement signed by the two neighboring countries last summer under US mediation.

In a post on the social media platform Truth Social, Trump expressed on Friday his appreciation to Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan for their support of the peace agreement signed in August.

“I want to thank President Aliyev of Azerbaijan, and Prime Minister Pashinyan of Armenia for upholding the Peace Agreement we signed last August,” Trump wrote. “This was a nasty War, 1 of 8 that I have ended, but now we have Prosperity and Peace.”

Trump announced that Vice President Vance will travel to both countries “to build on our Peace efforts, and advance the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity.”

He added that the US will strengthen its strategic partnership with Azerbaijan, pursue a “beautiful” agreement on peaceful nuclear cooperation with Armenia, and finalize deals with Azerbaijan involving major US semiconductor manufacturers, as well as the sale of US-made defense equipment, includ-



US Vice President JD Vance speaks during a news conference on Jan 22, 2026, in Minneapolis. (AP)

ing personal protective armor, boats, and other systems.

On August 8, Azerbaijan and Armenia signed a US-brokered peace agreement aimed at ending more than 30 years of conflict between the two countries.

The agreement was signed by US President Donald Trump, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, and included an economic component al-

lowing US companies to invest in both countries.

Also:

OSLO: Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen on Saturday refuted comments by U.S. President Donald Trump suggesting that non-US NATO troops stayed off the front lines in Afghanistan.

“It is unbearable that the American president questions the efforts of allied soldiers in Afghanistan,” Frederiksen said on Instagram.

She underscored that Denmark is among the NATO countries that have suffered the greatest losses per capita.

Trump told Fox Business on Thursday that the United States never needed non-US soldiers. “They’ll say they sent some troops to Afghanistan or this or that. And they did. They stayed a little back, little off the front lines,” Trump said.

Trump’s remarks have sparked widespread indignation. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said on Friday that Trump should apologize for his false assertion, describing the remarks as “insulting” and “appalling.”

According to Danish media, Danish veterans will hold a march from Kastellet in Copenhagen to the US Embassy to express their dissatisfaction with Trump’s statements.

Row erupts within Labour Party

UK government plans to create ‘British FBI’

LONDON, Jan 25, (AP): The British government said Sunday that it will unveil plans this week to create a new national police force, dubbed the “British FBI,” to take charge on complex investigations such as counterterrorism, fraud, online child abuse and criminal gangs.

The National Police Service will bring under the same umbrella the work of existing agencies dealing with terrorism and crime, police helicopters and policing of the roads, and regional organized crime units in England and Wales.

Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood said the new body will lift the burden on the 43 local police forces in England and Wales, helping them focus solely on day-to-day crimes within their jurisdictions.

“Some local forces lack the skills or resources they need to fight complex modern crime such as fraud, online child abuse or organized criminal gangs,” she said.

Mahmood said the current model was “built for a different century” and that the new body will attract “world-class talent” as well as helping to keep a lid on costs by moving procurement to one national force.

She said the full proposals will be unveiled to Parliament on Monday. Other changes expected include slashing the



Police officers patrol the King’s Cross train station, in London on Nov 3, 2025. (AP)

number of police forces in England and Wales and changes to how police officers are recruited and managed.

Also:

LONDON: A row erupted Sunday within Britain’s governing Labour Party after the ambitious mayor of Manchester was prevented from trying to re-enter Parliament at a special election in the city in the coming weeks, with critics claiming

that Prime Minister Keir Starmer did not want to see a potential rival back in the House of Commons.

Andy Burnham, who has been in charge of the Greater Manchester region since 2017, made a request to Labour’s governing committee on Saturday to stand as the party’s candidate in the upcoming election for the Gorton and Denton constituency, which is expected to take place by the end of February.

Europe

Flood risk warnings issued in BiH: Authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) have issued flood warnings across multiple regions as heavy rainfall combined with snowmelt is expected to raise river levels in the coming days.

On Friday, the Adriatic Sea Basin Agency warned of an increased risk of flash floods and urban flooding. Forecasts indicate that intensified precipitation and additional snowmelt could cause rivers and streams in the Adriatic basin to overflow. Areas of particular concern include parts of southern BiH’s floodplain, the Vriostica

River, and the entire course of the Neretva River and its tributaries, said the agency. (Xinhua)

French prosecutors probe seized oil tanker: French prosecutors said Friday they opened an investigation into an oil tanker intercepted in the Mediterranean Sea by the French navy and suspected of shipping Russian petroleum in violation of sanctions against Moscow.

The Grinch, an oil tanker that came from Murmansk in northwestern Russia and is suspected of being part of the sanctioned Russian shadow fleet, was redirected to an anchorage following Thursday’s operation by the French navy. (AP)

Indonesian rescuers recover more bodies from landslide, with 72 people still missing

BANDUNG, Indonesia, Jan 25, (AP): Improved weather on Sunday helped rescuers on Indonesia's main island of Java recover more bodies as they dug through mud and debris in search of scores of missing in a landslide that killed more than two dozen villagers.

The predawn landslide on the slopes of Mount Burangrang in West Java province on Saturday buried some 34 houses in Pasir Langu village. On Sunday, 72 people remained missing, many feared buried under tons of mud, rocks and uprooted trees. About 230 residents living near the site were evacuated to government shelters.

A 250-member search team on Sunday collected victims' remains, including body parts, in 14 body bags, bringing the total recovered to 25, said Ade Dian Permana, who heads the local search and rescue office. They will be released to relatives once they are identified by forensic experts.

Videos released by the search agency showed rescuers using farm tools and bare hands to pull a body from the mud. Permana said that loose ground on the slope prevented heavy equipment from being deployed. He estimated mounds of mud were to be up to 5 meters (16 feet) high, saying "our teams must move carefully."

Rescue team members work on site during search operations after a landslide accompanied by flash floods struck Cisarua Sub-district in West Bandung Regency, West Java, Indonesia on Jan 24. (AP)

"Some homes are buried up to the roof level," he added.

The head of the National Search and Rescue Agency, Mohammad Syafii, said teams were also using drones and K-9s to locate bodies along the landslide that stretched more than 2 kilometers (1.2 miles).

Visiting the area on Sunday, Indonesian Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka pledged that authorities would take measures to prevent similar disasters. He urged the local authorities in West Bandung district to "address the issue of land conversion in disaster-prone areas," including ways to reduce risks.



Rescue team members work on site during search operations after a landslide accompanied by flash floods struck Cisarua Sub-district in West Bandung Regency, West Java, Indonesia on Jan 24. (AP)

73 people to face probes over scams S.Korean ex-PM Lee Hae-chan dies

SEOUL, Jan 25, (Agencies): Lee Hae-chan, a former South Korean prime minister who was serving as a senior vice president of the Peaceful Unification Advisory Council (PUAC), died on Sunday while receiving medical treatment in Vietnam, Yonhap News Agency reported.

Lee collapsed on Jan 23 during a business trip to Ho Chi Minh City, where he was attending a meeting of the council's Asia-Pacific regional committee, and was rushed to a local hospital, according to Yonhap.

He was diagnosed with an acute myocardial infarction and underwent a stent procedure by local medical staff, but failed to recover and passed away at 2:48 pm local time.

A seven-term lawmaker and a veteran figure of South Korea's democratic movement, Lee served as prime minister under former President Roh Moo-hyun from 2004 to 2006.

Also:

SEOUL, South Korea: Dozens of South Koreans allegedly involved in online scams in Cambodia were returned to South Korea on Friday to face investigations in what was the largest group repatriation of Korean criminal suspects from abroad.

South Koreans, walking in the line at center, who are allegedly involved in online scams in Cambodia, arrive at the Incheon International Airport in Incheon, South Korea on Jan 23. (AP)

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

Upon arrival in South Korea's Incheon airport aboard a chartered plane, the suspects - 65 men and eight women - were sent to police stations.

The suspects, in handcuffs and wearing masks, were escorted by police officers and boarding buses. They were among about 260 South Koreans detained in a crackdown in Cambodia in recent months.



South Koreans, walking in the line at center, who are allegedly involved in online scams in Cambodia, arrive at the Incheon International Airport in Incheon, South Korea on Jan 23. (AP)

Critics say polls neither free nor fair

Myanmar holds last election round with army already certain to keep control over govt

YANGON, Myanmar, Jan 25, (AP): Voting was held Sunday in Myanmar in the final round of a three-stage general election, capping a nearly month-long process that has already ensured the country's military rulers and their allies will command a parliamentary majority to form a new government.

Critics say the polls were neither free nor fair, and were designed to legitimize the power of the military after it ousted the elected civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021.

The army-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party, or USDP, had already won most of the seats contested in the first two rounds of voting. Twenty-five percent of the seats in the upper and lower houses of the national Parliament are reserved for the military, guaranteeing it and its allies control of the legislature.

Senior Gen Min Aung Hlaing, who heads the current military government, is widely expected by both supporters and opponents to assume the presidency when the new Parliament meets.

The army's 2021 takeover triggered widespread opposition that dragged Myanmar into a civil war. Security concerns engendered by the fighting meant voting was not held in more than one-fifth of the country's 330 townships, another reason the process was described as neither free nor fair.

Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan on Tuesday said the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, of which Myanmar is a member, did not send observers and would not certify the election, citing concerns over the lack of inclusive and free participation.

Min Aung Hlaing pushed back against critics of the polls on Sunday, declaring that "the people who live in Myanmar are the ones who vote. Not those from outside."

"We are not concerned whether this is recognized by foreign countries or not. We recognize the people's vote. It should be like that," he told journalists after inspecting a polling station in Mandalay, the country's second-largest city.

Asked if he intended to take part in the new government, he declined to comment, noting the president would be selected when Parliament meets.

Suu Kyi, Myanmar's 80-year-old former leader, and her party did not participate in the polls. She is serving a 27-year prison term on charges widely viewed as spurious and politically motivated. Her party, the National League for Democracy, won landslide victories in the 2020 and 2015 elections, but was forced to dissolve in 2023 after refusing to register under new military rules.

Other parties also refused to register or declined to run under conditions they deem unfair, while opposition groups called for a voter boycott.

A new Election Protection Law imposed harsh penalties for most public criticism of the polls, with the authorities charging more than 400 people re-



Voters line up to cast ballots at a polling station during the final round of general election in Mandalay, central Myanmar on Jan 25. (AP)

he cast his ballot because he wants the country to be peaceful and develop "in all sectors, including education."

At the same station, Lae Lae Yi, 62, was less hopeful.

"I'm not expecting anything at all, because there is no motivation," she said.

Fighting was reported in at least one township holding polls, with five people injured on Sunday, independent online media, including the Irrawaddy, reported.

The previous two rounds of voting were disrupted by armed groups opposed to military rule carrying out attacks on polling stations and government buildings in several townships, killing at least two administrative officials, according to the military government.

The election was held in three phases due to the armed conflict. The first two rounds took place on Dec. 28 and Jan. 11 in 202 of the country's 330 townships. A total of 67 townships - mostly areas controlled by armed opposing groups - did not participate, reducing the original seats in the 664-member national parliament to 586.

Final results for all parliament seats are expected to be announced later this week. The military government has announced that Parliament will be

cently for activities such as leafleting or online activity.

Voting began on Sunday at 6 a.m. and ended at 4 p.m. in 61 townships across six regions and three states, including many areas that have seen clashes in recent months.

At the polling station in Dagon township in Yangon, the country's largest city, 86-year-old Soe Tint said

he cast his ballot because he wants the country to be peaceful and develop "in all sectors, including education."

At the same station, Lae Lae Yi, 62, was less hopeful.

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Haiti's transitional council deepens political chaos by voting to oust PM

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Jan 25, (AP): Haiti's long-running political crisis deepened Friday when the country's transitional presidential council announced it had voted to fire Prime Minister Alix Didier Fils-Aimé, just two weeks before the panel is supposed to step down.

Edgard Leblanc Fils made the announcement at a news conference alongside fellow council member Leslie Voltaire, saying a majority of the panel took the step in a vote Thursday, defying calls from the U.S. government to maintain stability in the Caribbean country's leadership. No other members of the panel were at the news conference.

The US State Department said in a statement late Thursday that keeping Fils-Aimé on in the position was "integral" to Haiti's efforts to overcome the gangs terrorizing the country, and warned that any politicians supporting the "vicious gangs" would pay a steep cost.

Leblanc did not elaborate on the reasons why council members had turned against Fils-Aimé, who they chose for the position in November 2024. But Leblanc said the council would secure a replacement within 30 days "to find the way to fully restore security and stability and enter a cycle of development, correct the mistakes of the past



Haiti's Prime Minister Alix Didier Fils-Aimé, (left), shakes hands with a graduate at a police graduation ceremony in Port-au-Prince, Haiti on Jan 23. (AP)

cessor, as well as a new government, free of foreign interference.

"Everyone is looking for a Haitian solution to the crisis, but when we start to find a Haitian solution to the crisis, the international community comes in with all its claws," Voltaire said.

He added that while the council recognized Fils-Aimé's capacity and enthusiasm, "the population doesn't get what it needs."

Voltaire said the council was on its way out but that it wants the "second half to play with a good team." And if political parties and the civil sector do not find "the best of the best" by Feb. 6, "we will come up with a solution."

The announcement came as the council faces increased pressure to hold general elections for the first time in a decade. Tentative dates were set for August and December this year to elect a president for the first time since President Jovenel Moise was killed at his home in July 2021.

Gang violence has surged since then, with armed men controlling an estimated 90% of Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, and swaths of land in the country's central region. More than 8,100 killings were reported across the country of nearly 11 million people from January to November last year, according to the UN, which warned those figures are underreported.



US warship USS Cincinnati is docked upon arrival at Ream Naval Base's pier in Sihanoukville, Cambodia on Jan 24. (AP)

US warship makes friendship visit to Cambodia's naval base

The USS Cincinnati arrived at Cambodia's Ream Naval Base on Saturday, marking the first time a US Navy warship has docked at the facility since its Chinese-funded renovation was completed early last year.

The completion of a new pier and dry dock at Ream has fueled concerns in Washington that China - Cambodia's close ally and main provider of aid and investment - may have been granted exclusive access to the base.

Controversy has persisted since 2019 over reports of a potential 30-year agreement for Chinese military use of the site on the Gulf of Thailand. Although Beijing funded the base's expansion, the Cambodian government has denied any agreement for exclusive Chinese privileges.

Prime Minister Hun Manet, who oversaw the base's reopening in April 2025, has maintained that Ream is open to all friendly na-

tions for joint exercises, provided the ships are not too large for the facility.

The Cincinnati is an Independence-class littoral combat ship, meaning it is designed to to operate close to shore and can operate in shallower waters than other warships. Its crew of about 100 is scheduled to engage in sporting events and other activities in the nearby city of Sihanoukville during its Jan. 24-28 visit. (AP)

Nigeria says US to deliver outstanding army equipment purchased over past five years

BUJA, Nigeria, Jan 25, (AP): Nigeria's government said Friday that the US has pledged to deliver outstanding military equipment purchased by the country over the past five years.

The matériel include drones, helicopters, platforms, spare parts and support systems.

"We want Nigerians to know that this partnership (with the US) is working." Information Minister Ibrahim Idris said following a meeting between a US delegation and Nigerian National Security Adviser Nuhu Ribadu in Abuja.

The meeting is the third high-level discussion between officials of the two countries since November, Idris said.

The meeting sought to address Nigeria's designation designation as a Country of Particular Concern, a congressional designation in the US for countries responsible for religious oppression.

The diplomatic fallout has been reworked into cooperation between the two countries. On Dec. 25, the US launched strikes on Nigerian soil targeting the Islamic State group in northwestern Sokoto state.

Also:

ABUJA, Nigeria: Gunmen who abducted more than 150 church worshippers in Nigeria's conflict-hit northwest are demanding 17 motorcycles as ransom from families of hostages, residents told The Associated Press.

In one of the largest mass abductions targeting religious



In this photo released by the Kaduna State government, people react during a meeting with Kaduna state Governor Uba Sani, after gunmen attack in Kurmin Wali, northwest Nigeria on Jan 21. (AP)

worship centers in the West African nation in recent months, the attackers last Sunday raided three different churches in Kaduna state's Kajuru council area, seizing 177 people before 11 managed to escape.

Nigerian security forces have deployed tactical teams in search of the kidnappers, believed to be among the rogue gangs who often carry out kidnappings for ransoms in remote communities with limited state and security presence.

Subcontinent

Pakistani rights lawyers jailed for 17 years: A Pakistani court on Saturday sentenced two human rights lawyers to 17 years in prison each over social media posts the authorities claimed were hostile to the state and its security institutions.

Judge Afzal Majoka announced the verdict a day after **Zainab Mazari** and her husband Hadi Ali Chattha were arrested in Islamabad, according to court documents.

The couple appeared briefly via video link but boycotted the hearing, prompting the court to conclude the trial and deliver the verdict. Family and friends denounced the ruling. The couple denied all the charges.

The court verdict said Mazari had posted multiple tweets in recent years that "portrayed the agenda" of the outlawed Baloch separatist group and Pakistani Taliban. (AP)

Mazari

Hotel fire in Pakistan kills 3: A fire in the basement of a hotel in Pakistan's eastern city of Lahore on Saturday killed at least three people and injured eight others, rescue officials said.

About 180 guests and staff were evacuated when the blaze broke out at the Indigo Hotel, the Punjab Emergency Services said in a statement. The search and rescue operation has been completed and the fire extinguished, it added.

Fire officers are investigating whether a gas leak was the cause.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif wrote on X that she is personally monitoring the situation following the incident in the Gulberg neighborhood of the city.

A fire last week at a shopping mall in Karachi killed 71 people. (AP)

5 dead in India fire incident: Five people trapped in a shop that caught fire in India's southern state Telangana were declared dead on Sunday.

The fire incident took place in the Nampally area of Telangana's capital city Hyderabad on Saturday.

A senior cop told media that all the dead bodies had been recovered. There were two children among the dead.

Director-General of the state's fire department Vikram Singh Mann said that the shop-owner would be prosecuted for criminal negligence. (Xinhua)

Boursa Kuwait closes lower

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait ended Sunday's session in negative territory, with the general index falling 65.21 points, or 0.74%, to close at 8,799.60 points. Trading activity totaled 234.2 million shares across 19,124 transactions, valued at KD 60.2

million (about USD 183.6 million). The main market index led the declines, dropping 99.51 points, or 1.20%, to 8,176.52 points, with 125.2 million shares exchanged in 10,792 trades worth KD 23.2 million (USD 70.7 million).

Business

New facility to produce 1,200–1,500MW through KAPP

KPC, KOC, and MEW sign MoU for Ratqa co-generation plant



KPC signs a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy and Kuwait Oil Company.

KUNA photos

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25, (KUNA): Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) signed on Sunday a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy and Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) to establish a co-generation power and steam plant in Ratqa field.

In a statement, KPC said the agreement aims to bolster cooperation, optimize the use of national resources and advance economically sound projects, noting the plant's planned capacity ranges between 1,200 and 1,500 megawatts through the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP).

The project is expected to deepen integration between oil and energy sectors, with new facility supplying the steam required for heavy oil production at the South Ratqa field, supporting a gradual increase in output to around 120,000 barrels per day.

It will also enhance the country's electricity generation system, help reduce production costs and improve the use of gas as fuel at the national level.

KPC Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Sabah said the project is a steppingstone toward building more integrated energy system in Kuwait.

He added that cooperation with the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy reflects the corporation's commitment to delivering sustainable solutions that support oil operations while meeting the country's future power needs.

The MoU was signed during a ceremony at the Oil Sector Complex (OSC), attended by Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Sabah, with the agreement inked by Managing Director for Planning and Finance Bader Al-Attar on behalf of the corporation, KOC Chief Executive Officer Ahmad Al-Eidan, and Ministry Undersecretary Dr. Adel Al-Zamel.

Other Voices

The reality & future of initial public offerings

By Hassan F. Beidas

Initial public offerings (IPOs) have long been regarded as one of the clearest indicators of the robust and vitality of global financial markets, reflecting investor confidence and expectations for corporate growth. When companies transition from private ownership to publicly listed entities, the objective goes beyond raising capital for expansion. In principle, IPOs also help boost market liquidity, deepen financial markets, and enhance their appeal to both local and foreign investors.



Hassan F. Beidas

During 2024 and 2025, global IPO markets underwent notable shifts. Regions such as the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) emerged as increasingly active listing hubs, while major technology companies in the United States and Asia prepared to enter public markets. This renewed activity, however, has unfolded against a complex economic backdrop marked by higher interest rates, rising trade tensions, and growing investor caution toward risk. According to global reports, the first half of 2025 approximately 539 IPOs worldwide took place raising nearly \$61.9 billion. China's share of listings increased significantly during this period, while Europe experienced a major decline. In contrast, data from the London Stock Exchange indicate that the value of IPOs in major markets fell to around \$44.3 billion in 2025—the lowest level in nine years—due to market volatility and higher financing costs. These conditions prompted many companies to cancel or postpone their listing plans.

One of the key challenges associated with large-scale IPOs is that while they may attract strong liquidity at launch, they do not necessarily guarantee sustained trading activity in the secondary market. Post-listing price declines often undermine investor confidence, encouraging some investors to withdraw liquidity rather than reinvest it.

Following the sharp contraction in IPO activity during the COVID-19 pandemic, global listings have gradually begun to recover in uneven manner.

The MENA region has stood out as one of the most active markets. In the final quarter of 2025 alone, around 14 IPOs raised close to \$1 billion, marking a 100% increase compared with the previous period. These offerings spanned sectors such as real estate, healthcare, and financial services. Meanwhile, the third quarter of the same year a listing of 11 additional companies took place, raising approximately \$700 million, reflecting growing investor appetite and a broader base of listed firms.

In Asia, the wave of new listings helped support a rise offmore than 21% in Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index during the first half of 2025, driven by renewed market momentum and stronger demand for newlylisted shares.

Mega IPOs remain the most debated element in this landscape. In the United States, a medical supply company Medline's IPO stood out as the largest globally, raising around \$7.3 billion. In Asia, Chinese technology and artificial intelligence companies were particularly active, collectively raising about \$900 million. Among the standout performers was Burn Technology, whose share price surged by roughly 120% following its market debut.

Looking ahead, analysts expect between 200 and 250 companies worldwide to go public in 2026, with total proceeds potentially reaching around \$60 billion. These listings are likely to beled by companies in artificial intelligence and space-related industries, reinforcing market appeal and attracting sizable capital inflows to global exchanges.

The report also highlighted that the industrial sector accounted for roughly 37% of total IPO activity in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), with proceeds of nearly \$2 billion. This was supported by the region's largest offering, the \$1 billion IPO of Flynas airline. The real estate sector ranked second, with seven IPOs raising \$1.2 billion and representing about 23% of total issuance value. Meanwhile, the healthcare sector accounted for 15% of total proceeds through three IPOs worth approximately \$500 million.

Overall, IPO activity is expected to continue gaining momentum in the coming period, supported by improving investor sentiment, renewed interest in emerging markets, and growing anticipation of high-quality opportunities in future-oriented sectors.

Foreigners sell GCC equities amid consistent declines

By KAMCO Invest

Foreign investors, including institutional and retail investors, were net sellers on GCC stock markets during Q4-2025 with net selling at USD 313.5 Mn as compared to USD 4.8 Bn in net buying by foreigners during Q3-2025. Some of the key factors that affected the flow of foreign money in the region included regional market trends, economic health of individual countries and crude oil prices. Quarterly trading data showed that foreign investors were net sellers in Q4-2025 on all exchanges barring Saudi Arabia and Oman. Saudi Arabia recorded net foreign buying of USD 1.0 Bn, while Oman saw net inflows of USD 86.6 Mn during the quarter, partially offsetting the overall net sales across the region.

Foreign investors were biggest sellers of Abu Dhabi stocks with net sales of USD 1.0 Bn during the quarter as compared to USD 798.7 Mn in net buy trades during the previous quarter. Kuwait was next with net sales of USD 187.9 Mn by foreigners followed by Bahrain and Qatar exchanges with net sales of USD 45.6 Mn and USD 8.8 Mn, respectively.

The yearly trend indicated continued positive activity by foreign investors on GCC exchanges in 2025, although total buying declined over the course of the year. Aggregate buying by foreign investors over the last five years stood at USD 54.8 Bn with 2022 being the year with the biggest net buying by foreign investors to the tune of USD 20.0 Bn.

In terms of trading activity across individual exchanges, the Saudi exchange recorded the highest net buying by foreign investors in 2025, totaling USD 5.5 Bn. This was followed by the Abu Dhabi and Kuwait exchanges, which saw net foreign inflows of USD 3.4 Bn and USD 1.5 Bn, respectively. Dubai and Qatar also registered net buying during the year, amounting to USD 1.3 Bn and USD 171.0 Mn, respectively. Conversely, the Oman exchange recorded the largest net sales by foreign investors in 2025 at USD 440.8 Mn, followed by Bahrain, which posted net sales of USD 10.3 Mn.

Meanwhile, monthly trend data indicated that Saudi Arabia and Oman recorded consecutive net buying by foreign investors across all three months of the Q4-2025. Dubai exhibited a net selling trend during the first two months of Q4-2025, which subsequently reversed to net buying in the final month of the quarter. Qatar, meanwhile, registered net buying in the first month of the quarter before shifting to net selling in the second month, and returned to net buying in the final month. The UAE and Kuwait exchanges experienced consistent net selling by foreign investors across all three months of the quarter.

On a m-o-m basis during 2025, GCC exchanges recorded net buying in eight months and net selling in four months during 2025. Net buying by foreign investors peaked in September-2025 mainly led by announcement related to foreign ownership limits in Saudi Arabia, reaching an aggregate value of USD 2.8 Bn, followed by USD 2.3 Bn in June-2025 and USD 1.9 Bn in May-2025. Conversely, foreign investors were the largest net sellers in March-2025, with net sales of USD 518.4 Mn, followed by November

-2025 at USD 251.2 Mn and October-2025 at USD 200.1 Mn.

In the Saudi market, total local Saudi investors were net sellers on Saudi stock market during Q4-2025 at SAR 4.9 Bn as compared to SAR 10.5 Bn in net selling during Q3-2025. Both Saudi individual and institutional investors registered net selling during the Q4-2025, amounting to SAR 85.6 Mn and SAR 4.8 Bn, respectively. On the other hand, buying was seen in trades by non-GCC foreigners and GCC investors to the tune of SAR 3.4 Bn and SAR 1.5 Bn, respectively. During FY-2025, foreign investors were net sellers in the Saudi market, with total net sales of SAR 21.6 Bn, representing a 7.8% decline compared to SAR 23.5 Bn recorded in FY-2024. The highest level of foreign purchase occurred in September-2025, reaching SAR 7.9 Bn. Similarly, Saudi individual investors recorded net buying of SAR 3.1 Bn during FY-2025, down from SAR 11.1 Bn in the corresponding period last year. April-2025 saw the peak in retail investor activity, with net purchases totaling SAR 3.5 Bn. The last week of September 2025 witnessed the highest level of net buying by foreign investors at SAR 5.8 Bn, while the second week of April 2025 recorded their peak net selling of SAR 2.2 Bn during FY-2025.

During 2025, Saudi Arabia's stock market experienced significant volatility, culminating in its largest annual decline in a decade, with the Tadawul All Share Index (TASI) falling 12.8% to close at 10,490.69 points, marking the lowest year-end level since 2022. The decline was driven by weak liquidity, falling trading volumes, lower oil prices affecting energy and petrochemical companies, and global and regional economic uncertainties. Despite the overall downturn, the market also recorded notable positive moments, including a 5% surge on 24-September-2025, the largest single-day gain since 2020, which brought TASI to its highest level since May 2025. Saudi Arabia also dominated regional listings activity, with 13 companies listed on the Tadawul Main Market, 2 transfers from Nomu to the Main Market, and 24 companies listed on the Nomu-Parallel market. Among them, Flynas became the country's largest IPO of the year, raising SAR 4.1 Bn (USD 1.1 Bn) in one of the region's biggest aviation listings. By the end of Q4-2025, the number of retail investors in Tadawul-listed companies reached 7.16 Mn, marking an increase of 111,599 investors compared to Q3-2025. The number of institutional investors rose to approximately 114,167 during Q4-2025.

During Q4-2025, trading by GCC investors (excluding Bahrain due to unavailability of data) in GCC exchanges showed a strong shift toward net buying. Net purchases reached USD 336.0 Mn, marking a significant turnaround from the previous quarter, Q3-2025, which recorded net sell trades of USD 51.2 Mn. This reversal indicates a renewed appetite for investment among GCC investors and reflects increased confidence in the regional markets during the last quarter of the year. Saudi Arabia witnessed the biggest net buying by GCC investors during Q4-2025 at USD 409.8 Mn followed by Qatar exchange at

USD 149.0 Mn. Dubai and Oman followed with USD 107.6 Mn and USD 16.3 Mn, respectively. On the other hand, Abu Dhabi and Kuwait exchanges recorded net sales by GCC investors in Q4-2025 partially offsetting the overall buying by GCC investors.

In terms of the aggregate trading activity, total GCC volume traded increased by 12.5% y-o-y to reach 391.2 Bn shares in FY-2025 as compared to 347.8 Bn shares in FY-2024. Most GCC exchanges reported an increase in trading volume during FY-2025, with the notable exception of Saudi Arabia. Kuwait led the region with a 71.3% rise, recording a volume of 117.3 Bn compared to 68.5 Bn in FY-2024, followed by Oman, which saw a remarkable 291.6% increase to 25.1 Bn from 6.4 Bn. Dubai, Qatar, and Bahrain also posted gains of 19.8%, 3.9%, and 13.8%, respectively. In contrast, Saudi Arabia experienced a sharp decline of 34.5%, while Abu Dhabi recorded marginal decrease of 0.2%, respectively.

Aggregate value traded across the region stood at USD 605.5 Bn in FY-2025, compared to USD 690.2 Bn in FY-2024 reporting a decline of 12.3%. During FY-2025, the total value of shares traded across GCC markets increased overall, while Saudi Arabia and Qatar recorded declines in trading value, the remaining GCC markets experienced y-o-y gains, reflecting broader growth in market activity across the region. Kuwait recorded the largest increase in trading activity, with the value traded rising from USD 48.4 Bn in FY-2024 to USD 86.6 Bn in FY-2025, increasing its market share to 7.0% from 14.3% in the previous year. In contrast, Saudi Arabia witnessed a decline in trading volumes, with the value traded falling from USD 494.7 Bn in FY-2024 to USD 346.1 Bn in FY-2025.

GCC Value Traded - Key Sector Contribution

The Banking sector accounted for the largest share of value traded, recording a marginal increase of 0.2% to reach USD 31.0 Bn in Q4-2025, compared with USD 30.9 Bn in Q4-2024. Within the sector, Al Rajhi Bank led trading activity with USD 5.4 Bn worth of shares traded during the quarter, followed by Saudi National Bank and Alinma Bank, with USD 2.7 Bn and USD 2.2 Bn, respectively. The Real Estate, Energy, and Diversified Financials sectors also contributed to overall growth in traded value during the quarter. Sector performance was broadly mixed in Q4-2025, with five out of ten sectors recording declines. Among the decliners, the Materials, Capital Goods, and Telecommunications sectors fell by 28.9%, 10.0%, and 20.3%, respectively.

Similarly, in terms of FY-2025 performance, the total value of shares traded increased on a largely broad-based basis. Most sectors reported gains in total value traded during the year. Aggregate traded value reached USD 622.2 Bn in FY-2025, compared with USD 544.5 Bn in FY-2024, representing an increase of 14.3%. Trading activity declined in the Energy, Materials, and Transportation sectors by 5.1%, 6.7%, and 13.6%, respectively. In contrast, the Banking and Real Estate sectors recorded strong growth, with traded values rising by 44.8% and 105.8%, respectively.

Saudi banks: Rising external debt will continue to fund strong lending growth

By S&P Global Ratings

S&P Global Ratings projects that Saudi banks will maintain strong lending growth fueled by the financing needs relating to Vision 2030. Banks will also continue to tap external funding sources to fund their growth. However, we expect banks' profitability to deteriorate slightly due to lower interest rates, while their asset quality indicators should normalize due to lower write-offs. Risks could stem from a significant and prolonged decline in oil prices or a spike in geopolitical risk.

In this Credit FAQ, S&P Global Ratings answers frequently asked questions from investors about how it expects Saudi Arabia's banks to perform in 2026.

What is your expectation for Saudi banks' lending growth and what are the key risks?

Economic growth prospects remain broadly supportive in Saudi Arabia, with both non-oil and hydrocarbon-related activities playing a role. Supporting this growth are rising household consumption, increased oil output following a relaxation of OPEC+ quotas, and the Public Investment Fund's significant investments in diversification projects, which reach above \$40 billion annually.

An unexpected and significant drop in Brent oil prices below our assumption of \$60 per barrel in 2026, or a substantial spike in geopolitical risk in the region, may affect Saudi Arabia's economic growth prospects and reduce lending opportunities for the banking sector. However, this is not our base-case scenario, and we expect banks' lending books to continue performing strongly, with 10% expansion in 2026 compared with 11% in the year to Nov. 30, 2025.

What are the main drivers of this lending growth?

We expect that corporate lending will continue to benefit from the opportunities arising from Vision 2030 projects. We expect Saudi banks to extend \$65 billion-\$75 billion in new corporate loans in 2026, fueled by high investments, primarily in the real estate and utilities sectors. New corporate loans amounted to \$70 billion between Dec. 31, 2024, and Nov. 30, 2025.

Another area of growth for banks is retail lending, especially mortgages, particularly as interest rates continue to decline. Retail lending—of which mortgages constitute roughly half—rose by 5% in the year to Nov. 30, 2025, and we anticipate that it will increase by nearly \$20 billion in 2026 from \$18 billion as of Nov. 30, 2025.

How would Saudi banks fund this growth?

We expect the Saudi government and its related entities to continue injecting deposits into the banking system to support credit growth. Government and government-related entity (GRE) deposits reached 32% of total deposits by November 2025, up from almost 20% in 2020, outpacing the growth in private-sector deposits. However, deposits were not sufficient to fully fund the expansion of the lending book. As such, we expect banks' loan-to-deposit ratios to continue increasing from 113% at the end of November 2025. We foresee that banks will continue to resort to external debt to bridge the gap. This will lead to a rise in net external debt as a proportion of total loans from 6% as of November 2025, which we view as manageable.

Stronger liquidity in the international capital markets and lower interest rates will also help. The latter could encourage banks to either start actively divesting mortgages to Saudi Real Estate Refinance Co., or issuing residential mortgage-backed securities to create financing headroom on their balance sheets.

Where do you see Saudi banks' asset quality indicators heading in 2026?

We expect Saudi banks' asset quality indicators to remain strong in a regional comparison. However, we project that the banking sector's nonperforming loan (NPL) ratio will reach 1.6%-1.7% in 2026, with a cost of risk of 55-60 basis points (bps), up from 1.1% and approximately 25 bps on an annualized basis for the year to Sept. 30, 2025 (see chart 2). Banks' cost of risk is normalizing following the strong recoveries they have recorded over the past few years.

Nevertheless, banks' exposure to riskier sectors—such as micro, small, and mid-size enterprises and the likelihood of lower write-offs will increase the NPL ratio.

On the retail side, borrowers' salaries typically secure the exposures, and the risk of job losses in Saudi Arabia is very low, especially for government and GRE em-

ployees. As for corporate lending, we understand that banks have sustained growth in recent years without compromising either their risk appetites or their lending and underwriting standards. However, Saudi banks have issued \$379 billion in new loans over the past five years in a supportive economic environment. An unexpected deterioration in the environment could test these loans and lead to higher NPLs.

Greenfield projects represent a significant portion of Saudi Arabia's \$1 trillion-plus investment pipeline. While these initiatives support the country's long-term economic transformation, they carry elevated execution, cost-overrun, and operational risks. Over time, this may increase banks' asset quality sensitivity across the projects' value chain, encompassing contractors, suppliers, and project developers.

How will Saudi banks' earnings develop in 2026?

We expect banks' profitability to remain strong. However, it will likely decline slightly due to lower interest rates. We expect that strong lending growth will partly mitigate the pressure on net interest margins, which we believe will contract only slightly. This contraction, coupled with a higher cost of risk, means that we expect banks' return on average assets to dip slightly to 2.2% in 2026. We expect banks to continue to invest in digitalization to further optimize their operating efficiency.

What is your view of Saudi banks' capitalization?

Saudi banks' capitalization remains strong. Rated Saudi banks had a tier 1 capital adequacy ratio of 18.4% on Sept. 30, 2025, and an average S&P Global Ratings-calculated risk-adjusted capital ratio of 13.1% at year-end 2024. However, the contribution of hybrid instruments to banks' overall capital mix has increased to 19% of their reported common equity on average. Alinma Bank and Saudi Investment Bank contributed the most as of Sept. 30, 2025, with 32% and 30%, respectively. Saudi National Bank and Arab National Bank contributed the least, with 9% and 16%, respectively, as of the same date. A significant increase in the contribution from hybrid instruments could weaken our view of banks' capital quality. We expect banks to maintain a relatively conservative dividend payout ratio of around 50% on average, which will help their internal capital generation.

US PCE inflation edges up to 2.8%, keeping Fed policy on hold

Geopolitical risks subside but continue to dominate market movements

By National Bank of Kuwait

Global markets ended the week on a steadier footing as investors weighed resilient growth against inflation that remains sticky but gradually easing. In the United States, PCE inflation edged up to 2.8% y/y in November from 2.7%, while monthly gains held at 0.2%, supporting the view that price pressures are cooling slowly rather than falling sharply. At the same time, demand stayed firm with consumer spending rising 0.5% in both October and November, alongside solid Q3 GDP growth of 4.4%, keeping expectations anchored for the Fed to remain on hold after three cuts in 2025. Risk sentiment improved after President Trump suspended planned Europe tariffs following Greenland-Arctic framework talks, helping lift equities and support Treasuries. In the UK, activity surprised to the upside as retail sales rebounded and January PMI data signaled a broader pickup led by services, although headline inflation ticked up to 3.4%, leaving BoE easing expectations largely unchanged. Across the Eurozone, growth remained modest but stable with the composite PMI holding at 51.5, while rising cost pressures reinforced the ECB’s patient but flexible stance. In Japan, the BOJ held rates at 0.75% while upgrading forecasts, and China’s PBoC kept LPRs unchanged as credit conditions improved. Meanwhile, gold reaches a record high supported by ongoing geopolitical uncertainty and weaker confidence in the U.S. dollar.

United States

U.S. PCE Inflation Ticks Up to 2.8% as Consumer Spending Stays Strong, Keeping the Fed on Hold

U.S. inflation moved slightly further from the Fed’s target in November but matched expectations, with both headline and core PCE inflation rising to 2.8% y/y from 2.7% in October, while monthly inflation held steady at 0.2% in both months. The BEA released October and November data together due to the government shutdown. The report also showed consumer spending remained strong, with personal consumption rising 0.5% in both months, while income growth was modest and the savings rate rose to 3.5%. Price increases were broad-based across goods and services, with energy costs jumping 1.9% and food prices flat. Alongside strong Q3 GDP growth of 4.4% and low jobless claims, the data suggests the economy is still expanding, supporting expectations that the Fed will hold rates next week after three cuts in 2025, with markets pricing only limited further easing this year.

U.S. Q3 Growth Revised Slightly Higher as Exports Improve and Inventory Drag Eases

The U.S. economy grew at a 4.4% annualized pace in Q3 2025, slightly revised up from 4.3%, marking the strongest GDP growth since Q3 2023. The upgrade was driven mainly by stronger exports and a smaller drag from inventories. Growth was supported by solid consumer spending (+3.5%), a sharp rebound in exports (+9.6%), and a recovery in government spending (+2.2%), while imports fell (-4.4%). Inventory headwinds eased significantly, but fixed

Previous Week Levels					This Week's Expected Range		3-Month
Currencies	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	Forward
EUR	1.1583	1.1570	1.1833	1.1826	1.1730	1.1200	1.1878
GBP	1.3365	1.3326	1.3645	1.3641	1.3530	1.3900	1.3640
JPY	157.85	155.62	159.22	155.71	153.65	156.90	154.52
CHF	0.8012	0.7788	0.8023	0.7801	0.7600	0.7900	0.7728

investment slowed, rising just 0.8% compared with 4.4% in Q2.

Trump Suspends Europe Tariff Plan After Greenland-Arctic Framework Talks

President Donald Trump suspended planned tariffs of 10% on February 1, rising to 25% on June 1, on goods from eight European countries after announcing a “framework of a future deal” concerning Greenland and broader Arctic cooperation. The reversal followed discussions with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte at the World Economic Forum in Davos. While details remain unspecified, Trump indicated negotiations would address Arctic security, NATO coordination, and potential U.S. involvement in Greenland’s mineral rights. Markets reacted positively: the S&P 500 and Nasdaq 100 moved to session highs, and Treasuries extended gains. Denmark reiterated that Greenland’s sovereignty remains non-negotiable, though trilateral discussions will continue under NATO auspices.

The U.S. dollar index was last seen trading at 97.599.

United Kingdom

UK Retail Sales Beat Forecasts as Online Spending Leads the Recovery

UK retail sales volumes rose 0.4% m/m in December 2025, beating expectations and rebounding from November’s slight decline. The increase was driven mainly by online and non-store retailers, with stronger demand for jewelry and precious metals during the holiday period, while supermarkets and fuel sales also edged higher. However, non-food stores such as clothing, household goods, and department stores saw declines, even as internet sales jumped 1.8% on the month. On a yearly basis, retail sales grew 2.5% y/y, the fastest pace since April and well above forecasts. Over the three months to December, volumes dipped 0.3% versus the prior three months but were still up 2.1% y/y. For 2025 overall, retail trade increased 1.1%, improving from 2024, with growth across most sectors except automotive fuel.

UK Private-Sector Activity Surges as Services Lead Broad Recovery

The UK S&P Global Composite PMI jumped to 53.9 in January 2026 from 51.4, far above expectations, marking the strongest expansion in private-sector activity since April 2024. Growth was led by a sharp rebound in services and a clear improvement in manufacturing, which hit a 17-month high. New

orders increased again, supported by stronger export demand, but employment fell as firms faced higher payroll costs and still-muted economic conditions, especially in services. Cost pressures picked up to the fastest pace in seven months, prompting companies to raise selling prices, while overall business confidence improved for a second month.

UK Inflation Picks Up to 3.4% YoY as Air Fares and Tobacco Push Prices Higher

UK headline inflation increased to 3.4% YoY in December, up from 3.2% in November and slightly above the 3.3% consensus, marking the first acceleration in five months. The pickup was primarily driven by a 28.6% MoM rebound in air fares and a 3% MoM rise in tobacco prices following duty adjustments. Services inflation edged higher to 4.5%, though the ONS highlighted volatility rather than underlying domestic pressures. Pipeline indicators continued to soften, with factory-gate prices flat on the month and input costs up just 0.8% YoY, reflecting lower crude oil prices. Markets were broadly stable, with GBP/USD trading near 1.3440 and rate expectations unchanged, still pricing in 25 bps of BoE easing and a 70% probability of a second cut by year-end.

The GBP/USD currency pair was last seen trading at 1.3641.

Eurozone

ECB Signals Patience, Not Inaction, While Keeping Policy Flexible

ECB meeting accounts from December 2025 showed policymakers believe the bank can remain patient, while stressing this does not mean reluctance to act or a one-sided policy approach. Officials said the current stance is appropriate but flexible, supported by resilient economic activity, historically low unemployment, and an inflation outlook expected to stay around target. However, they highlighted that risks could cause conditions to shift materially, meaning policy will be adjusted as needed rather than following a fixed path. The ECB kept rates unchanged for a fourth straight meeting, with the main refinancing rate at 2.15% and the deposit facility rate at 2.0%.

Eurozone Private-Sector Growth Steadies as Price Pressures Rise

The HCOB Flash Eurozone Composite PMI held steady at 51.5 in January 2026, slightly below expectations, showing a stable but modest expansion in private-sector activity. Growth was mainly supported by services, despite slowing, while manufacturing

output returned to expansion. New orders rose for a sixth straight month, though momentum eased due to weaker export demand. Employment fell slightly, largely driven by job cuts in Germany, while input costs climbed to near a one-year high, pushing selling prices to their fastest rise since April 2024. Overall business sentiment improved to a 20-month high, led by stronger optimism among manufacturers.

The EUR/USD currency pair was last seen trading at 1.1826.

Asia-Pacific

Bank of Japan Holds Rates at Multi-Decade High While Upgrading Growth and Inflation Forecasts

The Bank of Japan kept its short-term rate unchanged at 0.75% at its first 2026 meeting, leaving borrowing costs at their highest since 1995 ahead of February’s snap election. The decision passed 8–1, with only Hajime Takata pushing for a hike, while most policymakers judged risks to growth and inflation as balanced. The BOJ reiterated that further rate hikes remain possible if economic activity and inflation track its outlook. In its updated forecasts, the bank raised FY2025 GDP growth to 0.9% and FY2026 to 1.0%, supported by a US-Japan trade deal and a large stimulus package, and slightly lifted its FY2026 core inflation forecast to 1.9%.

The USD/JPY currency pair was last seen trading at 155.71.

PBoC Holds Loan Prime Rates at Record Lows as China Credit Conditions Improve

The People’s Bank of China (PBoC) kept its key lending rates unchanged at record lows in January, with the 1-year LPR holding at 3.0% and the 5-year LPR staying at 3.5%, in line with expectations. The decision comes after the central bank introduced 25 bps cuts to sector-specific rates effective Jan. 19 to support growth, while recent data showed 2025 GDP met the 5% target despite ongoing property sector weakness. Credit conditions also improved, as new yuan loans in December jumped from November and beat forecasts, helped by government stimulus efforts.

The USD/CNY currency pair was last seen trading at 6.9631.

Commodities

Gold Reaches a Record High

Gold marched toward \$5,000/oz on Friday after a strong rally that drove prices to a record high of \$4,989.61, marking its best weekly gain since March 2020. The surge has been supported by weaker confidence in U.S. dollar, ongoing geopolitical tensions, and broader economic uncertainty. Markets also monitored easing EU-US tariff concerns linked to Greenland, though tensions remain unresolved as Trump claimed a NATO-backed deal granting the U.S. permanent access, while Denmark reaffirmed its sovereignty. Meanwhile, U.S. PCE inflation came in broadly as expected, reinforcing expectations that the Fed will keep rates unchanged at next week’s meeting.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti Dinar
USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30565.

Al-Ruya list demands recount

Dispute over Kuwait oil workers union election results intensifies

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25: Despite the announcement of the victory of Al-Nahj List in the election of the Board of Directors of Kuwait Oil Company Workers Union for the 2026/2028 term, the conflict continues to intensify between the winning list and Al-Ruya List, which requested a recount and refuses to hand over all assets to the winning list.

Al-Ruya List issued a statement explaining its position: “With reference to the statements and comments issued regarding our request for a recount of the election results, we would like to clarify the following to the public:

First: Appealing is a legal right and not subject to doubt, especially since this right is guaranteed for candidates according to the regulations and bylaws. This includes what is stated in Chapter Nine of the bylaws of the union, particularly Article 56, which stipulates the candidate’s right within the specified period. The union is responsible for reviewing the appeal and taking whatever action it deems appropriate according to its powers and procedures.

Second: The reservation was documented and made public in the presence of everyone. Upon completion of the counting process, a representative of the list recorded a clear reservation on the results sheet, stating, ‘while reserving the right to request a recount’. This was done publicly and in the presence of all lists, without objection from any party. At the time, this confirmed that the process was clear and public from the very beginning.

Third: Recounting is a well-established procedure in union work and enhances trust. Therefore, requesting a recount is not unprecedented, it is a common practice in several petroleum sector unions and others. Ballot boxes were previously recounted according to official procedures, in the presence of candidates and list representatives, with documented minutes, to produce reassuring final results that reflect the true will of the voters and eliminate any ambiguity.

Fourth: The competent authority is the union, and the procedure is carried out with its guarantees. It is emphasized that any procedure related to ballot boxes or recounts will only be conducted through the union and the supervising body, in accordance with the procedures and guarantees it establishes, ensuring the integrity of the seals and minutes and the rights of all parties.

Fifth: We reject conflating the appeal with disrupting the union’s interests or questioning integrity. Submitting the request does not justify disrupting the union’s work or harming the interests of its members.

We also reject any abuse or questioning that impugns the integrity or reputation of our colleagues. The union’s records – especially financial records – belong to the general assembly and are a trust that must

be preserved. It must be done according to established procedures.

Sixth: A Call for Calm and Respect for Procedures and the Final Outcome

We affirm our complete respect for the established procedures and the decisions of the competent authority and whatever they may result in. We believe that reaching an accurate and reassuring outcome serves everyone – winner or loser – because the essence of union work is based on trust, fairness and the integrity of procedures.

Therefore, we maintain our legitimate right to complete the process of requesting a recount in accordance with the regulations. We call on the union to exercise its role with complete impartiality and to deal with this request, as with previous ones, within the approved regulatory framework, in a way that serves the interests of the workers and preserves the prestige and stability of union work.

In response, ‘Al-Nahj’ List also issued a statement. “Our colleagues, employees of Kuwait Oil Company, we would like to inform you that the opposing list has submitted a formal appeal against the election results. This is a right guaranteed for them according to the regulations and procedures, and we do not object to the principle of appeal, nor do we fear review.

“However, the appeal must follow its proper course without compromising the most important safeguard in the electoral process: the ballot boxes after they have been closed and sealed.

“The vote counting process was conducted under the supervision of the relevant authority and in the presence of representatives from the various lists. This was documented in official, signed minutes.

“The union refused to hand over a copy of the election minutes, a precedent in the history of union activity.

“Following this documentation, the sealed ballot boxes become evidence that must be preserved as is and should not be opened under any pretext outside of a competent judicial framework.

“Opening the sealed ballot boxes not only affects this election, but also undermines the very essence of the workers’ will, which was expressed at the ballot box and formed the current council.

“Opening the box after it was sealed opens the door to challenging the original result and reshaping it without due process.

“It transforms the workers’ will from a final and respected decision into a result that can be altered whenever it displeases one party, thus threatening the stability of union activity and weakening employees’ confidence in the value of their votes.

“Therefore, we hold the union, as the supervising body, fully and directly responsible for keeping the boxes sealed and for not breaking the seals, opening the boxes, or allowing any party access to them or handling their contents, except pursuant to a court order issued by a competent and impartial judicial authority upon request.”

New agreement aims to modernize Arab energy cooperation

Kuwait approves amendments to OAPEC agreement

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25: The Cabinet issued Decree-Law No. 1/2026 approving the amendments to the Agreement Establishing the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC).

This is within the framework of developing and restructuring the organization to keep pace with global developments in the energy sector.

Article One bis of the amendment stipulates changing the organization’s name to ‘Arab Energy Organization’, with Kuwait City as its headquarters.

Article Two states the primary objectives as follows: strengthening and supporting the energy sectors in member states, addressing common challenges, and protecting the legitimate interests of member states, both individually and collectively.

Article Three affirms that the provisions of the Agreement do not affect any other international

agreements or treaties to which member states are party, specifically mentioning the OPEC Agreement.

Article Four grants the organization legal personality, immunities and privileges in accordance with the protocol attached to the agreement.

Article Five authorizes the organization to conclude agreements with member states, other countries or international organizations, and to participate in joint projects across various aspects of economic activity within the energy industry.

Article Seven outlines the conditions for membership and accession, including for founding states and any Arab state that joins subsequently, as well as regulating associate and observer status.

Article Eight stipulates that the organization shall exercise its functions through three main bodies: the Council, the Bureau and the Secretariat General.

Regarding financial matters, Articles 22 and 23 detailed the mechanism for preparing and approving the organization’s budget and deter-

mining member states’ contributions and annual subscriptions.

Articles 24 and 25 affirmed the member states’ commitment to coordinate among themselves and to refrain from obstructing the organization’s decisions while respecting the sovereign interests of each State.

Articles 26 through 28 are on taking necessary measures in emergency situations that any member state might face while maintaining internal stability and the external relations of member states.

Article 33 stipulates the mechanisms for settling disputes between member states or between the organization and other parties, through amicable settlement, arbitration or recourse to the competent court, depending on the nature of the dispute.

Article 34 states the procedures for ratifying the agreement and its implementation in accordance with the legislative systems of the signatory states.



شركة الاستثمارات الوطنية
National Investments Company



Maryam Saif

As part of its ongoing commitment to developing national talent and investing in future generations, National Investments Company has concluded its internship program, “Bidaya”, which took place from January 4 to January 15, 2026. The program concluded with a graduation ceremony during which interns were recognized and awarded certificates in appreciation of their active participation and successful completion of the program.

The “Bidaya” program is the first structured internship initiative launched by National Investments Company, designed as a dedicated platform to identify and develop young talent while providing early exposure to the investment sector. The program

welcomed ten interns who were placed across several key areas, including Marketing and Corporate Communications, Finance, Asset Management, Governance and Compliance, Alternative Investments, Strategy, and Risk Management sectors.

The ceremony was attended by the Chairman of the Board, Khaled Waleed AlFalah, along with members of executive management and representatives from various company sectors, underscoring National Investments Company’s strong commitment to initiatives that empower youth and develop national talent. The event was also attended by Maryam Saif, Managing Director of the Human Capital Sector, who commended the interns for their active and constructive engagement throughout this valuable and distinguished program. Saif further praised the company’s sectors for their support in providing a motivating training environment, direct professional supervision, and practical opportunities that enabled interns to enhance both their academic and applied skills, supporting their readiness to successfully enter the labor market.

Maryam Saif explained that the “Bidaya” program was designed to bridge the gap between academic learning and practical application by providing participants with hands-on experience in a professional work environment and exposure to the company’s core investment functions. Throughout the program, interns followed a structured training curriculum under the supervision of the company’s professionals, with dedicated mentors assigned to guide them through daily tasks and practical projects, offering continuous support, guidance, and feedback to ensure maximum educational and professional benefit.

Saif added that, as part of the program requirements, interns delivered two presentations, including one presented to the Chairman of the Board. This provided them with a valuable opportunity for direct engagement with senior leadership and reinforced professionalism and institutional standards within the workplace.

In a further statement, Maryam Saif emphasized that the “Bidaya” program forms part of National Investments Company’s broader strategy to attract, develop, and nurture national talent, while building a sustainable base of qualified competencies to support the company’s future and the investment sector. She also

reaffirmed the company’s ongoing commitment to delivering high-quality learning experiences that contribute to human capital development and support Kuwait’s long-term economic growth.

In conclusion, National Investments Company expressed its sincere appreciation to all participating sectors and mentors for their vital role in supporting the interns and ensuring the success of the program, reaffirming its commitment to continuing initiatives that empower youth and contribute to the development of future leaders in the investment sector. The company noted that such collaboration reflects a deeply rooted institutional culture based on knowledge

sharing and long-term investment in human capital.

National Investments Company further emphasized that programs such as “Bidaya” serve as a vital platform for bridging academic knowledge with practical application and equipping youth with the professional and behavioral skills required by the modern labor market. The company renewed its commitment to launching and developing high-quality programs and initiatives that support youth and prepare a new generation of leaders with the vision, competence, and capability to lead the future of the financial and investment sectors, in line with national aspirations and the goals of sustainable development.



FHFA quietly lifts cap to \$225 billion each for mortgage giants

Trump housing chief expands Fannie, Freddie bond-buying authority

WASHINGTON, Jan 25, (AP): President Donald Trump’s federal housing finance director, Bill Pulte, quietly granted government-backed lenders the authority to nearly double a \$200 billion bond purchase that Trump ordered to try to lower mortgage rates, a move that could introduce a new level of risk for the companies.

An email obtained by The Associated Press that was sent by the Federal Housing Finance Agency to top officials at Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac eliminated caps that prohibited the lenders from each holding more than \$40 billion in mortgage bonds. The Jan. 12 email says that “effective immediately” the new amount of mortgage bonds that they could hold in their portfolios was raised to \$225 billion apiece.

If the mortgage buyers were to act on the full extent of this new authority, that would amount to a roughly \$170 billion increase in bond purchases over what the president instructed them to buy. Neither Pulte nor the FHFA addressed questions about whether Trump or Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent was consulted before the increase was enacted.

The changes to the purchasing rules effectively reverse nearly two decades of bipartisan consensus that limits should be imposed after the government had to bail out Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac in the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008-09, which led to both being placed into a government conservatorship.

Before this story was published, Pulte took to X, calling it “fake news.” “FHFA simply gave each entity legal flexibility to go beyond their previous caps,” Pulte wrote Friday, adding that despite the lenders’ new bond purchasing authority, they would not “exceed \$200 billion.”

After the story was published, the agency put out additional statement saying that “Fannie and Freddie will not be allowed to go beyond the president’s buy.”

The White House, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac did not respond to requests for comment. The Treasury Department, in a statement, said Pulte has been “collaborative and transparent” in working with the department. The statement did not address the bond purchases.

Some members of Congress who were closely involved in the fallout from the financial crisis have raised concerns about Pulte and the Republican administration’s new approach. They say any benefit from the mortgage bond purchase will be fleeting unless the tight supply of homes can be increased. Without that, they argue, any decrease in interest rates will only drive up home prices as sellers adapt to the lower cost of borrowing by increasing their asking prices.

“This is just a smoke screen for Trump and Bill Pulte to tweet about - it will do little, if anything, to lower mortgage interest rates over the long term and raises questions about increased risks to Fannie and Freddie,” said Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, the top Democrat on the Senate’s banking committee.

The episode offers the latest example of Pulte’s turbulent tenure in a typically low-profile position in the federal bureaucracy.

Pulte, who also appointed himself chair of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac,



A ‘For Sale’ sign is seen on Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2026, in Portland, Ore. (AP)

has used the post to cultivate his own political profile and spearheaded efforts to initiate federal criminal investigations of some of Trump’s chief antagonists.

Pulte was identified as a driving force behind the administration’s decision to criminally investigate Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, according to Bloomberg News, provoking an outcry from some prominent Republicans in Congress.

Pulte has presided over the firing of executives at Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, as well as ethics officials at Fannie Mae who were investigating him and his allies. He also has pushed Trump to endorse policy ideas that were widely panned. In November, Pulte convinced Trump of the allure of a 50-year mortgage as a way to increase home buying and building - a proposal that would drastically increase the overall price of a loan.

Fannie Mae was created in 1938 as part of the New Deal to shore up the mortgage industry. Congress created Freddie Mac in 1970 to provide additional liquidity to the housing market. The institutions buy up the vast majority of mortgages that lenders issue to homeowners, which are then packaged into bonds that are sold to investors.

Both now exist as private companies, but due to their government charters, are subject to additional regulation and can borrow money at far lower costs. Because of this government affiliation, markets also broadly recognize the financial products they sell as federally guaranteed.

But there is a tension between the lenders’ public mission and their desire to generate earnings, which has at times led both to take on heightened levels of

risk, as was the case before the financial crisis. That led to both being placed in a government conservatorship.

As a result, the federal government forced Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to draw down their mortgage investment portfolios, which the Treasury capped at \$450 billion. The FHFA went further, gradually ratcheting down the amount of mortgage bonds they could each retain, which was set as low as \$25 billion earlier this year, records show.

Now Pulte is overseeing a reversal of that. Both lenders are still subject to the Treasury’s \$450 billion cap. But with their newly granted limits, they can adjust their portfolios to take on a far more aggressive - and riskier - approach toward buying mortgage bonds.

At first, Pulte took a slow approach. In recent months, the FHFA granted Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac small increases in their mortgage bond buying capacities, which essentially served as a test run for Trump’s announcement this month, according to housing market analysts.

Now that both lenders have the authority to stake out a larger position, they could use it to boost earnings before an anticipated initial public offering that would allow investors to buy significant stakes in the companies. Neither company, however, seems to have enough cash or liquid assets to make a \$225 billion purchase, which could require taking on debt, analysts say.

Though Pulte maintains that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac would not buy more bonds than Trump ordered, the email that his agency sent to the lenders did not directly address the issue.

The email instructed the companies to increase bond investments to “exert meaningful downward pressure” on rates. Both companies were directed to submit purchasing plans to the FHFA, but the agency also made clear that the “commencement of increases” in purchases did not require its approval first.

The moves demonstrate the extent to which mortgage interest rates have become a political liability for Trump before the midterm elections in November, when Republicans’ control of Congress will be on the line.

But the plan, as announced by Trump, has already been criticized by many economists and housing policy experts as a gimmick considering the mammoth size of the \$13 trillion U.S. mortgage market.

“It does raise the question of whether we’re letting the genie back out of the bottle. That wouldn’t be so worrisome if the genie hadn’t done so much damage the last time around,” said Jim Parrott, who served on the National Economic Council during Democrat Barack Obama’s presidency and counseled him on housing issues.

Edward Pinto, a resident fellow at the conservative-leaning American Enterprise Institute, likened Trump’s initial \$200 billion announcement to a “sugar high.”

“It may have an effect, but it will be fleeting,” said Pinto, a former Fannie Mae executive. He noted that while Trump’s announcement briefly drove mortgage rates down, they ticked back up after Trump threatened a takeover of Greenland.

“It’s easy for the federal government to make a mistake here. They’ve done it in the past,” Pinto said.

Huawei’s chip-network integration boosts efficiency

China gains momentum in global AI race

BEIJING, Jan 25, (Xinhua): As the Chairman and CEO of Founders Space, I spend a great deal of time in conversations with influential entrepreneurs and investors across China. Those discussions reveal a picture of the global artificial intelligence (AI) race that feels very different from the one often portrayed in Western media.

When you look closely at what platforms like DeepSeek, Qwen, Kimi Chat, and Doubao are building, you start to see a structural shift that gives Chinese companies momentum the United States is struggling to match. Three forces in particular stand out, and together they form a foundation that could reshape the balance of global AI power.

The first force comes from a surprisingly old-fashioned element of modern technology: energy. Training frontier models depends on enormous amounts of power. In China, the state views this as a national priority and has created an environment where energy costs can be brought down through direct support and long-term planning.

At the same time, the United States is experiencing rising energy costs, aging infrastructure, and policy decisions that have set back renewable investments. With the country moving away from clean energy incentives and stumbling on grid modernization, the gap grows wider.

Cheap and reliable power may sound mundane compared to algorithmic breakthroughs, but behind the scenes, it influences every important decision a frontier model company makes. Costs compound over time, and China is deliberately positioning its ecosystem to carry those costs with far more ease.

The second advantage is China’s new relationship with data. In the United States, data remains locked away in private silos, guarded by corporations and fragmented across thousands of institutions. The government has limited authority to open these vaults, even when shared access would serve innovation.

China is taking the opposite approach. It has the ability to mandate that large companies contribute data to shared pools and is building a national data exchange system designed specifically to fuel the next wave of AI growth. This does not simply create larger training sets. It also allows Chinese startups to train finely tuned models for every major industry, from finance to logistics to healthcare. When that type of domain-specific data becomes widely accessible, it accelerates an entire ecosystem rather than a handful of tech giants.

The third force comes from Huawei, whose reach across both chip technology and networking gives China a structural edge the United States

cannot easily replicate. Because Huawei controls the networking layer inside its data centers, it has redesigned those systems so they can extract more performance out of cheaper, lower-power chips.

Most Western companies rely on chips from one firm and networking gear from another, which limits how deeply they can integrate the two. Huawei is crafting data centers where the network fabric and the chips speak the same native language. The result is a path to future parity using less expensive hardware, and that creates an economic advantage that compounds at scale.

When you place these pieces together, a larger picture emerges. Cheap power reduces the cost of training and inference. Open and mandated data access strengthens the diversity and quality of models. Integrated networking and chip design narrows the performance gap even when using less advanced hardware. Combined with China’s embrace of open source model development, these advantages create an ecosystem where AI becomes both powerful and accessible at prices Western companies will struggle to match. This is not a story about who has smarter engineers or more ambitious founders. It is a story about national strategy, infrastructure, and the structural forces that shape technological eras. And right now, those forces are tilting in China’s favor.

Installed capacity reaches 600 million kW by late 2025

China rebuts claims of lacking wind farms

BEIJING, Jan 25, (Xinhua): At the recent World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2026, claims were made that China produces large numbers of wind turbines while lacking wind farms of its own.

These assertions were quickly rebutted by media outlets and experts alike.

Figures from the Chinese government and international institutions show that China is, in reality, an undisputed global powerhouse in wind energy -- both in terms of total installed capacity and technological strength.

Below are some facts about the development of China’s wind energy sector.

How big is China’s wind energy industry?
China has ranked first worldwide in installed wind power capacity for 15 consecutive years. The country’s wind power capacity has expanded to 600 million kW by the end of November 2025, according to the National Energy Administration (NEA).

China has played an extraordinary role in advancing global wind power, adding 79.8 million kW of new capacity in 2024 -- up from 75.9 million kW in 2023. China accounts for 72 percent of the global market for new wind turbines -- a steady increase from 65 percent in 2023 and 58 percent in 2022, according to a report from the World Wind Energy Association.

In China, the world’s largest electricity consumer, one in every three kilowatt-hours of electricity comes from green energy sources,

powering daily life, while reshaping the national and global energy and industrial landscapes.

How fast has China’s wind power sector grown?

Over the past decade, China’s wind power sector has expanded at a remarkable pace, firmly establishing the country as the world’s largest wind energy producer.

Installed wind capacity has risen from around 130 million kW in 2015 to 600 million kW by the end of November 2025, with China consistently leading the world in annual new installations.

Since the start of the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-2025), the share of wind and solar power in China’s total electricity consumption has climbed steadily -- from 9.7 percent in 2020 to 18.6 percent in 2024, and to nearly one quarter in the first half of 2025.

This proportion has already exceeded the electricity consumption of the country’s tertiary sector as well as that of urban and rural households. At the same time, newly added wind and solar generation has become the main driver of growth in overall electricity consumption, strongly underpinning the rising share of non-fossil energy in China’s energy mix.

This rapid expansion has been driven by the development of large-scale onshore wind bases, the swift growth of offshore wind projects, continuous technological advances, and sustained policy support, allowing wind power to evolve

from a supplementary source into a central pillar of China’s power system.

How China has contributed to global wind energy development?

As a global leader in renewable energy, China’s green production capacity not only enriches its own energy supply but also creates broad opportunities for Global South countries to achieve low-carbon, leapfrog development, contributing to the building of a clean and beautiful world.

In 2024 alone, China exported 904 wind turbines with a combined capacity of 5.194 million kW to 23 countries, a 41.7 percent increase from the previous year, according to the 2024 China Wind Power Hoisting Capacity Statistical Briefing released by the China Wind Energy Association. By the end of 2024, China had exported a total of 5,799 wind turbines with a cumulative capacity of 20.788 million kW to 57 countries across six continents.

Official data showed that during the 2021-2025 period, wind power and photovoltaic products China exported helped reduce around 4.1 billion tons of carbon emissions in other countries.

Also, Chinese firms have pledged roughly 200 billion U.S. dollars in overseas clean energy investments since 2022, reported The Wired, a magazine, in December, saying that this is “beginning to narrow the gap in funding needed to slash the world’s climate pollution.”

Stranded by winter weather? Here’s what airlines owe you

WASHINGTON, Jan 25, (AP): Winter weather can upend even the best-laid travel plans, but one less thing to worry about is losing money if your flight is canceled: U.S. airlines are required to provide refunds.

A monster storm started to wreak havoc Saturday across parts of the country, with 12,200 weekend flights and counting canceled. Forecasters warned that catastrophic damage, especially in areas pounded by ice, could rival that of a hurricane.

Here’s a guide for winter travelers as flight disruptions pile up: When airlines expect bad weather to create problems for flights, they often give travelers a chance to postpone their trips by a few days without having to pay a fee. Search online for your airline’s name and “travel alerts” or similar phrases to look for possible rescheduling offers.

American Airlines, for example, said it is waiving change fees for passengers impacted by the storm and adding extra flights around the country in an effort to help passengers reach their destination after the storm passes.

Use the airline’s app to make sure your flight is still on before heading to the airport.

Cancellations can happen hours - or even days - before departure time. Consider American and Delta Air Lines: By mid-day Saturday, each carrier had canceled more than 1,000 of its scheduled Sunday flights, according to flight tracking site FlightAware.

Oklahoma’s largest airport suspended all flights Saturday, while Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport, a major hub, saw more than 700 departing flights canceled and nearly as many arriving flights called off. Flight disruptions also were stacking up at airports in Chicago, Atlanta, Nashville and Charlotte, North Carolina.

Disruptions were expected to intensify Sunday, FlightAware data showed. By late Saturday afternoon, nearly all departing flights scheduled to leave Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport on Sunday - 405 flights, or about 95% - had already been canceled. Major disruptions were also forecast for airports in Charlotte and Atlanta, home to the nation’s busiest airport, as well as New York’s John F. Kennedy International Airport and LaGuardia Airport, where 87% of Sunday’s departing flights have so far been canceled.

If you’re already at the airport, get in line to speak to a customer service representative. If you’re still at home or at your hotel, call or go online to connect to your airline’s reservations staff. Either way, it helps to also research alternate flights while you wait to talk to an agent.

Most airlines will rebook you on a later flight for no additional charge, but it depends on the availability of open seats.

You can, but airlines aren’t required to put you on another carrier’s flight. Some airlines, including most of the biggest carriers, say they can put you on a partner airline, but even then it can be a hit or miss.

If your flight was canceled and you no longer want to take the trip, or you’ve found another way to get to your destination, the airline is legally required to refund your money - even if you bought a non-refundable ticket. It doesn’t matter why the flight was canceled.

The airline might offer you a travel credit, but you are entitled to a full refund. You are also entitled to a refund of any bag fees, seat upgrades or other extras that you didn’t get to use.

If you paid with a credit card, a refund is due within seven business days after you decline an offer from the airline for another flight or a voucher, and within 20 calendar days if you paid for the ticket with a check or cash, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

U.S. airlines aren’t required by the Transportation Department to compensate passengers for meals or lodging when an airline cancels or significantly delays a flight during an “uncontrollable” event like bad weather.

Each airline, however, does have its own policies for assisting passengers who are stranded by a so-called “controllable” flight cancellation or long delay. These include disruptions caused by maintenance issues, crew shortages or computer outages that halt operations. The Transportation Department can hold airlines accountable for these commitments and maintains a website that lets travelers see what each airline promises if a major disruption is their fault.

If the weather forecast is troubling, Kyle Potter, executive editor of Thrifty Traveler, suggests looking into booking a backup flight. Some airlines stand out as potential backups, Potter says, because they let customers get a full refund as long as they cancel within 24 hours of booking.

The customer service phone lines will be slammed if flight cancellations and delays start stacking up during a bad storm. If you’re traveling with someone who has a higher frequent-flyer status, call the airline using their priority number. Another trick: Look up the airline’s international support number. Those agents can often rebook you just the same.

WEF on Africa to return in April 2027 after eight-year hiatus

JOHANNESBURG, Jan 25, (Xinhua): The World Economic Forum (WEF) on Africa is set to return to the continent in April 2027, ending an almost eight-year hiatus, with the event scheduled to be hosted in either Johannesburg or Cape Town, local media reported Friday.

South Africa’s Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille, welcomed the development, thanking the WEF for selecting the country to host the prestigious gathering once again, according to the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC).

“We are ready, able, and willing, and look forward to us being afforded the opportunity,” De Lille said. She added that the forum’s return represents another “vote of confidence” in South Africa’s world-class MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) infrastructure.

Chido Munyati, the Head of Africa and a Global Leadership Fellow at the WEF, confirmed the plan to reporters at the just-concluded WEF Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland. He stated that the forum will resume

its Africa summit in South Africa in April 2027.

The World Economic Forum on Africa traces its origins to the Forum on Southern Africa held in October 1990 in Geneva. From 1993 onward, the forum began convening on the African continent, with Cape Town serving as the first host city.

The most recent summit was held in September 2019 in Cape Town before the event was suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic and global strategic shifts.

President Lula calls current era a golden moment for local films

Oscar recognition for 'Secret Agent' boosts Brazilian cinema

RIO DE JANEIRO, Jan 25, (AP): Brazilians celebrated the nomination of "The Secret Agent" film to four Oscar categories on Thursday, which many said confirmed the rise of Brazilian cinema and its universal appeal.

"The Secret Agent" - nominated for best picture, best actor, best international film and achievement in casting - now shares Brazil's record for nominations, alongside the famed 2002 film "City of God" set in a favela in Rio de Janeiro.

"The Secret Agent" follows a widowed father - played by Wagner Moura - who becomes a target of Brazil's military dictatorship in the 1970s simply because he stands up to a business owner with ties to the regime.

Director Kleber Mendonça Filho said that more than one million spectators have seen the film, in a video posted on social media Thursday following the nominations.

Last year, Brazilian feature film "I'm Still Here" was also a box office success, drawing millions of moviegoers. It was nominated in three categories and won best international feature, giving Brazil its first Oscar.

The back-to-back successes are leading many to say that Brazil is living a particularly fruitful moment for its cinema - including President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who said that the local industry is currently "experiencing one of the best moments in its history."

The nominations are "recognition of our culture and of Brazil's ability to tell stories that move the world," he said on social media.

"I'm Still Here" is also set during the dictatorship, and observers say both films have contributed to nationwide discussion about the dark period in Brazil's history from 1964 to 1985, when people were tortured and disappeared.

Lúcia Espirito Santo, a 78-year-old retired lawyer, said that she herself had to watch her words when she was studying law at university for fear of disappearing.

"What we see in the film happened a lot. People would disappear and you didn't know why. Friends of mine from college disappeared because they spoke out, they advocated for freedom and democracy," she said, exiting the cinema after seeing



This image released by Neon shows Wagner Moura in a scene from 'The Secret Agent.' (AP)

the film.

Sabrina Guimarães, a 20-year-old student at a Rio de Janeiro university, who went to see the film Thursday, said learning about the country's history is essential.

"Even though we learn this stuff at school, we don't spend much time on it and it's not very specific. Feeling like you're there in the person's shoes, knowing what was happening at the time is very interesting," she said.

"It's good to understand what happened in the past so we don't repeat these things in the future."

Director Mendonça Filho said the film is a reaction to Brazil's past decade of political turmoil, including the far-right administration of former President Jair Bolsonaro, who last year was sentenced to 27 years and three months in prison for attempting a coup.

But the film also dialogues with the political climate in other places around the world, he said in an interview with The Associated Press on Thursday.

"The film is very Brazilian, but it's also universal, so it can be used to discuss issues in the United States, in Europe or in Brazil," Mendonça Filho said. "The theme of power being used to crush people and social classes is a theme that's current, not just historical."

Casting director Gabriel Domingues, who was nominated in the new category of "achievement in casting," said the outpouring of support for the film reflects broader enthusiasm for Brazilian cinema.

"Brazilian cinema is really in a moment of intense emotion, beyond just excitement. People get very moved, with this participation in international events and awards and everything," Domingues told The Associated Press, comparing it to Brazil's atmosphere around soccer.

Ana Paula Sousa, an expert in cinema and teacher at the ESPM University in Sao Paulo, said that the achievements of "I'm Still Here" and "The Secret Agent" are changing Brazilians' relation to the film industry in a country where movie attendance is historically low.

"People are talking about Brazilian cinema and thinking it's cool to talk about it. (...) That's something we didn't see before, and it's really great," she said.

Sousa said she hopes the successes will spark more consistent movie attendance among Brazilians.

Espírito Santo, the elderly moviegoer in Rio, said that she was incredibly proud of Brazilian cinema following the Oscar nominations.

"We're showing up, stepping onto the red carpet abroad," she said. "Brazil is starting to look like a producer of films, of well-told stories."

Festivalgoers reflect

Last Utah Sundance may be last for some

PARK CITY, Utah, Jan 25, (AP): Attendees at this year's Sundance Film Festival could not stand in line, step onto a shuttle bus or walk into a lounge without hearing one common question: "Will you go to the festival when it moves to Boulder?"

Butch Ward has been a Sundance regular since the early '90s, but like many longtime festivalgoers who fell in love with its charming mountain hometown of Park City, he said he won't be following Sundance to its new setting in Colorado next year.

The media professional from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, considers this the last year of the festival in its true form, "because a Sundance outside Utah just isn't Sundance."

That sentiment was shared by many attendees who had found their happy place at the Utah festival.

A group of women walked down Main Street on Saturday wearing yellow scarves that read "Our last Sundance 2026." Another festivalgoer with a film reel balanced atop her head held a sign dubbing this "the last Sundance."

"It's not just a resistance to change," said Suzie Taylor, an actor who has been coming to Sundance on and off since 1997. "Robert Redford's vision was rooted here. And isn't it poetic that he passed right before the last one?"

For Julie Nunis, the joy of Sundance is grounded in the tradition Redford created in Park City more than four decades ago. The actor from Los Angeles has come to the festival nearly every year since 2001 and said she doesn't want to experience it any other way.

Redford, who died in September at age 89, established the festival and development programs for filmmakers in the Utah mountains as a haven for independent storytelling far from the pressures of Hollywood. Before his death, Redford, who attended the University of Colorado Boulder, gave his blessing for the festival to relocate.

Independent

Boulder emerged victorious from a yearlong search in which numerous US cities vied to host the nation's premier independent film festival. Sundance organizers decided to search for a new home because they said the festival had outgrown the ski town it helped put on the map and developed an air of exclusivity that took focus away from the films.

Some film professionals and volunteers said they were willing to give Boulder a try but worried Sundance could lose its identity outside its longtime home.

Lauren Garcia, who has come from Seattle to volunteer at Sundance for the past six years, said curiosity may lead her to Boulder for future festivals. She described feeling a sadness lingering over the final Utah festival and wondered if Redford's death means it's time for Sundance to close this chapter.

"How is the festival going to express itself in a new place and continue his legacy? It's a huge question mark," said Garcia, an anthropologist. "The truth is, it's never going to be the same now that he's gone."

Redford's daughter, Amy Redford, who serves on the Sundance Institute's board of trustees, said she's excited about the transition, even if it comes with a steep learning curve.

Nik Dodani, an actor and filmmaker passionate about telling LGBTQ+ stories, said he's excited to experience the festival in a new state that embraces diversity, but he worries the departure will create a "vacuum" of those stories in Utah.

Amy Redford assures that won't be the case.

The piece of her father's legacy that she said meant the most to him - the institute's lab programs for emerging screenwriters and directors - will remain in Utah, at the resort he founded, about 34 miles (54 kilometers) south of Park City. Filmmakers will continue to "create the civil discourse that we really need to be having in the state," she said.

"Boulder, Colorado, will be a new adventure. It will feel like our beginnings when we were trying to figure things out, and that will have an important impact on what we do," she told The Associated Press. "But the way that we meet artists where they need to be, well, that evolves out of a heartbeat that is here" in Utah.



A woman wearing a film reel on her head holds a sign that reads "the last sundance" while attending final Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah, on Friday, Jan. 23, before the festival moves next year to Boulder, Colo. (AP)

Film



Elizabeth Debicki attends the premiere of 'Wicker' during the Sundance Film Festival. (AP)



Michelle Mao attends the premiere of 'Zi' during the Sundance Film Festival. (AP)



Natalie Portman attends the premiere of 'The Gallerist' during the Sundance Film Festival on Saturday, Jan. 24, at Eccles Center in Park City, Utah. (AP)

Franco and Jackson Jr lead road movie gone wrong

Portman, Rogen debut new movies at Sundance

PARK CITY, Utah, Jan 25, (AP): The comedy streak at the Sundance Film Festival continued Saturday with the world premieres of the art world satire "The Gallerist," with Natalie Portman, and Olivia Wilde's "The Invite," a sharp look at a crumbling marriage.

"The Invite," which debuted at the Eccles Theater, marks Wilde's third time behind the camera and first since "Don't Worry Darling." It received an enthusiastic standing ovation.

Will McCormack and Rashida Jones wrote the script for "The Invite," in which a couple on the edge (Wilde and Seth Rogen) have their upstairs neighbors (Penélope Cruz and Edward Norton) over for dinner. The evening starts with awkward small talk and becomes a raw and revealing encounter that's funny and devastating at times.

"Several of the greatest moments of this movie were written by the cast," Wilde said after the premiere. "We shot in order, which was incredible. ... It was such a luxury."

There was also quite a bit of improv, Wilde and Rogen said. "I think there's a seven-hour movie that you would have liked," Wilde said.

Wilde has had a busy Sundance so far. Following "The Invite" was Cathy Yan's "The Gallerist," starring Portman as gallerist Polina Polinski attempting to make a name for herself at Art Basel in Miami, with the help of her assistant (Jenna Ortega), who gets involved in a plot to sell a dead body.

"It was such a great original concept that felt really juicy and perfect," Yan said after the movie, with Portman, Ortega and Charli xcx by her side.

When an audience member asked if Portman took the role for personal reasons, she quipped, "I've never tried to sell a dead body before."

Zach Galifianakis plays an influencer and Da'Vine Joy Randolph is an emerging artist in the starry cast, which also includes Catherine Zeta-Jones, Sterling K. Brown and Daniel Brühl.

Sundance movies might have a reputation for leaning into serious dramas, but this year the independent film festival has a slew of comedies on the slate, from quirky documentaries to more raucous fare.

One of the latter comes from filmmaker Macon Blair, a Sundance veteran and grand jury prize winner for "I Don't Feel at Home in This World Anymore," whose new movie might best be described as a road movie gone wrong.

Dave Franco and O'Shea Jackson Jr. play two down on their luck guys and general screwups who are hired to transport a troubled teen (Mason Thames) to a treatment facility in "The S---heads," which had its world premiere in Park City, Utah Friday night. It's one of the films looking for distribution at the indie film festival.

Blair and Alex Orr started working on the script over 10 years ago. It almost got made in 2017, but financing fell apart when they were in pre-production.

"Over time it got a little darker, a little seedier, a little angrier. It's still a comedy, it's still meant to be fun and breezy and a good time," Blair said. "But there was a current of something that became a little more pronounced."

When they decided to try again, Franco was the one who

The behavior of the French public broadcaster and the hostile practices sponsored by French official circles represent an escalation that can only keep the bilateral relations tense, it cautioned. (KUNA)

MADRID: The 46th International Tourism Fair 2026 (FITUR) began on Saturday, offering visitors a wide range of travel experiences while spotlighting emerging destinations from across the globe.

After three business-focused professional days, FITUR opens its doors to travelers over the weekend, who will be able to explore a wide range of destinations thanks to the participation of 161 countries, 111 of them with official representation, as well as enjoy a varied program of activities organized by exhibitors.

Mexico is participating as the partner country of the fair's 46th edition, which opened on Wednesday, bringing festive atmosphere to the exhibition halls while showcasing its diverse tourism offerings and rich cultural heritage.

helped get it across the finish line, joining as a producer, finding the money and suggesting Jackson and Thames for their roles. Blair loved watching Franco work, in particular.

"Every single thing he does, you're like, 'Oh that could go in the movie,'" Blair said. "He's so prepared, so dialed in. It was impressive to watch."

The film also features surprising supporting performances by Kiernan Shipka and Peter Dinklage, who Blair became friends with after getting a drink at Sundance not too long ago. His hope is to find a distributor who might be open to a theatrical release, citing a movie like "Friendship" as an example of a more unconventional movie that audiences turned out for.

"I hope someone gets the vibe of the movie on its own terms," Blair said. "You don't name a movie this because you want it to be a Merchant Ivory thing. But there's other things in it. I think about O'Shea's performance and how vulnerable he gets in this. I'm hoping people laugh, I'm hoping people have a good time. But I'm also hoping people see that he's a great actor too."

Filmmakers and actors whose careers were shaped by Robert Redford and the Sundance Institute he founded reflected on his legacy as the godfather of independent cinema at a star-studded gala Friday night during the first Sundance Film Festival since his death.

The 2026 festival - its last in Utah, before relocating to Boulder, Colorado - is a love letter to the haven Redford established in the state decades ago for stories that didn't fit into the mainstream.

The two-day event, allow visitors to enjoy a varied program of activities organized by exhibitors, including interactive experiences, cultural performances and traditional cuisine. (KUNA)

MILAN: Chinese pianist Lang Lang will take the stage at the opening ceremony of the Milan-Cortina 2026 Olympic Winter Games on February 6, the organizers announced on Thursday.

The organizing committee describes Lang Lang as "more than a pianist: he is a bridge between cultures, generations, and worlds." "At the Olympic Opening Ceremony, his piano will give voice to a global narrative, where emotion, encounter, and wonder come together before the eyes of the world," it said. Lang has previously performed at the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, sharing the stage with a young pianist.

The upcoming ceremony, to be held at Milan's iconic San Siro Stadium, is built around the theme "Armonia" (Harmony), emphasizing the shared human values. (Xinhua)

'It was like what a view ... it's incredible'

Honnold reaches top of Taipei 101 skyscraper without ropes

TAIPEI, Taiwan, Jan 25, (AP): American rock climber Alex Honnold ascended the Taipei 101 skyscraper on Sunday without any ropes or protective equipment.

Cheers erupted from a street-level crowd as he reached the top of the spire of the 508-meter (1,667-foot) tower about 90 minutes after he started. Wearing a red short-sleeve shirt, Honnold waved his arms back and forth over his head.

"It was like what a view, it's incredible, what a beautiful day," he said afterward. "It was very windy, so I was like, don't fall off the spire. I was trying to balance nicely. But it was, what an incredible position, what a beautiful way to see Taipei."

Honnold, known for his ropeless ascent up Yosemite National Park's El Capitan, climbed up one corner of Taipei 101 using small L-

shaped outcroppings as footholds. Periodically, he had to maneuver around and clamber up the sides of large ornamental structures that jut out from the tower, pulling himself up with his bare hands.

The building has 101 floors, with the hardest part being the 64 floors of the middle section - the "bamboo boxes" that give the building its signature look. Divided into eight, each segment has eight floors of steep, overhanging climbing followed by balconies, where he took short rests as he made his way upward.

Honnold's free solo climb of the iconic building in Taiwan's capital city was broadcast live on Netflix with a 10-second delay. The ascent, originally scheduled for Saturday, was delayed for 24 hours due to rain.

Having a cheering crowd was unusual and a bit

unnerving at first for Honnold, whose climbs are usually in remote areas.

"When I was leaving the ground, you're like oh it's kind of intense, there's so many people watching," he said. "But then honestly, they're all wishing me well. I mean basically it just makes the whole experience feel almost more festive, all these nice people are out supporting me and having a good time."

The climb drew both excitement and concern over the ethical implications of attempting such a high-risk endeavor on live broadcast.

Honnold isn't the first climber to ascend Taipei 101, but he is the first to do so without a rope. French rock climber Alain Robert scaled the building on Christmas Day in 2004 as part of the grand opening of what was then the world's tallest building.



Rock climber Alex Honnold of the US, raises his fist as he climbs on top of the Taipei 101 skyscraper in Taipei, Taiwan, Sunday, Jan. 25. (AP)

Books



Photos from the opening of the 57th Cairo International Book Fair.

KUNA photos

Cairo Book Fair ... exceptional cultural gathering of creators, thinkers

In an annual cultural event, Cairo International Book Fair comes back with a new look, bespeaking that books are still capable of bringing together creators, thinkers, and the public in a space where languages, cultures, ideas and knowledge merge.

With its theme: "Whoever Stops Reading for an Hour Falls Behind

for Centuries", this year's edition, which kick-started on January 21, is deemed the largest ever in view of participation, activities and cultural and intellectual content. Drawing a total of 1,457 publishers from 83 countries, the fair has so far attracted more than a million visitors, reflecting cultural diversity in its cultural, intellectual and artistic programs. (KUNA)

Film focuses on sustainable living, global responsibility

King Charles believes 'harmony' can help save planet

LONDON, Jan 25, (AP): Can it be that, like many baby boomers, King Charles III feels misunderstood?

That might sound like a strange question for a man with his own public relations team and easy access to any journalist in the realm. But 16 years after he wrote a book explaining his vision for saving the planet, the king has teamed up with Amazon Prime to make a film spelling out that philosophy.

The documentary delves into Charles' concept of "harmony," the idea that restoring the balance between the human and natural worlds is crucial to combatting global warming and many other major problems facing humanity.

Along the way, the king also confronts his critics, who have lampooned him as a dilettante flitting aimlessly from one cause to another with no rhyme or reason. Charles believes that climate change, urban planning, sustainable agriculture, traditional crafts and fostering understanding between religions - causes to which he has devoted much of his adult life - are inter-related issues that must be dealt with to create more liveable communities. "I think we need to follow harmony if we are going to ensure that this planet can support so many," he said in a trailer for the film. "It's unlikely there's anywhere else."

To help explain these ideas, experts including Tony Juniper, the former head of Friends of the Earth in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and Emily Shuckburgh, a University of Cambridge climate scientist, appear with Charles in "Finding Harmony: A King's Vision," available on Amazon from Feb. 6. The narrator is Kate Winslet.

The king wants people to recognize that humans are as much a part of the natural world as the birds and the trees, something that can be obscured as we rush to work in air-conditioned offices, then drive to the supermarket to buy food wrapped in plastic, Juniper told The Associated Press.

The "cycles and loops" of nature are still what govern human society, Juniper said, and reconnecting with that is critical as we confront global warming, soil erosion, ocean plastics and the chemicals build-



Jennie Regan stands beside the stone she carved with an inscription from a Scottish fairy tale at Dumfries House in Cumnock, Scotland, Nov. 26, 2025. (AP)

ing up in our food chains.

"All of that is reversible, all of that fixable," he said. "But it's going to require more of us to understand that we are not outside nature, we are in it."

Juniper believes Charles is uniquely qualified to deliver this message because he has been campaigning on these issues for decades and continues to do so even as other world leaders shun environmental protection. Charles addressed the idea of restoring balance in the natural world in his 2010 book "Harmony: A New Way of Looking at Our World," written with Juniper and Ian Skelly, a former BBC presenter.

So why return to the subject now?

Part of it may be the hope of reaching a new audi-

ence through a streaming service with global reach. Prince William, Charles' heir, ventured into the same space last year when he revealed his plans for the monarchy on comedian Eugene Levy's Apple TV show "The Reluctant Traveler."

But the king also wants to shift the focus back to an issue he hopes will define his legacy after two years in which the media, and the public, were distracted by other matters, said Ed Owens, author of "After Elizabeth: Can the Monarchy Save Itself?"

First there was Charles' cancer diagnosis, which forced him to step away from public duties for several months in early 2024 and raised nagging questions about his health. Then there were the continuing tensions with his younger son, Prince Harry, and the scandal surrounding his brother Andrew's links to the convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

With Charles apparently past the worst of his cancer treatment, and Andrew stripped of his titles, now may be the time to turn the page.

Even so, the king can't be accused of only taking up these issues recently. Charles gave his first speech on the environment in February 1970, when he was just 21 and still a student at Cambridge.

In 1990, he founded Dumfries House, the flagship project of the King's Foundation, to promote sustainable agriculture, traditional arts and crafts, health and well-being.

The house and surrounding 2,000-acre estate in southwestern Scotland operate as a laboratory of sorts for the philosophy of harmony, offering courses that seek to teach the principles of nature while preparing students to work on farms, in hotels and restaurants - and on construction sites.

Among those who is attending a course at Dumfries House is Jennie Regan, 45, who is training to be a stonemason after 15 years as a university administrator. On a recent afternoon, Regan stood proudly behind a carving she created bearing the inscription "Have I not guided you well?" - a nod to the story of the benevolent Scottish fairy Ghillie Dhu who led a lost child to safety.

Hermès designer Nichanian takes final bow after 37 years

PARIS, Jan 25, (AP): With Paris Fashion Week menswear heading into its final weekend, Hermès marked a transition Saturday as Véronique Nichanian presented her final men's collection after 37 years leading the house's menswear and then stepped out to acknowledge a standing ovation.

The Fall-Winter 2026 show was staged at the Palais Brongniart, the former Paris stock exchange.

The front row blended Hermès executives with a broader-than-usual mix of musicians, actors and designers.

Singer Usher was seen ahead of the show with Hermès executive chairman Axel Dumas. Rapper Travis Scott, actors James McAvoy and Chace Crawford, and designer Paul Smith were among those attending. On the runway, Nichanian delivered the kind of material-driven, understated wardrobe that has long defined Hermès men's clothing.

Models wore silk turtle-necks paired with leather trousers in a restrained palette of navy, black and taupe.

Overcoats were built with leather patchwork elements and shearling linings, leaning into warmth and texture without showy excess.

Several looks drew directly from earlier seasons, with archival pieces incorporated into the lineup.

Among them were a navy leather suit with topstitched pinstripes first shown in 2003 and a mocha calfskin



Designer Veronique Nichanian accepts applause after the Hermes Fall/Winter 2026-2027 Men's collection presented in Paris, Saturday, Jan. 24. (AP)

jumpsuit from 1991.

Color arrived in controlled flashes, with orange and yellow jackets interrupting the darker tones. One of the most striking pieces was a glossy khaki crocodile-skin suit, a statement look that stood apart from the quieter mix of leather, silk and tailored outerwear.

Hermès announced in October that London-based designer Grace Wales Bonner will succeed Nichanian.

Wales Bonner, founder of her eponymous label, is scheduled to present her first Hermès menswear collection next January.

Hermès has said she will become the first Black woman to lead a major fashion house.

Technology

'Mind your peace'

How to filter disturbing content on social media

By Annie Margaret
University of Colorado Boulder

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

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When graphic videos go viral, it can feel impossible to protect yourself from seeing things you did not consent to see. But there are steps you can take.

Social media platforms are designed to maximize engagement, not protect your peace of mind. The major platforms have also reduced their content moderation efforts over the past year or so. That means upsetting content can reach you even when you never chose to watch it.

You do not have to watch every piece of content that crosses your screen, however. Protecting your own mental state is not avoidance or denial. As a researcher who studies ways to counteract the negative effects of social media on mental health and well-being, I believe it's a way of safeguarding the bandwidth you need to stay engaged, compassionate and effective.

Research shows that repeated exposure to violent or disturbing media can increase stress, heighten anxiety and contribute to feelings of helplessness. These effects are not just short-term. Over time, they erode the emotional resources you rely on to care for yourself and others.

Protecting your attention is a form of care. Liberating your attention from harmful content is not withdrawal. It is reclaiming your most powerful creative force: your consciousness.

Just as with food, not everything on the table is meant to be eaten. You wouldn't eat something spoiled or toxic simply because it was served to you. In the same way, not every piece of media laid out in your feed deserves your attention. Choosing what to consume is a matter of health.

And while you can choose what you keep in your own kitchen cabinets, you often have less control over what shows up in your feeds. That is why it helps to take intentional steps to filter, block and set boundaries.

Fortunately, there are straightforward ways to reduce your chances of being confronted with violent or disturbing videos. Here are four that I recommend:

- Turn off autoplay or limit sensitive content. Note that these settings can vary depending on device, operating system and app version, and can change.
- Use keyword filters. Most platforms allow you to mute or block specific words, phrases or hashtags. This reduces the chance that graphic or violent content slips into your feed.
- Curate your feed. Unfollow accounts that regularly share disturbing images. Follow accounts that bring you knowledge, connection or joy instead.
- Set boundaries. Reserve phone-free time during meals or before bed. Research shows that intentional breaks reduce stress and improve well-being.

Social media is not neutral. Its algorithms are engineered to hold your attention, even when that means amplifying harmful or sensational material. Watching passively only serves the interests of the social media companies. Choosing to protect your attention is a way to reclaim your agency.

The urge to follow along in real time can be strong, especially during crises. But choosing not to watch every disturbing image is not neglect; it is self-preservation. Looking away protects your ability to act with purpose. When your attention is hijacked, your energy goes into shock and outrage. When your attention is steady, you can choose where to invest it.

You are not powerless. Every boundary you set - whether it is turning off autoplay, filtering content or curating your feed - is a way of taking control over what enters your mind. These actions are the foundation for being able to connect with others, help people and work for meaningful change.

I'm the executive director of the Post-Internet Project, a nonprofit dedicated to helping people navigate the psychological and social challenges of life online. With my team, I designed the evidence-backed PRISM intervention to help people manage their social media use.

Our research-based program emphasizes agency, intention and values alignment as the keys to developing healthier patterns of media consumption. You can try the PRISM process for yourself with an online class I launched through Coursera in October 2025.

You can find the course, Values Aligned Media Consumption, on Coursera. The course is aimed at anyone 18 and over, and the videos are free to watch. (AP)

'Brains of teens not for sale'

Macron pushes for fast-track social media ban for under-15s

PARIS, Jan 25, (AP): French President Emmanuel Macron says he wants his government to fast-track the legal process to ensure that a ban on social media for children under the age of 15 can enter into force in September at the start of the next school year.

In a video released late Saturday by French broadcaster BFM-TV, Macron said he had asked his government to initiate an accelerated procedure so that the proposed legislation can move as quickly as possible and be passed by the Senate in time.

"The brains of our children and our teenagers are not for sale," Macron said. "The emotions of our children and our teenagers are not for sale or to be manipulated. Neither by American platforms, nor by Chinese algorithms."

Macron's announcement came just days after the British government said it will consider banning young teenagers from social media as it tightens laws designed to protect children from harmful content and excessive screen time.

According to France's health watchdog, one in two teenagers spends between two and five hours a day on a smartphone. In a report published in December, it said that some 90% of children aged between 12 and 17 use smartphones daily to access the internet, with 58% of them using their devices for social networks.

The report highlighted a range of harmful effects stemming from the use of social networks, including reduced self-esteem and increased exposure to content associated with risky behaviors such as self-harm, drug use and suicide. Several families in France have sued TikTok over teen suicides they say are linked to harmful content.

Macron's office told The Associated Press that the video was addressed to lawmaker Laure Miller, who is sponsoring the bill that will be examined in a public session on Monday.

"We are banning social media for under-15s, and we are going to ban mobile phones in our high schools," Macron said. "I believe this is a clear rule. Clear for our teenagers, clear for families, clear for teachers, and we are moving forward."

In Australia, social media companies have revoked access to about 4.7 million accounts identified as belonging to children since the country banned use of the platforms by those under 16, officials said. The law provoked fraught debates in Australia about technology use, privacy, child safety and mental health and has prompted other countries to consider similar measures.

Kuwait opens 21st Surgeons’ Conference

Robotic surgery becomes the pillar of surgical development: MoH

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25, (KUNA): Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi affirmed on Saturday that robotic surgery has become a cornerstone of the surgical development system in Kuwait, given the improved control it offers, particularly in complex surgeries and oncology procedures.

This came in a speech he delivered at the opening of the 21st Surgeons’ Conference, held concurrently with the 10th Conference of the Kuwait Surgeons Association under the theme “Innovation, Precision, and Multidisciplinary Care in Upper Gastrointestinal Surgery,” which runs for three days.

The conference is considered one of the most prominent scientific conferences in the field of surgery and among the oldest medical conferences in the country across all specialties, Dr. Al-Awadhi said

The conference brings together an elite group of experts from Kuwait and abroad, with the participation of healthcare professionals, surgeons, and resident doctors, he added.



Left: Health Minister Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi delivers the opening speech. Right: Health Minister Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi reviews the exhibition held on the sidelines of the conference.

The Ministry of Health continues its efforts to support and develop advanced surgical services through the qualification and training of national cadres.

The objective of this scientific and



KUNA photos

technological advancement is to improve patients’ quality of life, noting that the ministry seeks to provide precise, safe, and fast recovery healthcare based on best global practices and the latest medical innovations,

Dr. Al-Awadhi explained.

For his part, Chairman of the Conference Organizing Committee Dr. Mousa Khorsheed said that the conference addresses key topics, most notably gastrointestinal surgery with the participation of a group of specialized doctors from various countries around the world.

The conference discusses the latest methods for diagnosing benign and malignant diseases, as well as modern treatment approaches, he noted.

Furthermore, the conference includes several workshops, among them robotic surgery procedures held at Farwaniya Hospital, in addition to two workshops at the Faculty of Medicine to train 35 trainee doctors, Dr. Khorsheed said.

He praised the role of the Ministry of Health in supporting such conferences over the past years, as well as its support for scientists and researchers in the healthcare field.

The conference continues to be held for the 21st year as part of a continuous and distinguished academic journey.



A man photographs snowfall at the US Capitol, Sunday, Jan. 25, in Washington. (AP)

Climate change may intensify rare winter storms

Polar vortex and warm ocean are intensifying major US winter storm

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

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By Mathew Barlow, UMass Lowell and Judah Cohen, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)

A severe winter storm sweeping across the central and eastern US in late January 2026 is threatening states from Texas to New England with crippling freezing rain, sleet and snow. Several governors issued states of emergency as forecasters warned of hazardous travel conditions, dangerous wind chills and power outages amid bitter cold expected to linger for days.

The sudden blast may come as a shock to many Americans after a mostly mild start to winter, but that warmth may be partly contributing to the ferocity of this storm.

As atmospheric and climate scientists, we conduct research that aims to improve understanding of extreme weather, including what makes it more or less likely to occur and how climate change might or might not play a role.

To understand what Americans are experiencing with this winter blast, we need to look more than 20 miles above the surface of Earth, to the stratospheric polar vortex.

Multiple weather factors have to come together to produce such a large and severe storm.

Winter storms typically develop where there are sharp temperature contrasts near the surface and a southward dip in the jet stream, the narrow band of fast-moving air that steers weather systems. If there is a substantial source of moisture, the storms can produce heavy rain or snow.

In late January, a strong Arctic air mass from the north was creating the temperature contrast with warmer air from the south. Multiple disturbances within the jet stream were acting together to create favorable conditions for precipitation, and the storm system was able to pull moisture from the very warm Gulf of Mexico.

The fastest winds of the jet stream occur just below the top of the troposphere, which is the lowest level of the atmosphere and ends about seven miles above Earth’s surface. Weather systems are capped at the top of the troposphere, because the atmosphere above it becomes very stable.

The stratosphere is the next layer up, from about seven miles to about 30 miles. While the stratosphere extends high above weather systems, it can still interact with them through atmospheric waves that move up and down in the atmosphere. These waves are similar to the waves in the jet stream that cause it to dip southward, but they move vertically instead of horizontally.

You’ve probably heard the term “polar vortex” used when

an area of cold Arctic air moves far enough southward to influence the United States. That term describes air circulating around the pole, but it can refer to two different circulations, one in the troposphere and one in the stratosphere.

The Northern Hemisphere stratospheric polar vortex is a belt of fast-moving air circulating around the North Pole. It is like a second jet stream, high above the one you may be familiar with from weather graphics, and usually less wavy and closer to the pole.

Sometimes the stratospheric polar vortex can stretch southward over the United States. When that happens, it creates ideal conditions for the up-and-down movement of waves that connect the stratosphere with severe winter weather at the surface.

The forecast for the January storm showed a close overlap between the southward stretch of the stratospheric polar vortex and the jet stream over the US, indicating perfect conditions for cold and snow.

The biggest swings in the jet stream are associated with the most energy. Under the right conditions, that energy can bounce off the polar vortex back down into the troposphere, exaggerating the north-south swings of the jet stream across North America and making severe winter weather more likely.

This is what was happening in late January 2026 in the central and eastern US.

Earth is unequivocally warming as human activities release greenhouse gas emissions that trap heat in the atmosphere, and snow amounts are decreasing overall. But that does not mean severe winter weather will never happen again.

Some research suggests that even in a warming environment, cold events, while occurring less frequently, may still remain relatively severe in some locations. One factor may be increasing disruptions to the stratospheric polar vortex, which appear to be linked to the rapid warming of the Arctic with climate change.

Additionally, a warmer ocean leads to more evaporation, and because a warmer atmosphere can hold more moisture, that means more moisture is available for storms. The process of moisture condensing into rain or snow produces energy for storms as well. However, warming can also reduce the strength of storms by reducing temperature contrasts.

The opposing effects make it complicated to assess the potential change to average storm strength. However, intense events do not necessarily change in the same way as average events. On balance, it appears that the most intense winter storms may be becoming more intense.

A warmer environment also increases the likelihood that precipitation that would have fallen as snow in previous winters may now be more likely to fall as sleet and freezing rain.

(AP)

Experts identify key cells driving cancer growth

WUHAN, Jan 25, (Xinhua): A collaborative team of Chinese and US scientists has identified a specific group of highly adaptable tumor cells that act as a central hub driving lung cancer progression, creating tumor diversity and causing resistance to therapies, according to new research published this week in the journal Nature.

The study, led by researchers from China’s Huazhong Agricultural University and the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York, provides a new potential strategy for targeting cancers known for their tricks to evade treatment.

A major reason cancers are difficult to treat and often recur is that tumor cells can switch between different states to survive attacks from drugs, said Yan Yan, a corresponding author of the paper.

To track these changes in living tissue, the team developed a new genetic reporting system, likened to installing “trackable chips” and “precision clearance switches” in tumor cells in mouse models of lung cancer.

This allowed them to pinpoint and study a “high-plasticity cell state” (HPCS). These HPCS cells function like a “central traffic hub” within the tumor’s ecosystem, distributing cells into different growth paths and allowing other cells revert to this adaptable state, according to the study.

They demonstrated that eliminating HPCS cells in early-stage tumors could prevent them from turning malignant. In established tumors, targeting HPCS cells significantly slowed cancer growth.

Furthermore, removing HPCS cells suppressed resistance to both chemotherapy and targeted drugs, and therefore, combining this approach with standard treatments nearly eliminated tumors in the models.

The findings suggest a common mechanism for cellular plasticity, and targeting this hub state could be a promising approach across multiple cancers, according to the researchers.

Meanwhile, a Chinese research team has achieved a major advance in the precise regulation of protein degradation in living organisms, opening new avenues for therapeutic strategies against diseases ranging from cancer to neurodegenerative disorders.

The study, published recently in the journal Cell, describes a novel strategy that enables selective degradation and elimination of specific “disease-causing proteins” with both spatial and temporal precision in vivo.

Proteins are essential regulators and functional components of the body’s biological machinery. The abnormal expression or dysfunction of protein underlies many human diseases. Traditional small-molecule therapeutics typically inhibit protein function by occupying their active protein pocket; however, many disease-related proteins lack such druggable pockets, rendering them resistant to traditional therapeutic approaches.

To overcome these limitations, researchers from the Institute of Chemistry, Chinese Academy of Sciences (ICCAS), developed an innovative tool named supramolecular targeting chimeras (SupTACs).

‘Get fit by doing good’

UK group blends fitness, volunteering as an alternative to traditional gyms

LONDON, Jan 25, (AP): Shoveling piles of compost and clearing weeds on a cold, damp evening in London might not be most people’s idea of fun.

But it’s smiles and chatter all around as a group of people in running gear put on headlamps and get to work in a community garden located on a derelict parking lot rooftop. The volunteers warmed up by jogging a mile to get to the site, and the digging, squatting and lifting they are doing is part of a weekly workout session.

Combining exercise with community service is the mission of GoodGym, an organization that encourages UK residents to “get fit by doing good.” There’s no expensive gym membership, treadmills or weights. All participants need is a desire to walk, run or bike and a willingness to sort cans at a food bank, pick up trash, visit an older adult or do other kinds of local volunteer work.

“I go to the normal gym usually and I do other sorts of exercise, but this is my mandatory once-a-week run with the GoodGym group,” said Jason Kurtis, 42, who was among the regulars toiling in the south London garden. “It’s really fun and it forces me to get out, especially on a Monday night when it’s cold and in the middle of winter.”

GoodGym says it has more than 26,600 members in 67 locations across England and Wales, and that it wants to start new groups in Northern Ireland and Scotland. Most weeks there are meetups happening somewhere. Recent workouts in London included clearing sidewalks of discarded Christmas trees, picking plastic litter from the muddy banks of the River Thames, planting fruit trees and setting up cots for homeless people.

Members say that signing up for activities - and feeling they’re a part of something positive - motivates them to exercise regularly.

GoodGym began in 2007 when its founder, Ivo Gormley, started running to deliver a newspaper to an older person in his neighborhood. At the time, Gormley said he wasn’t doing any exercise and missed being part of a basketball team.

“I just didn’t like that idea of going to a gym, going into a sweaty basement and lifting things that don’t really need lifting. I thought I could do something more useful in my exercise,” he said.

He started organizing group runs to places where participants could help with community projects big and small: the first group ripped down outdated posters in his east London neighborhood, Gormley said.

The idea gained traction in other English cities and GoodGym, which registered as a charity in 2015, expanded rapidly. The COVID-19 pandemic ruled out group runs, but the organi-



Participants in the Goodgym group collect litter from the riverbank to keep the River Thames free of plastic and other waste in London, Wednesday, Jan. 14. (AP)



Participants in the Goodgym group exercise after collecting litter to keep the River Thames free of plastic and other waste in London. (AP)

zation received a surge in requests to help older adults who were isolated at home. Volunteers started focusing on tasks like delivering prescriptions and food.

GoodGym still pairs volunteers with retirees who want someone to talk to or need help with practical tasks like moving heavy furniture or lawn mowing. Many home visits call for one volunteer at a time and therefore have no group exercise component, though participants are encouraged to run, walk or cycle to their assignments.

Gormley said he wanted to make it as easy as possible for people to stay in shape and give back. Monthly donations are welcome but voluntary, and members are not pressured to show up, he said.

“You can just sign up today and have a go tonight. We try to reduce the barriers as much as possible,” Gormley

said. “You don’t have to come back if you don’t like it. It’s a really easy way to get involved.”

In southwest London’s Battersea district, local GoodGym leader Anastasia Hancock instructs members to lunge, jump and stretch as they prepare for their mile-long run to the Dodding-ton and Rollo community roof garden, a rare slice of greenery in the middle of towering apartment buildings that were built as affordable housing in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Hancock organizes a variety of volunteer projects for GoodGym members in her area, but helping to maintain the garden is one her group returns to every month. She recalls how they once helped shift hundreds of bags of heavy compost up narrow steps to reach the rooftop.

“That was an amazing workout,” she said.

Rwanda to test AI tech in clinics

KIGALI, Rwanda, Jan 25, (AP): Rwanda will test technology powered by artificial intelligence in more than 50 health clinics as part of a new initiative by the Gates Foundation to support 1,000 clinics across Africa with the aim to improve health care services.

The technology is intended to strengthen rather than replace clinical judgment, while improving efficiency within an already stretched health system, Andrew Muhire, a senior official with Rwanda’s Ministry of Health, told The Associated Press on Thursday. Rwanda’s now has one health care worker for 1,000 patients - far from the globally recommended ratio of 4:1,000.

The Gates Foundation and OpenAI on Wednesday launched a new initiative dubbed Horizons1000, with joint funding of \$50 million over two years. Bill Gates said the initiative will help close the health inequality gap.

“In poorer countries with enormous health worker shortages and a lack of health systems infrastructure, AI can be a game changer in expanding access to quality care,” Gates said in a blog post on the launch.

Breakthrough experiment

China conducts first metal ‘3D printing’ test in space

BEIJING, Jan 25, (Xinhua): China has successfully conducted its first metal 3D printing experiment in space, a significant leap forward for its in-orbit manufacturing capabilities.

The breakthrough experiment was performed by a retrievable scientific payload developed by the Institute of Mechanics under the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), the CAS announced on Saturday.

The pioneering payload hitched a ride to space aboard the Lihong-1 Y1 suborbital vehicle, a commercial recoverable spacecraft developed by the Chinese aerospace enterprise CAS Space for space tourism.

This vehicle successfully completed its inaugural test flight from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest China on Jan. 12.

According to the CAS, after the Lihong-1 Y1 crossed the Karman line, boundary separating Earth’s atmosphere and outer space, and reached at an altitude of approximately 120 kilometers, the experiment autonomously fabricated metal components in the microgravity environment.

This successful mission marks a transition of China’s space-based

metal additive manufacturing technology from “ground-based research” to a new phase of “in-space engineering verification,” elevating its overall technological capability to the world’s forefront, the CAS said.

This breakthrough will strongly propel the development of China’s space manufacturing technology and serve as a key enabler for future space infrastructure development, it noted.

Conducting metal additive manufacturing in the unique space environment is far more complex than on Earth.

The research team has overcome a series of core challenges, including stable material transport and forming under microgravity, full-process closed-loop control, and high-reliability coordination between the payload and the launch vehicle, according to the CAS.

Following the experiment, the payload capsule made a safe parachute-assisted landing and was promptly recovered. Scientists have now obtained invaluable first-hand data, including the dynamic characteristics of the melt pool, material transport, solidification behavior, and the geometric precision and mechanical properties of space-printed parts.

Brunson and Anunoby come up big for Knicks

Lakers erase 15-pt hole to beat Mavs

PHILADELPHIA, Jan 25, (AP): Jalen Brunson scored 31 points, OG Anunoby added 23 and the New York Knicks followed their most lopsided win in franchise history with a 112-109 victory over the Philadelphia 76ers on Saturday.

The Knicks crushed the Nets 120-66 on Wednesday and then exploded with a 30-point third quarter in a stiffer road test that sent them to their first win in three tries this season over the 76ers.

Joel Embiid had 38 points and 11 rebounds, but turned the ball over on the final play of the game after the Knicks seemingly tried to intentionally foul him. Tyrese Maxey scored 22 points for the Sixers but shot an airball on a late tying 3-point attempt from near halfcourt as he anticipated an intentional foul that didn't come.

Led by Brunson, the Knicks opened the quarter on a 21-7 run and made



Miami Heat guard Pelle Larsson, left, blocks the shot of Utah Jazz forward Cody Williams (5) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Salt Lake City. (AP)

Philly sound a bit like the inside of Madison Square Garden. The "Let's go Knicks!" chants that had largely been tamped down by boos in a competitive first half, instead filled the arena with each big Knicks bucket.

Lakers 116, Mavericks 110

In Dallas, Luka Doncic had 33 points and 11 assists, and the Lakers erased a 15-point deficit in the final seven minutes of a victory over the Mavericks in the star guard's second visit to Dallas since his shocking trade to Los Angeles almost a year ago.

LeBron James scored 11 of his 17 points in the fourth quarter, when Rui Hachimura had a four-point play before another 3-pointer on the next possession to put the Lakers in front for good as Doncic improved to 4-0 against his former team.

Hachimura's 3-pointer for a 108-106 lead started an 11-2 run that Doncic capped with a driving layup for an eight-point edge, prompting the Slovenian star to turn his old bench and declare the game over.

Max Christie, who came to Dallas along with injured 10-time All-Star Anthony Davis in the trade for Doncic, scored 24 points. Naji Marshall had 21 points and 11 rebounds as Dallas' season-best four-game winning streak ended.

Hornets 119, Wizards 115

In Charlotte, Brandon Miller scored 21 points as the Charlotte Hornets beat Washington, sending the Wizards to their ninth straight loss.

Miles Bridges and LaMelo Ball each scored 20 points, Kon Knueppel added 16 and Moussa Diabate 11 as the Hornets won consecutive games for the first time since January 3-5 against Chicago and Oklahoma City.

Tre Johnson had career-highs of 26 points and six assists for the Wizards, who, according to the Elias Sports Bureau, fielded the youngest starting lineup, by average age, since the NBA began tracking starters in 1970-71. Washington's starting five, at an average age of 20.64 years old, beat the previous youngest lineup of 20.74, fielded by Oklahoma City on April 10,



New York Knicks' Mitchell Robinson, center, tries to pass the ball with Philadelphia 76ers' Kelly Oubre Jr., right, and Quentin Grimes, left, defending during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Philadelphia. (AP)

2021 against Philadelphia.

Cavaliers 119, Magic 105

In Orlando, Donovan Mitchell scored 27 of his 36 points in the second half and Cleveland pulled away to a win over Orlando.

Jaylon Tyson added 17 points for the Cavaliers and Evan Mobley had 13 points and seven rebounds. Paolo Banchero led the Magic with 27 points. Desmond Bane added 20 points and Anthony Black finished with 16 points, five rebounds and five assists.

Jalen Suggs returned after missing

eight games with a bruised right knee and had 9 points and six assists in 24 minutes for Orlando.

Playing without Darius Garland (sore toe) and DeAndre Hunter (sore knee), the Cavaliers won for the fifth time in six games.

Bulls 114, Celtics 111

In Chicago, Kevin Huerter made a 3-pointer just before the buzzer, lifting Chicago past Boston before retiring Derrick Rose's jersey number.

Coby White scored 22 points and hit five of Chicago's 21 3s, helping the

Bulls win their fourth straight.

Rose entered rarified air after the game when the Bulls sent his No. 1 to the rafters, putting the Chicago product alongside Michael Jordan, Scottie Pippen, Jerry Sloan and Bob Love as the only players with numbers retired by the team. The Bulls gave their crowd plenty to cheer before they honored the South Side product and former MVP by squeezing out a win over the Eastern Conference's second-place team, even though Jaylen Brown scored 33 for Boston.

Chicago led 111-109 when White missed a driving layup and Smith missed the putback with 20 seconds remaining. Brown got the rebound and drove for a layup to tie it with 14 seconds left.

The Bulls called a timeout and worked the ball to Huerter, who nailed a 3 from the corner with less than a second remaining. Huerter arrived at United Center wearing a No. 1 jersey in honor of Rose. Nikola Vucevic scored 16 for Chicago, and Smith and Matas Buzelis added 14 points apiece.

Brennan claims final stage

Jay wins the Tour Down Under after being knocked off bike by kangaroo

ADELAIDE, Australia, Jan 25, (AP): Australia's Jay Vine was knocked down by a kangaroo on the final stage Sunday but recovered to win the Tour Down Under cycle race, the first event of the 2026 World Tour.

Vine was knocked from his bike when two large kangaroos bounced onto the road on a high speed section with about 96 kilometers (61 miles) left in the undulating 169.8 kilometer (105 mile) stage through the hills around Adelaide. Three riders - Menno Huising, Lucas Stevenson and Alberto Dainese - were forced to quit the race and the kangaroo also was injured.

Vine led the race by 1 minute, 3 seconds on general classification entering the last stage. But he was already at a disadvantage because two of his UAE Team Emirates including the defending champion and then second-placed Jhonatan Narvaez crashed out in the fourth stage on Saturday.

Juan Sebastian Molano also abandoned the tour Sunday because of fatigue, leaving Vine with only two teammates on the last stage: Ivo Emanuel Oliveira and Briton Adam Yates.

Vine got up immediately after his crash and changed bikes twice before rejoining the peloton with around 92 kilometers remaining.



Jay Vine of UAE Team Emirates celebrates victory after stage five of the Tour Down Under road cycle race in Adelaide, Australia. (AP)

He remained near the front of the peloton for the rest of the stage and finished 1 minute, 3 seconds ahead of Mauro Schmid of Switzerland (Team Jayco Alula) and Harry Sweeny (EF Education - Easypost) of Australia who

was a further nine seconds behind.

"Everyone asks me what's the most dangerous thing in Australia and I always tell them it's kangaroos," said Vine who won his home race for the

second time in three years. "They wait and they hide in the bushes until you can't stop and they jump out in front of you. Point proven today."

"Two of them blasted through the peloton when we were doing probably 50 kph (30 mph) and one of them stopped and went left, right, left right, left right and I ended up hitting its backside."

Matthew Brennan of Britain (Team Visma) won the stage in a sprint ahead of Finn Fisher-Black of New Zealand (Bora Hansgrohe) and Tobias Lund Andresen of Denmark (Decathlon).

The stage covered eight laps of a circuit which involved a slow, steep climb to the finish in the township of Stirling. There were two breakaways during the stage, the second of which came back to the peloton with only one kilometer remaining.

Vine managed to overcome an enormous amount of bad luck to win the race.

"This year we started off really positive and we just had more and more bad luck as the race went on," he said. "Today was never going to easy and I've been saying all week it's not over until it's over."

"But it's proven to be not over till it's over in this race for us."

O'Malley defeats Yadong

Gaethje stuns Pimblett to capture interim lightweight title at UFC 324

LAS VEGAS, Jan 25, (AP): One of the storylines entering UFC 324 was whether Justin Gaethje would retire after facing Paddy Pimblett on Saturday night.

Looks like Gaethje has plenty left if he wants to continue his career.

Gaethje went after Pimblett from the beginning, his aggressiveness leading to a unanimous decision and upset victory for the interim lightweight title.

"My coach was definitely upset with me after the first round," Gaethje said. "I love this (stuff) so much, it's really hard to control myself sometimes. I knew that I had to put him on his back foot. He is very dangerous, got great timing. I had to steal momentum and his confidence. I had to work really hard in the first round. Champions move forward."

In the first UFC fight card on Paramount+, the judges awarded Gaethje (27-5) the victory by scores of 48-47, 49-46 and 49-46. The Associated Press scored it 48-47 for Gaethje.

Pimblett (23-4) was a -250 favorite at BetMGM Sportsbook.

In the co-main event, third-ranked bantamweight challenger Sean O'Malley (19-3) of Phoenix defeated No. 5 Song Yadong (22-9-1) of China by unanimous decision. All three judges scored the bout 29-28. O'Malley appeared in real trouble before putting together his strongest round in the third.

UFC CEO and President Dana White said the Paramount viewership numbers will come out Tuesday or Wednesday, but the early results were more than promising. "This exceeded expectations beyond belief for Paramount," White said. "We know it killed it. They're saying it exceeded expectations by double. We've got a real good feeling we're going to have a great relationship for seven years."

Gaethje and Pimblett waged a physical and bloody fight. White said Pimblett was sent to a hospital but that Gaethje refused to go.

"I wanted that belt, but there's no other man I would rather lose to," Pimblett said. "For me, it's the idea of someone I've loved watching growing up watching the UFC. It shows why he's a legend right there."

The combatants weren't the only ones injured. Referee Mark Smith was carried out of the octagon after tearing an ACL while officiating the Ateba Gautier-Andrey Pulyaev bout.

Gaethje, a 37-year-old who fights out of Denver, landed a series of punches about a minute and a half into the fight and took Pimblett to the mat. The pounding continued in the second round when Gaethje took the 31-year-old Englishman down three times. On the third time, with about 30 seconds left, Gaethje was relentless in landings blows on Pimblett's face.

But Pimblett began to find his game in the third round despite bleeding by his right eye. He connected with enough punches while remaining standing to get back into the bout.

At least temporarily.

A strong combination by Gaethje midway through the fourth turned the fight back into his favor. Even though he was taken to the floor late in the round, it was Gaethje who pounded Pimblett's face. Each approached the fifth as if he didn't want to leave it in the judge's hands, and Pimblett put together a combination with about a minute left.

The crowd stood to applaud both fighters when the final bell rang, a tribute to the entertaining and action-filled bout. The way this card came together might not have been what White had in mind when putting together first Paramount+ card, and there were issues right up until fight day.



Justin Gaethje, left, and Paddy Pimblett battle in an interim lightweight title fight during the UFC 324 mixed martial arts event in Las Vegas. (AP)

Katie fights for Olympic berth after controversial decision

WASHINGTON, Jan 25, (AP): U.S. skeleton racer Katie Uhlaender is pressing forward in her fight for a sixth Olympic berth, saying Saturday that she is appealing a decision by international officials that seemed to cost her a chance to compete at the Milan Cortina Games.

Uhlaender said she is asking the International Olympic Committee for a wild-card berth into the Olympic women's skeleton field, which currently has the maximum of 25 sliders - including two from the U.S.

Uhlaender said she has made the ask with the backing of the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee, which confirmed that it has asked that Uhlaender receive a discretionary spot in the field.

"Had this race not been manipulated, I would be preparing to represent the United States of America and make history as the first woman to compete in six Olympic Winter Games for our country," Uhlaender said in a statement Saturday, a copy of which was sent to The Associated Press. "Instead, I am now focused on legally challenging what I believe to be a fundamentally flawed investiga-

tion and decision by the IBSF in a final attempt to earn my place at what would be my sixth and last Olympic Games."

At issue for Uhlaender: A North American Cup race earlier this month where Canada had four of its sliders withdraw, and that decision lowered the number of available standings points available. If the Canadian sliders competed, Uhlaender likely would have gone on to make the U.S. Olympic team.

The International Bobsled and Skeleton Federation looked into Canada's decision and found no rules were broken. Uhlaender ultimately could take her case to the Court of Arbitration for Sport. Documents reviewed by AP show that some other countries are speaking up on Uhlaender's behalf as well.

The NAC series is a tier below the World Cup level and tends to be a place for developmental athletes to compete. Uhlaender competed in seven races this season on the NAC and Asian Cup - another lower-tier - circuits in an effort to collect enough points to make the Olympic team after failing to make this season's U.S. World Cup

roster.

Kelly Curtis and Mystique Ro competed on World Cup this season for the U.S. and secured Olympic spots. Uhlaender has said repeatedly that she is not looking to thwart the Olympic dream for Curtis, Ro or any other athlete.

She said Saturday that she's only looking for the IOC to be fair.

"Doing so would protect the integrity of competition and prevent further harm," Uhlaender said. "Such action would send a powerful message to young athletes everywhere: that standing up for ethics and integrity may be difficult, but it matters."

Uhlaender won the women's skeleton world championship in 2012, medaled in that event at the worlds two other times and finished a controversial fourth at the 2014 Sochi Olympics - with many still believing she should have been awarded the bronze medal. Russian slider Elena Nikitina won the bronze at that event, then had the medal stripped three years later because of a state-sponsored doping scandal only to have her finish eventually restored following appeal.

Norway's Eitrem breaks 5,000m world record

BERLIN, Jan 25, (Xinhua): Norwegian skater Sander Eitrem broke the men's 5,000m world record at the speed skating World Cup in Inzell, Germany on Saturday, winning the event in five minutes and 58.52 seconds. Eitrem became the first speed skater to skate the distance in under six minutes, beating the previous world record of 6:00.23 set by Timothy Loubineaud of France in Salt Lake City, the United States, last November.

With the victory in Inzell, Eitrem finished third in the overall World Cup standings for the 5,000m. "It

probably hasn't fully sunk in yet," the 23-year-old said after crossing the finish line. "Being the first under six minutes has been a dream since I was little, so the fact that I actually am the first, it's incredibly big." Czech 19-year-old Metoděj Jilek placed second in 6:01.98, a result that secured him the season title in the distance. Loubineaud placed third, more than five seconds behind Eitrem.

In the men's 1,000m, American Jordan Stolz continued his dominance, winning the final World Cup race of the season and clinching the season

title with five victories from five races.

He also won gold in the 1,500m event on Friday to claim the season title in that event as well.

In the women's 1,000m, Dutch star Jutta Leerdam took the victory in 1:12.74, setting a meet record. Japan's Miho Takagi finished second in 1:13.43, while another Dutch skater Femke Kok came third in 1:13.67. In the women's 3,000m, Norway's Ragne Wiklund won in 3:54.74, with Joy Beune and Valerie Maltais finishing second and third, respectively.

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Shiffrin wins record 9th slalom season title ahead of Olympics



United States' Mikaela Shiffrin speeds down the course during an alpine ski, women's World Cup slalom, in Spindleruv Mlyn, Czech Republic. (AP)

American dominates last slalom

SPINDLERUV MLYN, Czech Republic, Jan 25 (AP): Mikaela Shiffrin has locked up the slalom season title with the Olympics looming to become the first skier in the six-decade history of the World Cup with nine season titles in one discipline.

The American star might have to share her record soon, though, as teammate Lindsey Vonn has eight downhill titles and currently holds a commanding lead in those standings in her second season back from her initial retirement in 2019.

On the men's side, Ingemar Stenmark won the slalom globe and Marcel Hirscher the overall title eight times each.

Shiffrin dominated the last slalom before the Milan Cortina Games on Sunday, securing top spot in the discipline standings with two races to spare.

Shiffrin won both runs to beat runner-up Camille Rast, the world champion from Switzerland, by 1.67 seconds. The rest of the field, led by Germany's Emma Aicher, trailed by more than two seconds.

Shiffrin's victory came a day after she earned her first giant slalom podium in two years.

But the American was reluctant to read too much into those results and how they may translate to her form for the Olympics, where she plans to start in slalom, GS, and the



Austria's Manuel Feller celebrates winning an alpine ski, men's World Cup slalom in Kitzbuehel, Austria. (AP)

team combined.

"At the Olympics is a totally different challenge," said Shiffrin, who won slalom gold in 2014 and GS gold four years later, but didn't finish any of her individual events in 2022.

"I've had great Olympics, I've had tough Olympics, I try to go in with an open mind, good spirit, trusting my team," she added. "We're coming in with strong athletes, so it's time to enjoy that."

This weekend's races took place at the Czech venue of Shiffrin's World Cup debut at age 15 in March 2011.

"It just feels amazing to be here. I feel like when I was 15 years old still, like, I don't know, just love skiing. I just love skiing. That's the best feeling to be here," Shiffrin said.

Clinching the slalom globe and setting yet another record was not on her mind during the race, the American said.

"It's actually hard to think about that today because there was so much to think about on the race course," Shiffrin said. "So now it's like a nice surprise."

Shiffrin won her first slalom globe at age 18 in March 2013, her most recent one came two years ago. Last season, she led the standings but then missed two months of racing following a GS crash and Zrinka Ljusic of Croatia took the title.

Shiffrin's 71 career race wins in slalom and 108 overall are both records for men and women.

Shiffrin's seven wins from eight slaloms give her an insurmountable 288-point lead over second-placed Rast in the season standings. There are two more slaloms scheduled after the Olympics, with a race win worth 100 points.

Rast triumphed in the only slalom Shiffrin didn't win this season, in Slovenia three weeks ago.

The women's World Cup continues in Crans-Montana with a downhill and a super-G next weekend, the last races before the Olympics.

Meanwhile, Manuel Feller pleased the home crowd with a surprise win in the World Cup slalom of the classic Hahnenkamm event, a day after the Austrian team had a

disastrous result in the downhill.

Feller, fourth after the opening leg, kneeled on the snow in the finish area after his run as he watched the final three racers all coming up well short, including first-run leader and world champion Loic Meillard, who finished 0.35 behind in second.

Meillard was seeking his first slalom win of the season after two podiums in December, though he did win a giant slalom in France last month.

Germany's Linus Strasser, who won the race two years ago, was 0.53 behind in third after edging out Lucas Pinheiro Braathen by four-hundredths for a place on the podium.

When his victory was confirmed, Feller got up, held one of his skis in the air and let out a loud scream.

"I can't describe how much this means to me," the Austrian said in a tearful course-side interview.

"This year I was close to quit a few times, just no energy anymore for a few races. But all my life, quitting was no option, so I kept on going."

His victory came a day after Vincent Kriechmayr in 13th was the best Austrian finisher in the storied Hahnenkamm downhill, which marked the worst result for the home team in the history of the race.

Feller was the 2023-24 slalom champion but has been struggling with back pain in recent years. He had not won a race since triumphing in Palisades Tahoe, California, in March 2024, and had not had a podium result in the current campaign.

Hayat: Equestrian season brimming with international championships

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25: Masoud Johar Hayat, President of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation announced that the 2025–2026 season is packed with international competitions at the two-star and three-star levels. He highlighted that these events provide riders with valuable opportunities to improve their skills while competing against international athletes from across the Arab world, Gulf region, and Europe.

Hayat added that the Police Sports Club will host an international championship on January 28–29. Equestrian fans in Kuwait can also look forward to thrilling competitions in the World Cup qualifiers, set to take place at KIB | The Stadium in collaboration with Suffix.

The third edition of the equestrian festival at KIB | The Stadium kicks off on February 5, featuring two international championships at the two-star and three-star levels, along with a one-star competition. The festival will run for two weeks along Marina Beach, promising excitement for riders and spectators alike.



Masoud Johar Hayat, President of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation

Kuwait Sports for All Federation opens volunteer registration for Kuwait Sports Day

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25, (KUNA): The Kuwait Sports for All Federation has opened registration for volunteers to participate in organizing Kuwait Sports Day, Vice Chairman Abdullah Al-Adwani announced on Sunday.

The event will be held on February 7 at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway under the patronage of Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi.

In a press statement, Al-Adwani said the initiative reflects the federation's strong belief in the vital role played by youth and volunteers as key partners in the success of major national events. He noted that registration is available through the official link, urging interested individuals to apply early.

Al-Adwani explained that Kuwait Sports Day is a comprehensive national occasion aimed at promoting sports as a healthy lifestyle while reinforcing the values of community participation and volunteerism.

He added that the federation is keen to attract volunteers from various age groups and backgrounds, providing them with an opportunity to gain practical experience and contribute directly to an officially sponsored national sporting event.

According to Al-Adwani, volunteer teams will be involved in several organizational roles, including field coordination, welcoming participants, providing logistical



Vice Chairman Abdullah Al-Adwani support, and assisting with accompanying programs and activities.

He affirmed that the federation will ensure a well-organized working environment and offer guidance and necessary training to guarantee a positive and rewarding volunteer experience, stressing that volunteer work is a cornerstone of successful major sporting events and a reflection of Kuwait's civilized image.

Best of the Rest

Reed wins Dubai Desert Classic: Former Masters champion and current LIV Golf circuit member Patrick Reed eased to victory at the Dubai Desert Classic by four strokes.

Reed, who held a four-stroke lead after the third round, finished ahead of England's Andy Sullivan. Julien Guerrier of France and Spain's David Puig finished joint-third, one back of Sullivan.

Rory McIlroy's chances of a record-extending fifth title fell well short with a joint 33rd-place finish.

Reed, who won the 2018 Masters for his only victory in a major, earned his fifth win on the European tour. He has won one LIV event, in Dallas last year, since joining the Saudi-funded league in 2022. (AP)

□ □ □

Džeko scores on Schalke debut: Edin Džeko scored minutes after going on for his Schalke debut to help the team snatch a 2-2 draw with Kaiserslautern in Germany's second division.

The 39-year-old Džeko, who joined Schalke in a surprise transfer from Italian team Fiorentina on Thursday, looked like being upstaged by another substitute, Ivan Prtajin, who scored twice after going on in the 61st for Kaiserslautern. Prtajin scored with his first touch - a header from a free kick - then made it 2-0 in the 84th on a counterattack.

But Džeko, who made his hugely anticipated entrance in the 67th, pulled one back with three minutes of normal time remaining and Kenan Karaman got the equalizer in the last minute.

Kaiserslautern coach Thorsten Lieberknecht berated his players on the field for letting their lead slip. The Red Devils dropped to sixth in the 18-team division.

It was Schalke's second consecutive draw, but the team remained top, two points ahead of Darmstadt after 19 rounds. (AP)

□ □ □

James wins a fifth straight Winter X title: Snowboarder Scotty James parlayed a never-before-landed trick combination into his fifth straight X Games title on the halfpipe on Saturday and tied Shaun White with eight overall gold medals at the biggest event this side of the Olympics.

In the final major contest before next month's Milan Cortina Games, the 31-year-old Australian capped off his winning run with two straight backside 1440-degree jumps. That's two tricks spinning with his back facing down the hill to start, one while riding forward, the other riding backward - or "switch." They are among the toughest on the halfpipe.

James briefly put his hand onto the snow to stay upright after the second jump, but the judges rewarded him anyway. His score of 95 easily beat second-place finisher Haku Shimasaki of Japan. (AP)

Monaco keeps rare clean sheet

Marseille edges Lens to join Ligue 1 title race

PARIS, Jan 25, (AP): Loan signing Ethan Nwaneri scored a fine goal early into his club debut as Marseille beat Lens 3-1 to creep tentatively back into the Ligue 1 title race.

Marseille's victory ended Lens' 10-game winning streak in all competitions and stopped the northern side from reclaiming top spot from Paris Saint-Germain.

Third-placed Marseille moved five points behind Lens and remained seven behind PSG before their clash at Parc des Princes on Feb. 8.

A day after joining on loan from Premier League leader Arsenal, the 18-year-old Nwaneri took just 13 minutes to score. The way the winger took the goal validated Marseille coach Roberto De Zerbi's decision to put him straight into the starting lineup.

Collecting the ball in midfield, Nwaneri drifted effortlessly past a player by cutting inside to the left, and then calmly curled a pinpoint shot from 20 meters into the bottom corner.

The highly rated Nwaneri became the youngest player in Premier League history at 15 years, 181 days when making his debut for Arsenal in September 2022. Last season, he scored nine goals for The Gunners in 37 games overall.

His goal made it 2-0 at a vibrant Stade Velodrome after Amine Gouiri netted in the third minute, swapping passes with Brazilian Igor Paixão



Lens' Malang Sarr, left, vies for the ball against Marseille's Hamed Traore during the French League One soccer match between Marseille and Lens in Marseille, France. (AP)

before clipping the ball over the goalkeeper's head.

United States winger Tim Weah set up Gouiri's second goal of the game with a first-time cross from the right in the 75th as Marseille's league-high goal tally reached 44 in 19 games.

Rayan Fofana pulled a late goal back but France winger Florian Thauvin was ineffective for Lens against the club where he scored 86 goals across

two spells.

Monaco kept a rare clean sheet but could not score in a 0-0 draw at Le Havre.

Mid-table Monaco leaked goals in losing seven of the past eight league games, and was hammered 6-1 at Real Madrid in the Champions League on Tuesday. The club's Ultras have stopped encouraging the players during games and want chief executive Thiago Scuro to leave amid reported concerns over last summer's transfer deals and physical preparation.

The performance was more disciplined this time but Monaco's injury problems mounted.

Central defender Wout Faes, who only just joined on loan from Leicester as cover for Mohammed Salisu, limped off with a left ankle injury in the 29th minute. He was replaced by former Tottenham and Bayern Munich defender Eric Dier, who was injured and replaced by Jordan Teze in the 70th.

Lorient followed up last Friday's 3-1 win at Monaco with a 2-0 victory at Rennes in the Brittany derby.

Midfielder Jean-Victor Makengo scored after three minutes with a low shot and striker Pablo Pagis wrapped things up with a close-range finish approaching the end.

PSG needed a late goal to scrape a 1-0 win at struggler Auxerre.

China's historic run at AFC U23 Asian Cup sparks praise

BEIJING, Jan 25, (Xinhua): Despite a 4-0 loss to defending champion Japan in the final in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Chinese men's football team delivered the country's best-ever performance at the AFC U23 Asian Cup and earned widespread applause at home and abroad.

"This scoreline is tough to take, but that's football," said Chinese head coach Antonio Puche. "You saw it yourself - they have outstanding players, and their performance was near perfect. We fought hard. I'm incredibly proud of this team and my players." The General Administration of Sport of China sent a congratulatory letter, noting, "You have set a historic best for Chinese teams in this tournament. This achievement marks the first time in 22 years that a Chinese men's national team has reached the final of an international competition." "Starting from the fourth group seed, you faced tough opponents without fear, constantly overcoming obstacles and making history. With impressive performances and a flawless defense, you fought your way to the final," wrote the Chinese Football Association (CFA).

"Your remarkable performances earned respect, admiration, and cheers. National teams at all levels should look to you as a role model, learning from your team spirit, fighting will, and tactical discipline to transform this honor into collective action and powerful momentum for the growth of Chinese football," the association added.

China had made history in the semifinal by beating Vietnam 3-0 to reach the U23 Asian Cup final for the first time. Before the final, they had gone unbeaten with a perfect record in the tournament and had not conceded a single goal.

The players' performances have attracted global attention. Brazilian star Neymar praised the team on social media, commenting "Que Maneiro!" ("How cool!").

Former Manchester City player Scott Carson praised goalkeeper Li Hao's outstanding performance in a highlights reel, calling his saves "impressive" and wishing the team luck in the final.

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NEWS



Al Sadd skipper lifts the Qatar-UAE Super Shield after a thrilling final win. Roberto Firmino struck twice, including a last-minute winner, as Al Sadd narrowly defeated Shabab Al Ahli 3-2. – KUNA photo

Sports

Kuwait heads to Bahrain for pre-squash champ'ship camp

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25: Kuwait's under-17 and under-13 teams departed for Manama, Bahrain, to take part in a four-day training camp ahead of the 31st Arab Squash Championship, which begins on January 28.

The delegation is led by Hamad Al-Omran, Secretary General of the Squash Federation. The under-17 squad includes Abdullah Hani, Abdulrahman Al-Kandari, Abdulmohsen Al-Otaibi, Saleh Al-Kandari, Abdullah Ma'youf, and Hamoud Al-Sawagh. The under-13 team features Salman Al-Saleh, Saqr Al-Kandari, Abdullah Al-Ali, Yazan Al-Ahmad, Khaled Al-Mudhn, and Saud Al-Fawzan.

The technical staff accompanying the teams comprises

es head coach Sherin Adel, Coach Ahmed Sabai, and fitness coach Ahmed Al-Sayed.

In preparation for the championship, the players have been training intensively for nearly a month with daily morning and evening sessions at Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah International Squash Center in South Surra.

The Arab Championship will see participation from Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Qatar, and Kuwait.

Hamad Al-Omran emphasized that the Kuwaiti teams aim to win gold and secure podium finishes in both individual and team competitions, highlighting that the country's squash players are consistently strong contenders in regional tournaments.



The Kuwaiti squash delegation.

Kuwait lifts medal haul to 68 at Gulf Swimming Championship



KUNA photos
Kuwait's champions celebrate victory with their medals.

DUBAI, Jan 25, (KUNA): Kuwait continued its strong showing at the Gulf Swimming Championship in the UAE, raising its total medal count to 68 by the end of the third day of competition.

The team secured 25 gold, 27 silver and 16 bronze medals, underlining its dominance across various age groups and events since the championship began last Thursday.

Swimmer Waleed Abdulrazzaq told KUNA he was delighted with the team's performance and the results achieved alongside his teammates, noting that the high level of competition provided valuable experience.

He added that taking part in such championships

motivates him to work harder in future training sessions, praising the coaches and team officials for their continued support and efforts to develop young swimmers.

Kuwaiti swimmer Saba Sultan also expressed her happiness with the positive results, saying the competitive atmosphere helped her deliver her best performances.

She described the championship as an important step in her sporting career and voiced hope for even better results in upcoming tournaments, while thanking her family, coaches and teammates for their encouragement and support.



Saba Sultan dazdles on the podium.

Sabalenka survives Mboko challenge for last eight spot

Alcaraz continues bid for career Grand Slam

MELBOURNE, Australia, Jan 25, (AP): TikTok influencer and top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka is having to work her way through some rising teenage stars in her bid for a third Australian Open title in four years.

Sabalenka, who has drawn praise from fans and other players for her posts on the social media platform about matters on and off the court, held off 19-year-old Vicky Mboko 6-1, 7-6 (1) at Rod Laver Arena on Sunday. She'll play 18-year-old Iva Jovic in the quarterfinals.

The 29-seeded Jovic overwhelmed Yulia Putintseva 6-0, 6-1 in 53 minutes at John Cain Arena - with six service breaks and winning the first 10 games - to secure a spot in the last eight of a Grand Slam for the first time.

"Obviously, she's No. 1 for a reason and had so much success at this tournament," Jovic said of Sabalenka. "But that's what I want - I said it last year, I hope to be able to play her this year, because you definitely want to play the best and see how it goes."

Coco Gauff, who was still a teenager when she won her first major title in 2023, is back into the quarterfinals in Australia for the third consecutive year after a 6-1, 3-6, 6-3 win over No. 19 Karolina Muchova. She'll next face No. 12 Elina Svitolina, who closed play on Day 8 with a 6-2, 6-4 win over 18-year-old, eighth-seeded Mirra Andreeva.



Alex de Minaur of Australia plays a backhand return to Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan during their fourth round match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

No. 1-ranked Carlos Alcaraz is also in the last 8 for the third straight year, continuing his bid for a career Grand Slam at age 22 with a 7-6 (6), 6-4, 7-5 win over No. 19-seeded Tommy Paul.

He's never gone past the last eight at Melbourne Park, the only one of the four Grand Slam venues where he hasn't won the title. That's a statistic he's determined to rectify, to the point where he's reworking his serve to a look a little bit more in style with 10-time Australian Open champion Novak Djokovic.

He's unlikely to have the crowd behind him in the quarterfinals, where he'll meet local hope and sixth-seeded Alex de Minaur, a 6-4, 6-1, 6-1 winner over No. 10 Alexander Bublik.

No. 3 Alexander Zverev, the runner-up in Melbourne last year, beat Francisco Cerundolo 6-2, 6-4, 6-4 and will next meet 20-year-old Learner Tien, the youngest men's quarterfinalist in Australia since Nick Kyrgios in 2015. Tien, who needed treatment for a

bloody nose after the third game, beat three-time Australian Open runner-up Daniil Medvedev 6-4, 6-0, 6-3.

The 38-year-old Djokovic got a walkover into the quarterfinals after Jakub Mensik withdrew 24 hours ahead of their scheduled fourth-round match with an abdominal injury.

Jovic has been getting some good advice from Djokovic, a 24-time major winner, during the tournament. He said he's been happy to help an up-and-coming star with Serbian heritage.

Jovic made it clear last year that she wanted a chance to play the World No. 1. Now she'll get that chance.

Sabalenka, who has joked about waiting for a formal invitation to partner Djokovic in mixed doubles at a major, breezed through the first set in 31 minutes against Mboko but had some difficulty in the second.

Mboko saved match points and played well enough to beat many players, but not the two-time Australian Open champion.

"What an incredible player for such a young age," Sabalenka said of Mboko. "It's incredible to see these kids coming up on Tour. I can't believe I say that. I feel like I'm a kid!"

"She pushed me so much, and I'm happy to be through," Sabalenka added in her on-court TV interview.

Sabalenka led the second set 4-1, and then failed to convert three match points while leading 5-4. Mboko slowly took momentum and forced a tiebreaker only for Sabalenka to dominate.

It was the 20th straight tiebreaker victory - a record - for Sabalenka.

Bavarians suffer rare Bundesliga defeat

Kimmich demands Bayern response

BERLIN, Jan 25, (Xinhua): After Bayern Munich's first Bundesliga loss since March 2025, Germany midfielder Joshua Kimmich urged the club to stay focused on its objectives.

Speaking ahead of Bayern's final UEFA Champions League league phase match against Dutch side PSV, the 30-year-old called for "a reaction from us." Although Bayern has already secured a top-eight place to bypass the playoff round and secure direct entry to the knockout stage, Kimmich stressed the importance of holding onto second place in the standings. Bayern's stated aim this season is to win the Champions League, he said, and teams that finish in the top two positions are guaranteed to play all their second-leg knockout ties at home.

"We would earn the opportunity to play the second match at home until the semifinals," Kimmich said.

He rejected the idea that Saturday's 2-1 loss to Augsburg should be seen as a warning shot, instead describing it as a reminder of what is required. "It tells us to stay completely focused on every game and give 100 percent," he said. "It all emerges in the reaction we show now. I am full of anticipation because I am convinced we will do it." Bayern coach Vincent Kompany said he remains optimistic, noting it had been 322 days since the club's previous league defeat.

"We know exactly what to do," Kompany said, adding that despite setting multiple scoring records and building a long winning run, the focus is now on preparing for the decisive phase of the Champions League.

The loss to Augsburg was only Bayern's second defeat of the season, following a Champions League defeat against Arsenal, but Kompany said the team can remain calm. Bayern still leads the Bundesliga by eight points and will avoid the Champions League playoffs that proved costly last season.

"We avoided the playoffs we had to go through last season," he said. "That is enough motivation to make the most of it this time." Defender Jonathan Tah said the squad is eager to respond. "We feel a lot of rage in us that we want to unleash in the upcoming games," he said.

Former Bayern captain Lothar Matthaus raised concerns about a recent dip in defensive standards. The 64-year-old pointed to the number of chances conceded, citing 17 by Leipzig and 16 by Augsburg, and said Bayern has too often lost control of matches.

'The government will decide on our participation'

Azam in Pakistan squad as World Cup plans unclear

ISLAMABAD, Jan 25, (AP): The Pakistan Cricket Board announced its 15-member T20 World Cup squad on Sunday despite still waiting for the go-ahead from its government to participate in next month's tournament.

PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi threw his support behind Bangladesh, which was replaced by Scotland on Saturday, after the ICC rejected the Bangladesh Cricket Board's request to shift its World Cup games from India to Sri Lanka over security concerns.

Naqvi, who supported Bangladesh's stance, accused the ICC of double standards and said he will follow his government's instructions on whether to participate in the tournament.

"We are selectors, and our job is to pick the team," Aaqib Javed, a member of the selection committee, told reporters in Lahore. "We've announced the team very close to the (ICC) deadline. The government will decide on our participation so I can say nothing on that front. That's what the chairman has said, too, so we'll wait for their decision."

The ICC has set Jan. 30 as the deadline for all 20 participating nations to submit their final squads.

Pakistan selectors excluded fast bowler Mohammad Wasim from the 16-member squad announced for next

week's three-match T20 series against Australia in Lahore. They also continued to ignore Haris Rauf, who hasn't played since competing in the Asia Cup last September, but kept faith with struggling batter Babar Azam, who scored 202 runs at a strike rate of 103.06 in 11 Big Bash League games while opening the batting for Sydney Sixers.

"We don't see him opening the batting (at the World Cup)," head coach Mike Hesson said. "He hasn't opened the batting for us because the ability to attack in the power play is very important."

Hesson said Babar could come in handy on slow pitches in Sri Lanka where Pakistan is scheduled to play all its games, including the playoffs if it

advances in the tournament, starting Feb. 7.

"He (Babar) certainly has the skill to control the middle overs, if required, and then to feed the strike to certain players," Hesson said. "If we're chasing a lower score, he certainly has that ability to control a chase ... the conditions in Australia are significantly different than what we're going to face in Sri Lanka, so we factored all those things in."

Hesson said the selectors preferred the three fast bowlers - Shaheen Shah Afridi, Salman Mirza and Naseem Shah - after taking into account their abilities to bowl in all three T20 phases.

With the wickets likely to suit spinners, Pakistan included four spinners: Mohammad Nawaz, Shadab Khan, Abrar Ahmed and Usman Tariq.

Pakistan plays its opening Group A match against the Netherlands on Feb. 7 followed by matches against the United States (Feb. 10), India (Feb. 15) and Namibia (Feb. 18).

Squad: Salman Ali Agha (captain), Abrar Ahmed, Babar Azam, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Khawaja Nafay, Mohammad Nawaz, Salman Mirza, Naseem Shah, Sahibzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Shadab Khan, Usman Khan, Usman Tariq



Pakistan Cricket Board's Director High Performance and member of selection committee Aqib Javed, center, attends a press conference with T20 team captain Salman Ali Agha, right, and head coach Michael Hesson to announce the squad for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, in Lahore, Pakistan. (AP)